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Farmers' Perceived Effects of Intra-Communal Conflict on Cassava Production in Emohua Local Government of Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of intra-communal conflict on cassava production in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. The specific objectives were to determine the perceived effects of intra-communal conflict on cassava production in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria, and determine the measures that can assist in curbing intra-communal conflicts in the research area. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to obtain a sample size of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents, out of which 114 were successfully interviewed. Information was elicited using an interview schedule and analysed using frequencies, percentages, mean and ordinary least squares regression analysis (OLS). The study revealed that intra-communal conflicts have high effects on the destruction of farmlands ($\bar{x}$=3.2), loss of market transactions ($\bar{x}$=3.2), destruction of both private and public assets ($\bar{x}$=3.2), shrinking of markets due to the high cost of transactions ($\bar{x}$=3.2), increase in the cost of production ($\bar{x}$=3.2), reduction in market efficiency ($\bar{x}$=3.2) and lower outputs ($\bar{x}$=3.4). The study concluded that intra-communal violence is a significant barrier to agricultural output in the research region; agricultural potential is severely undermined by the ongoing incidence of intra-communal disputes. To lessen intra-communal conflicts and increase cassava production in the study area, the study suggests strengthening community conflict resolution mechanisms, encouraging social cohesion and communication within the community, improving security and safeguarding agricultural activities, implementing equitable resource management policies, providing agricultural support and production incentives, and establishing clear land boundary demarcation and documentation.

Key Words: Intra-communal conflict, cassava production, food and nutrition security

Introduction

The role of the agricultural sector in Nigeria's rural economy and its contribution to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (averaging 24%) is often underestimated, especially regarding food security and supply, with Nigerians spending N22.8 trillion on food items in 2019 (Oyaniran, 2020). Based on data from

the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2026) and Oyaniran, (2020), more than 80 percent of the population is involved in agriculture at a subsistence level, which accounts for 90% of the agricultural output in Nigeria. The agricultural sector in Nigeria is categorized into four main areas: livestock, fishing, forestry, and crop production. The crop sector covers the greatest amount of agriculture, encompassing more than 70.8 million hectares of farmland and making up 87.6% of the entire agricultural production, with the livestock sector providing 8.1%, fisheries 3.2%, and forestry 1.1% (Oyaniran, 2020). Additionally, the FAO (2026) highlighted that Nigeria is the leading global producer of cassava (Manihot esculenta), with annual production frequently surpassing 60 million metric tons, which constitutes over 20% of worldwide cassava output. Given the significant revenue generated from both domestic value addition and income derived from cassava, along with government earnings, its economic potential is vast. However, Nigeria's rural livelihood systems, particularly those reliant on natural resources, continue to face a number of challenges, including climate change, environmental degradation, coastal erosion, flooding, declining ecosystem productivity, inadequate infrastructure, poverty, limited access to modern technologies, and ongoing resource-use conflicts (Oduehie, et al., 2023). These challenges have had a negative impact on the livelihoods of rural communities, particularly crop farmers in the Niger Delta, resulting in lower income, increased vulnerability, food insecurity, and slower rural development. In response, the government has implemented a number of policies and program pertaining to the environment and climate that are meant to strengthen resilience and advance sustainable development. These include the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) program, the Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP), the Economic and Export Promotion Incentives and Zero Reject Initiative, the Action against Desertification (AAD) program, and the Nigeria Erosion and Watershed Management Project (NEWMAP). In order to promote sustainable rural development, these program aim to boost environmental sustainability, enhance resource management, lessen the consequences of climate change, and increase rural communities' capacity for adaptation (Adeleke, et al., 2024).

In recent times, violent conflicts have increased across rural Nigeria, endangering the sustainability of agricultural operations. A climate of insecurity that seriously jeopardizes agricultural productivity, investment, and long-term development has been brought about by these conflicts, which range from the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast to armed banditry in the Northwest to farmer-herder conflicts and land disputes in the Middle Belt and parts of the South, particularly in Emohua Local Government Area (Abiodun, et al., 2025; Nnadi et al., (2026). Farmers have frequently been displaced, farmland has been destroyed, transaction costs have increased, and market access has decreased as a result of these conflicts. According to Ahmed and Kuusaana, (2021), the ongoing spread of these conflicts puts agricultural investment at risk, especially in rural areas where smallholder farmers and agri-entrepreneurs are most vulnerable.

In the rural areas of Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State, conflicts among various communities persist. Inhabitants of these areas have been displaced for years due to a recurring communal crisis that forces them to leave and return to their homes frequently. According to Alfred, et al, (2023) the conflict in Emohua LGA has taken many forms, ranging from intra-communal to inter-communal, and they have either contributed to or undermined developmental advancements in these

places. The major contributors to communal conflict in the LGA include cult-related clashes, land disputes, political leadership tussles, traditional rulership tussles and struggles for the control of natural resources (crude oil) of the LGA. It contributes to the corpus of information on agricultural extension and rural development by highlighting how localized disputes impact cassava farmers' production decisions, market involvement, and household income. As a result, the study aimed to assess the impact of intra-communal violence on Emohua LGA's cassava output. The specific objectives include; (1) ascertaining how intra-communal conflict is perceived to affect cassava production; (2) investigating the relationship between intra-communal conflict and cassava output in the study area; and (3) identifying measures that can assist in curbing intra-communal conflicts in the study area. The research was guided by the null hypothesis ($H_0$1), which stated that intra-communal conflict has no significant effect on cassava production in the study area; ($H_0$2) there is no significant relationship between increased production cost due to intra-communal and cassava output in Emohua LGA; and ($H_0$3) Farm size has no significant influence on cassava output in the study area.

Methodology

The research was carried out in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Emohua LGA is one of the twenty-three (23) LGAs within Rivers State, situated between the latitudes of 4°50′0″ N and 5°13′0″ N and the longitudes of 6°40′30″ E and 6°54′0″ E, covering an approximate land area of 831 km².

A multistage sampling procedure was employed to choose 120 cassava farmers. Initially, key communities and villages in Emohua LGA are primarily organised around its electoral wards (refer to table 1 below). Five (5) electoral wards known for significant occurrences of intra-communal conflicts were intentionally chosen for this research. From each of the wards/communities, a total of twenty-four (24) cassava farmers were randomly selected, resulting in 120 respondents overall.

A structured interview schedule was used to collect data for the research. Means and percentages were used to achieve objectives one, two, three and four, while ordinary least squares regression analysis was used to achieve hypothesis one, two and three.

Table 1: Sampling frame

Wards	Communities
Ward 01 - Ogbakiri I	Ogbakiri I
Ward 02 - Ogbakiri II	Ogbakiri II
Ward 03 - Emohua I	Part of Emohua/Rumuche/Rumuewhor
Ward 04 - Emohua II	Part of Emohua/Oduoha
Ward 05 – Obelle	Obelle Community
Ward 06 – Ibaa	Ibaa Community
Ward 07 – Rundele	Rundele Community
Ward 08 – Rumuekpe	Rumekpe Community
Ward 09 - Elele Alimini	Elele Community
Ward 10 - Omudioga/Akpadu	Omudioga and Akpadu Communities
Ward 11 – Egbeda	Egbeda Community
Ward 12 – Ubimini	Ubimini Community
Ward 13 - Odugu I	Parts of Odugu/Oduoha
Ward 14 - Odugu II	Odugu / Oduoha community

Source: INEC-IREV, (2023).

The study's results reveal that a substantial majority (64.9%) of cassava farmers in Emohua Local Government Area were male and married (71.9%). These findings align with the observations made by Miao et al. (2023), who highlighted that rural men bear the responsibility for providing for and caring for their families. Nevertheless, the results contradict Obianefo et al. (2021) and Yiga et al. (2025), who stated that women in rural regions face significant limitations regarding access to land, agricultural inputs, credit facilities, and agro-chemical marketing. The study also found that cassava farmers in the area had an average age of 44.6 years, with a household size averaging 6.8 individuals, indicating a moderate availability of labour within households. However, larger households may also lead to increased consumption pressures (Machibya and Waryoba, 2025). Additionally, around 86% of the participants had completed either primary, secondary, or higher education, leaving only 14% without formal education. This suggests that farmers with greater educational qualifications tended to be more productive in cassava cultivation. This may indicate a heightened capacity to absorb new information and skills, along with a more receptive attitude towards innovative ideas aimed at boosting their productivity. This finding aligns with research conducted by Oli et al., (2025), which demonstrated that farmers with higher education levels utilised resources more effectively than their less educated peers. Moreover, the average farming experience among the participants was 14.2 years, suggesting that they have been involved in the sector for a significant duration. A large majority (91.5%) of the participants earn between ₦35,000 and ₦90,000 per year, while only 8.5% earn above ₦91,000 annually, indicating that most of the respondents are primarily subsistence farmers.

Perceived Effects of Intra-communal Conflict on Cassava Production

The findings in table 3 reveal that the respondents evaluated all of the stated repercussions of intra-communal violence as having a considerable impact on cassava output in Emohua Local Government Area, with all mean scores exceeding the benchmark mean of 2.50. Lower production had the highest mean score ($\bar{x}$ = 3.44), indicating that intra-communal conflict is the leading cause of reduced cassava yield. Conflicts interrupt labour, transportation, and input procurement, resulting in increased production costs ($\bar{x}$ = 3.29). Furthermore, the result also revealed that the respondents agreed that intra-communal conflict contributes to smaller markets ($\bar{x}$ = 3.24) and reduces market efficiency ($\bar{x}$ = 3.22), showing that conflicts negatively influenced the marketing and distribution of cassava products. In addition, Conflict had a significant impact on cassava production operations, including damage of farmland ($\bar{x}$ = 3.18), loss of market transactions ($\bar{x}$ = 3.18), and asset destruction ($\bar{x}$ = 3.17). Overall, the data imply that intra-communal conflict has a detrimental impact on both the production and marketing aspects of cassava cultivation in the studied region.

This finding is consistent with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2021), which highlighted that conflicts within communities weaken rural economies and diminish agricultural output. Additionally, these results are in agreement with Okopi, et al. (2024), who stated that conflict adversely affects agricultural productivity in rural Nigeria, significantly impacting household income and food security, thereby exacerbating poverty and threatening socioeconomic development in these regions.

Table 3: Perceived effects of intra-communal conflict on cassava production in Emohua LGA

Conflict effect	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD
Destruction of farmland	3.18	0.78
Loss of market transactions	3.18	0.76
Destruction of assets	3.17	0.83
Shrinking market	3.24	0.69
Increase in production cost	3.29	0.80
Reduction in market efficiency	3.22	0.75
Lower output	3.44	0.63

Field survey, (2024). Midpoint = 2.50; hence, mean score <2.50 = No effect; while mean score ≥ 2.50 = Effect.

Relationship between Intra-communal Conflict and Cassava Output

Table 4 shows the relationship between intra-communal conflict and cassava output. The results reveal a considerable fluctuation in the average cassava yield of 2,450.30 kg. The average farm size was 2.48 hectares, indicating the dominance of smallholder farmers. Results in Table 4 also revealed strong agreement that conflict has a detrimental impact on productivity, which is confirmed by the high mean score for cost increase (3.29) and poorer output perception (3.44). This is consistent with

research by Olanipekun and Ijeh (2022), which found that conflict dramatically lowers agricultural output and increases production costs.

Table 4: **Relationship between intra-communal conflict and cassava output**

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Cassava Output (kg)	2450.30	410.52	1800	3200
Farm Size (ha)	2.48	1.12	0.50	5.00
Increase in Cost	3.29	0.41	2.10	4.00
Lower Output Perception	3.44	0.30	2.50	4.00

Source; Field survey, (2024). R^2 = 0.945 F-statistic significant at p < 0.01

Identify Measures that can Assist in Curbing Intra-communal Conflicts

Table 5 shows that the mean values for all suggested indicators exceeded the 2.50 standard, indicating that respondents were generally in agreement. The top ranking was youth employment and empowerment programs ($\bar{x}$ = 3.45), indicating that intra-communal disputes in Emohua LGA are primarily driven by youth restlessness and unemployment. This is consistent with research by Hailu Demeke, (2022), who posits that a high incidence of young unemployment increases the likelihood of political instability and makes nations more unstable overall, making them more vulnerable to armed conflict. This also aligns with Fuseini, et al. (2025), research on the poverty-conflict nexus, which holds that social unrest is more likely to occur when there are fewer chances for a living, and in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where high levels of deprivation frequently combine with recurrent bouts of violence and instability, poverty and war are two of the most enduring and interconnected issues impeding sustainable development. Therefore, conflict-related interruptions in cassava production might be greatly decreased by including young people in off-farm businesses and agricultural value chains in a profitable manner.

Furthermore, regular dialogue and sensitization ($\bar{x}$ = 3.38) imply that communication problems and false information are the main causes of inter-communal strife. This finding implies that long-term communication platforms might facilitate mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence among farmers. Also, strengthening traditional leadership institutions ($\bar{x}$ = 3.32) ranked highly, reflecting the importance of indigenous governance systems in rural conflict resolution. This demonstrates the importance of community elders and traditional leaders in settling conflicts (Alliyu, et al, 2020). In many rural communities in Rivers State, traditional institutions continue to be crucial for settling disputes, especially those involving land. Similarly, the majority of respondents ($\bar{x}$ = 3.29) supported the creation of a clearly defined land boundary. This is in agreement with Anierobi, et al. (2024) and Abada and Omeh, (2022), who noted that land concerns are often at the heart of conflicts among communities, particularly when there is a lack of agricultural land or when borders are unclear. Consequently, accurate land mapping and recording may lessen recurrent disputes that impact cassava crops.

Lastly, fair allocation of community resources ($\bar{x}$ = 3.27) emphasizes the idea that marginalization is a source of conflict. Because disparities in the distribution of benefits, such as development projects, remuneration, or agricultural inputs, can lead to stress. The respondents also agreed that there is a need for the creation of neighborhood peace committees ($\bar{x}$ = 3.18) and government intervention/security

presence ($\bar{x}$ = 3.05). This implies that in order to preserve stability, formal and local governing systems are required. However, the majority ($\bar{x}$ = 2.96) of the respondents supported alternative conflict resolution procedures. This shows that although frameworks for mediation and arbitration are recognized, they are not as dependable or readily available as more traditional leadership techniques.

Table 5: Respondents rated the effectiveness of eight proposed conflict-mitigation measures on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree). A mean score ≥ 2.50 was considered significant acceptance.

Strategies for curbing intra-communal conflicts

Variable	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD
Youth employment and empowerment programs	3.45	0.62
Regular community dialogue and sensitization	3.38	0.70
Strengthening traditional leadership institutions	3.32	0.66
Clear land boundary demarcation	3.29	0.74
Equitable distribution of community resources	3.27	0.71
Establishment of community peace committees	3.18	0.78
Government security intervention	3.05	0.83
Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms	2.96	0.88

Source; Field survey, (2024). Midpoint =2.50; hence, mean score <2.50 = disagreement; while any mean score ≥ 2.50 was considered significant acceptance.

Effect of Intra-communal Conflict on Cassava Production in Emohua LGA

The coefficient of intra-communal conflict index is negative (-312.85) and statistically significant. This implies that a unit increase in conflict intensity reduces cassava output by approximately 313 kg per hectare. As a result, we reject the theories and support the alternative, which claims that intra-communal violence has a major detrimental effect on cassava output. This result confirms Odom, et.al, (2025) and Ogunwede, et.al, (2025) research that conflict disrupts farming activities, damages farmland, restricts access to markets, and discourages investment in cassava cultivation. Farmers facing recurrent conflict are likely to cultivate smaller portions of land or abandon farming temporarily, resulting in lower productivity.

Table 6: Effect of intra-communal conflict on cassava production

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-value
Constant	1245.60	210.44	5.92
Intra-communal conflict index (X_1)	-312.85	88.73	-3.52*
Increase in production cost (X_2)	-0.0045	0.0017	-2.65*
Farm size (X_3)	785.20	102.15	7.69*

*Source; Field Survey, (2024). Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.64$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.62$ F-statistic = 65.48*** Prob (F-statistic) = 0.000 Significance levels: ***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05*

Relationship between Cost of Production and Intra-Communal Conflict

The coefficient for increased production cost (-0.0045) is negative and significant. This suggests that cassava output is reduced by rising expenses for transportation, security, and replacement of damaged equipment. As a result, there is a strong inverse relationship between cassava output and cost increases caused by war. Because farmers cut back on manpower, fertilizer, and better seeds when production prices rise, which lowers output. This validates the economic production theory, which states that as input affordability drops, output also reduces. However, Agriculture Institute, (2025) noted that due to the law of diminishing returns, more input does not necessarily equate to more output. A variety of production-related inputs are needed for the creation of goods and services.

Relationship between Farm Size and Cassava Output

Farm size had a positive coefficient (785.20) and was statistically significant. This indicates that a one-hectare increase in farm size increases cassava output by approximately 785 kg. Therefore, farm size significantly and positively influences cassava output. The strong positive correlation is consistent with traditional production theory; greater aggregate output, improved input allocation, and scale growth are all made possible by larger farms. However, access to bigger land holdings may be restricted in conflict-prone areas, which would indirectly reduce production.The R2 value of 0.64 indicates that farm size, higher production costs, and intra-communal conflict account for 64% of the variation in cassava output. Strong explanatory power is demonstrated by the model's statistical significance (F = 65.48). Together, the results show that while farm size continues to be a crucial factor in determining output, intra-communal disputes seriously impair cassava production in Emohua LGA through both direct (farm destruction) and indirect (higher cost) routes.

Conclusion and Recommendations Intra-communal violence is a significant barrier to agricultural output in the research region. Their agricultural potential is severely undermined by the ongoing incidence of intra-communal disputes. Restoring peace and stabilizing: there is a widespread understanding among farming communities that social instability and insecurity prevent sustained agricultural growth. Furthermore, regression results from the study revealed that intra-communal

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Implementation of Youth Employment and Empowerment Programs:** Targeted youth empowerment programs, such as agribusiness training, input subsidies, and access to financial facilities, should be implemented by the government and development organizations. Youth engagement in cassava value chains and associated businesses will reduce the causes of conflict and alleviate restlessness.
2. **Strengthen Traditional and Community-based Conflict Resolution:** Local dispute resolution systems should explicitly incorporate and support traditional rulers and community elders. The creation of effective community peace committees will encourage early conflict resolution and mediation prior to escalation.
3. **Provision of Agricultural Support and Production Incentives:** The government could offer better cassava stems, subsidized agricultural supplies, and access to rural infrastructure like roads and storage facilities in order to lessen the indirect effects of production costs brought on by war. Farmers will be encouraged to maintain and increase output even in vulnerable locations if production costs are lowered.
4. **Improved Security Presence and Government Intervention:** In neighborhoods that are prone to violence, local and state governments ought to improve security surveillance. Early involvement can stop conflicts from getting worse and safeguard agricultural assets.
5. **Clear Land Boundary Demarcation and Documentation:** Relevant land administration authorities should collaborate with community leaders to demarcate and properly document land boundaries. This will reduce recurring disputes over farmland ownership and improve tenure security for cassava farmers.

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