

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN FARMER-HERDER CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACEBUILDING IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Farmer-herder conflicts remained a major threat to agricultural production, rural livelihoods and peaceful coexistence in Benue State, Nigeria. This study examined the roles of agricultural extension services and local governance in peacebuilding and the resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in Benue State. Specifically, it assessed the roles of agricultural extension services, examined the effectiveness of local governance institutions, and determined their influence on peacebuilding and sustainable conflict resolution. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and a multistage sampling procedure was used to select 266 respondents from Agatu, Guma and Logo Local Government Areas. Data were collected using a structured interview schedule and analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression. Results showed that agricultural extension services played a high role in conflict prevention and resolution, with a mean score of 3.86, while local governance institutions were perceived as effective, with a mean score of 3.73. Multiple regression revealed that agricultural extension services ($\beta = 0.361$; $p < 0.001$) and local governance mechanisms ($\beta = 0.428$; $p < 0.001$) significantly influenced peacebuilding and sustainable conflict resolution, jointly explaining 53.6% ($R^2 = 0.536$) of the variation in the outcome. The study concluded that integrating agricultural extension with responsive local governance could strengthen sustainable peacebuilding and farmer-herder conflict resolution in Benue State. The study was limited by its coverage of only three Local Government Areas, which could constrain the generalizability of the findings to the entire state.

Keywords: Agricultural extension; local governance; peacebuilding; pastoralism; grazing rights; conflict resolution.

Introduction

Farmer-herder conflict has remained a major threat to rural livelihoods, agricultural production and peaceful coexistence in Benue State. Competition over land, water and grazing resources has interacted with weak governance, policy contestation and distrust among stakeholders. The conflict has resulted in loss of lives and property, displacement of rural households and disruption of agricultural activities and food security. Recent evidence from Study area showed that inconsistencies in government policies, poor management of land-based resources and institutional weaknesses contributed to the persistence of farmer-herder conflict. Perceptions of injustice over access to scarce land resources also intensified violence (Okoye et al., 2025). The problem therefore extends beyond competition over agricultural resources to include poor communication, weak stakeholder coordination, limited local institutional capacity and inadequate participatory governance.

Peacebuilding provides a broader framework for addressing such conflicts because sustainable peace requires more than the temporary cessation of violence. Galtung (1969) distinguished positive peace from the mere absence of direct violence and emphasized the importance of addressing conditions that sustain conflict. Burton (1990) similarly emphasized that effective conflict resolution required attention to the underlying causes and unmet human needs that generated and sustained conflict rather than merely suppressing its violent manifestations. Lederach (1997) argued that sustainable peacebuilding required long-term efforts to transform relationships, strengthen institutions and involve actors at different levels of society. In the same vein, Lederach (2003) viewed conflict transformation as a process that went beyond the immediate settlement of disputes to address relationships, structures and social conditions that sustained conflict. These perspectives were relevant to farmer-herder conflicts because lasting peace required communication, mediation, cooperation and institutional arrangements that addressed both immediate disputes and underlying sources of tension.

Agricultural extension and local governance could contribute to these peacebuilding processes. Extension services could facilitate communication between farmers and herders, disseminate information on sustainable resource use, support early warning activities and promote dialogue and collective action. Fisher et al. (2000) emphasized the importance of communication, dialogue, negotiation and collaborative action in managing conflicts and building constructive relationships among conflicting parties. Local governance institutions could provide platforms for mediation, policy implementation, community participation and coordination among traditional authorities, government agencies, farmers and herders. These functions were consistent with Lederach's (1997) view that sustainable peacebuilding required the involvement of multiple actors and stronger linkages between local and formal institutions.

Recent studies have also demonstrated the relevance of these mechanisms in managing farmer-herder conflicts. Community institutions and traditional authorities have remained important first-line actors in conflict mediation in Benue State. However, their interventions have often resulted in temporary rather than sustainable peace because of weak enforcement capacity and limited integration with formal governance structures (Shabu et al., 2026). Similarly, recent agricultural extension research emphasized the importance of multilingual extension services, cooperation and stakeholder engagement in managing farmer-herder relations (Nnadi et al., 2026).

Despite these contributions, an important research gap remains. Existing studies in Benue State have largely examined the causes and consequences of farmer-herder conflicts, government policies, traditional institutions, community based mechanisms and broader governance

challenges. Comparatively limited attention has been given to the combined contribution of agricultural extension and local governance to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Recent research has called for peacebuilding approaches that connect community institutions with formal governance and security structures (Shabu et al., 2026). Evidence from agricultural extension research also suggests that extension actors could contribute to conflict sensitive communication and peaceful resource management (Nnadi et al., 2026).

This study therefore examined the roles of agricultural extension and local governance in peacebuilding and the resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in the study area. It provided an interdisciplinary perspective by linking agricultural advisory services with local governance and conflict resolution processes.

Problem Statement

Despite extensive attention to farmer herder conflict in the study area, existing studies have focused largely on its causes and consequences, government policies, traditional institutions, community based mechanisms and broader governance challenges, with limited empirical evidence on the combined contribution of agricultural extension services and local governance to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. In particular, the extent to which agricultural extension and local governance mechanisms jointly contribute to peacebuilding and the sustainable resolution of farmer-herder conflicts remained insufficiently documented in the study area. This study therefore examined the roles of agricultural extension services and local governance in peacebuilding and the resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in Benue State, Nigeria.

General Objective

To examine the roles of agricultural extension services and local governance in peacebuilding and the resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in the study area.

In this study, peacebuilding referred to the processes of dialogue, mediation, stakeholder engagement, cooperation and institutional coordination aimed at preventing conflict recurrence and promoting peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders.

Specific Objectives

The study sought to:

1. assess the roles of agricultural extension services in preventing and resolving farmer-herder conflicts in the study area;
2. examine the effectiveness of local governance institutions in facilitating farmer-herder conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the study area; and
3. determine the influence of agricultural extension services and local governance mechanisms on peacebuilding and sustainable resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in the study area.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 5% level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$):

H₀₁: Agricultural extension services had no significant influence on peacebuilding and sustainable resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in the study area.

H₀₂: Local governance mechanisms had no significant influence on peacebuilding and sustainable resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in the study area.

Justification of the Study

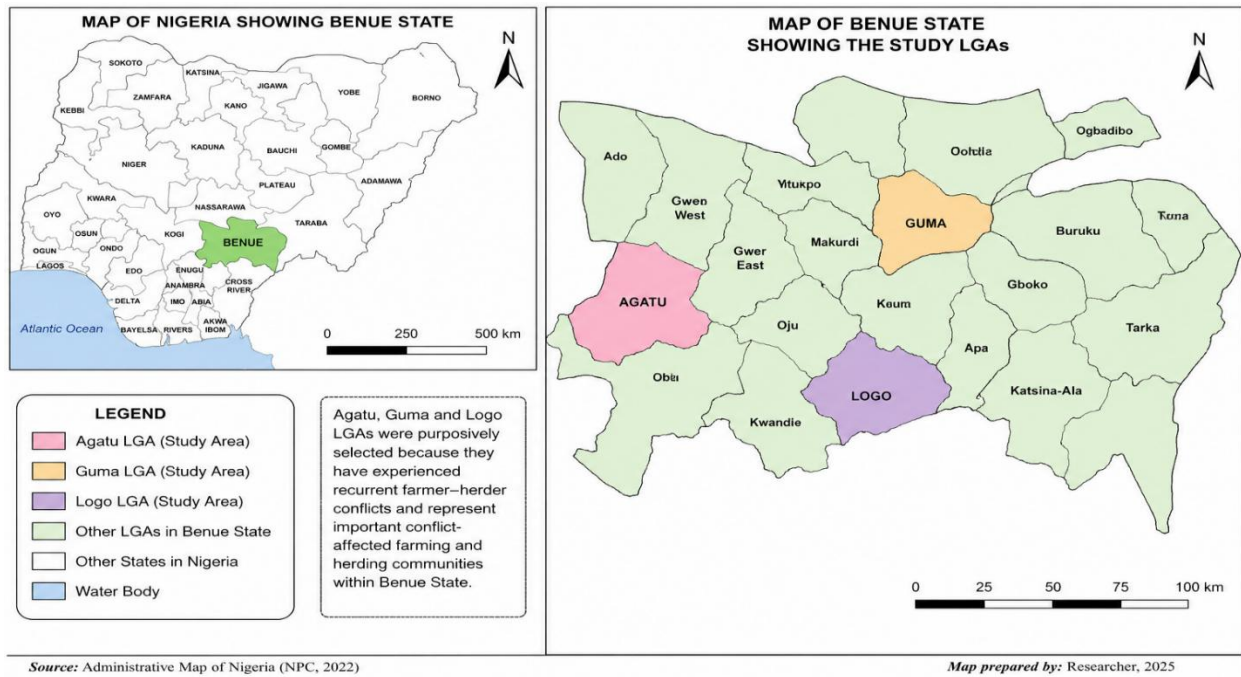
The findings provided practical evidence to support agricultural extension agencies, local governments and traditional institutions in strengthening coordinated approaches to farmer-herder dialogue, mediation, stakeholder engagement and conflict prevention in the study area. The study also provided useful evidence for developing more participatory and integrated peacebuilding strategies that could strengthen sustainable conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders.

Methodology

Study Area

The study was conducted in Benue State, Nigeria, located in the North-Central region and popularly known as the “Food Basket of the Nation.” The state had 23 Local Government Areas and was predominantly agrarian, with crop farming and livestock production serving as major livelihood activities. The coexistence of farming and herding communities, coupled with competition over land, water and other agricultural resources, had made the state an important setting for examining farmer-herder conflict. Agatu, Guma and Logo Local Government Areas were purposively selected because they had experienced recurrent farmer-herder conflicts and represented important conflict affected farming and herding communities within the state. Their selection therefore provided an appropriate setting for examining the roles of agricultural extension services and local governance institutions in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Figure 1: Map Showing Study Area



Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

A **multistage sampling procedure** was used to select respondents for the study. Benue State was purposively selected because of the prevalence of farmer-herder conflicts and the relevance of the study objectives. Three Local Government Areas (LGAs), namely **Agatu, Guma and Logo**, were purposively selected based on the occurrence and relevance of farmer-herder conflict. From each selected LGA, three villages were purposively selected. In **Agatu LGA**, the selected villages were Okokolo, Odugbeho and Adagbo; in Guma LGA, Yelwata, Abaushwa and Tse Agbough; while in Logo LGA, Tse-Kanji, Tse Kyegh and Anyibe were selected.

A sampling frame of 862 farmers and herders was obtained from the selected communities. The sample size of 266 respondents was determined using Cochran's (1963) formula for sample-size determination. The 266 respondents were then proportionately allocated to the selected communities according to their respective population sizes, after which respondents were selected through simple random sampling to ensure that eligible farmers and herders had an equal opportunity of selection.

Cochran's (1963) formula:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2} \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where:

- n_0 = initial sample size
- Z = standard normal deviation at 95% confidence level = 1.96
- p = estimated proportion of the population possessing the characteristic = 0.50
- q = $1-p$ = 0.50
- e = acceptable margin of error = 0.05

The resulting sample size was adjusted to **266 respondents** for the study.

Table 1: Distribution of the Sampled Respondents in the Study Area.

State	LGAs	Villages	Sample Frame	Sample Size
Benue	Agatu	Okokolo	125	39
		Odugbeho	120	37
		Adagbo	117	36
	Guma	Yelwata	110	34
		Abaushwa	90	28
		Tse Agbough	82	25
	Logo	Tse- Kanji	80	25
		Tse Kyegh	71	22
		Anyibe	67	20
Total	1	3	9	862
				266

Source: Field Survey, 2026. The sample of 266 respondents represented approximately 31% of the sampling frame of 862 farmers and herders in the selected communities.

Method of Data Collection

Primary data were collected using a structured, pre-tested interview schedule administered to the 266 selected respondents. The instrument focused specifically on agricultural extension services, local governance mechanisms, peacebuilding activities, and farmer-herder conflict resolution outcomes in the study area. Items measuring extension roles and local governance effectiveness were structured on a five-point Likert scale, while peacebuilding and conflict resolution outcomes were measured using relevant indicators aligned with the study objectives. The instrument was pre-tested in a community outside the sampled villages, and necessary corrections were made before final administration. The internal consistency of the 17 Likert scale items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability test produced a coefficient of 0.82, which indicated good internal consistency. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 and above was considered acceptable for the study. Trained enumerators administered the instrument through face-to-face interviews, with the researcher supervising the exercise to ensure completeness, consistency and accuracy of the data collected.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was pre-tested in a community outside the sampled villages to assess the clarity, relevance and consistency of the questionnaire items. The internal consistency of the Likert scale items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The reliability test produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82, which indicated good internal consistency among the items. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 and above was considered acceptable for the study. Necessary corrections were made to the instrument based on the pre-test results before the final administration of the questionnaire.

The Cronbach alpha formula used to test the validity of the instrument is as follows:

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left[1 - \frac{\sum S_i^2}{S_T^2} \right]$$

Where:

- α = Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient
- k = number of items
- S_i^2 = variance of each individual item
- $\sum S_i^2$ = sum of the variances of all items
- S_T^2 = variance of the total score across all items

Measurement of Likert Scale

The roles of agricultural extension services and the effectiveness of local governance institutions were measured using a **five-point Likert scale**. Respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed with each statement as follows:

5= Very High / Very Effective 4.20-5.00, 4= High / Effective 3.40-4.19, 3= Moderate / Moderately Effective 2.60-3.39, 2= Low / Less Effective 1.80-2.59, 1= Very Low / Not Effective 1.00-1.79.

Analytical Technique

The data were analysed using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation for the first two objectives, while multiple regression analysis was used to determine the influence of agricultural extension services and local governance mechanisms on peacebuilding and sustainable resolution of farmer-herder conflicts. A mean benchmark of 3.00 was used for the Likert scale items. Before estimating the regression model, multicollinearity among the explanatory variables was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance values. The results showed VIF values of 1.31 for agricultural extension services and 1.31 for local governance mechanisms, with corresponding tolerance values of 0.763 for each variable. These values indicated that there was no serious multicollinearity among the explanatory variables and that the regression estimates could be interpreted reliably.

The multiple regression model was specified as:

$$PSCRI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AES + \beta_2 LGM + \varepsilon$$

Where:

- $PSCRI$ = Peacebuilding and Sustainable Conflict Resolution Index (dependent variable)
- AES = Agricultural Extension Services
- LGM = Local Governance Mechanisms
- β_0 = Constant/intercept
- β_1 and β_2 = Regression coefficients of the explanatory variables
- ε = Error term

The significance of the regression coefficients was tested at the 5% probability level ($p \leq 0.05$). A positive and significant coefficient indicated that the respective variable significantly enhanced peacebuilding and sustainable conflict resolution, while a non-significant coefficient indicated no statistically significant influence.

Limitation of the Study

The study was limited to selected farming and herding communities in Agatu, Guma and Logo Local Government Areas of Benue State; therefore, the findings may not be fully generalizable to all farmer-herder communities in the state. The study also relied on respondents' self reported perceptions of agricultural extension services, local governance and peacebuilding, which could have been influenced by recall or response bias. In addition, the cross sectional design captured the situation during the period of data collection and could not establish how the effectiveness of extension and local governance mechanisms changed over time. Despite these limitations, the study provided useful empirical evidence on the complementary roles of agricultural extension and local governance in farmer-herder conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the study area.

Results and Discussions

Roles of Agricultural Extension Services in Preventing and Resolving Farmer-Herder Conflicts

Table 2: Perceived roles of agricultural extension services in farmer-herder conflict prevention and resolution

S/N	Roles of agricultural extension services	Mean	SD
1	Facilitated dialogue and communication between farmers and herders	4.21	0.71
2	Sensitized farmers and herders on peaceful coexistence	4.15	0.74
3	Disseminated information on appropriate land and natural-resource management	4.02	0.79
4	Linked farmers and herders with relevant government and conflict-resolution institutions	3.88	0.86
5	Facilitated community meetings and stakeholder consultations	3.94	0.81
6	Promoted collective action for sustainable management of shared resources	3.76	0.89
7	Provided early information on emerging farmer-herder tensions	3.61	0.94
8	Assisted affected communities in accessing alternative livelihood opportunities	3.28	1.02
Grand Mean		3.86	0.85

Source: Field Survey, 2026. Decision benchmark = 3.00.

The results in Table 2 showed that agricultural extension services played a high role in farmer-herder conflict prevention and resolution, with a grand mean of 3.86. Seven of the eight assessed roles recorded mean scores within the high or very high categories, while assisting affected communities in accessing alternative livelihood opportunities recorded a moderate mean score of 3.28. Facilitating dialogue and communication between farmers and herders recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.71$), while assistance to affected communities in accessing alternative livelihood opportunities recorded the lowest ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.02$).

Discussion of Findings

The finding that agricultural extension services had a high role in farmer-herder conflict prevention and resolution ($M = 3.86$) suggested that extension activities extended beyond conventional agricultural advisory functions to include communication, sensitization, stakeholder linkage and collective resource management. The highest rated role was facilitating dialogue and

communication between farmers and herders ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.71$), which indicated that respondents regarded communication as a particularly important extension function in conflict prevention and resolution. Sensitization on peaceful coexistence ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.74$) and dissemination of information on appropriate land and natural resource management ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.79$) were also highly rated. These findings suggested that extension personnel could contribute to conflict management by creating communication channels, improving awareness and promoting more responsible use of shared resources.

The finding was consistent with James (2025), who emphasized inclusive and participatory communication, stakeholder engagement and grassroots communication as important mechanisms for managing farmer-herder conflict in the study area. It also agreed with Nnadi et al. (2026), whose study identified language barriers and the mobile nature of herders as constraints to conflict-management efforts and recommended the use of extension services in appropriate languages to promote cooperation and peaceful resource use. The high rating for linking farmers and herders with relevant government and conflict resolution institutions ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.86$) further suggested that extension personnel could serve as intermediaries between rural communities and formal institutions. This role was important given evidence that weaknesses in government responses and land resource management contributed to the persistence of farmer-herder conflict in the study area (Okoye et al., 2025).

However, assisting affected communities in accessing alternative livelihood opportunities recorded a **moderate** mean score ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.02$), rather than a high score. This suggested that extension services were more prominent in communication, sensitization and institutional linkage than in directly facilitating alternative livelihood opportunities for conflict affected households. The result was important because farmer-herder conflict was associated not only with communication challenges but also with competition over land and other critical resources and perceptions of injustice (Nwankwo, 2025). Thus, the peacebuilding contribution of agricultural extension could be strengthened when its advisory and communication functions were integrated with local governance, resource-management institutions and livelihood support interventions. The finding indicated that agricultural extension constituted an important grassroots mechanism for conflict prevention and resolution, particularly through dialogue, sensitization, information dissemination, stakeholder linkage and collective resource-management activities.

Table 3: Effectiveness of local governance institutions in conflict resolution and peacebuilding

S/N	Local governance mechanisms	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Traditional rulers facilitated dialogue between farmers and herders	4.18	0.73	Effective
2	Village/community leaders mediated farmer-herder disputes	4.09	0.77	Effective
3	Local government authorities provided platforms for peaceful negotiation	3.84	0.86	Effective
4	Local institutions responded promptly to emerging conflicts	3.68	0.91	Effective
5	Community leaders promoted compliance with negotiated agreements	3.72	0.88	Effective
6	Local governance institutions facilitated joint community meetings	3.79	0.83	Effective
7	Local authorities linked conflicting parties with security and relevant government agencies	3.61	0.94	Effective

8	Local institutions monitored and followed up on conflict-resolution agreements	3.39	1.01	Moderately Effective
9	Local governance institutions provided sustainable mechanisms for preventing conflict recurrence	3.27	1.05	Moderately Effective
Grand Mean		3.73	0.89	Effective

Source: *Field Survey, 2026. Decision benchmark = 3.00.*

The results in Table 3 showed that local governance institutions were perceived as effective in facilitating farmer-herder conflict resolution and peacebuilding, with a grand mean of 3.73, which was above the 3.00 decision benchmark. Seven of the nine mechanisms were rated effective, while monitoring and following up on conflict resolution agreements ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.01$) and providing sustainable mechanisms for preventing conflict recurrence ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.05$) were rated moderately effective. Traditional rulers' facilitation of dialogue between farmers and herders recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.73$), followed by mediation of farmer-herder disputes by village and community leaders ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.77$).

Discussion of Findings

The finding that local governance institutions were perceived as effective in facilitating farmer-herder conflict resolution and peacebuilding ($M = 3.73$) indicated that locally based institutions played an important role in managing disputes within farming and herding communities. Traditional rulers' facilitation of dialogue recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.73$), followed by mediation by village and community leaders ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.77$). This suggested that locally legitimate institutions remained important first-line mechanisms for resolving disputes because they were accessible to community members and were familiar with local norms, relationships and sources of conflict.

The finding agreed with Shabu et al. (2026), who reported that traditional institutions were frequently relied upon as first responders to farmer-herder conflicts in the study area, with mediation and dialogue constituting important approaches. However, their study also indicated that such mechanisms could produce temporary rather than lasting peace where enforcement capacity was weak and coordination with formal institutions was limited. The relatively lower ratings for monitoring and following up on conflict resolution agreements ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.01$) and providing sustainable mechanisms for preventing conflict recurrence ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.05$) were consistent with this limitation. The findings therefore suggested that local institutions were stronger in immediate dialogue and mediation than in ensuring long term compliance and preventing the recurrence of conflicts.

The result also supported Adenuga (2025), who reported that local government peacebuilding committees had considerable potential for conflict management but faced challenges associated with irregular meetings, limited local government autonomy, ethno-political influences and weak institutional coordination. Similarly, Okoye et al. (2025) found that weaknesses and contradictions in government policies and poor management of land based resources contributed to the persistence of farmer-herder conflict in the study area. Thus, although local governance institutions were effective in immediate mediation and dialogue, their contribution to durable peace could be strengthened through improved institutional coordination, enforcement, follow-up and integration with formal government and security structures.

Table 4: Influence of agricultural extension services and local governance mechanisms on peacebuilding and sustainable conflict resolution

Variables	β (coefficient)	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Constant	0.842	0.262	3.216	<0.001
Agricultural extension services	0.361	0.058	6.184	<0.001
Local governance mechanisms	0.428	0.058	7.391	<0.001
R²	0.536			
Adjusted R²	0.532			
F-value	151.92			<0.001

Source: Field Survey, 2026. Dependent variable: Peacebuilding and Sustainable Conflict Resolution Index.

The results in Table 4 showed that the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 151.92$, $p < 0.001$) and explained 53.6% of the variation in peacebuilding and sustainable conflict resolution ($R^2 = 0.536$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.532$). Agricultural extension services had a positive and significant influence on the outcome ($\beta = 0.361$, $SE = 0.058$, $t = 6.184$, $p < 0.001$), while local governance mechanisms also had a positive and significant influence ($\beta = 0.428$, $SE = 0.058$, $t = 7.391$, $p < 0.001$).

Discussion of Findings

The regression results showed that agricultural extension services and local governance mechanisms had positive and significant relationships with peacebuilding and sustainable conflict resolution. The model explained 53.6% of the variation in the outcome ($R^2 = 0.536$), while the significant F-value (151.92, $p < 0.001$) indicated that the explanatory variables jointly provided substantial explanatory power. Agricultural extension services had a positive and significant coefficient ($\beta = 0.361$, $SE = 0.058$, $t = 6.184$, $p < 0.001$), while local governance mechanisms also had a positive and significant coefficient ($\beta = 0.428$, $SE = 0.058$, $t = 7.391$, $p < 0.001$). The larger coefficient for local governance mechanisms suggested that they had a relatively stronger association with peacebuilding and sustainable conflict resolution than agricultural extension services within the estimated model.

The stronger contribution of local governance mechanisms indicated that institutional legitimacy, mediation and local response capacity were important for translating dialogue into more sustainable conflict-resolution outcomes. This was consistent with evidence from the study area showing that weaknesses in government policy implementation, land governance and institutional coordination had contributed to the persistence of farmer-herder conflict (Okoye et al., 2025). The result also supported the view that community based institutions could contribute substantially to mediation and peacebuilding, although their effectiveness could be limited where follow-up, enforcement and coordination with formal institutions were weak.

The significant contribution of agricultural extension services further suggested that conflict resolution in agrarian communities was not exclusively a security or political concern. Extension personnel could contribute through conflict sensitive communication, farmer-herder sensitization, stakeholder engagement, information dissemination and linkages with relevant institutions. The result therefore suggested that stronger integration of agricultural extension functions with responsive and accountable local governance could provide a more coordinated approach to farmer-herder conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding in the study area.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: Agricultural extension services had no significant influence on peacebuilding and sustainable resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in the study area.

The regression result showed that agricultural extension services had a positive and statistically significant influence on peacebuilding and sustainable conflict resolution ($\beta = 0.361$, $t = 6.184$, $p < 0.001$). Since the p -value was less than 0.05, **H₀₁ was rejected**. This indicated that agricultural extension services significantly influenced peacebuilding and sustainable resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in the study area.

H₀₂: Local governance mechanisms had no significant influence on peacebuilding and sustainable resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in the study area.

The regression result showed that local governance mechanisms had a positive and statistically significant influence on peacebuilding and sustainable conflict resolution ($\beta = 0.428$, $t = 7.391$, $p < 0.001$). Since the p -value was less than 0.05, **H₀₂ was rejected**. This indicated that local governance mechanisms significantly influenced peacebuilding and sustainable resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in the study area.

The rejection of both null hypotheses further confirmed that agricultural extension services and local governance mechanisms were significant contributors to peacebuilding and sustainable conflict resolution in the study area. The result suggested that strengthening both extension functions and local governance mechanisms could provide a more coordinated approach to preventing conflict, facilitating dialogue and supporting sustainable peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders.

Conclusion

The study concluded that effective farmer-herder peacebuilding depended on the complementary roles of agricultural extension services and local governance institutions. While extension provided important communication and linkage support, local governance offered stronger institutional capacity for mediation and conflict resolution. Sustainable peace in the study area therefore required greater integration of extension and local governance efforts to support continued dialogue, cooperation and peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders.

Recommendations

In line with the empirical evidence, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Benue State Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, through its Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), should institutionalize conflict sensitive extension activities such as farmer-herder dialogue, peace education, early warning information and joint resource management training within routine extension programmes, with implementation commencing within six months.
2. The local government authorities in Agatu, Guma and Logo, in collaboration with traditional institutions, should strengthen community based mediation mechanisms by organizing regular farmer-herder peace forums, monitoring negotiated agreements and

responding promptly to emerging disputes, with such mechanisms established or strengthened within six months.

3. The Benue State Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the selected local governments should establish coordinated peacebuilding platforms involving extension personnel, farmers, herders, traditional leaders and relevant government and security agencies to improve information sharing, mediation, follow-up and conflict recurrence prevention, with the platforms established within one year.

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