



Farmers'-Herders' Self-other Resource Justice Perception in Benue State: The Role of Perceived Controllability and Collective Efficacy

by

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Abstract

This study examined the role of perceived controllability and collective efficacy on self-other justice perception among farmers and herders in Benue State. Four hundred and fifty participants comprising farmers and herders participated in the study. Out of these participants, 356 (79.10%) were males, while 94 (20.9%) were females. The ages of participants ranged between 19-65 years, and their mean age was 39.42 years. A multi stage sampling technique was used to select participants. The study was survey, and the design of the study was Ex Post Facto. Sense of Control Scale, Community Collective Efficacy Scale and Self-Other Justice Perception Scale were the instruments used in the study. Multiple Regression was the statistic used to analyse data. The result of the study indicated that perceived controllability independently predicted self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. Results also showed that collective efficacy independently predicted self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. In addition, the result of the study revealed that perceived controllability and collective efficacy jointly predicted self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. It was recommended that processes and frameworks that are just and equitable be developed and implemented to reduce the incessant conflict between farmers and herders. It was also recommended that the government revisits some measures of governance in the past in order to extract knowledge for harmonious existence between farmers and herders.

Key words: Perceived Controllability, Collective Efficacy, Self-other, Justice Perceptions, Resource Use, Farmers'-Herders'.

1. Introduction

For a number of years now, there has been heightened conflicts between farmers and herders in Nigeria due to allegations and counter-claims concerning the use, management, possession, and procurement of land for farming and cattle rearing. Farmers on the one hand have alleged that herders damage their farmlands and let their cattle over

graze, thereby leaving the lands open to erosion and destruction, and also resulting in the utter damage of crops. This action is likely to make the lands unproductive and hard to farm (Abanyam *et al.*, 2020). They reason that this act prevents farmers from making maximum use of such lands (Adejoh *et al.*, 2022). Herders on the other hand argue that farmers cultivate crops on officially recognized grazing routes, set rangelands and naturally flooded pieces of land on fire, and they also assert that their prerogative to resources (land, water and forage) appears to be overlooked and their land rights are usually regarded as being unimportant compared to those of farmers because they solely demand the periodic use of resources (Brottem, 2021). These have resulted in issues of justice between farmers and herders. These issues play a vital role in causing, extending, and managing the conflicts between farmers and herders.

Sonenen *et al.* (2018), argued that people are preoccupied about justice because being dealt with equitably bestows beliefs of self-worth, thereby fulfilling the psychological need for belongingness. However, when there are feelings of injustice, people become unstable, distraught, and react in a manner that seeks to reinstate justice (Rodriguez, 2012).

In this study, it is reasoned that justice can be assessed by the extent to which an individual includes the other in the self. Including the other in the self also known as self-other inclusion is the extent to which the self-perception of an individual overlaps with his or her perception of a close other (Aron *et al.* 2004). When an individual includes the other in the self, the resources, viewpoints, and personalities of close others become intertwined, and the individual acts for the benefit of the other because the outcomes of the other whether negative or positive are regarded as his outcomes (Aron *et al.*, 2006). In addition, evidence suggests that people are driven to get justice for those with whom they share an identity. For example, Leighton (2012) revealed that individuals are driven to get justice for those with whom they share an identity, and deprive others of resources and equitable outcomes.

In this study, group processes were examined among farmers and herders. It is important to examine self-other justice perception among farmers and herders because when there is a psychological overlap between groups, members of the in-group will start to show more favourable dispositions towards the out-group, and incidents impacting the outgroup possess a personal connotation for the in-group as found by Dys-Steenbergen *et al.*, 2015.

Though studies have investigated numerous field with variables such as ethnicity, amount of rewards, availability of information and accountability of decision on justice perception, however, the area of resource control (for example land and other ecological resources) have attracted fewer studies especially now that there are heightened concerns about land and territorial expansion due to an increase in population. In the light of this, perceived controllability and collective efficacy have been chosen as variables of interest in this study to examine what role they may play in the crises of confidence that is raging between farmers and herders in Nigeria.

Studies have implicated perceived controllability in self-other justice perception. Perceived controllability has been defined as an individual's belief in his capacity to carry out behaviours (Karimi and Mohammadimehr, 2022). Mariano *et al.* (2017) found that people who highly believe in their capabilities to coordinate and carry out action were likely to be successful when the perception of justice was high. Also, Zhao *et al.* (2020) revealed that when faced with a challenging situation, people with a high perception of control try to deal with the problem, while individuals with a low perception of control

are more likely to avoid the problem. In addition, Besta *et al.* (2018), found a significant relationship between the motivation to self-expand and self-efficacy. Furthermore, Parker (1993) revealed that individuals with a high perception of control believe that injustice can be corrected compared to individuals with a low perception of control.

Collective efficacy has also been documented as a predictor of self-other justice perception. Babisky and Seebauer (2020) define collective efficacy as the mutual feeling of a group in its communal capacity to fulfill particular objectives. Besta *et al.* (2023) found a significant relationship between the perception of self-expansion and the willingness to act. Pereira *et al.* (2022) revealed that the perception that a situation is unjust, and the feeling that a group of people can correct the condition using concerted behaviours leads to collective actions. Also, Besta and Zawandzka (2016) found that self-other inclusion increases the willingness to engage in joint actions to achieve collective goals. In addition, Kalvina and van Zomeren (2020) revealed that members of an outgroup may be driven to correct the condition of another group whose members have been dealt with unjustly by engaging in joint actions in favour of the disadvantaged group when members of both groups associate with each other. Yu *et al.* (2010), found that high collective efficacy is associated with a more positive intention of engaging in group actions when there are feelings of injustice.

In recent years, the conflict between farmers and herders has taken a violent angle resulting in fatalities, with Benue State recording the highest prevalence and fatalities (Ifedayo, 2023). The Benue State Emergency and Management Agency revealed that these number of farmers lost their lives in the following years as a result of invasions by herders; 174 in 2019, 88 in 2020, 2131 in 2021, 172 in 2022, and 104 since January 2023 (Adedokun, 2023). Recently, attempts were made by the government to arbitrate by establishing grazing routes and grazing reserves. However, these bills have not been successful and have been faulted for taking over the jurisdiction conferring authority to the regulation, ownership and administration of land in Nigeria with the state governors. Also, herdsmen have perceived the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law passed by the Benue State Government in 2017 as a plot that is aimed at restricting the movement of cattle to fertile land resulting in doubts and mistrust. Also, when individuals believe they have little or no control over a disadvantaged situation, they make little or no attempt to influence the situations. Perceptions of injustice are preceded by the drive to engage in collective actions so as to reinstate justice which may be through violence, riots and protests. Furthermore, solutions to the conflict between farmers and herders have been proffered by third parties, and not the major parties to the conflict. With an attendant need to nib the conflict in the bud, a more valid approach to resource use that is without suspicion and conflict is needed. The need is the fulcrum of the present study which is aimed at investigating perceived controllability of farmers and herders over the resolution of resource use conflict. The study also investigated whether each of the farmers' and herders' blocs can unite collectively to address the recurrent conflicts arising from access to grazing resources.

This study therefore investigated the roles of perceived controllability and collective efficacy on self-other justice perception among farmers and herders in Benue State. Specifically, the objective of the study was to determine whether perceived controllability and collective efficacy will independently and jointly predict self-other justice perception among farmers and herders.

Research Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that

1. Perceived Controllability and collective efficacy will independently and jointly predict self-other justice perception among farmers and herders.

2, Materials and Methods

Design

The study is a survey because questionnaires were administered. An Ex Post Facto design was adopted for this study.

Participants and Settings

The participants for this study comprised 391 farmers and 59 herders. Out of these participants, 356 (79.10%) were males, while 94 (20.9%) were females. The ages of participants ranged between 19-65 years, and their mean age was 39.42 years.

This study was conducted in Benue State. Benue State lies in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria. It has geographic coordinates of Longitude 7°47' and 10°0' E and Latitude 6°25' and 8°8' N. Benue State occupies a landmass of 34,059 square kilometers, and is bounded on the North by Nasarawa State, bounded by Taraba State to the North East, and Cross River State to the South. Benue State is also bounded by Enugu State to the South West and Kogi state to the West. Internationally, Benue State is bounded to the South East by the Republic of Cameroon (National Investment Promotion Commission, 2023). Benue State is administratively and agriculturally divided into three zones namely Zone A (Benue North East), Zone B (Benue North-West), and Zone C (Benue South) representing the three Senatorial Districts in Benue State (Ani *et al.*, 2016). Guma, Makurdi, Agatu and Kwande Local Government Areas were the Local Government Areas in which the study was conducted.

Guma Local Government area is located in the Northern part of Benue State with a land mass of 2,882 square kilometers. Guma lies within Latitude 6°33' and 7°3'N and Longitude 7°60' and 8°18' E. Guma is bounded on the East by Tarka and Logo Local Government Areas, on the South by Markurdi Local Government Area, and on the North by Doma Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. The indigenes of Guma Local Government Area are mainly the Tivs, whose major occupation is farming. Other occupants of Guma are the Fulani herdsmen whose sole occupation is cattle rearing. Gbajimba is the headquarters of Guma Local Government Area.

Makurdi Local Government lies within Latitude 7°33' 00'' N to 7°47' 00'' N and Longitude 8°27' 00'' to 8°4' 00'' E. Makurdi is bounded to the North by Guma, to the South by Gwer-East, and to the West by Gwer-West. Makurdi is also bounded to the North-West by Doma Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. Makurdi has a landmass of 804 square kilometers and is the Capital of Benue State. Makurdi is one of the major towns in Benue State, and is the major site of economic activities as well as the indigenous trade center for farm products in Benue State.

Agatu Local Government Area lies within Latitude 7°9' N and Longitude 7°9' E. Agatu is bounded to the South by Apa Local Government Area, to the West by Omala Local Government Area of Kogi state. Agatu was created out of Apa Local Government Area, and its headquarters is Obagaji. The Idoma people constitute the main tribe in Agatu, and the inhabitants of Agatu are primarily farmers.

Kwande Local Government Area has a landmass of 2,891 square kilometers, and its executive center is at Adikpo. Kwande is bounded to the North by Ushongo Local Government Area, to the North-West by Katsina-Ala Local Government Area, to the

South by Cross River State, to the South East by the Republic of Cameroon, and to the East by Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State.

Sampling Techniques

A multi-stage sampling technique was used in the study. Stratified sampling technique was used to select the local government areas from which participants were drawn. Benue State was stratified using the Senatorial Zones namely Benue North East (Zone A), Benue North West (Zone B) and Benue South (Zone C). One Local Government each was purposively selected from Zone A and Zone C strata, while two Local Government Areas were purposively selected from Zone B stratum because the zone has more Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. Kwande Local Government was selected from Zone A, Makurdi and Guma Local Governments were selected from Zone B, and Agatu Local Government was selected from Zone C. In addition, four IDP Camps were purposively selected from each of the four Local Government Areas, from which farmers were drawn. The IDP Camps were Jato Aka Camp, Mbaper Camp, Kumakwagh District Camp and Mbakunu Camp in Kwande Local Government Area; RCM Primary School Camp, Dauda Community Camp, Gbajimba 1-Camp Central Primary School and Umenger Community Camp in Guma Local Government Area; Tse-Chagu Community Camp, Atson Camp, Agan Community Camp and LGEA Camp in Makurdi Local Government Area; and Oweto Community Camp, Okokolo Community Camp, Obagaji Community Camp and Odugbeho Community Camp in Agatu Local Government area. The herders were selected from Makurdi and Agatu using a respondent-driven sampling technique.

Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire comprised five sections:

Section A contained the demographic information of participants namely Age, Gender, Marital status, Occupation, Level of Education, Religion and Tribe. Section B contained the Sense of Control Scale developed by Lachman and Weaver (1998). The scale is a 12-item instrument designed to measure the extent to which individuals feel they have control over situations and outcomes in their lives. The scale is made up of two subscales namely the Personal Mastery Subscale and the Perceived Constraints Subscale. Personal Mastery Subscale measures an individual's efficacy in achieving goals, while the Perceived Constraints Subscale measures the extent to which an individual believes that there are external factors hindering him from achieving his goals. The Personal Mastery Subscale contains 4 items which are items 1, 2, 3, 4 while the Perceived Constraints Subscale contains 8 items namely 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. The items on the Personal Mastery Subscale are scored reversely, while the items on the Perceived Constraints Subscale are scored directly. The Sense of Control Scale has a 7-point Likert response format ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Scores on the scale range from 12 to 84. Prenda and Lachman (2001) reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.85 for the Sense of Control Scale. After the pilot study, a Cronbach alpha of 0.63 and a parallel form reliability of 0.67 was obtained. concurrent validity was established by determining the correlation between Mastery Beliefs and the Total Mood Anxiety Symptoms Questionnaire scores and determining the correlation between Constraints Beliefs and the Total Mood and Anxiety Symptoms Questionnaire scores. Total Mastery Beliefs correlated negatively with mood and anxiety ($r = -.46, p = .000$)

and Total Constraints Belief correlated positively with mood and anxiety ($r = .66$, $p = .000$)(Trans, 2021).

Section C contained the Community Collective Efficacy Scale. The Community Collective Efficacy Scale developed by Carroll *et al.* (2005) was adapted for use in this study. The community collective efficacy scale is a 7-item instrument designed to measure people's beliefs about their joint capacities as a group. In this study, the word "community" was replaced with the word "group" on the scale. The community collective efficacy scale has a 5-point Likert response format ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. All the items on the instrument are scored directly. Scores range from 7 to 35. The norm of the instrument is 21. Carroll *et al.* (2005) reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.86. A Cronbach alpha of 0.54 and a parallel form reliability of 0.57 was obtained after the pilot study. Criterion validity was established by correlating the community collective efficacy scale with other measures of self-efficacy such as the Generalized self-efficacy scale and the New Generalized self-efficacy scale. The community collective efficacy scale correlated significantly with the General self-efficacy scale and the New General self-efficacy scale with a value of 0.50.

Section D contained the Self-Other Justice Perception Scale. The Inclusion of the Other in the Self Scale developed by Aron *et al.* (1992) was adapted to measure the degree to which a group is willing to include the other group in their perception of land justice. The Inclusion of the Other in the Self Scale is a single-item scale that was basically designed to measure how close individuals feel with another person or group. In this study, the word 'overlap" was replaced with the word "inclusion" and one group was asked to rate the degree to which it will include the other group in their perception of equitable land use. The instrument consists of a set of 7 pairs of concentric circles one labeled farmer and the other labeled herder that vary in their degree of inclusion from 1 = no inclusion to 7 = most inclusion. The norm of the instrument is 4. Scores range from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating a higher willingness to include the other group in the equitable use of available land resource. Aron *et al.* (1992) reported a test-retest reliability of 0.83 to 0.86. After the pilot study, a test-retest reliability of 0.55 was obtained, and a convergent validity of 0.62 was obtained when the scale was correlated with the Procedural and Distributive Just World Belief Scale.

Procedure

The study was conducted in two phases namely the pilot study and the main study. A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the Sense of Control Scale, Community Collective Efficacy Scale and the Self-other Justice Perception Scale using a Nigerian sample. Twenty participants made up of farmers and herders selected from Logo Local Government Area participated in the pilot study. Before the pilot study, a letter of introduction was submitted to Benue State Emergency and Management Agency Makurdi to obtain permission to access the IDP Camps in Benue State. Permission was granted to access the IDP Camps. Participants were addressed, and the purpose of the study explained. Instructions were given on how to respond to the items on the questionnaire. All the instruments were found to be reliable and were used for the main study.

The second phase of the study was the main study. During the main study, the letter of introduction stamped by BENSEMA was presented to its representatives at the various IDP Camps visited. Individuals at the IDP Camps were addressed and the purpose of the study explained. They were informed that farmers were the only participants of interest in the study. Informed consent was obtained verbally, participants were told that

they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point in time during the study. Participants were also assured of the confidentiality of information provided. Ethical approval was also obtained from Benue State Ministry of Health and Human Services and a project number MOH/STAT/204/1/029/2024 assigned. A total of 410 copies of the Questionnaire was administered to farmers and retrieved. Out of the 410 copies retrieved, 19 copies were discarded because they were not completely filled and were also filled by people who did not belong to the population of interest. Only 391 copies were analysed. For the herders, a trained research assistant administered the copies of questionnaire to herders in their location. 65 copies of questionnaires were administered and retrieved. However, 6 copies of questionnaires were discarded because they were not completely filled. Only 59 copies were analysed.

Multiple regression was the statistic that was used for data analysis.

3. Result and Discussion

Hypothesis one states that perceived controllability and collective efficacy will independently and jointly predict self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. This was tested using Multiple regression analysis, and the result is presented in Table 1 below

Table 1 presents results on the independent and joint influence of perceived controllability and collective efficacy on self-other justice perception. Table 1 reveals that perceived controllability and collective efficacy jointly predicted self-other Justice Perception among farmers and herders [$R = 0.145$; $R^2 = .021$; $F(2, 447) = 4.78$; $p < .01$]. Collectively, perceived controllability and collective efficacy accounted for about 2.1% variance in self-other justice perception. Furthermore, table 1 reveals that both perceived controllability ($\beta = 0.093$; $t = -1.99$; $p < .05$) and collective efficacy ($\beta = -0.113$; $t = -2.42$; $p < .01$) independently predicted self-other justice perception.

Table 1: Multiple Regression Summary Table Showing Perceived Controllability and Collective Efficacy as Predictors of Self-other Justice Perception among farmers and herders.

Criterion	Predictors	β	t	P	R	R^2	F	P
Farmers'-Herders' self-other Resource Justice Perception	Perceived	-.09	-1.99	<.05				
	Controllability				.145	.021	4.78	<.01
	Collective Efficacy	-.11	-2.42	<.01				

Observation of the beta values shows a weak inverse relationship between perceived controllability, collective efficacy and self-other justice perception. This implies that increases in perceived controllability ($\beta = -.09$) and collective efficacy ($\beta = -.11$) of participants results in reductions in self-other justice perceptions. Thus, hypothesis one is confirmed and therefore accepted in this study.

The result of the study revealed that perceived controllability independently predicted self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. This implies that farmers and herders possess a high believe in their capacities to change the perceived injustice associated with land use. The finding of this study is consistent with the findings of Zhao *et al.* (2020), who found that when faced with a challenging situation, people

with a high perception of control try to deal with the problem, while individuals with a low perception of control are more likely to avoid the problem. The finding of this study is also consistent with the findings of Mariani *et al.* (2017) who found that people who highly believe in their capabilities to coordinate and carry out action were likely to be successful when the perception of justice was high. The finding of this study is also in line with the findings of Parker (1993) who revealed that individuals with a high perception of control believe that injustice can be corrected compared to those with a low perception of control. The findings of this study can be explained using primary control. Farmers and herders believe that they can bring about a change in their environment to enable them acquire more land.

The result of the study also revealed that collective efficacy independently predicted self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. This implies that farmers and herders believe that as distinct groups, collectively, they can coordinate and act to correct the perceived injustice associated with land use. The findings of this study is consistent with the findings of Pereira *et al.* (2022), who found that the perception that a situation is unjust, and the feeling that a group of people can correct the condition using concerted behaviours leads to collective action. The findings of this study is also in line with the findings of Besta *et al.* (2023), who reported a significant relationship between the perception of self-expansion and the willingness to act. This finding is also consistent with the findings of Yu *et al.* (2010), who revealed that high collective efficacy is associated with a more positive intention of engaging in group actions when there are feelings of injustice. A plausible explanation for this finding is that both farmers and herders believe that they are being deprived of the use of land which they feel they are entitled to, and will engage in group actions to rectify the perceived injustice.

The result of the study further revealed a joint prediction of perceived controllability and collective efficacy on self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. This implies that farmers and herders believe that they possess the ability to change the perceived injustice associated with land use, and they also believe that as distinct groups, they can act collectively to produce the desired change.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusively, this study examined the roles of perceived controllability and collective efficacy on self-other justice perception among farmers and herders in Benue State. 391 farmers and 59 herders participated in the study. The result of the study revealed that perceived controllability and collective efficacy independently and jointly predicted self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. The implication of this is that the belief that farmers and herders can bring about a change in their environment and the belief of farmers and herders that through joint and coordinated efforts they can act to correct a situation, increases the likelihood that farmers and herders will act to rectify the perceived injustice associated with resource use.

Recommendations

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

1. It is recommended that processes and frameworks that are just and equitable should be developed and implemented to reduce the incessant conflict between farmers and herders.
2. To promote justice, farmers and herders must develop new and effective methods of resolving the problems associated with perceived injustice through collaborative effort.

3. It is also recommended that the government revisits some measures of governance that was adopted in the past so as to extract knowledge for harmonious existence among farmers and herders.

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