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**PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF LAND GRABBING CONFLICTS ON RURAL LIVELIHOOD IN
OBAFEMI-OWODE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OGUN STATE**

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ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to assess the perceived effects of land grabbing conflicts on the livelihoods of rural communities in Obafemi Owode Local Government area of Ogun state, Nigeria. A total of 120 respondents were selected using a snowball technique. A structured interview schedule was used to elicit information from them. The primary data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentages, and the Relative Importance Index. The study established the occurrence of land grabbing conflicts in the local government area which was carried out mainly by the *omo-oniles* and the private investors. The land grabbing in Ogun state commonly affect small land holders and private individuals. Most of the lands grabbed were meant for agricultural related activities and residential purposes. The coping strategies employed to mitigate land grabbing conflicts include Settlement for the purchase of new equipment, farm tools or inputs and farm produce (73.0%); re-negotiation with the *Omo oniles* (69.2%); Remission of a certain part of the farm produce to the *Omo oniles* (65.0%); and Erection of concrete and live fences (53.3%). The perceived effects of land grabbing conflicts according to their order of Relative Importance Indices are: loss of resources (1.66); marginalization of the right of the people especially the poor and the widows (0.95); and causes mayhem and unrest among the populace and also leads to affliction and death (0.91 respectively). Others are Deprivation of farmers' source of livelihood (0.89); increase in the dependent of non-farm employment activities (0.87); loss of local profit from crop production (0.85); the waste of time and money in cases that are referred to the court (0.84); reduction in the quality of the land (0.83); and negatively affects social interaction in the communities (0.82); as well as the discouragement of investment in rural areas (0.75). The study concludes that land grabbing by the *omo-oniles* and the private investors is prominent in Obafemi- Owode the local government area of Ogun state and affects mostly the small farmland holders and private individuals. The perceived effects of land grabbing conflicts permeate the physical, economic and social lives of the respondents. The study recommends the promulgation and implementation land policies and the establishment of special task forces to fight against the violent and criminal activities of land grabbers by the government in Ogun State. The Non governmental Organisations could assist in building more housing estates for individual acquisition.

Keywords: Agricultural production, land grabbing conflicts, *Omo-onile*, rural livelihoods

INTRODUCTION

Land is an essential natural resource, both for the survival and prosperity of humanity, and for the maintenance of all terrestrial ecosystems (Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 1999). Land is not just a resource to be exploited, but a crucial vehicle for the achievement of improved socioeconomic, biological, and physical environments (FAO, 1999). Land is used for agriculture, settlements, forestry as well as natural reserve conservation. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 1999) summarised the basic functions of land in supporting human and other terrestrial ecosystems as a store of wealth for individuals, groups, or a community; production of food, fibre, fuel or other biotic materials for human use and as biological habitats for plants, animals and micro-organisms. Others include co-determinant in the global energy balance and the global hydrological cycle, which provides both a source and a sink for greenhouse gases; regulating the storage and flow of surface water and groundwater. Land provides the physical space for settlements, industry and recreation. Land enables or hampers the movement of animals, plants and people between one area and another (FAO, 1999).

Despite the multifarious functions and uses of land, European Environmental Agency

(EEA) (2013) emphasized that it is a finite resource: how it is used constitutes one of the principal reasons for environmental change, with significant impacts on quality of life and ecosystems, as well as on the management of infrastructure. According to (FAO, 1999, and Godfray *et al.*, 2010), population growth, dietary changes and increasing use of crop-based biofuel are placing greater pressure on food production and land resources. FAO (1999) advanced that the population of the world would be increasing at an estimate of 97 million per year until the end of the century, and 90 million per year until AD 2025. Land is becoming more scarce as a resource, thus stimulating conflicts.

According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), environmental degradation reduces agricultural land by five to 10 million hectares annually (IFAD, 2011). Also, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 2015) reported that land degradation has been exacerbated due to the nonexistence of land use planning, or of its orderly execution, or the existence of financial or legal incentives prompting wrong land use decisions, or one-sided central planning leading to over-utilisation of the land resources. Also, the demand for large land area for commercial agriculture prompted by food insecurity and the

crave to possess a residential building by every individual in Nigeria instigates land grabbing conflicts.

Conflict, according to (Jacintha, Ibegbulam, and Gertrude, 2016) is a state of disagreement, chaos and in most cases, physical combat. The United Nations Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action or (UNEP., 2012) emphasized two types of conflicts- Non Violent and Violent conflicts. To UNEP, Non-violent conflict is essential for social change and development and is a required component of human interaction. Conflict becomes problematic when societal mechanisms and institutions for managing and resolving conflict break down, giving way to violence.

Land issues readily lend themselves to conflict. The relative significance of land to the communities as economic assets, and source of livelihoods as well as its linkage to the identity, history and culture of communities makes it a central object of conflict (The United Nations Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action, 2012). Several communities are struggling with conflicts over agricultural land use, and other natural resource issues (University, 1997). Land use conflict can occur when there is disagreement or dispute as to the use of land and/or feelings that a person's rights or well-being or the rights of the environment are being threatened by an action or undertaking of another or the inaction of another (Quadros, 1991).

According to (Alawode, 2013) conflicts over agricultural lands increased from 27.1% in 1990s to 72.9% in 2000 and 80.6% in 2010. Land grabbing often lead to land conflicts in many nations. Land conflicts often have extensive negative effects on economic, social, spatial and ecological development especially in developing countries and countries in transition, where land market institutions are weak, opportunities for economic gain by illegal action are widespread and many poor people lack access to land. (Wehrmann, 2008) Land conflicts can have disastrous effects on individuals as well as on groups.

The Land Use Decree, which was later called Land Use Act of 1978 vested all lands in all the states in the hands of the governor of each state. Lands exempted were those designated for the Federal Government agencies and projects. The Land Use Act of 1978 remains the most powerful law on land use and administration in Nigeria. Even though the law was designed to put an end to land issues, however, land related issues and cases continually dominate the law courts in Nigeria. Essieton (2015), reported that there are pressure on farmlands in Ogun State. In some areas, an acre goes for between N300,000 and N900,000. The conflicts on land in Ogun state got worsened by the activities of *Omo oniles*.

Over the years, land grabbers have constituted a plague unto many Ogun residents interested in owning landed property. Many lives have been lost to the activities of these *Omo Oniles*, who makes their victims' part with a good proportion of their money at any point in time. For any one nursing the ambition of becoming a landlord in Ogun state, it is like attempting to fight with 'principalities' as the *Omo Oniles* do not only engage their targets physically but they also use diabolical means to deal with anyone they feel is too stubborn to succumb to their demands. They go as far as placing charms on any land in contention and even sending killers after their victims in their desperation to extort money from their victims or scare them away from the land to enable them to resell to another buyer. They use force and intimidation to dispossess or prevent any person or entity from acquiring legitimate interest and possession of property acquired through state government or private transactions. They inflict hardship on the people as they show up at the last minute to make demands on the excuse that their ancestors own the land.

Several cases of land grabbing conflicts were reported in Igbein communities of the Egbas land in Obafemi Owode Local Government of Ogun State. There are about 300 towns and villages in Igbein. The people engaged mainly in food production. The cases of land grabbing conflicts by *Omo oniles* were reported in Mokoloki, Ibafo, Mowe Arepo, Aseese, Someke, Pakuro, Orimu-Erumu, and Ofada and several other communities in Igbein. However, there is a dearth of research on how it has affected the livelihoods of the people and the coping strategies employed to mitigate the effects, hence, the need for this study. Some of the questions that needed to be answered include the following: What is the extent of land grabbing conflicts in rural communities in Ogun state? What is the proportion of the lands grabbed and what are the initial plans for such lands? What are the coping strategies employed to mitigate land grabbing conflicts in the rural communities? What are the perceived effects of land grabbing conflicts on the livelihood in the study area. The study assessed the perceived effects of land grabbing conflicts on rural dwellers livelihood activities in Igbein communities in Ogun state, with the specific aim to;

1. Ascertain the occurrence of land grabbing conflicts in the study area
2. Investigate the proportion of the land grabbed
3. Identify the purpose of acquiring such land
4. Identify the coping strategies employed to mitigate land land grabbing conflicts in the study area



METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Ogun State Nigeria. The State is located in the southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It lies between latitude 6.2°N and 7.8°N and longitude 3°E and 5°E. It covers a total land area of 16,409.26km². The State shares its border with Lagos State and the Atlantic Ocean to the south, Ondo State to the east, and on the north are Oyo and Osun States. It also shares an International border with the Republic of Benin. The state is characterized by distinct seasons. These are, the rainy season (April-October) and the dry season (November- March).

Agriculture is the mainstay of the State’s economy and employs a large percentage of the population in the State. Crops produced in the State include cocoa, kolanut, Oilpalm , yam, cocoyam, plantain, maize, rice, cassava, vegetables, and sugar cane. Lumbering is also commercially practiced in the State. Some of the inhabitants engage in livestock rearing (poultry and fisheries), while others are civil servants, hunters, and traders. In recent times, the people of Obafemi Owode also engage in quarrying, artisan works, and handcraft.

Obafemi-Owode Local Government Area, is one of the twenty (20) Local Government Areas in Ogun State. It is also the largest LGA, in terms of geographical expanse. Obafemi Owode Local Government are mostly Egba people residing in Adigbe, Oba Kobape, Obafemi, Ogunmakin, Ajebo, Owode, Ibafo, Iro and Mokoloko. The common language being spoken is Yoruba with Egba dialect. The traditional institution of the people is predominantly governed by Baales.

The Local Government is popularly referred to as homeland of Ofada rice because the area (specifically Ofada town) grows the crop for commercial purposes. It is linked severally with road networks to Lagos State, thus making it an emerging urban council area, with several housing estates and industries springing up.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Due to the prevalence of land grabbing conflicts in the communities, Obafemi Owode Local Government Areas was purposively selected for the study. Ten communities out of the 300 communities in the Local Government Area were

purposively selected based on the communities reported to be mostly affected by land grabbing. Twelve respondents were selected from each community through a snow-ball method. Thus, a total of 120 respondents was used for the study. Data were collected with the aid of a well-structured questionnaire.

The data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentages and the Relative Importance Index. According to Johnson and LeBreton (2004), RII aids in finding the contribution a particular variable makes to the prediction of a criterion variable both by itself and in combination with other predictor variables.

Formula for calculating the Relative Importance Index (RII), is : $RII = \frac{\sum W}{A * N}$

Relative Important Index (RII) = Sum of Weights (W1+W2+W3+ ----+WN) / A x N

Where W = weights assigned to each factor by the respondents and it ranges from 1 to 5 where ‘1’ is less important and ‘5’ is extremely important

A = highest weight (i.e. 5 in this case), and N = total number of respondents.

$$\text{Weighted score} = \frac{\text{No of Vx 5} + \text{No of IV x 4} + \text{No of III x 3} + \text{II x 2} + \text{I x 1}}{A * N}$$

For a five-point response item, Relative Importance Index (RII) produces a value ranging from 0.2 - 1.0 (Badu, Owusu-Manu, Edwards, Adesi, and Lichtenstein, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Occurrence of land grabbing conflicts

All the respondents indicated that land grabbing conflicts occurred in Obafemi Owode Local Government Area of Ogun state (Figure 1). The affirmation of the occurrence of land grabbing conflicts is an indication of the prevalence and the need to address the scenario urgently. To buttress the occurrence, the study investigated those involved in land grabbing. Eighty-six percent of the respondents indicates that their land were grabbed by the *Omo oniles* while 14 percent of the respondents indicated that their land were grabbed by private investors (Figure 2). The study shows that most of the land grabbed in the study area were taken by the *Omo oniles*.

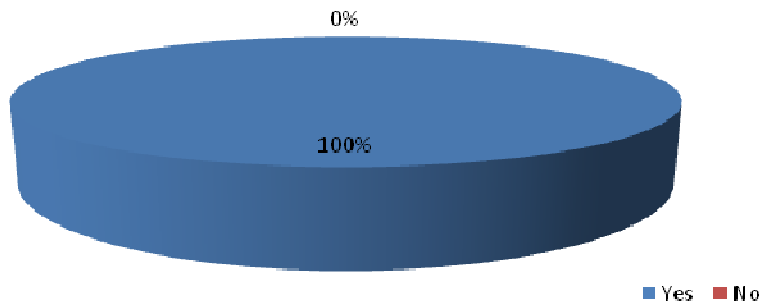


Figure 1: The occurrence of land grabbing in the Obafemi owode LGA.

The activities of the *Omo oniles* in Lagos and Ogun states are so terrible that the property owners in some communities sent petitions to the government to save their souls from the nefarious activities of land grabbers. This prompted the Lagos state government to sign State Property Protection and Neighbourhood Safety Corps bills into law in August, 2016. The law was promulgated to ensure that the investors, businessmen and the general populace carry on their legitimate land/property transactions without any hinderance

or intimidation. (Akinbode 2016). The Ogun state government can also embark on such actions to stop the activities of land grabbers in Ogun state.

The grabbing of land by private investors without paying fully the necessary dues might result from the encouragement of private investors to farm in Nigeria. The same situation was recorded in Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Benin republic where a large proportion of land were grabbed without adequate compensation of land owners (Grain, 2013, Biofuels Digest, 2015).

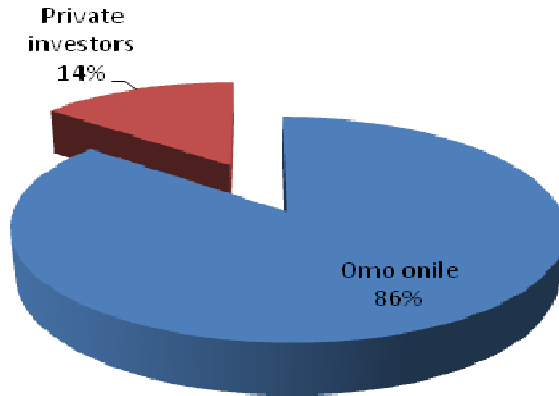


Figure 2. Who Grabbed the Land?

Proportion of land grabbed

Data in Table 1 shows that 80,0 percent of the respondents indicated that less than five hectares of land were grabbed from them, 17,5 percent indicated that they grabbed between six to ten hectares of farmland were grabbed from them while 2.5 percent of the respondents indicated that

the land grabbed was within 11-15 hectares of land. The study shows that land grabbing was common among small land holdings. Hence, small land holders should be encouraged to obtain legal documents like the certificate of Occupancy for their landed properties for security purposes.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by the proportion of land grabbed

Proportion of land grabbed (Ha)	Frequency	Percentage
≤ 5	96	80.0
6 –10	21	17.5
11 –15	03	2.5
TOTAL	120	100

Source: Field survey, 2016

Purposes of acquiring the land before grabbing

Data in Figure 3 revealed that 41.7 percent of the respondents acquired the land for arable crop production, 30 percent acquired the land for residential purposes, 25.8 percent acquired the land for agri-business while 2.5 percent acquired the land for poultry production. It implies that most of the land grabbed were meant for farming and agricultural related activities. This could have a

negative effect on agricultural productivity especially now that the emphasis of revenue generation in the country is shifting from oil exploration towards increasing agricultural productivity.

People aspiring to establish farmlands could come together in cooperatives for joint land ownership while the Government and private individuals should place more values on building low cost housing estates for individual acquisition.

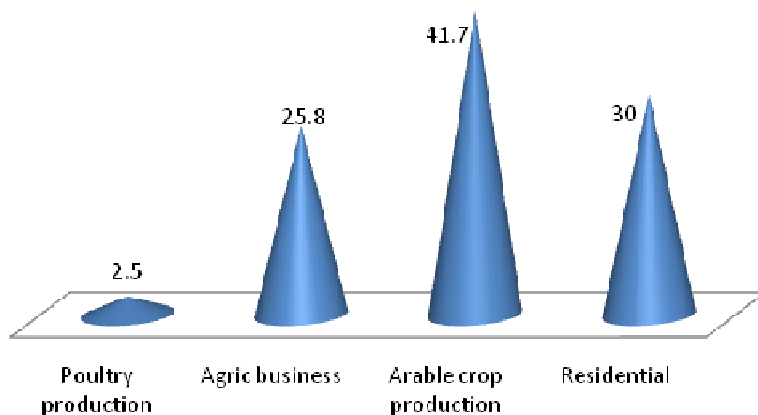


Figure 3. Purposes for Acquiring land

Coping strategies employed to mitigate land conflicts and land grabbing in the rural communities

Data in table 2 shows the strategies used to mitigate land grabbing conflicts in the study area. The strategies varies and it ranges from repurchasing of land to erection of concrete fences, to the use of law enforcement agents, parting away with the first proceeds from the farms and paying compensation anytime the situation arises, as

indicated by 70.0, 65.0, 53.3, 65.0 and 74.1 percentages of the respondents respectively.

It could be affirmed that apart from the use of law enforcement agents, all the coping strategies employed by the people varies and are mostly informal in approach. There is the need to establish a special task force in the Ogun state to fight against the violent and criminal activities of land grabbers in Ogun State.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by coping strategies employed to mitigate land grabbing conflicts in the rural communities

Coping Strategies	Frequency	Percentages
Negotiation for the repayment of land ownership	83	69.2
Erection of concrete fence	64	53.3
Use of law enforcement agent	76	63.3
Remission of a certain part of the farm produce	78	65.0
Settlement for the purchase of new equipment, farm tools or inputs and farm produce	88	73.0
Planting of trees round the farm land	40	33.3

Perceived effects of land grabbing on Respondents' Livelihood Activities

Table 3 revealed the perceived effects of the respondents on land grabbing in the study area. The loss of resources (1.66) was ranked first and most important perceived effect of land conflicts and land grabbing among the variables listed. Also (Deininger and Castagnini, 2006) affirmed that land conflicts leads to the loss of economic resources .

The people perceived that the rights of the poor and widows are marginalized (0.95) through land grabbing conflicts. This was ranked second among the variables.

Other effects are Land grabbing conflicts according to their ranking in a descending order are as follows: It causes mayhem and unrest among the populace (0.92), leads to affliction and death (0.92) and deprivation of farmers' source of livelihood (0.89). It also increases the dependent of non-farm employment activities (0.87), and causes loss of local profit from crop production (0.85). It waste

time and money in cases that are referred to the court (0.84) and affects social interaction in the communities (0.82). It also discourage investment in rural areas (0.75).

In Rwanda, according to Andre and Platteau, (1998) report, one of the principal reasons for the outbreak of war in Rwanda in 1994 was land conflicts. He emphasized that land conflicts erupts in places where extreme land scarcity coincided with accumulation of land by individuals with access to non-agricultural incomes. Thus, the implementation of policies on land for continual peaceful coexistence of the citizens of Nigeria is indispensable. According to Zongo (2002), conflict is usually high in areas where land is a key asset and source of livelihood of the people. Also, a lot of the female respondents interviewed, whose land were grabbed, were actually engaged in petty trade, while the male have drifted from agriculture to other occupations. Some engaged in other activities such as suppliers of sand and gravel. Deininger and

Castagnini (2006) affirmed that about 5 to 11 percent agricultural productivity were lost due to land conflicts in Uganda. According to International Arbitration and Disputes Resolution Directory (1997), there are concerns over the cost and delays of litigation procedures in Nigeria. Odirri (2004) stated that the process of litigation has become more and more time consuming, expensive and cumbersome and increase in the number of cases in courts have led to congestion and delay in their resolution. Takashi and Deininger (2005) discovered that pending conflicts reduce the organic fertiliser application (by over 30%) when there were pending cases of land conflicts in Kenya. According to Centre for Environmental Economics and Policy in Africa (CEEPA, 2011), farmers who face land disputes are reluctant to apply long-term improvement measures and shy away from the use of profitable perennial crops.

Responsible and inclusive Business (RIB, 2015) stated that “rather than leading to development opportunities from investment in land use, land grabs mean that livelihoods are lost,

human rights violated, and poverty and exclusion perpetuated’. All these affects social intercation.

Evidence is emerging that land conflicts limit the investment that farmers make on their land. CEEPA, (2011) opined that land conflicts can keep a piece of land either unused or under used for several years. RIB, (2015) also indicated that legal and regulatory risks, including claims for damages can lead to investment insecurity. Olokode (2016) stated that the activities of *Omo onile* discourages people from acquiring landed properties in Lagos, because of the fear of being defrauded.

The remaining two variables which are increase in income of the people and provision of employment for the youth were the least important variables. They are the variables with means lower than three, showing that they are not important. They ranked twelveth and thirteenth respectively. This shows that land grabbing do not reduce the level of unemployment among the youth in the study area, neither does it improve their standard of living.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents’ Perceived effects of land conflicts and grabbing

Variables	Mean	Relative Important Index	Rank
It provides employment for the youth	1.97	0.39	13 th
It causes loss of local profit from crop production	4.25	0.85	7 th
It leads to loss of resources	8.28	1.66	1 st
It leads to affliction and death	4.53	0.91	3 rd
It affects social interaction in the communities	4.12	0.82	10 th
It deprive the people of the source of their livelihood	4.47	0.89	5 th
It increases the income of the people	2.25	0.45	12 th
It reduces the quality of the land	4.13	0.83	9 th
It increases the dependent on non-farm employment activities	4.36	0.87	6 th
It discourages investment in rural areas	3.77	0.75	11 th
It causes mayhem and unrest among the populace	4.53	0.91	3 rd
It waste time and money in cases that are referred to the court	4.18	0.84	8 th
It marginalised the right of the people especially widows	4.73	0.95	2 nd

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study established the occurrence of land grabbing by the the omo-oniles and the private investors in the local government area which affects mostly the small land holders and private individuals. The respondents mostly used informal approaches to mitigate the effects of land grabbing conflicts. The perceived effects of land grabbing conflicts permeate the physical, economic and social lives of the respondents.

The study recommends the intervention of government agencies in profering a permanent solution to land grabbing conflicts through the promulgation and implementation land policies and the establishment of special task forces to fight against the violent and criminal activities of land

grabbers in Ogun State. The Non governmental organisations could assist in building more housing estates for individual acquisition.

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