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Original Article

Effectiveness of Government Intervention in Resolving Conflict Between Pastoralists and Farmers in Handeni District, Tanzania

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The conflicts between farmers and pastoralists have prevailed in several parts of the world in history, posing effects such as deaths, injuries, economic hardship and loss of properties. This study focused on exploring the effectiveness of government intervention in resolving conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in Handeni District, Tanzania. Data were collected from 60 respondents selected through a simple random technique. The study was guided by three objectives, which are to examine the causes of the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, to assess the effects of the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists and to suggest measures that could improve the effectiveness of the government in managing the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. The study was conducted through a cross-sectional survey design, where data for this study were collected using both primary and secondary sources. Primary data sources included questionnaires, while secondary data was collected through document review. The sampling techniques included both probability and non-probability sampling. Quantitative data were analysed through SPSS version 25, while qualitative data were subjected to content analysis. The results revealed that conflicts between farmers and pastoralists were caused by competition over resources and climate change. The impacts of the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists included deaths and economic hardship. It was also found that the government was moderately effective in managing the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. The study recommends that the government should put much effort into addressing the root causes of the conflicts, such as droughts and ensure that land use planning and management are effectively implemented.

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INTRODUCTION

Conflicts between farmers and pastoralists have long existed in Africa and are caused by competition for natural resources such as land and water (Ntumva, 2022). Food security, livelihoods, and regional stability are all impacted by these conflicts, which have major socioeconomic and political implications (Owolabi *et al.* 2016). These conflicts are especially noticeable in Tanzania and are impacted by historical, cultural, and policy-related elements (Daniel, 2023). As noted above, competition for resources is one of the many variables that lead to disputes between farmers and pastoralists in Africa. Arable land, grazing pastures, and water sources are the resources that farmers and pastoralists compete over, and this is essentially the main cause of disputes between them (Ntumva, 2022). Competition over resources account for nearly 68% of the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in Africa (*Ibid*).

Conflicts frequently arise from instances of cattle damaging crops or vice versa. Such occurrences have the potential to intensify intercommunal tensions and cause large financial losses (Okonkwo *et al.* 2023). In Nigeria, such damages are the cause of about 24% of conflicts between farmers and pastoralists (Muhammed *et al.* 2015). Migration patterns are another factor contributing to conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. Pastoralists' movements are influenced by previous grazing routes and migration brought on by climate change (Wafula *et al.* 2022). According to Thalheimer & Webersik (2020), 12% of conflicts between farmers

and pastoralists are caused by migration-related factors. Conflicts may arise from encroachments on agricultural fields brought on by increased migration.

The emergence of these conflicts has a negative impact on people's livelihood and their lives at large. For example, in the Middle Belt of Nigeria, violent clashes between farmers and pastoralists have killed over 1,300 people and forced almost 300,000 more to flee their homes (Muhammed *et al.* 2015). Ethnic tensions and the struggle for resources are the main causes of these conflicts. In Mali and Burkina Faso, due to land pressure, evictions, and armed group activity, farmer-herder violence has escalated in the central parts of Mali and northern Burkina Faso (Gaye, 2018 and Ba, 2023).

In Tanzania, disputes between pastoralists and farmers are common in districts like Handeni, Kilombero, Kiteto, Rufiji, and Kilosa. Inconsistent land use and resource management regulations, unstable land tenure, poor local institutions, corrupt practices, and government intervention tactics are the primary causes of these conflicts (Mwamfupe, 2015).

Conflicts between Tanzanian farmers and pastoralists have seriously hampered conservation efforts and livelihoods (Massawe & Urassa, 2016). Environmental deterioration, property destruction, and fatalities have resulted from these conflicts. Such conflicts have disrupted everyday economic activity in places like Kilosa District, and they have led to an increase in illicit activities like charcoal collection in areas near Mikumi National Park,

which puts conservation efforts at even greater risk (Boku, 2014).

The Tanzanian government has taken action to resolve these disputes in recent years. For example, in order to support tourism and conservation initiatives, the government has forced Maasai nomads out of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (Daniel, 2023). Indigenous tribes, however, have criticised these measures, believing that tourism profits are being prioritised over their rights and means of subsistence (Kovalická, 2024). To resolve disputes between farmers and pastoralists, several efforts have been put in place. In an effort to settle disagreements and stop them from getting worse, the government has set up arbitration bodies at the local level (Massay, 2022).

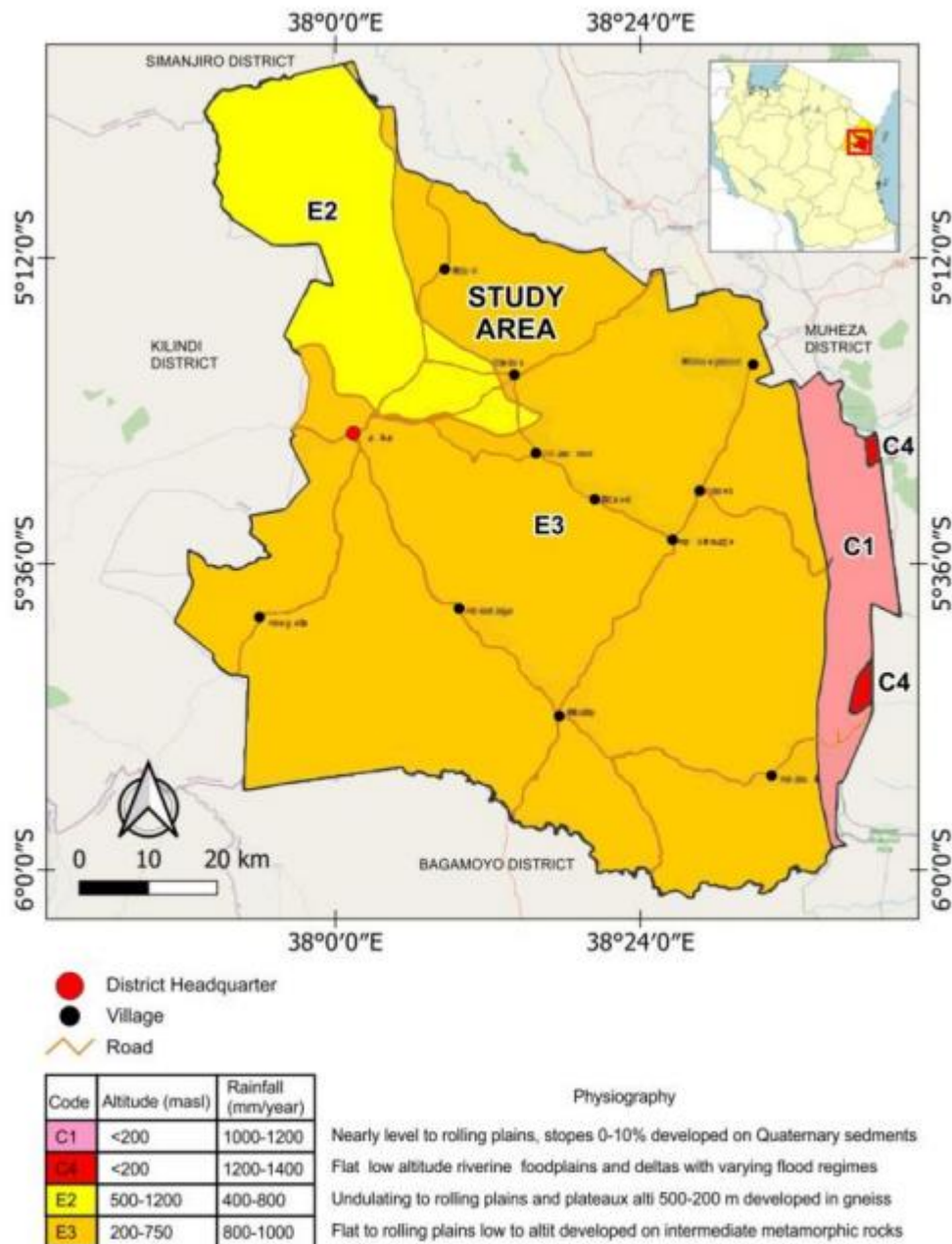
In order to reduce resource-based conflicts, the Tanzania Natural Resource Forum also helped to form a coalition that brought together Pawaga's farmers and pastoralists, encouraging communication and cooperative land-use planning (Mnyawami, 2023). Joint village land-use planning has also been pushed to secure rangeland resources and explain land rights, hence reducing land tenure conflicts (Mwita *et al.* 2017). In order to develop harmony between farming and pastoralist groups, President Samia Suluhu Hassan announced the "Tutunzane Mvomero 2023-2028" campaign at the national level. Its goals include modernising livestock keeping, encouraging environmental protection, and promoting sustainable land-use practices. All these initiatives provide a thorough strategy for resolving conflicts by tackling underlying problems via community involvement, legislative reforms, and sustainable resource management.

Due to institutional inefficiencies, inconsistent policies, and insufficient land tenure security, the Tanzanian government's attempts to resolve conflicts between farmers and pastoralists have

largely failed (Massawe and Urassa, 2016). Land grabbing and encroachments have been caused by lax enforcement of land rights, which has heightened tensions between the farmers and pastoralists (Ntumva, 2022). Local dispute resolution organisations, such as ward tribunals and village councils, frequently lack the authority and resources needed to effectively mediate conflicts. These institutions have also been further weakened by corruption among local authorities, which has given rise to feelings of unfairness and partiality. Inadequate cooperation with stakeholders and obsolete records have also hindered the government's land use planning efforts, leading to conflict and overlap in interventions (Flintan, 2020). Additionally, policies that prioritise tourism and conservation over the livelihoods of indigenous communities, like the expulsion of Maasai herders from the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, have sparked resistance and brought attention to the government's disregard for indigenous rights (Daniel, 2023). The study was guided by three objectives, which are: to assess the effects of conflicts between farmers and pastoralists and to suggest measures that could improve the effectiveness of the government in managing the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists.

METHODS

The study was conducted in Handeni district, Tanga Region. The study was conducted following a cross-sectional survey design. It was conducted in Misima and Sindeni, specifically in the Msomera Sindani villages, respectively. This area was selected as it experiences many fire outbreaks each year, resulting in economic loss and the death of people. The district was chosen because it had a high concentration of pastoralists and farmers, as well as having fewer studies of this nature (Mwakalonge & Chingonikaya, 2023). The study included two villages and two wards.

Figure 1: Map of Handeni District

Source: Author's Primary Household Survey Data, 2025

Location

The Handeni District is located in Tanga's southwestern region. It is situated at an altitude of 600 to 1,000 meters above sea level and spans an area of 6,433 km². There were 384,353 people in the

district per the national population census in 2022. Whereby males were 190, 425, and females were 193, 928. Handeni is surrounded by the Pwani Region to the south, the Kilindi District to the west, the Korogwe District to the north, and the Pangani

District to the east. Administratively, the Handeni District is divided into 112 villages, seven divisions, and 19 wards.

Socio-economic Profile

The main source of income for the people living in Handeni district is agriculture. According to URT (2017), 93.1% of households depend on agriculture for their income. Currently, 92,809.5 hectares of this land are utilised for crop production. Among the crops grown are maize, beans, millet, cassava, cotton, sunflower, pigeon pea, oranges, bananas, coconut, sisal and vegetables (Mwakalonge & Chingonikaya, 2023).

Livestock

Livestock is the second most important production sector in the district, with 99,670 native cattle, 735 improved cattle, 180,138 goats (of which 6,161 are improved breed), 17,728 sheep, 1,696 donkeys, 24,520 pigs, and 439,509 poultry (11,099 are improved breed). With a Handeni carrying capacity of 2 ha/AU/Year, the estimated 33,943 ha of viable range land can sustain 140,580 animal units annually. Without taking into account wildlife, the present estimated population of Handeni is 122,790 animal units (NBS, 2022).

Research Design

This study was cross-sectional since all of the data came from a single point in time. Time, labour, and material constraints led to the selection of this strategy. Even more important, given the research objectives (Kothari, 2004).

Sampling Technique

In this study, two wards (Misima and Sindeni) were chosen randomly within the district. In Misima ward, Msomera village was chosen due to the presence of many pastoralists in the area, while in

Sindeni Ward, Sindeni village was chosen due to the existence of farmers in the area. Hence, villages were selected based on their proximity to a large population of farmers and pastoralists (Kothari, 2004). Twenty pastoralists and twenty farmers were randomly picked from each community using a simple random selection procedure.

Data Collection

In this study, data were collected using both primary and secondary sources. The researcher aimed to collect data from a sample size of 100 respondents; however, due to financial and accessibility limitations, only 60 respondents participated effectively in this study. The distribution of respondents included 30 (50%) respondents from Msomera village and 30 (50%) respondents from Sindeni village. Primary data sources included questionnaires for household heads and in-depth interviews with key informants. The questionnaires consisted of both open-ended and closed questions. Also, Likert scales were included in the questionnaires. Secondary data was collected through document review. Peer-reviewed articles, books and book chapters published between 1 January 2010 and 28th February 2025, which examined the effectiveness of government intervention in resolving conflict between pastoralists and farmers, were considered. The studies were sourced from various databases using specific keywords, synonyms, and search phrases.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

This study included respondents of all genders. However, the majority of the respondents, 39 (65 %), were male, whereas 21 (35%) were female. Table 1 summarises the findings on the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Respondents' Distribution by Gender, Age and Occupation

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	39	65
Female	21	35
Total	60	100

Age	Frequency	Percentage
10-20	2	3
20-30	27	45
30-40	20	33
40-50	7	12
50 and above	4	7
Total	60	100

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Farmers	35	58
Pastoralism	25	42
Total	60	100

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	28	47
Primary education	19	32
Secondary education	10	16
Post-secondary education	3	5
Total	60	100

Source: Field data (2025)

The findings in Table 1 revealed that the majority of the respondents, 27 (45%), were aged between 20-30 years. This was followed by 20 (33%) of respondents whose ages were between 30 and 40 years. The age group of 4-50 years comprised 7 respondents, equivalent to 12%. The ages of 4 (7%) respondents were above 50 years, while 2 (3%) respondents were aged between 10-20 years. These findings suggest that farming and pastoral activities are practised by youths. These findings concur with those of Arowolo *et al.* (2013), who reported that in many rural areas, pastoralism and farming activities are practised more by youths compared to other age groups.

Concerning the occupation of respondents, the majority of the respondents, 35 (58), were pastoralists. This was followed by 25 respondents (42 %) who were farmers. The interpretation of these findings is that the sample size was made up of people who depended on pastoralism and crop production as their main source of livelihood (Mwakalonge & Chingonikaya, 2023).

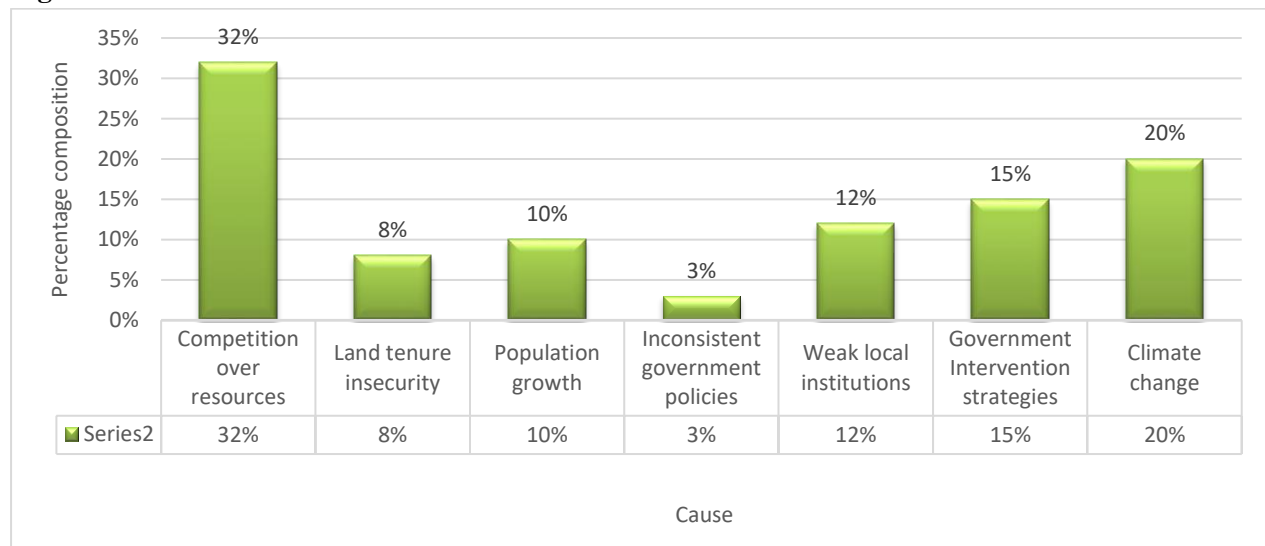
On the education levels of the respondents, the findings revealed that the majority of the respondents, 28 (47%), had no formal education, while those with primary education were 19 (32%). Others, 10 (16%) respondents had secondary education, while 3 respondents, equivalent to 5%, had post-secondary education. The interpretation of

these findings is that respondents in the study area had either primary education or no formal education. The findings concur with Marete (2018), who reported that pastoralists and farmers are characterised by low levels of educational attainment.

Causes of Conflicts Between Pastoralists and Farmers

It was imperative to understand the respondents' views regarding the causes of conflicts between pastoralists and farmers. The findings on the causes of conflicts between pastoralists and farmers are summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Causes of the Conflicts Between Pastoralists and Farmers



Source: Field data (2025)

The findings in Figure 2 show that the main cause of the conflicts between pastoralists and farmers is competition over resources. This was suggested by 19 (32%) respondents. Another cause was climate change, 12 (20%). Government intervention strategies were proposed by 9 respondents, equivalent to 15% to be a cause of conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. This was followed by weak local institutions, which were suggested by 7 (12%) respondents. On top of that, other respondents 6 (10%) claimed that the conflicts emanated from population growth in their areas, whereas 5 respondents (8%) viewed that the root cause of the conflicts was land tenure insecurity. Few respondents 2 (3%) reported that the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists was due to the inconsistency of government policies. These findings imply that there is no single cause of

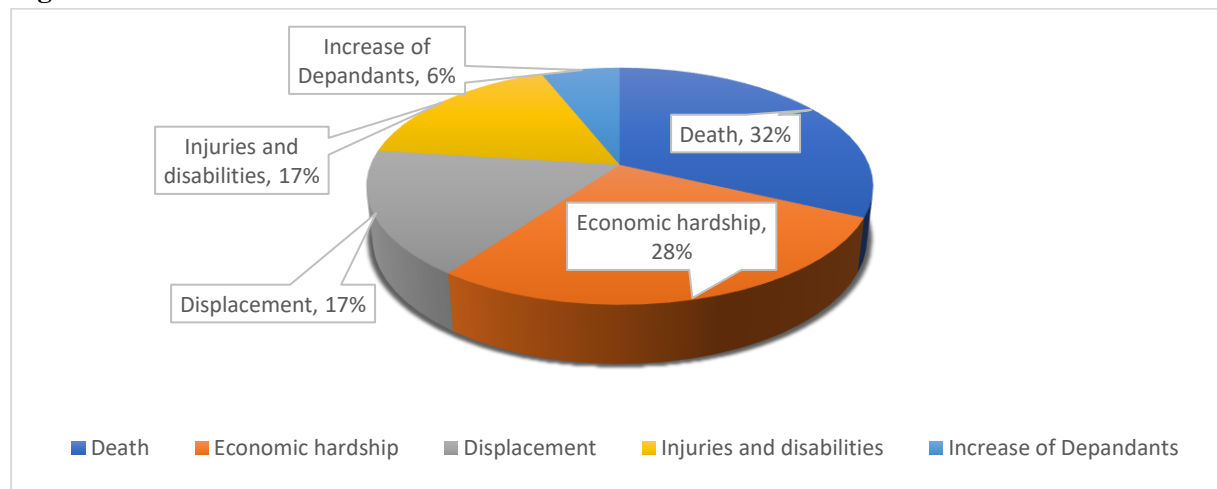
conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, it is an interplay of various factors. However, the conflicts mainly emerged due to scarcity of necessary resources for pastoralism and farming, such as arable land, grazing land and water in Handeni district, triggering frequent clashes between farmers and pastoralists. Likewise, climate change seemed to be a notable cause because it has resulted in a scarcity of water and pasture, which forces people to move to areas where water and pasture are found, leading to conflict over access to such resources. These findings are in agreement with those of Mwamfupe (2015) and Ntumva (2022), whose studies also revealed that the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists are caused by competition over natural resources, climate change, population pressure and weak government institutions.

Effects of the Conflicts Between Farmers and Pastoralists

The researcher asked respondents about the effects of the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists.

The findings on this aspect are summarised in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Effects of the Conflicts Between Farmers and Pastoralists



Source: Field data (2025)

According to the findings presented in Figure 3, the majority of the respondents, 19 (32%), reported that the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists resulted in deaths. The conflicts also increased economic hardship by 17 (28%) due to the loss of properties and assets during the conflicts. Furthermore, the occurrence of displacement was suggested by 10 (17%) respondents in the study area. Similarly, 10 respondents, equivalent to 17%, said the emergence of injuries and disabilities was the main effect of the conflict between farmers and livestock keepers. Few respondents, 4 (6%), reported that the outbreak of the conflicts increases the dependency rate in their communities. The implication of these results is that the effects of conflicts between farmers and pastoralists are the occurrence of deaths and the intensification of economic hardship. The findings concur with those of (Adelakun *et al.* 2015). Whose study revealed that many people lose their lives and others are dragged

into extreme poverty when conflicts between farmers and pastoralists emerge. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that apart from deaths and poverty, the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists cause forced migration (Manu *et al.* 2014), injuries and disabilities (Ahmed, 2014) and increase the dependency ratio in the communities.

Effectiveness of the Government Intervention in Addressing the Conflicts between Farmers and Pastoralists

In the introduction section, it was discovered that in order to effectively address the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, the government's role can never be underestimated. Respondents in this study were requested to rate the extent to which the government is effective in addressing the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. Their responses are summarised in Figure 4 below.

Table 1: Effectiveness of the Government in Addressing the Conflicts between Farmers and Pastoralists

Response	Frequency	Percent
Highly effective	5	8
Effective	13	22
Moderately effective	25	42
Less effective	17	28
Total	60	100

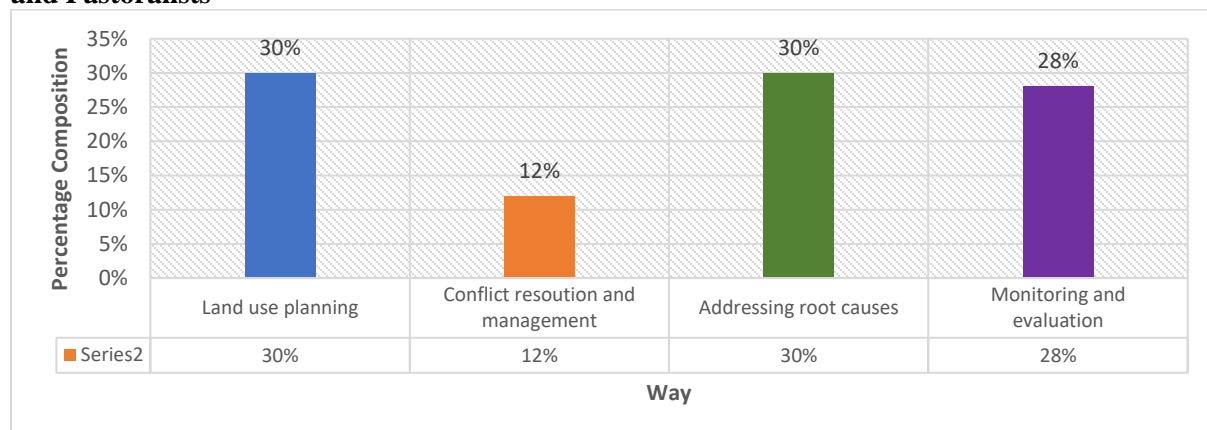
Source: Field data, (2025)

The findings in Table 1 above depict that the majority of the respondents, 25 (42%), opined that the role played by the government in addressing the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists was moderately effective. This was followed by 17 (28%) respondents who said the government was less effective in addressing the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, while 13 respondents, equivalent to 22%, claimed that the government was effective in addressing such conflicts. Few respondents 5 (8%) reported that the government was highly effective in managing the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. The interpretation of these results is that, in the context of Handeni district, the government's role in managing conflicts between farmers and pastoralists is moderate. The findings also suggest that government efforts in managing such conflicts are highly required by the farmers and pastoralists. The government, from

village levels to central government, can address such conflicts using different interventions such as policies, providing education and awareness, as well as ensuring that there is proper land use planning (Basupi *et al.* 2017 and Flintan, 2020).

Ways of Improving Government Effectiveness in Addressing the Conflicts between Farmers and Pastoralists

In the previous subsection, it was found that the government's effectiveness in managing conflicts between farmers and livestock keepers is moderate. Thus, it was important to ask respondents to provide their views on what should be done by the government to improve its effectiveness in managing conflicts between farmers and livestock keepers. Respondent's suggestions are summarised in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Ways of Improving Government Effectiveness in Addressing the Conflicts between Farmers and Pastoralists

Source: Field data (2025)

According to the findings presented in Figure 4 above, the government has to put much effort into land use planning and management if conflicts between farmers and pastoralists are to be eradicated, as suggested by 18 (30%) respondents. As well, the government should address the root causes of the conflicts, 18 (30%). Likewise, 17 (28%) respondents suggest that the government should intensify the practice of monitoring and evaluation in areas where conflicts are prevalent so as to address the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. Lastly, 7 (12%) respondents viewed that the government should invest heavily in conflict resolution and management. The findings imply that addressing the root causes of the conflicts and having land use planning and management can fully address the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. For instance, proper land use planning and management can entail land demarcation or zoning, securing land tenure, establishing dams and social services in areas where the conflicting communities are found (Flintan, 2020). With regard to the root causes of conflicts, the government can ensure there are plans for drought management, policy reforms. Creating alternative livelihoods and addressing historical injustice (Abbink *et al.* 2014). Effective conflict management can also be attained through monitoring and evaluation, particularly by collecting data, evaluating interventions and collaborating with NGOs and other stakeholders to address the complex challenges of farmers and pastoralists' conflicts (Ntumva, 2022).

CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists were mainly due to competition over resources and climate change. The impacts of the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists included deaths and economic hardship, as well as displacement. It was also found that the government was moderately effective in managing the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in

Handeni district. Thus, it was advised that the government should put much effort into addressing the root causes of the conflicts, which are drought, improving livelihoods and ensuring that land use planning and management are effectively implemented. The plans can involve zoning and securing land tenure among the communities.

Recommendations

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

- The government should ensure proper land use planning and management in the areas where conflicts occur.
- The government should have a tendency to address the root causes of the conflicts so as to minimise the potential of the emergence of the same conflicts in future.

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