

# Time Perspective as a Predictor of Self-Other Justice Perception among Farmers and Herders in Benue State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of time perspective on self-other justice perception among farmers and herders in Benue State, Nigeria. Four hundred and fifty (450) participants comprising 391 farmers and 59 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 from 19 to 65 years, and their mean age was 39.42 years. The study was a survey, that employed multiple sampling technique for participant selection. The 17-item Short Version Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory and Self-Other Justice Perception Scale were the instruments used in the study. Multiple Regression was the statistic used to analyse data. The results of the study revealed that the dimensions of time perspective namely present hedonistic perspective ( $\beta = 0.110$ ;  $t = 2.371$ ;  $p < .05$ ), past positive perspective ( $\beta = 0.172$ ;  $t = 3.702$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and present fatalistic perspective ( $\beta = -0.114$ ;  $t = -2.404$ ;  $p < .05$ ) predicted self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. It was therefore concluded that the propensity to focus on different aspects of the past and the present plays a critical role in predicting self-other justice perception and is important in resolving resource use conflict among farmers and herders. The findings of this study have practical implications for policy makers that have been assigned the responsibility of resolving the crisis between farmers and herders in Benue State. The findings of this study will assist policy makers in developing novel and efficient approaches and interventions of resource use that are just and equitable, which will aid in abating this incessant conflict between farmers and herders.

**Key Words:** Time Perspective, Self-other, Justice Perceptions, Resource Use, Farmers and Herders.

## INTRODUCTION

For a number of years now, it has been observed that intense conflicts exist between farmers and herders in Nigeria due to mistrusts concerning the use, management, possession, and procurement of land for farming and cattle rearing. This conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria dates back to the colonial times when land ownership was commercialized by the colonial governors, and there was a reduction in communal land ownership which resulted in the scarcity of land (Njoku, 2020). The recurrent conflict has threatened security and stability in Nigeria. According to Amnesty International (2018), from about January 2016 to October 2018, 3,641 persons lost their lives, 406 were wounded, 5,000 homes were set ablaze, and 182,530 persons became destitutes due to the conflict between farmers and herders.

Issues of justice arise among farmers and herders. Issues regarding the ownership, administration, access to and the management of land arise among these user groups (Shehu et al., 2017). These issues play significant roles in initiating, prolonging, and controlling the conflicts between farmers and herders (Burgess, 2020). Justice has been defined as an act that is in conformity with the demands of some regulations which provides that every member of society gets fair treatment (Burgess, 2020). It also refers to the degree to which institutions ensure resources and obligations are allotted to individuals using methods that are equitable (Velasquez et al., 2014). Sonenen et al. (2018), argue that people are preoccupied about justice because being dealt with equitably bestows

beliefs of self-worth, thereby fulfilling the psychological need for belongingness. Justice also regulates intentions, objectives, beliefs, social identity, and the behaviour of individuals. 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 through self-other inclusion. 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, and the needs of other are believed to be the needs of the self (Aron et al., 2006; Clarke and Mills, 2012). The individual incorporates the resources of the other in the self to form a shared identity, boost self-efficacy, and to also strengthen the sense of self (Xu et al., 2016). 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 begin 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).

The theory of equity by Adams (1965) provides the theoretical basis for the study. This theory assumes that people desire to be treated fairly in relationships, and when they perceive that they are not being treated equitably, they become dissatisfied and may act to correct the situation. By this theory, the outcomes of relationships are as a result of how equitable the distribution of costs and benefits are for individuals in the relationship. When evaluations reveal that the distribution is inequitable, individuals become distressed and strive to adjust the costs and benefits so as to make it equitable. One way of achieving this can may be through self-other inclusion.

Though studies have investigated numerous field with variables such as ethnicity, amount of rewards, availability of information and accountability of decision on justice perception, this 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, time perspective has been chosen as a variable of interest in this study to examine what role it may play in the issue of justice perception among farmers and herders.

Studies have implicated time perspective in self-other justice perception. Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) define time perspective as an involuntary process that involves dividing personal and social encounters into time domains of the past, the present and the future, which gives direction, coherence and meaning to these encounters, and impacts the perceptions, decisions and actions of individuals. It is important to study time perspective because it is a principal facet of human behaviour since it influences the motivation, emotions, and cognition of people. Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) identified five domains of time perspective namely past positive time perspective, past negative time perspective, present hedonistic time perspective, present fatalistic time perspective, and future time perspective. Past positive time perspective has been defined as a positive and sentimental perspective of past experiences. It is a domain of time perspective that involves paying attention to positive aspects of previous experiences such as happy memories and achievements (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). According to Zimbardo and Boyd (1999), individuals who are past positive oriented, regard their past as a continuous and fundamental aspect of their present and future selves. Furthermore, this domain of time perspective may inspire people to strive for goals that are consistent with their previous values and interests (Webster et al., 2014). Past positive time perspective has been implicated in self-other justice perception. For example, Jankowski et al. (2020) found that a higher past positive time perspective promotes favourable results. Also, Tyler (2006) revealed that individuals who are past positive oriented are inclined to advocate for justice and fairness for themselves and for others.

Past negative time perspective, another dimension of time perspective has also been implicated in self-other justice perception. Past negative time perspective refers to a negative and pessimistic viewpoint of past experiences (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Individuals who are past negative oriented concentrate on former negative experiences such as disappointments, failures and traumas (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). It has been found that people who are past negative oriented may feel that present events are unjust as a result of previous grievances, resulting in increased resentment and perceived injustice. Also, these individuals may pursue revenge for previous injustices, leading to cycles of injustice (Juhl & Routledge, 2019). Furthermore, Juhl and Routledge (2019) reported that a past negative time perspective encourages a desire for retribution since individuals who are past negative oriented ruminate on previous negative experiences instead of concentrating on the present or the future. Giacomini and Jordan (2016) revealed that individuals who are past negative oriented believe that justice is inequitable because they hold onto previous negative experiences.

Present hedonistic time perspective, another domain of time perspective has been implicated in self-other justice perception. According to Zimbardo and Boyd (1999), present hedonistic time perspective entails concentrating on the present, with emphasis on pleasure, and enjoyment. Present hedonistic oriented individuals prioritize short term benefits, thereby increasing their perception of Justice. Evidence suggests that individuals who are present hedonistic oriented may be more inclined to work collaboratively to achieve immediate gratification and enjoy the present. Sekscinska et al. (2018) revealed that present hedonistic time perspective influences justice perception especially in situations where immediate needs are met. Also, present fatalistic time perspective has also been implicated in self-other justice perception. According to Zimbardo and Boyd (1999), people with a present fatalistic orientation believe that outcomes are predetermined, and their actions have little or no impact on outcomes. These individuals attribute outcomes to external factors, rather than their actions, and this results in feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness, even in situations where the individuals possess the ability to influence outcomes. These individuals feel that justice is unattainable and also believe that their actions will not produce the desired change (Giacomini & Jordan, 2016). Also, Baird et al. (2021) found that present fatalistic time perspective is negatively associated with capabilities and outcomes.

Another domain of time perspective that has been implicated in self-other justice perception is future time perspective. Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) state that individuals with a future time orientation are interested in future goals, ambitions and outcomes. It has been found that people with a future time perspective prioritize long-term justice over short-term benefits and are also more inclined to overlook previous injustices and strive for reconciliation. For example, Gavrielides (2019) reported that individuals with a future time orientation are more likely to support restorative justice. Also, individuals with a future time perspective are more inclined to approve the principles of distributive justice such as equality as found by Giacomini and Jordan (2016).

This study therefore investigated the role of the dimensions of time perspective on self-other justice perception among farmers and herders in Benue State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the last few years, the conflict between farmers and herders has taken a violent dimension resulting in fatalities, loss of properties and food crises (Chukwuemeka et al. 2018) with Benue State recording the highest prevalence and casualties (Ifedayo, 2023). Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), (2024) reported that in 2023, 414 people were killed by herdsmen. In addition, Gambo (2019) reported that over 73 herders and 5,000 cattle were killed by supposed indigenous farmers in Benue State. Recently, attempts were made by the government to arbitrate by establishing grazing routes and grazing reserves. However, these bills were not successful and were 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 hold onto past experiences of injustice, they become resentful and may seek revenge for previous experiences of injustice thereby escalating conflicts. In addition, when people believe that they have little or no control over outcomes in their lives, they perceive justice as being inequitable and uncontrollable, resulting in a decline in trust and cooperation. Furthermore, studies have been conducted to examine the

environmental drivers of farmers-herders' conflict (for example, Adams et al. 2019; Mahmood & Azuaga, 2020), the socio-cultural drivers of the conflict (for example Ahmed & Kuusana, 2021) as well as the efforts of state actors in resolving the conflict. There exists a dearth in literature on studies that have been conducted to examine how farmers and herders can resolve the conflict between them. The present study is aimed at explaining how a psychological variable, namely time perspective could be implicated in self-other justice perception among farmers and herders in Benue State. This study therefore investigated the role of the dimensions of time perspective on self-other justice perception among farmers and herders in Benue State.

It was hypothesized that:

1. The dimensions of time perspective will predict self-other justice perception among farmers and herders.

## METHODOLOGY

### Design

The study was 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 Northeast, and Cross River State to the South. Benue State is also bounded by Enugu State to the Southwest and Kogi state to the West. Internationally, Benue State is bounded to the Southeast by the Republic of Cameroon (National Investment Promotion Commission, 2023). Benue State is administratively and agriculturally divided into three zones namely Zone A (Benue Northeast), 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 herdsman 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 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 Southeast by the Republic of Cameroon, and to the East by Takum local government area of Taraba State.

### Sampling Techniques

A multiple 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 Human 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 three 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 17-item Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory Short Version, revised by Orosz et al. (2017). The Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory originally developed by Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) is a 56-item inventory that was designed to measure individual differences in time orientation, or the propensity to concentrate on different aspects of the past, the present, and the future. The instrument consists of five subscales namely past negative perspective, present hedonistic perspective, past positive perspective, present fatalistic perspective, and future perspective. However, the 17-item Short Version of the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory was used in this study. The past negative subscale consists of 4 items (1,2,3,4), the present hedonistic subscale comprises 3 items (5,6,7), future subscale is made up of 4 items (11,12,13,14), past positive subscale consists of 3 items (8,9,10), and the present fatalistic subscale consists of 3 items (15,16,17). The 17-item Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory has a Likert-type response format ranging from 1 = very untrue, 2 = untrue, 3 = neutral, 4 = true, and 5 = very true. All the items on the scale are scored directly, with higher scores indicating more of the time perspective being measured. The norms for the various subscales are past negative 2.47, present hedonistic 2.84, future perspective 3.68, past positive perspective 3.20, and present fatalistic perspective 2.70. A test-retest reliability of between 0.60 and 0.76 was reported for the instrument. In addition, the following test-retest reliability was reported for various subscales: past negative 0.76, present hedonistic 0.60, past positive 0.74, future perspective 0.76, and present fatalistic 0.61. The instrument has convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity as reported by Orosz et al. (2017).

Section C 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 resources. 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 17-item Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory, 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 Questionnaire were 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 the 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..

**RESULT**

Hypothesis one states that the dimensions of time perspective will 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: Multiple Regression Model Showing the Effect of the Dimensions of Time Perspective on Self-Other Justice Perception among Farmers and Herders.

Time Perspective Dimensions	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P	$\beta$	T	P
Past Negative					-0.084	-1.817	>.05
Present Hedonistic					0.110	2.371	<.05
Past Positive	0.250	0.062	5.905	<.001	0.172	3.702	<.001
Future					0.071	1.496	>.05
Present Fatalistic					-0.114	-2.404	<.05

Table 1 above presents results on the predictive role of the dimensions of time perspective on self-other justice perception. Table 1 reveals that out of the five dimensions of time perspective, only present hedonistic perspective ( $\beta = 0.110$ ;  $t = 2.371$ ;  $P < .05$ ), past positive perspective ( $\beta = 0.172$ ;  $t = 3.702$ ;  $P < .001$ ), and present fatalistic perspective ( $\beta = -0.114$ ;  $t = -2.404$ ;  $P < .05$ ) predicted self-other justice perception. Also, the result showed a positive relationship between present hedonistic time perspective, past positive perspective, and self-other justice perception. This implies that increases in present hedonistic orientation and increases in past positive orientation results in increases in self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. Furthermore, the result revealed a negative relationship between present fatalistic perspective and self-other justice perception. This implies that increases in present fatalistic orientation results in reductions in self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. Thus, hypothesis one is confirmed and therefore accepted in this study.

## DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### Discussion

The result of the study revealed that the dimensions of time perspective namely, present hedonistic perspective, past positive perspective, and present fatalistic perspective predicted self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. This prediction was positive for present hedonistic oriented participants. This implies that the more farmers and herders are unable to delay their quest for land, the more they are willing to include the other group in their equitable distribution of land resources. This result is consistent with the findings of Sekcinska et al. (2018) who found that present hedonistic time orientation influences justice perception when immediate needs are met. A plausible explanation for this finding is that farmers and herders who are present hedonistic oriented because of their desire to satisfy their immediate need of acquiring land for crop production and cattle rearing respectively establish a relationship with the other group via self-expansion in order to acquire immediate and unlimited access to the land resources that are owned by the other group so as to protect their vested interests.

The result of the study also revealed that past positive time perspective positively predicted self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. This implies that the more farmers and herders hold unto the memories of the harmonious relationship that previously existed between them with regards to the use of land resources, the more willing they are to include the other group in their equitable distribution of land resources. The result of this study is consistent with the findings of Jankowski et al. (2020) who found that a higher past positive time perspective promotes favourable results. This result is also consistent with the findings of Tyler (2006) who revealed that individuals who are past positive oriented are inclined to advocate for justice for themselves and for others. A plausible explanation for this finding is that farmers and herders who are past positive oriented are interested in continuing with the harmonious relationship that previously existed between them by reason that it increases their capacity and their ability to acquire land resources to meet their distinct needs.

The result of the study further revealed present fatalistic time perspective negatively predicted self-other justice perception among farmers and herders. This implies that the more farmers and herders believe they have no control over their situation, the less willing they are to include the other group in their equitable distribution of land resources. The result of this study is in line with the findings of Baird et al. (2021) who found that present fatalistic time orientation is negatively associated with outcomes and capabilities. The result of this study is also in line with the findings of Giacomini and Jordan (2016) who revealed that present fatalistic oriented individuals feel that justice is unattainable and also believe that their actions will not produce the desired change. A plausible explanation for this finding is that farmers and herders who are present fatalistic oriented believe that they are a deprived group, and that their actions will not result in changes in their current situations. These individuals have resigned to fate, luck or chance to produce the desired change.

### Conclusion

Conclusively, this study examined the role of time perspective 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 the dimensions of time perspective namely present hedonistic time perspective, past positive time perspective, and present fatalistic time perspective predicted self-other justice perception among farmers and

herders. The implication of this is that the propensity to focus on the present and past increases/reduces the likelihood that farmers and herders will act to rectify the perceived injustice associated with resource use.

## Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations were 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. Farmers and herders should be reoriented that the times have changed and that the cordial relationship that previously existed between them is no more. They should be advised to accept the present-day realities associated with land use.
3. It is also recommended that strategies such as education and community engagement that are aimed at empowering individuals with a present fatalistic time orientation be introduced to assist them in developing a sense of control as well as a sense of agency over their lives.

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