

Aged cattle rearers in northwest Nigeria and succession planning: Attitudinal analysis¹Ibrahim, S., ²Torimiro, D. O., ¹Nasiru, S., ³Aledare, M. E. and ¹Muhammad, H. A.¹Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, Abdullahi Fodio University of Science and Technology, Aliero, Nigeria²Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Gaborone³Department of Agricultural Education, Kogi State College of Education (Technical), Kabba, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The cattle rearing industry in Nigeria is highly traditional and dominated by aged farmers, which has made the sector less productive and limited the adoption of modern technologies. This study was conducted in Northwest Nigeria to assess the aged cattle rearers' attitude towards succession and their willingness to transfer the industry to the next generation. Specifically, the socio-economic characteristics were described, their attitudes toward farm succession were examined, their transfer of farm assets was determined, and the correlates of their attitudes towards succession were established. Two hundred and forty respondents were selected using a multistage sampling procedure. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The results show that most (45.74%) of the respondents were aged 65 and above, with a mean of 67.17 +/- 5.46 years, and most (95.4%) were males. Many (63.3%) respondents had a herd size of at least 100 with an average of 112.32 +/- 106.46 heads. The findings reveal that most (90.8%) respondents had a favourable attitude toward succession. Correlations existed between respondents' attitudes toward farm succession and their age ($r = 0.204$), household size ($r = 0.243$), and herd size ($r = 0.378$). It is recommended, among others, that farm succession issues be legislated.

Keywords: Attitude, Cattle, Rearers, Farm, Succession.**INTRODUCTION**

Livestock production in Nigeria is a subsector of agriculture that contributes about 10% to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) apart from employment the sector generates (Angbulu, 2023). Many households rely on ruminants for their livelihoods, especially in rural areas. Nigeria has a cattle population of about 20,585,189 heads (NAERLS & FMARD, 2020). The cattle industry has become a security threat because of the over-dependence of its value chain on a network of nomadic herders, causing significant friction between herders and landowners (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2016).

The ageing farming population and the prevalence of traditional practices in Nigeria's cattle rearing industry limit productivity and make it difficult for modern livestock technologies to be effectively adopted. Farm succession has been defined as the process by which farms are passed on from one generation to the other. In northern Nigeria, a cattle farm is not passed down to a successor; instead, it is split between different successors of the business owner after his demise, which may negatively impact cattle farm business expansion (Ibrahim, 2018).

Attitude is an organised disposition to think, feel, perceive, and respond to a psychological object or idea (Kerlinger, 1967). Despite the critical role of livestock farming in the economy and culture of northwestern Nigeria, there is a significant research gap regarding older pastoralists' attitudes toward succession

planning. This study aims to provide valuable insights that can inform policy and educational initiatives and ultimately support the long-term sustainability of pastoral communities in Northwest Nigeria.

Therefore, the study was conducted in Northwest Nigeria to assess the aged cattle rearers' attitude towards succession and gauge their willingness to transfer the industry to the next generation. Specifically, it

- i. described the socioeconomic characteristics of respondents.
- ii. examine respondents' attitudes towards farm succession; and
- iii. determined respondents' transfers of farm assets to a successor.

The only hypothesis for this study tested significant relationship between respondents' socioeconomic characteristics and attitudes toward farm succession Planning.

METHODOLOGY

The study sample was drawn from rural communities in Kebbi State, Northwest Nigeria. The State is divided into five pastoral blocks: Argungu, Birnin Kebbi, Bagudo, Zuru, and Yauri. A multistage sampling procedure was used. In the first stage, two LGAs with a preponderance of aged cattle rearers were randomly selected in each pastoral block. In the second stage, 50% of all the rural communities were

purposely selected from each LGA, making a total of twenty-four rural communities. Slovin's formula was used to calculate the sample size of 240 respondents.

Attitude towards farm succession was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to disagree (1) for positive statements, with negative statements scored in reverse. The total maximum and minimum scores of 20 and 4 were obtained for each respondent. Transfer of farm assets was measured on a scale of 0 (not transferred) to 3 (fully transferred).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results in Table 1 show that nearly half (45.4%) of the cattle rearers were 65 years or older, with a mean age of 67.17 ± 5.47 years. This indicates that most respondents are in their advanced years, reflecting the dominance of older adults in cattle production. This finding aligns with Fagorusi (2016), who reported that the mean age of Nigerian farmers was 55.5 years, signifying a decline in youth participation in livestock production. The finding also supports the United Nations (2022) projection that the global population of people aged 60 and above is expected to double by 2050, with developing countries Nigeria inclusive contributing the largest share. Similarly, Adeleke *et al.* (2017) noted that older persons constitute about 4.3% of Nigeria's population, equivalent to 9.4 million people. The implication is that most cattle rearers in the study area are elderly, and their physical strength and agility for intensive livestock management may have diminished, leading to reduced productivity. This reflects the law of diminishing returns, where increased age inversely affects labour efficiency and output (Ogunremi & Adedeji, 2023). Consequently, this demographic pattern limits the sector's capacity to adopt improved cattle-rearing technologies and sustain productivity, thereby posing challenges to the long-term sustainability of livestock production in Nigeria.

Table 1 further reveals that 95.4% of respondents were male, compared to 4.6% female, confirming that cattle rearing remains a male-dominated enterprise. This gender imbalance corroborates Torimiro (2019) and Adekunle, Agboola, and Ogunjimi (2015), who found that men dominate energy-demanding and capital-intensive farm enterprises. Similarly, Ibrahim *et al.* (2020) observed that the physical demands and long-

distance mobility involved in cattle rearing discourage female participation. Recent findings by Obayelu, Ogbe, and Edewor (2020) and Agada & Nwosu (2023) also indicate that gender disparity persists in Nigeria's agricultural sector, constraining inclusive development and equitable access to productive resources. The limited presence of aged female rearers may also be traced to traditional inheritance systems that prioritize male heirs, as observed by Torimiro (2019) and Ibrahim (2018), where livestock ownership is typically transferred to sons rather than daughters.

Furthermore, most (84.0%) respondents were married, indicating strong family structures that may facilitate intergenerational planning. According to Okpara (2010), married farmers often experience higher motivation to increase productivity for household sustenance and commercial benefits, making them more likely to engage in succession planning to secure family livelihoods. The results also show that 48.8% of respondents had household sizes between 11 and 20 members, with a mean household size of 13 ± 6.98 . The large household size reflects sociocultural values attached to family and Labour in rural communities, where children are considered both social capital and a source of Labour. This finding is consistent with Ibrahim (2018) and contrasts with the National Bureau of Statistics (2016) report, which recorded an average rural household size of 5.9 persons. Large households in pastoral systems often provide abundant family labour for herding, which directly enhances livestock management and productivity (Gallagher & Waite, 2000; Mgbakor, Ochiaka, Okorie, & Ugwu, 2014; Musa *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, the majority (85.0%) of respondents had 20 years of education or less, with a mean of 10.92 ± 10.96 years. This implies that most aged cattle rearers possess basic literacy, including the ability to read and perform arithmetic, which can enhance their capacity to plan for succession and manage farm resources efficiently. The finding supports recent studies such as Fasina and Inegbedion (2013), El-Osta, Johnson, and Mishra (2004), and Ibrahim *et al.* (2020), who noted that education significantly influences succession planning among farm households. Similarly, Nwabuatu (2024) found that literate livestock farmers in northern Nigeria are more likely to identify and mentor successors compared to their illiterate counterparts.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to socioeconomic characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Age			67.17	5.468
60-65	109	45.4		
66-70	74	30.8		
71-75	37	15.4		
> 75	20	9.3		
Sex				
Male		95.4		
Female		4.6		

Marital status				
Married	236	98.3		
Divorced	1	0.4		
Separated	2	0.8		
Widowed	1	0.4		
Household size				
< 11	93	38.8	13.04	6.989
11-20	117	48.8		
21-30	26	10.8		
31-40	2	0.8		
> 40	2	0.8		
Years of education				
< 21	209	85.0	10.92	1.096
21-40	32	13.3		
> 40	4	1.7		

Source: Field survey, 2018

Furthermore, results in Figure 1 indicate that more than half (57.9%) of the respondents practiced monogamous family structures, having only one wife. This finding suggests that monogamous households are more likely to have an identified and clearly designated successor. In contrast, in polygamous families, household heads often face challenges in identifying a single heir, making discussions about farm succession more complex and potentially conflict laden. This result supports the observation of Barclay, Foskey, and Reeve (2007), who reported that many farmers particularly those in polygamous or extended family systems—often avoid succession discussions because they raise emotionally sensitive issues related to fairness and the equitable treatment of children. Similarly, Baker, Ian, and Lobley (2010) noted that intergenerational transfer within family units remains the main entry pathway into farming in England, underscoring the significance of family structure in

shaping succession dynamics. Recent evidence from Ibrahim et al. (2020) and Nwabuatu (2024) reinforces this conclusion, showing that household composition strongly influences the succession process among livestock farmers in Northern Nigeria. Monogamous families tend to exhibit more coherent and cooperative succession arrangements, as decision-making is centralised and conflicts over inheritance are minimised. By contrast, polygamous arrangements introduce competing claims and power dynamics, often leading to delays or avoidance of formal succession planning (Okolocha & Anugwu, 2022; Gontur et al, 2025). Therefore, the predominance of monogamous family structures among respondents in this study may explain why most had identified successors. It also highlights the role of family cohesion and structure in shaping attitudes toward succession and ensuring the smooth transfer of farm assets to the next generation.

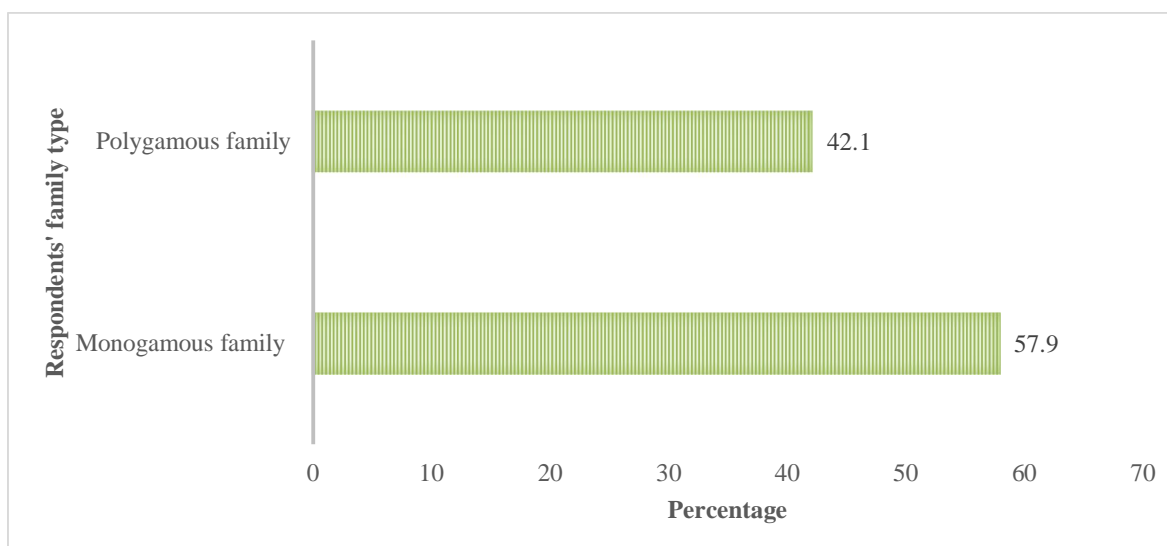


Fig. 1: Distribution of respondents according to family types

Source: Field survey, 2018

Results in Figure 2 show that the majority (85.7%) of the respondents were literate in both Arabic and Western education, meaning they possessed the ability to read, write, and perform basic numeracy in at least one language. This relatively high level of literacy implies that most aged cattle rearers have acquired some formal or informal education, which may have positively influenced their understanding and appreciation of the need for succession planning. Education, as an essential component of human capital, is known to shape decision-making, record-keeping, and the transmission of farm management knowledge to younger generations. The findings suggest that education attainment could be a major reason why most respondents had already identified successors for their farms. This aligns with earlier evidence by Fasina and Inegbedion (2014) and El-Osta, Johnson, and Mishra (2004), who posited that farmers with higher education levels are more likely to

plan and implement farm succession strategies due to improved awareness and planning capacity. Recent studies further support this relationship. Ibrahim et al. (2020) and Olubiyi (2022) reported that literacy and exposure to formal training enhance farmers' perception of the economic and social value of succession, encouraging them to prepare younger household members for management and ownership responsibilities. Likewise, Okoh et al. (2021) and Nwabuatu (2024) observed that educated farmers are more open to institutional advice and extension guidance on intergenerational transfer, resulting in smoother transition processes. Therefore, the high literacy recorded among the aged cattle rearers in this study could explain their generally favourable attitude towards farm succession planning, as education not only improves awareness but also facilitates communication and trust in the transfer process between generations.

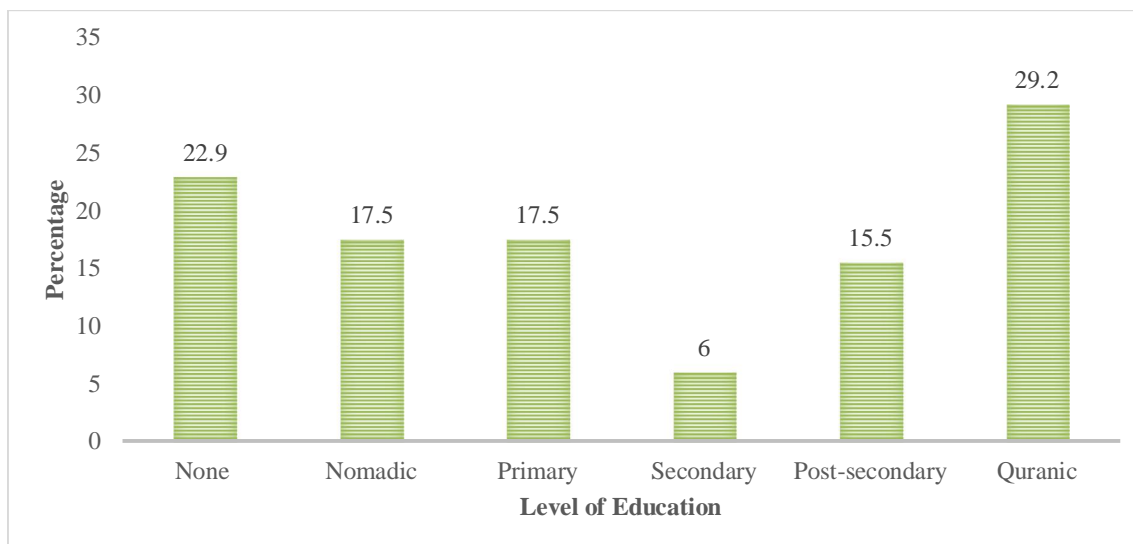


Figure 2: Distribution of respondents according to their level of education

Source: Field survey, 2018

Rank order of respondents' attitudinal statements towards succession planning

Table 2 presents respondents' attitudes toward farm succession planning. The statement "I am sure succession planning is important for the farm and farm owner" ranked 1st (Mean = 5.00 ± 0.00), indicating a strongly positive perception of succession planning as essential to farm continuity and sustainability. This was followed by "I see succession-related issues as worrisome issues" ranked 2nd (Mean = 3.33 ± 1.59), "Discussing succession is like wishing me early death" ranked 3rd (Mean = 1.52 ± 0.50), and "Thinking about succession is like a waste of time" ranked 4th (Mean = 1.12 ± 0.34). The overall result indicates that respondents generally exhibited a

favourable attitude toward succession planning. This finding implies that many aged cattle rearers in the study area recognise the relevance of succession planning to both the farm and its owner. Such awareness likely stems from increased access to extension and advisory services that emphasize the importance of intergenerational transfer of farm assets and knowledge. This is consistent with the findings of Ibrahim *et al.* (2020), who reported that cattle farmers in Kebbi State with greater awareness of succession planning were more prepared to designate successors despite prevailing socio-cultural and psychological barriers. Similarly, Okoh *et al.* (2021) and Olubiyi (2022) emphasized that a positive perception of succession planning enhances the continuity and

resilience of family owned agribusinesses in Nigeria. Conversely, Okolocha and Anugwu (2022) found that negative cultural connotation such as equating succession discussions with death or misfortune tend to delay or prevent proper planning. The lower mean scores associated with such negative attitudinal statements in this study suggest that while traditional beliefs persist, they may gradually weaken as more farmers become exposed to extension programmes promoting farm sustainability. Additionally,

Nwabuatu (2024) Gontur *et al.*, (2025) study both noted that effective succession planning is strengthened by exposure to training, education, and institutional support, all of which shape individuals' attitudes toward the process. Therefore, the findings from this study reinforce the growing recognition among older cattle rearers of the need for structured farm succession planning to ensure generational continuity and reduce the risk of farm fragmentation or abandonment.

Table 2: Distribution of aged cattle rearers' attitude towards farm succession

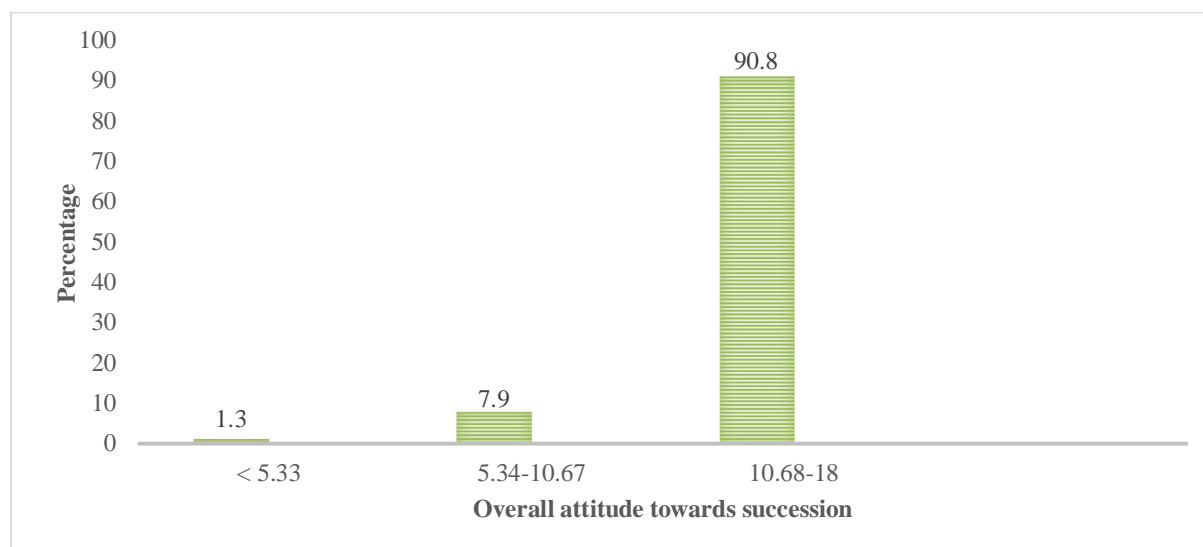
Attitudinal statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ranking	Decision
I am sure succession planning is important for the farm and the farm owner.	5.000	0.000	1st	Favourable
Discussing succession is like wishing the farm owner an early death.	1.520	0.500	3rd	Favourable
Thinking about succession planning is a waste of time.	1.120	0.339	4th	Unfavourable
I see succession planning-related issues as problematic to me.	3.325	1.586	2nd	Favourable

Source: Field survey, 2018

Overall level of respondents' attitude towards succession

Results presented in Figure 3 revealed that most respondents (90.8%) exhibited a favourable attitude toward farm succession planning. This finding suggests that many aged cattle rearers in the study area recognise the significance of planning for intergenerational farm transfer. The overall positive attitude implies that when farm succession is supported by appropriate legal frameworks and

extension guidance, older rearers may be more willing to entrust their farming operations to younger, energetic, and innovative successors. Such readiness enhances the prospects for continuity, modernisation, and sustainable growth within the cattle industry. These findings corroborate earlier reports by Ibrahim *et al.* (2020) and Okoh *et al.* (2021), who emphasized that positive attitudes and supportive institutional mechanisms are crucial determinants of effective farm succession among rural farming populations.



Mean=13.32, S. D=2.827, n = 240

Fig. 3: Distribution of respondents according to overall attitude towards succession

Source: Field survey, 2018

Respondents' level of transfer of farm assets to a successor

Evidence in Table 3 shows that the grand mean of farm asset transfer among aged cattle rearers was 2.18, which served as the benchmark for assessing the extent of asset transfer. The results revealed that the respondents had transferred four out of six key farm assets to their identified successors. Specifically, management as a farm asset ranked 1st (Mean = 2.80 ± 0.60), followed by Labour (Mean = 2.77 ± 0.59) and cattle rearing skills (Mean = 2.77 ± 0.59), both ranking 2nd. *Knowledge of cattle rearing* ranked 3rd (Mean = 2.73 ± 0.63), control of the farm by a successor ranked 4th (Mean = 1.73 ± 1.07), while *ownership of the farm* ranked 5th (Mean = 0.30 ± 0.83). The findings indicate that most aged cattle rearers have begun transferring essential managerial, Labour, and skill-based assets to their successors but have largely withheld ownership

rights. This suggests that ownership is traditionally retained until the demise of the principal operator, reflecting a cultural norm of delayed inheritance within pastoral communities. The result thus aligns with Errington (1998), who observed that in many family farm systems, full financial and ownership responsibilities are rarely assumed by successors until the first generation has passed away. The partial transfer of farm assets observed in this study may also explain the respondents' generally favourable attitude toward succession planning, as they appear willing to prepare successors for future ownership while maintaining control during their lifetime. This gradual approach to transfer provides successors with experiential learning opportunities while preserving the elders' authority, a practice that enhances continuity and stability in traditional livestock production systems.

Table 3: Rank order of respondents' transfer level of farm assets to a successor

Assets	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Decision
I have transferred the management of my farm to a successor.	2.80	0.60	1st	Fully transferred
I have transferred labour to an identified successor.	2.77	0.59	2nd	Fully transferred
I have transferred cattle-rearing skills to my successor.	2.77	0.59	2nd	Fully transferred
I have transferred knowledge of cattle rearing to a successor.	2.73	0.63	3rd	Fully transferred
I have transferred the control of my farm to a successor.	1.73	1.07	4th	Not transferred
I have transferred the ownership of my farm to a successor.	0.30	0.83	5th	Not transferred

Source: Field survey, 2018

Overall level of respondents' transfer of farm assets to successors

Results presented in Figure 4 show that most respondents (86.3%) moderately transferred their farm assets to identified successors. This implies that aged cattle rearers have already initiated the process of succession planning. The finding suggests that, over time, these older farmers may become increasingly willing to hand over farm ownership to the younger generation. This pattern corroborates Fennell's (1981) classical assertion that family farm succession is a progressive and multistage process during which knowledge, Labour, management, and ownership of the farm business are gradually transferred from the retiring older generation to the younger one. Recent studies have reaffirmed that succession is typically a gradual and multi-phased process, often beginning with the delegation of Labour and managerial responsibilities before the eventual transfer of ownership (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2020; Okolocha & Anugwu, 2022; Nwabuatu, 2024). Similarly, Okoh *et al.* (2021) observed that aged farmers in Northern

Nigeria prefer to first engage potential successors in day-to-day operational tasks as a preparatory step toward eventual ownership transition. These observations align with Olubiyi (2022), who noted that successful farm continuity in sub-Saharan Africa depends on experiential learning and progressive asset handover to ensure sustainability. Furthermore, Daniele *et al.* (2024) reported that management and knowledge transfer precede legal ownership in most smallholder and livestock-oriented family farms, reflecting a cultural inclination toward maintaining control until late in life. More so, the moderate level of asset transfer recorded in this study indicates that the process of intergenerational succession has begun among aged cattle rearers. However, the deliberate retention of ownership until later in life highlights both cultural and risk-aversion factors influencing succession timing in pastoral systems. This aligns with general findings in rural succession studies accentuating that social norms, inheritance laws, and emotional attachment to the farm significantly shape the pace and completeness of the transfer process (Nwabuatu, 2024; Gontur *et al.*, 2025).

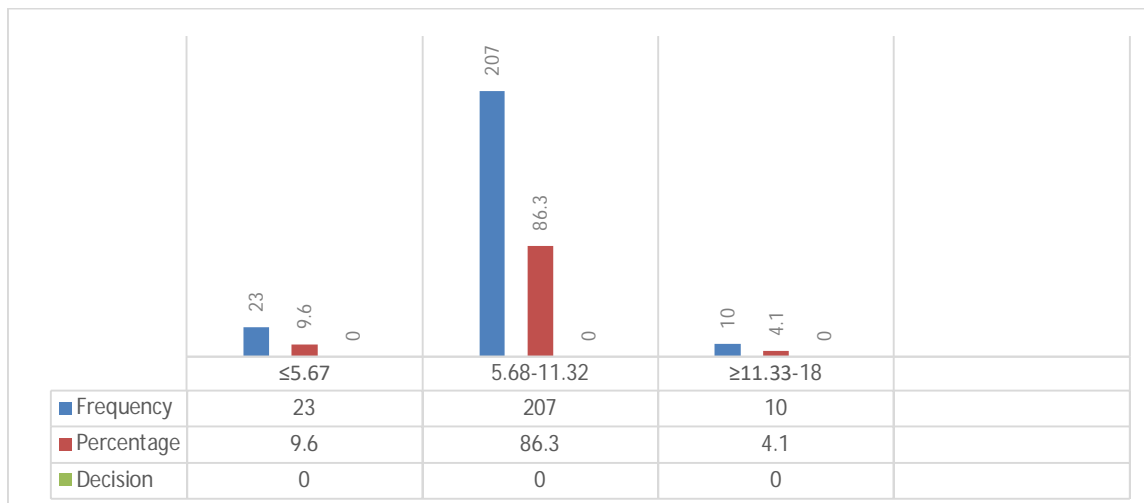


Figure 4: Distribution of respondents according to the rate of transfer of farm assets to successors
Source: Field survey, 2018

Some correlates of aged cattle rearers' attitudes towards succession

Results in Table 4 indicate a positive and significant relationship between aged cattle rearers' attitudes toward succession planning and their age ($r = 0.204$), household size ($r = 0.234$), and herd size ($r = 0.378$). This implies that as the age, household size, and herd

size of the respondents increase, their attitudes toward succession planning become more favourable. The positive relationship between herd size and attitude towards succession supports the argument that farmers with larger herds have stronger incentives to plan for continuity to prevent asset fragmentation and mismanagement (Stephen et al., 2024).

Table 4: Correlates of respondents' attitudes towards farm succession

Variables	R	r2	p-value	Decision
Age	0.204***	0.041	0.001	Significant
Household size	0.243***	0.059	0.000	Significant
Herd size	0.378***	0.142	0.000	Significant

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: Field survey, 2018

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that aged cattle rearers in Northwest Nigeria exhibited a generally favourable attitude toward farm succession planning. While most have begun transferring key managerial, labour, and skill-based assets to identified successors, ownership rights are typically retained until after the demise of the farm owner, reflecting deep-rooted cultural norms. Socioeconomic factors such as age, household size, and herd size significantly influenced attitudes toward succession. The following recommendations were made:

- i. Attitudinal change campaigns and succession mentorship programmes should be introduced to enhance farm succession planning.
- ii. Issues of farm succession planning should be legislated at the local, state and federal levels of government.
- iii. Youth involvement in livestock production should be actively promoted.
- iv. Livestock extension agents should be trained on farm succession planning.

- v. Gender inclusion and family dialogue in succession planning should be promoted.

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