

THE ROLE OF ENDOGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper is an assessment of the roles of endogenous conflict resolution strategy in promoting social justice and peace in Nigeria. This paper focuses attention on the relevance of Endogenous conflict resolution in addressing crisis in Nigeria. The paper discusses the conceptual meaning of Endogenous conflict resolution. It examines the various strategies and approaches in Endogenous conflict resolution to address the incessant societal conflicts in human societies. In addition, the paper discusses the efficacy of endogenous conflict resolution. The paper therefore adopted the structural conflict theory as its theoretical framework to provide theoretical orientation to the discourse. The paper derives its materials from selected books and internet materials. The paper highlighted the importance of Endogenous conflict resolution. The paper concludes that Endogenous conflict resolution should be adopted as an alternative strategy in addressing the several societal conflicts.

Keywords: Peace, Conflict, Endogenous Resolution, Approaches, Social Justice

Introduction

Human beings live in societies and defined territories where they interact, interrelate, and socialize with one another and explore and exploit their environments to attain goals and make gains. While interrelating and socializing however, arguments, discussions, disputes, struggles and disagreements, ensue to threaten their hitherto peaceful co-existence. Such disagreements, struggles, and disputes resulting from frictions in social interactions led to conflicts because 'no man is an island. In our everyday relationships, we engage in intentional harmful behaviours (conflict) towards our friends and neighbors with a view to resolving our incompatible ends or means and claiming scarce values, status, power and resources (Ogunleye, 2008). Conflict in social interaction is a natural and common phenomenon, a permanent feature of human life.

Conflicts constitute one of the greatest challenges currently facing human society world over. Issues of identity, governance, resource allocation, state sovereignty and power struggle, sometimes coupled with the personality question, have all conspired to cause staggering loss of life, destruction of property and environmental degradation. Conflict situation threatens harmony and peaceful co-existence of interrelating parties, serenity and silence. Thus, where peace reigns, there is usually an attendant stability and a general feeling of security rather than living in fear of oppression and persecution. Conflict is a basic and inherent feature of relationships, be it the relationship between husband and wife, one ethnic group and another, one religious group or another, or one country or the other or between/among individuals or communities.

The phrase "conflict resolution" refers to a range of strategies used to resolve disputes by finding positive solutions to issues. Thus, the goal of endogenous conflict resolution is to resolve disputes in unconventional ways. As a result of the aforementioned, the concept of Endogenous Conflict Resolution focuses on finding "non-conventional" peaceful ways to settle disagreements and conflict situations in ways that are both cost-effective and satisfy all parties involved while also maintaining relationships after a settlement may have been reached. In this context, endogenous conflict resolution

is specifically designed to act as a non-violent alternative to the official traditional procedures of resolving conflicts and disputes, which mostly include litigation and the courts.

A well-organized, tried-and-true social framework that aims to preserve and strengthen social ties includes endogenous conflict resolution procedures. The procedures, rules, and methods are firmly anchored in the people's traditions and customs. The processes' significance and usefulness stem from their efforts to reduce conflicts, restore equilibrium, and resolve conflicts. Because endogenous processes are more casual, they are less frightening. In a familiar setting, many who use them feel more comfortable. Chiefs, elders, heads of families, and others have a responsibility to prevent and terminate conflicts in addition to resolving them. As much focus is placed on mending connections and bringing people together, group rights and relationships are just as significant as individual ones. Consensus-building based on candid conversations to share knowledge and elucidate problems is often incorporated into endogenous conflict resolution. Because an elder's choice is supported by societal pressure and does not involve any face loss, disputing parties are more likely to follow advice from these mediators than from other sources. Ideally, the outcome is a feeling of solidarity, mutual participation and accountability, and communication across groups that would otherwise be at odds (USAID, 2005). Stated differently, the endogenous conflict resolution strategy resolves disputes inside or between communities by utilizing local players and the conventional community-based judicial and legal decision-making approach. The goal of local methods is to settle disputes without the need of the state's police, courts, or other outside institutions. Local discussions can result in workable agreements that maintain good relations amongst communities.

One of the main methods for resolving disputes amicably is endogenous conflict resolution. This phrase is typically used to describe informal dispute resolution procedures when parties meet with a third party to work out a less formal and frequently more amicable resolution to their disagreement than what can be achieved through the legal system. Although mediation is the most popular method of endogenous conflict resolution, there are numerous other approaches as well, such as discussion, cooperation, negotiation, discourse, third-party intervention, cooperative problem solving, etc. However, courts occasionally compel voluntary endogenous conflict resolution, requiring disputants to attempt mediation before pursuing their case in court.

Endogenous conflict resolution procedures were not a "alternative" to anything, but Western forms of ADR (alternative dispute resolution) were developed in reaction to the challenges and shortcomings of court proceedings. When they were initially created and used, there were no courts or highly structured processes and institutions to mention. In general, the groups shared only endogenous dispute resolution procedures. They were actually endogenous and specific to these peoples, although having the appearance of alternative dispute resolution (ADR).

The endogenous conflict resolution approach emphasizes the fundamental human qualities of empathy, sharing, and collaboration in addressing shared issues (Murithi, 2006). In order to foster social order and peace in communities, cultural methods to conflict resolution and management are essential. Interaction and the rules that people and societies live by are based on cultural values and attitudes. Additionally, they encourage resource sharing and equitable distribution, which fosters a peaceful and prosperous environment. African cultural values address the fundamental nature of life, what it means to be human, and how all people are interconnected. Therefore, reciprocity, inclusivity, and a feeling of shared destiny among people are key components of peacemaking. It provides a value system for giving and receiving forgiveness. This is because society places greater emphasis on

communal life. It is believed that people are linked to each other including disputants as perpetrators or victims.

In fact, people and communities have been using endogenous conflict resolution techniques for generations. The uniqueness of the current legal system is challenged by the more traditional methods of resolving disputes, especially those used by Endogenous or Aboriginal peoples worldwide. The goal of endogenous approaches is dispute resolution rather than necessarily passing judgment. Reconciliation and the restoration of social harmony between the disputing parties were prioritized over punishment. In a similar vein, endogenous conflict resolution is frequently employed in a variety of conflict situations, from divorces to extremely complicated public policy issues. Endogenous conflict resolution can occasionally prevail over disputes that appear unsolvable.

In Nigerian institutions, such as families, churches, mosques, schools, and between groups, endogenous conflict resolution is currently employed to resolve a range of conflicts. Endogenous conflict resolution proponents think it's better than litigation and lawsuits for a variety of reasons (Familugba & Adedayo, 2020). In general, endogenous conflict resolution is less costly and quicker. Rather than being governed by attorneys, judges, and the government, it is predicated on the parties to conflicts engaging more directly. An integrative approach is the foundation of the majority of endogenous conflict resolution procedures. Compared to court-based techniques like litigation, they are less competitive and more collaborative. In fact, participating in an Endogenous Conflict Resolution process will often ultimately improve the relationship between the disputing parties. The need to resolve conflicts is significant in human relations. Conflict in every form can be resolved by using appropriate resolution techniques, there is the need for more creativity and consideration of more alternatives when decisions are made; this is based on the premise that the purpose of Endogenous conflict resolution is to reconcile both the conflicting issues and the common interest in a conflict. Because of this, endogenous conflict resolution typically results in less escalation and animosity between parties.

Conflict resolution strategies

Conflict resolution involve implementation of strategies to limit the negative aspects of conflicts and increase the positive aspects of conflict at a level equal to or higher where the conflict is taking place. Rahim (2001) says that conflict resolution strategy is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict. He added that committed group members attempt to resolve group conflicts by actively communicating information about their conflicting motives or ideologies to the rest of the group (e.g., intentions; reasons for holding certain beliefs) and by engaging in collective negotiation. He also identified conflict resolution strategies and explained them as follows:

- i. Accommodating: Giving the other side what it wants is the essence of the accommodating strategy. When one of the parties wants to maintain harmony or believes the matter is trivial, accommodation is frequently used.
- ii. Avoiding: The goal of the avoidance technique is to postpone conflict forever. The avoider hopes that the issue will be resolved without a confrontation by postponing or ignoring the conflict. Actively avoiding conflict is often a sign of low self-esteem or low power. Avoidance tactics can occasionally be a successful conflict resolution tactic.

- iii. Collaborating: Working together involves combining the ideas of several people. The goal is to come up with a novel solution that works for everyone. Despite its benefits, collaboration requires a substantial time investment that is inappropriate for all conflicts.
- iv. Compromising: The compromising approach usually requires both parties to compromise some aspects of their stance in order to reach a workable, if not pleasant, resolution. This tactic works best in disputes in which the parties have roughly equal power. While both parties stand to lose something important, like a client or essential service, business owners usually use compromise while negotiating contracts with other companies.
- v. Competing: In competition, one side wins and the other loses, making it a zero-sum game. Competition is frequently used by highly forceful people as a dispute resolution tactic. Only a few conflicts, including emergencies, are suitable for the competitive strategy. Generally speaking, company owners gain from reserving the competitive strategy for times of crisis and for actions that cause animosity.

The Efficacy of Endogenous Conflict Resolution Approach

Numerous family disputes, land and boundary disputes between two communities and states, and communal/community conflicts—including interpersonal, intergroup, interethnic, and interreligious conflicts—have been resolved and settled thanks in large part to the Endogenous Conflict Resolution Strategy. However, the bulk of Nigerian states and communities follow a similar procedure for resolving disputes: paramount rulers arbitrate conflicts both inside and outside of communities, particularly when the issue was brought to their attention. The contending parties settle their differences amicably through mediation by the traditional authorities (Famigbaga & Adedayo, 2020). Other situations, such as property disputes, religious conflicts, murders, or thefts, might be brought to the attention of the community council for settlement (Gbenemene, 2018). After, one of the disputants has lodged a complaint with the paramount ruler, may be over a land dispute, border dispute or any other matter, the paramount ruler dispatches one of his chiefs-in-council to summon the other disputants to the chief's palace. The council of chiefs resolves the matter amicably by asking the trespasser to refrain from trespassing on the other person's property. Sometimes, if one of the parties to a dispute has instituted a legal action in a court, for example, in a customary court, the council of chiefs can approach the court to grant it permission to withdraw the matter for settlement and to report their decision back to the court. Such decision or settlement coming out of the council of chiefs is usually adopted as the judgment of the court and binding on the parties to the conflict (Gbenemene, 2018).

Where the conflict is between two communities or towns, the traditional leaders of both communities get together to try and resolve the dispute peacefully. In some cases, disputing communities usually form peace Consultative Committees, headed by the community paramount ruler, to mediate into conflict between such communities and other neighbouring communities. In some cases, after listening to the parties involved, and useful pieces of advice have been given by the elders, kolanut is then brought, the kolanut is prayed over and broken into pieces by the person who is qualified to do so, the eating of the kolanut by the parties involved, and those present is a strong sign of forgiveness, peace, solidarity, and reconciliation (Abbah, 2016). Among the Igala people of Kogi State, it is expected that the reconciled parties that ate the kolanut should in no way harbor hatred towards each other. If anyone does, he or she would incur the wrath of abegwu (ancestors) deities who witnessed the reconciliation meetings.

It is important to point out that the endogenous conflict resolution Strategy of dispute resolutions is adopted by most people in rural communities and some urban areas in major parts of Nigeria, because it is cheaper, more accessible to the people, and does not find fault. The procedure is non-adversarial and provides room for reconciliation and for peace to prevail. The desired end result of endogenous conflict resolution strategy is not punishment but rather, to restore a harmonious relationship and peaceful coexistence among conflicting parties. The strategy has great untapped potentials in maintaining social solidarity among a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society such as Nigeria where intercommunal conflicts are prevalent.

Traditional oath-taking is a phenomenon in Igala traditional religion. It is the evoking of sacred and supernatural forces to be a witness of the truth of a statement or the binding nature of a promise. In another dimension, it is the invitation of the almighty God to punish anyone that commits a crime and tries to cover it up or it could be said to be an oath of allegiance, swearing that the gods or ancestors should punish you with death or evil if you go against certain agreement (Abbah, 2016). Oath taking takes place in order to pledge allegiance, or to unveil secrets behind a particular evil, for instance, when a person dies a suspicious death, the family will report the case and the suspect to the court of the elders, if after enquiries and questioning, the person refuses to plead guilty to the charges, it is oath taking that will be used to settle the rest of the issue, if a person is having ill-feelings against family members or inter-group or group crisis or conflicts, parties will be called to order, through the breaking, sharing, and eating of the Kola nut

Theoretical Underpinning

This paper is anchored on structural conflict theory. According to the structural conflict theory, conflict in society results from rivalry for scarce resources and conflicting interests. The idea is divided into two schools of thought: the liberal structural and the radical structural. According to the structural conflict theory, conflict stems mostly from resources (Kriesberg, 1998). The assumption is that scuffles and violence are mostly caused by rivalry for resources. According to structuralists, the natural desire to dominate resources is the root cause of societal problems including poverty, disease, exploitation, political and economic exclusion, injustice, and inequality, all of which are causes of conflict (Nnoli, 1998). The core of global conflict is the use and control of natural resources. Radicalists such as Karl Marx and associates maintained that, conflict occurs because of the exploitation and the unjust nature of human societies and domination of resources (Mack-Adams, 2006). The radicalists argue that capitalism is associated with violence due to the exploitative system in relation to production and division of society into proletariats and bourgeoisies which create conflict.

Lack of resources is not necessarily the primary cause of violence, even if the structural conflict theory offers the framework for examining conflict, including violence. Africa is home to the frequently cited empirical examples of structural theory's applicability. Scholars have defended the structural conflict theory's premise by pointing to the frequent overthrow of imperial regimes and governments (Galtung, 2007). Unquestionably, deprivation and resource disparity played a role in these acts of violence, but this study will also identify other important contributing reasons. For example, contrary to what the structuralists claim, the western world, which is home to many billionaires and the epicenter of capitalism, is not more violent than other regions of the world, like Africa. The violence often reported in the western world such as ISIL attacks are ideological. This is a highlight of other factors aside resource as being key contributors to violence.

According to structural conflict theory, conflict results from the way societies are organized or divided. These distinctions may be based on gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, or economic status. Conflict arises when a society's structure is unfair and exploitative. Therefore, reorganizing or redesigning these societies to attain equity and justice is the means by which the conflict is resolved. Social structural theories function on the premise of innate human hostility and power dynamics since they attribute the causes of conflict to unfair social structures, which are the product of one or more influential members of that society. In other words, inasmuch as the ruling class is said to have obtained their positions and authority through the use of power, power must be stripped from them and redistributed equitably to the oppressed classes. In this sense, social structural theories share both a Freudian and Darwinian perspective about humanity.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Indigenous conflict resolution performs a healing function in Nigerian societies. It provides opportunity for the examinations of alternative positive decision to resolve differences. It equally promotes consensus-building, social bridge reconstructions, and the re-enactment of order in the society. For conflict resolution, the obvious implication is to view conflicts as non-isolated events in its social context. Such perspective is not narrowly focused on a conflict and its resolution. It takes into account the cultural setting and the social context. It looks at the history of preceding events which have led to the conflict concerned. And while concentrating on the conflict itself and process of resolving it, it takes possible implications for the future seriously. A wider look is taken than one which just includes the disputing parties, possible consequences for others in their families and social network are also taken into consideration. Potential effects on relationship and interests are envisaged.

Resolving conflicts between communities strengthens society from within and fosters a climate that allows businesses to flourish, which advances all spheres of human endeavor. Conflict resolution through stakeholder dialogue dispels misinformation, gives parties a sense of control over the dispute and its resolution, and teaches participants strategies and tactics for resolving future conflicts. Time can be saved and resources can be directed toward development if all parties involved in different dispute resolution categories are encouraged to reconsider their stance and utilize the many facets of indigenous conflict resolution techniques.

Therefore, in order to settle or lessen the onset of conflicts in Nigeria, government officials and individuals in positions of authority must do everything in their power to ensure that suitable indigenous conflict resolution techniques are used. If the country wants to experience sustainable development and improved internal stability, this requirement becomes even more crucial. It should be mentioned that the methods used to settle disputes inside a country are crucial since they can significantly affect that country's experiences and fortunes. Indigenous dispute resolution techniques may not be at all successful since they have been characterized as deliberately neglecting or rerouting attention from the legal system (litigation).

Additionally, it is critical that disputing parties communicate with one another. This will always help opposing parties hear one other out and provide space for compromise. Negotiation strategy has been viewed as a universally applicable principle of dialogue-based conflict resolution. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that when suitable indigenous conflict resolution techniques are used to settle disputes within a country, they may improve national stability and sustainable development, which would serve the country's functional goals. However, if disputes, particularly those between ethnic

and religious groups, are not adequately or successfully settled, it may have disruptive effects on the country.

Analyzing conflict resolution techniques, encouraging community involvement, cultivating trust and flexibility, bolstering existing institutions with efforts to establish legitimacy, and strengthening leadership potential through focused development initiatives are some of the main recommendations. By putting these tactics into practice, Nigeria can strengthen community ties, advance peace, stability, and efficient crisis management. It can also use its advancements in health security and the legitimacy of its traditional institutions as a template for dealing with health emergencies and advancing community well-being in other areas. Legitimacy and Authority, Leadership Style, and Community Trust are major predictors of Crisis Resolution Strength, according to logistic regression research, which emphasizes the importance of effective leadership styles, community trust, and institutional capacity building.

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