

TRADITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN IGBO SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT: As a result of the clamour to strengthen the unification and cooperation of Igbos in particular and Nigeria at large for peace, security and good governance, the need to revisit ancient, but ethical traditional administrative practices becomes pertinent. This paper focused on Traditional Administrative System and Conflict Resolution in Igbo Society. The objective was to examine the Igbo pattern of traditional administrative system in order to revive some traditional Igbo practices which were and can still be applied for conflict resolution. The research was anchored on the theory of cooperative conflict resolution. Data were collected mainly from secondary sources. The methodology adopted was content analysis. The paper discovered that in the primitive Igbo society, traditional administrative system and conflict resolution were achieved through public participation such that whatever decision arrived at was regarded as a consensus decision, which left no residue of bad feelings since the way of wisdom was via the group and not an individual. In conclusion, it is the position of the paper that the Igbo traditional approach to conflict resolution is among the most effective alternative to dispute resolution and liberal peace building. The paper recommended that policy makers can explore some of the enduring qualities of the Igbo traditional administrative system of conflict resolution and seek ways and means of integrating them to the modern conflict resolution practices, especially where state machinery is weak.

Keywords: Igbo, administrative system, traditional society, conflict resolution

Introduction

Amongst humanity's highest values is peace. The most popular view of peace is an absence of dissension, violence, or war. The rise in political instability and violence in recent years has prompted policymakers to look for new, long-term solutions to today's security challenges. The UN has launched its 'Sustaining Peace' agenda, which places new emphasis on efforts to prevent conflict and sustain peace.

In traditional Igbo society, customs and tradition were the principal mechanisms for social order. Part of the traditional education of Igbo children was knowledge of what to do and what to avoid, the reward of doing good, the consequences of violating the norms and values of the community, and how reparations are made in cases of breaches of custom. The Igbo traditional administrative methods of conflict resolution stressed the need of fostering a spirit of peace and mutual respect for both individuals and groups, in times of peace and in times of conflict. Conflict was viewed as a communal concern. Conflict resolution followed conflict patterns as embedded in the norms and customs of a society. Resolution processes were culturally prescribed. Emphasis was placed on reconciling the disputants with each other, rather than on establishing right and wrong, winner or loser. Thus punishment was not aimed at retaliation, but at restoring equilibrium, usually through the mechanisms of restitution, apology and reconciliation. There was emphasis on justice and fairness, forgiveness, tolerance and coexistence.

Conflicts were, therefore, seen as events in the tempo of social life. An all-inclusive tactic to resolution was stressed. The spiritual aspect was quite apparent. As cultural values were important to the people, a customary approach was inclined towards rituals to promote a conciliatory community. The approach thus emphasizes healing of emotive wounds created by conflict and restoration of social interactions. This was often done through public performances of reconciliation, which were entered into by warring parties, and were compulsory on all those concerned.

Thus, in the Igbo traditional society, there was no “private dispute” of any seriousness, since a dispute affects everyone in one way or another. The moral code of war guaranteed respect and protection for women, children and the old in times of conflict. For durable peaceful coexistence, tolerance and understanding were important elements in Igbo traditional dispute resolution. This involved the adoption of joint problem-solving procedures integrating dialogue, reconciliation, mediation and accommodation, which led to the working out of an agreement. Thus the goal of traditional mechanism was on restitution rather than retribution (Nwolise, 2001 in Mezie- Okoye, 2017). More importantly, the traditional dispute resolution methods were aimed at resolving conflicts and not necessarily pronouncing judgments. As rightly pointed out by Gbenemene (2018) the conflict resolution was placed on internalized values which include honesty, openness, empathy, community solidarity and individual loyalty to the group. It was usually believed that individuals who come before the community for dispute settlement should be sincere otherwise they are seen as having committing an offence against the community rather the individual concerned.

Controversies and debates abound as to the most appropriate mechanisms for resolving conflicts. Some scholars believe that the application of western methods in

resolving conflicts in local communities may have some limited usefulness Arthur, Issifu, & Marfo (2015). Others, however, believe that the use of traditional methods of conflict resolution would be most appropriate in addressing issues that are emanating from a socio-economic and political setting that is not completely modern. Yet, others think that a successful tackling of the conflict challenges that abound in Igbol and would require a new and novel thinking that would accommodate both mechanisms by according preference to one or the other where it is most suitable (Akinwale and Olarinde 2010).

Therefore, this paper is of the view that the rising tide and persistence of conflict and violence among Nigerian societies is a big flaw on the western-style of conflict resolution because it produces the “winner-takes-all outcome” and negates the African indigenous principles of conciliation, and as such, can hardly be a basis for conflict resolution in the African cultural context. The paper examined the mechanisms and institutions of Igbo traditional administrative system which are used as means of conflict resolution.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on the theory of cooperative conflict resolution which was propounded by Morton Deutsch in 2004. The theory according to Mehat (2004) assumes that cooperative disposition of the parties to a conflict would evoke an atmosphere of trust and eventually lead to mutually beneficial options for settlement. In his view, a number of factors like the nature of the dispute and the goals each party aims at are pivotal in determining the kind of orientation a party would bring to the negotiating table in its attempt to solve the conflict. It is argued here that cooperation is an essential approach to effectuate resolution of conflict since negotiating a desirable agreement always includes common and diverse goals leading to finding a balance between the parties concerned.

A cooperative approach aligns with the process of interest-based or integrative bargaining, which leads parties to seek win-win solutions. Disputants that work cooperatively to negotiate a solution are more likely to develop a relationship of trust and come up with reciprocally beneficial options for settlement. Cooperative styles are characterized by; effective communication, friendliness, coordination of effort, feeling of agreement with the ideas of others, willingness, and defining conflicting interests as a mutual problem to be solved by collaborative effort.

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Literature Review

Conceptual Clarification

Igbo Traditional Administrative System

Whereas the Hausa/Fulani and the Yoruba, for example, operated a centralized and semi- centralized system of political administration with the Emir and the Oba respectively, wielding executive, judicial and legislative powers, the Igbo traditional political organization prior to the arrival of the European colonial government, was a system that operated through the collective participation of all the elders in society. Thus, a major distinguishing factor in the pre-colonial political organization between the Igbo people of Nigeria and their other major ethnic groups was the republican nature of their administration, Dons (2015), Joshia (2001). Located at the east and west of the great River Niger, stretching from north of the Niger Delta region through the thick belt of tropical rain forest, and moving gradually to the virtual grassland vegetation belt, the Igbo, at present, occupy mostly in the five south eastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria namely; Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States, with a sizable number in Delta and Rivers States. The relative density of the tropical forest of the area made the establishment of large territorial empires impossible. As a result, Igbo societies are small compact entities when compared with the other major ethnic groups of Nigeria. A traditional Igbo society consists of clusters of individual family units that constitute kindred, with several of these kindred making up an Igbo village, clan or town. Every member of an Igbo village is related to each other in one way or the other, and thus constitutes a network of beings, such that what affects one equally affects the other. The political administration of the Igbo village before colonial rule in Nigeria was a cooperative responsibility of all heads of individual family units who pass on their decisions to the youths for implementation. Igbos are known to be mobile, enterprising, and industrious.

Conflict and Conflict Resolution

There many definitions of conflict and conflict resolution respectively. Rummel (1981) sees conflict as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals" This means that conflict may be conceptualized as a way of settling problems originating from differing interests and for the continuity of society (Otite and Albert, 1999). Similarly, Albert (2001) argues that "conflict is designed to resolve divergent dualism and achieve some kind of unity even if it be through the annihilation of one of the conflict parties". Conflicts do not always result in the destruction of the society as they sometimes follow their own courses and stages and

terminate in the reconciliation of the individuals or the communities concerned. Eventually, they restore the society to some degrees of order which permits it to continue to exist in a changed form. In Igbo land, like in other Nigeria tribes, indigenous ways of managing conflicts is rooted in the various traditions, customs, religious beliefs, and native laws. Thus, conflict resolution can be seen as the informal or formal process that two or more parties use to find a peaceful solution to their dispute.

Conflict resolution can therefore be defined as the informal or formal process that two or more parties use to find a peaceful solution to their dispute. It is the process by which two or more parties reach a peaceful resolution to a dispute. It is a means of putting an end to the conflict. It involves finding a solution to a disagreement, argument and opposition. Hence, Priyali (2018) defines it as a settlement of dispute through negotiation, persuasion, arbitration or any other action suitable for the settlement.

Institutions of Conflict Resolution in Igbo Traditional Administrative System

In Igbo traditional administrative system, Igbos see human existence as unified, interlinked, and integrated in a web. In most Igbo communities, there existed the concept “anyibuotu” which means “collective personhood” or “member of the human family”. From childhood especially at the family level, people were taught to live in harmony with others and avoid a situation of trying to win at all cost in the case of conflict and dispute settlement.

Similarly, Isike & Uzodike (2014) assert that the Igbo society imparts in their offspring that quarrel and fight with others are to be seen as quarrel between blood relations. There was the application of inculcation of myths through the use of proverbs, idioms, folktales and songs to describe the nature of the world and how to live in it. The need to live harmoniously with others and avoid violent conflict because of the dangers inherent in it was one of the reasons for inculcating these myths on the children at tender age. The institutions of family, council of elders, clan, female born of a village etc. were used in the task of conflict monitoring and prevention. Each family head is employed and mobilized to prevent conflict through peace education and conflict monitoring.

The principal political organization among the Igbo, is the age mates (umunna), comprising a number of families and extended families with a common or related ancestry (Okafor, 2011). A number of umunna comprise the village, also supposed to be linked by a common ancestry. Every umunna guards its internal harmony and solidarity as well as its corporate image. It is a very important factor in social interaction and cohesion. A typical Igbo traditional society is male-controlled and a lot of right and power are vested in them. This is supported by Okafor (2011)

when he averred that the ofo is domiciled in the indigenous community, and customary power over communal lands is usually vested in an elder in the umunna. He adds that more importantly, members of the Council of Elders emerge from the umunna. Primogeniture, which prevails among the Igbo ensures that superiority is based on age. When there is a quarrel or dispute, it is reported to the head (diokpala) of the agnate who endorses the machinery for its resolution. When a town or a community council is summoned, individuals from each agnate attend and talk as representatives of their respective agnates. This ensures that any decision taken has broad-based support. Consequently, a conflict resolved at the Assembly brings all and sundry and every segment of the community along with it. There is great reverence for age in the Igbo society.

When there is a conflict, the elders are expected and enjoined by tradition to tell the whole truth as they know it, no matter whose “ox is gored.” Any decision or action they take must be based on the truth. In many cases, the eldest within the family or agnate equally is the chief priest of the family or the village earth shrine, which is probably the strongest force in the establishment and maintenance of social order in the Igbo culture. In very serious cases, conflicting parties may be asked to go before the appropriate earth shrine and protest their innocence or be purified of their guilt. In the Igbo traditionally, unwritten political arrangements and customs are the main mechanisms of social order. A custom in breach has a built-in mechanism of imposing sanctions or extracting reparations. In the opinion of Okafor (2011) the elders are the guardians of norms and wrongs, and provide the traditional system of restoring equilibrium.

Shorter (1977) supported by Okafor (2011) identified the age-group organizations, the classificatory sisters, the classificatory co-wives, agnates and cognates, title groups, and the marriage lines as among social organizations, which are very strong in the Igbo socio-political arrangement. The progress of individual members of an age group is monitored by the society. Each age group usually decides and acts to contribute something to the good of their community. Age groups become tools of social order, unity, and action. Age sets are usually assigned specific duties in the government and functioning of the communities.

The classificatory sisters (umu-ada) are probably among the most powerful Igbo organ for conflict resolution. They bond themselves into an association usually named after the village of their birth, and normally step in to resolve, even the most stubborn conflicts, and no sensible leaders or elders venture challenge them. All women married into the families in a village are customarily regarded and respected as having a communal husband and are called umu-nwunye-di. These classificatory co-wives tie themselves into an association usually named after the village or the family of their marriage. They work hard and are aggressive protectors of women

against marital mistreatment. They are also agents for peace and the resolution of conflicts within the family and the village. They devise or maintain a basket of sanctions and punitive measures, which they impose on the guilty in a conflict.

Matrimonial lines have also been significant lines of traditional peacekeeping in Igbo land. In the past, rulers or other influential persons married into the relations of other rulers or possible adversaries. This helped soothe sentiments and secure peace among the different persons. Marriages also reduced inter-group wars as children who possessed mixed blood were used to prevent, manage and resolve conflict. Most of those marriages were not just intra-tribal but inter-tribal. As Gordon and Gordon (1996) point out, “when people of different descent groups must marry, live among, and cooperate with one another, their cross cutting ties together with the pervasive fear of feud and constitute an important mechanism for the maintenance of social order”.

Noble groups such as Ichie, Ozo, and Nze are generally regarded as social superiors. A freeborn member of a community can accede to any of the titles if he has attained some level of affluence and can pay for the various accession dues. Titled persons are highly honoured and have the capacity to contribute to the development of their communities and when peace is under threat or in breach, these titled members, with their strong connections to the economic base, can work for the good of the community by proposing actions intended to lay a conflict to rest.

There are established celebrations of festivals during which the virtues of peace, harmonious living, honesty etc. were extolled in melodies and dance. Rites and sacrifices are performed to the community divinities and ancestors for peace, prosperity, fertility, good works, protection, and bumper harvest, etc. Ajayi and Buhari (2014) add that sanctions were imposed on families and individuals who were seen to have contradicted the customs and traditions of the people in order to deter others from engaging in behaviours that would engender conflict. Sanctions were meted on such misbehaviour as stealing, wilful murder, incest, abuse of elders, wilful damage to property, lying, bearing false witness, poisoning, rape, desecration of communal deity, etc. Such sanctions ranged from those that are imposed by the deities such as accidents, sickness, death, famine, poverty, misery, barrenness, loss of children, lack of male child, etc. to the ones imposed by the society such as exile, ostracism, fines, compensation, restitution, rendering apology, flogging in an open arena, etc.

To establish truth and guilt and discourage dishonest attitude and evil actions in society, there was the institution of oath taking. According to Oguntomisin (2004) most times this was done at the shrine of a very powerful deity over something that could be an avenue for contacting such deity. People are always warned before taking oath on the consequence of doing so on falsehood in order to avoid shame, or even

death.

The ethical code of war ensured the respect and protection of womenfolk, children and the aged. Respect for females was imperative since they represent the origin (source) of life. The child represents innocence, while the elderly were considered to be closer to the spirit of the ancestors (Njoya, 1988). Generally, before the outbreak of conflict or hostilities, the parties to the conflict try to settle the dispute peacefully. Only when all efforts to achieve reconciliation have failed would the parties resort to war. After any conflict, the question of reconciliation was put on top of the agenda. It was usual for the disputants to meet in the presence of an arbitrator from a neutral community. In many cases, treaties or agreements were entered into solemnly and were usually regarded as binding and revered. The beliefs behind oaths were that God or some supernatural power would punish any individual who breaks the requirements of the oath (Mbiti 1970). Thus, the society was seen as having ownership of both the conflict and its context.

Methods of Conflict Resolution in Igbo Traditional Administrative System

i. Mediation

Mediation is an old method of conflict management enclosed by secrecy. It involves non-coercive intervention of the mediator(s), called third party either to reduce or go beyond or bring conflict to peaceful settlement. Mediators are sought from within the communities or societies of the parties concerned. The mediators usually endeavoured that peace and harmony reigned supreme in the society at whatever level of mediation. This is also usually couched with the maxim of no victor no vanquished as buttressed by the maxim (Isurmona, 2005). If we apportion blame to the guilty person we must do the same to the other party in conflict. Elders are respected as trustworthy mediators because of their accumulated experiences and wisdom (Ajayi & Buhari 2014). To be identified a mediator, one must be a fearless person, knowledgeable, wise, give room for criticisms, tolerant, upright in all ways, and not selfish.

In what appears to be another form of mediation among the Igbos, it is believed that every suffering or sickness is the effect of a wrongdoing somewhere in the universe. Therefore, to resolve the problem, people trace it to its cause through a system of reading the minds of the 'Powers' called divination. They also believe that some people can use their psychic powers to do evil to others. It is unfortunate that where there is such a problem, an individual may be accused of bringing about the evil through witchcraft. When such an accusation has been made, the suspicion can tear a relationship apart. Members of a family might refuse to eat any food cooked by or remotely associated with the accused person. It is in such a case (e.g., unexplained deaths in a family, malignant disease, or habitual failure of business or enterprise) that

the family or the community decides to go to a diviner or seer (dibia), often outside the community, to trace the root of the problem Okafor (2011). Although the diviner sometimes hits the nail on the head, he also discharges and acquits the main suspect in a case, sometimes tracing the problem to a wrongdoing in the distant past. To the animists, who believe that divination is a revelation from the 'Powers,' much bad blood is not left after the consultation, especially where the diviner is of high repute. As the diviner often prescribes a propitiatory offering or sacrifice, everybody is content to let the matter die. Usually, once the offerings have been made, there are no bad feelings left. Divination is a mechanism of conflict resolution that is very much acceptable in the animist Igbo society. Some village communities have invoked the most powerful mmanwu (spirit manifest) in their localities, especially those with magico-psychic powers to intervene in and settle or decide on a malignant issue or dispute.

ii. **Adjudication**

Adjudication involves bringing all disputants in a conflict to a meeting usually in the chambers or compounds of family heads, or village quarter as the case maybe. It is believed that any leader that lives unjustly or that is biased in judgment is exposing himself and his family for repercussion. Thus, leaders endeavour to live above board and to make sure judgments are delivered without fear or favour. According to Fortes & Evans (1940), in most cases, the deity is left to adjudicate matters in which the leaders feel they are incapable of addressing or in which the parties to the dispute elect to table the case before the deity. In this case it is the Chief Priest of the deity involved that takes charge and judgment is instant.

iii. **Reconciliation**

This was the most significant aspect of conflict resolution. It is the end product of adjudication. After the disputants have been persuaded to end the dispute, peace was restored. This restoration of peace and harmony was always anchored on the principle of give a little and get a little. This idea buttresses the idea of the disputing parties to give concessions. A feast was usually organized to confirm the readiness of the conflicting parties towards reaching points of compromise (Olaoba, 2005). In some cases, to make the reconciliation more binding on both parties, rituals treaties and blood covenant were used to remove fear, and engender trust, and to avoid further war. Such treaties and covenants involve powerful deities, which makes it not easy to violate as violation would bring dire consequences (Nwolise 2005). The mediators (elders) represented the norms and values of the society, especially on moral issues. They thus advocated a settlement that would accord with commonly accepted principles of justice in terms of custom, virtue, and fairness, and reflect community

judgement about appropriate behaviour. Thus, to flout such a settlement was regarded as defying the moral order of the society.

Conflicts and their resolution, therefore, were viewed as events in the comprehensive continuation of social life. Shorter (1977) has pointed out that “A typical immediate goal is to reach an agreement which includes more than merely solving the problem or rectifying the injustice. What is specifically aimed at in the search for durable peace, is genuine reconciliation and, where necessary, restitution and rehabilitation”. According to Lederach (1975:53): “Reconciliation is both a focus and a locus, a place where people and things come together creating the possibility and social space where both truth and forgiveness are validated and joined rather than a framework in which one must win over the other”. As William (1999:28) notes:

Emotional wounds and injured relationships are healed within the context of the emotional unity of the community. Opposed interests are resolved within the context of community interest in peace. Quarrels over rights are sorted out within the context of overall community norms. Power struggles are contained within the context of overall community power.

The consequences of a misdemeanour can stretch beyond the parties to their relations. Okafor (2011) writes that where one of the parties fears for his life either through violence or the use of psychic powers, each of the parties swears that (a) “I will not cause death or harm to the other person either by myself or through a proxy”; (b) “Nor will I see any danger lurking for him and be silent.” The palm of each person is lacerated and each of the parties licks his own blood as well as that of the opposition. The affirmations are then repeated, and the ritual is over.

After an armed conflict between two communities or where a man from one community has murdered a person from another community, the two communities usually engage in an oath cleansing ritual, which some parts of Igbo land called ikommee (literally, scooping up of blood) Okafor (2011). The idea is that bloodshed contaminates the soil and is abominable to the earth-force. So, after a conflict, the blood-drenched soil must be cleansed by scooping away the blood-soaked earth. The rite puts a seal on the peace agreement between the erstwhile disputants. The ritual is not punitive because both parties fully participate. In some parts of Igbo land, if this ritual is not performed after a war or in some cases where blood had been shed violently, it is taken that the conflict is not over and could break out again.

When a person has breached a customary taboo in the Igbo traditional community, he is taken to have offended the earth-shrine, which, in the Igbo system,

is less powerful than the Great God (Chukwu). The taboos are classified into abomination and sacrilege against the earth-force. The person who has breached such taboo customarily excludes himself from some of the rights and privileges in the community until he is cleansed. The cleansing ritual is meant to have set the minds of the 'Powers' at ease. If a person commits a misdemeanour in an Igbo community, it is customary for a fine to be imposed on him or her as a way of making reparations. In some cases, ostracism was pronounced against the delinquent. If the person pays the fine, the matter is allowed to halt at that as he is taken to have made peace with the community. But, if the delinquent is recalcitrant or is evading opportunities to make contact with the community and will not pay the fine, the elders of the community can levy distraint upon him. On the appointed day, the youths of the community surge to the offender's residence chanting. On getting to the residence, they can grab any property, which the man could exchange upon payment of the fine. The youths can also seize stray animals from the neighbouring compounds, and it is obligatory on the offender to pay for their redemption and return to the owner.

The Igbo use what they eat and what they drink not only for maintaining life and good health but also for the expression of the deepest feeling of love and hate. Therefore, just as hospitality in Igbo land is partly social and partly spiritual, so is the sharing of kola nuts, the drinking of palm wine, the eating of coconut, and eating any meal from the culinary science of the Igbo. When there is a conflict, there is no room for commensality. However, in the words of (Anigbo, 1987) after the conflict, as a process of conflict resolution or of putting a seal on the peace terms, a lot of kola nuts and food and drinks are shared by the erstwhile contending parties to symbolize the restoration of fraternal relationship. Both parties contribute in cash and in kind

iv. **Arbitration**

Arbitration is the least used conflict resolution method in traditional Igbo society. The reconciliation function is practiced by an authority figure that mediates between conflicting parties but is empowered to make binding judgments. The purpose is not to render a judgment in law but to reconcile the conflicting parties and its norms. The relationship between the authority and the community is cushioned by community representatives who advise authority (Ajayi & Buhari 2014). The social structure of the Igbo society is largely based on generational lines and age-sets. Elders form the senior generation set. In their role as political and spiritual leaders of the society, the elders laid down rules and procedures to settle disputes. The society therefore relied on their wise guidance, prayers and blessings. Their advanced age and experience is seen as indicating their close relationship with the spiritual world. Thus, their decisions on any issue were sacrosanct. The junior generation set had the role to execute decisions agreed upon by the elders. The elders, therefore, played an

important part in defusing tensions and conflicts. They had well laid down procedures for settling disagreements in which all the parties to the conflict got a chance to put across their views. The elders were recognised as having authority to act as arbiters and give judgement on the rights or wrongs of a dispute submitted to them and suggest a settlement though they may have had no power of physical coercion by which to enforce them (Fortes & Evans 1940).

The animist religion of the Igbo implies that there is a life-force in every inanimate object just as there is in a living object. This was the ideal behind the socio-religious ritual of oath taking among many Igbo societies. This is done through swearing by an object and invoking the life force to witness. Since the life-force knows the true facts of the matter, it is unsafe to take a false oath because it would only be a matter of time before the powerful life force attacks. When a matter such as claims and accusations, and serious defamation occurs, a resort may be made to oath taking. Each party swears to a deity that his own declarations are right. Those who swear to it normally make some small offering to the deity. If, after oath-taking, new facts arise or the parties agree to settle out of shrine, the religious priests can conduct a ceremony of annulment of oaths. Although the elders might agree that the oath be sworn to, they prefer that humans handle the matter at issue. The most serious cases, especially those involving lives, are resolved by the dreaded blood oath/covenant) or summoning somebody to the shrine for oath taking.

v. **Negotiation**

In negotiation, the secret is to harmonize the interests of the parties concerned. Thus, even when the conflict involves a member against his or her society, there is an emphasis on recuperation and reinsertion of errant member back into its place in society. The recovery of a dissident member can just as well be seen as the restoration of the harmony and integrity of the community, as the assertion of value consensus and social cohesion, so that the management of the conflict favours the concerns of both parties (Olaoba, 2005). In traditional Igbo society, for example, peace was negotiated. Apology for wrongs done to individuals and the entire community is a feature of negotiation. Such apology is channelled through the elders, compound heads and chiefs of high caliber in the society.

It is done on the representative level or quasi-representation. The negotiation process in the traditional Igbo setting is seen as a re-establishment of relationships between people and also with their God and spirits who were regarded as witnesses and active participants. As Kiplagat (1998) points out: "There is a holistic approach to the process, working with the community as a whole, invoking spiritual forces to be present and accompany the community towards peace". The responsibility of the elders was to guide the negotiation towards an agreement, which would reflect as

much as possible the consensus of all the parties involved.

Empirical Review

Ajayi, and Buhari, (2014) studied Methods of Conflict Resolution in African Traditional Society. The study examined the patterns or mechanism for conflict resolution in traditional African societies with particular reference to Yoruba and Igbo societies in Nigeria and Pondo tribe in South Africa. The paper notes that conflict resolution in traditional African societies provides opportunity to interact with the parties concerned. It promotes consensus-building, social bridge reconstructions and enactment of order in the society. The paper submits further that the western world placed more emphasis on the judicial system presided over by council of elders, kings' courts, peoples' assemblies, etc.; for dispute settlement and justice dispensation. It concludes that traditional conflict resolution techniques such as mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, and negotiation as well as cross examination which were employed by Africans in the past, offer great prospects for peaceful co-existence and harmonious relationships in post-conflict periods than the modern method of litigation settlements in law courts.

Karim and Joseph (2016) examined the efficacy of the indigenous approach to peace building in Africa. The objective was to determine how effective indigenous approach to achieving peace can be. The paper reviewed secondary data such as, including journals, articles, books etc. It observed that most of the efforts made towards peace building have not achieved its purpose. The paper found that the relegated indigenous peace building approach has attained some level of peace in war-torn societies. It therefore recommended that, for a sustainable peace to be seen, leaders of should establish a legal framework regarding indigenous peace building.

Christian (2017) studied conflict resolution strategies in Igbo religion: the oath taking and covenant making perspectives. The objective of the paper was to discuss conflict resolution strategies in Igbo Religion. The paper relied on the methodology of historic-descriptive which means that the practices of inuiyi and Igbandu and their efficacy as conflict resolution mechanisms were studied and interpreted in the context of Igbo Religion. The findings of the paper attested to the relevance and prevalence of the indigenous strategies from the ancient times till the present. The study concluded that for greater peace and social harmony in Igbo society there is need for the integration of some western methods of conflict resolution into the native forms. It recommended the expunging of the fetish elements in the traditional forms for universal acceptance especially across religious affiliations.

Cynado (2019) examined Conflict Resolution in Traditional Pre-colonial Igbo Society. The paper's aim was to recapture those social organs that made living

harmonious in Pre-colonial Igbo society. To do this, the paper took a brief look into the pre-colonial social structure and governance organs of the people and their relevance in conflict management. This took the form of descriptive study as more emphasis was made on secondary sources and eye witness experiences as an Igbo scholar. Preliminary study revealed that Colonial masters and their appendages made frantic efforts to decimate and destroy the people's culture including their conflict management system. The paper maintained that the government shall set up an advisory committee to study the pre-colonial dispute management mechanism of various ethnic groups in Nigeria as this enable us to reduce the frequent conflict explosions in the country.

Okpan (2019) studied Extra Mundane Means of Conflict Resolution among the Igbo Group of Nigeria: An Anthropological Appraisal. The objectives of the paper which was anchored on structural functionalism was primarily to account for those extra mundane approaches to conflict resolution adopted in traditional Igbo society. Secondly, the paper attempted to assess both the impact of modernization and the relevance of such mundane strategies of conflict resolution to today's conflict ridden Nigerian state. The author was of the view that given the fact that masquerades, deities and diviners are still important and revered aspects of the culture of contemporary Igbo societies, extra mundane approaches to conflict resolution should be refined and integrated into conflict resolution paraphernalia of the new Nigerian state.

Methodology

The methods adopted in this work are historical, analytical, and expository. In the collection of materials, the author depended on content analysis of secondary sources of data in order to understand how traditional administrative system was used as means of resolving conflict in traditional Igbo societies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Solving today's tough problems depends upon finding better ways of dealing with conflicts. From this study, one can rightly infer that the Igbo traditional approach to conflict resolution is among the most potent alternatives to dispute resolution and liberal peace building. In traditional Igbo society, which had no statutes, customs and tradition were the principal mechanisms for social order. Part of the traditional education of Igbo children was knowledge of what to do and what to avoid, the reward of doing good, the consequences of violating the norms and values of the community, and how reparations are made in cases of breaches of custom. The Igbo traditional administrative methods of conflict resolution stressed the need of fostering a spirit of peace and mutual respect for both individuals and groups, in times of peace and in

times of conflict. It is therefore recommended that policy makers can explore some of the enduring qualities of the Igbo traditional administrative system of conflict resolution and seek ways and means of integrating them to the modern conflict resolution practices especially where state machinery has failed.

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