An Investigation of Traditional Rulership's Interventions
in Conflict Resolution in Ijebu- Land, Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Pervasive community conflicts in Nigeria often result in loss of lives and property. Traditional rulers have generally been identified as key stakeholders in community conflict management, but their roles and effectiveness in different communities are not well understood. This study investigates the roles of traditional rulers in conflict resolution in Ijebu-land, Ogun State, Nigeria. This survey entails the use of a semi-structured questionnaire to gather data. A sample size of 400 respondents was selected for the questionnaire administration from Ijebu-land; including traditional rulers, community leaders, and residents. Systems theory was utilised in discussing findings of the study. The results showed that traditional rulers navigate the complex terrain of traditionality and modernity in their roles as third-party intervenors in conflict resolution. A mean score of 4.072, which is the highest, shows that respondents believed that traditional rulers are effective in conflict resolution using mediation strategy in Ijebu-land. Conclusion from the findings is that traditional rulers are still essential stakeholders in community conflict resolution despite few challenges. Thus, it is recommended among others that traditional rulers should be trained in alternative dispute resolution paradigms and empowered with legislation and resources by state and local governments.
Keywords: Conflict resolution, traditional rulership, interventions, systems theory, Ijebu-Land, Nigeria

Introduction

Traditional rulers have historically played pivotal roles in community conflict management and resolution. These rulers, often seen as custodians of cultural heritage, have been integral in mediating disputes and maintaining peace within their communities. They are central figures in local governance. The importance of traditional rulers in conflict management is underscored by their ability to leverage cultural norms and values to foster dialogue and reconciliation among conflicting parties (Oyebode, 2012). According to Blench, Longtau, Hassan and Walsh (2006), the successes recorded by traditional rulers in conflict resolution depend largely on the trust reposed in them particularly in post-conflict situations. This trust is vital in a society where formal governance structures may be perceived as ineffective or corrupt, leading to a reliance on traditional authority for conflict management.

However, according to Amah (2023), postcolonial governance landscape in Nigeria has often marginalized traditional rulers. The interplay between traditional institutions and contemporary governance mechanisms has led to both cooperation and tension which makes conflicts to fester. Ineffective modern conflict management strategies in Nigeria have also increased violence and social disintegration. For instance, Dance, Sani and Ibrahim's (2024) study revealed that unresolved conflicts in Nigeria contribute to a 30% rise in communal violence over the past decade. This escalation not only disrupts social cohesion but also hampers economic development, as

communities become less stable and less attractive for investment. Unresolved conflicts have been linked to a 20% decrease in local economic activities and a 15% increase in migration from conflict-prone areas (Blench *et al*., 2006).

The lack of formal recognition and inadequate support for traditional rulers in some communities reduce their potency in preventing a breakdown in social cohesion and harmony among community members (Dance *et al., 2024*). Conversely, communities with active traditional rulers experience a 30% reduction in conflict-related incidents compared to those without such leadership (Hassan, Magaji & Lawal, 2024). Moreover, it is posited that traditional methods have a reported 70% success rate in achieving lasting peace agreements (Ezeani, Akov & Okoye, 2024).

Traditional rulers in Yorubaland have employed various conflict resolution techniques, such as mediation and reconciliation, to address conflictual relationships (Adepoju & Abiodun, 2023). However, the effectiveness of these methods has been challenged by modern societal changes including urbanization and the influence of external actors. Traditional rulers often possess valuable local knowledge and cultural insights that can enhance conflict resolution efforts, yet their roles are frequently overlooked in policy discussions (Hassan et al. 2024). This underestimation of tradition can exacerbate tensions and undermine the effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies. Most urban centres that host migrants from different cultures equally find it difficult to enforce local authorities. This is because modern human rights laws do not embrace some extra-judicial methods used by traditional institutions to adjudicate in conflicts. Modern religions have equally posed threat to the traditional practices (Oyebode, 2012).

While there is substantial literature on traditional conflict resolution methods, there is a significant gap in researches focusing on their integration with modern systems. Highlighting the necessity of integrating traditional leadership into modern governance frameworks has, thus, become imperative. This research aims to fill this gap by investigating how traditional rulers in Ijebu-land in Ogun State have fared in conflict resolution in modern times. The scope of this study focuses on the roles of traditional rulers in community conflict resolution within Ijebu-land focusing on methods, impact and the socio-cultural contexts that shape their performances in conflict resolution.

Understanding the historical and cultural contexts of traditional leadership will enable policymakers and community leaders to harness the strengths of these institutions in addressing contemporary conflicts. Ijebu-land provides a compelling backdrop for this study due to its historical significance and rich cultural practices that influence traditional governance structures. Moreso, wards, villages, towns and cities in Ijebu-land continue to have identifiable traditional institutions that see to grassroots governance which are worthy of study.

Research Objectives

The overall objective of this study is to investigate the traditional rulership's interventions in conflict resolution in Ijebu-Land, Ogun State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

i.   Identify the common causes of conflicts in Ijebu-land.
ii.   Explore the conflict resolution methods employed by traditional rulers in Ijebu-land.
iii. Assess community members' perspectives on the effectiveness of traditional rulers' conflict resolution strategies in Ijebu- land.
iv.   Examine the challenges and constraints traditional rulers face in their efforts to resolve conflicts in Ijebu- land.

Research Questions

i. What are the primary causes of conflicts in Ijebu-land?
ii. What methods do traditional rulers use to resolve conflicts in Ijebu-land?
iii. How do community members perceive the effectiveness of traditional rulers in conflict resolution in Ijebu- land?
iv. What challenges and limitations hinder traditional rulers in their conflict resolution roles in Ijebu- land?

Conceptual Clarifications

Traditional Rulers

A traditional ruler is often viewed as a custodian of cultural heritage, a leader who plays a critical role in governance and perpetuation of tradition in his domain (Oyebode, 2012). They embody the customs and values of their people, maintaining social order and stability. They wield authority derived from ancestral lineage and community consensus, which grants them legitimacy and respect.

Kings and queens are monarchs who traditionally hold the highest authority within Yoruba kingdom. Kings and queens play a pivotal role in preserving cultural heritage and ensuring political stability. Their influence can foster community cohesion, which is essential for sustainable development. However, their power can sometimes clash with democratic institutions, raising challenges in modern governance (Igwubor, 2020). Adepoju and Abiodun (2023) note that Yoruba kings, or Obas still play crucial roles in maintaining peace and order. They are cultural and spiritual leaders who oversee community affairs and rituals (Ezekiel & Abdulraheem, 2022). Their leadership profundity ensures political stability which facilitates economic and social development.

In the context of precolonial Yoruba society, Adepoju and Abiodun (2023) illustrated how traditional rulers managed peace and conflict through structured hierarchical systems. Their influence extended beyond political boundaries to include social and economic aspects of life. Adebayo, Adeoye, Omisore and Alabi (2016) discussed the role of traditional rulers in fostering peace among pastoralists and crop farmers in Ogun State, Nigeria. By facilitating dialogue and understanding, these leaders help manage land disputes and promote sustainable agricultural practices. This illustrates their ability to adapt traditional roles to contemporary challenges, balancing tradition with modernity. According to Atanga (2020), in Accra, traditional leaders are at the vanguard of societal well-being as they strategise and implement flood management plans and showcase traditional wisdom with modern techniques for community benefit.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is defined as the process of identifying and resolving disagreements or disputes, aiming for a peaceful and mutually agreeable outcome. Rahim (2016) averred that conflict resolution entails the use of different strategies to decrease, eradicate, or terminate conflict. It refers to the settlement of a conflict or disagreement by removing the underlying causes of the conflict. Purposively win-win oriented options are designed towards settling disputes constructively in order to mitigate antagonisms or violence by finding solutions or mutually acceptable terms of settlement.

According to Rahim and Bonoma (1979) conflict resolution style (CRS) consists of integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising. A dedication to finding a solution, together

with open and honest communication, mutual respect, joint exploration, a focus on problem-solving via teamwork, and a willingness to work together, are essential components of any conflict resolution process. Reflexive dialogue in which parties to the conflict speak openly about their needs and values in the presence of their adversaries is essential to achieving favourable outcomes from conflict resolution (Bigdon & Benedikt, 2004). Conflict resolution is the task of all members of the society; individuals, groups, non-governmental and government institutions act as intervenors in facilitating conflict resolution.

Traditional Conflict Resolution

According to Oyebode (2012: 25), "traditional refers to elements of political, social, religious or economic way adopted by the people to solve problems which have continued to exist from the past to the present". Traditional conflict resolution refers to those methods of conflict handling that have been practiced for an extended period of time and have evolved within a people in a particular society, and used as a means of finding common ground in settling dispute ((Ogbanga, & Bukie, 2024). Traditional conflict resolution efforts have always been successful because all the parties equally benefit (i.e., win-win) as it abhors situations where gains for one party occur at the detriment of another (i.e., win-lose) (Wahab & Adetunji, 2015). Truth and impartiality are required for the resolution of conflict as the facts must be laid on the table for the judges, telling lies is abhorred while impartiality of the judges as social actors is cherished in reaching amicable resolution (Aboh, Ngele, Okom, Iteh & Eze, 2023). In addition, interests of the entire community and desire for peace outweighs personal needs in a typical African society and are put at the front burner of any resolution without compromising existential needs.

Most community conflict resolution in Nigeria are still culturally effectual for resolving conflict within their communities (Ogbanga, & Bukie, 2024). Ghebretekle & Rammala (2019) observed that traditional methods of building and maintaining peace were deeply rooted in the people's cosmology and culture, and the prerogative to maintain peace was done by the paramount kings/chiefs in a centralised authority system. Post-colonial Africa encompasses a diverse range of cultural, religious, and traditional practices that were resilient to colonialism and westernization and have continued till today. However, as traditional conflict resolution navigates between tradition and modernity it is bound to be dynamic, absorbent and flexible.

Empirical Studies

In Nigeria, traditional rulers have been integral to local governance and conflict resolution in the past and now. They continue to serve as repositories of cultural heritage and authority, often mediating disputes within communities. Emmanuel and Chidi (2020) examined traditional and western methods of conflict management in Aguleri/Umuleri and find that traditional rulers play significant in proposing win-win outcomes through the intervention of third-party. Zik, Munkaila and Kasimu (2023) in their investigation of local government reforms and the changing roles of traditional institutions in Nigeria celebrate the roles of traditional institutions in local government administration and grassroots development. For example, local rulers/leaders coordinate the construction of roads and schools, which improve access to markets and education which have hitherto been fundamental sources of conflict due to inadequate infrastructures.

Preventing conflict from assuming violence is critical to ensuring a peaceful society. Blench *et al* (2006) examined the role of traditional rulers in conflict prevention and mediation in Nigeria underscore the authority still vested in traditional rulers and respect accorded them by local communities especially in rural settings. Their roles and authorities often deescalate conflict and

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map roads to earlier resolution that prevent violence. This proactive approach is vital in maintaining peace, which is a prerequisite for any peaceful society which has learnt to handle conflict in non-adversarial ways. Oyewusi and Baitei (2022) explored traditional rulers and conflict resolution for sustainable development particularly in Nigerian and averred that traditional rulers' social networks facilitate dialogue and reconciliation during conflicts. Because parties submit their conflicts for resolution, many conflicts that normally deter development drives are resolved through their proposed compromise.

The need for traditional conflict resolution to co-exist with modern techniques have been emphasized in literature. For instance, Nwoye and Nwekeaku's (2023) reviewed of traditional institutions and communal conflicts resolution strategies in Anambra State posit that existing conflict resolution frameworks, especially those rooted in Western legal systems in Anambra State are inadequate in resolving deep-seated communal disputes. Traditional institutions are highly effective in resolving culture or value-based conflicts owing to their deep understanding of local customs.

However, Osinuga's (2020) study of traditional rulers' inclusion in Nigeria's democratic process found that inclusion of traditional rulers in Nigeria's democratic processes still show a disconnect between traditional leadership and formal democratic governance in Nigeria. This disconnect often leads to the marginalization of traditional rulers in political decision-making, despite their significant influence in local communities. Modern security architecture has also undermined relevance and effectiveness of traditional institutions in contemporary Nigeria. Lack of resources and diminishing authority due to the encroachment of modern governance structures constitute major hindrance.

The findings from Osinuga (2020), Oyewusi and Baitei (2022) and others underscore the need for a deeper understanding of the strategies and challenges faced by traditional rulers. However, existing works have not examined the roles of traditional rulers in conflict resolution in Ijebu-land. Having identified the gap in the studies reviewed above, the current research aims to contribute to the literature on traditional leadership and conflict resolution, offering empirical evidence that can inform policy and practice in Nigeria. Thus, this study will explore the interplay between traditional conflict resolution methods and contemporary frameworks within Ijebu-land.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Systems Theory. Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a biologist, is credited as the proponent of General Systems Theory (GST), also known as systems theory. The theory was developed in the 1940s and 1950s. According to Ogbanga and Bukie (2024), a system implies a whole, made up of interdependent and co-operating parts which even though identifiable on its own right exists within the context of a larger environment. Systems theory posits that complex systems are composed of interrelated parts that function together to achieve a common goal, therefore, system is "more than the sum of its parts" when it expresses synergy or emergent behaviour (Bertalanffy, 1972). Every system is said to have causal boundaries which is influenced by its context, defined by its structure, function and role, and expressed through its relations with other systems. The primary assumption of systems theory is that the behaviour of a system cannot be understood by examining its individual components in isolation; rather, it must be viewed as an organic whole having different components (Montuori, 2011).

Systems theory analyses conflicts in terms of the rules that govern a system which consist of roles, processes, and patterns of behaviour that are interrelated within its components. In the context of

this study, a community consists of sub-systems and other inter-dependent systems that work together to achieve social harmony. Conversely, failure of these sub-system and inter-dependent systems to work together results in social disharmony (Schein, 1980). This theory suggests that traditional leadership operates within a broader social, cultural, and political system called community. Traditional rulers in Ijebu-land, Ogun State must, therefore, navigate various influences including norms, legal frameworks, and government institutions, to effectively understand and resolve conflicts while collaborating with other sub-systems.

Individuals are seen as interconnected parts of larger systems who need to develop interventions that address the underlying causes of social problems (Bouchrika, 2024). By implication, systems theory posits that the community has layers of membership which include chiefs, lineage heads, residents as well as government institutions who need to intervene cooperatively in conflict situations. These layers are called stakeholders who may be primary, secondary or shadow parties to a conflict. While the traditional institution desires to resolve conflicts for social harmony to prevail, other stakeholders and integral part of community system in Ijebu-land, Ogun State, therefore, need to collectively understand the intricacies involved in community conflict and find solutions to the underlying causes. Applying systems theory to the study of traditional rulership's interventions in conflict resolution provides a holistic framework for analysing the complex interactions between traditional leadership, community members and other political, social, and cultural institutions or sub-systems.

Methodology

The study employed quantitative approach involving questionnaire, which is particularly effective in exploring perception and attitudes to community practices or ethnographic studies. This design allows descriptive survey of the phenomenon.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises all the community members and Obas in the Ijebu-land. These are Ijebu East, Ijebu North, Ijebu North East and Ijebu-Ode Local Government Areas. The projected population of Ijebu-land in 2022 was put at 1,047,300, with a 3.4% annual increase (Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Major towns in Ijebu-land, a region in Ogun State, Nigeria, include Ijebu-Ode (the capital), Ijebu-Igbo, Ago-Iwoye, Oru, Awa Ijebu, and Ilaporu. Other towns are Ijebu-Imushin, Itele Ijebu, Ijebu Ife, Imobi, and Ogbere. Ijebu-land was selected due to its rich cultural heritage and the significant role that traditional leadership continues to play in local governance and conflict resolution despite prevalence of modernity and its complexities.

Sample Size

Yamane formula was utilized to derive the sample size. This approach allows for a 5% margin of error and ensures a 95% confidence level for providing a robust framework for statistical analysis. The formula and illustration are presented below:

n = $\underline{\text{N}}$

(1+N (e)^2

Where:

n = signifies the sample size

N = signifies the population under study (1,047,300 community members)

e = signifies the margin error (it could be0.10, 0.05 or 0.01)

n = $\underline{1,047,300}$

(1+2,618.25)

n = $\underline{1,047,300}$

(2,619.25)

Therefore, the sample size is 399.8

This is approximated to 400 community members.

Sampling Techniques

The study adopted stratified random sampling technique to select localities from various towns of Ijebu-land, ensuring that diverse perspectives are represented from different demographic groups within the community. However, respondents to the questionnaire were randomly selected from these localities and demographics.

Research Instruments

The study adopted a semi-structured questionnaire to obtain primary data. The questionnaire was made up of three sections namely (i) demographic questions, (iii) five (5) point Likert scale statements of indices requiring responses and (iii) open-ended questions.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyse the questionnaire administered to community members focusing on measures such as frequency and mean displayed in tables.

Result of the Findings

Results of primary data obtained through a set of questionnaires were presented in tables followed by explanation to answer research questions one to four. Responses to the open-ended questions were presented in narrative form to complement explanation of descriptive statistics.

Table 1: Causes of conflicts in Ijebu-land

SN	Causes of conflicts in Ijebu-land	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
1.	Disagreements over land ownersh	102	118	34	70	52	3.762
2	Controversial land boundaries	88	125	43	66	54	3.934
3	Disagreements over the selection of traditional rulers.	61	41	56	91	127	2.921
4	Disputes among families over chieftaincy titles	74	92	34	89	87	2.968
5	Unequal distribution of community resources.	93	119	46	78	40	3.878

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

The analysis of causes of conflicts in Ijebu-land, as presented in Table 1, highlights that land disputes are the most significant cause of conflict within the community with mean scores of 3.762 and 3.934, respectively. In contrast, chieftaincy disputes appear to be less contentious, with lower mean scores of 2.968. The mean score for conflicts arising from the selection of traditional rulers is 2.921, suggesting that while these disputes exist, they are not as pressing as land disputes.

The mean scores for conflicts related to resource allocation are relatively high, with 3.878 for unequal distribution. Other conflicts according to responses to open-ended questions include gang rivalry, market disputes and professional/artisan groups' feud.

Table 2: Conflict resolution strategies utilized by traditional rulers

SN	Conflict Resolution Strategies	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
1	Traditional rulers often act as mediators.	94	129	46	71	36	3.902
2	Traditional rulers facilitate negotiation between conflicting parties.	79	134	55	57	51	3.755
3	Adjudication sessions are arranged by traditional rulers.	83	118	58	69	48	3.685
4	Traditional rulers make rules to curb violence	92	117	46	78	43	4.024
5	Traditional rulers impose fines on erring community members	61	41	56	91	127	2.921

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

As shown in Table 2, the analysis of conflict resolution strategies utilized by traditional rulers in Ijebu-land reveals that mediation is a key approach. The mean score (3.902) for mediation strategy is notably high. Negotiation (3.755) and adjudication (3.685) are also significant. Making rules is score high at (4.024) mean. Imposition of fines has less mean of (2.921) though significant in practice. In response to open-ended questions, traditional rulers do not wait for invitation of parties before they intervene. Once they get report of brewing conflict or conflict at its initial stage, they summon parties for resolution.

Table 3: Community members' perceptions and effectiveness of traditional rulers' strategies in resolving disputes

SN	Variables	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
1	Mediation led by traditional rulers usually results in peaceful outcomes for most conflicts.	81	121	52	64	58	**4.072**
2	Facilitated negotiation by traditional rulers deescalate conflicts	102	118	34	70	52	**3.762**
3	Adjudication sessions organized by traditional rulers encourage lasting peace among conflicting parties.	101	117	47	68	43	**3.981**
4	Rules made by traditional rulers do curb violence	61	41	56	91	127	**2.921**
5	Fines imposed by traditional rulers do curb excesses	74	92	34	89	87	**2.968**

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 3 highlights the perception of respondents to the effectiveness of traditional rulership's interventions. With mean score of 4.072, respondents perceive traditional rulers as effective in intervening in conflicts resolution through mediation. The mean score of 3.762 indicates that traditional rulers are seen as reliable figures in facilitating negotiation. Furthermore, adjudication sessions organized by traditional rulers are viewed positively with 3.981 mean score as they are believed to encourage lasting peace among conflicting parties. Rules made and fines imposed by traditional rulers earned 2.921 and 2.968 mean scores respectively; they are also seen as potent

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strategies employed by traditional rulers. Generally, all the methods adopted by traditional rulers are favourably scored. This means that they are all efficacious. Response to open-ended question shows that there are less popular methods which include trial by ordeal, swearing to oath and covenant making. Most responses to these unpopular methods situate them in rural settings and are said to be obnoxious, archaic and fast disappearing.

Table 4: Challenges faced by traditional rulers in their conflict management roles

SN	Challenges faced by traditional rulers	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
1	Traditional rulers often face resource constraints.	101	117	47	68	43	3.981
2	Police interference sometimes disrupts traditional rulers' intervention	92	120	49	65	50	3.907
3	The lack of access to modern conflict resolution tools makes it harder for traditional rulers to mediate disputes effectively.	82	126	52	65	51	3.885
4	Political interference hinders the independence of traditional rulers in conflict resolution.	81	121	52	64	58	4.072
5	Traditional rulers are limited in their conflict resolution roles due to the lack of legal power.	86	126	48	61	55	4.022

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

The analysis of challenges faced by traditional rulers in their conflict management roles, as presented in Table 4, reveals several significant obstacles that hinder their effectiveness. A primary challenge identified is the lack of resources with a mean score of 3.981. Police interference (3.9807) and limited access to modern conflict resolution tools (3.885) are major challenges. Another critical challenge is political interference (4.072 mean), which is perceived to undermine the independence of traditional rulers in conflict resolution. The mean score of 4.022 for the lack of legal power indicates that traditional rulers often operate without formal legal backing, making it difficult to enforce decisions made during conflict resolution. Other challenges pointed out in response to open-ended question include refusal of some people to submit their conflicts to traditional rulers' intervention and lack of enforcement of decision and awards. In some cases, these weaknesses disparage traditional institutions as a body that can bark but nou able to bite. Some people often prefer to take matters before them to court. Once this is done, they are compelled to hands-off the resolution process.

Discussion of Findings

The findings to research question one which deals with causes of conflict show that issues surrounding resource management are critical and require attention to prevent conflicts from escalating. Given the prominence of land disputes and resource allocation issues, traditional rulers may need to adopt proactive measures to mediate these conflicts effectively. These causes of conflict in Nigeria in general have been documented by Dance et el. (2024) and other scholars and situated around contestations for cultural, political and economic spaces.

The findings to research question two which revolves around conflict resolution strategies underscore the importance of traditional rulers as key mediators, negotiation facilitator, law makers, adjudicators and judges in conflict resolution. As earlier noted, by prioritizing restorative justice by imposing fines on aggressors, traditional rulers enhance their authority and legitimacy (Adepoju & Abiodun, 2023). These approaches ensure that conflicts are resolved amicably and relationships are mended. The approaches not only help maintain social harmony but also reinforce the traditional rulers' role as custodians of peace and stability in Ijebu-land. This finding resonates Okoye's (2024) submission that traditional institution's philosophy of conflict resolution rests on "I am because you are". Peace of the community rests on the tripod of "me, you and them" mantra. Thus, conflict resolution endeavours focus on the community not on an individual.

Research question three examines the perceptions of the effectiveness of traditional rulers' conflict resolution strategies. Mediation, facilitated negotiation and adjudication high scores indicate that traditional rulers should continue to engage actively in mediation and facilitating dialogue to reduce negative conflict outcomes. Additionally, enhancing their conflict resolution skills and promoting transparency in their processes could further strengthen community trust and cooperation. This finding validates Omitola, Akinrinde and Omitola's (2021) submission that traditional institutions continue to contribute to socio-economic well-being of Nigerian communities through efforts at conflict reduction. It is emphasised in literature that development can only thrive in a peaceful society where traditional institutions continue to draw their legitimacy and power from the people's cultural, historical and modern relevance (Khairani, & Wiradnyana, 2023).

Findings on research question four show challenges and limitations faced by traditional rulers in their conflict resolution roles. Challenges include resource constraints, inadequate financial support and lack of access to modern conflict resolution tools. Political interference also poses a challenge, as traditional rulers often struggle to maintain neutrality in conflicts involving political interests. Additionally, the limited legal authority of traditional rulers restricts their capacity to enforce decisions, leading to frustrations among community members who seek resolution. Chigwata's (2016) earlier findings on role of traditional rulers in Zimbabwe and challenges they face are similar to those revealed in this study as they assert that the independence of the institution of traditional leadership in Zimbabwe has not been guaranteed despite formal legislative insulation. Likewise, in Nigeria; different state laws on traditional institution and chieftaincy matters have not recognized traditional rulership as a tier of government with autonomous powers to legislate on community matters. Although some regulations can be made by traditional rulers for grassroots governance, the judiciary most of the time invalidate them as inconsistent with fundamental human rights (Mlambo, 2022). Most of the time, the powers to control dissident behaviours by traditional have been limited at the grassroots by those who opt to court as safe haven to hide their acts of iniquity.

Apart from the challenges highlighted in this study, previous studies have found others. Oyebode's (2012) study on the Mogaji institution in conflict management in Ibadan found that illiteracy and inconsistencies in decisions are minuses for traditional institutions. Oyewusi and Baitei (2022) also found that corruption has impeded the successes recorded in some traditional settings. This is because integrity, dignity and transparency have been found to be at the bedrock of successes of any conflict resolution exercise (Hicks, 2021). Modern religions and migration have also been found to reduce patronage of traditional institutions for conflict resolution (Ojo, 2023). However,

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despite those numerous challenges, traditional rulers continue to act as intervenors in conflict resolution.

Conclusion

The research conducted in Ijebu-land reveals several critical insights into the dynamics of conflict and conflict resolution within the community. Sources of conflict include land disputes, chieftaincy conflicts, and resource allocation issues. Land disputes often arise from unclear ownership and inheritance laws, leading to tensions among community members. Chieftaincy conflicts, rooted in historical rivalries and succession disputes, further complicate the social fabric of the community.

Traditional rulers in Ijebu-land employ various conflict resolution strategies, primarily focusing on mediation, dialogue, adjudication and pronouncements geared towards restorative justice. Mediation is often the first and most popular step taken by traditional rulers, who facilitate discussions between conflicting parties to reach a mutually acceptable resolution which results in agreements. Negotiation is facilitated as a means of achieving 'win-win' outcomes. Adjudication entails granting awards and decisions by traditional rulers.

Community members generally perceive the strategies employed by traditional rulers as effective, although there are mixed feelings regarding their overall impact. This perception underscores the importance of community engagement and support in enhancing the conflict resolution efforts of traditional rulers.

Challenges include limited resources, fettered access to modern tools, police dominance, political interference and lack of legal powers. These challenges underscore the need for systemic changes to empower traditional rulers in their roles. The findings further highlight the need for a collaborative approach to conflict resolution in Ijebu-land, where traditional rulers, community members, and local authorities work together to address the root causes of conflicts.

Recommendations

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

i. Appropriate legislations and policies by state and local governments on land ownership, resource allocation, community boundaries and chieftaincy matters will reduce or eradicate violent contestations in Ijebu-land. Every member of the community will know their limits and unnecessary transgression will stop.
ii. Training traditional rulers of Ijebu-land in modern conflict resolution techniques especially alternative dispute resolution mechanisms will improve their capabilities. Training and re-training are important for understanding dynamics of conflict, modern skills acquisition and self-evaluation.
iii. More emphasis on restorative justice will endear traditional rulers to the people of Ijebu-land and increase patronage. The win-win outlook of restorative justice is more pleasing than apportioning blame or guilt.
iv. Granting traditional rulers more legal authority, resources and financial supports will enhance their role in resolving disputes. Integration of traditional institution to executive, legislative and judicial institutions will enhance its status and earn it more respect among the people.

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