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INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to evaluate the roles of indigenous conflict resolution strategy in facilitating and promoting social justice, peace, harmony and sustainable development in Nigeria. This paper focuses attention on the activities and roles of indigenous conflict resolution practitioners in settlement of ethno-religious disputes and crises in Nigeria. The paper discusses the conceptual meaning of indigenous conflict resolution. It examines the various methods, mechanism, techniques and approaches put in place by indigenous conflict resolution practitioners in resolving societal conflicts in Nigeria. In addition, the paper discusses the implications of indigenous conflict resolution strategies for sustainable development and national stability. The paper derives its materials from selected books and internet materials. The paper observes that indigenous conflict resolution contributed tremendously to resolving many ethno-religious and societal conflicts. The paper concludes that indigenous conflict resolution strategy had played tremendous roles in resolving major ethno-religious crises in Nigeria.

Keywords: Indigenous Strategy, Conflict, Resolution, Ethno-religious Crises, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Conflict has been defined in variety of ways. It is sometimes described as competitive or aggressive behaviour. It is said to involve negative interpersonal perceptions and hostile feelings. It is described in terms of what might have caused it, such as scarcity of resources. Often, it is defined in terms of its win-or-lose outcomes. However, these descriptions do not reach the core meaning of conflict. Rather, they describe various manifestations of an underlying construct.

According to Deutsch (1980), conflict is a basic psychological mechanism that centres on incompatible goals. Conflicts exist whenever one set of goals, needs or interests disagree with another set. 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. 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 neighbours 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. Conflict has lent itself to various definitions including escalated competition between two or more parties over a set of mutually incompatible goals (Laue, 1992). It is also defined as the expression of hostile attitudes over incompatible values or pursuance of divergent interests over resources, power, identity and status (Lund, 1997); and expression of animosity, arguments, disputes, confrontations, interests, war, chaos or venting of other forms of hostilities over irreconcilable differences (Adesanya, 2005). 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.

Ethno-religious conflict has taken different dimensions in Nigeria. The issues considered above are the springboards for the manifestation of ethno-religious conflicts in different dimensions as experienced in our society. There has been a continuous and unabated domination by one ethnic group over others and by one religious organization over others. The ingredients and specific factors precipitating ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria are needs, perceptions, desire for power, values, religious space, structural differences, communication differences, ethnocentrism, desire for autonomy, feelings and emotions.

Conflict resolution is seen by Miller (2003) as a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through the constructive solving of problems. Therefore, indigenous conflict resolution is aimed at terminating conflicts through non-conventional means. The outflow of the foregoing is that the idea of Indigenous Conflict Resolution is about the search for the application of "non-conventional" peaceful methods of settling disputes and resolving conflict situations using the least expensive methods, and in ways that satisfy the parties, as well as ways that preserve relations after a settlement might have been reached. Indigenous Conflict Resolution in this context is specially meant to serve as an alternative to the official conventional means of settling disputes and conflicts mainly through litigation and the courts, but with preference for non-violence.

Indigenous conflict resolution processes are part of a well-structured, time-proven social system geared towards reconciliation, maintenance and improvement of social relationships.

The methods, processes and regulations are deeply rooted in the customs and traditions of the people. The importance and utility of the processes lie in the fact that they strive to restore a balance, to settle conflict and eliminate disputes (Choudree, 1999). Indigenous processes are relatively informal and thus, less intimidating. Those who use them are also more at ease in a familiar environment. The role of chiefs, elders, family heads, and others is not only to resolve conflicts but also to anticipate and put an end to conflicts. Group relationships and rights are as important as individual ones as emphasis is on restoring relationships and reconciling groups (Choudree, 1999).

However, Sustainable Development is the development that is conducted without depletion of natural resources. It is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. The development of the Nigeria states has been slowed down by conflicts of different forms; ethnic, religious, political and institutional. Nigeria now commits a disproportionate share of her meagre national resources to the purchase of arms; human resources are also diverted to the battle field. The productive sectors of the economy are thus being deprived of the necessary resource support needed for sustainable development.

Conceptual Clarification

Indigenous Conflict Resolution Strategy

Indigenous conflict resolution strategy is defined as the capability of social norms and customs to hold members of a group together by effectively setting and facilitating the terms of their relationship and collective actions for achieving mutually beneficial ends (Fred-Mensah, 2005). Over the years, there have developed inter group conflict over land; increasing reliance on formal contracts to regulate relationships and create understanding; and shifts in methods of conflict resolution in that, mediation seems to have given way to more confrontational statutory approaches based on formal court procedures (Fred-Mensah, 2005). Despite these, indigenous methods still prevail, especially at the grassroots' levels.

Indigenous conflict resolution typically incorporates consensus-building based on open discussions to exchange information and clarify issues. Conflicting parties are more likely to accept guidance from these mediators than from other sources because an elder's decision does not entail any loss of face and it is backed by social pressure. The end result is ideally a sense of unity, shared involvement and responsibility and dialogue among groups otherwise in conflict (USAID, 2005). In other words, Indigenous conflict resolution strategy uses local actors and traditional community-based judicial and legal decision-making strategy to resolve conflicts within or between communities. Local strategies aim to resolve conflicts without resorting to state-run judicial systems, police, or other external structures. Local negotiations can lead to adhoc practical agreements which keep inter-communal relations positive. (Lowry, 1995)

Indigenous conflict resolution is one of the major strategies of settling conflicts in an informal manner. It is a term generally used to refer to informal dispute resolution processes in which the parties meet with a third party who helps them to resolve their dispute or conflict in a way that is less formal and often more consensual than what is obtainable in the courts. While the most common forms of indigenous conflict resolution are mediation, there are many other forms: dialogue, negotiation, collaboration, discussion, third party intervention, joint problem

solving etc. Though, voluntary indigenous conflict resolution is sometimes mandated by the courts, which require that disputants try mediation before they take their case to court (Nicole, 2003).

While Western forms of ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) were generated as a response to the difficulties and deficiencies associated with court proceedings, Indigenous Conflict Resolution processes were not an "alternative" to anything. There were no courts or highly formalized procedures and institutions to speak of when they were first developed and practiced. Generally, indigenous conflict resolution processes were all that the communities had in common. Although they look like Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), they were truly indigenous and unique to these peoples (Brainch, 2006).

Indigenous conflict resolution strategy focuses on the principles of empathy, sharing and cooperation in dealing with common problems which underline the essence of humanity (Murithi, 2006). Cultural approaches to resolving and managing disputes play a vital role in promoting peace and social order in communities. Cultural values and attitudes provide the basis for interaction and the norms by which individuals and communities live. These also promote sharing and equitable distribution of resources, thus promoting a climate of peace and development. African cultural principles relate to the very essence of existence and being human and how all humans are inextricably related. Therefore, peacemaking is underscored by the principles of reciprocity, inclusiveness and a sense of shared destiny between people. 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 (Murithi, 2006).

In fact, indigenous forms of conflict resolution have been practiced by people and communities for centuries. The older forms of conflict resolution, particularly those practiced by the indigenous or aboriginal peoples around the world, challenge the originality of the present-day court system (Osi, 2008). According to (Harunanah, 2003), indigenous methods were aimed at resolving conflicts and not necessarily pronouncing judgment. Emphasis was not on punishment but on reconciliation and restoration of social harmony among the parties in conflict. Similarly, Indigenous Conflict Resolution is widely used in all sorts of disputes, ranging from divorces to very complex public policy problems. Even when conflicts are seemingly intractable, they sometimes yield to Indigenous Conflict Resolution. (Sung Hee Kim, 1994).

Today, Indigenous Conflict Resolution is used to settle a variety of disputes in Nigerian institutions, including the family, churches, mosques, schools, and between one ethnic group and the other. For many reasons, advocates of Indigenous conflict resolution believe that it is superior to lawsuits and litigation. Indigenous Conflict Resolution is generally faster and less expensive. It is based on more direct participation by the parties in disputes, rather than being run by lawyers, judges and the state. Most Indigenous Conflict Resolution processes are based on an integrative approach. They are more cooperative and less competitive than court-based methods like litigation. For this reason, Indigenous Conflict Resolution tends to generate less escalation and ill feelings between parties. In fact, participating in an Indigenous Conflict Resolution process will often ultimately improve the relationship between the disputing parties.

The need to resolve conflicts is significant in human relations. Ethno-religious conflict 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 indigenous conflict resolution is to reconcile both the conflicting issues and the common interest in a conflict.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development as a concept is a victim of definitional pluralism. It is a difficult word to define. However, attempts have been made by scholars to conceptualize sustainable development. (Gboyega, 2003) defines sustainable development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not jeopardize the future. Naomi (1995) opined that sustainable development is usually taken to involve economic growth, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life. Chrisman (2004), views sustainable development as a process of societal advancement, where improvements in the wellbeing of people are generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society. Sustainable development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. A country is classified as developed when she is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry.

Sustainable development is that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Sustainable development requires an institutional framework that will be able to promote strong central guidance, intergovernmental and interagency coordination, combined with participation from the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (Treurnicht, 1997). By implication, it becomes imperative for Nigeria Federal Government and every state to take a serious look at the scourge of conflicts among various ethnic groups, tribes, religions, political parties etc, and to design viable and workable mechanisms for building indigenous conflict resolution strategy that will aid sustainable development.

Indigenous Conflict Resolution (ICR) Mechanism, Techniques and Approaches

Attempt shall be made to discuss the various ways in which Indigenous Conflict Resolution practitioners resolve conflicts:

a) Mediation: It is a conflict resolution model in which a neutral party mediate between two conflicting parties. It is a diplomatic procedure which endeavours to settle a dispute by assisting the parties to reach a voluntary agreement. For mediation to succeed, the mediators should be experienced, persuasive and capable of bringing refreshing view points and insights into the resolution process. The mediators are to be neutral adviser who could suggest resolution terms but without acting in any way to enforce them on the parties. This technique is quite productive and helpful in settling conflicts that would have otherwise escalated easily. Okorie (1997) believes that the strength of mediation lies in its emphasis on cooperation, trust and reliance on "open communication". According to Oba Adejimi Adu, cited in Punch Newspaper (2019), the re-introduction of Palace Courts in some states is now assuming a new

status. In majority of communities, the structure is such that there is a Palace Court which is held thrice a week within the palace. Most of the issues that are resolved are civil. For instance, issues between husband and wife, marriage, inter-religious disputes, land disputes, disputes between families and chieftaincy issues. Once issues come to the Palace Courts, the Palace mediators are able to resolve them. The Palace Courts have a registrar and all the cases are documented and if any person is not satisfied, the case is referred to the Oba (king), who will hear what the court has done and will adjudicate on it. Ninety-nine percent of such cases were resolved. The Palace Court has had huge success in mediation process and sustains peace and stability in the society (Punch Newspaper, 2019).

It is important to identify the role of indigenous media mediation programmes in conflict resolution process. For example, in Ekiti, there are various means of resolving conflicts with the media stations intervention and resolution strategies. There was indigenous resolution programme aired on Ekiti Television tagged "*Igbimo Ipetu*" meaning 'Reconciliatory Council' and another program put in place by Progress FM tagged "The mediators". All these are the efforts put in place in order to restore peace, unity and development to the society.

b) Negotiation: This involves a direct process of dialogue and discussion between a minimum of two parties who are faced with a conflict situation. According to Fisher, (2000) as cited by Best (2006), it is a structural process of dialogue between conflicting parties about issues in which their opinions differ. Negotiation is a key approach to the peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts where both parties come to the realization that they have a problem, and both are aware that by talking to each other, they can find a solution to the problem. The benefits of compromise are believed to outweigh the losses arising from refusal to negotiate.

c) Problem Solving Model: This is an approach that seeks to replace the win-lose orientation with a win-win one. Conflict is seen as a failure in problem solving. The problem solving model helps the group to find the causes of its failure. It directly treats the causes to restore mutual relations. According to (Fisher, 1983), Problem solving models involves a face to face discussion between conflicting parties, organized by a third party consultant in an isolated setting under an informal interpersonal atmosphere. In addition to being non-judgmental regarding the behaviour of the conflicting parties, the consultant portrays a diagnostic pattern of behaviour that is non-coercive (Fisher, 1983). The Problem Solving approach differs from mediation or arbitration in the sense that it has the flexibility and a non-directive and non-coercive orientation that the consultant requires. This approach offers wider participation by allowing interested individuals to participate in a face-to-face discussion that can lead to the resolution of the conflict. According to Okorie (1997), dialogue and consultation are the overwhelming superior conflict resolution options for all parties. Some of the measures include the provision of counselling services and open communication among the mediator and conflicting parties.

i) Altering the Human Variable: This is a method of focusing the behaviour of the individuals involved. Attitudes and beliefs may be changed through educational efforts. Interpersonal and inter-group conflict may be reduced through the shared knowledge of how the other person feels and why he behaves in the way he/she does.

ii) Altering Structural Variable: The formal organizational and societal structure itself may be altered in order to reduce or resolve conflict. Members of conflicting groups may be

transferred or exchanged, positions may be created to serve as "go between" on behalf of the conflicting groups, an appeal system may be developed to eliminate arbitrary use of power and the organizational boundaries may be redefined to encompass the source of an external conflict.

d) Conciliation: This is a situation whereby a neutral third party communicates separately with conflicting parties and provides the assistance needed for the resolution of conflicts among the two parties. In this situation, the third party studies the facts and makes proposals which the parties are free to either accept or reject. It is a process of assisting the parties to identify the case and the extent of the differences and to develop and agree on a mutually acceptable settlement. It is often believed that like mediation, conciliation is advisory but has the distinct quality of going deeper in unearthing facts that are deliberately hidden by the conflicting parties. Unlike mediators, conciliators may arrange formal hearing where both sides are to submit their evidence and arguments. A report including recommendations is prepared and submitted for the consideration of the parties. Most of the basic processes and issues that characterize mediation are also applicable to conciliation. However, the issue of consensus is paramount. Consensus requires that each participant must agree on the point being discussed before it becomes a part of the decision. Although not every point will meet every actor's complete approval, unanimity is still not the goal. The focus of the use of consensus is to make all actors understand and accept a point of view based on logic. In most conflicts, each party wants to win and no party wants to lose. Therefore, in the use of conciliation, conscious efforts must be made to avoid win-lose statements and discard the notion that someone must win.

Indigenous Conflict Resolution Strategy and Procedure in Dispute Settlement in Nigeria

Indigenous Conflict Resolution Strategy has played a pivotal role in resolving and settling of numerous family disputes, land and boundary disputes between two communities and states, and communal/community conflicts, which include; interpersonal, inter-group, inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts.

In Nigeria, however, the process of dispute settlement in majority of states and communities are similar: paramount rulers preside over disputes within and outside a community especially where the matter was reported to them. The traditional rulers mediate in a dispute and resolve it amicably between the disputing parties. However, in some other circumstances, such as land dispute, religious disputes, murder or stealing can be reported to the community council for resolution (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 chief 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 (Gbenemene, 2018).

It is important to point out that the indigenous conflict resolution Strategy of dispute resolution, management and mediation is used by majority of 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 (Gbenemene, 2018). For instance, Indigenous conflict resolution strategies were used to resolve the conflicts between Ife and Modakeke; and the one between the Jukuns and Tivs. The desired end result of indigenous conflict resolution strategy is not punishment but rather, to restore a harmonious relationship and peaceful co-existence 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 inter-communal conflicts are prevalent.

Among the Yoruba, indigenous law derives essentially from customs and traditions. Literacy was not associated only with the written word, but also very essentially, with verbal art and remembrance. Although, the legal traditions of the Yoruba were largely unwritten, their preservation and survival were done through performance to make them lively and easily understood. The traditional society presented an atmosphere conducive for enduring performance, indeed, the Yoruba people derived their sources of adjudication from wisdom and traditional knowledge of the forebears which were always dramatized. Olaoba confirmed that, the elders sit under a tree, and talk until they agree, the elders are the force behind order or decorum in traditional society. This indicates that elders, within the culture of the Yoruba, are the custodian of wisdom and knowledge (Olaoba, 2001).

Cases resolved by *Baale* include conflicts among co-wives, brothers and sisters, truants, and street fights involving children and foster children or dependants. Conflicts resolved immediately include minor conflicts by scolding the trouble makers and appeasing whoever was offended. The *Baale* (Quarter Chief) is required to visit the offended person, even to thank him/her for accepting a peaceful resolution of the conflict. It is the duty of the *Baale* to call together his household and warns them to desist from conflict provoking situations. The court imposed no fine. However, appeals could be made from court to the second court which is the court of the ward-chief *(Ile-ejoijoye Adugbo).* This court tried civil cases. It could not try criminal cases but it had the authority to conduct preliminary investigation into criminal cases before transferring them to the court of the king *(Ile-ejo Oba)* (Oguntomisin, 2004). Dispute resolution by the Chief-in-council *(Igbimo Ilu*) in Yoruba land was the highest indigenous institution for conflict resolution. In the pre-colonial era, the council had the power to pass a death sentence on any offender brought before it. The court of the king was the highest court.

In the Indigenous judicial system in Yorubaland, fines of damages are not usually awarded by the mediators in civil cases. The utmost aim is to restore peace by settling disputes amicably. In other words, restoration of harmony is what is paramount in the indigenous judicial system. Sometimes, however, mediators award simple fines as a deterrent to the re-occurrence of particular anti-social behaviour. This may be demanded in form of kola nuts or local gins both of which have ritual significance. Some of the kola nuts are broken and the drink passed round for everyone to eat as a way of celebrating the resolution of the conflict.

These actions help to reinforce the term of the reconciliation as it provides an opportunity of interaction for the parties concerned, with the hope of at least reducing the scope, intensity and effects of conflicts. During formal and informal meetings, conflict resolution exercises permit a reassessment of views and claims as a basis for finding options to crisis and to divergent points of view. Those who organize conflict resolution exercises or meetings usually constitute the third party in a triangular arrangement and consist of traditional rulers (King, Chiefs, etc).

The Ile-Ife-Modakeke conflict is one of the most recent ethno-communal conflicts that ate deep into the very fabric of the Yoruba race. While the causes of the conflict are many and varied, but it was adequately documented that cultural identity, land occupation, economic resources and politics are the major causes of the conflict between the two communities. The Ile-Ife-Modakeke communities were engaged in this conflict and violence from 1997 which lasted for about five (5) years over the creation of Ife-East local government and the location of the new council's headquarters within Ile-Ife. The two communities engaged in protracted and prolonged conflict for years.

In January 1999, the Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuade and his counterpart, the Ogunsua of Modakeke, Oba Francis Adedoyin embraced each other after a conflict resolution and peace meeting convened to end the Ile-Ife-Modakeke conflict by the then military administrator of Osun State, Colonel Theophilus Bamigboye. This indigenous conflict resolution strategy and techniques embarked upon by the major stakeholders in the two conflicting communities brought needed peace to the troubled communities.

Indigenous conflict resolution strategy that was used to resolve Ife-Modakeke was multifaceted, that is, it involves the process at resolving the ethno-communal conflicts through constructive means. In putting the Ife-Modakeke conflicts, panels/committees were set up by the government and traditional rulers of the two warring communities to investigate and identify the background, remote, immediate, underlying and incessant causes of the conflict between the two communities and address it through lasting solution that are mutually satisfactory, self-perpetuating and sustaining to both Ile-Ife and Modakeke communities.

The Ile-Ife-Modakeke conflict make an exception to Indigenous conflict resolution techniques and strategies. In the words of Asiyanbola (2007), the Ile-Ife-Modakeke conflict remains the oldest intra-ethnic conflict in Nigeria which makes the process of indigenous peace making a realistic one. Effort of the Nigerian government in resolving the conflict through Indigenous techniques/strategies and the impact it has had on the people of Ife and Modakeke is commendable.

The Indigenous Conflict Resolution Strategies that was also used to end and resolve protracted inter-state, land and farmland disputes between the people of Ukelle in Cross-River State and the people of Izzi in Ebonyi State is one of the highly commendable roles of Indigenous Conflict Resolution (ICR) in projecting sustainable development in Nigeria. The Federal Government of Nigeria through the former minister of interior, Lt.-Gen Abdulraham Dambazzau (rtd) and Director-General, Boundary Commission, Dr. Mohammed Ahmed together with the governors and traditional rulers of the two warring states and communities explored indigenous mechanism in resolving the inter-state/inter-ethnic conflict. The

contingent of Federal Government with the assistance of other stakeholders in the two state were able to interact with the people of both communities in order to know the major causes of conflict and get first-hand information from the two communities.

The former minister convened a peace and mediation meeting at the instance of all the traditional rulers, religious leaders, community elders, youth and other stakeholders in other to find a lasting solution to the land disputes which have been ravaging the two communities for decades. At the peace and mediation meeting, the youths from both warring sides of Ebonyi and Cross-River State agreed to ceasefire at the various waring zones. The ceasefire accord was reached during peace meeting which had various leaders and representatives of the two states in attendance

In a peaceful and symbolic gesture, both the youths and the elders from Cross River and Ebonyi States embraced themselves, ate and drank together as a sign for peaceful resolution of the conflicts. The delegation did not give up until peace was fully restored through indigenous mediation and conciliation (Daily Trust Newspaper, 2019).

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 (Otite, 2001). 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.

When conflicts are resolved between communities, the society is strengthened from within, and enabling environment is created for businesses to thrive thereby leading to development in all strata of human endeavour. When conflicts are resolved through dialogue among stakeholders, disinformation and misinformation are dispelled; parties in disputes gain a sense of ownership over the dispute and its resolution and participants learn techniques and methods for solving future disputes. All the stakeholders in various categories of dispute resolution should be encouraged to review their position, taking advantages of the different aspects of indigenous conflict resolution strategies, with this, time will be saved and resources will be channeled towards development.

There is, therefore, the need for government functionaries and those in position of authority in Nigeria to put all hands on deck in seeing that appropriate indigenous conflict resolution strategies are employed to resolve or reduce the emergence of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. This need becomes more imperative if the nation is to enjoy sustainable development and its internal stability enhanced. It is also to be noted that the strategies employed to resolve conflicts in a nation are of great importance, as such can have a great impact on the fortunes and experiences of such a nation. Indigenous conflict resolution strategies, which has been

described as purposely diverting attention away from, or out rightly ignoring judicial process (litigation), may not in the least be effective.

Furthermore, as earlier stated, the need for dialogue among conflicting parties is important. This will invariably assist conflicting parties to hear one another's views and thereby give room for compromise. Negotiation strategy has been seen to have universal application as a principle of conflict resolution based on dialogue (Best, 2006). Moreover, it is to be stated that when appropriate indigenous conflict resolution strategies are employed in resolving conflict in a nation, such could turn out to enhance the sustainable development and national stability, thereby serving functional purposes for the nation. On the other hand, when conflicts especially ethno-religious conflicts are not properly or effectively resolved; it could have dysfunctional implications for the nation.

In order to ensure national cohesion, sustainable development and stability, conflicts should rather be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties. In other words, resolution of conflicts should involve dialogue, thereby giving room for better understanding, clear perceptions and enlightenment by the parties involved. The paper posited that indigenous conflict resolution strategy has been a major tool in resolving conflicts in the Nigeria societies. The strategy makes significant effort in resolving various inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts in the landscape. To this end, the government should formulate policies that could aid the use of Indigenous Conflict Resolution Strategy as instrument in achieving sustainable development and thereby fostering national stability in Nigeria.

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