

**PREVALENCE OF COMMUNAL CONFLICT: ADOPTING PROPER CONFLICT
RESOLUTION STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF
SETTLEMENT AND CONTINUED PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE**

By

**Prof. EMMANUEL Amos Umana, FNIM, FCIARB, FCIMC, CFE (USA),
Vice Chancellor (VC)
Obong University, ObongNtak,
Akwa Ibom State**

And

**Grace Johnson,
Independent Education Researcher/AI Education Practitioner
London, UK**

ABSTRACT

This study examined the prevalence of communal conflict and the adoption of proper conflict resolution strategies for settlement and continued peaceful coexistence among communities. Communal conflict has remained a major challenge in many societies, particularly in developing nations where competition over land, resources, political influence, and cultural identity often generates tension among groups. The study explored the concepts of conflict, conflict resolution strategies, and communal conflict, highlighting the various causes and effects of communal disputes on individuals and communities. The work further examined the steps involved in adopting effective conflict resolution strategies and the significance of such strategies in restoring peace and promoting sustainable development. Findings revealed that communal conflict contributes significantly to loss of lives and property, economic decline, psychological trauma, displacement of persons, and the breakdown of social cohesion within affected communities. The study also established that the adoption of appropriate conflict resolution strategies such as dialogue, mediation, negotiation, reconciliation, stakeholder engagement, and continuous peace monitoring plays a vital role in reducing hostility, rebuilding trust, and fostering peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, effective conflict resolution mechanisms enhance social harmony, community development, and long-term stability. The study concluded that sustainable peace can only be achieved when communities embrace peaceful means of resolving disputes and when relevant stakeholders actively participate in peacebuilding initiatives. One of the recommendations made was that governments at all levels should establish and strengthen community-based conflict resolution mechanisms to address disputes before they escalate into violence.

KEYWORDS: Communal Conflict, Proper Conflict Resolution, Strategies, Settlement, Peaceful Coexistence.

INTRODUCTION

In many regions of the world, communal strife has emerged as one of the most enduring societal issues affecting development, security, and peace. Conflicts between communities often result from rivalry for land, natural resources, political representation, ethnic identity, religious divisions, and historical grievances in Nigeria and other African nations. These conflicts often result in violence, destruction of property, relocation of people, and interruption of socio-economic activities. According to Krause (2019), communal conflicts are typically characterized by collective actions among identity-based groups seeking to protect perceived interests or defend their rights against rival communities.

Governments, development organizations, and peacebuilding groups are concerned about the rising incidence of communal conflict due to its detrimental effects on social cohesion and national development. In addition to impeding economic growth, fostering insecurity, and undermining attempts at sustainable development, communal violence erodes intergroup trust. Döring and Mustasilta (2024) observed that communal violence remains a major source of insecurity in many regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, contributing significantly to human displacement and social instability. As a result, there is an increasing demand for efficient systems that can stop conflicts from getting worse and help disputing groups reach a peaceful resolution.

The use of conflict resolution techniques has become crucial for resolving intercommunal conflicts and fostering harmonious cohabitation. In order to address the underlying causes of conflict and restore amicable relations between opposing parties, these tactics include methodical techniques, including discourse, mediation, negotiation, arbitration, reconciliation, and peacebuilding projects. Coleman, Deutsch, and Marcus (2023) emphasized that effective conflict resolution strategies help reduce hostility, encourage mutual understanding, and facilitate mutually beneficial outcomes. Communities can settle disputes amicably without using violence by using these strategies. The adoption of proper conflict resolution strategies is particularly important in sustaining long-term peace and fostering community development. Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall (2023) argued that conflict resolution strategies promote cooperation and peaceful interaction among groups by providing structured methods for managing differences and preventing future disputes. Therefore, attaining ongoing peaceful cohabitation and sustainable development within communities requires an awareness of the frequency of communal conflict and the efficacy of conflict resolution techniques.

Concept of Conflict

Conflict is a social phenomenon that arises when people, groups, or organizations believe that their needs, beliefs, interests, or goals are incompatible and that one party may obstruct the accomplishment of another's aims. Workplaces, towns, countries, and interpersonal relationships can all experience conflict, which can take many different forms, from little arguments to violent altercations. According to Toncheva-Zlatkova (2023), conflict arises when competing interests, values, or goals cause tension between parties and is an inevitable aspect of social and organizational life.

Moreover, the outcomes of conflict vary depending on how it is handled; it is not always a bad thing. Conflict frequently fosters critical thinking, creativity, and organizational development by pushing people to consider different perspectives and question preconceived notions. On the other hand, poorly handled conflict can lead to animosity and decreased productivity. As noted by Gaba and Joseph (2023), conflicts are a common aspect of decision-making processes in businesses since individuals and groups frequently have diverse preferences, knowledge, and interests.

Conflict is the battle between individuals and groups over wealth, power, position, ideals, or views from a wider societal perspective. Therefore, in order to reach positive results, effective conflict management concentrates on comprehending the reasons behind conflicts and using suitable tactics including negotiation, mediation, and cooperation. Creating successful interventions and encouraging peaceful coexistence between disputing parties require an awareness of the nature and context of conflict (Rhodes and

Concept of Conflict Resolution Strategies

Conflict resolution strategies are structured approaches used to manage and navigate disagreements. They focus on understanding the root causes of disputes and applying specific

techniques such as active listening, empathy, and negotiation—to achieve mutually agreeable solutions and preserve working or personal relationships.

As noted by Coleman (2023), conflict resolution strategies refer to the methods, techniques, and processes used to address disagreements, disputes, and tensions between individuals or groups in a constructive manner. These tactics are intended to lessen animosity, foster understanding, and provide results that both parties can agree upon. Parties can manage disagreements amicably while preserving good connections by using conflict resolution techniques.

Ramsbotham (2023) describes conflict resolution strategies as systematic approaches employed to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts through dialogue, negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and collaboration. The idea places more emphasis on dealing with the underlying causes of conflicts than just managing their symptoms. Cooperation, reconciliation, and lasting peace between disputing parties are promoted by effective conflict resolution techniques.

According to Clements (2024), conflict resolution strategies involve the application of communication, problem-solving, and peacebuilding techniques aimed at transforming conflict into opportunities for positive change. The idea emphasizes how crucial respect for one another, attentive listening, compromise, and reaching a consensus are to finding long-term solutions. Therefore, conflict resolution techniques are crucial instruments for fostering peaceful coexistence, organizational efficacy, and social concord.

Concept of Communal Conflict

According to Jan Pospisil (2021), communal conflict involves organized disputes among identity-based groups whose members share common ethnic, religious, cultural, or territorial affiliations. These conflicts are often sustained by historical grievances, social exclusion, political marginalization, and competition for scarce resources. As tensions escalate, the affected communities may engage in violence that disrupts peace and social cohesion (Pospisil, 2021).

Conflict between two or more communities, ethnic groups, religious groupings, or clans over matters like land, resources, political power, cultural values, or identity is referred to as communal conflict. It is distinguished by collective action, when members of a community band together to protect what they believe to be their shared interests. Such conflicts often arise when groups believe that their rights, resources, or social status are being threatened by another community (Krause, 2019).

Furthermore, because it jeopardizes security, economic expansion, and peaceful coexistence, community strife is seen as a significant barrier to progress. Boundary disputes, battles between farmers and herders, ethnic rivalries, and religious tensions have all been connected to community violence in numerous African nations, including Nigeria. Typically, the repercussions include fatalities, population displacement, property damage, and strained ties within the community. Therefore, understanding communal conflict is essential for developing effective strategies for peace building and conflict resolution (Ide, 2020).

Effects of Communal Conflict

➤ Loss of Lives and Destruction of Property

One major effect of communal conflict is the loss of human lives and the destruction of valuable property. Violent clashes often lead to deaths, injuries, and the burning of homes, schools, markets, and other public facilities. As illustrated by Döring and Mustasilta (2024), communal violence is a major source of insecurity that disturbs livelihoods and causes significant displacement of people.

Consequently, affected communities experience suffering, homelessness, and a decline in their overall quality of life.

➤ **Economic Decline and Increased Poverty**

By interfering with farming, commerce, transportation, and other productive activities, communal conflict has a negative impact on economic development. As noted by Nwakamma (2023), communal conflicts often result in the abandonment of development projects and hinder the growth of small-scale businesses within affected communities in a similar vein; protracted hostilities deter investment and limit job prospects, which makes locals poorer. Compromise can be an effective method for managing conflict and differences, but it is not always the best choice.

➤ **Psychological and Emotional Trauma**

Families and individuals may suffer grave psychological repercussions as a result of communal conflict. After seeing violence or losing loved ones, victims may suffer from anxiety, depression, terror, tension, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Recent research on conflict-related trauma has shown that exposure to violence is linked to long-term mental health issues, social estrangement, and emotional instability. Long after the violence has finished, these psychological repercussions may still be present, making it difficult for victims to contribute to society.

➤ **Breakdown of Social Cohesion and Trust**

Another significant effect of communal conflict is the weakening of social relationships and trust among community members. As explained by Fiedler (2023), armed conflict often reduces social and political trust, cooperation, and identification among groups. Likewise, importance of social cohesion in maintaining peaceful coexistence and effective community functioning. When communal conflict occurs, mistrust, hostility, and discrimination may replace unity and cooperation, making reconciliation difficult (Akpan & Chinyere)

➤ **Displacement and Underdevelopment**

Communal conflict frequently forces people to flee their homes in search of safety, leading to internal displacement and social dislocation. As observed by Döring and Mustasilta (2024), communal violence often triggers significant displacement flows across affected regions. Furthermore, as illustrated by Ja'afaru (2025), prolonged conflicts contribute to social Dislocation, impoverishment, and developmental setbacks. Community development is slowed because funds that could have been used for infrastructure, healthcare, and education are instead used for conflict resolution and reconstruction.

Conflict Resolution Strategies to communicate and enforce Settlement of Communal Conflict

Adopting conflict resolution techniques for resolving intergroup disputes entails a methodical procedure meant to reestablish harmony, advance understanding, and cultivate long-term cohabitation between disputing groups. Competition for resources, ethnic divisions, political interests, cultural misinterpretations, or historical grievances are common causes of communal disputes. Effective conflict resolution requires structured interventions that address both the immediate causes and underlying factors of the conflict (Ide & Barnett, 2020).

➤ **Conflict assessment and diagnosis**

Conflict diagnosis and assessment are the first steps. This entails determining the conflict's causes, parties involved, interests, and dynamics. Mediators and legislators can create effective

intervention tactics when they have a thorough grasp of the nature and scope of the conflict. According to Paffenholz (2021), conflict analysis helps reveal root causes and power relations that influence the behavior of conflicting parties.

➤ **Stakeholder engagement and dialogue initiation**

Stakeholder involvement and discussion initiation constitute the second step. To address complaints and issues, representatives of the disputing groups, traditional authorities, religious leaders, government representatives, and civil society organizations are gathered. Parties can share their opinions and build mutual understanding through dialogue. Constructive communication reduces hostility and creates a foundation for cooperation (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2020).

➤ **Mediation and negotiation**

Negotiation and mediation constitute the third phase. Discussions between opposing groups are facilitated by impartial third parties to find common ground and create workable solutions. Compromise, developing trust, and cooperative problem-solving are all encouraged by mediation. Research by Hellmüller (2021) indicates that mediation is particularly effective in reducing tensions and promoting peaceful settlements in communal disputes.

➤ **Agreement formulation and implementation**

The creation and execution of an agreement constitute the fourth stage. After reaching a consensus, the parties create formal or informal agreements that specify roles, resource-sharing plans, payment schedules, or other peacebuilding-related measures. Effective implementation requires commitment from all stakeholders and support from relevant institutions (Paffenholz, 2021).

➤ **Reconciliation and relationship rebuilding**

Rebuilding relationships and making amends constitute the fifth phase. Restoring social cohesiveness and trust within communities is essential to long-term peace. Community gatherings, peace education campaigns, cooperative development projects, and cultural exchange programs are a few examples of reconciliation activities. Such efforts help heal past grievances and strengthen intergroup relationships (Ide & Barnett, 2020).

➤ **Monitoring, evaluation, and peace maintenance**

Monitoring, assessment, and peacekeeping constitute the last phase. Constant observation guarantees adherence to agreements and assists in spotting new conflicts before they become serious ones. Community leaders, government agencies, and peace building organizations play crucial roles in sustaining peace and promoting long-term stability (Hellmüller, 2021).

Effect of Adoption of Proper Conflict Resolution Strategies to Settle Communal Conflict

In Nigerian communities, adopting effective conflict resolution techniques is crucial to lowering intercommoned strife and fostering long-term peace. Peaceful alternatives to violence and retaliation are offered by conflict resolution techniques include mediation, negotiation, dialogue, arbitration, reconciliation, and the participation of traditional rulers and community leaders. When used successfully, these tactics deal with the underlying causes of conflict, promote understanding between opposing groups, and open doors for long-term cohabitation. Research conducted in Nigeria has demonstrated that communities that adopt organized conflict resolution

techniques see increased communal growth, decreased animosity, and improved social cohesiveness (Bessong, 2024).

Restoring peace and security in impacted communities is one of the main outcomes of using appropriate conflict resolution techniques. Conflicting parties are urged to identify complaints, speak honestly, and work out mutually agreeable solutions through discourse and mediation. This procedure minimizes casualties, lessens violence, and keeps people and property from being destroyed. After protracted community conflicts, peace committees and mediation efforts have effectively reduced tensions and restored regular social and economic activities in many Nigerian communities (Akpomovie & Forae, 2024).

The improvement of social cohesiveness and togetherness is another significant outcome. Among once antagonistic parties, effective conflict resolution fosters trust, forgiveness, and reconciliation. When complaints are settled amicably, community members become more cooperative in local government, cultural events, and development initiatives. This restored trust promotes peaceful cohabitation and lessens racial and religious barriers, increasing shared accountability for community development (Babatunde, 2020).

Economic development is also greatly aided by the use of successful dispute resolution techniques. Farming, trade, investment, education, and infrastructure development are all frequently hampered by communal strife. Businesses restart operations, agricultural activities continue uninterrupted, and investors rebuild confidence in impacted areas when disagreements are settled amicably. Stable communities draw both public and private investments, raising living standards and generating job possibilities.

The Potency of Conflict Resolution Strategies in Sustaining a Continued Peaceful Coexistence between Communities

By offering organized methods for resolving conflicts and minimizing the escalation of tensions, conflict resolution techniques are crucial to maintaining peaceful cohabitation between groups. Effective techniques including discourse, mediation, negotiation, and reconciliation give disputing parties the chance to voice their complaints, comprehend one another's viewpoints, and come to mutually agreeable conclusions. These strategies improve social ties, foster trust, and lessen animosity among community members. According to Lederach (2022), sustainable peace is achieved when communities adopt constructive conflict resolution mechanisms that address both the immediate issues and the underlying causes of disputes.

The effectiveness of conflict resolution techniques is demonstrated by their capacity to improve intergroup understanding and societal cohesiveness. Conflicts between communities are frequently caused by rivalry for resources, cultural differences, political agendas, or old grievances. Stakeholders can discover shared interests and cooperate to find peaceful solutions through cooperative problem-solving and community conversation efforts. Ramsbotham (2023) argued that conflict resolution strategies encourage cooperation and create an environment where differences are managed constructively rather than through violence, thereby strengthening community stability and harmony.

Additionally, by improving communication and lowering mistrust among community members, conflict resolution techniques support long-term peace. Open lines of communication created by peacebuilding and mediation initiatives allow people and organizations to talk about delicate subjects without worrying about prejudice or reprisals. These exchanges promote openness, responsibility, and tolerance for differing viewpoints. Coleman (2021) emphasised that effective communication and continuous engagement among stakeholders are essential components of successful conflict resolution and sustainable peaceful coexistence.

Furthermore, the longevity of peaceful cohabitation is contingent upon the regular use of conflict resolution techniques and the active participation of government agencies, traditional institutions, and community leaders. Long-term results are more likely to come from peacebuilding initiatives that include inclusive decision-making procedures, restorative justice techniques, and local involvement. These tactics not only settle current conflicts but also increase the community's ability to withstand future hostilities. According to Alaba and Adebobola (2024), restorative and community-based conflict resolution approaches foster reconciliation, rebuild damaged relationships, and create a solid foundation for enduring peace among communities.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that communal conflict remains a significant threat to peace, security, and socio-economic development in many communities. The prevalence of disputes arising from competition over resources, political interests, cultural differences, and territorial claims continues to undermine social stability and harmonious relationships among community members. The consequences of communal conflict, including loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement of populations, economic hardship, and psychological trauma, highlight the urgent need for effective interventions. The study further concluded that the adoption of proper conflict resolution strategies is highly effective in settling communal disputes and preventing the recurrence of violence. Strategies such as dialogue, mediation, negotiation, reconciliation, stakeholder engagement, and peacebuilding initiatives provide constructive avenues for addressing grievances and restoring trust among conflicting parties. These approaches promote mutual understanding, encourage cooperation, and strengthen social cohesion within communities. Finally, the study established that conflict resolution strategies possess significant potential for sustaining continued peaceful coexistence among communities. When properly implemented and supported by governments, traditional institutions, religious leaders, and civil society organizations, these strategies contribute to lasting peace, stability, and development. Therefore, sustained commitment to peaceful conflict management remains essential for building resilient and harmonious communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Governments at all levels should establish and strengthen community-based conflict resolution mechanisms to address disputes before they escalate into violence.
2. Traditional rulers, religious leaders, and community stakeholders should actively promote dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation among conflicting groups to foster peaceful coexistence.
3. Peace education programmes should be introduced and strengthened within communities and educational institutions to cultivate tolerance, mutual respect, and non-violent approaches to conflict management.
4. Early warning and conflict monitoring systems should be established to identify potential sources of communal tension and facilitate timely intervention before conflicts become violent.
5. Policies aimed at equitable distribution of resources, social inclusion, and justice should be implemented to address the underlying causes of communal conflicts and promote sustainable peace.

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