

**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT MECHANISMS AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT AMONG MEMBERS IN OGIJO COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION, OGUN STATE**

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Abstract

The study examined the relationship between conflict management mechanisms and community development among members in Liberty Estate in Ogijo, Ogun State. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The sample size of 139 participants was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula at 95% confidence level.. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the participants. The self-developed questionnaire was validated for face and content validity and the Cronbach's alpha co-efficient r-value of =0.81 indicated internal consistency and high reliability. The study's findings revealed that participants identified ten conflict management mechanisms and considered indigenous participatory approach as the most common mechanism for conflict management in the community. The study found that there was a relationship between conflict management mechanisms and community development among members. The study recommended that community development associations should embrace indigenous participatory approach mechanism for conflict management in communities in Nigeria because members can identify its local mode of operations and it is a cost-effective means of resolving conflicts toward promoting community development among members in communities. Leaders, members, and stakeholders in the community should be trained in the use of indigenous participatory approach and other proactive non-toxic conflict management mechanisms such as collaboration, storytelling, peace counseling, and alternative dispute resolutions for community development.

Keyword: Conflict Management Mechanisms, Community Development, Community Development Association (CDA),

Introduction

Members in the community development association experience conflicts during interactions toward development efforts in their community. Wahab and Adetunji (2015) said that conflicts emerge at different developmental phases in the community. Conflicts ensue when people engage in exchange of ideas and communications in their environment (Isola, 2010). Akande (2016) said that effective conflict management enhances development in the community. Conflict management is the process of escalating the positive aspects of conflict and de-escalating its negative aspects (Osakede, et al.,

2018). Ajigbade (2012) and Oludele (2014) opined that although conflict is universal and no community is conflict-free because conflicts are bound to occur as long as human beings interact with one another, members of the community are often surprised that conflict happens and wait for too long to seek help in managing their differences.

Interactions among community members naturally morphs into a struggle for scarce resources. This communal struggle is counterproductive unless there is reconstruction of the process to help members derive benefits from the conflict. Conflict is natural to human interactions and inevitable in community development (Okotoni & Olaniyi, 2021). Conflict is a development-driven phenomenon when it is controlled among members in the community (Akande, 2016). Recently, scholars are interested in the need to manage conflicts for community development (Smith, et al., 2014). The conversion of conflict from its natural state to a mechanism that enhances rather than inhibits development underscores conflict management in the community. The juxtaposition of conflict as a bridge between human interaction and quest for development is the basis for the concept of conflict management in community development. Okebiorun (2019) and Sule and Ita (2000) said that conflicts should be well managed if any society would develop but argued that most communities seldom evolve conflict management mechanisms hence they remain underdeveloped.

Akande (2016) has argued that community conflict is an incongruence of ideas between two opposing parties whose perception and interpretation of such ideas are divergent. Earlier definitions of community conflict and suggest that conflict impedes community development when interactions among parties in the community decrease rather than increase the probability of goal attainment because of the inability to manage idea incompatibility. This presupposes that conflict ensues when the means adopted by one party in the pursuit of a community's goals is at variance with the interest of the other party thereby increasing the likelihood of resistance rather than acquiescence of the group's goals.

Emeri (2019) hypothesized that the social functioning in the society is predicated on social processes of competition, cooperation, conflict, assimilation, and accommodation. The challenge is that the predilection of a community of practice tilts in the direction of conflict as a natural occurrence rather than the skillful outcome of social processes. The inference from this assumption is that conflict is a social construct that bridges interaction and moderates co-existence of human beings in the formation of the modern society and the quest for the development of communities. The inevitable

forces of human interactions on one side of the pendulum can be inherently destructive if the other does not counterbalance it to create harmony. The natural outcome of human interactions is conflict which can either be positive or negative depending on how individuals and groups involved in the process of interactions perceive the issues and manage their reactions.

Communal living and collective actions to improve the space where people reside are the basis for the concept of community development (Olayinka, 2020; Ramsey-Soroghaye, 2021). The United Nations (2014) states that community development is the process of coming together of members of a community to take collective action and create solutions to common problems in the community. The scope of community development is wide and it is a multi-dimensional process involving the provision of socio-economic infrastructures to facilitate the provision of social amenities to promote the quality of life of people in the community and integration of the community with the national economy (Egbe, 2014).

The community is a collection of people who share certain common features and live agreeably together in mutual relationship in a contextual space or geographical location (Oni, 2013). It implies that living together induces the felt-need to pool ideas and resources together to improve the space or location where the people dwell (Lavergne & Saxby, 2001), and this is where development infuses with community to become the concept of community development among scholars. The process of living together as people who share locale, socio-cultural bond, and belongingness entails organising along physical, traditional, artificial, structural or statutory boundaries as families, rural communities, and residential estates in urban centres under the control of local and state government authorities in the country.

In Emeh, Eluwa, and Ukah (2012), community development is a process of social actions where people organise and mobilise to plan and execute activities that exploit and utilise resources and materials in the community to improve infrastructures for the betterment of members. The coordination process is mainly initiated by the community development association (CDA) where membership is open to all community members. The Australian Institute of Family Studies (2017) posited that community development is a continuous process of interactions and whilst it is suitable to improve developmental facilities in the community, its usage as a tool for community transformation efforts may not be ideal where the change programme falls outside the jurisdiction of members or when funds for execution are limited.

Kenny (2007) would agree that community development is a holistic approach to development that is framed on the principles of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination, and collective action. It is assumed that community development process entails participation, deliberation, and decision-making in the CDA; all these are predictors of conflict in the community. The CDA serves as the driver of collective action and community participation for development but interactions among members may induce conflicts that require management mechanisms to engender peaceful co-existence and development. Akinsorotan and Olujide (2005) argued that the use of CDAs for development is a social action involving community participation for developmental purposes. The establishment of CDAs has legal backings in the local government framework in Nigeria. The Law emphasized internal democracy and governance in the operations of the CDAs. Oyalowo (2021) stated that the CDA promotes community development through community participation and purposeful interactions predicated on effective conflict management mechanisms.

Although Okotoni and Olaniyi (2021) asserted that there is no definition of conflict, scholars have drawn inferences from the etymology of the term to mean struggle, disagreement, or fight over competing interests or resources. Conflict came from a Middle-English coinage from the Latin derivation of the word, '*confligere*' which is a second-person singular future passive indicative of '*confligo*' meaning 'to strike together' or 'to clash' and it denotes a fight or struggle, especially one that is prolonged and intense. While there is no single approach to define conflict, the concept has often been conceived in literature by its nature as a phenomenon of human interactions in the society hence scholars have attempted to define conflict from different perspectives.

The Council of Europe (2012) mapped different scholars and construed conflict as a form of natural process in human social interaction, an opposition or absence of agreement between parties, and a way to solve social contradictions. A punctilious review of this submission shows that conflict is a natural outplay of struggle, disagreement, and disputes arising from incompatibility of perception and interests in human interactions toward community development. Dennen (2005) was categorical in approach and stated that conflict means incompatibility of interests, goals, values, needs, expectations and social cosmologies. Conflict means differences in preferences among members of the community (Isola 2010; Isola, 2011). Conflict denotes imbalance between two competing variables in an attempt to achieve stability and equilibrium (Ekore, 2014). Okotoni and

Olaniyi (2021) posited that conflicts are bound to occur wherever community of members with different social status and interests come together to pursue a common cause for the development of the community.

Conflict management is critical to community development because a community cannot develop where there is unresolved or lingering dispute among members (Igbinoba, et al., 2019). Whilst conflicts are natural phenomenon of social interactions, conflict management requires skills to evolve ways to resolve conflicts satisfactorily to all parties involved in the community (Dreu & Gelfand, 2008; Onugu, 2011). There are many proven techniques for managing conflicts toward promoting peaceful existence and development in the community (Akande, 2016). Technique refers to the way an effort is performed. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2022) and Cambridge Dictionary (2022), technique is a way of performing an activity that needs skill to accomplish a desired goal. Tahir (2012) said that technique is the implementation of the tactic undertaken to obtain optimal result.

Different scholars have identified numerous ways to manage conflicts and described these as techniques. Wahab and Adetunji (2015) said that conflict management techniques entail using different approaches to constructively engage the parties in the conflict and solve problems causing the conflict to end the conflict without external intervention. The foundation for evolving techniques revolves around Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument which propositioned five conflict management models for managing conflict from the dimensions of assertiveness and cooperation. These five models range from accommodation, avoidance, and collaboration to competition and compromise (Sample, 2008; Akande, 2016; Igbinoba, et al, 2019).

Against the veracity of the effectiveness of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, Adepoju (2004) in Akande (2016) highlighted seven generic methods of conflicts management commonplace in the community and these are the use of force or coercion, withdrawal, smoothing, compromise, mediation and arbitration, corporate goals, and problem-solving. On their part, Igbinoba, et al (2019) studied prominent scholars such as Follett; Blake and Mouton; Thomas; Singleton, Toombs, Taneja, Larkin, and Pryor; Rahim and Bonoma; and Pruitts and drew up methods such as compromise, collaboration, avoidance, competition, and accommodation for conflict management in the community. Sule and Ita (2000) suggested a stretch of the methods of conflict management from the plethora of approaches and 10-Way Approach Conflict Management Mechanisms have

been propositioned by this study from the critical review of different conflict management techniques discussed by different scholars.

Subair and Oyelude (2010), Olayinka (2020), and Wahab and Odetokun (2014) suggested an indigenous participatory approach to conflict management which involves a grassroots community-based means of internal conflict resolution using traditional institutions, elders and/or local mediators in the community. Federman (2016) developed the concept of Bruner 1990 and identified storytelling which uses a narrative mode of thought to elicit cooperation and reconciliation among parties as a conflict management mechanism. Bar-On (2010) and Myers (2021) also suggested that storytelling is a mechanism for conflict management in the community. Ememe (2018), Ememe and Amadi (2015), and Olusakin (2018) proposed peace counselling which is the proactive promotion of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to help people prevent the occurrence of conflict, resolve conflicts peacefully, or create social conditions conducive to peace. Akande (2016) and Igbinoba, et al (2019) considered the use of alternative dispute resolutions (ADRs) which entails ombudsman, conciliation, mediation, arbitration, neutral evaluation, settlement conferences, and community dispute resolution programmes as conflict management mechanisms. Wahab and Odetokun (2014) identified litigation involving the use of the court of law for legal action in pursuit of relief and justice as a mean of conflict management in the community.

Other conflict management mechanisms are forcing/competing (pushing one viewpoint at the expense of another), withdrawal/avoidance (neither party takes action to address the issues involved in the conflict), smoothing/accommodating (accepting the concerns of other people first rather than prioritizing one's own concerns), compromising/reconciling (expedient and mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties), and collaborating/consensus/problem-solving (all parties willing to empathize and try to understand one another's situation) in the community (Akande, 2016; Igbinoba, et al, 2019). The end-goal of conflict management in the community is the de-escalation of conflict, promotion of understanding and harmonious co-existence, and development in the community. Using force or coercion for managing conflicts in the community may be counterproductive given contemporary issues around human rights and democratic values being promoted in community development. The understanding of conflict management has evolved over the years but holistic mechanisms to resolving conflicts have not been mapped in literature despite the availability of different methods in the community of practice for managing conflicts.

Against this background that this study examined the influence of conflict management mechanisms on community development among members in Ogijo community development association.

Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To identify conflict management mechanisms for community development among members in Ogijo community development association.
2. To ascertain the relationship between conflict management mechanisms and community development among members in Ogijo community development association.

Research Questions

The study raised these research questions:

1. What conflict management mechanisms can members in Ogijo community development association identify?
2. What is the relationship between conflict management mechanisms and community development among members in Ogijo community development association?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 215 members in Liberty Estate in Ogijo, Ogun State. The sample size of 139 participants was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula at 95% level of confidence. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the participants. The study used a self-developed questionnaire titled Conflict Management Mechanisms and Community Development Scale (CMMCDS) to collect data from the respondents. The instrument has Sections A and B with 20 items derived from the research questions on four-Likert scales ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) and Agree (A) to Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Subject experts reviewed and made adjustments to some items of the instrument for face and content validity. The instrument was pilot tested among 20 members in Onafowokan Estate, Ita Oluwo who were not part of the sample and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient r-value of =0.82 showed a good internal consistency. The questionnaires were administered within the Estate over a period of four weeks and 120 questionnaires were returned as valid for data analysis representing 86.33% response rate. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages was used to analyse Section A and B, while inferential statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation was used to analyse the variables with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 29 years old	7	5.8%
30 – 49 years old	77	64.2%
50 - 69 years old	19	15.8%
70+ years old	17	14.2%
Total	120	100%

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	61	50.8%
Male	59	49.2%
Total	120	100%

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
African Traditional Religion	6	5.0%
Christianity	69	57.5%
Islam	43	35.8%
No Religious Affiliation	2	1.7%
Total	120	100%

Level of Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage
No Formal Education	9	7.5%
Islamic Education	9	7.5%
Primary/Secondary Education	88	73.3%
Tertiary Education	14	11.7%
Total	120	100%

Nature of Employment	Frequency	Percentage
Full-Time Employment (Self-employment and Paid-employment)	79	65.8%
Home-based Entrepreneurship	17	14.2%
Retiree	16	13.3%
Unemployed	8	6.7%
Total	120	100%

Length of Residence in Community	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 2 years	9	7.5%
3 – 5 years	63	52.5%
6 – 9 years	25	20.8%
10+ years	23	19.2%
Total	120	100%

Source: Authors' Field Research, 2023.

Table 1 showed that participants were aged 18-29 years old (n=7, 5.8%), 30-39 years old (n=63, 52.5%), 50-69 years old (n=19, 15.8%), and 70+ years old (n=17, 14.2%). Female participants were 61 (50.8%) whilst male were 59 (49.2%). The religion of participants was African Traditional Religion (n=6, 5.0%), Christianity (n=69, 57.5%), and Islam (n=43, 35.8%) while 2 (1.7%) had no religious affiliation. Among the participants, 9 (7.5%) participants had no formal education, 9 (7.5%) had Islamic education, 88 (73.3%) had primary/secondary education, and 14 (11.7%) had tertiary education. Participants with full-time employment (self-employment and paid employment) were 79(65.8%), home-based entrepreneurship were 17 (14.2%), retirees were 16 (13.3%), and unemployed were 8 (6.7%). There were 9 (7.5%) members who had spent less than 2 years in the community, 63 (52.5%) had spent 3 – 5 years, 25 (20.8%) had spent 6 – 9 years, and 23 (19.2%) had spent 10+ years in the community.

Research Question One: What conflict management mechanisms do members in Ogijo community development association identify?

Table 2: Conflict management mechanisms identified by members in Ogijo community development association

N.	Items	Frequency and Percentages
1	Indigenous Participatory Approach	55 (45%)
2	Collaborating/Consensus/Problem-Solving	27 (22%)
3	Storytelling	10 (8.3%)
4	Peace Counseling	9 (8%)
5	Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADRs)	6 (5%)
6	Compromising/Reconciling	5 (4.2%)
7	Withdrawal/Avoidance	3 (3%)
8	Forcing/Competing	2 (2%)
9	Smoothing/Accommodating	2 (2%)
10	Litigation	1 (1%)

Source: Authors' Field Research, 2023.

Table 2 revealed that participants were able to identify the ten conflict management mechanisms in the community. It can be deduced from the findings that the most commonplace mechanism for conflict management among members in the community development association was the indigenous participatory approach which 45% (n=55) of the participants identified as the conflict management mechanism in the community. Collaborating/consensus/problem-solving mechanism was identified by 22% (n=27) of participants. The storytelling mechanism was identified by 10 (8.3%) of the participants. The peace counseling mechanism was identified by 8% (n=9) of participants. Alternative Dispute Resolutions mechanism was identified by 5% (n=6) of participants. The compromising/reconciling mechanism was identified by 4.2% (n=5) of participants. The withdrawal/avoidance mechanism was identified by 3% (n=3) of participants. Whilst 1% (n=1) identified litigation mechanism, 2% each (n=4) were able to identify forcing/competing and smoothing/accommodating mechanisms respectively.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between conflict management mechanisms and community development among members in Ogijo community development association?

Table 3: The relationship between conflict management mechanisms and community development among members in Ogijo community development association.

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
Conflict management mechanisms regulate conflicts for peace co-existence in the community	115 (95.8%)	4 (3.3%)	1 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	3.95	0.25
Conflict management mechanisms convert conflicts for development in the community	117 (97.5%)	2 (1.7%)	1 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	3.97	0.22
Conflict management mechanisms improve misunderstanding, disagreement, and mistrusts among members of the community	116 (96.7%)	3 (2.5%)	1 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	3.96	0.24
Conflict management mechanisms help members of the community to resolve their incompatibility to work towards the attainment of development goals in the community	115 (95.8%)	4 (3.3%)	1 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	3.95	0.25
Conflict management mechanisms lower communal conflicts in the community	116 (96.7%)	3 (2.5%)	1 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	3.96	0.24
Conflict management mechanisms reduces fighting and pursuit of personal agenda above community-driven goals among members in the community	115 (95.8%)	4 (3.3%)	1 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	3.95	0.25
Conflict management mechanisms promote understanding and harmonious co-existence in the community	116 (96.7%)	4 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3.97	0.18
Conflict management mechanisms acknowledge rights of members in the community	116 (96.7%)	4 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3.97	0.18
Conflict management mechanisms promote inclusion and diversity that facilitate community development	116 (96.7%)	4 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3.97	0.18
It is better to resolve conflicts through alternative dispute resolutions rather than using force	117 (97.5%)	3 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3.98	0.15
Collection of dues for community development or special levies for project development is better done through collaborative rather than coercive approach	115 (95.8%)	5 (4.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3.96	0.20
Provision of community-based facilities is possible through collaboration rather than coercion or use of force	115 (95.8%)	5 (4.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3.96	0.20
Community gatekeepers use communication, mediation, negotiation, and reconciliation to manage conflicts and implement community-driven projects	89 (74.2%)	31 (25.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3.74	0.44
					Weighted Mean	3.95

Key: SA=Strongly Agreed; A=Agreed; D=Disagreed; SD=Strongly Disagreed; SD=Standard Deviation

Note: Authors' Field Research, 2023.

The result from Table 3 revealed that conflict management mechanisms influenced community development among members in Ogijo community development association. The weighted mean of 3.95 was set as bench mark for decision making and some of the items raised to measure the variables supported the fact that conflict management mechanisms influenced community development among members in Ogijo community development association as twelve out of thirteen items had mean scores above the set bench mark of 3.95. For instance, Conflict management mechanisms regulated conflicts for peace co-existence in the community ($\bar{x} = 3.95$). Conflict management mechanisms converted conflicts for development in the community ($= 3.97$). Conflict management mechanisms improved misunderstanding, disagreement, and mistrusts among members of the community ($= 3.96$). Conflict management mechanisms helped members of the community to resolve their incompatibility to work towards the attainment of development goals in the community ($= 3.95$). Conflict management mechanisms lowered communal conflicts in the community ($= 3.96$). Conflict management mechanisms reduced fighting and pursuit of personal agenda above community-driven goals among members in the community ($= 3.95$).

Furthermore, conflict management mechanisms promoted understanding and harmonious co-existence in the community ($= 3.97$). Conflict management mechanisms acknowledged rights of members in the community ($= 3.97$). Conflict management mechanisms promoted inclusion and diversity that facilitate community development ($= 3.97$). It was better to resolve conflicts through alternative dispute resolutions rather than the use of force ($= 3.98$). Collection of dues for community development or special levies for project development was better done through collaborative rather than coercive approach ($= 3.96$). Provision of community-based facilities was possible through collaboration rather than coercion or use of force ($= 3.96$). Consequently, it is apparent that conflict management mechanisms influenced community development among members in Ogijo community development association.

Discussion

The findings showed that participants were able to identify ten conflict management mechanisms for community development in the community development association. This corroborated the findings of Ajigbade (2012), Sule and Ita (2000), and Wahab and Adetunji (2015) that organisations could identify and deploy appropriate techniques to resolve conflicts for institutional efficiency and

development. The organisation is a formal community and the authors through their studies have demonstrated that institutional managers could identify conflict management techniques in their organisations. The study is in tandem with the findings of Okebiorun (2019) that respondents were able to identify all the six conflict management techniques for peaceful co-existence and development in the community. The study further corroborated Ememe (2018) who drew a nexus between peace education as a technique for conflict management and sustainable rural development to assert that the identification of conflict management mechanisms contributed to community development among members in Ogijo community development association. The study of Igbinoba et al (2019) identified collaboration mechanism and accommodation mechanism as techniques of conflict management but their findings showed that these mechanisms did not have positive correlation on productivity and development in three public universities in Southwest Nigeria.

Furthermore, the analysis of finding from the study showed that conflict management mechanisms influenced community development among members in the community development association. This result is in agreement with Okotoni and Olaniyi (2021), and Wahab and Adetunji (2015) whose studies among communities in Lagos State and Osun State respectively confirmed that the deployed of conflict management mechanisms promoted peaceful co-existence and engendered community development. The result also validated Oludele (2014) who argued that the absence of conflict management mechanisms negatively influenced the community when the author studied clergy-laity conflicts over Nigerian Baptist policies in Ogbomoso conference, 1993-2008. Although Okotoni and Olaniyi (2021) had established the effective delivery of the different techniques of conflict management on communication and industrial democracy, the findings of the study showed that members in the community development association prioritised indigenous participatory approach as the most commonplace conflict management mechanism that has significantly influenced community development in the community development association. This result supported Emeh, Eluwa, and Ukah (2012), Olayinka (2020), and Onugu (2011) who found that the practices of the community conference, traditional democracy, and indigenous participatory approach (Ebi theory among the Yoruba) respectively which are hinged on the principle of self-help approach to rural community development in Nigeria enhanced rural populace active participation in decision-making and implementation of policies for community development.

Conclusion

The study identified ten conflict management mechanisms in community development association and categorised them in order of significance to community development. Members of the community development association considered the indigenous participatory approach as the most common mechanism for conflict management. Conflict management mechanisms were significantly available for community development among members in Ogijo community development association. The study concluded that conflict management mechanisms influenced community development among members in Ogijo community development association. There was a very strong positive relationship between the variables among members in Ogijo community development association was rejected.

Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations based on the findings of the study:

- Community development associations in Nigeria should embrace indigenous participatory approach for conflict management because members can easily identify its local mode of operations and benefits. The indigenous participatory approach is an internally generated and a cost-effective way of promoting community development among members in communities.
- Leaders and executives of community development associations should be trained in indigenous participatory approach and other mechanism that engender community participation and internal democracy in communities to build their skills in effective conflict management mechanisms for community development.
- Members in community development associations and other stakeholders in community development should also be trained in the principle of self-help approach to development that will enable them embrace proactive and non-toxic conflict management mechanisms for community development such as collaboration, storytelling, peace counseling, and alternative dispute resolutions.

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