

Chapter 20

Conflict Resolution and Management Education's Demand on Traditional Rulers in Sokoto Community

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Introduction

Conflict is an essential and unavoidable human phenomenon because where there is human interaction; there is a likelihood of personal likes and dislikes as well as agreements and disagreements. These agreements and disagreements among individuals and groups lead them to conflicts. Conflicts are neither constructive nor disruptive but the ways these conflicts are handled make them either positive or negative (Amason cited in Ignace (2014), described conflict as a form of socialization. He stressed that people in organisations have both personal and role preferences about the organizations' actions and policies. However, conflict exists whenever it is impossible for others to carry out their desired action. Bens, in Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012), reported that conflict is the tension that is experienced when a group of people feels that their needs or desires are likely to be denied. His argument was in consonance with the contention made by Jun (2018), who postulated that conflict occurs whenever incompatible activities occur. It could mean strife, controversy, discord of action and antagonism.

Traditional rulers are community leaders charged with the responsibility of fostering sustainable development of their communities of which effective management and resolution of conflicts is a key element of successful leadership. As leaders and custodian of community tradition, culture, customs and their preservation, traditional rulers hold the key to the success or failure in any political administration in Nigeria because they operate at the grassroot of the society and interact closely with people in their daily activities, consequent upon which they were highly respected (Abdusalam et al., 2020). In particular, they are expected to facilitate dialogue between individuals and groups, as well as between different stakeholders, in order to identify and address the root causes of the conflict which are inevitable in such a social milieu (Hamadou, 2023). Additionally, traditional rulers should be familiar with and be able to use techniques, including negotiation and mediation to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner (Lang, 2019). Accordingly, Ige and Fajimi (2023) advised training of community leaders through educational programme in the use of indigenous participatory approach and other proactive non-toxic conflict management

mechanisms such as collaboration, storytelling, peace counselling, and alternative conflict resolution mechanisms.

Conflict resolution and management education comprises formal and nonformal training programmes which are crucial in equipping individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively handle conflicts in various contexts. These programmes often cover key aspects of conflict resolution, including communication techniques, negotiation strategies, and mediation skills (Jones & Smith, 2021) help to prevent, reduce, or resolve conflicts that may arise due to different interests, goals, values, or personalities. Conflict resolution and management education entails acquisition of knowledge and skills on how to communicate effectively, listen actively, empathise with others, collaborate, compromise, and problem-solve in conflict situations. Acquisition of conflict management skills and knowledge has been reported to lead to improvement in their ability to de-escalate conflicts and demonstrating a positive impact of conflict management training programmes (Ibrahim & Mohammed, 2018; Liam, 2024).

Statement of the Problem

The community is an organised system that has a set of rules and regulations which places various restrictions in the behaviour of individuals who operate in it. It is a social system with different individuals who share work activities but have different goals, values, status, perceptions and assigned roles for the achievement of its set goals. This makes it prone to conflict situations as experienced in communities today. Conflicts in communities have led to unpleasant relationships between traditional rulers, society members, including farmers and herdsmen. Some conflicts have resulted in struggles for power in communities. Such a state of affairs has disrupted peace and unity. In some instances, conflicts have culminated in physical destruction of farmlands and in the loss of lives of certain community members. There are observed problem areas involving role definition of members in a community. Such role conflicting areas include marriage conflict, farmers and herdsmen's conflict, social roles conflict, among other things. The choice of Gidan Marayu community of Sokoto State is because peace has been sustained in recent times in spite of the attendant disparities in income, beliefs and occupational interest which often produce great dissatisfaction and agitations among Nigerian farmers and herdsmen of which Gidan Marayu Community Sokoto is not an exception. This has often resulted in community disputes and conflicts in almost every farm place. The attitudes of traditional rulers have also not helped much as some of the conflicts centred on their personality, administrative and leadership style. The focus of this study therefore, is to assess the strategies of conflict management among community members of farmers and herdsmen in Gidan Marayu in Sokoto State.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this research is to identify and assess the strategies of conflict management engaged by traditional leaders in Gidan Marayu community of Sokoto State. However, the study is designed to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Identify the common types of conflicts occurring in Gidan Marayu community, Sokoto State.
2. Examine the sources and underlying causes of conflicts among community members in Gidan Marayu community, Sokoto State.
3. Assess the strategies and methods employed by traditional leaders and mediators among community members in Gidan Marayu community, Sokoto State.

Research Questions

1. What are the common types of conflicts experienced in Gidan Marayu community, Sokoto State?
2. What are the main sources and causes of conflicts among community members in Gidan Marayu community, Sokoto State?
3. What strategies and methods do traditional leaders and mediators use to resolve conflicts among community members in Gidan Marayu community, Sokoto State?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will serve as a valuable and useful reference material for Sokoto State Ministry of Education, educational agencies, educational administrators and planners, education researchers and stakeholders, policy makers, traditional leaders, farmers, herdsmen and other stakeholders. The significance of this study is predicated on the need for a peaceful atmosphere conducive for community members-farmers, herdsmen and leaders. Resolving conflict in community is considered of great importance and certainly requires a deeper understanding and analysis because it is a basic pre-requisite for the effective management of well-developed communities.

Method**Research Design**

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey design is the collection of data using questionnaire for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions or quality regarding a given population. The design was considered appropriate for the study because it allows for the collection of data from the sample, which will be a true representation of the population. The focus of this study is collection of information from a representative sample upon which inferences would be drawn

about the strategies of conflict management of the target population. Therefore, descriptive survey design is the most suitable method in this study because the study intends to gather information to find out the true picture of Conflict Resolution and Management Education Demands on Traditional Mediators in Gidan Marayu Community of Sokoto State.

Population of the Study

The population for this study covers the households in one community out of the three communities contiguous to the Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto. The participants comprised three traditional leaders, 43 farmers and four herdsman. They were household heads.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for this study is a self-designed questionnaire entitled: "Questionnaire on Conflict Management Strategies of Traditional Leaders (QCMSTL)". The questionnaire offers the advantage of being easy and cost effective to administer to a large population (Fajonyomi & Fajonyomi, 2003). The choice of this research instrument was to generate first-hand information from the sampled traditional leaders, farmers and herdsman. The contents of the questionnaire were related to the objectives of the study to ensure its validity.

Reliability of the Instrument

Fajonyomi and Fajonyomi (2003) define reliability as a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated tests when administered a number of times. Thus, in order to ensure the reliability of the research instrument, a pilot test was conducted in which the research instrument was administered in the two other communities not covered by the study, namely Gidan Magaji and Gidan Aku. A test re-test method with an interval of two (2) weeks was also done and the results of the two administrations were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) Coefficient. A reliability index of 0.89 was obtained, which was a strong measure of reliability. The instrument was therefore considered very reliable for use.

Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered to all the participants (traditional leader, farmers and herdsman) by the researcher with the help of trained research assistants, who personally visited all the sampled participants for the administration and collection of the copies administered. Permission to administer questionnaires was obtained from the traditional leader of the selected community after presenting a letter of introduction, which clearly described and explained the purpose of the study, the importance of completing the questionnaire and confidentiality of their responses. The copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respective participants in their various workstations during

their workhours. Most of the times, the contents had to be translated to the language of immediate environment which was either Fulfulde or Hausa for understanding and responses given transcribed.

Method of Data Analysis

In order to analyse the data that were collected through the questionnaire descriptive statistics were used.

Data Analysis and Results

Research Question One

RQ1: What are the common types of conflicts experienced in Gidan Marayu community, Sokoto State?

The data for answering this research question are presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Common Types of Conflicts in Gidan Marayu Community of Sokoto State?

S/N	Items Statement	Agreed (%)	Disagreed (%)	Ranking of Agreed Value
1	Intrapersonal Conflict	15 (30)	35 (70)	4
2	Interpersonal conflict	20 (40)	30 (60)	3
3	Intra-Association Conflict	5 (10)	45 (90)	6
4	Inter-Association Conflict	30 (60)	20 (40)	1
5	Conflict of values and beliefs	10 (20)	40 (80)	5
6	Cognitive conflict between farmers and herdsmen	25 (50)	25 (50)	2

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 indicates types of conflicts common between farmers and herdsmen in Gidan Marayu community.

Item 1 shows that 30% of the respondents agreed that intrapersonal conflict was usually experienced by farmers and herdsmen in Gidan Marayu community, while 70% of the respondents totally disagreed with the opinion.

Item 2 indicated that 40% of the participants agreed that interpersonal conflict between farmers and herdsmen's is common in Gidan Marayu community while 60% of the participants disagreed.

Item 3 indicated that 10% of the participants agreed that intra-association conflict was experienced in community while 90% of the participants disagreed.

Item 4 indicated that 60% of the participants agreed that inter-association conflict was common whereas 40% of the participants were against the idea.

Item 5 indicated that 20% of the participants agreed that conflict of values and beliefs usually occurred while 80% of the participants disagreed with the opinion.

Item 6 indicated that 50% of the participants agreed to the claim that cognitive conflict was common while 50% of the participants disagreed with this claim.

On ranking the percentage of ‘agree’ regarding the common types of conflicts, inter-association ranked first, followed by cognitive conflict, interpersonal conflict, intrapersonal conflict, conflict of values and beliefs and intra-association Conflict in that descending order.

Research Question Two

RQ 2: What are the main sources and causes of conflicts among community members in Gidan Marayu community, Sokoto State?

The data for answering this research question are presented in Table 2:

Table 2: Sources of Conflicts in Gidan Marayu community of Sokoto State

S/N	Items Statement	Agreed (%)	Disagreed (%)	Ranking of Agreed Value
1	Problem of communication	35 (70)	15 (30)	2
2	Role ambiguity	28 (56)	22 (44)	5
3	Difference in goals	33 (66)	17 (34)	3
4	Conflict of interest	30 (60)	20 (40)	4
5	Difference in values and beliefs	20 (40)	30 (60)	6
6	Inadequate resources	40 (80)	10 (20)	1

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 indicates sources of conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Gidan Marayu community of Sokoto State.

The results reveal that 70% of the participants agreed to item 1, which states that problem in communication, is a source of conflict in Gidan Marayu community, the remaining 30% of the participants disagreed with the opinion.

Item 2 revealed that 56% of the participants agreed that role ambiguity or unclearly defined roles causes conflict in Gidan Marayu community while 44% of the participants disagreed with the opinion.

Item 3 revealed that 66% of the participants agreed that difference in goals is a major source of conflict in Gidan Marayu community, whereas 34% of the participants disagreed with this opinion.

Item 4 revealed that 60% of the participants agreed that conflict of interest leads to disagreement and strife in Gidan Marayu community, whereas 40% of the participants disagreed with the opinion.

Item 5 revealed that 40% the participants agreed that difference in values and beliefs usually cause conflicts in Gidan Marayu community while 60% of the participants disagreed with the opinion.

Item 6 revealed that 80% of the participants agreed that inadequate resources is a major source of conflict in Gidan Marayu community while 20% of the participants disagreed with the claim.

Ranking percentage of agreed response, inadequate resources ranked first with 80% of the identifying it as a major cause, problem of communication (70%) ranked second, difference in goals (66%) ranked third, conflict of interest (60%) ranked fourth, role ambiguity (56%) ranked fifth, and differences in values and beliefs (40%) ranked sixth, the least significant of the sources and causes of community conflict in Gidan Marayu community of Sokoto State.

Research Question Three

RQ3. What strategies and methods do traditional leaders and mediators use to resolve conflicts among community members in Gidan Marayu community, Sokoto State?

The data for answering this research question are presented in Table 3.

Table3: Strategies used by traditional rulers to resolve conflicts in Gidan Marayu community of Sokoto State

S/N	Items Statement	Agreed (%)	Disagreed (%)	Ranking of Agreed Value
1	Forcing/dominating approach	22 (44)	28 (56)	6
2	Avoidance or withdrawing approach	25 (50)	25 (55)	5
3	Compromise/agreeing approach	41 (82)	9 (18)	1
4	Accommodation or smoothing approach	39 (78)	11 (22)	2
5	Collaboration approach	35 (70)	15 (30)	3
6	Problem solving approach	32 (64)	18 (36)	4

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 presents the different conflict resolution strategies employed by traditional rulers and mediators in the Gidan Marayu community. The ranking of the strategies commonly used by the traditional rulers based on the percentage of

respondents who agreed, reveals that compromise/agreeing approach (82%), accommodation or smoothing approach (78%), collaboration Approach (70%), problem-solving approach (64%), avoidance or withdrawing approach (50%), and forcing/dominating approach (44%) respectively ranked first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth.

Discussion of the Findings

Table 1 provides insights into the common types of conflicts experienced in the Gidan Marayu community, Sokoto State, particularly among farmers and herdsmen. The results reveal that inter-association conflict is the most prevalent form of conflict in the community, with 60% of respondents acknowledging its occurrence. This suggests that tensions between different associations or groups, such as farmer cooperatives and herder unions, contribute significantly to the broader conflict landscape in the area. This finding aligns with previous studies () that highlight inter-group rivalries as a critical factor in rural conflicts, particularly in agrarian settings where competition over resources is intense. The second most common form of conflict identified is cognitive conflict between farmers and herdsmen, reported by 50% of respondents. This type of conflict often arises due to differing perceptions, misunderstandings, and deep-seated biases between the two groups (ACCORD, 2018). Cognitive conflict is particularly significant in regions with recurring disputes over land use, grazing routes, and water access, as misunderstandings between farmers and herders can escalate into larger-scale violence.

Additionally, Interpersonal conflicts, reported by 40% of respondents, rank third. These conflicts typically emerge from individual disagreements, personal disputes, and misunderstandings at the community level (Dimelu, Salifu & Igbokwe, 2016). While they may appear less severe than broader inter-group conflicts, interpersonal tensions can contribute to a cycle of retaliation, fuelling prolonged disputes within the community. Intrapersonal conflicts, referring to internal struggles individuals face due to conflicting emotions, beliefs, or pressures, rank fourth, with 30% of respondents acknowledging their presence. This suggests that some community members experience psychological distress due to the ongoing conflicts, which can affect their decision-making and social interactions (Brottem, 2021). At the lower end of the ranking, conflict of values and beliefs was agreed upon by only 20% of respondents, indicating that ideological and cultural differences are less significant as direct sources of conflict in the community. However, while not a primary driver, such differences can still exacerbate existing tensions.

The least reported type of conflict is intra-association conflict, with only 10% of respondents agreeing to its occurrence. This suggests that conflicts within specific groups, such as farmer cooperatives or herdsmen's associations, are relatively rare in comparison to broader inter-group conflicts. This finding contrasts with study

by Okeke & Nnamani (2023), which emphasise the role of internal leadership struggles in fuelling broader community disputes. Overall, the ranking of conflict types highlights the prominence of inter-group tensions over internal disputes within associations. The predominance of inter-association and cognitive conflicts underscores the need for conflict resolution mechanisms that focus on inter-group dialogue, trust-building, and shared resource management. The findings further reinforce the argument that addressing rural conflicts requires not only economic interventions but also social cohesion strategies that mitigate deep-rooted biases and misconceptions (Efobi, Adejumo, & Kim, 2025).

On sources and causes of conflicts reveals that conflicts within rural communities such as Gidan Marayu in Sokoto State are often driven by a variety of socio-economic and cultural factors. The findings presented in Table 2 indicate that inadequate resources (80%) was identified as the most significant source of conflict, followed by problems in communication (70%), differences in goals (66%), conflict of interest (60%), role ambiguity (56%), and differences in values and beliefs (40%). These results align with previous studies that highlight resource scarcity, poor communication, and diverging interests as key drivers of conflict in agrarian societies (e.g. Ahmad, 2010). The ranking of inadequate resources as the primary source of conflict supports the resource scarcity theory, which suggests that competition over limited land, water, and grazing resources is a major trigger for disputes between community members, particularly among farmers and herders (Neudert, et al. (2020). This finding is consistent with Olaniyan et al. (2015), who reported that access to agricultural land and water in Nigeria's rural communities is increasingly contested due to environmental degradation and population growth, leading to frequent disputes.

Besides, Communication problems (70%), the second-ranked cause of conflict, reflect a lack of effective dialogue and misunderstanding between different community groups. According to Akinyemi (2017), poor communication exacerbates tensions by fostering suspicion and misinterpretation of intentions, especially in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual communities. The fact that many traditional communities rely on oral dispute resolution mechanisms means that breakdowns in communication can quickly escalate into larger conflicts (Usman, 2022). Differences in goals (66%) ranked third, suggesting that conflicting interests and priorities among community members contribute significantly to disputes. Farmers and herders, for example, may have opposing land use strategies, leading to friction over land tenure and seasonal movements of livestock. This aligns with the findings of Aliyu & Ibrahim (2023), who noted that divergent economic interests often fuel land-related conflicts in Nigeria's northern states. Conflict of interest (60%), ranked fourth, indicates that individual and group interests often clash, particularly in decision-making processes and resource allocation. This is a common challenge in communal settings, where collective ownership structures must balance different stakeholder needs (Blench, 2017).

Role ambiguity (56%), ranked fifth, highlights the challenges associated with unclear responsibilities and authority structures in conflict resolution. When roles are not clearly defined, disputes may arise over leadership, decision-making, and community governance. Research by Turner et al. (2011) suggests that unclear leadership roles often hinder effective dispute resolution in traditional communities. Finally, differences in values and beliefs (40%), ranked the least significant cause of conflict in Gidan Marayu, suggesting that cultural and religious tensions are less prevalent compared to economic and resource-based conflicts. However, this does not mean they are insignificant. More, Okpa, Ajah, Eze, & Eneonwu (2023) indicate that while resource conflicts are more frequent, ideological differences can sometimes intensify pre-existing disputes, especially in ethnically diverse regions.

The results from Table 3 reveal the dominant conflict resolution strategies adopted by traditional rulers and mediators in the Gidan Marayu community of Sokoto State. The findings indicate that the compromise/agreeing approach (82%) is the most preferred method, followed by accommodation or smoothing approach (78%), collaboration approach (70%), problem-solving approach (64%), avoidance or withdrawing approach (50%), and forcing/dominating approach (44%). The compromise/agreeing approach ranking as the most used method suggests that traditional rulers in Gidan Marayu prioritize mutual agreement and middle-ground solutions in settling disputes. This finding is consistent with the principled negotiation theory (Abdusalam et al., 2020), which emphasises a win-win resolution that satisfies all conflicting parties to maintain social harmony. Prior studies (Akpabio, 2022; Orji, 2022) have noted that compromise is particularly effective in agrarian communities where long-term relationships and coexistence are essential.

The accommodation or smoothing approach (78%), which ranked second, suggests that traditional leaders often encourage disputing parties to maintain peace by prioritizing relationships over personal interests. This aligns with the findings of ACCORD (2018), who assert that smoothing strategies are commonly employed in African rural communities to preserve social cohesion, especially when disputes involve family or inter-group relations. The collaboration approach (70%), ranked third, highlights the emphasis on collective problem-solving where both parties work together to find a mutually beneficial solution. This approach aligns with transformative conflict resolution theory (Bush & Folger, 2005), which stresses dialogue, empowerment, and recognition in resolving disputes. Research by Olawale and Ibrahim (2022) on Nigerian conflict mediation has similarly shown that collaborative methods foster long-term peace, especially in land disputes between farmers and herders.

The problem-solving approach (64%), which ranked fourth, indicates that traditional leaders adopt rational, discussion-based methods to analyse conflicts

and reach informed resolutions. This is in line with previous research (Albert, 2020) showing that problem-solving methods are increasingly integrated into indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms as communities modernize and adopt structured negotiation techniques. The avoidance or withdrawing approach (50%), ranked fifth, suggests that some conflicts are deliberately ignored or postponed when traditional leaders believe that intervention may escalate tensions. This aligns with Bonoh's (2023) conflict management model, which posits that avoidance is sometimes used when the stakes of direct confrontation are too high. However, studies by Omeje (2017) indicate that excessive reliance on avoidance can lead to unresolved tensions and recurring conflicts. Finally, the forcing/dominating approach (44%), ranking as the least used method, suggests that traditional rulers in Gidan Marayu rarely impose unilateral decisions on disputing parties. This contrasts with findings from other African contexts where authoritarian conflict resolution is more common (George, Akujuru, & Egobueze, 2024). The lower ranking of this method may indicate a preference for consensus-based leadership, which aligns with the communal governance structures prevalent in northern Nigeria (SPARC, 2023) Causes of farmer–herder conflicts in Africa).

Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance conflict resolution strategies in Gidan Marayu community. One of the key recommendations is the need to strengthen traditional mediation mechanisms. Traditional rulers play an essential role in resolving disputes, but their effectiveness can be improved through capacity-building initiatives. Government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should collaborate with these leaders to provide training in modern conflict resolution techniques. This would ensure that traditional methods are complemented by contemporary approaches, making dispute resolution more structured and effective.

Another important recommendation is the improvement of communication channels within the community. The study identified poor communication as a significant source of conflict. To address this issue, open dialogue forums should be established where community members can freely express their concerns and clarify misunderstandings before they escalate. Additionally, awareness campaigns on the importance of clear and respectful communication can help in reducing conflicts that arise from misinterpretation and misinformation.

Furthermore, there is a need to encourage collaborative and inclusive conflict resolution strategies. The study found that compromise, accommodation, and collaboration were the most effective methods used by traditional rulers. Therefore, promoting a culture of negotiation and mutual understanding among community members can further reduce disputes. The establishment of

community peace committees, comprising representatives from different groups, such as farmers, herdsman, youth, and women, can provide a platform for constructive engagement and conflict prevention.

Given that inadequate resources were identified as the leading cause of conflict, efforts should be made to address issues related to resource scarcity. Government intervention is necessary to ensure the equitable distribution of land, water, and grazing areas. Policies that promote sustainable farming and herding practices should be implemented to reduce competition over resources. Additionally, the introduction of alternative livelihood programs, such as skills acquisition and vocational training, can help community members find other means of sustenance, thereby reducing their dependence on scarce resources.

Moreover, integrating formal and informal conflict resolution approaches would enhance the effectiveness of mediation efforts. While traditional rulers play a significant role in conflict resolution, their work can be complemented by legal frameworks and government support. Establishing alternative dispute resolution (ADR) centers within the community can provide a structured approach to mediation, ensuring that conflicts are resolved in a fair and consistent manner. Collaborations between traditional leaders and local government authorities can also help in ensuring that agreements reached during mediation processes are legally binding and enforceable.

Additionally, it is crucial to promote conflict sensitivity and peace education within the community. Awareness campaigns, workshops, and training sessions on conflict resolution and tolerance should be organized to equip community members with the necessary skills to handle disputes constructively. Schools and religious institutions should incorporate peace education into their curricula to instil values of cooperation and non-violence among young people. By fostering a culture of peaceful coexistence, the likelihood of recurrent conflicts can be significantly reduced.

In conclusion, this study has highlighted the nature of conflicts, their sources, and the methods employed by traditional rulers in Gidan Marayu community. The findings indicate that inter-association conflicts, cognitive conflicts between farmers and herdsman, and interpersonal disputes are the most common forms of conflict in the area. The primary sources of these conflicts include inadequate resources, poor communication, and differences in goals. Despite these challenges, traditional leaders have played a crucial role in conflict resolution, relying on compromise, accommodation, and collaboration as their main strategies.

Conflict is an inevitable part of human interaction, but how it is managed determines whether it leads to violence or constructive change. Strengthening

community-based conflict resolution mechanisms, promoting dialogue, and addressing resource-related disputes are essential steps toward achieving sustainable peace in Gidan Marayu community. By integrating traditional and modern approaches, encouraging stakeholder participation, and fostering a culture of tolerance, a more stable and harmonious community can be established. Ultimately, ensuring lasting peace requires a collective effort from community leaders, government agencies, and residents in embracing dialogue and collaboration as fundamental principles for conflict resolution.

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