

"Traditional Cure for Modern Conflicts": Exploring Traditional Mechanisms for Traditional Justice and Reconciliation in Adamawa State, Northeastern Nigeria

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Abstract

Original Research Article

This study explored traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation in Adamawa State, Northeastern Nigeria. The research was set in four Local Government Areas - Yola North, Numan, Madagali and Michika. Using a qualitative descriptive design, primary and secondary data were utilized. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to collect primary data from a sample population of traditional rulers, community leaders, legal practitioners, and religious leaders which made up of 30 Key Informant Interviews (KII) and 15 In-depth Interviews (IDI). Secondary data were obtained from journal articles, textbooks, reports, and newspapers. Thematic qualitative analysis was used to analyse data. Findings reveal viable traditional mechanisms including Tara (fines/compensation), Sulhu (Mediation and conciliation), Bollum (Oath Taking), Murabus (Banishment), and Wariya (Ostracism). These mechanisms are still effective because of their cultural significance, community participation and informal nature. However, lack of formal legal recognition and human rights concerns remains challenging. The study concludes that a careful consideration and collaboration among stakeholders are required to guarantee a hybridisation of traditional and formal justice systems in Adamawa State.

Keywords: Conflict, Reconciliation, Traditional cure, Justice, Traditional Mechanisms, Adamawa State.

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Introduction

Conflict is a constant phenomenon of human interactions. As a result of this, many mechanisms have been developed to manage or resolve conflict completely. Some of these mechanisms have global application in any type of conflict, while others are context-specific. Litigation has proven to be ineffective in sustaining peace because it is focused

on a win-lose approach, while the global search for peace and security is concerned with restorative justice and reconciliation that have the potential for sustainable peace. This has led to calls by peace scholars and practitioners for state and non-state actors to adopt more traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation, especially in post-conflict peacebuilding (Muhammad-Baba, & Tukura, 2026;



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Afatakpa & Olufunmilayo, 2026; Aminu & Basil, 2022).

In modern conflicts, the world has witnessed the application of various traditional mechanisms for traditional justice and reconciliation in both internal and intra-state conflicts. For example, the use of traditional village councils known as *panchayats* in India to resolve local conflicts has been argued to be successful (Ananth, 2014). The *Sulh* tradition in many Asian countries with Muslim-majority populations is an arbitration mechanism that involves the intervention of mediators or elders who negotiate and reconcile conflicting parties outside the formal legal system (Haroon, 2017). Before colonialism, African communities had developed distinct but interrelated traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation based on elders, traditional rulers, clan heads, age groups, and religious leaders (Zartman, 2000). This can be found in various pre-colonial political systems such as the Oyo Empire, the Mali Empire, the Fulani/Hausa Emirates, etc. Colonialism eroded these traditional justice systems and introduced the Western culture of the court system, where there is very little chance for reconciliation and peace.

The use of councils of elders, chiefs, elders, age groups, and kings to resolve conflict and ensure justice is not new in Nigeria. This is a cultural practice that has outlived colonialism. Like most African countries, Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society with a very religious population. This has led to a socio-cultural and religious belief in restorative justice rather than retributive justice (Anthony et al., 2020). This means that the primary aim is to restore relationships and promote healing, rather than punish offenders. The approach is community-based and involves the participation of all stakeholders, including the offender, the victim, and the community leaders. This traditional mechanism has proven to be effective in resolving disputes related to land, marriage, inheritance, and other issues. It has also been used to promote social cohesion and address conflict between different religious and ethnic groups in the country.

In Adamawa State, the use of traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation is not

different, as seen above. The state is also a multi-ethnic and religious society. The practice of kingship and chieftdom is paramount, thus ensuring community-based approaches to justice and reconciliation. To this end, the paper contextualized three objectives. One, the identification and assessment of some major traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation in Adamawa State. Two, the assessment of the effectiveness and limitations of the mechanisms. Three, the exploration of the opportunities for synergy between traditional and modern justice systems in Adamawa State.

Statement of the Problem

Quite a number of communities in Adamawa State still appreciate the utility of traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation despite the current acceptance and use of constitutional court systems in Nigeria. Intractable communal conflicts, family conflicts, land contestations, local criminal activities, chieftaincy tussles, and ethnic tensions are some major conflicts that can best be resolved using localized mechanisms that appreciate reconciliation and building relationships over the punitive measures obtainable in extant laws in courts. However, indigenous mechanisms have been relegated because of over reliance and dominance of Western-style retributive justice systems.

Hassan and Tyvoll (2018) have highlighted some traditional mechanisms for traditional justice and reconciliation in Adamawa State, such as *Tifinitie*, *Bollum*, *Shafa*, *Sulhu*, *Hunayeere*, *Kommbol*, and *Pulaaku*. However, these mechanisms have not been fully explored in scholarship, especially in terms of their utility in a community-based hybrid system and modern conflicts. More so, there is a disconnect between these traditional methods and formal justice systems. There is a need for a hybridisation of formal state retributive justice and community-based mechanisms. This is the gap this study seeks to fill by exploring these traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation in Adamawa State, Northeastern Nigeria.

Literature Review

Traditionalist, Modernist, and Hybridist Debates on Traditional Conflict Resolution in Africa

Current debate on traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation in Africa has led to the emergence of three schools of thought – traditionalists, modernists, and hybridists. The argument of the traditionalists is that indigenous mechanisms such as traditional rulers, council of elders, age groups, customary courts etc, are still very relevant in ensuring justice and reconciliation, especially in local conflicts. This position is based on the fact that, these traditional mechanisms are rooted in the traditions, cultures, and norms guiding African societies. There is an avalanche of literature that expresses the importance of these traditional mechanisms in conflict management, resolution, and restorative justice (Ambali et al. 2021). In the same vein, Okoye (2024) assert that traditional rulers can play relevant roles in alternative dispute resolution in communal conflicts because of the inherent skills of negotiation, mediation, and reconciliation they possess. Placed within the Ubuntu philosophy, the study argues that traditional rulers should be at the core of alternative dispute resolution in Africa because they are closer to the people and most conflicts occur in rural communities than urban settings. The study further argues that the failure of current traditional system is largely due to politics and corruption, which has led to a disconnect between the successes made in the past and the shortfalls being experience in recent times. Therefore, Mukhtar and Jafaru (2025) argues that while traditional institutions are still important, it is very necessary to integrate them into formal legal systems for more effectiveness.

The modernist perspective argues that formal state institutions are primarily preferable for justice and reconciliation in Africa. This argument rests on the fact that traditional mechanisms for justice not only reinforces the “US vs THEM” divide, but does not follow a laid down procedure that guarantees homogeneity and international human rights obligations Mamdani (2020). From this point of view, it may be counterproductive to focus only on traditional mechanisms which does not uphold the

rule of law, human rights, and accountability reminiscent of the modern state system, suggesting that state systems are more effective compared to informal traditional mechanisms (Fuseini et al., 2025). This school of thought tends to align more with the contemporary global discourse on democracy, human rights, freedom, equality, human dignity, and human security. Traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution are, most often, lacking in upholding these individual centered principles because of their communal nature and operation. To Murambadoro (2020), transitional justice can best be achieved through legal and formal institutions like courts and truth commissions. Despite their current acceptance and ascendancy, debates are arising about the possibility of having a combined system of both traditionalist and modernist.

The hybridist school of thought has gained traction in recent times. It proposes a fusion the old ways (traditional) and the new ways (modern) of ensuring justice and reconciliation in Africa (Oluyemi & Akinwunmi, 2025). In their study set in Northern Ghana, Paalo and Issifu (2021) showed how hybrid system has been used to engage in peacebuilding activities more effectively to resolving the Dagbon conflict in that region. the study observed that debates on hybrid peacemaking often focus on local and international systems, without much insight into ‘home grown’ hybrid system. The import of this is that, hybrid is not restricted to local-international arrangements. Rather, local practices can be fused together to create domestic hybrid order. The study argues that long lasting communal conflicts can best be resolved using state-traditional arrangements. Sayne (2012) upheld this perspective by arguing that lasting peace in Africa is mostly the product of dynamic cooperation between formal state systems and traditional institutions peacebuilding arrangements. This is the domestic hybridisation that has been neglected in literature according to Paalo and Issifu (2021). This speaks to the need to examine how traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation in Adamawa State can be synergise with formal state legal frameworks in order to have a hybrid system that will be more effective in justice delivery, reconciliation, and peacebuilding generally.

Traditional Mechanisms for Traditional Justice and Reconciliation in Africa

As stated above, there are many traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation in Africa that have been tested to be very effective in peacemaking during and after violent conflict. They include, but not limited to *Gacaca* in Rwanda, *Acholi* in Northern Uganda, *Magamba spirits* in Central Mozambique, and *Kpaa Mende* in Sierra Leone

Gacaca in Rwanda

Prior to 1994, Rwanda was a little-known nation tucked away in the center of Africa. But on April 6, 1994, a plane carrying the then-president Juvénal Habyarimana was shot down over Kigali, the country's capital. This marked the beginning of a genocide campaign against the minority Tutsi people and the so-called "average" Bahutu people, who belonged to the main ethnic group but were against the ruling authority. 800,000 individuals died throughout the course of 100 days (Mamdani, 2020).

After the genocide, the question of post-conflict justice and reconciliation became pertinent. The punishment for the crimes of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity through imported Western litigation has proven to be ineffective in restoring communities that have gone through violent conflict. A very good example is the fact that, the ICTR finished only 75 cases as at 2014 with no prospect for restorative justice (Brehm et al., 2014). The Rwandan government headed by Paul Kagame, decided to look inward for a local based approach that can serve the interests of justice and reconciliation. Before Rwanda was colonized, there were gacaca courts (Bornkamm, 2012). The term "gacaca" (Kinyarwanda for "grass") refers to the fact that the hearings were typically held outside in each community's vacant marketplaces, schoolyards, and other public spaces. In a perfect hearing, the accused would acknowledge their wrongdoing, show regret, beg for forgiveness, make restitution, and then bring food and drink to all parties as a sign of peace (Vandeginste, 1999). Since the 1940s, this conventional approach of conflict resolution, which closely resembles the ideas of restorative justice

(Drumbl, 2002), has been developed as a recognized judicial system for common offences. The use of Gacaca courts in trying perpetrators of the genocide started in 2001 and 1,958,634 cases were successfully resolved by the courts in all (Brehm et al., 2014). These feet wouldn't have been achieved using the conventional court trial.

Mato Oput of Acholi in Northern Uganda

Literally translated, Mato Oput means "drinking bitter root" (Jendia, 2015). The ceremonial of Mato Oput is a significant aspect of Acholi culture that has gained widespread recognition both inside and outside of Uganda. The Mato Oput ritual is a common tool for resolving disputes between the victim's clan and the offender's clan. The first step in this process is mediation and negotiation between the two parties involved. A degree of compensation from the perpetrator to the victim is agreed upon as the result of mediation and negotiation. Culu kwor, or compensation, is a crucial aspect of the procedure. Culu kwor stands for acknowledging the victim's suffering as a result of the offender's actions and acts as a deterrence to future offending. Culu kwor must be utilized to take care of the requirements of the deceased, including planning funerals and burial ceremonies and looking after widows and orphans (Lonergan, 2012). This symbolic exchange is important, but it is also important to take care of these needs.

Magamba spirits in Central Mozambique

The Magamba Spirits was a restorative justice strategy employed at the end of the Civil War in Mozambique from 1976-92 (Lakika, 2025). In the backdrop of the Mozambican civil war, the magamba spirits evolved into the socio-cultural world of Gorongosa, which was already inhabited by a variety of spirits and healers, and are particularly prevalent in the Gorongosa region. They each play a unique role in society. The many spirits inflict suffering at first, but the suffering is then converted into a healing power. The processes used to transform affliction into healing, particularly with magamba spirits, reveal the existence of social spaces and momentum

for the implementation of restorative justice. The Magamba Spirit works in such a way that it takes over an individual or group of individuals who have done something bad and must confess and seek redress before they can be free. The spirit most often takes over individuals in a situation where there is a communal or widespread atrocities. That is, the Magamba spirit is not concerned with single criminal responsibilities but family and group criminal responsibilities.

Kpaa Mende in Sierra Leone

Maladministration, poor economic policies, weak access to justice, alienation of young people, and lapses in state security all led to the outbreak of civil war in Sierra Leone in 1991 (Mitton, 2012). The Revolutionary United Front rebel leaders disguised as freedom fighters and dragged the country into a state of anarchy that resulted to the death of about 50,000 civilians and property worth billions destroyed (Tar & Wapmuk, 2017). After the war, the process of transitional justice led to the adoption traditional justice mechanism among the *Kpaa Mende* ethnic group. Like *Gacaca*, the *Kpaa Mende* have devised intricate methods of dealing with crime and punishment. There are two interconnected approaches to obtaining justice: restorative and retributive. The severity of the offense or the goal of the punishment may affect the type of justice adopted in a particular case. In general, traditional *Kpaa Mende* traditions attempt to heal and restore (restorative justice), even though some punishment may be meted out in the process. Restorative justice is mostly predicated on wrongdoers admitting their crime or behavior, apologizing to the person who has been harmed, and expressing genuine remorse.

Theoretical Analysis

This study is anchored on Indigenous Standpoint Theory which resonates with the works of Nakata (1998, 2007) on indigenous perspective, contributing to the development of indigenous techniques. Indigenous Standpoint Theory takes into account the researcher's 'Indigeneity' (Foley, 2003). According to Nakata (2007, p. 213), an Indigenous perspective is

neither "the endless production of subjective narrative to disrupt objective accounts" nor the "aggregation of stories from lived experience." Indigenous Standpoint Theory, on the other hand, "is a distinct form of analysis and is itself both a discursive construction and an intellectual device to persuade others and elevate what might not have been a focus of attention by others" (Nakata, 2007, p. 214). This specific mode of analysis highlights, integrates, and promotes indigenous scholars' cultural knowledges and experiences in ways that non-indigenous scholars cannot. Moreton-Robinson (2013, p. 338), echoing this viewpoint, states that "people's lived experience is the point of entry for investigation of the cultural interface where western knowledge systems and Torres Strait Islander experiences are dialectically engaged." An Indigenous Standpoint Theory is thus "not a social position but a discursive method of inquiry" (Moreton-Robinson, 2013, p. 338). In other words, as a discursive technique of inquiry, it reveals how knowledge is formed and disentangles Western knowledge frameworks from indigenous methods of knowing. Ultimately, the theory will provide more detailed, culturally inclusive knowledge (Nakata, 2007), informed by history, politics, policy, and, most crucially, indigenous knowledges.

However, while Nakata (2007) describes Indigenous Standpoint Theory as an important development in theoretical research, the theory itself appears broad and stands alone, i.e. it is not specific to one particular field or context, despite being widely applied in the field of education. This is by no means a limitation, but rather an advantage. The theory's breadth allows it to be utilized in a variety of contexts and combined with other methodological techniques.

In relation to this study, it suffices to say that there is need for indigenous knowledge on the traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation to be brought to fore by indigenous scholars. The western mechanisms that have permeated African societies should be challenged by promoting global knowledge of traditional mechanisms. This will help in breaking new grounds in terms of theoretical and practical application of restorative justice during and

after violent conflicts. This theory also validates the contemporary calls within and outside Africa for the continent to look inward for solutions to their problems. This is couched in a popular phrase known as “*African solutions to African problems.*” This theory also validates the fact that there is need for African societies to tell their own stories in all aspects of life. There is an African proverb that says “*until the lion tells the story, the hunter will always be the hero.*” This is exactly the main thesis of Indigenous Standpoint Theory in relation to Western dialectics of justice and reconciliation. The promotion of indigenous knowledges to counter Western narratives by giving more insights that are based on shared experience and common history. This is what this study hopes to achieve – bringing to fore the traditional methods of justice and reconciliation and how they can serve as cure for modern conflicts.

Methods and Setting

This is a qualitative study based on descriptive research design. Primary and secondary data were used. Primary data were collected through 30 Key Informant Interviews (KII) and 15 In-depth Interviews (IDI). Secondary data were collected from journal articles, textbooks, reports, newspapers etc. For the interviews, purposive sampling and snowballing methods were utilized in reaching out to the respondents. Snowballing helped in accessing respondents that could not be accessed ordinarily. These techniques were chosen because of the experiences and knowledge of the respondents on the subject matter. They include traditional rulers and

community leaders, government officials, judges and lawyers, staff of correctional centres, and religious leaders. The study was set in four Local Government Areas (LGA) thus: Yola North, representing Central Political Zone of the state; Numan, representing Southern Political Zone, and two LGAs Madagali and Michika, representing Northern Political Zone. The choice of these LGAs is anchored on the popularity of the traditional mechanism for justice and reconciliation obtainable in these areas, as well as their applicability to modern conflicts. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the Key Informant Interviews (KII) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI). This was carried out by coding interview transcripts into different categories based on the objectives of the study. Results and discussion were presented simultaneously using the objectives as major themes with minor themes embedded in the discussion. Interview responses were quoted verbatim as empirical evidence backing the findings and insight from secondary sources.

Results and Discussion

In this section, the findings of the study are presented and discussed thematically based on the three research objectives.

Some Major Traditional Mechanisms for Justice and Reconciliation in Adamawa State

Some traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation in Adamawa State were identified as the major ones in terms of practical application. These are presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Traditional Mechanisms for Justice and Reconciliation in Adamawa State

	<i>Kamwe (Michika - Northern Zone)</i>	<i>Batta (Numan - Southern Zone)</i>	<i>Marghi (Madagali - Northern Zone)</i>	<i>Fulani (Yola North - Central Zone)</i>
<i>Fines/Compensation</i>	Tara	Tara	Tara	Pulaaku
<i>Mediation, Negotiation, and Conciliation</i>	Sulhu	Sulhu	Sulhu	Sulhu
<i>Oath Taking</i>	Tifinitie	Bollum	Shafa	Hunayeere
<i>Banishment</i>	Murabus	Murabus	Murabus	Murabus
<i>Ostracism</i>	Wariya	Wariya	Wariya	Wariya
<i>Islamic and Christian Norms</i>	Obligation to forgive	Obligation to forgive	Obligation to forgive	Pulaaku Code

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 1 shows the various traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation in Adamawa state. Though not exhaustive, but they represent the major ones that are common in practice. Fine or compensation is obtainable in all the three zones of the state, particularly among the *Kamwe* people in Michika, *Batta* in Numan, *Marghi* in Madaghalii all known as *Tara*; and among the *Fulani* in Yola North known as *Pulaaku*. This is also the same thing with mediation/negotiation/conciliation, banishment, and ostracism known as *Sulhu*, *Murabus*, and *Wariya* respectively. On oath taking, the ethnic identities have different names. *Kamwe* calls it *Tifinitie*, *Batta* calls it *Bollum*, *Marghi* calls it *Shafa*, and the *Fulani* calls it *Hunayeere*. Another common feature among the sampled population is the belief in Islamic and Christian doctrine of “obligation to forgive” as seen on the last item

Tara (Fines and Compensation): The enactment of charges on criminals, often in the way of restitution to victims and, in some cases, as an enticement to society as a whole. Furthermore, it was a popular way of justice and crime control in the majority of

Adamawa State's communities. Aminu and Basil (2022) noted that this method played a key role in the maintenance of order and social control in traditional societies, and that it was essentially necessitated by the fact that social control and behaviors were tied to an individual's sense of reciprocity with the group to which he belonged. In this regard, groups played a significant role in enforcing restitution judgments against perpetrators in favor of victims. It should be noted that, in addition to serving as a tool of social control, this strategy was a true tool of conflict resolution, particularly between criminals and their victims. In contrast to official resolution in criminal courts, this system insured those criminals and victim lived in peace and concord once the former had adequately compensated the latter. This view was shared by many respondents. On *Pulaaku*, a Fulani man shared his thought:

Pulaaku has been a very effective tool in resolving criminal cases in our community. We have local leaders who serves judges. They determine the severity of the

crime and its corresponding fine. For example, if a person steals a goat, he will be asked to pay a little bit higher the price of that goat as a form of the trouble caused and deterrence (Yola North LGA, KII, 5 February 2024)

***Sulhu* (Mediation, Negotiation, and Conciliation):**

Also known as *Sulh* in Sharia Law, it is a form of legal contract between two or more parties who have agreed to shift grounds for the purpose of achieving a win-win outcome in conflict situation (Haroon, 2017). Traditional justice and reconciliation in Adamawa State were marked by the restoration of peace, order, and strained amicable relationships. This viewpoint was forged by the necessity to maintain society united, driving everyone closer to collaboration and tolerance. This was done to encourage discipline, mutual understanding, and the elevation of peaceful life among the people. *Sulhu* is employed as a crime control technique in Adamawa state, where elders mediate on crimes committed by gathering all parties and giving them a fair hearing. Negotiation and reconciliation are implemented effectively to guarantee justice is served. This century-long Islamic method of reconciliation has been incorporated into Borno State judicial service via the Amicable Settlement Corridor of the State High Court (Majida & Robins, 2017).

***Rantsuwa* (Oath taking):** In traditional African civilizations, this is another essential and well-known means of social control. This entails swearing with the holy Quran or Bible, which are the sacred books of Muslims and Christians worldwide. In Islam, suspects were forced to swear by holding the holy book after conducting ceremonial cleansing known as ablution, to prove their innocence of heinous crimes beyond a reasonable doubt. The swearing was so powerful and effective that individuals were afraid to commit crimes since the repercussions may be as rapid as abrupt death, insanity, and long-term severe ramifications for the perpetrator's generation. Most respondents agreed with the fact that the use of ordeals in the administration of justice in pre-colonial Nigeria did

not elicit moral condemnation. Because it was a valid (and quick) method of discovering the truth.

In northeastern Nigeria, binding oaths are also utilized in conflict resolution. Participants in the context of *Sulhu* swear on the Qur'an. The Batta of Adamawa utilize the Bollum oath, the Marghi use Shafa, and the Fulani use the *Hunayeere* promise (Hassan & Tyvoll, 2018). In each scenario, two disputing parties who cannot reach an agreement agree to make a solemn commitment of their viewpoint (typically declaring innocence). It is therefore thought that God (or gods, in the case of *Bollum*) will decide the matter and deliver death or disaster upon the guilty or dishonest party in a short period of time. A respondent shared his view on *Bollum* thus:

Bollum is a name of a village in Numan Local govt where there is a god that avenge justice for victims of assumed or verified wrong doing. The offenders' clan from the maternal side will be dying without cause. People all go there to prove their innocence if they are accused wrongly. This tradition is fading because of Christianity. It is said that some strong Christians were able to stop the god from prevailing on them by their prayers when it comes crying in the night (Numan LGA, IDI, 10 February, 2024)

A respondent from the Marghi identity group also shared his view on *Shafa* as follows:

Shaffa is a very physical expression of skill in identifying especially a thief or witchcraft allegations. A traditional bunch of dry grass is used at the neck of the accused. Once it chokes the accused it is believed that he or she committed the crime. If admission is not done on time it can lead to loss of life. Though it has been faulted by some people believing that the administrator

might use extra strength to choke the accused (Madagali LGA, KII, 22 January, 2024)

The CJTF has previously utilized Quranic oath-taking as a counter-insurgency strategy in Borno State (Hassan & Tyvoll, 2018). Male teenagers were instructed to report to their ward leaders, in front of whom they swore on the Quran that they were not affiliated with Boko Haram. Those who rejected were considered as possible Boko Haram members. Many were handed over to security personnel for arrest and questioning, while others were reportedly slain unlawfully by the CJTF.

Murabus (Banishment): Banishment is the act of removing a criminal from his or her community for an extended length of time. Respondents noted that this practice was also used in traditional civilizations to get rid of dangerous criminals. It gave a permanent or temporary means of removing a criminal from his community. Responding to questions on this practice, a respondent had this to say:

The practice of self-exile was very common in those days. It was so common that those who commits crimes do not even wait for pronouncement from the village council, they flee immediately and wait for reconciliation in a foreign land. The village council determines the form of reconciliation in collaboration with accused person's family and victim. Sometimes it may involve *Tara* (Fines) before the accused can return (Numan LGA, IDI, 10 February, 2024)

This strategy was significant because it prevented the victim's family from taking immediate action or revenge and facilitated their acceptance of an indemnity and peaceful settlement with the offender's family. Furthermore, in most traditional African civilizations, offenses that resulted in short-term exile included chronic stealing, numerous incidents of adultery, and homicide. This practice

seemed to be more predominant among the Fulani ethnic group based on data from respondents.

Wariya (Ostracism): Ostracism is the deliberate decision in a traditional community to isolate an offender. This strategy was and still is successful since it involved cutting off social relations with friends and relatives, which causes a lot of social and psychological agony. In traditional African society, every occurrence of ostracism had a definite period of time, and the expiration of such periods was frequently accompanied by certain fines, which were either in cash or in kind (Aminu & Basil, 2022). Adultery, witchcraft, and repeated stealing were among the offenses that drew this form of punishment in Adamawa State.

Islamic and Christian Norms (Obligation to Forgive): Northeastern communities also have religious or ideological resources that are frequently employed to resolve local issues. In Islam, Muslims are called to practice restorative justice: *ih-san* (healing and reconciliation), *samah* (forgiveness), and *adl* (justice) are both virtues and duties. Furthermore, one of the most significant social commodities is the ummah (a collective sense of unity and harmony). The ummah must be safeguarded at all costs. Christ commanded Christians to love one another, reconcile with their enemies, and seek the good of the society. The *pulaaku* moral code emphasizes forbearance of fault as a virtue and source of esteem among the Fulani.

The Effectiveness and Limitations of Traditional Mechanisms for Justice and Reconciliation in Adamawa State

Data from the field shows that traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation in Adamawa State have been effective, though with minor limitations. Many reasons have been proffered by respondents in this regard. But for the purpose of this study, we have triangulated these reasons into three thematic parts. On effectiveness, the first is the cultural significance attached to these traditional mechanisms. It was gathered that these traditional processes for justice and reconciliation are strongly rooted in the local culture and customs of the people.

As a result, they seemed to be more embraced by the local populations. This perspective reechoes the submissions of Ambali et al. (2021) and Okoye (2024) about the relevance of these traditional mechanisms in communal conflicts in Nigeria. This cultural connection has increased peoples' trust and involvement, making them more likely to participate in the process and accept its consequences. On this note, a respondent stated that:

Our local ways of resolving conflict have been part of us for so long. We are used to them and found them appealing than these modern ways. It is part of who we are and we prefer it to the western ways. (Michika LGA, KII, 14 January, 2024)

The second is community participation. Various stakeholders within the community, such as elders, religious leaders, and respected individuals, are frequently involved in these traditional procedures. This inclusiveness guarantees that different groups' thoughts and concerns are heard, and that choices are taken collaboratively. This has led to a deeper sense of ownership of the reconciliation process and strengthen communal relationships. Last but not the least, is that these traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation are informal in nature. Respondents alluded to the fact that these traditional procedures are often more informal in nature than formal legal proceedings. This spontaneity has been proven to be beneficial to the people because it provides for openness and adaptation to individual situations. Furthermore, it has lessened the burden of bureaucratic processes, making justice and reconciliation more readily available and timely, particularly in rural areas where formal legal institutions are scarce.

Despite the identified effectiveness of these traditional mechanisms, some limitations were noticed in the course of the study. The first is that, the absence of a legal foundation has been a challenge to the practice of traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation in modern conflicts in Adamawa state. These mechanisms often lack a

formal legal foundation, which raises questions regarding accountability and uniformity in the administration of justice. Personal prejudices, cultural norms, or power dynamics within the community may all impact decisions, resulting in uneven outcomes and potential abuse of authority. Second limitation has been the concern over gender and human rights abuses. Women and disadvantaged groups often experience prejudice and inadequate representation in many of these systems. Gender biases can be common, influencing outcome fairness and sustaining disparities. The final limitation has to do with the limited scope and enforcement of these mechanisms for justice and reconciliation. While the traditional methods appeared efficient for settling certain types of community problems, they are incapable of dealing with complicated instances, particularly those involving inter-community conflicts or major crimes. Furthermore, decisions made through traditional methods may not be enforceable in the official legal system, thereby complicating the administration of justice and accountability. These limitations reinforce the argument of modernist school of thought which question the legal and human rights concerns associated with traditional mechanisms.

Opportunities for Synergy between Traditional and Modern Justice Systems in Adamawa State.

An exciting prospect in Adamawa State, Nigeria, is the possible synergy between traditional and modern justice systems, leading to a community hybrid system, moving away from the common international and local hybridization. The state is a mingling of several cultures and communities, each with its own set of customary rules and practices. While the modern justice system is founded on Nigerian statutory laws, the traditional system is based on generations of conventions and traditions. Both systems have unique strengths and shortcomings, making the study of partnership potential critical for developing a more efficient, accessible, and fair judicial framework.

The inclusion of traditional dispute resolution procedures into the modern legal system represents a

huge possibility for synergy. Village councils and traditional rulers, for example, have a thorough awareness of their individual communities' customs and beliefs. The modern justice system can get insights into cultural nuances that would otherwise be neglected by incorporating these frameworks into formal legal proceedings. Furthermore, this partnership may result in faster outcomes and fewer caseloads in courts, reducing the stress on the already overworked legal system. Both systems can complement one another by encouraging communication and mediation between parties and providing litigants with a variety of options for seeking justice that meets their preferences and requirements. A legal practitioner states that:

One of the challenges we are facing in the conventional court system is the delay in justice delivery. There cases that have been here for more than ten years but, I believe they can be resolved through traditional mechanisms, through the use of community chiefs, traditional and religious leaders. Though we have cases like divorce, family feuds that we use to refer them back to their community leaders for dialogue. So, it is true that there can be a good collaboration between the modern court system and traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation in Adamawa State (Yola North LGA, IDI, 6 February, 2024).

Another possibility is to improve access to justice for marginalized and isolated communities. Adamawa State is divided into rural areas where official legal institutions' reach is frequently limited. Traditional justice systems are more established in these areas and provide an accessible option for redress. Marginalized groups can have smooth access to justice by building strong links between traditional and modern systems. Legal professionals and community leaders could work together to ensure that situations requiring formal legal proceedings are

correctly referred to, while less serious disagreements can be addressed through customary methods, avoiding needless escalation.

To this end, the merger of Adamawa State's traditional and modern judicial systems represents a possible path toward a more robust, accessible, and culturally sensitive legal environment. A well-rounded and selective approach within human rights standards can be constructed by leveraging the assets of both systems, meeting the distinct requirements of varied populations while encouraging harmony and unity within the state. Harsher practices, such as ostracism and banishment, which represent the Western retributive justice system are not permanent in the context of Adamawa State. They have deadlines when the offender can be reintegrated back into the society. The essence is not to permanently displace the offender from the community. Rather, it is a moment for sober reflection. It is therefore not a total retributive justice as it were. Therefore, careful consideration, collaboration, and ongoing conversation among stakeholders are required to guarantee that the ensuing synergy is founded on respect, fairness, and inclusivity.

Conclusion

This paper has been able to show that traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation in Adamawa state are very effective and have the potential for sustaining peace and security in Adamawa state. However, the advent of modern legal systems and institutions has challenged the utility of traditional mechanisms in recent years. Nonetheless, the traditional mechanisms for justice and reconciliation remains an essential part of the cultural heritage of Africa, Nigeria, and Adamawa State and continues to play a significant role in promoting peace and harmony. There is need therefore, for Adamawa State government to integrate these traditional mechanisms into contemporary Western justice systems in order to create a locally based hybrid system that can better tackle modern conflicts. This can be achieved by taking the profile of all available and effective traditional mechanisms identified in this study, along

with local actors in charge of those mechanisms. After that, a comprehensive document can be produced that clearly outlines the cases that can be referred to these traditional mechanisms for justice and resolution. Cases outside the scope of the mechanisms should also be clearly stated in order to avoid ambiguity and a possible clash with conventional legal systems.

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