

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISM IN THE TRADITIONAL
UZUAKOLI COMMUNITY OF SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA.**

Dr. Chiedozie Ifeanyichukwu Atuonwu History Unit, School of General Studies,
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike. Phone:08030920000;
Email:dozieatuonwu@gmail.com;

Nwaoha Nnamdi Green

Peace & Conflict Resolution Unit, School of General Studies,
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike.
Phone: 08037913479;Email:favour4green@gmail.com.

&

Ezeigbo Josiah Ikedieze

Department of History & International Relations,
Abia State University,Uturu.
Phone:08134589032;Email:ezeigbojoik@gmail.com.

Abstract

Conflict resolution is an integral part of the Igbo society and was bequeathed to the people by the forbearers of the society. Recently, it was observed that the people were ignoring the traditional method of conflict resolution in their communities for legal procedures. The current upsurge of these lawsuits amongst members of the society denotes that the indigenous conflict resolution methods are gradually heading towards extinction. In view of the above problem, this research work is designed for the evaluation of Igbo traditional method of conflict resolution with particular reference to Uzuakoli community in Abia State. The methodology used is a qualitative research method which through interviews, observations, published documents and data collected critically assessed the traditional conflict resolution in the community. The study discovers a well-organized conflict resolution mechanism set by the people, but undermined by the inundating culture of the Western world.

Keywords: Uzuakoli, Conflict, Resolution, Strategies, Traditional, Community,

Introduction

The Igbo is an ethnic group that predominantly inhabited the densely populated Eastern part of Nigeria and has variations in some of their cultures such as in art styles, attire and religious practices which differentiate community members among others in the region. The people have a peculiar social structure that include various subgroups organized by clan, lineage, and village affiliation which defines their level of interactions, inter-relationships; as well influence unavoidable disagreements and conflicts in their interactional processes as in other ethnic communities. Conflicts, perhaps, cannot be equivocated as an intrinsic and inevitable spice of the society,¹ that exist among the Igbo people. Hence, it was believed whenever people gather in the family or social group there are bound to be conflict which could result from varying degree of individual interest. Consequently, all the members of the family may not share the same view, but may likely have divergent opinion as when friends or town tenaciously hold views that are diametrically opposed.²

However, the history of pre-colonial and post-colonial Igbo society did not exclude issues of conflicts and local wars. Sources of most conflicts in our area of study are linked to community migration and demographic insecurity, quest to protect cultural identity, and murder. The predominant sources of the contemporary Igbo indigenous conflict are boundary disputes, struggles for inheritance³ and family squabbles and domestic violence – that is, disagreement between spouse and persons in intimate relationship. Apparently, conflicts among the people usually manifests 'whenever or wherever' incompatible events occurred and may result in 'win – lose' character or in most cases, produce 'win-win' situation in settlement.⁴

It is worthy of note that prior to the advent of the Christianity, the people had a well laid-down traditional process and channels for conflict resolution which was based on the general confidence in the processes, mediators, arbiters, and adjudicators.⁵ This went a long way in enhancing the fraternal relationship which existed among the people. Disputants and the traditional peace facilitators were constrained to act on the path of truth, impartiality, transparency and fairness by the law and the presence of spirit-forces of the land. The people insist that a good judgment 'cut' into the flesh as well as the bone of the matter in dispute. This implies a “hostile compromise” in which there are neither victor nor vanquish.

The community has traditional institutions and personalities for conflict resolution alongside guiding principles which the warring parties, arbitrators and adjudicators must follow in settlement and report of cases, depending on the type and nature of the conflict. The traditional institutions include: Family (Ime – Ulo Nna); Eldest male in family or group of small related families (Okpara or Okpara – Ikwu), regarded as occupying ancestral seat for justice and holding ancestral spears for its dispensation; Hamlet (Ikwu-ezi); Clan (Umu-nna or amala); Umuada or Umuokpo (females born in kindred or village); Age grades (Oti ogbo); Council of elders (ndi – okieny or ndi – Ichie); Village assembly tribunal (nzuko obodo); Oracles or deities (ndi-isi agbara n'agbara); Secret cult or masquerade-system (ndi-okonko or ndi-mmanuwu); The village assembly and the kings (oha-na-eze); Council of title chiefs (ndi-nze na-ozo); The king and his cabinet chiefs (Eze na ndi oso-eze), among others. The leadership of these institution usually comprise people with an ancestral trace to the society, for proper understanding and knowledge of their culture which is to be applied in the conflict resolution process.⁸

Uzoakoli

The settlement of Uzuakoli in Bende local government, is about 10miles from Umuahia linked by road and rail. The town is bounded to the north by Akoli, to north-west by Amaorji Lodu and Ubani Umuahia, to the south-east by Amaeke, Ukume and Okwuehi, all in Ibeku Umuahia. It is also bounded to the east by Ozuitem. Uzuakoli was among the communities that experienced the invasion of the European missionaries in the early 1920s, and was the last community in Abia, solders invaded and ended their battle in 1969-70, during the civil war.⁹

The origin of Uzuakoli people as an Igbo community is traced to Ezere Isu as the grandfather through Akoli their claimed father, all in Imenyi.¹⁰ The people just like other Igbo communities appreciate the dual existence world between the spiritual and physical world. The existence of the 'Supreme Being' (Obasi di n'elu) and the ancestors or gods were the occupants of the spiritual world, while the living being (man) is the inhabitants of the populated physical world.

By the traditional belief of the people, “the Supreme Being (God) does not function in isolation but carries out multitudinous array of functions through the instrumentality of the lesser gods (deities and divinity)”. These deities are seen as gods between the

'Obasi di n'elu (Supreme God) and the people which orders their activities on the physical world.

Conflict Resolution Strategies

The Uzuakoli people have a well laid down indigenous rules through which they forestall escalation of conflict in the societies. These rules are quite unwritten but provided procedures and channels for complaints/litigation in the society. It also provided for indigenous institutions a definite way of responding to different conflicts, beginning from the family to the apex institution and authority in the communities.¹¹

Honesty and truthfulness was the significant principle of conflict resolution in the pre-colonial era of the community.¹² The people believe that it is a taboo to give false witness or judgment before the shining sun and the land of their ancestors or gods, and that such will invoke spirit forces of the ancestors or wrath of the gods on whosoever that does so. Presently, honesty and truth can no longer be found in the arbitration process since all deities guiding against that had been destroyed. And since God's punishment is not immediate, people have continued with all manners of anomalies in the indigenous conflict resolution system.

Family

The eldest man is held with high respect and considered to stand tall in sustaining peace and harmonious relations in the family and all complaints of dispute are channeled through him.¹³ It is his duty to inform other elders of the family who agree on a date to summon parties to the conflict for hearing and settlement of the matter. There is no fee involved in the complaints as observed and recounted by respondent.¹⁴ The family does not arbitrate over cases of members, but mediate peace and co-existence of members which is its central objective.¹⁵

At the arrival of all parties concerned (mediators and disputants) on the summons to the family compound for resolution, the family head declares the meeting open and parties are allowed to freely narrate their case without interruptions or intimidation from anybody. A respondent said: Parties are also permitted to pick listeners from relatives as maternal uncle or a sister married out from the family, if the case is

between brothers. In a conflict between husband and wife when it gets to the family head for settlement, those summoned as listeners include both parents and the conflict (Onye nkpa n'aka aku or onye mbuba).¹⁶

After the complainant has presented his/her case, the defendant is given a chance to ask the complainant questions followed by the family members (mediators) and other listeners. The same is applied to the defendant after narrating his own side of the matter. And after all hearings, parties to the conflict are excused out to examine their presentations and verify key statement by them to reach at the truth of the matter. At the end, the guilty was asked to apologize the offended and promise never to do such again for peace and co-existence of the family.

In the resolution of conflict that involved threat of life between brothers, incest and injury from related member of the family (mostly the child to a daughter married out), and a woman to pack her cooking pot to the fathers home or elsewhere by the husband: the elders and Umuada (daughter married out from the family) are to be summoned by the family head on the aforementioned case to perform propitiation sacrifice to appease 'Erima' (the gods that protects and regulate interaction among blood related persons in the family) for re-enforcement of relationships among the blood related members. Persons involved in threat to life case will be made to take the concussion of sand and other particles mixed together and are usually hanged on the well of the family head. And they are enjoined to eat together and vow never to be involved in any evil act against each other.¹⁷

In the case of of murder, incest and extra-marital affair by a married woman in the family, certain sacrifices are also conducted.¹⁸ Unintentional murder required “Nsi- orikota” (an appeasement sacrifice) usually prepared by the elders of the village with one goat, one fowl (non-laying hen), tuber of yam, kaolin, Igbo kola nut of four-piece in a shield and some leaves mortared together and given to the parties involved to reunite and open a fresh relationship free of human blood, pains and grudges. While the sacrifice for incest “Erima” involves one fowl (non-laying hen), Igbo kola, pan-wine of 10liters and one yam. A non-childbearing woman born in the family (Adanwanyi) together with the elderly men of the family will gather and the oldest/head of the family involved would take the two native-sexual offenders into a room nude and

flog them four strokes of cane interchangeably. And for extra-marital affair, a sacrifice of appeasement is offered to the husband with one fowl (non-laying hen), 10litres of palm wine, Igbo kola nut with pieces in the shield and one yam. Some items are equally expected from the man who laid her in addition to a male fowl. Except the sacrifice takes place, the man will not eat nor drink from the wife's pot.¹⁸

Hamlet

The hamlet is led by the eldest man, with a team of other elders from different families of the hamlet in the community. Conflict resolution technique used by them is arbitration with litigation mode and fee involved in reporting cases. The hamlet leader usually take upon himself the responsibility of informing other elders whenever there are cases to handle. They agree within the leadership team and mandate the leader to pass information across to the accused and inform both parties to the conflict and the people on the agreed date of the meeting. Hamlet leader signals the parties and urge them to converge at a venue for the settlement, while he reaches out to the people for summons through a town crier, usually without a definite agenda.¹⁹

Cases handled at this level are mainly problem between two families, kindred or two different individuals who on their own could not resolve their matter but prefer to bring it to the hamlet. The hamlet leader, with other elders declare the meeting open by making the agenda known to other members present as the arbitration panel. The complainant narrates his or her case at the behest of the hamlet leader. At that juncture, the complainant and the defendant must have paid an equivalent fee or two bottles of gin drink for litigation. After narrating his case, he receives questions from both the defendant and other members of the panel, after which the defendant is called upon to narrate his own side of the case and also entertain questions from both the complainant and the arbitration panel. They are asked for 'Isiaka-Ikpe' (their submissions) on the case. The litigants are usually excused from the venue for strict scrutiny of their key statements and witnesses could be invited at the back by the panel for more facts on the matter.²⁰

The hamlet arbitration panel with all traditional means of truth verifications and test of validity reaches a conclusive decision on the settlement of the matter and then invite in the parties to the conflict and they are coaxed to accept the decision as the

appointed members of the panel pronounce their decision and reparation is made where necessary.²¹ At the end, the elders usually drop few words of advice and recount the cord of peace which has been so cordial among them and warn never to erode that and peace is restored between the parties.

They are asked to give 'Ihe ibu Ikpe' (what they have –usually little cash in appreciation to entertain the people) in a situation they give only gin for litigation.²¹

Umu-ada

The Umu-ada are mainly first daughters born in the community but married out but still have the interest of their maternal home at heart. According to the people's custom, these children of their daughters are accorded with respect and regard as special members of the maternal villages. Obviously, the Umu-ada is a veritable instrument of conflict resolution in the Uzuakoli community. They negotiate and mediate peace and harmonious relationships among family members and also force family members to comply with the decision of the family-head or leadership of the lineage.²²

The Umu-ada promotes peace and co-existence between clans of their communities by resolving crisis of leadership or other crisis which might bedevil the intra/inter-relationship of families of villages as may be deemed necessary by them to intervene. Hence, they are a unique institution for conflict resolution and, play a very vital role in the sustainability of peace and unity of their paternal homes.²³

Age-Grade

The age-grade association are men and women believed to have been born in the same period alongside others. The age period of the group members ranges at least from one to three years gap of birth across families in communities. The age-group is an institution of development and peace in the society. They contribute immensely in the growth of communities through enforcement of the village laws, decision and taking up some social needs like water borehole. The age-group implement village sanctions on defaulters of community rules and bring to book whosoever that disobey the elders or violates the general assembly verdict.²⁴ In conflict resolution, the age-group resolves disputes between members and any other matter of dispute reported by

concerned parties. They can litigate an unresolved matter between them and a member to the king's palace or the elder's council for settlement.²⁵

They mediate and arbitrate over cases reported by its members through a formal complaint mechanism to the head of the age-grade or the secretary who informs other principal members within the community or at the central level on a date for hearing. In a situation, any of the parties to the conflict snub the association's summons on repeated occasion, they stand to face a disciplinary action of suspension from the age-grade meeting. Parties are not forced to adhere to association verdict or decision, rather are encouraged to accept the reached decision on their matter and have their relationship restored, though they have an open option to appeal to any other arbitration panel in the society.²⁶ The age-group also intervenes in community conflicts to prevent escalation of crisis and restore peace through negotiation. Hence, the age-groups are valuable assets of peace and development in the community.

Village Assembly

The arbitration seating is made up of every adult male while the jury members are old men from different families of each community in Uzuakoli. Women are permitted to hang out at the venue during resolution at the village square if and only if involved in litigation or witness to the matter in dispute. The village-general assembly tribunal is a well democratized system with caution and consciousness of the existing peaceful relationship of the community in resolving conflicts. They play a levelheaded view in airing vies and show decorum to the traditions, and the elders present. For instance, the younger ones who had their elderly family members in the square, suggest to them (the elderly) for proper swift reasoning and share before the assembly to avoid being faulted for fine. Prohibition of interrupting the plaintiff and the defendant while speaking, nor the witness during testifying as well as other persons while asking questions within the meeting shows their interest and intention to make peace.²⁷

They treat all manners of cases such as debt, physical combat, land/boundary disputes, and inheritance except controversial matters that involve accusation of disease infliction or death which is usually referred to the council of elders where one could find the required deities for such matters.²⁸ Litigation here is done through an appointed individual from any of the hamlets by the village development union.

Usually the appointed individual takes the responsibility of communicating with parties to the conflict on a scheduled date for hearing, though there are issues of urgency where the summoning call could be arranged immediately for hearing. There is litigation fee which may likely vary across communities. In the case of Amamba, the litigation fee is one-thousand naira (N1000) just as in the Agbozu community. The litigation fee could also be accompanied with two bottles of gin-drink which is at the discretion of the complainant.²⁹

Formerly the litigation fee of the community was 50k, later N1 and went to N50; and N100 to the present N1000 which is fixed to control the incessant jingling of the native court summons bell less severe issues that could be tolerated or handled at the family or hamlet level. The person in charge of the general assembly court litigations moderate the native court session to ensure strict adherence of every individual to the court rules. Fines are applicable for individual misconduct, such fines are been paid by defaulters through the collection of one or two bottles of gin-drink. And nobody is permitted to exchange words with another, smoke cigarette or take tobacco snuff in the venue. Interruption and side talks are highly prohibited.³⁰

The moderator (presiding individual) usually declares the gathering open with a remark (Ikpa-Ama) to begin hearing on the cases. Plaintiff is normally called upon to freely table his case and thereupon asked questions by both the defendant and jury. Usually the defendant will be the first to ask question, followed by any other member of the general assembly. The defendant will equally tell his own version of the matter and same takes place in questioning. Witnesses are been given a chance to tell what they know about a case. For boundary matters, the arbitrators normally move to the site or selected individuals to go into the site and bring back report on their findings which will form basis on decision of the judgment.

The excuse of parties or to stand aside to take decision for conclusive resolution of conflict after presentation of pleas and all questions exhausted, shows their will for justice, peace and collective responsibility in the village unity. They plead strict observation and control during proceedings which also depicts mutuality and orderliness for peaceful resolutions in the society. Hence, the village assemblies are therefore instrumental to the peace and harmonious relationships that exist between families and among members of the society.

Council of Elders

The elders in the council are representatives of different kindred and clan and also the symbol of the dual existing ancestors in the society. They handle exceptional cases of controversy which required a strong investigation and consultation of the gods to resolve. Such cases are mysterious death of an individual which another is accused to be responsible; a calamity on the community believed to be wrath of the gods or controversial accusation of an individual to have inflicted sickness on someone. They treat other cases as land dispute, inheritance dispute, cultural rights between villages; murder which attracts a negative sanction from the gods, etc. On the case of diabolic accusation of killing another (Ebubu-Nsu).³¹

Such was usually settled by giving the accused a concoction call (Uhiala) from the elders council court after (Nkwo-Ukwu ano) 8 days interval of 4 times for hearing and verdict. One year is to mark the person's innocence and if he/she did not die or his or her involved alleged act of killing another then will be celebrated. While on the case of "Igbu-Ochu" (intentional killing of another) the "Uhiala" sacrifice was also given to the culprit on 8 days interval of 7 times for appeasement of the gods.

Litigation with them takes the same process with other indigenous institution but might vary in fee. The elders and oracles through libations and sacrifices connect the ancestors to appease the gods of the land for continuous peaceful existence of persons, family or village involved in the act. Hence, the elders' council is a sustaining variable to the peace of the communities in partnership with the gods.

Eze's Palace

The king usually played interventional role on conflict in the community. The intervention in the king's domain might take the shape of summons to intervene between two parties, either through formal complaint by one party before the traditional royal stool or his cabinet. In a situation where an informal complaint is lodged nothing is required from the disputants. The (king) Eze alone or with few selected cabinet members are to find out details and summon both parties for advice and caution to avoid trouble.

Some cases involve litigation fee equivalent to what complainant paid. After the report, the Eze sends a message to summon on the matter outside criminal cases. The

Eze sets up an arbitration panel in his council or cabinet after the plaintiff and defendant must have responded to the summons with their witnesses or relatives as listeners to the arbitrage process. The plaintiff is interrogated or cross-examined by the defendant, arbitration panel and even listeners to the process after stating his/her case. The same is applied to the defendant after stating his side of the case. After which they are sked to make their final submissions to the case (Isa'ka Ipke).³²

Eze sets up a jury from his council and the invitees with members of the panel. The jury sorts out the lies in their submissions after the two parties who are sent out of sight, are invited back for judgment and before the judgment they normally give what they have (Ihe Ibu-Ikpe) to entertain members of the panel for the time spent. Thereupon, the Eze is empowered to declare the judgment.³³

Okonko Fraternity

The Okonko fraternity is a cultural medium of peace making in the Uzoakoli community. The fraternity usually a stand in resolving of land dispute and inheritance, and also hold control of farm lands or any other property entrusted to it as a body. Litigants usually pay equivalent fee and gin-drink for registration of their cases. The fraternity have a general overseer and secretary general from “Ndi-Anyaoğu”, Umuachiana. Another custodian of the fraternal affairs is according to villages and hamlets who take directive from the overseer.

In report of cases, the complainant goes to their parish head of the fraternity who communicate other members on a date to site for hearing. If on a land or property matter, the fraternity serves summon to the defendant after flagging their symbol (Obu or Ohiri) leave which indicate an injunction to the concerned land or property. The hearing takes normal process or other indigenious arbitration body in the society.²² The Okonko fraternity played a unique role in holding control of property or land given to them by a complainant pending onthe hearing and decision on the matter. They stand to follow up court cases on property under their watch should a defendant refuse to respond to summon and choose to go for a lawsuit.

The litigation of parties to two different parish head almost ruined the peace that existed among the parishioners of the fraternity when one Mr. Ukam gave their land as the family head to Umueze Okonko fraternal parish and his brother gave to

Umuachiana fraternal parish/head of Okonko Uzuakoli. The Umueze had Mr. Ukam as their grandson and agitated it was his right to hold control of their farm land as the family head while Mr. Onyeabor and the support group argued Mr. Ukam should share the land not to pro rata the land to Mr. Onyeabor. The communities intervened and saved the Okonko fraternity from disintegration by the two groups in the struggle.³⁴

DEITIES

Obi-ala

The Obi-ala Uzuakoli formerly served as the entrance to the elders' council court. It is a deity responsible for resolving controversial cases and conflict. It is a sacred place built by the forbearers of the society which prohibited elders from standing on falsehood, sentiments and bribe taking. Any elder who defiles the sanity of the Obi usually go in for it. It is the supreme court of the land, people like, illegitimate born of the land, women and the insane do not enter into the Obi-ala. For the women folk, they stand outside to present their case to the oracle as it kills any person who infringed any of its rules.³⁵

In the Obi-ala, the only sacrifice required for its appeasement is truth. Any oath taking in a case of dispute settlement, the elders will pour wine and kola nut of four cotyledons inside a dug hole after which the parties to the conflict are to bend down and drink from this dug hole called "Uhi-ala". The faulted after taking the oath will be severely punished to death by the gods if no intervention sacrifice is made to appease the gods and set him free.³⁶

Erima

The Erima is adjudged the god and bond of the kinship and is a mixture of sand and other molded particles usually hanged on the wall of the oldest man and head of the family.²⁵ It is used to settle conflict of threat to life and incest. It could close the generation of the entire kindred if neglected in case of incest, murder of a relation, marriage of blood related person, force of blood either by fighting among blood related group, forceful quench of cooking fire in a woman's kitchen mud, living a husband home with cooking pots and plates, if neglected and propitiatory sacrifice snubbed to appease the gods, and concerned parties go back to sit together.³⁷

Conflict resolution strategies in Uzuakoli is suited for the people's custom to maintain peace, harmonious relationship and is married with the extrajudicial processes. The case of ostracisation though was the common negotiation tool on case that will bring calamity on the society or cases that could escalate or destroy the peace and development of the community and the case of murder which could escalate to involve others in the fight for reparation. The first negotiation step is for the perpetrator to leave the community for seven years.³⁸ It is used to forestall any possible escalation of conflict. The issue of mixed concoction as “Uhiala, Erima and Nsohu” for people to take as oath for truth telling, protecting and uniting is another sign of extrajudicial mode in the conflict resolution of the society.

The Community

The enhancement of peaceful relationship is the prime aim of all socio-political structures in Igbo society. Communities take upon them the role and responsibility of institutionalizing indigenous bodies to handle problems of disagreement and conflicts at all levels of human interactions in the society.

Conflict Prevention Role

The community in sacred role of maintaining peace and harmony placed fines of N2,000 and N5,000 for adults who fight and use of sharp element as weapon respectively.³⁹ Every disagreement that could lead to physical combat between two individuals are expected to be reported through the appropriate channel for peaceful settlement. They play the role of emergency response on matters that requires urgency to forestall escalation of the core cause of the conflict.

These include the intervention and separation of individual or group in a physical fight, and resolve the conflict where possible or arraign the parties to a tribunal which is ever ready to attend to cases even without formal litigation or report to enhance peace and harmonious relationship in the society.²⁷ Communities in Uzuakoli have also insisted on forcing their members to exhaust all indigenous channels provided for conflict resolution before taking it to the police, that is, all matters must be reported to the appropriate quarters mostly the community square general assembly tribunal while any defilement to that attracts a fine of N5,000.⁴⁰

Peace Making

The people have often solicited and made peace between two clans or villages of the society. They usually play these roles through the family heads, village heads, community town union, women association or the youth association. An aged woman from Uzuakoli recalled the 1988 Uzuakoli Youth reconciliatory movement. The youths in Diaspora came in between to make peace between Amamba community and Eluoma Community.⁴¹

They also recounted how the Uzuakoli Development Union (UDA) intervened, made and restored peace on the “Itu-eye” (feast of Ilaoso ceremonial date) misunderstanding between Ngwu and other communities of Uzuakoli. Women association as a socio-political unit in the communities play relevant roles in maintaining peace and harmonious relationship between family group and hamlets.⁴² Another was the intervention into Amamba town union's conflict with the youths in 2005.⁴³ The women also facilitate peace by resolving matters of sex abuse in villages, negotiate peace between fathers (men of the land) and youth, men of their community and another community.⁴⁴

Peace Building

Uzuakoli indigenes have continued to enhance peace through the bequeathed culture of their forbearers in the community. The people have a cultural festival called “Abia” which followed as an end party of their new yam festival. On the very day of the festival, mostly relative of different families and friends are been hospitably hosted with telling of stories of their blood relationship and myths on their ancestral lineage.⁴⁵

Another cultural celebration of peace building of the people is “Ila-oso” Uzuakoli. The people arrange this festival in way that a particular day is assigned to each community to demonstrate their cultural heritage round other communities of Uzuakoli. This depicts high sense of mutuality among relations and the spirit of co-existence in the society. The introduction of inter community sports game by the youth movement in 1988 to inculcate and retain the spirit of oneness in the minds of the younger ones and encouragement by the elders to inter marry has been a medium to enhance peace in the community. The people have an adage which says that “Ogo bu-ikwu-ato” (the in-laws are one's next of kin) which means any issue of conflict that

links one's wife, husband or relatives or both should be treated homely with the spirit of tolerance, accommodation and compromise.⁴⁶

The People

Indigenous conflict resolution in Uzuakoli communities is an enormous responsibility indeed, the peace facilitators strive to repose the confidence of parties to the conflict and the hope of general public who look up to them in the conflict resolution process of the society. It is observed that many members of the communities are pursuing settlement of their cases at the law court.⁴⁷

There is a complete loss of confidence in the indigenous resolution process of the society because corruption has infiltrated the system as in the law court today. There is a lot of unreliability on the arbitrating process due to the presence of some unscrupulous individuals in the arbitration panels who take bribe to conceal truth and jeopardize fairness, equity and natural justice. The arbitrators in most cases allow these unscrupulous elements among them to override decisions with their discretionary powers in matters they have vested interest. Hence, there is distrust in traditional dispute resolution process presently in the community. This research finding shows that they currently lack coherence and brevity in reaching conclusive decision and reliable verdict.⁴⁸

Conclusion

The study in Uzuakoli established the Igbo social structure and cultural life as major source of conflict in the society. Issues like family inheritance, land and cultural rights are all linked to conflict among people in the Igbo communities. The presence of peace practice in all the indigenous institution of Uzuakoli shows that peace-making is the cultural heritage of the Igbo people.

In the evaluation of conflict resolution strategies in Uzuakoli community, the study was able to bring to knowledge how organized and rich the custom and traditions is in handling cases as they emerge in the society. Resolutions amongst disputing parties are binding among the people and the tradition is tailored to suite cases according to their nature and shape. For example the case of incest and witchcraft, you will agree

with me that the law court do not have a conclusive solution to it than law court judgment for the former while the latter is always an enormous task for the court to decided. The study also established that the law court does not resolve indigenous conflict because when two parties head for English court one must return unhappy as a loser. That means, there was no settlement between them, rather an award of victory. The study emphasized on the court verdicts of indigenous conflict and its menace in the community which had negative effect on the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Enhancement of mutual relationship was observed as a significant role of Igbo socio-political structures in the community. Conflict resolution was adopted across indigenous institutions to resolve conflict among members. It was also noted that the communities played emergency responds to crisis and preventive measures in conflict management by dissuading conflicting parties, collection of fines and sanctions as reparations to curb violent conflict and unnecessary disputes between/among parties in the community.

The role of peace-making was also marked as their cultural heritage which is usually demonstrated by the family and village heads, town unions, women association or youths in the communities. More so, peace-building was linked to the people's cultural festivals, subgroups and village affiliations which they demonstrate as group celebrations, clearing of roads and intra/inter village sports games. Finally, the study confirmed gradual loss of confidence in the indigenous conflict resolution process. It pointed out the activities of unscrupulous arbiters who had infiltrated the system with bribery and corruption as in the law court. Impartiality, lack of bravery and the use of deities were other confirmed factors that is bringing lost in interest in the process by Christians.

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