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# CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AND WELL-BEING OF RURAL DWELLERS IN CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

**Agara, Edey Peter**

Department of Sociology,  
University of Calabar, Nigeria

## Abstract

*The inevitability of conflict in human interaction has been emphasized in literature by scholars, stakeholders, political, opinion, and religious leaders. However, the devastating consequences of conflict on the general human well-being have made conflict resolution an important topic of research to scholars. This study explores the linkages between conflict resolution strategies and well-being of rural dwellers in Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examines the impact of mediation, and negotiation, on the well-being of rural dwellers. Three research questions were raised to guide the study. Cross-sectional survey research design was adopted because of the nature of the study. Questionnaire is the main instrument of data collection. Quantitative data were collected from 384 respondents from the study area. The generated data were statistically tested using Pearson Product Moment Correction (PPMC). Results from the quantitative study reveals that there is a significant relationship between mediation, negotiation, and well-being of rural dwellers in Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between conflict resolution strategies and well-being of rural dwellers in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study recommended that advocacy for tolerance, love, forgiveness, and sensitivity of government to people's needs should be put in place to enhance well-being of rural communities ravaged by conflict.*

**Keywords:** Conflict resolution strategies, Mediation, Negotiation, Rural dwellers, Social, and well-being

## Introduction

Conflict is a natural dynamic that arises when people's interests, perceptions, goals, values or approaches to problems differ and when one party feels that another is interfering with their ability to attain a certain objective (Chimaraoke, 2002; Bukari, 2013). It may occur between individuals or groups and range from minor disagreements to major disputes or even war. Conflict is an inevitable and all-pervasive element in our society and in the world. Although conflicts may end up in destruction and even death, conflicts may also result in increase effectiveness, enhanced relationships, and further goal attainment (Choudree, 1999). Indeed, in human terms conflict is one of the "engines of evolution" that allows us to learn, progress, and grow. Conflict resolution is a process of managing a conflict and negotiating a solution. It is best understood as a working model with two key elements, conflict management and negotiation (Nandalal & Simonovic, 2003). Conflict Management is a communication process for changing the negative emotional states in a conflict to emotional states that



allow working out a solution to the conflict. Negotiation is a communication process for enabling disputing parties to achieve an outcome with respect to their differences. Resolving conflicts to achieve positive outcomes involves two distinct elements, conflict management and negotiation. The first element, conflict management, deals with the attitudes and strong negative emotions usually associated with a conflict situation (Ofuho, 1999). It involves defusing the accompanying emotional energy and achieving a mutual understanding of differences. This element is often referred to as conflict settlement.

Conflict settlement occurs when destructive behaviour has been reduced and hostile attitudes lessened. The aim of conflict control is to mitigate and ultimately end conflict. It is efficient and highly effective, but does not take into account the demands and interests of the parties involved, and thus fails to fundamentally resolve conflict (Gardner, 1980; Prah, 2004). The goal of conflict resolution is to eliminate the root causes of incompatibility. The equality of others and their need for participation are considered, which can eliminate deep dissatisfaction and help to build long-term relationships (Bush & Folger, 1994). However, as conflict control often incurs lower costs, is more effective and avoids the 'volunteer's dilemma', it is difficult to argue for conflict-resolution methods. However, the causes of the conflicts still remain to be resolved (Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2012). Once the conflict has been reduced, the next step is to use negotiation or problem solving to arrive at an outcome that satisfies both parties. At this point, the conflict is resolved, that is, the structure of the situation that gave rise to the struggle in the first place is changed and modified so that the interests of all parties are met. Conflict management is then directed toward settlement and negotiation is directed toward achieving the more difficult outcome, resolution.

Conflict is likely to have several impacts, which may include harm to both humans and the natural resource base. It is a very complex and multi-dimensional social process (Rukuni, Zadzisai, Maxwell & Kwaedza, 2015). Conflict partly springs from the increasing demand on natural resources owing to population growth, but also as a result of the continued depletion of these resources in both quantity and quality due to degradation, over-harvesting, governance deficits, and external factors such as climate change and commercial pressure (Xie, Song, & Stringfellow, 1998). With regard to the typology of conflict, one could say it is usually a confusing concept over which scholars in the field have not been able to reach consensus. However, it is categorised in many ways, taking the nature of conflicting parties, conflict issues or conflict causes as a parameter (Rukuni et al. 2005). Conflict resolution practitioners take into account all levels of conflict, including but not limited to family, criminal, civil, sexuality, gender, multinational and financial. Conflict is part of life, and when it is wisely handled it could serve as an engine of progress (Fiseha, 2013). However cohesive a society might appear, it could be harbouring conflicts. We cannot expect a society with different interests and value systems to be immune from conflict. But the point is that, even if conflict is a common denominator to every society, it does not mean that all societies use similar ways of settling their conflicts. In their various societal, socio-economic and political



contexts, societies indeed differ in the modalities they use to resolve conflict (Fleischacker, 1994). The paper explores the linkages between conflict resolution strategies and well-being of rural dwellers in Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examines the impact of mediation, and negotiation, on the well-being of rural dwellers.

## **Theoretical perspective**

### **Frustrations-aggression-displacement theory**

The theory is otherwise known as frustration aggression hypothesis. This theory is associated with “Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower, and Sears, (1939) and further developed by Miller and Roger Barker (1941), and Leonard Berkowitzin (1969)”. The major assumption of the theory is that when individuals are prevented from attaining their goals, frustration sets in (Friedman & Scchustack, 1999). The frustration – aggression hypothesis attempts to provide partly the reasons why violence occurs in the soicety. According to Dill and Anderson, (1995) frustration aggression theory is used to give explanation of unrest and revolutions in the society. The theory reported that the poor and the less privilege engages in various forms of hostility to convey their bottled up frustration and resentment. Whitley and Kite, (2010) defined frustration is a situation, where an individual needs suffers either slight or major distortion. Aggression connotes the feeling or reaction of an individual towards frustration. Aggression takes place when there is an communication between an internal feeling and cues that are available in the social system. Frustration lacks the capacity to cause aggressio. When an individual experience frustration the next line of action is the feeling of aggression. According to Whitley and Kite, (2010)the number of frustration and subsequent aggression depends on how near the individuals is to the goal when they are blocked a significant element of frustration aggression theory concerns the redirection or displacement of aggression a particular frustration instigates aggression against targets that are to some degree related to that source.

### **Methods and materials**

The cross-sectional survey research design was adopted in this study. This design was opted for because of its flexibility and the opportunity it provide researchers to compare many different variables at the same time. This study is carried out in Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The Central Senatorial District of Cross River State stretches between longitude 7.00 to 858<sup>E</sup> and Latitude 5.000 to 5.29<sup>N</sup>. The area is located midway between Cross River South and the Northern Senatorial District. It is bounded in the north by Ogoja, Obudu, and Obanliku Local Government areas of Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State, and on south by Biase and Akamkpa Local Government areas, on the east by Republic of Cameron, and Ebonyi State in the West. For administrative convenience, the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State is divided into six local government areas, namely: Abi, Yakurr, Ikom, Etung, Boki, and Obubra. It has a projected population of 775,250 and is occupying an



area of 2005 square Kilometres (Williams, Akpama, Ayang & Iferi-Obensten, 2013). The Central Senatorial District of Cross River State lies within the rich fringes of tropical rainforest zone of South-eastern Nigeria. The major occupation of the area includes farming, trading, and lumbering. The rich topsoil is laced underneath with unfathomable and extensive beds of limestone, clay, lead, iron, alt, gravel, quartz, pyrite ore, etc.

The population of study comprises of rural dwellers in selected local government areas in Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The age range of the study population is between 18-60 years. The sample size for the study is three hundred and eighty-four (384) respondents. The respondents were selected from the study area through the purposive sampling technique. Since the population of the study is unknown, the sample size was determined by the Cochran sample determinant. The formula for Cochran sample size determinant is stated thus:

$$n = \frac{Z^2(pq)}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n = Required sample size
- Z = Confidence level (put at 95% or 1.96)
- p = Proportion of rural dwellers (given in this study as 50%). That is 0.5
- q = Compliment of p (put at 50%, i.e, 1 - 50%). That is 0.5
- e = Level of accuracy or margin error (put at 0.05).

Applying the formula, therefore,

$$n = \frac{1.96^2(0.5)(0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 (0.25)}{0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025}$$

$$n = 384.16$$

$$n = 384$$

The study adopted multistage sampling technique using purposive and simple random sampling technique. The first sampling technique adopted is the purposive sampling technique. This method was used to select three local government areas that have experience conflict in the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. These Local Government Areas include – Abi, Obubra, and Yakuur Local Government areas.



This was achieved using the balloting system. The first Furthermore, two communities each were randomly selected from the three local government area picked for the study. A total of 6 (six) communities were therefore selected for the study. In each of the six communities, purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondent who are present at the time of study. From each of the communities used for the study, two (2) major clans were purposively selected. A total of twelve (12) clans were covered in the six communities selected for this study. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling procedure from the marked clans. An average of thirty-two (32) respondents were selected from each clan. The thirty-two (32) respondents purposively selected from each clan were adult ages 18-60 years. They were selected from their respective household. In event where there is no adult of the specified age, the researcher moves to the next household to continue the administration of the research instrument. In all a total of three hundred and eighty-four (384) respondents were selected for the study.

The questionnaire titled questionnaire on “Conflict Resolution Strategies and Well-being of Rural Dwellers” was adopted as main instrument for data collection. The questionnaire consists of 26 items and measured the following items; mediation, negotiation, and well-being of rural dwellers. The questionnaire was divided into three main units. Section A, elicited data on the respondents’ demographic data such as sex, age, marital status, educational level etc. Section B, consists of 20 items designed to measure the independent variable while section C elicited data on the dependent variable; each require the respondent to indicate the frequency of their responses on a four point Likert-scale – Strongly Agree[SA], Agree [A], Strongly Disagree [SD], Disagree [D] scale. Analysis of data were carried out based on the research hypotheses. The questionnaire was validated by two Lecturers in the Department of Sociology, University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. The statistical test employed was the Pearson Product Moment Correction (PPMC) statistical tool. All the hypotheses were stated in the null form and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

### Data presentation

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used to perform frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correction (PPMC) to test the stated hypotheses. A total of 384 questionnaires were administered out of which 379 were retrieved for analysis, which account for 98.7 per cent response rate. Results in table 1 show that Out of the 379 respondents, 229 representing 60.4 per cent were males and 150 representing 39.6 per cent were females. 93 (24.5%) of the respondents were aged 25 years and below 16 2 (42.7%) respondents were aged 26-35 years, 82 (21.6%) respondents were aged 36-45 years while, 42 (11.1%) respondents were aged 46 years and above. Distribution of respondents based on marital status revealed that, 164 (43.3%) were single; 185



(48.8%) were married; while 30 (7.9%) were divorced/Separated. The distribution of respondents based on level of education showed that, 75 (19.8%) had no formal education, 97 (25.6%) had primary education 106 (28%) had secondary education, while 101 (26.6%) had tertiary education. Out of the 379 respondents used in this study, most of the respondents' 137 (36.1%) were engage in farming as their primary occupation; 82 (21.6%) respondent were students; 84 (22.2%) were engage in trading; 61 (16.1%) were civil servant while only 15 (4%) were in the category of entrepreneurs. The distribution of respondents' based on religion showed that, more than half of the respondents' 350 (92.3%) reported they were Christians; 8 (2.1%) reported they were Muslim while 21 (5.5%) were African Traditional worshippers.

TABLE 1

Demographic data

Variable		Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	150	39.6
	Female	229	60.4
	Total	379	100
Age of respondent	Below 25 years	93	24.5
	26 - 35 years	162	42.7
	36- 45 years	82	21.6
	46 years and above	42	11.1
	Total	379	100
Marital status	Single	164	43.3
	Married	185	48.8
	Divorced/Separated	30	7.9
	Total	379	100
Level of education	No formal education	75	19.8
	Primary education	97	25.6
	Secondary education	106	28
	Tertiary education	101	26.6
	Total	379	100
Occupation	Farming	137	36.1
	Student	82	21.6
	Trading	48	12.7
	Civil servant	61	16.1
	Entrepreneur	51	13.5
	Total	379	100
Religion	Christianity	350	92.3
	Muslim	8	2.1
	ATR	21	5.5
	Total	379	100

Source: Field survey, 2020



## Results and discussion of findings

### Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between mediation (as a conflict resolution strategies) and well-being of rural dwellers in Central Senatorial District. The independent variable is mediation while rural dwellers is the dependent variable.

### Decision rule

If the calculated value is greater than or equal to ( $\geq$ ) critical value, reject null-hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and accept alternate hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) and if the calculated is less than the critical value accept the null. To test this hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient is used to test this hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance and the result was presented in Table 2

### Results:

As presented in Table 2, the result is statistically significant  $r = 0.501$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . This is because the calculated  $r$ -value of 0.501 is greater than the critical  $r$ -value of 0.195, at 0.05 alpha ( $\alpha$ ) levels of significance, with  $df = 377$ . This implies that, there is a significant relationship between mediation and well-being of rural dwellers in Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The correlation coefficient is a standardized measure of an observed effect, it is a commonly used measure of the size of an effect and  $r$ -values of  $\pm 0.1$  represent a small effect,  $\pm 0.3$  represent medium effect while  $\pm 0.5$  is a large effect. The squared correlation  $(0.501)^2$  which is a measure of effect size indicates the proportion of explained variance on the dependent variable. Therefore, 25% of the variance in well-being of rural dwellers is accounted for by mediation (conflict resolution strategy). The magnitude of effect is moderate. This means, there is a significant relationship between mediation and well-being of rural dwellers in Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of mediation and well-being of rural dwellers

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r-value	Sig.
Mediation	379	13.76	2.14		
				0.501	.000*
Well-being of rural dwellers	379	14.69	2.14		

\*Significant at 0.05 level;  $df = 377$  critical  $r$  value = 0.195  
Source: Field survey, 2020



## Hypothesis two

There is no significant relationship between negotiation (as a conflict resolution strategies) and well-being of rural dwellers in Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The independent variable is negotiation while the dependent variable is well-being of rural dwellers.

## Results

As presented in Table 3, the result is statistically significant  $r = 0.761$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . This is because the calculated  $r$ -value of 0.761 is greater than the critical  $r$ -value of 0.195, at 0.05 alpha ( $\alpha$ ) levels of significance, with  $df = 377$ . This mean that, there is statistical significant relationship between negotiation and well-being of rural dwellers in Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The correlation coefficient is a standardized measure of an observed effect, it is a commonly used measure of the size of an effect and  $r$ -values of  $\pm 0.1$  represent a small effect,  $\pm 0.3$  represent medium effect while  $\pm 0.5$  is a large effect. The squared correlation  $(0.761)^2$  which is a measure of effect size indicates the proportion of explained variance on the dependent variable. The magnitude of effect is large, this means that negotiation correlates positively with well-being of rural dwellers in the study area. Therefore, we can conclude that, there is statistical significant relationship between negotiation and well-being of rural dwellers in Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria.

TABLE 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of negotiation and well-being of rural dwellers

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r-value	Sig.
Negotiation	379	12.99	2.10		
				0.761	0.000
Well-being of rural dwellers	379	14.69	2.14		

\* significant at 0.05 level;  $df = 377$  critical  $r$  value = 0.195

Source: Field survey, 2020

## Discussion of findings

The statistical analysis for hypothesis one shows a significant relationship between mediation and well-being of rural dwellers in Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. Previous studies have shown that carefully constructed mediation could prevent a full blown conflict. Consequently, enhancing the well-being of



people concern. The findings of the study reveals that conflict resolution usually requires finding a mutually acceptable solution that meets the interests of both parties and promotes the well-being of people. If all parties can see their interests satisfied, movement toward resolution is substantially increased and well-being of the individuals involved in the conflict is enhanced. Mediation is a popular process of conflict resolution. It is quite productive and helpful in settling conflicts that would have otherwise escalated easily and damage the livelihood of people. Mediation as used in law is a form of alternative dispute resolution, a way of resolving disputes between two or more parties (Shedrack, 2006). The objective of mediation is to help parties to a conflict, within an environment of controlled communication, to reach solutions to their problem the role of a mediator is to create the enabling environment for the parties to carry out dialogue sessions leading to the resolution of a pending conflict, which will avert the destruction of lives and properties that may affect the well-being of people. The mediator needs to enjoy the confidence of the parties to the conflict. In addition, there is need to be objective, neutral, balanced, supportive, and non-judgmental and astute in questioning, and to try to drive the parties towards win-win as opposed a view on what might be a fair a reasonable settlement, generally where all parties agree that the mediator may do so. Mediation has a structure, timetable and dynamics.

The result of the second hypothesis shows that there is a significant relationship between negotiations and well-being of rural dwellers in Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study revealed that negotiation is a key approach to the peaceful resolution of dispute and conflicts in rural communities that have experience conflict in the past. Adopting this conflict resolution strategy has actually help in bring to an end conflict and enhance the well-being of rural dwellers.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

Conflict is universal and inherent in all social activity, it is characterized by perceived differences and negative emotional states. The issues in conflict can be thought of as tangible and intangible, as needs or beliefs. Conflict often results in destructive ends but it does not have to. Collaboration and compromise are usually available as alternatives in a conflict situation. Pursuing these ends in conflict is called conflict resolution. To manage conflict successfully, we propose that the negative emotions that accompany conflict be managed by the strategic use of reflective listening. The differences in needs that underlie the conflict can best be dealt with by interest-based negotiation. Solutions are found when conflicting parties surface the interest behind their positions. The problem solving process is used to allow the free creation of ideas that will best meet the needs to the two parties. The study recommended that advocacy for tolerance, love, forgiveness, and sensitivity of government to people's needs should be put in place to enhance well-being of rural communities ravaged by conflict.



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