Curbing Social Inequalities And Gender-Based Injustices In Igboland: The Role Of Public Relations And Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Bodies

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Abstract: In this study, the roles of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in curbing obnoxious gender-based societal practices and injustices in Igboland of Nigeria is critically examined. It is occasioned by public complaints that the orthodox legal system is oftentimes weak and slow in addressing this problem. The poor, the weak and the voiceless in society including women and girls who cannot afford the costs of long and tortuous legal battles in court are usually victims of injustices, unjust practices and lack of equal access to the formal justice system. The specific objectives of the study were to: ascertain the length of time it takes to dispense cases in the formal courts; determine the roles of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland in correcting social injustices and in dispute mediations and resolutions in Igbo communities; assess their comparative acceptability vis-à-vis the formal court system amongst the Igbo people of Nigeria. In the study methodology, a combination of desk research and survey technique was employed in gathering data, which were statistically analysed through tests of proportions. Results obtained showed that it takes relatively long to dispense cases in Nigerian courts; alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland contribute significantly in redressing obnoxious traditional practices and in dispute resolutions in Igbo communities. They are significantly more acceptable and patronized by the people more than the formal courts. It was then recommended that the government of Nigeria should recognize these bodies, use conflict-free public relations media to enlighten them better on fair justice resolution styles and integrate them into the country’s formal legal system.

Keywords: Alternative dispute resolution, traditional bodies, public relations, oramedia, issues management.

I. Background to the Study

Oraegbunan (2011), observed that the Igbo society of Nigeria has in its body of customary laws a rich penal system, though largely unwritten. Igbo communities, prior to the slave trade era and colonialism had well-established mechanisms for peace education, confidence building, peacemaking, peace building, conflict monitoring, conflict prevention, management and resolution (Nwolise, 2004). There are a host of traditional institutions for the maintenance of peace, social order and dispute mediation/resolutions in Igbo communities. The native law and custom enforced by them are often thought as passed on from sanctified ancestors and gods whom it would be a sacrilege to disobey in order not to incur a dangerous curse as penalty (Onyemaechi, 2009). In spite of this, cases of obnoxious widowhood practices, hateful inheritance right issues, birthright issues and many more abound in parts of Igboland, thereby inhibiting the social, economic and political development of the people in line with current global realities.

According to Oraegbunan (2010), every society has its own means of controlling the social behaviour of its citizens in order to reach its desired goals. This is done through the provision of penal techniques by which those who are found guilty of acts prohibited by the society are punished. The Igbo as a group is part of the human family hence subject to the influence of all natural causes of conflict among humans; differences in perceptions, needs, values, power, desires, goals, opinions and many other components of human interaction. These differences often lead to conflict (Weeks, 1992). Hence, the existence of these grey areas of conflicts in Igboland is not unforeseen, but it is the failure to correct them that could be termed the greater sin. Fortunately, Anyacho and Ugal (2009) observed that the Igbos have institutions that carried out the task of peace education, peace building, confidence building, peacemaking and peace enforcement as well as conflict monitoring, prevention, management and resolution. These institutions include:

1. Family Assemblies.
2. OKpara - Eldest man in the family, regarded as occupying ancestral seat for justice and holding ancestral spears for its dispensation.
3. Umunna (clan).
4. Umuada or Umuokpu (Females born in a kindred or village).
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5. Amala (Council of elders).
7. Oha-na-Eze (Meeting of the king and the people).
10. Otú Ogbo (age grades).
11. Ndi chilli echich (titled men, e.g. Ozo title-holders)
12. Agbara (Oracles/deities).

Their justice delivery of these Igbo traditional bodies is dispensed via three channels: arbitration, oath taking and trial by ordeal (Oraegbunam, 2010). Some of these dispute resolution options are often criticized as being unorthodox and crude in styles and practices. The main purpose of this study is to therefore to determine the viability and acceptability of these bodies as effective alternative dispute resolutions and social order maintenance organs amongst the Igboland of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Notwithstanding the array of traditional institutions for checking social inequalities, injustices and conflicts, there still exist reports of some distasteful cultural practices like widowhood maltreatments, denial of inheritance rights to women and the girl-child, trial by ordeal, resort to oracles in deciding guilty parties, forced oath-taking, forced membership of cultural associations and many more in Igboland of Nigeria. The orthodox judicial system has not helped the matter, as the weak and poor in society, especially the rural women don’t have equal access to justice. Thus, even in the face of the ugliest unjust societal practices, they swallow their pains either in silence or seek legal solace in the much more accessible and affordable traditional institutions for dispute resolutions. This is buttressed by the fact that many community native people have swallowed the belief that the orthodox legal system is open to certain weaknesses which include undue delays in litigations and in discharging justice and the dependence on technicalities which open doors for the guilty to escape justice and many more. Thus, its proponents argue that the traditional legal option is bereft of such justice delivery shortcomings, hence, the popularity of alternative dispute resolution bodies in Igboland amongst local natives.

Bearing all these in mind, this study was aimed at ascertaining the effectiveness and viability of the alternative dispute resolution traditional bodies in Igboland and their level of acceptability in comparative terms to the orthodox legal system amongst the Igbo people of Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study, therefore, included to:

i. Ascertain the average length of time it takes to dispense cases at the formal courts in Nigeria.
ii. Determine the roles of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland in correcting social injustices, obnoxious traditional practices and in dispute resolutions in Igbo communities.
iii. Assess the comparative acceptability and viability of the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies vis-à-vis the formal court system amongst the Igbo people of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study therefore addressed the following research questions:

i. Does it really take long time to dispense cases at the formal courts in Nigeria?
ii. Do alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland contribute significantly in correcting social injustices, obnoxious traditional practices and in dispute resolutions in Igbo communities?
iii. What is the acceptability and viability of those alternative dispute resolutions (ADR) traditional bodies vis-à-vis the formal court system amongst the Igbo people of Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

i. It does not take long time to dispense cases at the formal courts in Nigeria.
ii. Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland do not contribute significantly in correcting social injustices, obnoxious traditional practices and dispute resolutions in Igbo communities.
iii. Alternative dispute resolutions (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland are not significantly more acceptable and viable than the formal court system in the area.

Significance of the Study

This study would afford us the opportunity of understanding the Igbo people of Nigeria better, their world views, their appreciation and handling of justice and peace matters, with a view to arming us with better ways to graft such traditional justice system/dispute resolution mechanisms into the orthodox legal framework.
Furthermore, it would help us understand the strength and weaknesses of such ADR systems and point out better ways to improve upon them for optimal societal benefits.

II. Methodology

Data were gathered through secondary and primary sources. The primary data came through survey with structured questionnaire as the main instrument and statistically analysed with tests of proportions. The area of study constituted three rural communities in three Igbo states in Nigeria (Arondizuogu from Imo State, Aninri from Enugu State and Ohafia in Abia State). This was aimed at achieving a fairly wide coverage. The population of the study was 120,000 adult male and female in the 3 rural communities. A sample size of 300 was judgementally determined, while proportionate criteria was used to allocate it to the three rural communities at 100 each. The statistical analysis was done at a 5% margin of error, and 95% level of confidence.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical construct of this paper is founded on traditional communication media (oramedia) and issues management principles as sound tools for effective social cohesion and dispute management in African communities.

African Traditional Media (Oramedia)

The African traditional media are the indigenous means of communication by the people amongst themselves. It done through both human and non-human vehicles like talking drums, the folk songs, drama, festivals, town criers, traditional wears, the artifacts, art works, paintings, stories, and among others cultural architecture that reflects in the palaces, shrines, and African cities, towns and villages (Ogboaja, 1985; Osho, 2011). Wilson (1999), defined oramedia or traditional media in Nigeria as the local means of communication by the rural people which essentially sustain the information needs of this segment of the population that represents over 70 per cent of the national population. Oramedia is the enduring, sustaining and inevitable culture and tradition of the African people (Osho, 2011).

MacBride et al (1981:47), defined traditional media or oramedia as body languages and other non-verbal languages being used in the traditional societies for millennia for a variety of purposes. The messages and ideas are transmitted by means of itinerant dance and mime groups, puppet shows and other folk media which serve not only to entertain but to influence attitudes and behaviour.

Hence, oramedia organs like masquerades, palm fronds (omunkwu), local white chalks (nzu), kolanuts are employed in dispute resolutions in Igboland. For instance, when masquerade is used to put palm fronds or draw a white chalk over a disputing property, it means the place is now sacred and must not be trespassed by any of the disputing parties, until the case is fully determined. This is always religiously obeyed by the people.

Amongst the traditional African people, oramedia are highly effective than all other means of communication because they are interactive, inter-personal, combine verbal communications with non-verbal codifications, and they are simple, natural and less expensive. The high content of non-verbal components in oramedia actually make them to be more effective because non-verbal communicates the mind more than verbal. When anybody wants to lie, especially during dispute resolutions, it is the non-verbal that readily contradicts the verbal lies (Osho, 2011). This must be why Mehrabian (1981), asserts that 93 per cent of meaning in a conversation is conveyed non-verbally; 38 per cent through the voice and 55 per cent through the face.

Again, one unique thing about oramedia is the immediate feedback, which makes communication to be effective, because it is embedded in the cultural values and tradition of the people through body language, signs, and objects (Osho, 2011). Indeed, oramedia is culturally based as it is natural with the tradition and customs of the people. It involves their language, dialect, individual occupation or family occupation or communal occupation.

By the account of Osho (2010:34), most Africans live in the rural communities, raising livestocks or engaging in farming, notwithstanding that Africa has many big cities that are growing rapidly, like Lagos, Nigeria (with population of 18 Million); Abuja, the new Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria; Cairo, Egypt (with population of 15 Million); Casablanca, Morocco; and Cape Town, South Africa. Among the uniqueness of oramedia in the modern age as catalogued by Osho (2011) include:
1. They are transmitted from one generation to the other. People grew up with them, and they get accustomed to them in their day-to-day interactions. So, they are bound to be with the people till eternity.
2. Oramedia is both verbal and non-verbal means of communication which make them more appealing, effective, and understandable.
3. The indigenous media in Africa serves as alternative media in the modern age because for messages to properly get to the grassroots, the people must be linked up through the oramedia. Hence, traditional rulers across Africa even in big cities like Lagos, Cairo, Cape Town, Nairobi, Abeokuta and others still use the Town Criers to announce festivals, restrictions, traditional ceremonies, rules, regulations, dos and don’ts. Thus, oramedia is used to reinforce the information they get from the mass media because the market women and others have the opportunity of asking questions directly from the representatives of the traditional ruler, the Town Crier who brought the message. Indeed, the ‘medium is the message.’ (McLuhan, 1964).
4. The oramedia are derived from the culture and way of life of the people. Hence, it is enduring and effective.
5. The traditional media is less expensive, as it costs less to send messages and to receive.
6. It uses less expensive indigenous technology in disseminating information to the people.
7. Communal: The oramedia are communal in nature because they are used within the confines of understanding of a particular people, tribe or ethnic group.
8. Credible: The people believe in the messages of the traditional media more than the exogenous media or the new media.
9. Easy Understanding: The messages that are being transmitted through the traditional media are easy to understand, and does not require the interpretation of anybody. It is transmitted in the language and culture that are traditional to the people.
10. Simplicity: The oramedia are simple and less sophisticated to apply. A lot of elite still don’t know how to manipulate many things in their handsets and laptops after many years.

Thus, the uniqueness of these African means of communication is embedded in their originality, creativity, tradition and culture of the people. These essentially make them highly effective and enduring in the dissemination of information personally, inter-personally and through group communications. Hence, their employment in dispute resolutions.

**Issues Management**

This is a public relations principle that believes in the proactive management of issues before they grow into disputes or crises. According to Dougall (2008), issues management is an *anticipatory, strategic* management process that helps to detect and respond appropriately to emerging trends or changes in the socio-political environment. These trends or changes may then crystallize into an “issue,” which is a situation that evokes the attention and concern of influential organizational publics and stakeholders. Heath (2002), also defined issues management as the stewardship for effective building, maintaining and repairing relationships with stakeholders and stakeholders.

Common examples of issues management include direct, behind-the-scenes negotiations with lawmakers and bureaucrats, and proactive campaigns using paid and earned media to influence how issues are framed. Issues should precipitate action when a collective, informed assessment demonstrates that the organization is likely to be affected (Dougall, 2008). Regester and Larkin (2005:44) advised that public relations practitioners are well placed to help manage issues effectively, but often lack the necessary access to strategic planning functions or an appropriate networking environment which encourages informal as well as formal contact and reporting. Hence, the alternative dispute resolution bodies in Igboland could become more effective if they engage the services of their sons and daughters that are educated in tracking issues for them for proactive resolutions.

The need for expert advise in issues management as pointed out by Dougall (2008), is because Issues commonly have a lifecycle comprising five stages—early, emerging, current, crisis and dormant. In simple terms, as the issue moves through the first four stages, it attracts more attention and becomes less manageable from the organization’s point of view. As the issue matures, the number of engaged stakeholders, publics and other influencers expands, positions on the issue become more entrenched and the strategic choices available to the organization shrink. If and when the issue becomes a crisis for the organization, the only available responses are reactive and are sometimes imposed by external parties, such as government agencies. Not all issues reach the crisis stage and many crises are not the result of an underlying issue (Dougall, 2008). To buttress this stand, Palese and Crane (2002), proposed a four-stage model comprising issue identification, analysis, strategy and measurement. While Regester and Larkin (2005), recommended a seven-step process including monitoring, identification, prioritization, analysis, strategy decision, implementation and evaluation. All these corroborate the fact that the traditional ADR bodies in Igboland need to integrate issues management philosophy in their operations in order to nip most emerging disputes in their communities in the buds.

**1.8.2 The Igbos**

Igbo people can be found in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria called Igboland. Oraegbunan (2010), wrote that the Igbos are today found in high concentration in Nigerian States of Anambra, Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo. There are also large Igbo populations in Delta and River states of Nigeria. They are a very immigrant
race. They are also in large numbers in Northern Nigeria and in old Ogoja, Calabar, Benin, Lagos, the Cameroons, Gabon, Congo Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, and recently to all parts of ECOWAS sub-region and South Africa. They are mainly Christians. Their men are mainly business entrepreneurs, while their women are mainly agrarian and small scale business holders. From time immemorial, both men and women in Igbo land have played major roles in dispute resolutions and maintenance of peace and order through their established traditional social institutions.

1.8.3 Dispute and Man: An X-ray

Disputes are inevitable parts of human nature. In any social context, human beings are bound to agree and disagree sometimes. When human beings interact in their day to day activities, disagreements and disputes are bound to occur (Anyebe, 2007). This arise due to conflict of diverse interests. Its resolutions, as integral part of commercial and socio-economic development, are the major functions of law through litigation (Aina, 2005). Hence, traditional African people resolve theirs through tradional ADR systems. ADR represented a move away from a formal process to informal process (Anyebe, 2007; Idornigie, 2005).

1.8.4 The Concept of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

According to Wikipedia (2011), alternative dispute resolution (ADR), also known as external dispute resolution in some countries, such as Australia includes dispute resolution processes and techniques that act as a means for disagreeing parties to come to an agreement short of litigation. It is a collective term for the ways that parties can settle disputes, with (or without) the help of a third party. Despite historic resistance to ADR by many popular parties and their advocates, ADR has gained widespread acceptance among both the general public and the legal profession in recent years. In fact, some courts now require some parties to resort to ADR to resolve some type, usually mediation, before permitting the parties’ cases to be tried (Wikipedia, 2011).

HG.org (2012) adds that ADR typically refers to processes and techniques of resolving disputes that fall outside of the judicial process (formal litigation – court). Courts are increasingly requiring some parties to utilize ADR of some type, most often mediation, before permitting the parties’ cases to be heard. There are generally four categories of ADR. These are mediation, arbitration, negotiation and collaborative law. Conciliation is sometimes included as a fifth category (HG.org, 2012). All ADR procedures, but negotiation, include the presence of a neutral person capable of providing an unbiased opinion who acts as a facilitator or decision maker. An exception exists with collaborative divorce or collaborative law where each party retains counsel who assists in the resolution process through explicitly contracted terms (HG.org, 2012).

1.8.5 Traditional Civil Dispute Resolution and the Nigerian Judiciary

According to Oraegbunan (2010), the formal judicial system in Nigeria accord legitimacy to decisions when well-taken at the traditional civil dispute resolution levels. Oraegbunan (2010), noted that although there are discordant and conflicting judicial voices with regard to oath-taking, yet long line of decided cases attracted judicial blessings on the practice especially in matters of arbitration and private dispute settlements. He cited examples like in Charles Ume v. Godfrey Okoronkwo & Anor, a case emanating from a native arbitration in respect of title to the land in dispute. Oguegbu J.S.C. while delivering the lead judgement stated, inter alia, that “oath-taking was one of the methods of establishing the truth of a matter and was known to customary law and accepted by both parties” (Oraegbunan, 2010). But still, while the courts accept traditional rulings in some cases they reject them in other cases, prompting Oraegbunan (2011) to say that the relationship between the orthodox court system and the traditional system is like that of a master and his servant. The discordant notes, however, could also be because the Supreme Court’s approach is premised on the common law methodology which places more emphasis on evaluation of evidence by the judge rather than on preternatural sanctions which constitute the quintessence of traditional oaths.

The practice also received a blessing from the Supreme Court of Nigeria in the case Egesimba v. Onuzurike19 thus: Customary arbitration by elders of the community is one of many African customary modes of settling disputes and once it satisfies the necessary requirements, the decision would have binding effect on the parties and this creates an estoppel. It is recognized under Nigerian jurisprudence (Oraegbunam, 2011).

Even in Okpurunwu, Oguntade J.C.A (as he then was) while dissenting from the lead judgment by Uwaifo reiterated the existence of arbitration among the African natives: I find myself unable to accept the proposition that there is no concept known as customary or native arbitration in our jurisprudence...The right to freely choose an arbitrator to adjudicate with binding effect is not beyond our native communities (Oraegbunam, 2011).

But, in Onwuauungle v. Onwuauungle, the court blatantly condemned practice of arbitration based on oath-taking as not being arbitration at all. The Supreme Court also exhibited this attitude in Umeano Achiapka & Anor v. Nduka & Ors. In this case, the appellants instituted an action in the High Court against the respondents claiming a declaration of title to land. The claim was founded inter alia on a judgment of the native
court delivered in 1925 which was admitted in evidence as Exhibit C. The native court, however, did not order the parties to swear to the juju, but rather ordered the oath to be taken by a third party from whom the respondents traced their title. The issue before the High Court was whether or not the Exhibit C constituted estoppel per rem judicatam. The High Court held it did not. The Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court confirmed this. The Supreme Court citing with approval the decision of the Court of Appeal held that “…a judgment which enjoins the parties to swear to a juju on to do further acts ascertained or unascertained in order to determine where the merits of the case lie is not a final judgment as it is not a pronouncement on the rights of the parties which are in dispute and it cannot operate as estoppel per rem judicatam”

1.8.6 Criticisms of the Traditional ADR System in Igboland

One of the areas frequently criticized or challenged in the traditional ADR system in Igboland is trial by ordeal. This is a practice whereby the accused was subjected to a dangerous or painful physical test, the result being considered a divine revelation of the person’s guilt or innocence. The participants believed that God would reveal a person’s culpability by protecting an innocent person from the torture. Igbo trial by ordeal has been applied to witchcraft cases, widows suspected of having killed their husbands, someone accused of stealing, rape or adultery and many more. In the case of widows suspected of having killed their husbands, the accused could be forced to drink the bath-water used in washing the corpse of the diseased. The belief is that she would die if she is guilty; otherwise her innocence would be established if unharmed (Oraegbunam, 2010). These are some of the practices which some educated elites among the people frowned at and sometimes challenge in courts.

1.8.7 ADR Practices in Other African Countries

Other African countries also practice alternative dispute resolution (ADR). For instance, the Gikuyu elders of Kenya had a long history and primary responsibility to their people of prevention of strife between members of lineages and the prevention of deadly conflicts in which people would resort to supernatural powers or open hostilities, bloodshed and destruction of property Anyacho and Ugal (2009). The Kpelle people of Liberia also have a well established forum for informal settlement of conflicts. It was called “House of Palavar” or “moot” which was made up of an ad-hoc council of kinsmen and neighbours of parties in conflict, every claim was investigated with honesty and at the end, just judgment was delivered and all parties involved shared a drink.

In some Southern African communities, there was the concept of ‘ubuntu’ a customary law whose violation attracted sanctions ranging from fines to isolation (Masina 1969). Among the Oromo people of East Africa, there is also the ‘Gada’ system, an institutions for the prevention of strife amongst the people. Conflicts were resolved through establishing the truth and a verdict of just and honourable peace given for reconciliation and restoration of social harmony in the area (Anyacho and Ugal, 2009).

1.8.8 Reasons Why Rural African Natives Prefer Their Traditional ADR Systems

Firstly, the rural folks accuse the formal legal system as being steeped in varied shortcomings which include: formalistic and technical legal justice format, which tends to elevate form over substance (Anyebe, 2007).

Secondly, they claim that in the formal judicial system, a litigant’s success in the court again is dependent on series of variables and factors, which include: the caliber of attorney whose services a litigant can afford. Therefore, justice is for the highest bidder (Peters, 2004). This leads to some loss of confidence by the rural Africans in the formal legal system.

Thirdly, they argue that the formal legal system is characterized by long delays in adjudications and high cost in terms of both time and money expended (Anyebe, 2007).

Fourthly, they believe that the formal legal system tends to obstruct the course of justice by encouraging lawyers to tarnish the evidence which is favourable to the opposition, while at the same time oppressing evidence favourable to opponents or preventing the falsity of evidence on his side to be discovered (Ayua, 1995).

Fifthly, Anyacho and Ugal (2009), observed that the people believed that their traditional ADR system is more effective, because the instant justice built in it scared people from breaking a norm no matter the circumstances. While Oraegbunam (2010), maintained that the solemnity of the choice of an oath by the disputants and imminent evil visitation to the oath breaker if he swore falsely, are the deterrent sanctions of the traditional form of judicial process which commends it alike to rural and urban indigenous people in Africa.

Added to all these, the formal legal system in Nigeria is also suffocated by too many cases in the courts, leading to trial delays and denial of justice, inadequacy of judicial personnel, archaic system of court adjudication, corruption, lack of modern management technology and the absence of case management
techniques (Anyebe, 2007). This position was corroborated by the Chief Judge of Nigeria, Honourable Justice Dahiru Musdapher, who stated that during the 2010-2011 Legal year alone, the Supreme Court of Nigeria disposed of 163 cases, consisting of 78 judgments and 85 motions. However, 1,149 civil appeals, 58 criminal appeals and 177 motions are still pending before the Supreme Court. He lamented that even if there were a full constitutional complement of 21 Justices of the Supreme Court, it would certainly take several years before the backlog would be cleared (Musdapher, 2011). Yadudu (2007), buttressed this fact by stating that there is in contemporary Nigeria, an unacceptable, perhaps indecent, level of dilation and delay in the judicial process which tends to erode the confidence of the common man in the system and encourage resort to some form of self-help by the people out of desperation. (See table 1 below for an example).

This problem is not peculiar to Nigeria though, as recognized by Wikipedia (2011) that the rising popularity of ADR can be explained by the increasing caseload of traditional courts, the perception that ADR imposes fewer costs than litigation, a preference for confidentiality, and the desire of some parties to have greater control over the selection of the individual or individuals who will decide their dispute, as witnessed in England, Wales, Australia and other countries.

1.9 Data Presentation and Analysis
1.9.1 Secondary Data Analysis
Test of Research Question 1: Does it really take long time to dispense cases at the formal courts in Nigeria?

Table 1: The length of trial time in civil cases in Lagos State, 2006 -2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General</th>
<th>Civil Cases (2006-2011) National Average</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Court High Court</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court of Appeal</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Court</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1 above shows that between 2006 to 2011, it took an average of 3.4 years to dispense cases at High courts in Lagos; 2.5 years to do so at the Court of Appeal in Lagos and 4.5 years at the Supreme Court. This brought the national average to 3.47 years. Hence, we adopt the alternative hypothesis that it takes a long time to dispense cases at the formal courts in Nigeria.

1.9.2 Primary Data Analysis: This part is based on Likert’s 4-points scale and Tests of Proportions (for Hypotheses 2 and 3).

Table 2: Respondents’ Demographic Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex: Male:</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>58.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>41.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age: 21 – 30 years</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>41.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 50 years</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>20.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 years Or Above</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education: O’Levels/Equivalent</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>19.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OND/NCE</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HND/BA/B.Sc</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>29.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBA/M.Sc/PhD</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>21.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status: Married</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>68.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>31.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents’ demographic data in table 2 indicate that 58.66% were male, while 41.33% were female; 25% were in the age bracket of 21 to 30 years, 41.66% in the age range of 31 to 40 years; 20.33% were in the age range of 41 to 50 years, while the remaining 13% 50 years or above. 19.67% had only O’Levels qualifications, 29% had National Diplomas or equivalents, 29.67% had 1st Degrees, while the remaining 21.67% had Masters or Ph.Ds. Only 68.33% were married, while 31.67% were single.

Table 3: Test of Objective 2: To determine the roles of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland in correcting social injustices, obnoxious practices and dispute resolutions in Igbo communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>SA (4)</th>
<th>A (3)</th>
<th>D (2)</th>
<th>SD (1)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland contribute significantly in dispute resolutions in Igbo communities</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(448)</td>
<td>(453)</td>
<td>(44)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>They also contribute meaningfully in correcting social injustices in the area</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(452)</td>
<td>(471)</td>
<td>(34)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>They are quite effective in correcting obnoxious social practices in the area</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(324)</td>
<td>(342)</td>
<td>(110)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Data displayed on table 3 above show that 112 respondents strongly agreed that alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland contribute significantly in dispute resolutions in their communities; 151 agreed to the proposition; 22 disagreed with it, while the remaining 15 strongly disagreed. All these gave a Mean score of 3.2, indicating agreement to it. Again, 113 respondents strongly agreed that they contribute meaningfully in correcting social injustices in their communities; 157 agreed to that; 17 disagreed to it; while 13 strongly disagreed. These gave a Mean score of 3.23 indicating an agreement. Then, 81 respondents strongly agreed that they are quite effective in correcting obnoxious social practices in their communities; 114 agreed to it; 55 disagreed, while 50 strongly disagreed.

Statistical Test of Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2: Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland do not contribute significantly in correcting social injustices, obnoxious traditional practices and dispute resolutions in Igbo communities.

Tests of proportions were used here to test the null hypothesis, using data from table 3. The proportion that strongly agreed or agreed with a proposition is equal to 40 percent (0.4) and the alternate, that it is not equal to 40% (0.4) at 5% level of significance. The formular for obtaining the observed proportion is:

\[
\hat{p} = \frac{p - P}{SE}
\]

Where:

\(\hat{p}\) = Observed proportion
P = Hypothesised proportion (40%)

SE = Standard Error of proportion which is

\[
SE = \sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{N}}
\]

Since P, and N are known, the value of SE is determined as follows:

\[
SE = \sqrt{\frac{0.4(0.6)}{300}} = 0.0283
\]

\(P_e\) = Proportion expected. Since \(N > 30\), normal distribution is assumed, hence, at 5% level of significance for a two-tail test, the \(P_e\) value is 1.96.

Based on these conditions, decisions on the propositions suggested in table 3 are determine as follows:
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1. \[ \frac{37}{300} = 0.123 \]
   \[ \frac{0.123 - 0.4}{30} = 0.0283 \]
   \[ P_o = -9.79 \]
   \[ P_o = -9.79 > P_e = 1.96 \]

2. \[ \frac{30}{300} = 0.10 \]
   \[ \frac{0.10 - 0.4}{105} = 0.0283 \]
   \[ P_o = -10.60 \]
   \[ P_o = -10.60 > P_e = 1.96 \]

3. \[ \frac{30}{300} = 0.35 \]
   \[ \frac{0.35 - 0.4}{30} = 0.0283 \]
   \[ P_o = -1.76 \]
   \[ P_o = -1.76 < P_e = 1.96 \]

III. Result Interpretation

The outcome of question 1: \( P_o = -9.79 > P_e = 1.96 \), indicates a strong agreement from the respondents that alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland contribute significantly in dispute resolutions in Igbo communities. Question 2 which resulted in a score of \( P_o = -10.60 > P_e = 1.96 \), shows that the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland also contribute meaningfully in correcting social injustices in their communities. However, question 3 which gave a result of \( P_o = -1.76 < P_e = 1.96 \), is saying that they are not effective in correcting obnoxious social practices in their communities.

Table 4: Test of Objective 3: Assess the comparative acceptability and viability of the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies vis-à-vis the formal court system amongst the Igbo people of Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland are more acceptable to you than the formal courts</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland are more viable amongst the rural folks than the formal courts</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.9 125 Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>You would prefer to take your case to the ADR traditional bodies in your area than the formal courts</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.8 4 Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Data on table 4 indicate that 101 respondents strongly agreed that alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland are more acceptable to them than the formal courts; 131 also agreed to that; but 47 said they prefer the formal courts, while 21 strongly preferred the formal courts. Again, 119 respondents believed strongly that the Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland are more viable in their communities than the formal courts; 133 respondents also agreed to that; 34 disagreed, while the remaining 14 strongly disagreed. Finally, 121 respondents said they would prefer to take their cases to the ADR traditional bodies in their areas than the formal courts; 137 also displayed preference to that, but 22 disagreed with that; while 20 strongly disagreed too.

Statistical Tests Of Hypotheses 3 with Tests of Proportion

Hypothesis 3: Alternative dispute resolutions (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland are not significantly more acceptable and viable than the formal court system in the area.

Decisions on the propositions suggested in table 4 are used to determine the result as follows:

\[ \frac{68}{300} = 0.227 \]
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\[
\frac{0.227 - 0.4}{0.0283} = -6.11, \quad P_o = 6.11 > P_e = 1.96
\]

\[
\frac{0.48}{300} = 0.16
\]

\[
\frac{0.16 - 0.4}{0.0283} = -8.48, \quad P_o = 8.48 > P_e = 1.96
\]

\[
\frac{0.42}{300} = 0.14
\]

\[
\frac{0.14 - 0.4}{0.0283} = -9.19, \quad P_o = 9.19 > P_e = 1.96
\]

IV. Result Interpretation

Question 4 with the result \( P_o = -6.11 > P_e = -1.96 \), indicated that the Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland are more acceptable to the rural people than the formal courts. The result of question 5: \( P_o = -8.48 > P_e = -1.96 \), indicated that Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland are more viable amongst the rural folks than the formal courts. While question 6 which resulted in a score of \( P_o = -9.19 > P_e = -1.96 \), shows that majority of the rural folks preferred to take their cases to the ADR traditional bodies in their communities than the formal courts.

V. Summary of Result

After the secondary and primary data analysis, the following results were obtained:

i. It takes a relatively long time to dispense cases at the formal courts in Nigeria.

ii. Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland contribute significantly in dispute resolutions in Igbo communities.

iii. The alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland also contribute meaningfully in correcting social injustices in their communities.

iv. However, they are not effective in correcting obnoxious social practices in their communities.

v. The Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland are more acceptable to the rural people than the formal courts.

vi. The Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland are more viable amongst the rural folks than the formal courts.

vii. Majority of the rural folks preferred to take their cases to the ADR traditional bodies in their communities than the formal courts.

VI. Discussion

It is not heartwarming news to learn that cases take so long a time to be dispensed in Nigerian courts, as shown by our result number one. This is much more worrisome when viewed under the context that justice delayed is justice denied. In some cases, the plaintiff may even die before judgement comes. This is unarguably one of the reasons motivating the common man’s preference for the traditional ADR organs in his community. The problem is again sometimes worsened by his lack of trust in the police force that must demand for money before discharging its duties.

Meanwhile, both result number two and three indicate that the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland contribute significantly in dispute resolutions and in correcting social injustices in their communities in Igbo communities. But that is counteracted by result number four which shows that, they are not effective in correcting obnoxious social practices in those communities. Infact, some of them are the progenitors and custodians of some of those hateful traditional social practices like in the cases of widowhood rights, inheritance rights, trials by ordeal, reliance on oracles in investigations, oath-taking and what have you. Hence, no matter their popularity and level of acceptance in rural communities and beyond, there is still room for improvement in the dispute resolutions and justice dispensation practices of the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland.

VII. Recommendations

Mindful of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

(i) There should be a judicial reform to enthrone quick justice dispensations in the formal courts in Nigeria.
(ii) The alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in the country should be inculcated into the judicial system, and properly regulated and monitored by the government.

(iii) Public relations experts should be consulted by the government to educate the traditional ADR bodies on proactive dispute resolution practices through issues management.

(iv) Public relations educational programmes should also be used to peacefully enlighten the traditional ADR practitioners on the need to drop some of those obsolete traditional social practices which their fore-fathers instituted in this modern time.

(v) The alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies should incultate into their system a mechanism for appeals. A situation where their rulings are final and do not give rooms for any appeal is anathema to any modern justice practice.

VIII. Conclusion

No doubt, the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) traditional bodies in Igboland of Nigeria contribute meaningfully in curbing social inequalities in their communities through effective dispute mediations and resolutions. But they could be made to serve better as reliable complement to the orthodox formal courts if their styles could be modernized through conflict-free public relations education and enlightenment programmes. When this is done, the organ would garner more public confidence and inter alia help in decongesting the formal courts in Nigeria that are today being suffocated with untried cases.

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Curbing Social Inequalities And Gender-Based Injustices In Igboland: The Role Of Public Relations

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