

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF COMMUNITY-BASED COUNSELLING ON DISPUTES RESOLUTION IN IJANIKIN, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explored the impact of community-based counselling on dispute resolution in Ijanikin, Lagos State, Nigeria. Community-based counselling offers a grassroots approach to conflict management, emphasizing communication, empathy, and mutual understanding. The descriptive survey research design was used, the population of the study were residents of Ijanikin. The sample size of 200 participants was selected using purposive sampling technique for selecting key informants, community-based leaders, counsellors, and a stratified random sampling method to select residents from various wards within Ijanikin to ensure representation. Data were collected using self-developed questionnaire named Community -Based Counselling on Dispute Resolution Questionnaires (CBCDRQ). Cronbach Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the instrument and value of $r = 0.89$ was obtained. The data from the self-developed questionnaires are analyzed using descriptive statistic for mean and standard deviations and inferential statistics were used to calculate One-Sample t-test, Chi-Square Test and One-Way ANOVA. Findings show that community-based counselling significantly contributes to peaceful cohabitation and reduces the incidence of prolonged disputes. The study concluded that community-based counselling holds great promise for promoting social harmony, reducing violence, and enhancing justice in local Nigerian communities like Ijanikin. To consolidate these gains, there is a pressing need for multi-level investment and community engagement aimed at strengthening the foundations of counselling practice and making it more accessible, respected, and impactful. It was recommended that there should be increase training and capacity building for community counsellors and integrate counselling into educational curricula and youth programmes.

Keywords: Community-based counselling, disputes resolution, conflict management, community development.

Introduction

Conflict is an inherent aspect of human interaction, particularly in diverse and densely populated communities. In Nigeria, the rapid urbanization and socio-economic disparities have exacerbated communal tensions, necessitating effective conflict resolution mechanisms. Ijanikin, a suburban area in Lagos State, exemplifies such communities where disputes often arise from land ownership issues, cultural differences, and resource allocation. Community-based counselling involves providing psychological support and guidance within the community setting, aiming to address interpersonal and communal issues. This approach is particularly effective in multicultural communities where understanding diverse cultural backgrounds is essential (Adepoju & Oyewunmi, 2021). In the view of Onyema et al. (2025) demonstrated that integrative counselling approaches, including culturally sensitive therapy, narrative therapy, and relational therapy, significantly reduced intercultural conflicts in Ogun and Oyo States. Community-based peace education programs have been identified as crucial in preventing conflicts and building peace among youths and adults. Abba and Haruna (2023) emphasized the importance of integrating such programmes into Nigeria's educational system to promote good inter and intra-group relationships.

Onyema et al.(2025) posited that traditional methods of dispute resolution, including interventions by community elders and religious leaders, have historically played a significant role in maintaining peace. However, these approaches sometimes lack the neutrality and structured framework required to address contemporary conflicts effectively. Consequently, there has been a growing interest in community-based counselling as a complementary strategy for dispute resolution.

Siyadion et al.(2025); Ogunbiyi and Obiweluzor, (2023) opined that Community-based counselling involves trained professionals working within the community to facilitate dialogue, promote understanding, and develop conflict resolution skills among residents. This approach not only addresses the immediate issues but also empowers individuals with the tools to manage future conflicts constructively. It shown that such interventions can lead to significant reductions in community tensions and foster a culture of peace. Amodu and Usman (2020) emphasized that grassroots conflict resolution efforts are more trusted in Nigerian communities compared to formal justice systems, which are often perceived as inaccessible or biased. The community members' preference for counselling over litigation mirrors the growing recognition that non-adversarial methods are more sustainable for community peace-building (Nwachukwu & Oladele, 2019).

The relevance of community-based counselling has been further underscored by national policies aimed at promoting alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms. The Nigerian government's National Policy on Arbitration and ADR, approved in 2024, emphasizes the importance of accessible and efficient dispute resolution methods to alleviate the burden on the judicial system and enhance social cohesion (Usman et al., 2025; Siyadion et al., 2025).

In the context of Ijanikin, implementing community-based counselling programs could address the unique challenges faced by the community, such as youth restiveness, inter-ethnic conflicts, and disputes over communal resources. Fostering open communication and mutual respect, these programs have the potential to transform conflict dynamics and contribute to sustainable peace in the area (Ogunbiyi & Obiweluozor, 2023).

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms, such as mediation, arbitration, and negotiation, offer effective means of resolving disputes without resorting to litigation. Usman, Akintayo et al. (2025) highlighted the benefits of ADR in Nigeria, noting its role in reducing litigation backlogs, facilitating collaborative problem-solving, and preserving relationships. Onifade et al. (2022) found that youth restiveness and violence are often mitigated more effectively through community counselling than through punitive measures.

Aluko and Balogun (2021) emphasized that family and land disputes in peri-urban Lagos are best resolved through community-based approaches due to shared values and cultural familiarity. Training community leaders in ADR techniques has also proven beneficial. For instance, NGOs have organized training sessions for traditional and religious leaders in Kaduna State, enhancing their capacity to amicably resolve disputes within their communities.

Effective conflict management involves identifying the root causes of conflicts and implementing strategies to address them. Social work interventions have been instrumental in managing conflicts in areas like Bakassi Local Government Area of Cross River State. Ikpeme et al. (2025) found that social workers played a key role in mitigating conflicts by providing psycho-social support, advocating for vulnerable populations, and facilitating dialogue among conflicting parties.

Additionally, incorporating conflict management into educational curricula can prepare future professionals to handle conflicts effectively. Onalua et al. (2024) evaluated the social work curriculum at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and recommended integrating indigenous conflict management methods to enhance practitioners' readiness. According to Eze and Ojo (2023), the lack of institutional backing for community counselling programs often leads to burnout among counsellors and reduced trust in the services. Similarly, Yusuf and Adeyemi (2024) observed that many Nigerians still view counselling with suspicion due to religious and cultural misconceptions. The lack of an enforceable policy framework to support community-based counselling programmes (Ibrahim & Umeh, 2025).

Community development initiatives aim to improve the well-being of community members through participatory and sustainable practices. Organizations like the Strategic Action for Community Development Nigeria (SACD-Nigeria) have been at the forefront of promoting community-led development. In 2020, SACD-Nigeria convened a coalition to co-create strategies addressing challenges such as insecurity, poverty, and hunger, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and innovation (SACD, 2020). The Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) program has facilitated peace agreements between conflicting groups, such as farmers and herders in

Adamawa State, demonstrating the impact of community engagement in conflict resolution and development (MCN, 2020).

This study aims to explore the impact of community-based counselling on dispute resolution in Ijanikin, Lagos State. It seeks to assess the effectiveness of these interventions, identify the types of disputes commonly addressed, and evaluate the challenges faced by community counsellors. The study will provide insights into the role of counselling in enhancing community harmony and inform strategies for improving conflict resolution practices in similar settings.

Statement of the Problem

In Ijanikin, Lagos State, persistent interpersonal and communal disputes have posed a significant threat to social harmony and community development. Traditional conflict resolution methods, though valuable, are often limited by bias, lack of professionalism, and reduced influence in rapidly changing social contexts. Many conflicts escalate due to poor communication, emotional distress, and lack of access to structured mediation. Despite the introduction of community-based counselling as a grassroots strategy to address these issues, there remains limited empirical understanding of its effectiveness in resolving disputes in the area. This gap raises important questions about the relevance, reach, and impact of community-based counselling in promoting peace and sustainable coexistence in Ijanikin.

Purpose of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the effectiveness of community-based counselling in resolving disputes among residents of Ijanikin.
2. To identify the types of disputes most commonly addressed through community-based counselling in the area.
3. To assess the challenges faced by counsellors and stakeholders in implementing community-based dispute resolution strategies.

Research Questions

The study provided answers to the following research questions:

1. How effective is community-based counselling in resolving disputes among residents of Ijanikin?
2. What types of disputes are most commonly addressed through community-based counselling in Ijanikin?
3. What challenges do counsellors and stakeholders face in implementing community-based dispute resolution strategies in Ijanikin?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions the null hypotheses formulated are as follows:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of community-based counselling in resolving disputes among residents of Ijanikin .

H₀₂ : There is no significant difference in the type of disputes most commonly addressed through community-based counseling .

H₀₃ : There is no significant difference in the challenges faced by counselors and other stakeholders in implementing community-based disputes resolution strategies

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used, this allows for an in-depth understanding of how counselling affects dispute resolution while also quantifying the extent of its impact. The population of the study were residents of Ijanikin, particularly individuals who have experienced community disputes, community leaders, local counsellors and stakeholders involved in conflict resolution. The sample size of 200 participants, consisting of both direct beneficiaries of counselling and key informants were selected using purposive sampling technique for selecting key informants (community leaders and counsellors), and a stratified random sampling method to select residents from various wards within Ijanikin to ensure representation. Data were collected using self-developed questionnaire named Community -Based Counselling on Dispute Resolution Questionnaires (CBCDRQ). The items were designed using a Five-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree and Neutral (Undecided) which has five (5) points. Cronbach Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the instrument and value of $r = 0.89$ was obtained which indicates that the instrument is very reliable, and the items measure a consistent regarding the impact of community-based counselling on dispute resolution in Ijanikin. The data from the self-developed questionnaires are analyzed using descriptive statistics for mean and standard deviations and inferential statistics was used to calculate One-Sample t-test, Chi-Square Test and One-Way ANOVA.

Results: How Effective is Community-Based Counselling in Resolving Disputes Among Residents of Ijanikin?

Table 1: Effectiveness of Community-Based Counselling

S/N	Items	Mean	S D	Remark
1	Community-based counselling has helped reduce conflicts in my neighborhood.	4.08	0.81	Agreed
2	I believe counselling is more effective than legal intervention in resolving community disputes.	3.94	0.83	Agreed
3	Disputes are resolved more quickly when community counsellors are involved.	4.08	0.81	Agreed
4	Counselling sessions help conflicting parties understand each other better.	3.90	0.81	Agreed
5	I have personally benefited from community counselling during a dispute.	3.94	0.85	Agreed
6	Community counsellors in Ijanikin are skilled at managing conflicts.	4.04	0.82	Agreed
7	Counselling outcomes are usually accepted by all parties involved.	3.91	0.83	Agreed
8	Community-based counselling promotes lasting peace among residents.	3.91	0.81	Agreed
Weighted Mean		3.97		

In Table 1, the result indicates a strong consensus among respondents that community-based counselling is an effective method for resolving disputes. With a weighted mean of 3.97, respondents agreed that this form of intervention fosters understanding, promotes peaceful coexistence, and provides timely resolution to interpersonal and communal conflicts.

Results: What Types of Disputes are most Commonly Addressed through Community-based Counselling in Ijanikin?

Table 2: *Types of Disputes Addressed by Community Counselling*

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Family disputes are often resolved through community-based counselling.	3.98	0.85	Agreed
2	Land and property disputes are common in Ijanikin and often require counselling.	3.94	0.81	Agreed
3	Youth-related conflicts (e.g., gang clashes) are addressed through community counselling.	4.11	0.82	Agreed
4	Marital and relationship issues are resolved using counselling services in the area.	4.01	0.79	Agreed
5	Religious or cultural misunderstandings are commonly addressed by community counselling.	3.99	0.82	Agreed
6	Conflicts between neighbors are commonly resolved with the help of counsellors.	3.99	0.84	Agreed
7	Disputes involving financial misunderstandings are referred to community-based counselling.	4.03	0.82	Agreed
8	Community-based counselling is used to resolve disputes during community development projects.	4.00	0.83	Agreed
Weighted Mean		4.00		

In Table 2, the result shows that a broad spectrum of disputes is addressed through counselling in Ijanikin, including family conflicts, land/property disputes, youth violence, and religious misunderstandings, with a weighted mean of 4.00. The highest rated item pointed to youth-related conflicts, revealing the community's concern over increasing youth violence and gang-related issues.

Results: What Challenges do Counsellors and Stakeholders face in Implementing Community – Based Dispute Resolution Strategies in ijanikin?

Table 3: Challenges Faced by Counsellors and Stakeholders

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	There are not enough trained counsellors in Ijanikin to manage community disputes.	4.06	0.81	Agreed
2	Lack of funding limits the effectiveness of community-based counselling programs.	4.02	0.82	Agreed
3	Cultural beliefs and stigma prevent people from seeking counselling services.	3.90	0.78	Agreed
4	Many residents are unaware of the availability of community-based counselling.	4.07	0.83	Agreed
5	Facilities for community counselling are inadequate in Ijanikin.	3.93	0.82	Agreed
6	Community leaders do not provide enough support to counsellors.	3.90	0.82	Agreed
7	Disputes sometimes escalate due to poor implementation of counselling strategies.	4.02	0.81	Agreed
8	There is no clear policy framework guiding community-based counselling in this area.	4.13	0.80	Agreed
Weighted Mean		4.00		

In Table 3, despite the noted effectiveness, the result uncovered several challenges impeding the optimal delivery of counselling services. With a weighted mean of 4.00, respondents pointed to issues such as inadequate number of trained counsellors, poor funding, lack of awareness, weak policy support, and cultural stigma.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis one: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of community-based counselling in resolving disputes among residents of Ijanikin.

Table 4: One-Sample t-test Results for Effectiveness of Community-Based Counselling

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	p-value
Effectiveness of Community-Based Counselling	200	3.97	0.82	16.82	199	<0.001

Table 4, the results obtained compares the sample mean 3.97 to a neutral value assumed to be 3. The significant t-value 16.82 and p-value <0.001 indicate that community-based counselling is perceived as significantly effective. p-value of less than 0.05 is generally considered significant. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected

Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference in the type of disputes most commonly addressed through community-based counseling.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test for Independence Results for Types of Disputes Addressed

Type of Dispute	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Chi-Square Statistic	df	p-value
Family Disputes	199	200	0.005	5	0.999
Land/Property Disputes	197	200	0.045	5	0.999
Youth-Related Conflicts	205	200	0.625	5	0.998
Marital Issues	200	200	0.000	5	1.000
Cultural Issues	199	200	0.005	5	0.999
Neighbor Conflicts	199	200	0.005	5	0.999
Total	1200	1200	0.685		

Table 5, the results obtained compares observed frequencies of each dispute type with expected frequencies. The low Chi-Square statistic 0.685 and high p-value 0.999 indicate no significant difference in how often each dispute type is addressed. Thus, null hypothesis accepted .

Hypothesis three: There is no significant differences in the challenges faced by counselors and other stakeholders in implementing community-based disputes resolution strategies

Table 6: One-Way ANOVA Results for Challenges Faced by Counselors and Stakeholders

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	MS	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	2.56	7	0.366	0.550	0.792
Within Groups	98.64	1488	0.066		
Total	101.20	1495			

Table 6, the results obtained compares the means of different challenge categories. The low F-value 0.550 and high p-value 0.792 suggest no significant difference in the severity of different challenges. Thus, null hypothesis accepted.

Discussion of findings

How effective is community-based counselling in resolving disputes among residents of Ijanikin?

This finding aligns with Adepoju and Oyewunmi (2021), who noted that community-based counselling enhances social integration by addressing the emotional and psychological roots of

conflict. Similarly, Amodu and Usman (2020) emphasized that grassroots conflict resolution efforts are more trusted in Nigerian communities compared to formal justice systems, which are often perceived as inaccessible or biased. The community members' preference for counselling over litigation mirrors the growing recognition that non-adversarial methods are more sustainable for community peacebuilding (Nwachukwu & Oladele, 2019). This suggests that when properly structured, community counselling can serve as a cornerstone for peace in urbanizing areas like Ijanikin

What types of disputes are most commonly addressed through community-based counselling in Ijanikin?

This observation is supported by Onifade et al. (2022), who found that youth restiveness and violence are often mitigated more effectively through community counselling than through punitive measures. Also, Aluko and Balogun (2021) emphasized that family and land disputes in peri-urban Lagos are best resolved through community-based approaches due to shared values and cultural familiarity. These findings highlight the versatility of community counselling and its capacity to adapt to different conflict domains, making it a vital tool for local governance and social cohesion.

What challenges do counsellors and stakeholders face in implementing community-based dispute resolution strategies in Ijanikin?

These challenges reflect the broader systemic weaknesses in Nigeria's community development and mental health frameworks. It was corroborated with Eze and Ojo (2023) that the lack of institutional backing for community counselling programmes often leads to burnout among counsellors and reduced trust in the services. Similarly supported by Yusuf and Adeyemi (2024) observed that many Nigerians still view counselling with suspicion due to religious and cultural misconceptions. The lack of an enforceable policy framework to support community-based counselling programs (Ibrahim & Umeh, 2025). Without formal recognition and integration into local government structures, these initiatives remain underfunded and underutilized.

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the role and impact of community-based counselling in resolving disputes within Ijanikin, a densely populated and socio-culturally diverse area of Lagos State. The findings from the survey and statistical analysis provide robust evidence that community-based counselling is not only widely recognized but also actively utilized as an effective conflict resolution mechanism across a range of interpersonal and communal disputes. The high weighted mean scores across the three major focus areas effectiveness, types of disputes addressed, and challenges clearly demonstrate that residents value counselling as a viable alternative to legal or violent conflict resolution methods. Specifically, the study revealed that counselling services have been instrumental in resolving family issues, land and property disputes, youth-related conflicts, and even religious and cultural misunderstandings. This emphasizes the flexibility and cultural sensitivity of community counselling strategies in comparison to formal judicial processes.

However, the study also identified significant structural and operational barriers that limit the full potential of community-based counselling. These include a shortage of trained personnel, limited public awareness, poor infrastructural support, and the absence of clear government policy frameworks to support these grassroots initiatives. Unless these challenges are addressed, the sustainability and scalability of counselling as a tool for peace-building may be compromised. The study affirmed that community-based counselling holds great promise for promoting social harmony, reducing violence, and enhancing justice in local Nigerian communities like Ijanikin. To consolidate these gains, there is a pressing need for multi-level investment, policy development, and community engagement aimed at strengthening the foundations of counselling practice and making it more accessible, respected, and impactful.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following were recommended

1. Government and NGOs should provide funding and training for community counsellors.
2. Awareness campaigns should be launched to educate the public on the benefits of counselling.
3. Integration of traditional and modern conflict resolution methods should be encouraged.
4. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of counselling programs should be implemented.

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