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## Women Leadership and Conflict Resolutions in Nigeria: A Case Study of Amaigbo Women Association, Imo State, Nigeria

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### Abstract:

Social experts have undoubtedly agreed that conflict is inherent in every human relationship due to clashes of interest. Many studies have also proven that women are the major players in conflict existing in social relationships. In view of this, peace and conflict resolution experts are of the view that women should be given fairground in the management of conflicts if there should be a floor for peaceful co-existence in our various communities. This paper examines the extent to which women leadership affects conflict resolutions amongst Amaigbo Women Associations in Imo State. In this respect, conflict resolution is measured with dimensions such as conciliation, mediation, and arbitration. Three hypotheses were formulated, and a structured questionnaire was distributed to seventy-two respondents in the thirty-six women associations studied. Two respondents, each consisting of the Chairperson and Secretary, were purposively chosen from the thirty-six women associations. Seventy-two copies of the questionnaire were produced and administered, but only sixty-two copies were retrieved and used together with the information obtained through an interview for analysis. The findings revealed that the role of women associations is very relevant to peacekeeping and conflict resolution in our society. The implication of the findings is that women associations were highly engaged in the use of mediation; they also used the conciliation process sometimes but moderately used arbitration in resolving conflicts amongst the people of Amaigbo and its environs in Imo State. Based on these, the study recommends, amongst others, that women associations should be given powers and authority to engage in peace-building and conflict resolution roles, especially in the areas of conciliation, mediation, and arbitration.

**Keywords:** Arbitration, conciliation, conflict resolution, meditation, negotiation, women leadership

### 1. Introduction

Behavioural experts have, over the years, come up with an uncontending position that conflict is inherent in man. They believe that humans have things that keep them both individually and collectively in common such that may be in the form of behaviours, actions, activities, materials, tangible and intangible valuables, etc., which are capable of causing common interests and can arise due to similarities in personal/individual and group values that are symbolic to the subjects involved. This implies that when things of value build the relationship between oneself and the self, it becomes personal interest. However, when it builds the relationship between an individual and another individual, an individual and a group, and/or one group and the other, it becomes a common interest. Conversely, when things of interest become more valued and preferred by an individual over the other individual or by an individual over a group and/or a group over another group, the result is what is otherwise known as conflict.

Conflict is a situation where there are opposing ideas, opinions, feelings, or wishes within and amongst individuals or groups. Nwolise (2014) opines that conflict is a phenomenal product of the clash of interests between one or two parties which, maybe individuals, groups, states, or a collection of any of them. Conflict has been proposed to be a significant pervasive occurrence in human societies, and as such, its pervasive phenomenon manifestation cuts across the psychological, political, and socio-anthropological dimensions of human existence (Gilbert & Orluwene, 2018). The issue of conflict is neither a family, group, state nor a national or continental rather, a global affair that has since time immemorial globally occupied the center stage of mankind and globally occupied associations as their functionality is inevitable since interactions amongst humans are unavoidable. Burton in Akpuru-Aja (2007) believes that conflict as a reflection of the class of interests or goals between parties may be evolved in an individual or group of individuals, ethnic groups, states, or organizational setting. Besides, Daugherty and Pfaltzgraf in Nwolise (2014) disclosed that conflict is a condition in which one identifiable group of human beings is engaged in the conscious opposition of one or more other identifiable groups because the said groups tend to pursue what are or appear to be incompatible goals. Relatedly, Lewis-Coser in Johnson (2015) stressed that conflict is a struggle over and claims of scarce resources in which the aims of opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals.

According to Umoh (1996), conflict occurs at three major situational levels thus:

- Firstly, conflict is perceived in this situation as parties realize that conflict exists because they observe the difference in their goals and the opportunity for interference been in existence.

- Secondly, conflict is factual – in this situation, conflict brings about feelings of disagreement, hostility, anger, fear, or mistrust between one party and the other.
- Thirdly, conflict is behavioural – this implies that conflict is expressed through behaviours that are actively or passively inferred by at least one party.

The above three situations create room for conflicts. In these situations, conflict arises from the desire of two or more contestants to attain a goal or achieve an objective available to only one person, party, or group. Perhaps, since no individual, group, or organization is an island, as such cannot exist or function in isolation, disagreement, intrigue and misunderstanding are bound to arise in the course of interactions and the need for change(s). Thus, conflict also arises in the bid to gain control over scarce resources, especially when these resources or interests are mutually incompatible.

The highlights prove that conflict exists inside us and around us and therefore is a naturally inevitable part of human, social, political, religious, and economic relationships, which helps reveal a system's objectives and interests. Thus, it is an essential creative element of human relations that serves as a means to change and the means by which our social values of welfare, security, peace, justice, and opportunities for personal and social development are achieved. Conflict helps to create opportunities for social justice if allowed to be constructively resolved by the parties involved. However, it has been argued extensively by peace and conflict resolution analysts that although conflict is good for enacting adequate and beneficial revolutions, once it is prolonged and escalated beyond boundaries, it can be very disastrous and destructive to the parties involved (Gilbert & Orluwene, 2018), as most times it becomes difficult to resolve it due to the damages incurred. Sequel to this, peace and conflict experts have recommended that in order to achieve a reasonable amount of benefits from a particular conflict, there should be immediate conflict interventions and resolution involving tripartite parties (Maduabuchi, 2017).

It is undoubtedly true that conflict has been ignited more by female folks than their male counterparts in every society. However, women leadership is also one of the best channels through which long-lasting conflict resolutions are made. Many literatures have been written on conflict resolution, but only a few have considered the impact of women leadership/association on it. Also, many dimensions have been used by several researchers to study conflict resolution, but none have used conciliation, mediation, and arbitration collectively in the Nigerian context. Therefore, this study and its variables will breach the knowledge gap, expand the extent of literature and contribute to scholarship in this field of study.

### 1.1. Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guide the study:

- To examine the relationship between women leadership and the conciliation process of conflict resolution by Amaigbo Women associations in Imo state, Nigeria
- To examine the use of the mediation process of conflict resolution by Amaigbo women associations in Imo state, Nigeria.
- To ascertain the use of arbitration as a conflict resolution process by Amaigbo women associations in Imo state, Nigeria.

### 1.2. Research Hypotheses

The data were analyzed with the following hypotheses:

- H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between women leadership and conciliation in Amaigbo women association in Amaigbo LGA of Imo State.
- H0<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between women leadership and mediation in Amaigbo women association in Amaigbo LGA of Imo State.
- H0<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between women leadership and arbitration in Amaigbo women association in Amaigbo LGA of Imo State.

### 1.3. Women Leadership

The issue of gender equality has become a contemporary one since time immemorial in the traditional African setting. This is because many believe that even though God has created us equal, the female folks in the pure African tradition are inferior to their male counterparts. This issue has made many women over the years have their potential entrapped inside them and unutilized, as they are indoctrinated that the place of women lies in the management of the home, especially the kitchen. Ironically, the task involved in home management, which is believed to be the ideal task of women in the family, is analytically a critical one. In recent times, women have become relevant not only in home management but also virtually in every sphere of life endeavour. They have taken up careers in education, family/social welfare, banking, law, religion, military, and even leadership in virtually all sectors of human endeavours.

Research has found that recently women are becoming more powerful agents of change in our societies. Women leadership describes the act of empowering women with the power and authority to make decisions that could create an enabling environment for growth and development. Thus, researchers have also found that women tend to have a distinct leadership style that helps to shape how their teams are run. These studies have specifically shown that women tend to use the transformational leadership style to achieve objectives. Women leadership is inclusive, encourages participation, shares information and power with followers, and creates/strengthens group identities. It is also believed that women leadership is generally capable of considering the human side of individuals and helps generate high levels of empathy.

Analytically, women leaders have been ascertained to have the capacity to understand, regulate and connect with emotions, which also connects them to the feelings and aspirations of people concerned during periods of conflicts, crisis, and fortitude. Ogbonna (2017) opined that women leadership enhances the free flow of peaceful co-existence and harmony among people. He stressed that though women are usually known for igniting conflict but are good conflict managers if they are given the mandate to. In many cases, female leaders have been proven to be more likely to be involved in coaching and mentorship and capable of developing their direct reports based on visible features rather than bias. Gilbert (2004) opined that women are good at making bold and wise decisions as leaders, which helps to make them less authoritative and more democratic. Women leadership equips and allows women to make life-determining decisions through different societal problems. They may have the opportunity to redefine gender roles and such other roles, which allow them to enjoy more freedom to make prominent decisions within the private and public sectors. In recent times where conflict has become the order of the day in our societies due to corruption, greed, selfish interest, politics, etc., women are becoming more feasible in peacekeeping and conflict resolution. This is evident as research has proven that women leadership through their associations goes beyond their objectives to promote peace within and outside their communities.

Obviously, women as mothers and wives in their families have the skills to manage issues in their homes which tend to reflect in the activities of the larger societies. The truth is that the larger society is a product of the individual family units, as such decisions made by our women in their various homes fall back on society collectively. It is very evident that women leadership, through its various women associations in our communities, tries harder to achieve this objective of exercising effective participation in building and managing good social relationships in our environments.

#### *1.4. Conflict Resolution*

Conflict resolution is a process of bringing two or more parties, ideas, or interests to find a peaceful solution to the disagreement or discrepancies amongst them. Miller (2003) describes it as a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflict through the constructive solving of problems, distinct from management and transformation of conflict. Conflict resolution is targeted at the conclusive and permanent resolution of conflicts to the satisfaction of the conflicting parties. This process addresses the underlying causes of a particular conflict and seeks to build new and lasting relationships between hostile groups to avoid a reoccurrence of such conflict (Gilbert & Orluwene, 2018). It helps to conceptualize methods and processes that could facilitate the peaceful ending of conflict and re-distribution amongst conflicting parties. The goal of every conflict resolution approach is not perhaps to decide which person is right or wrong but to reach a solution that everyone can live with amicably. In this process, there must be a win/win situation for conflicting parties to be satisfied. As such, the priority should be focused on looking forward to needs rather than solutions to adequately create a win/win option for both parties (Akpuru-Aja, 2007). Conflict resolution helps to bring conflicting parties together during and after the conflict, as such creating enables environments that could help resist further problems from erupting. Hansen (2011) opines that one of the most relevant dimensions in resolving conflict is by choosing to tackle problems causing conflict as a team rather than attacking the parties involved. Hence in managing or resolving conflicts, skills must be put in place by the conflict management team to help reduce the tension of the problem.

Ibaba (2017) stressed that having good conflict resolution skills help conflicting parties reduce the friction that enhances damage in the parties' relationships. Thus, by resolving conflicts in a more professional and respectful manner, these parties are enabled to collaborate better with themselves, build stronger working relationships and help to reduce or terminate eruptions (Konleh, 2006). When conflicts are managed or resolved in an unhealthy manner, it can cause irreparable rifts, resentments, and breaks. However, when they are resolved in a healthy manner, the outcome increases understanding, builds trust, strengthens relationships, and sustains equity and untrampled peace and co-existence by conflicting parties. Several researchers have found that the need for conflict resolution is very crucial since conflict is inherent in man as the need for shelter (Gilbert & Orhiwene, 2018; Ibaba, 2017; Gilbert, 2014). It is stressed that the only way growth and development can be visible in any given environment or society at large is when there is peace and harmony; as such, the process of conflicts in every social setting attracts a careful application of processes that are capable of addressing the issue on the ground without jeopardizing the co-existence of the parties involved both at the short and long run. Sequel to this, conflicts are resolved using adequate processes, approaches, or even methods that could help sustain long-lasting peace and harmony.

#### *1.5. Approaches to Conflict Resolution*

There are so many approaches to resolving conflicts in any social setting and human relationship. This study adopts three popular approaches: conciliation, mediation, and arbitration.

##### 1.5.1. Conciliation

This is a conflict resolution method where the conflicting parties meet with a neutral third party to resolve their differences more acceptably. It is an alternative dispute resolution process that makes provision for a conciliator to meet both separately and collectively with the parties in dispute in order to address the conflicting issue amicably. During this period, the conciliator (an individual or a team) discusses the conflicting issue(s) consistently with both parties in the bid to improve communication amongst them; they better observe, understand and interpret the conflicting issue and encourage and support both parties to accepting a unanimously adopted settlement. Besides, this process involves a voluntary proceeding where the parties involved are free to agree and attempts to resolve their differences as the conciliator helps to facilitate them. However, the major objective of every conciliation proceeding is to reach an amicable, swift, and cost-efficient settlement of the conflicting issue. Conciliation helps build a positive relationship between the

parties in dispute during and after the settlement. Nwoka (2015) opined that conciliators typically act as more than mere communication conduits amongst disputants, as they mostly engage in fact findings, interpreting messages, and persuading disputing parties to build a benchmark for developing a lasting agreement. A major benefit of the conciliation process is that the conflicting parties are leveraged to choose the timing, language, place, structure, and content of the conciliation proceedings, which gives them better control and understanding of the process. Conciliation as a conflict resolution strategy is disputant friendly and enables quick dispute settlements and outcome acceptance.

### 1.5.2. Mediation

This is a conflict resolution process with a neutral third party that assists conflicting parties through constructive discussions and negotiations on the disputing issues to reach a mutually acceptable resolution. According to Robbins et al. (2020), mediation is an effective means of conflict resolution for disputes not requiring a judicial or third-party determination. Mediators foster on the use of problem-solving approaches to resolving conflicts amongst disputing parties. During mediation, communication is improved among parties to get to the root cause of the conflict and seek the most possible means to address this problem(s) to find a true resolution for all parties. Mediation helps to provide a neutral and confidential setting where disputing parties can freely open up discussions on their views regards the dispute. Mediators act as go-betweens and enablers in the conversations between parties involved in a conflict. The mediators help these parties to come to a mutually satisfactory agreement and also help to avoid them getting derailed and stuck in a prolonged argument. However, holding back private information that can escalate to conflict is reduced during mediation as the mediator acts to build, maintain, sustain, and improves communication amongst disputants as credible information leading to the conflict resolution is sourced from the disputants. The mediator acts as a neutral facilitator to guide the parties through the process and helps them think outside the box while searching for possible solutions to the dispute.

### 1.5.3. Arbitration

This is a conflict resolution procedure in which a dispute is submitted by agreement of the conflicting parties to one or more people who make binding decisions on the dispute. The act of arbitrating involves the settlement of disputes by an individual or group of individuals chosen to resolve the conflict between two parties. Arbitrators have more formal roles than mediators, as they have the authority to decide the issues and how they affect both parties. During the arbitration process, both parties are given the opportunity to present their case to the arbitrator, such as the introduction of reliable pieces of evidence and witnesses/testimonies to both parties in conflict. However, the major purpose of arbitration is to obtain a fair resolution of disputes by an impartial third party without unnecessary expenses or delay in the delivery of justice. It is advisable that during arbitration, conflicting parties should be free to agree on how the dispute is to be resolved and should only be subject to such safeguards as are necessary for the public interest and procedural justice.

The process of arbitration has four types of functions which include:

- Resolving contractual disputes between parties involved in a dispute,
- Addressing interests of the different parties in bargaining situations such as public relations building,
- Settling litigated claims, and
- Resolving social/community disputes

Arbitration may provide a satisfactory quality of justice than many courts of law, as most courts are overcrowded with untried cases. Most arbitration processes enhance greater flexibility in decision-making; for a simpler, faster, more peaceful, and less expensive conflict resolution process, arbitration is preferred the most. The arbitration process is thus more controlled as the arbitrator acts as the judge responsible for resolving a dispute. In order to achieve this, the arbitrator listens to each side of the party's argument, takes their relevant evidence, and renders a binding decision. After these processes, the arbitrator, therefore, gives decisions that are usually confidential and which cannot be appealed after being delivered by both parties in dispute.

## **2. Methodology**

The cross-sectional survey design was deemed best for this study because what was being investigated was behavior and experiences (Ahiauzu & Asawo, 2017). Besides, the range of issues and interrelations of variables used in this study are numerous and diverse. The study is a causal one that intends to identify the effect of the application of conciliation, mediation, and arbitration on conflict resolution in women associations in Amaigbo community in Imo State of Nigeria. The design is expected to reveal the relationship between women leadership and conflict resolution. This approach meets our purpose and enables us to generalize from the result of our sample for the entire study population. In view of this, the causal study is adopted and built on the purpose of hypothesis testing in which we examined the causal relationship between women leadership and conflict resolution in a non-contrived study setting.

### *2.1. Population of the Study*

The population of the study was drawn from the 36 registered associations in Amaigbo community, Imo State, Nigeria. Two top executive members, each comprising the chairperson and secretaries, were purposively chosen as respondents to this study. The study, therefore, had seventy-two (72) respondents. These respondents were selected because they have adequate and relevant information on the subject matter studied.

## 2.2. Data Collection Methods

Primary and secondary sources of data were utilized for this study. The primary data were gathered through the administration of a questionnaire designed in the five-point Likert-scale format, while the secondary data were sourced from documented facts in test books, the internet, and journals. Besides, a structured questionnaire containing questions relating to women leadership as it facilitates conflict resolution amongst women associations in Amaigbo community in Imo State was issued to the chairperson and general secretaries of these associations. The copies of the questionnaire were administered personally by the researcher to the respondents. Seventy-two (72) copies of the questionnaire were distributed, but only sixty-two (62) copies, representing 86.1%, were retrieved and analyzed for the study.

However, to generate the qualitative data, the researcher adopted an in-depth personal interview via open-ended questions designed to clarify issues to obtain detailed information about the phenomena under study, especially those difficult to capture through the structured questionnaire. Since the interviews were conducted after the copies of the questionnaire with their related responses had been retrieved, the responses in the interview session were used to confirm some of the recognizes that were not cleared in the questionnaire.

## 2.3. Data Analyses

This section presents the analyses of data as earlier stated on the hypotheses.

- H0<sub>1</sub>: Women leadership has no significant relationship with the conciliation process of conflict resolution amongst Amaigbo Women Association in Imo State.

In testing, this hypothesis conciliation as the measuring variable for Amaigbo Women Association was ranked with the percentage responses of the influence of women leadership on conflict resolution. The result obtained is presented in the table below:

			<b>Women Leadership</b>	<b>Conciliation Process</b>
Spearman's rho	Women leadership	Correlation coefficient	1.000	.605**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	62	62
	Conciliation	Correlation coefficient	.605**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	62	62

*Table 1: Women Leadership and Conciliation Process*  
 \*\* Correlation Is Significant at the 0.01 Level (2-Tailed)

The statistics of the data analysis using a sample size of 62 in table 1 above show that the relationship between women leadership and the use of conciliation as a process of conflict resolution is strong, positive, and significantly evident in the spearman rank order correlation coefficient is .605\*\*, and the probability value is less than the critical value ( $t_{er_s} = .605$ ,  $p = .000 < 0.05$ ). This result implies that conciliation is effective and efficient in conflict resolution by women associations. In view of this result, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between women leadership and the conciliation process of conflict resolution-amongst Amaigbo women associations in Imo State.

- H0<sub>2</sub>: Women leadership has no significant relationship with the mediation process of conflict resolution amongst Amaigbo Women Association in Imo State.

In testing this hypothesis, mediation as the measuring variable for Amaigbo Women Association was ranked with the percentage responses of the influence of women leadership on conflict resolution. The result obtained is presented in the table below:

			<b>Women Leadership</b>	<b>Mediation Process</b>
Spearman's rho	Women leadership	Correlation coefficient	1.000	.862**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	62	62
	Mediation	Correlation coefficient	.862**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	62	62

*Table 2: Women Leadership and Mediation Process*  
 \*\* Correlation Is Significant at the 0.01 Level (2-Tailed)

The statistics of the data analysis using a sample size of 62 in table 2 above shows that the relationship between women leadership and the use of mediation as a process of conflict resolution is very strong, positive, and significantly evident in the spearman rank order correlation coefficient is .862\*\*, and the probability value is less than the critical value ( $t_{er_s} = .862$ ,  $p = .800 < 0.05$ ). This result implies that mediation is very effective and efficient in the conflict resolution process of women associations. In view of this result, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis

that there is a significant relationship between women leadership and the mediation process of conflict resolution amongst Amaigbo Women Associations in Imo State.

- H0<sub>3</sub>: Women leadership has no significant relationship with the arbitration process of conflict resolution amongst Amaigbo Women Association in Imo State.

In testing this hypothesis, arbitration as the measuring variable for Amaigbo Women Association was ranked with the percentage responses of the influence of women leadership on conflict resolution. The result obtained is presented in the table below:

			<b>Women Leadership</b>	<b>Arbitration Process</b>
Spearman's rho	Women leadership	Correlation coefficient	1.000	.568**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	62	62
	Arbitration	Correlation coefficient	.588**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	62	62

*Table 3: Women Leadership and Arbitration Process*  
 \*\* Correlation Is Significant at the 0.01 Level (2-Tailed)

The statistics of the data analysis using a sample size of 62 in table 3 above shows that the relationship between women leadership and the use of arbitration as a process of conflict resolution is moderate, positive, and significantly evident in the spearman's rank order correlation coefficient is .588\*\*, and the probability value is less than the critical value ( $r_{.05} = .568$ ,  $p = .000 < 0.05$ ). This result implies that arbitration is fairly used but not often in the conflict resolution process of women associations. In view of this result, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between women leadership and the arbitration process of conflict resolution amongst Amaigbo Women Associations in Imo State.

From the analysis above, the following findings were drawn thus, that:

- Women associations use the conciliation process for conflict resolution.
- The mediation process is mostly used for conflict resolution by women associations.
- The arbitration process is moderately used by women associations to settle disputes.

### 3. Discussion of Findings

In recent times, the role of women associations in conflict resolution and peacekeeping cannot be overlooked in our societies. Women are the central caretakers of families, and everybody is affected negatively when they are excluded from peace-building missions. Women associations have been posed to be advocated for peace and, as such, serve as peacekeepers, relief workers, and mediators in their communities. Considerably, women associations are not just victims of conflict but the domain of knowledge, experience, skills, leadership, and social networks that help prevent/resolve conflicts and build lasting peace and unity. Agbajobi (2010) stressed that women associations are intuitive, have good negotiations, can diffuse tensions, and also strike strategic compromises – skills that are crucial in conflict resolution. Wyllie (2020) also opined that women associations are crucial partners in economic recovery, social cohesion, and political legitimacy, and women's use of the process of mediation enables effective peacekeeping and conflict resolution. Mccandles (2020) disclosed that if women associations are better found at making and sustaining peace, their involvement in conflict resolution is indispensable and unavoidable.

Ukino (2010) claims that the incessant conflict in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has got its light to resolution through interventions of various women associations in the region. In the same vein, Okpare (2017) has reported that political warlords and other prominent top government functionaries are now lobbying women associations to participate in agitations and peace negotiations in social and economic. Amikpo (2015) disclosed that during social conflict, women associations not only intend to stop the conflict, but they also go into negotiations with conflict parties to address the dispute in a way that it gains a lasting resolution. Women have always been intermediaries in conflict resolution as they have the skills to create enabling environments for peace to reign in a dispute environment. Ani (2012) believes that women associations are types of machinery for social engineering that pilot the peaceful co-existence of people in society.

Obviously, the roles of women associations in conflict resolution cannot be overemphasized. This aspect of the paper evaluates the use of the dimensions such as conciliation, mediation, and arbitration in conflict resolution in our environs. Thus, the evaluation is based on the following sub-themes:

#### 3.1. Women Associations and Conciliation

The result of this study is in tandem with Schulenburg (2014), who found that women associations are very potent in using conciliation to resolve conflicts amidst conflicting parties. Naturally, women are created and known to be soft and pleasant to be with, as this quality helps them create the atmosphere that could help solve an existing dispute. Nwobueze (2015) proposed that the conciliatory role of women in peace-building and conflict resolution makes them friendly and ready to absorb pressures just to find possible grounds to resolve a conflict. The peace-building process is not easy, as seen, especially when women are involved. However, they examine the conflicting environment to know the best conciliatory strategy to put in place to avoid escalating the dispute. Maduabuchi (2017) claims that there is hardly any

social conflict that women associations cannot resolve using the conciliatory process. In this vein, women are proposed to be very effective conciliators.

### 3.2. Women Associations and Mediation

The analysis of data on the relationship between women and the mediation process of conflict resolution shows that the result supports the works of Albert (2012) that as more women are getting educated through schooling, they advocate for gender equality as such, take up responsibilities like that of the men implying the mediation process in conflict resolution. Mediators have high control over the intervention process involved in conflict resolution because the process of interaction between the disputing parties is managed effectively using this approach. Johnson (2015) observes that women associations are very good mediators in conflict resolution. This process is evident, as cited in Gilbert and Orluwene (2018), that women associations play a lot of mediatory roles in peace-building and conflict resolution in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. They claim these associations go in between conflicting parties to draw an enabling ground for disputing parties to interact and decide how to solve their problems without causing more harm.

Maduabuchi (2017) disclosed that women associations are very good mediators, especially in the social context of communal conflict resolutions. He opines that, especially in the south-east region of Nigeria, the women associations have gained more power to mediate intra-communal and inter-communal disputes. Nwobueze (2015) reports that women associations in the south-east region of Nigeria have a very strong statutory power to mediate communal conflicts, making provisions for disputing parties to build common ground for peace-building, conflict resolution, and co-existence.

### 3.3. Women Associations and Arbitration

The findings of this study have proven that women are good arbitrators, especially in family and communal issues. This result is in line with the works of Mccandles (2020), who stressed that laws/decisions made by women are more rigid to be adhered to than that of their male counterparts. He opines that women leadership in organizations and societies where women have a voice is twice more effective. Research has found that although many causes of conflicts in our societies are from women, ironically, women are also the brains behind conflict resolution and peace-building in our societies (Ogbonna, 2017). Women associations have, over the years, been preferred as a conflict management channel instead of courts to get quick and reliable dispensable justice (Mavalla, 2016). Recently, due to the delay in the Nigerian judicial system in the dispensation of justice, disputants have sought alternative mediums through which conflicts can be resolved (Ikenna, 2013). One major channel for resolving conflict in such situations, especially in the south-east and south-south, is arbitration by women associations that have sound and solid constitutions for enforcing peace and harmony. In some communities in Nigeria, especially within the south-east region, women associations are so powerful that they can withdraw cases from the court to handle and create peace amongst disputants (Obla, 2013). Conflict resolutions made by women associations through the process of arbitration are binding on the disputing parties.

## 4. Conclusion

From the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made:

- Women leadership is very relevant to peace-building and conflict resolution.
- Women associations are good at initiating the conciliation process to resolve conflicts.
- Women associations prefer the mediation process in resolving conflicts, as they use it to soften the ground for both parties.
- Arbitration process of conflict resolution is not always used by the women association because women are reported not to be capable of handling some cases in the community.

## 5. Recommendations

Sequel to the conclusions above, the following recommendations have been made:

- Women associations should be given legal backups by the government to resolve conflicts within and outside their various communities.
- The associations should not be biased in their assistance to dispense justice or resolve conflicts.
- The associations should not withhold information from both parties or display attitudes that will make disputants lose trust in them or find faults in their decisions.
- Women associations should facilitate the conflict resolution processes to avoid escalating the conflict.
- Women associations should make use of the relevance of the conciliation, mediation, and arbitration processes of conflict resolution where necessary.

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### Questionnaires

Questionnaire on Women Leadership and Conflict Resolutions in Nigeria: A Case Study of Amaigbo Women Associations in Imo State

Instruction: Please carefully read the statements and tick (√) the options that best reflect your opinion on the following scales:

- 5 – Strongly Agree (SA),
- 4 – Agree (A),
- 3 – Undecided (UD),
- 2 – Disagree (D),
- 1 – Strongly Disagree (SD).

S/N	Women Leadership	SA	A	UD	D	SD
	<b>Women Association</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
1.	Organization takes up leadership roles amongst women in the community	30	25	7	0	0
2.	Our association builds socialization and fosters gender equality and peaceful co-existence among people	40	22	0	0	0
3.	Our women association has its major mission as conflict resolution among members.	30	30	2	0	0
4.	Our women association helps to uphold peace and harmony in our various communities	40	22	0	0	0
5.	Our women association has a very strong constitution binding members' unity.	50	10	2	0	0
6.	Our women association has the power to intervene in matters concerning our members.	45	17	0	0	0
7.	Our women association has the powers as granted by our constitution to intercede on matters involving non-members.	25	25	12	0	0
S/N	Women Leadership	SA	A	UD	D	SD
	<b>Women Association</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
8.	Our women association has the constitutional right to handle intra-community issues.	40	15	7	0	0
9.	Our women association has the constitutional right to handle inter-community issues.	35	20	7	0	0
10.	Our women association is recognized within and outside the community.	40	20	2	0	0
	<b>Conflict Resolution</b>					
	<b>Conciliation</b>					
11.	We provide an informal communication link between the negotiators and opponents in resolving conflicts	30	25	5	2	0
12.	We engage in fact-finding to get to the root of disputes and find the best ways of resolving conflicts.	28	22	5	5	2
13.	We help to lower tensions that exist amongst disputing parties.	40	20	2	0	0
14.	We assist in interpreting issues surrounding the conflict	42	15	5	0	0
15.	We assist in bringing about negotiated settlements amongst conflict parties	30	20	10	2	0
	<b>Mediation</b>					
16.	We have high control over the dispute intervention process between the conflicting parties.	40	20	2	0	0
17.	We help to facilitate the context of interaction between the disputing parties	45	15	2	0	0
18.	We assist disputing parties in overcoming the bottlenecks of a successful negotiation	35	25	2	0	0
19.	We are not biased or impartial, and we allow the disputants to make decisions for themselves that will end the conflict.	40	20	2	0	0
20.	We protect each party's interest and do not have any conflicting interests while helping to resolve disputes.	35	15	10	2	0
	<b>Arbitration</b>					
21.	We have low control over the intervention process	40	15	5	2	0
22.	We hear from both sides of the party in a judicial manner to deliver an unbiased judgment.	50	12	0	0	0
23.	We settle civil matters involving two parties	50	12	0	0	0
24.	We settle cases in that we are given the powers by both disputants to do so.	45	15	2	0	0
25.	We have high control over the decisions made, as they are binding on both parties and are not easily revocable.	30	30	2	0	0