

DWINDLING TRADITIONAL PRACTICES IN CONFLICT RESOLUTIONS AND RESTORATION OF SOCIAL ORDER IN UBAKALAABIA STATE, NIGERIA

OGADINMA IKONNE¹&OKPAN SAMUEL O.²

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY¹

ABIA STATE UNIVERSITY, UTURUABIA STATE .

And

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY²

EVANGEL UNIVERSITY YAKAEZE,

EBONYI STATE .



ogadinma.ikonne@gmail.com¹&sokpan@evangeluniversity.edu.ng²

Abstract

African traditional practices are gradually becoming unpopular because of western civilization and industrialization. The dwindling native practices and conflict resolutions in Ubakala are explored. The aims are to find out the traditional practices in conflict resolution; the extent to which the traditional practices in conflict resolution have been weakened by western civilization; the extent to which the dwindling strength of the traditional agents of conflict resolution have affected conflict resolution and social order; and the strategies for strengthening the traditional practices in conflict resolution to enhance social order in Ubakala respectively. Data were generated through mixed methods. Questionnaire was used to collect information from 504 respondents in Ubakala complemented by twenty-four (24) in-depth interviews (IDIs) organized in Ubakala. Data were analyzed with simple percentages/distribution tables, charts, chi-square statistic, ANOVA using SPSS 20.0 and content analyses. The analyses show that the weakening strengths of masquerade cults (Ekpo Unions), married first daughters (Umuada), traditional ruler's/village heads (ndiezenandinzenaozo), and age grades as traditional agents of conflict resolution and social order, have significant negative effects on peaceful resolution of physical violence cases, abortion cases/teenage pregnancies, land disputes and maintenance of law and order respectively. This has become a challenge to restoration of social order as it has resulted in so many disputes in Ubakala being taken to the police and courts where justice is usually prolonged and at times denied. It was therefore recommended that to strengthen the fabric of our communities and enhance security and development of our communities, there is need to revive and reinforce the republican nature of our society; and rebuild the altered social structure which is the very essence of our existence.

Keywords: Dwindling, Disputes, Conflict- Resolutions, Traditional- Practices, Western Civilization and Social Order.

Introduction:

Western civilization and culture has seriously contaminated the cherished traditional values of Africa and African native conflict resolution is not exempted. Arowolo (2010) holds that traditional African cultural practices paved the way for foreign way of making things as Africans became fully westernized. This has implication on almost all the aspect of African culture and Nigeria been the giant of Africa is mostly affected. In Nigeria, for example Wusu and Isugo-Abanihe (2006) hold that western civilization has put serious strain on the family structure especially on the area of child-fostering and family size. They hold the traditional child-rearing practices in Nigeria used to be a communal affair within the context of the extended family system or lineage, and the cost of raising children were never borne solely by biological parents. All this have changed today because of western civilization. That is why Arowolo (2010) holds the view that western civilization and culture has precariously contaminated the traditional values of Africa and has destroyed

African systems of conflict resolution. According to Ogoloma (2013) traditional conflict resolution (i.e. traditional settlement of dispute) is the search for alternative dispute resolution as against the conventional peaceful methods of settling disputes and resolving conflict situations using the least expensive methods without much acrimony. He holds that this system of resolving disputes has been the African traditional way of resolving conflict in Nigeria, sub-Saharan societies and the entire African before the advent of European colonization.

Some of the methods used in resolving conflicts in Ubakala and some other areas before the advent of western civilization were: excommunication, fines, mediation, negotiation, conciliation, traditional (wrestling, cleansing rituals) to mention but a few. For example, in Umuoha, according to Onwuka (2004) the mmanwu masquerade cult (which in Ubakala is called the Ekpo union) resolves a major offence like stealing through severe negative sanction such as excommunication and payment of fines in terms of goats, wines, etc in specific quantities

The focus of this study is to investigate the extent to which the dwindling strength of the masquerade cults (Ekpo Union), Umuada (Married First Daughters); village heads/traditional rulers and age grades have affected the resolutions of physical violence cases, abortion cases/teenage pregnancies, land disputes and inter-family quarrels in Ubakala Umuahia-south Local Government Area Abia State, Nigeria. In addressing this objective, the following research questions were answered: What are the traditional practices in conflict resolution in Ubakala? To what extent are the traditional practices in conflict resolution been affected by western civilization in Ubakala? To what extent has the dwindling strength of the traditional agents of conflict resolution affected conflict resolution and social order in Ubakala? How can the traditional practices in conflict resolution be strengthened to enhance social order in Ubakala?

Literature Review

Every society has a way of resolving conflict that is peculiar to them. Ademowo (2015) holds that the methods of conflict resolution in traditional African societies, though with variations across the ethnic groups were: mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, arbitration, and negotiation. These methods sometimes involved extra-judicial devices like gods, curse or charms to persuade or convince the disputants about the implication of their behaviour (Ademowo, 2015). Ajayi and Buhari (2014) hold that the traditional conflict resolution techniques such as mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, negotiation and cross examination which were employed in the past, offer great prospects for peaceful coexistence and harmonious relationships in post-colonial periods than the modern methods of litigation settlement in law courts. African traditional conflict resolution methods provided opportunities to interact with the parties concerned, promote consensus-building, social bridge reconstruction and enactment of order in the society more than those of the western world anchored on the judicial system presided over courts, kings, council of elders, etc for dispute settlements and justice dispensation (Ajayi and Buhari, 2014). However, the beginning of slave trade and later colonialism truncated the indigenous mechanisms for peace in Africa with the obscurity of the place of the king and traditional chiefs (Ademowo, 2015).

The major traditional conflict resolution practices in Africa despite variations include mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, negotiation, cross examination, oath-taking, peace-treaty and cleansing rituals (Ajayi and Buhari, 2014; Ademowo, 2015) but the law enforcement agents, traditional police, and courts

were responsible for ensuring compliance with laws of the land (Ajayi and Buhari, 2014). The authors further explain that disputants often take their cases to elders and neighbourhood mediators who can be trusted to resolve conflicts with dispatch in local language, using familiar standard of behaviour.

In Igbo society, for example, the traditional institutions for conflict resolution include: the family, Amala (council of elders), Okpara system (eldest male), Umunna (clan), Umuada (female born in a town but married out), age grades, Ohanaeze (assembly of the people and the king), hunter's association, and Agbara (local deities or oracles) (Ajayi and Buhari, 2014), but in Ubakala, the Eze and chiefs, the Ekpo Union (masquerade cults) are inclusive. In fact, Akinwale (2010) holds the view that traditional rulers formed part of the houses of parliament during the early post-colonial administration in Africa. It seems however, that the traditional practices in conflict resolution have been relegated to the background lately resulting in the news of social disorder heard from many Nigerian and African societies at large today. This is the reason Akinwale (2010) holds the views that the politics of conflict management is expected to connect with the predominant traditions of a society and that the official adoption of traditional measures of conflict management is capable of promoting the peace and development in Nigeria.

Indeed, the significant fact about African cultural history is the convergence upon the indigenous tradition of the two external influences—the Arab-Islamic and the European-Christian—to which the continent has been exposed for well over a millennium. The values and lifestyles associated with these traditions have been assimilated and to a large extent indigenized on the continent. This observation provides a broader perspective on the phenomenon of Westernization in Africa, an observation made as early as the late nineteenth century by the great African cultural theorist Edward Wilmot Blyden and summed up in the late twentieth century by Ali Mazrui as “the triple heritage” (Irele, 2010).

It is important to stress that colonialism distorted and retarded the pace and tempo of cultural growth and trend of civilization in Africa. One of the most profound consequences of colonization has been how the political and economic rape of the colonies has also led to what sometimes seem to be an unbridgeable cultural gap between the nations that were the beneficiaries of colonization and those that were the victims of the colonial assault. Arowolo (2010) was of the view that with Africa subjugated and dominated, the Western culture and European mode of civilization began to thrive and outgrow African cultural heritage. Traditional African cultural practices paved the way for foreign way of doing things as Africans became fully 'westernized'. Western culture now is regarded as frontline civilization. African ways of doing things became primitive, archaic and regrettably unacceptable in public domain.

The strength of the African traditional agents of conflict resolution tends to be dwindling. Hamisu, Makinta, Muhammed, Garba, and Umar (2017) hold that the power of the traditional institutions was negatively affected by the 1976 local government reforms and as such needs to be strengthened through constitutional amendments. Apart from this, western civilization and culture seem to have seriously contaminated the traditional values of Africa (Arowolo, 2010) and this is the point this work had attempted to prove, especially, the extent to which the damage is done in the study area in this contemporary time.

Theoretical Framework

A relevant theoretical perspective for examination of conflict and conflict resolution must take cognizance of the socio-economic and political complexity of the society under study. The conflict tradition which sees conflict resolution and social control as state control designed to protect the interest of a privileged few is obviously deficient in explaining the phenomena of conflict resolution in an acephalous primary group like Igbo traditional society. The exchange model with emphasis on personal rewards is more economic oriented and less sociological and anthropological.

This research adopts the structural functionalist framework. The conflict resolution structures of the Igbo group constitute part of the social structure of their society. The functions of these structures are defined in terms of the contributions they make toward resolving conflicts, maintaining consensus and group solidarity. Parsons (1965) argued that human action is directed by norms provided by the social system. He pointed out that the cultural system provides more general guidelines for action in the form of beliefs, values and systems of meaning. The norms which direct action are not merely isolated standards for behaviour: they are integrated and patterned by the values and beliefs provided by the cultural system.

The pertinent strand of functionalist theory to lucid with regard to the paper is the dysfunctional assumption. The dysfunction idea posits that they could be unintended or unrecognized, social change or interruptions that could entrench negative effect on society. Dysfunction could be either manifest or latent; manifests are intended dysfunctions whereas latent are unintended that however emanates from the dysfunctional interruptive tendency. Obviously Western civilization had a manifest dysfunction of cultural imperialism and imposition of ideology predicated on eurocentrism which manifested in colonial disruption and imposition of new align believes on the people of Ubakala and Africa in general. However, they did not intend to bring about break down of social order which has emanated from their manifest role. It is pertinent to recognize and critically articulate this latent dysfunctional role, whereas Igbo traditional conflict resolution is largely hinged upon their religious believe which gives it credence and acceptance by all; Western influence has brought about a radical change undermining the potency of historical existing structures that hitherto ensured social order within the community. The people believe was guided by the faith on the supernatural being that binds and dictates the people's actions and behavior in every circumstance not a human institution that could be influenced. The community has no faith or trust in such institutions thereby making their efforts towards ensuring social order inadequate.

Methodology

This study is based on a cross-sectional survey design. The design is adopted because it is cost effective in a study of this nature that involves large population, and it will enable the researcher to gather data at one point in time within a limited time.

This study is carried out in Ubakala, Umuahia-South Local Government Area of Abia State. Ubakala is one of the ancient clans in Umuahia-South local Government Area and it is the headquarters of the local government which is located at ApumiriUbakala. The popular market of Ubakala people is known as Apumiri market. There are thirteen villages all together in Ubakala and each of these villages has evolved into a community headed by an Eze with his council of elders/chiefs. However, the Eze of Amibo remains the overall leader of all the Eze since Amibo is the only Ubakala village that did not ask for autonomous community. Other villages demanded for autonomous communities leaving Amibo to bear the Ancient name of Ubakala

Community. Besides, the Eze of Amibo was the only one that was generally crowned before autonomous community issue began. The overall Ubakala Communities are: Amibo, Nsukwe, Umuogo, Amuzu, Eziamma, Mgbarakuma, Umuosu, Avodim, Laguru, Abam, Umuako, Nsirimo, and Ipupe. It has common boundaries with Isiala-Ngwa LGA. Ubakala people are industrious and religious

The general population of Ubakala based on 1991 population is 25,989 (11,822 for males, and 14,167 for females). The 1991 population is used as the base population because the 2006 population and housing census figures were only broken down into local government areas and have not been separated into communities, villages/localities. However, the 2018 estimated Ubakala population is 55,211 (25,115 for male, and 30,096 for female) and it is done using simple mathematical/arithmetic method as thus:

$$P_t = P_0(1 + \frac{r}{100})^t$$

Where:

P_t is population at time (t)

r is the annual rate of growth (that is, 2.83)

t is the inter-censal period (that is, the gap between 1991 and 2018 which is 27 years)

Table. 1. Population of Ubakala by Gender and Communities

Communities	Male	Female	Both sexes	2018 Estimation
Umuako	1,030	1,228	2,258	4797
Nsirimo	1,751	1,991	3,742	7950
Abam	119	172	291	618
Amuzu	910	1,001	1,911	4060
Eziama	705	760	1,465	3112
Amibo	894	983	1,877	3988
Mgbarakuma	1,457	1,622	3,079	6541
Laguru	1,080	1,225	2,335	4961
Umuosu	859	1,652	2,511	5334
Ipupe	826	982	1,808	3840
Avodim	903	992	1,895	4026
Umuogo	559	655	1,214	2579
Nsukwe	729	874	1,603	3405
Total	11822	14167	25989	55,211

Source: NPC (1991). *National population commission census '91 final results Abia State*, Umuahia: NPOPC

However, the target population of the study is 16,730 people, being the population of some seven (7) relevant population categories cut across the study area. The population categories are as follows: - traditional rulers/titled men, umuada association, men's union/association, women's union/association, masquerade cults, Age grades, youth association The target population is shown in the table 2

Table 2: Target Population for the Study

Population Categories	Amibo Community	Mgbarakuma Community	Amuzu Community	Total
Traditional rulers/titled men	40	47	43	130
Umuada association	180	250	300	730
men's union	620	850	820	2,290
women's union	1,010	1,200	1,300	3,510
masquerade cults	250	120	200	570
Age grades	1,450	1,600	1,300	4,350
youth association	1,800	1,850	1,500	5,150
Total	5,350	5,917	5,463	16,730

Sources: official records/registers of community unions/associations and official records/registers of traditional rulers/titled men, in the study area

The study is limited to the dwindling traditional practices in conflict resolutions and restoration of social order in Ubakala Abia State, Nigeria focusing on Amibo, Mgbarakuma and Amuzu communities. The main reason for inclusion of these communities is due to their random selection among other communities. The study participants are drawn from relevant population categories in the study area. The sample used for this work is 504 persons. The study kept to a probability of 0.4 and 96% confidence interval. The z-score for this given confidence interval is 1.96. For $z = 1.96$, $P = 0.3$, $e = 0.04$, $N = 504$ calculated using:

$$N = \frac{z^2[(p)(q)]}{e^2} \quad (\text{fisher, long, Stoekel and Townsend, 1991})$$

Where: Z = Z-scores (confidence level), e = error margin (it could be 0.10 down to 0.01, but in this work, 0.04 is used), P = estimate of population proportion with study characteristics (30% in this case), $q = 1 - P$.

$$N = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.3)(0.7)}{(0.04)^2} = 504.21$$

The Multi-stage cluster sampling technique involving simple random sampling, proportionate stratified sampling and availability sampling techniques will be adopted to select respondents for this study. At first, the thirteen communities in Ubakala were numbered and three (3) out of the thirteen communities were randomly selected. The selected communities are Amibo, Mgbarakuma and Amuzu. Secondly, in order to collect appropriate data for the study, seven relevant population categories were created in each community. The members of each population category will form the respondents for the study. Thirdly, the stratified proportionate sampling technique will be used in selecting the respondents from each population category in view of the fact that the population categories do not have equal size. The availability sampling technique will then be used to select the actual respondents from each population category as shown in table 3.

Table 3:Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling Technique for the Study

State/Community	Population Category	Total	Percentage	Proportionate Calculations
Amibo Community	Traditional rulers/ titled men	40	0.24	$40/16730 \times 504/1 = 1$
	umuada association	180		
	men's union	620	1.08	$180/16730 \times 504/1 = 5$
	women's Union	1,010		
	masquerade cults	250	3.71	$620/16730 \times 504/1 = 19$
	Age grades	1,450		
	Youths Association	1,800	6.04	$1010/16730 \times 504/1 = 30$
Mgbarakuma Community	Traditional rulers/ titled men	47	1.49	$250/16730 \times 504/1 = 8$
	umuada association	250		
	men's union	850	8.67	$1450/16730 \times 504/1 = 44$
	women's Union	1,200		
	masquerade cults	120	10.76	$1800/16730 \times 504/1 = 54$
	Age grades	1,600		
Amuzu community	Youths Association	1,850	0.28	$47/16730 \times 504/1 = 1$
	Traditional rulers/ titled men	43	1.49	$250/16730 \times 504/1 = 8$
	umuada association	300		
	men's union	820	5.08	$850/16730 \times 504/1 = 26$
	women's Union	1,300		
	masquerade cults	200	7.17	$1200/16730 \times 504/1 = 36$
	Age grades	1,300		
	Youths Association	1,500	0.71	$120/16730 \times 504/1 = 4$
			9.56	$1600/16730 \times 504/1 = 48$
			11.06	$1850/16730 \times 504/1 = 56$
		0.26	$1850/16730 \times 504/1 = 1$	
		1.79	$43/16730 \times 504/1 = 9$	

			4.90	$300/16730 \times 504/1$	=25
			< 7.77	$820/16730 \times 504/1$	= 39
			1.20	$1300/16730 \times 504/1$	=6
			7.77	$200/16730 \times 504/1$	=39
			8.97	$1300/16730 \times 504/1$	=45
				$1500/16730 \times 504/1$	
T o t a l		16,730	1 0 0		504

For the qualitative data (in-depth interview data), 24 community leaders will be purposively selected for interview, 8 from each of the 3 communities based on their leadership positions in the relevant qualitative population categories. The categories included: three traditional rulers (one from each of the communities); three village heads (one from each of the communities); three women's union chairpersons (one from each of the communities); three men's union chairpersons (one from each of the communities); three youth leaders (one from each of the communities); three masquerade cult leaders (one from each of the communities); three age grade leaders (one from each of the communities); and three umuada association leaders (one from each of the communities)

The instruments for data collection of this study were questionnaire and in-depth interview because of the need for a mixed-method research for an investigation of dwindling traditional practices in conflict resolutions and restoration of social order in Ubakala Abia State, Nigeria. The questionnaire, specifically, was used to collect quantitative data, and it was highly structured with only few unstructured questions. It had two different sections. The first section contained the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents while other section addressed the substantive issues in dwindling traditional practices in conflict resolutions and restoration of social order in Ubakala Abia State, Nigeria derived from the research questions, specific objectives and hypotheses. The in-depth interview on the other hand, was employed to gather qualitative data to complement the quantitative data for fuller understanding of the dwindling traditional practices in conflict resolutions and restoration of social order in the area of study. The IDI guide was completely unstructured with necessary probes. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher himself with the help of 3 research assistants. The research assistants were recruited on the basis of ability to read and write, speak and understand both English and local dialects of the communities. They were trained for two (2) days on the objectives of the study, relevance of the study, administration and retrieval of questionnaire. The in-depth interview was conducted by the researcher with the three research assistants. The researcher moderated the interview while the three assistants will do the note-taking and recording respectively. The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire were processed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0. The socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and the substantive issues in all sections of the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as simple frequency distribution tables, percentages, graphs and charts. Inferential statistics, particularly chi-square (χ^2) were used to test the stated hypotheses

Findings

The researcher got approval from the respondents before administering the questionnaires. The interviewees gave their consent before the in-depth interviews were conducted. Out of the 504 questionnaires distributed, 487 were correctly filled and returned, giving a response rate of 98 percent.

Socio-demographic Attributes of Respondents

This section presents the socio- demographic attributes of the respondents. The attributes are gender, age, marital status, educational qualification, occupation, religious affiliation and monthly income of respondents.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by socio-demographic characteristics

	Variables	Frequency (F)	Percent (%)
Distribution of respondents by Gender.	Male	285	58.5 %
	Female	202	41.5 %
	Total	487	100 %
Distribution of respondents by Age	18-27	68	13.9 %
	28-37	86	17.7 %
	38-47	93	19.1 %
	48-57	142	29.2 %
	58 and Above	98	20.1 %
	Total	487	100 %
Distribution of respondents by Marital Status	Single	143	29.4 %
	Married	122	25.1 %
	Separated	18	3.7 %
	Divorced	87	17.9 %
	Widowed	117	24.0 %
	Total	487	100 %
Distribution of respondents by educational qualification	No Formal Education	48	9.86 %
	FSLC	197	40.5 %
	WASC/SSCE/GCE	175	35.9 %
	NCE/OND	42	8.6 %

	BSc./HND	16	3.3 %
	MSc./PhD	9	1.8 %
	Total	487	100 %
Distribution of respondents by occupation	Unemployed	201	41.3 %
	Student	123	25.3 %
	Self-employed, specify	89	18.3 %
	Public servant	48	9.6 %
	Apprentice	26	5.3 %
	Total	487	100 %
Distribution of respondents by religious affiliation	Christian	356	73.1 %
	Muslim	5	1.0 %
	Judaism	0	0
	African Traditional Religion	126	25.9 %
	Total	487	100 %

Field Survey, 2018

Table 4 clearly indicates that majority (29.2%), of respondents were aged 48 - 57 years and that while 58.5% of the respondents are males, 41.5% are females. The number of male respondents who participated in the study outweighs the female respondents because many of the females who declined to participate felt it was a male issue. In terms of marital status, most of the respondents are single (29.4%). The educational qualification of the respondents' shows that majority of them have first school leaving certificate (40.5%) or senior school certificate (35.9%). About 41.3% are unemployed, while 43.9% are students and 5.3% are into apprenticeship. Also, majority of the respondents are Christians, this is basically because the study area is dominated by Christian worshippers.

Analysis of the Research Questions

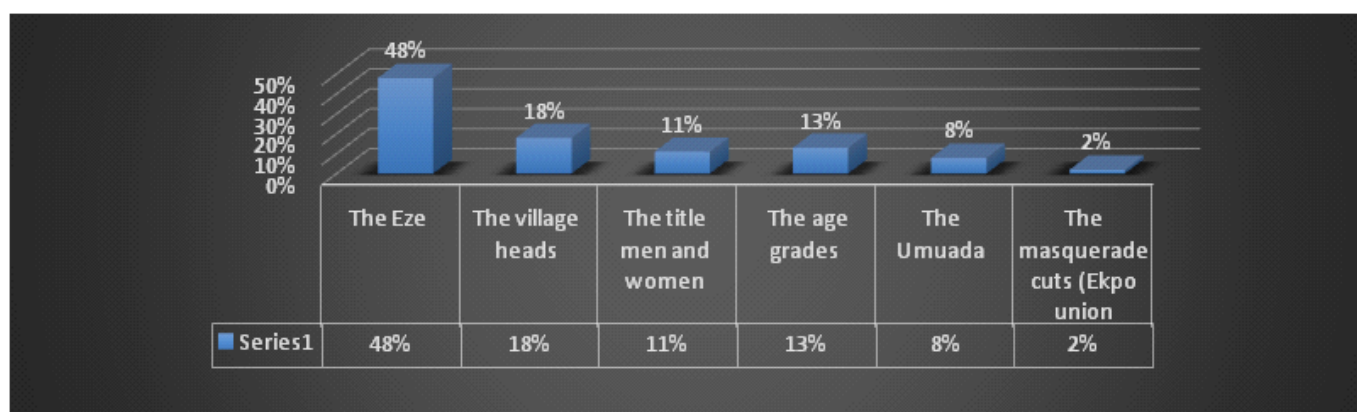


Figure 1: Responsibility for Handling Conflict Resolution Cases within the Community.

Figure 1 shows who is responsible for handling conflict resolution in the study area. Findings reveal that majority of the respondents are of the view that The Eze's (48%) are the once saddled with the responsibility of handling conflict resolution cases in the study area. However, village heads (18%), and the title men and women (11.00%), the age grades (13.00%), the Umuada (8%) and the masquerade cuts (Ekpo union) (2%) are other forms of handling conflict resolution. This finding is in tandem with the In-Dept interview. More specifically, a 35-year old male IDI respondent answered thus;

Emmmna (man) listen, you know this is Igboland, the Igwe in council that is the male representatives of each clan forms the highest authority source in this community. We make the laws, and we settle disputes or conflict (laughingly two of them are the same now). Then our Eze or Igwe as is known in some areas pronounce it. Once that is done, it is binding on every living soul within this community. Emmmm Yes, yes, we don't care whether you're a visitor you must obey. Is just in a case anyone refuse to accept our verdict then we use the age grade; you know mostly young people to enforce it on him.

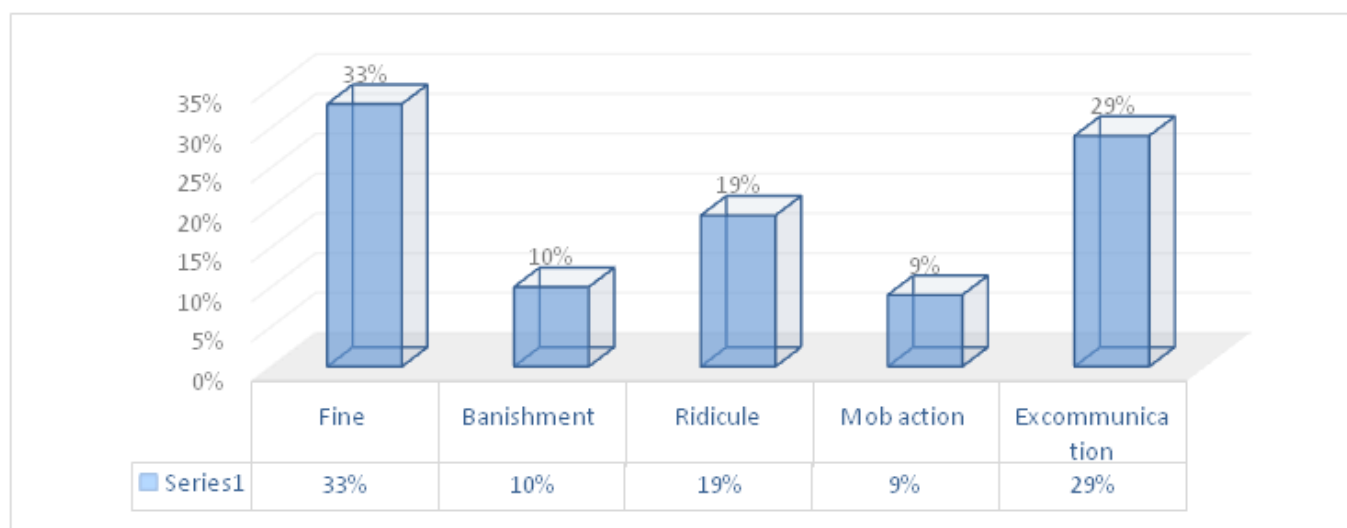


Figure 2: Major Sanction Given to Law-Violators within the Community?

Figure 2 shows the most common sanction given to law-violators in the study area. Findings reveal that majority of the respondents are of the view that fine (33%) is the most common form of sanction given to law-violators in the study area. However, excommunication (29%), and ridicule (19%), banishment (10%) and mob action (9%) are other forms of sanction given to law violators in the study area.

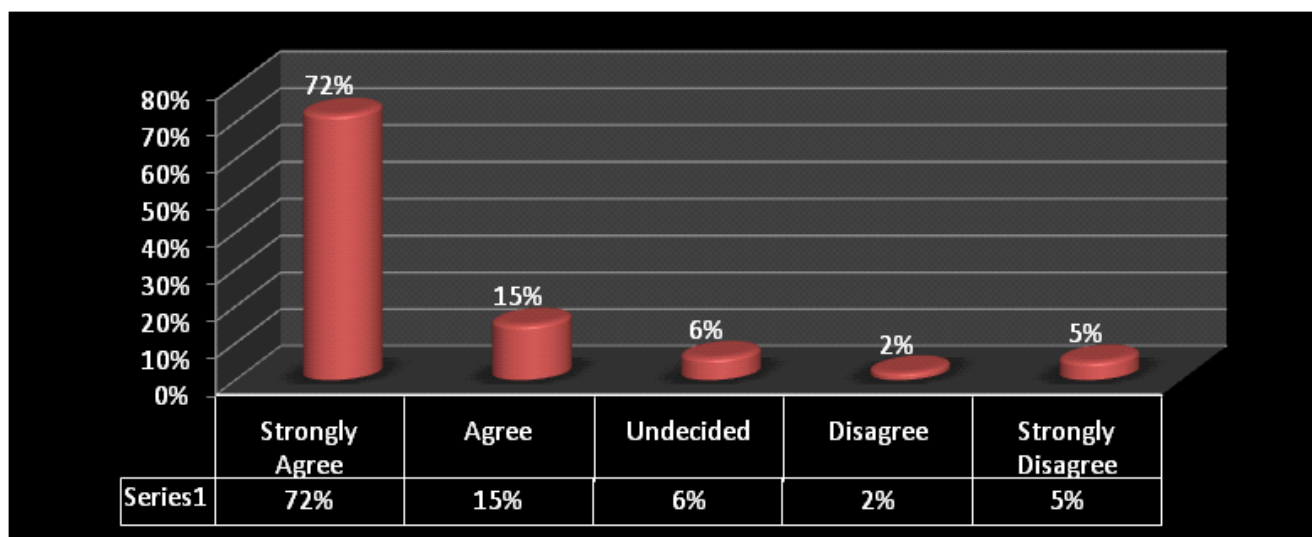


Figure 3: Effect of Western Education on Traditional Practices in Conflict Resolution

Figure 3 shows the extent western education has affected the traditional practices in conflict resolution in the study area. Findings reveal that majority of the respondents strongly agree (72%), (15%) also agreed that western education has affected traditional practices in conflict resolution in the study area. However, (2%) disagree, (5%) strongly disagree, while (6%) were undecided on whether western education has affected the traditional practices in conflict resolution in the study area. The in-depth interviews conducted are quite revealing on some of the whether western education has negative consequences on traditional conflict resolution mechanism. For instance, a male respondent stated that:

You can see it yourself, is it only conflict resolution that it affected? We have lost our moral, social and everything value that distinct us as Africans. My son who are we now? Nobody respects or obey traditional constituted authority anymore, they say it's out dated not modern. Western education chahi, (he exclaims), now they say we are idol worshippers, that's the most painful aspect, can you imagine me idol worshipper. Through these new idea, our mechanism to enforce social order are all regarded as idol just imagine that. Ekpois idol, Nmanwu Idol, Ozor title holder's idol, very soon our Eze himself will become an idol (everyone laughs out) (he cuts in sharply); look it is not a laughing matter; you will see it soon. The Eze operates in fear, the youths still obey him small oh, but you see those once that come from the city claiming to have seen the world, I tell you they have no regard for tradition but you know what (he laughs) we have a way of dealing with them, we used to deal with them, they think they know everything. (Male, 81 years, Traditional Council member)

A female interviewee corroborated the assertions of the male;

Is funny what western education has done to us, even at home we can't control our children again, they will tell you "you don't understand" one once told me mummy do you know if it was in America you can't flog me. I asked her why she said if I try it she will call the police to arrest me, you see where our world is now. So if I can't control my own daughter oh at home what hope does the general mechanism of resolving conflict have in our society? Everyone likes police that's who they prefer please. (Female, 47 years, Trader).

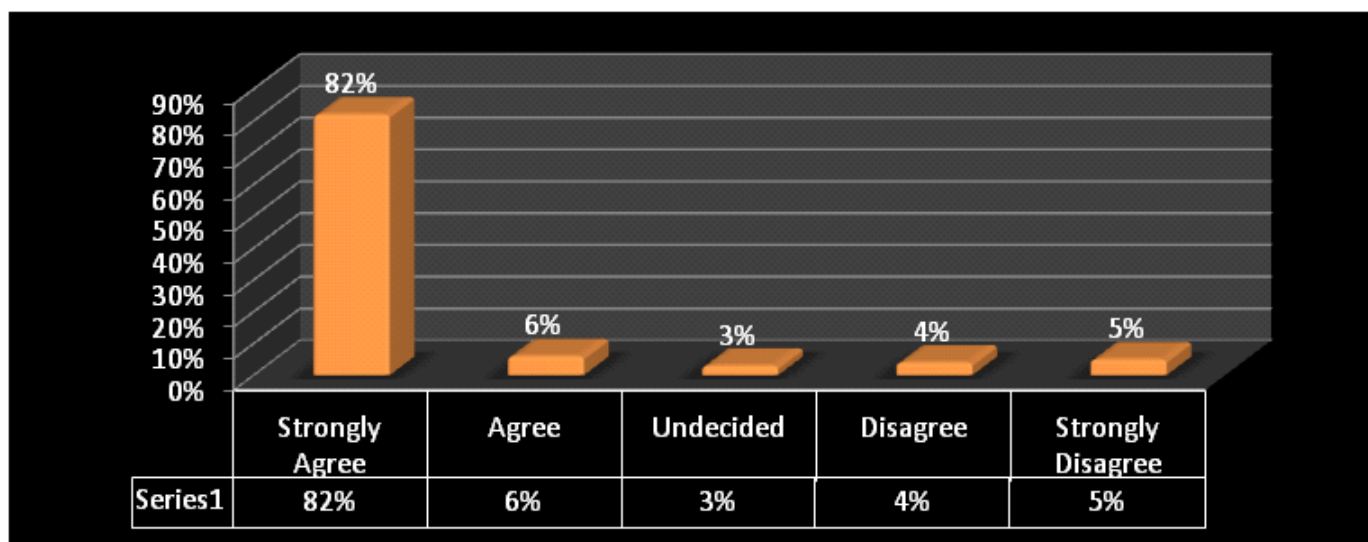


Figure 4: Traditional Agents of Conflict Resolution Has Affected Resolution of Disputes within the Community

Figure 4 show if dwindling strength of the traditional agents of conflict resolution has affected resolution of dispute in the study area. Findings reveal that majority of the respondents strongly agree (82%), and (6%) also agreed that dwindling strength of the traditional agents of conflict resolution has affected resolution of dispute in the study area. However, (5%) disagree, (4%) strongly disagree, while (3%) were undecided on whether dwindling strength of the traditional agents of conflict resolution has affected resolution of dispute in the study area.

A male IDP participant stated thus;

Yes, it has affected it, today there is so much rancor and hatred in our community. Because they all prefer going to police and court where peace is never achieved rather they keep collecting money from them. He (laughs) you know the police people are wicked and evil, they will never resolve the issue fast come today come tomorrow, they keep extorting them or do you talk about the court (laughs again) do they resolve any case in two years. So you people will remain enemies as long as the case is on. But in our traditional system we resolve issues fast, no bribe and we make peace as well, this one win this one lose, how can that ensure communal peace? Impossible. (IDI/Male, 56 years, Community Secretary/2018).

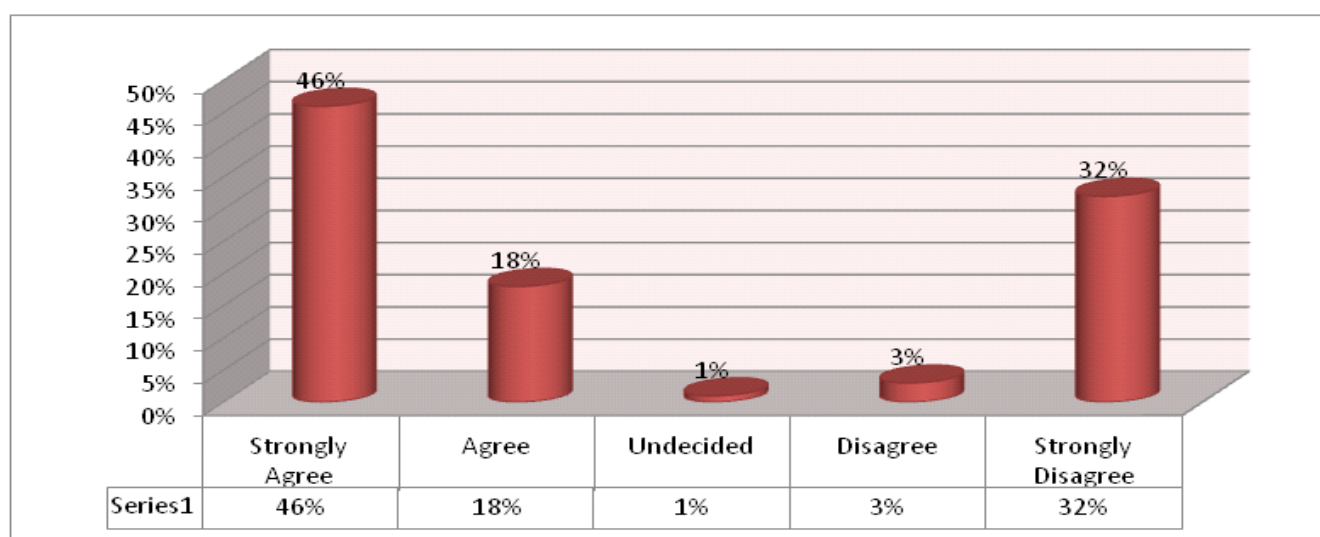


Figure 5: Weakening Strength of Traditional Agents of Conflict Resolution Has Negatively Affected the Peace and Order within the Community

Figure 5 shows whether weakening strength of traditional agents of conflict resolution has negatively affected the peace and order in the study area. Findings reveal that majority of the respondents strongly agree (46%), and (18%) also agreed that weakening strength of traditional agents of conflict resolution has negatively affected the peace and order in the study area. However, (32%) strongly disagree, (3%) disagree, while (1%) were undecided on whether weakening strength of traditional agents of conflict resolution has negatively affected the peace and order in the study area.

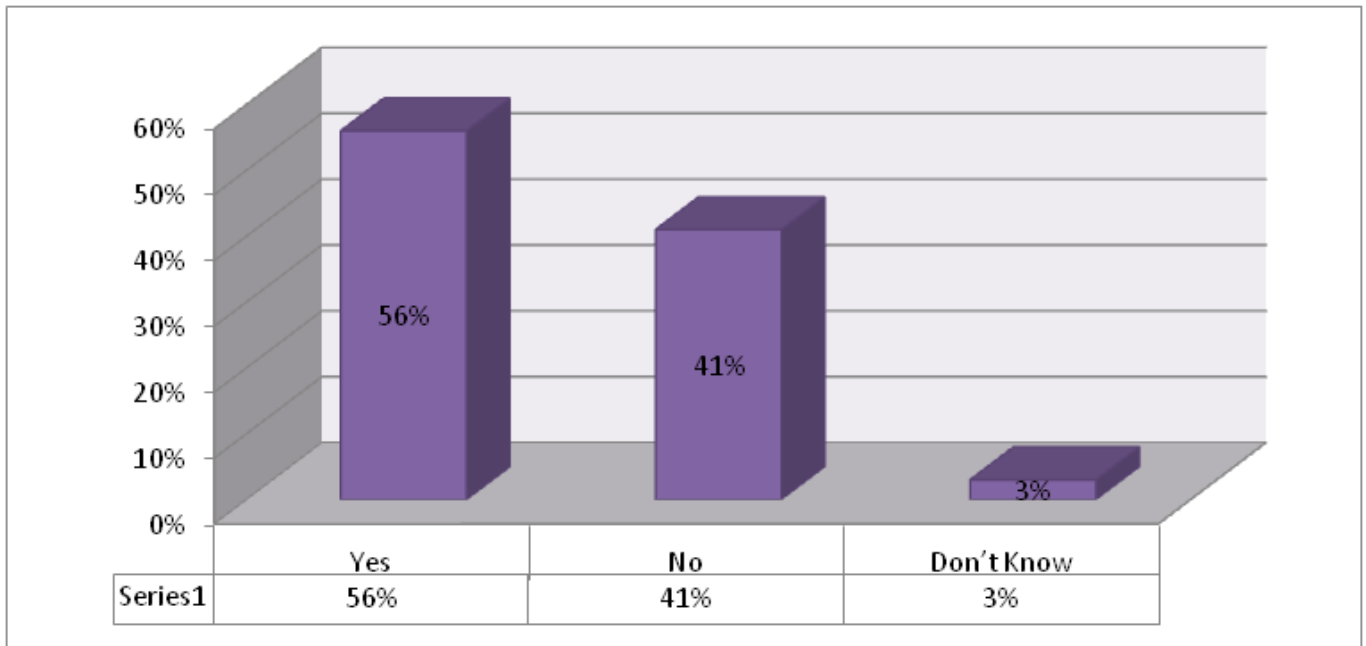


Figure 6: Efforts by traditional institutions in Strengthen the Traditional Practices in Conflict Resolution towards Enhancing Social Order within the Community?

Figure 6 shows whether Ekpo union, umuada, traditional ruler's/village heads, age grades or any other group have contributed towards strengthening the traditional practices in conflict resolution towards enhancing social order in the study area. Findings reveal that majority of the respondents are of the (56%) said yes that they have contributed, remarkably (41%) were of the view that they have not contributed these could be as a result of the perceived internal rancor among these associations coupled with western education that has undermined their efficacy of their authority.

There result of IDI as regards to this particular issue deferred, while somewhere in agreement others disagreed. One male interview stated thus;

Why won't we make efforts, remember I told you earlier we have a way of dealing with those over sabi people (I too know individuals). Yes, sometimes we deal with them when they refuse to respect or accept our mechanism. You know sometimes we excommunicate them from all village activity. Since you won't accept our verdict then stay on your own. Is that wickedness? (He answered) is not now, you said we didn't treat you fairly, so stay on your own case close. We used to fine them too. I can tell you we are trying we won't let our ancestral heritage to just die, yes we are making efforts. (Male, 74 years, Traditional council member)

Another Female IDI respondent argued differently thus;

You see all those people you mentioned, the problem, these days their verdict are skewed towards those who have money and ready to give more. I don't even know them and police who takes more bribe. Is good my name is not said before they will banish me if they see or read what am saying. Unlike before oo,

lost confidence in them. I don't see any effort; their effort is for personal gains. (Female, 68 years, Farmer)
 The extent to which this rebuilding has been done seems to be very low as there were contradictory views from the IDI reports of 74 years old male traditional council member and 68 years old female farmer. While the male believed that they have contributed significantly by excommunicating those that refused to adhere to traditional verdicts, the female believed that they are not these agents are not different from the conventional police in terms of taking bribery from offenders.

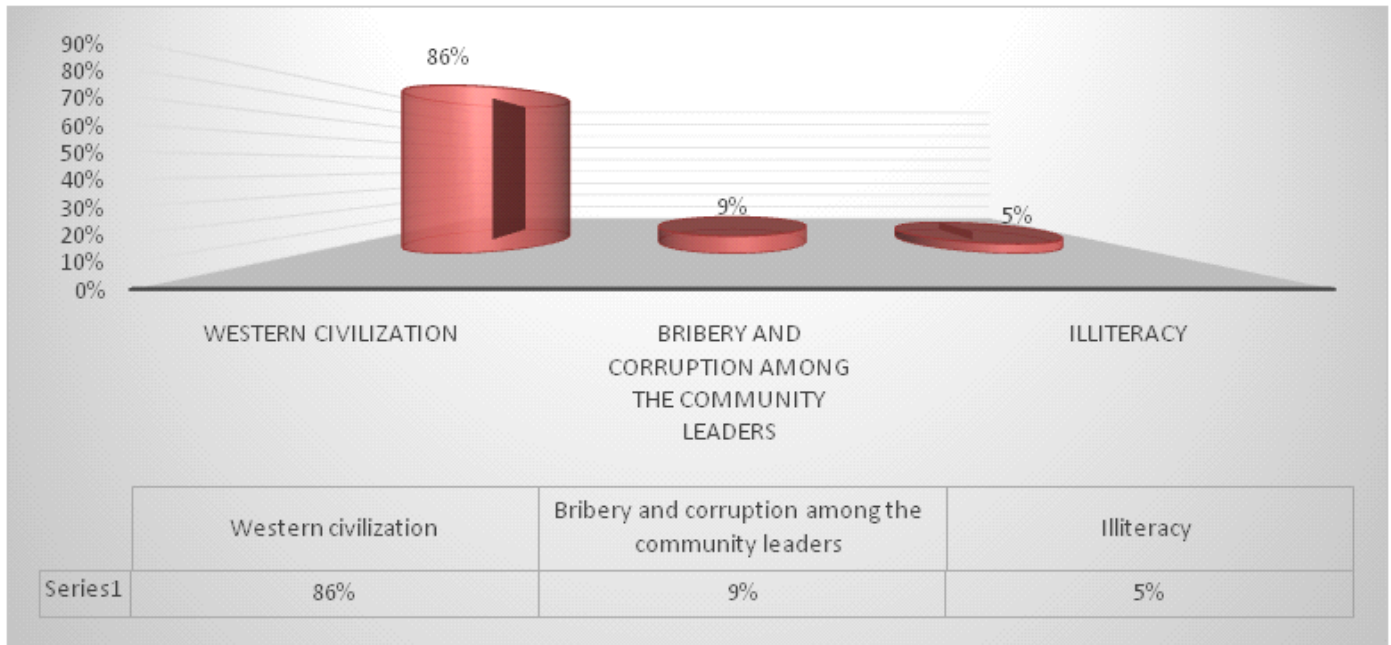


Figure 7: Major Obstacle to Traditional Practices in Conflict Resolution and Enhancement of Social Order within the Community

Figure 7 shows the major obstacle to the traditional practices in conflict resolution and enhancement of social order in the study area. Findings reveal that majority of the respondents are of the view that western civilization (86%) is the major obstacle to the traditional practices in conflict resolution and enhancement of social order in the study area. However, bribery and corruption among the community (9%), and illiteracy (5%) are associated as obstacle to the traditional practices in conflict resolution and enhancement of social order in the study area.

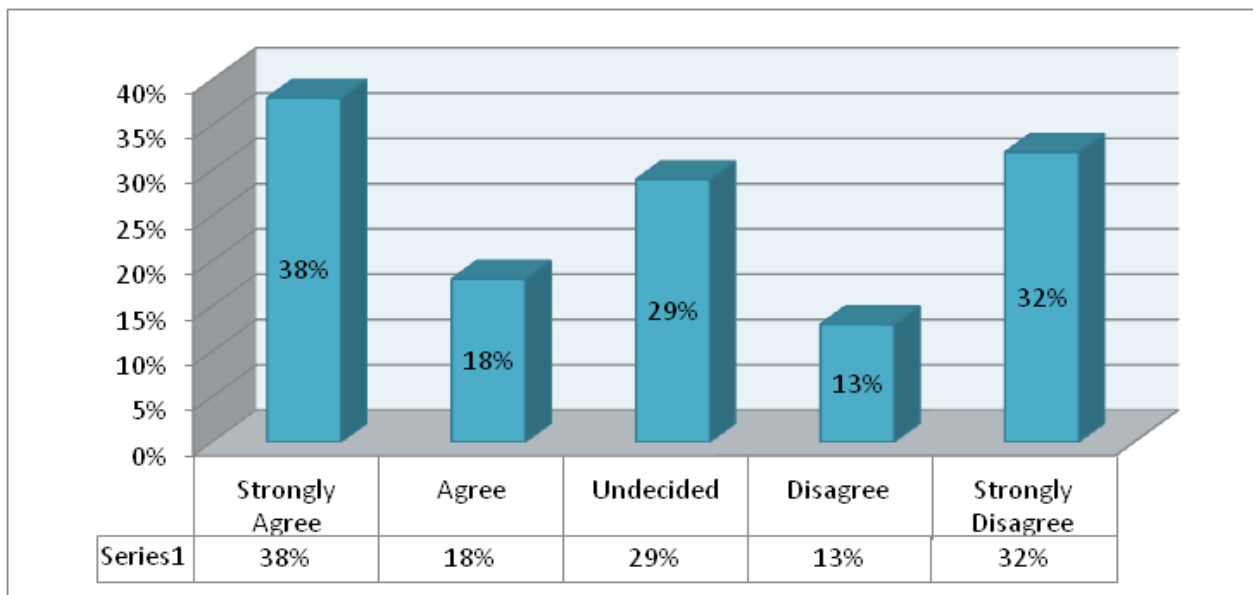


Figure 8: Excommunication of Those Who Take Matters to the Police without the Consent of the Eze Will Strengthen Traditional Practices in Conflict Resolution and Enhance Social Order in Community

Figure 8 shows whether excommunication of those who take matters to the police without the consent of the eze will strengthen traditional practices in conflict resolution and enhance social order in the study area. Findings reveal that majority of the respondents strongly agree (38%), and (18%) also agreed that excommunication of those who take matters to the police without the consent of the eze will strengthen traditional practices in conflict resolution and enhance social order in the study area. However, (32%) strongly disagree, (13%) disagree, while (29%) were undecided.

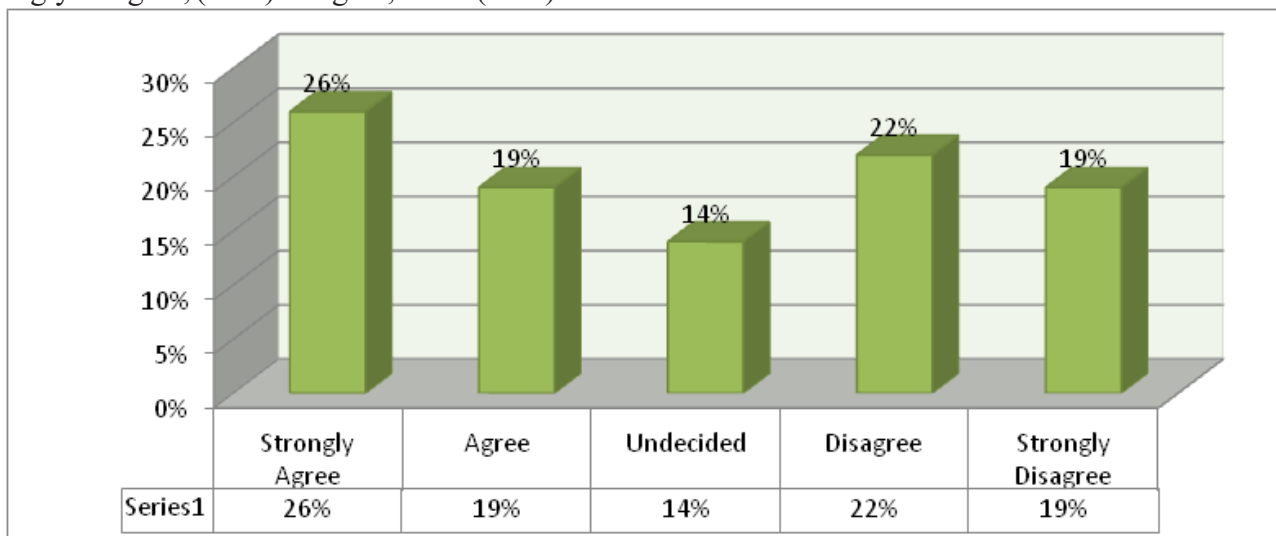


Figure 9: Banishing People Who Take Matters to the Police or Court without Eze's Approval Will Strengthen Traditional Practices in Conflict Resolution and Enhance Social Order

Figure 9 shows whether banishing people who take matters to the police or court without eze's approval will strengthen traditional practices in conflict resolution and enhance social order in the study area. Findings reveal that majority of the respondents strongly agree (26%), and (19%) also agreed that whether banishing people who take matters to the police or court without eze's approval will strengthen traditional practices in conflict resolution and enhance social order in the study area. However, (19%) strongly disagree, (22%) disagree, while (14%) were undecided. The in-depth interview conducted are quite revealing on whether banishing people can help to restore the efficacy of traditional mechanism for conflict resolution. One of the IDI respondents stated thus;

How many people do you want to banish, this police case pattern I tell you has become a norm, everyone even those without money rushes to the police? I even hear they have other was of paying the police. For me banishing can't work, maybe we just collect fine so that we know something is taken from the person for the community, forget banishing it won't work (Female, 56 years, Teacher)

Another male IDI respondent agreed with the female

You people should forget banishing; this people know you can't banish them. That time has passed oh. See what are we even saying, go and banish them; that's from what self? So if you banish them from coming back to their mansion or building (he laughs) let me tell you what will happen to Eze council, these callous people will arrest the entire council with the police, you know police does not respect traditional authority, they will arrest them oh. So talk of other method not banishing. In fact, everyone is even going to police, so you expect them to banish everyone (okwa-ya) is that what you expect. (Male, 46 years, Civil Servant)

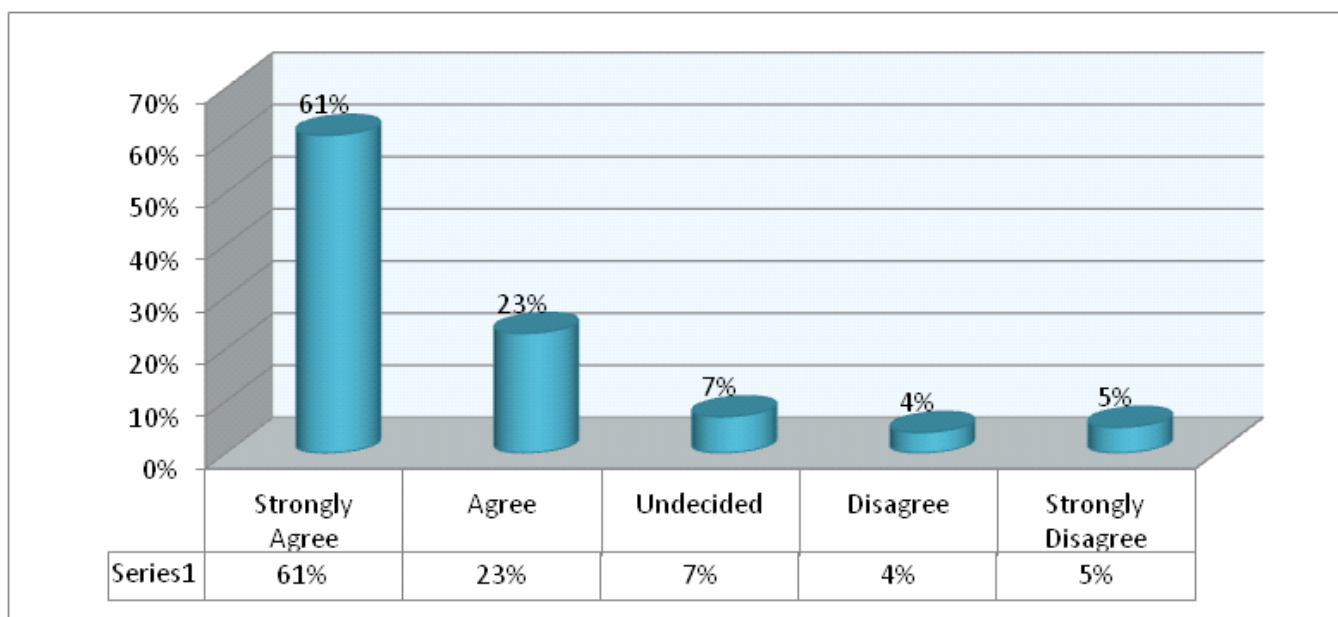


Figure 10: Fining People Who Take Matters to the Police or Court without the Eze's Consent Will Strengthen the Traditional Practices in Conflict Resolution and Enhance Social Order

Figure 10 shows whether fining people who take matters to the police or court without the eze's consent will strengthen the traditional practices in conflict resolution and enhance social in the study area. Findings reveal that majority of the respondents strongly agree (61%), and (23%) also agreed that fining people who take matters to the police or court without the eze's consent will strengthen the traditional practices in conflict resolution and enhance social in the study area. However, (5%) strongly disagree, (4%) disagree, while (7%) were undecided.

All the IDI participants agreed that this is the best mechanism. One male respondent answered thus;

That's the key, when they object our verdict and misbehave, we also fine them at least the money will be useful. You know they don't mind paying fine, so with fine you don't even create enmity among community members (Male, 45 years, Farmer).

Another also agreed and stated thus;

You know why we at the Eze council decided to be fining them, emmmm let me tell you my son. We realize the police and court uses the same method, they pay for bail, pay for this and that and if you don't pay they put you in prison. So if we also ask you to pay fine we are not committing any crime, so the police can't arrest us. You see we are learning and avoiding problems. (Male, 69 years, Trader and Traditional council member)

Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses 1: Respondents with higher education are more likely to attribute western education as the cause of weakening role of traditional mechanism of maintaining law and order than less educated respondents

Table 5: Tests to see if Respondents Differ Significantly by Education and Perception of Weakening Role of Traditional Mechanism of Maintaining Law and Order within the Study Area.

Educational Attainment	Western Education is the cause of weakening traditional law maintaining mechanism?					Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
No Formal Education	38(46.3%)	16(19.5%)	8(9.8%)	9(10.9%)	11(13.4%)	82
FSLC	22(32.8%)	24(35.8%)	9(13.4%)	8(11.9%)	4(5.9%)	67
WASC/SSCE/GCE	18(37.5%)	11(22.9%)	8(16.7%)	7(14.6%)	4(8.3%)	48
NCE/OND	23(38.9%)	15(25.4%)	9(15.3%)	8(13.6%)	4(6.8%)	59
B.Sc./HND	42(37.2%)	34(30.1%)	9(7.9%)	18(15.9%)	10(8.8%)	113
MSc./PhD	67(56.8%)	32(27.1%)	6(5.1%)	9(7.6%)	4(3.4%)	118
Total	210	132	49	59	37	487(100%)

$$X^2 = 4.722, df = 4, N = 487, P < .094$$

The cross tabulation in table 5 shows that most respondents regardless of education believe that there is a weakening role in traditional mechanism for conflict resolution. This is not unusual since it is glaringly clear that both educated and non-educated acknowledge that the role of traditional mechanism for conflict resolution has weakened with all the attendant consequences including unabated rancor and low regard for traditional authority. Statistically, ($X^2 = 4.722, df = 4, N = 487, P < .094$), there is also no significant difference in the views of educated and non-educated respondents.

Hypothesis 2: Male respondents are more likely to be aware of the weakening strength of the traditional agents of conflict resolution than their female counterparts

Table 6: Tests to see If Respondents Differ Significantly by Gender and Perception of Weakening Strength of the Traditional Agents of Conflict Resolution within the Study Area.

Gender	Weakening strength of traditional agents of conflict resolution					Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Male	87(40.1%)	72(35.6%)	22(10.9%)	13(6.4%)	8(3.9%)	202
Female	117(41.1%)	91(31.9%)	31(10.9%)	22(7.7%)	24(8.4%)	285
Total	204	163	53	35	32	487

$$X^2 = 3.622, df = 2, N = 487, P < .084$$

The cross tabulation in table 6 shows that most respondents regardless of gender believe that the strength of traditional agents of conflict resolution has weakened. This is not unusual since it is glaringly clear that both males and females are equally affected by the decline in efficacy of traditionally constituted authority in settling disputes. Statistically however, ($X^2 = 3.622, df = 2, N = 487, P < .084$), there is also a slightly significant difference in the views of male and female respondents

Discussion

The study examined the dwindling traditional practices in conflict resolution resolutions and restoration of social order in Ubakala Abia State, Nigeria. It was found that there were specific traditional practices in conflict resolution in Ubakala which included that the traditional rulers (NdiEze) are the centre of dispute settlements (see fig. 1), and those who violated laws in the community were either fined or excommunicated. This means that the strength of mob action called “mbembe” in Ubakala local dialect has completely weakened (see fig.2). These findings apart from being in tandem with the in-depth interview reports of a majority of the interviewees in the area, were also in agreement with the views of Akinwale (2010) that traditional rulers formed part of the houses of parliament during the early post-colonial administration in Africa. In view of the above, the researchers concluded that the instruments of sanction employed by the traditional rulers to sanction those that violated the traditional laws in the past were stronger and more potent than the instruments used in the present and as such has affected conflict resolutions and restoration of social negatively. In other words, the researchers have taken a position that people disobey the verdicts of the traditional rulers because of their awareness that the instrument of sanction that would be employed to sanction them, would inflict little or no pains on them.

It was also found that western ways of life especially western education were perceived as having negative effect on the traditional practices in conflict resolution in Ubakala. This view was greatly supported by the in-depth interview reports conducted in the area. These views were in line with the view of Arowole (2010) that with Africa subjugated and dominated, the western culture and European mode of civilization began to thrive and outgrew African heritage. These views were however at variance with the result of hypothesis one which showed that there was no significant difference in the views of educated and non-educated on this issue in the area of study ($p < .094$). the implication of this is that there could be other possible explanations to the dwindling traditional practices in conflict resolutions and restoration of social order in Ubakala other than western civilization (western education). Another explanation could be that western civilization could be playing an indirect role in the weakening of traditional practices in conflict resolution and social order. It could be an indirect explanatory factor in the disappointing attitudes traditional rulers that have affected native conflict resolution practices but certainly not a direct effect on the gradual weakening traditional dispute resolution and social order in Ubakala.

It was further found that the weakening strength of the traditional rulers and other agents of conflict resolution like the married first daughters (umuada), the age grades, and the masquerade cult (ekpo union), has affected the resolution of disputes in Ubakala negatively. Based on the IDI reports, has affected even the moral and social aspects of the communities to the extent that the people no longer have respect for the traditional institutions and as such tend to perceive it as idol worship. The IDI reports further showed that people preferred going to the police instead of traditional authorities. The implication of this was delay in the resolution of disputes (land disputes, family quarrels, abortion, fighting, etc) and negative effects on social order and community development. These views are in tandem with the view of Hamisu, Makinta, Muhammed, Garba and Umar (2017) that the power of the traditional institutions was negatively affected by the 1976 local government reforms and such needs to be strengthened through constitutional amendments. This view however has nothing to do with specific gender as the result of the second hypothesis showed that

there was no significant difference in the views of male and female respondents on the issue ($p < .084$). The researchers also found that efforts have been made by the communities and their agents to strengthen the traditional practices in conflict resolutions towards enhancing social order in the communities of Ubakala but these efforts were hindered by the attitudes of traditional agents of conflict resolution. The people believe that fines, excommunication and even banishment of traditional violators could restore social order (see figures 8, 9 & 10) but all to no avail as community members continued to prefer taking matters to the police and courts where justice would either be delayed or denied. Some of these efforts were not strong enough to compel compliance on the people as they should since they hovered around payment of fines and excommunication. Although the people viewed that banishment of people who disobeyed traditional authorities could be a strong factor in strengthening traditional practices in conflict resolution but the practice was not common in Ubakala. There was a perception that western education was the major obstacle to the native conflict resolution practices and enhancement of social order in the clan but the result of the hypothesis one as already stated did not support the view and could not stand as the limitation to the clan's efforts to strengthen traditional practices in Ubakala as the attitudes of traditional rulers would do. This finding is in tandem with view of Parsons (1965) that human actions are guided by norms provided by the social system. In view of the above the researchers concluded that efforts to strengthen social order in Ubakala are marred by the neglect and alteration of the people's value system especially the values of honesty and fairness by the traditional dispute resolution agents, and that this has resulted in cases being taken to the police and courts in Ubakala instead of to the traditional rulers.

Conclusion

It is concluded that the restoration of social order in Ubakala may remain unabated in future given the rate at which the strengths of traditional conflict resolution agents such as age grades, traditional rulers, umuada, ekpo union, etc are weakened by a lot of factors including western education and attitudes of traditional agents, resulting in so many disputes in Ubakala being taken to the police and courts where justice is usually prolonged and at times denied. The very essence of Igbo existence; its cherished social structure and its republican nature is under a serious threat as even the powers and respects of the traditional rulers and other dreaded agents of conflict resolution have been negatively affected to the extent that their attitudes and judgments are being questioned by community members who are supposed to be their strengths.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study

1. The local practice of mob action "mbembe" should be resuscitated in the communities of Ubakala. The people should be allowed inflict injury to native law violators themselves without the police intervention as the deterrent effect of this could have positive effects on restoration of social order in the clan.
2. There is also need to organize seminars and workshops in all Ubakala communities on the need to uphold and build Ubakala culture by strategically integrating western educational knowledge and exposures with cultural issues. This will go a long way to prevent any possible indirect effect of education the attitudes of traditional agents towards dispute resolutions.
3. There is need to revive and reinforce the republican nature of society and rebuild the altered social structure which is the very essence of the Igbo existence through the enthronement of people-oriented traditional rulers and mere politically-staffed traditional rulers. This is because enthroning honest and upright traditional rulers will not only eliminate those attitudinal issues in the dwindling strength of traditional agents of conflict resolution, but also restore social order in Ubakala.

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