

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PEACE CONSTRUCT IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the role of traditional institutions in the achievement of peace and development in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The Benin traditional council is seen as the power house of traditional peace-construct and cases involving crime and civil conflict are resolved by them. This function has a dynamic role in the maintenance of peace and stability of the city. The traditional council and palace of the Ancient Benin kingdom was very powerful, as it served as arbiter, peace maker and also law enforcer over its subjects. These ideals survived into contemporary Benin Kingdom, as the Palace of the King and other lesser courts of chiefs, still intervene in civil and criminal cases for resolution. However, the role played by the traditional councils and Palace in the resolution of disputes has weakened, due to the formal adoption of the Western models of conflict resolution, which adopts other methods like mediation, conciliation and negotiation. Benin City and Nigeria in general is being inundated with series of communal violence, and there is dire need for a comprehensive study into the role of traditional rulers in the achievement of peace and development in Benin City, Edo State. The study made use of the qualitative research methodology in gathering and analyzing data used in the research. Findings made shows that the traditional council of Benin Kingdom has institutions for the resolution of disputes in Benin City. The study also reveals that strengthening of the Benin traditional institutions of conflict resolution will help to checkmate disputes that abound in local communities of the City. The study recommends that the government should engage and enhance the capacity of the traditional councils to serve as viable options for the resolution of dispute among their subjects.

Keywords: Traditional Institutions, Peace Construct, Ancient Benin Kingdom, Conflict Resolution, Contemporary Benin Society.

INTRODUCTION

The socio-cultural norms and values embedded in traditional institutions have remained an integral part of every organized society in Africa. Apart from being the powerful human tool

for survival, the defined cultural norms and values also form the bases of existence of every civilized society, as it brings “order” which in turn makes the society devoid of any state of lawlessness (Boege, 2006). In pre-colonial Nigeria, these norms and values formed the bases upon which a traditional ruler exercises governance, power and authority or influence over their subjects. Furthermore, these institutions of traditional rulers were virtually the only institutions of governance which played critical roles such as custodians of customary law and communal assets, especially land and resources; guardians and symbols of cultural values and religious practices; dispensing justice, enforcing contracts and also resolving conflicts (Adeola, 2011).

According to Aidelokhai (2008), traditional rulers before the advent of colonial rule in Nigeria were the political, cultural, economic and social administrators of their various domains. But during colonialism, there was a new imposition of European hegemony over their existing sovereign authority. This new governance arrangement granted the colonialist easy exploitation and control of their territories which eroded the capacity of the African leaders to employ the African traditional methods in resolving conflicts that emanated in their domain. However, in recent times, the roles of traditional leaders have been relegated to the background in peace-building. There exists the loss of direction in traditional governance, and this is traceable to the prevailing State of the Nigerian society, where there is frequent electoral and post-electoral strife, and the persistence of widespread communal, ethnic and civil conflicts. Many scholars such as Albert, (2005) described as some manifestations of the failure of the State institutions. This is not to say that conflict did not exist in the pre-colonial era, but conflicts in pre-colonial Nigeria were duly resolved by the traditional system, as a result, crisis based on tribal, ethnic and religious sentiments were very minimal. Based on the identified problems above, this research therefor aims to investigate into the role of traditional rulers in the achievement of peace and development in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the qualitative research design. Data used in the study were generated from secondary materials such as journals, text books, libraries and online resources.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Primordialist Theory of Ethnicity

According to Geertz (1963), a founding scholar of primordialism theory of ethnicity, each person has a natural connection to perceived kinsmen. In time and through repeated conflict, essential ties to an individual own ethnicity will coalesce and will interfere with ties to civil society. Ethnic groups will consequently always threaten the survival of civil governments but not the existence of nations formed by one ethnic group. Thus, primordial originated conflict in multi-ethnic society is inevitable.

Proponents of primordialist accounts argue that ethnic groups and nationalities exist because there are traditions of belief and action towards primordial objects such as biological features and especially territorial location. This relies on strong ties of kinship among members of ethnic groups in such that, when such ties are threatened due to modernity and Statehood, the invocation of ancient hatred quickly evolves. Geertz (1963) further points out that, the resolution of such originated conflict lies in the appreciation of the individual cultural values of the different entities in such conflicts.

In the application of the primordialist theory to this study, it is evidently clear that, the traditional institutions of conflict resolution in Benin City is very apt in ensuring peace and tranquility in the city. This is as subjects have primordial bond to the traditional justice system and therefore abides by its rulings during conflict resolution processes.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Africa Traditional Conflict Resolution

Ayittey (1991) states that Africa traditional conflict resolution is a process where Africans applies their indigenous methods and institutions for conflict resolution which were instrumental to the facilitation of peace and tranquility in the society. The institutions that applied these methods included political institutions (family and Palace), economic institutions (market), social institutions (age-grade and professional associations) and religious institutions (deities, ancestors and sanctuaries). These methods evolved at different times and places in African societies, and they had been purposeful towards enhancing the social engineering which fostered wholesome unity in diversity across cultural boundaries. The methods also reflected a kind of association anchored on the cultural heritage in Africa (Ayittey, 1991).

Traditional institutions for conflict resolution enabled individuals in the society to understand and interpret the norms which occasioned peace and harmony and the desirable atmosphere under which development and social orientation and mobilization took place in various Africa societies. Bascom (1942) observed that, an individual of African background and nurturing environment grand up to join forces of development under the atmosphere of peace and harmony. The individual also determined to learn under the various identified institutions, models of conflict resolution so that as he/she grew up with it, it was to become a master able art for demonstration. Traditional institutions for conflict resolution also foregrounded the constitutional framework for the workability of the peaceful customs and norms. Agbaje (1989) stated that, no African was ready to be left in the dark or isolated from the realm of development and harmonious relationship. This became the utmost psyche and enthusiasms of the Africans since the application of traditional institutions for conflict resolution have produced positive result with enhanced mutual living. From Driberg (1934) writings, traditional institutions for conflict resolution in pre-colonial African societies were the core of the adjudicatory process that promoted peace and fostered unity. They have, evolved in the society to ascertain societies and social engineering. Not only were they the very relevance of the cultural heritage, but also they ennobled the course of justice and its administration in the society. Indeed, they had been so significant to popularizing African ethical mannerism.

Benin Empire

From the writings of Bondarenko (2001), the Benin Empire is described as a pre-colonial empire located in what is now southern Nigeria. Its capital was Edo, now known as Benin City, in Edo State. The Benin Empire was "one of the oldest and most highly developed states in the coastal hinterland of West Africa, dating perhaps to the eleventh century until it was annexed by the British Empire in 1897.

According to Bondarenko (2001), the original people and founders of the Benin Empire, the Edo people, were initially ruled by the Ogiso (Kings of the Sky) dynasty who called their land

Igodomigodo. The rulers or kings were commonly known as Ogiso. Igodo, the first Ogiso, wielded much influence and gained popularity as a good ruler. He died after a long reign and was succeeded by Ere, his eldest son. In the 12th century, a great palace intrigue and battle for power erupted between the warrior crown prince Ekaladerhan son of the last Ogiso and his young paternal uncle. In anger over an oracle, Prince Ekaladerhan left the royal court with his warriors. When the Ogiso died, the Ogiso dynasty was ended as the people and royal kingmakers preferred that their king son next in line should rule. Benin kingdom as existed during the 15th century as a system of protected settlements expanded into a thriving city-state. In the 15th century, the twelfth Oba in line, Oba Ewuare the Great (1440–1473) expanded the city-State to an empire (Bondarenko, 2001).

It was only at this time that the administrative centre of the kingdom began to be referred to as Ubinu after the Itsekhiri word and corrupted to Bini by the Itsekhiri, Edo, Urhobo living together in the royal administrative centre of the kingdom. The Portuguese who arrived in 1485 would refer to it as Benin and the centre would become known as Benin City and its empire Benin Empire (Smith, 1989).

The Ancient Benin Empire according to Ben-Amos (1995), eventually gained political ascendancy over Ile-Ife of Oyo Empire. The Benin Empire also gained political strength and ascendancy over much of what is now Mid-Western and Western Nigeria, with the Oyo Empire bordering it on the west, the Niger River on the east, and the northerly lands succumbing to Fulani Muslim invasion in the North. Interestingly, much of what is now known as Western Ibo land and even Yoruba land was conquered by the Benin Kingdom in the late 19th century as observed by Ben-Amos (1995), this includes Agbor (Ika), Akure, Owo and even the present day Lagos Island, which was named "Eko" meaning "War Camp" by the Bini.

Conflict

According to Best (2006), conflict is described as the pursuit of incompatible goals and desires, which bring about various ranges of discord. Faleti (2006) sees conflicts as a manifestation of the inherent flaws in human nature due to the fact the human nature is selfish, individualistic and obviously conflictive. Conflict exists everywhere and an ordinary part of social living, which may be minute or gigantic, apparent or hidden, and quick or lengthy lasting. Conflict happens among humans in all varieties of human relationships and in all social settings. Because of the extensive variety of ability variations amongst humans, the absence of war typically alerts the absence of significant interaction. Conflict through itself is neither accurate nor bad. However, the way wherein war is dealt with determines whether or not it's miles optimistic or destructive (Deutsch and Coleman, 2000). Although conflicts are inevitable in social relations, humans can embark on conflict constructively in addition to destructively. When approached constructively and cooperatively, conflicts can expose vital issues and project injustice. Conflicts do now no longer continually result in violence, and while cooperative techniques fail, humans can nevertheless voice their issues in collective opposition, protest, and non-violent cooperation.

Levy (2001) stipulates that, conflict can arise internationally, nationally, and locally. At the worldwide level, conflicts break-out due to efforts of one or a few nations to impose their very own political or ideology on others. The notion of individual or political actors, their philosophies of global politics, their belief of facts and decision making, and their emotional

states and personalities provide upward push to world-wide conflict. This is due to the fact those variables have differing outcomes on political leaders and of their alternatives goals and desires, their creation of the enemy, and their ideals at the pleasant techniques for accomplishing foreign policies which include a way to deal with threats (Levy 2001).

Conflict Resolution

Wallenstein (2002) states that the resolution of conflict refers to various method geared towards assuaging or disposing of sources of conflict. It is a general concept for an entire variety of strategies and methods for coping with conflict: it ranges from negotiation to diplomacy, mediation and arbitration, facilitation and adjudication, conciliation and conflict prevention, conflict control and conflict transformation, restorative justice and to peacekeeping. According to Albert (2001), resolving conflict involves methods of coping with a conflicts and negotiating a solution. It is well understood as a running process with two main elements, managing conflict and negotiating settlement. Conflict Management is a communique method for converting the bad emotional states in a struggle to emotional states that permit reaching a solution to the struggle. Conflict resolution enables the process for allowing disputants to reach final results which addresses their differences. The win/win or collaborative approach in conflict calls for a unique technique to negotiation, also called interest based negotiation. Interest based negotiation is a communicative method for reaching integrative settlement that meets the need of the differing parties to the conflict (Albert, 2001).

Barseghyan & Karaev (2004) sees conflict resolution as arising area of discipline and its evolution is primarily based totally on modern-day events. As a new area of discipline, conflict resolution tries to bring past set of techniques through growing theoretical insights, into the character and sources of conflict and the way conflicts may be resolved to result in long lasting settlements, without the usage of violence. Muhammed (2009) contends that, resolving conflicts to reap high-quality consequences calls for the removal of enemy pictures. Embedded enemy pictures are a critical impediment to conflict management, reduction, or settlement. Once formed, enemy pictures generally tend to turn out to be deeply rooted and resistant to modification, even whilst one adversary tries to call for reassessment in reason to the other party, the pictures themselves then perpetuate and accentuate the struggle.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Conflict Resolution Institutions in Pre-Colonial Benin

According to Eweka (1992), the political institutions in pre-colonial Benin and these comprised the Oba, the Enigie (singular, Enogie) and Chiefs. While the Oba was in charge of the entire kingdom, at the district and village level he was assisted by the Enigie (Dukes). Eweka (1992) stated that these titled chiefs had different functions assigned to them. Pre-colonial Benin had two types of Enigie, the Ogie Isi or royal dukes and Ogie Okanaban who were non-royal dukes. The Ogie-Isi was appointed by the Oba from amongst sons of past Obas and persons who were blood relations of the Oba. There is also the Ogie Ikanaban (plural of Okanaban) who was appointed from amongst persons who may have exhibited heroic exploits in war or rendered useful service to the Oba who appoints them.

Omoruyi (1981) studied Benin culture and identified system for resolving marriage disputes. According to Omoruyi (1981) for centuries, Benin was a powerful kingdom with amazing culture and social institutions for resolution of conflicts, but by 1897 the artistic wealth came

to ruin. These social institutions included: marriage, witchcraft, murder, theft and inheritance. Omoruyi (1981) also observed that, however, it is difficult to separate in analysis, social institutions from political and economic institutions because at some points they dovetailed into each other. There were also other district titles such as Ekhaemwen, Ohen or priests and Okaevbo or village heads, and these classes of administrators were either appointed or confirmed in accordance with the tradition of the land. Omoruyi (1981) went further to state that, in the pre-colonial time, parents got suitors for their children through matchmaking. This was against the background of behaviour and the need to extend family ties, hard work and fame. Most important, was the issue of virginity and circumcision. Omoruyi (1981) gave example of a young girl who was engaged to be married and went through pre-marital training under the guardianship of her own mother and the would-be mother-in-law. Thus, this period offered opportunity for the girl to be properly schooled in domestic duties until she was married because there was no clear-cut age of marriage. For the male, there was also no specific age too. It depended on when he considered himself strong enough to be able to fend for his family. However, a typical pre-colonial Benin marriage was one in which after the bride price as stipulated by the parents of the bride, has been settled alongside the necessary rituals such as Ulamwen, the bride and the groom started life (Omoruyi, 1981).

Oghi (2013) analyzed Benin traditional institutions and noted that institution of witchcraft and wizardry also existed in pre-colonial Benin. This was associated with confession. Such confession was brought to the notice of the Oba, who was the custodian of traditions and values. Oghi (2013) disputed the views which states that, when a person confessed to witchcraft, such person was brought to the palace where the witchcraft powers were rendered powerless. However, where the person confessed to have been responsible for the death of persons, he or she was banished or rehabilitated at Ekonorhue near Ikpoba Slope, Benin City where a chief priest or priestess took care of them. It is important to note from such views that, persons who confessed to witchcraft underwent two type of test. The first of such test according to Oghi (2013) was a ceremony in which the suspect was made to drink 'Tigin latex' sourced from sasswood mixed with water and he or she could summon the accusers for indemnity and obtain compensation for being wrongly accused. The other method involved the use of cock feather of a matured cock pressed on the tongue of the accused by persons skilled in the art. Where the feather fell off the tongue, it showed innocence of the accused; otherwise he or she was guilty as charged.

Omoniyi, (1977) studied social institutions of Benin Kingdom and noted that theft was also one of the social act that attracted serious sanctions in pre-colonial Benin. Theft was commonly punishments that ranged from banishment to death sentence depending on the gravity. When a person was caught stealing, such person was brought before the Odionwere at the village or to the Enogie at the dukedom level, but if within the seat of the Kingdom, Benin, such person was brought before the Oba. At the centre, Benin, the Oba who may be represented by palace chiefs, supervised such trials. Persons found guilty as accused, especially of grave cases, were kept in prison (Ewedor) ahead of execution during the next festival. However, where the case of theft was not serious and the accused was found guilty, fines were imposed or the accused and guilty person was paraded publicly with empty snail shells tied around the person neck irrespective of the gender, with permission of the community head. This practice was basically at traditional way of maintaining social justice. At the village level, such trials were attended by interested persons (Omoniyi 1977). There were also cases where

suspects or untried offenders were taken care of, by chiefs who were interested in them or were referred from the village.

According to Osagie, (2007) the resolution of land disputes in Benin Kindom starts with the notion that, all lands in the Benin Kingdom belonged to the Oba. This is illustrated in the word “obayantor” (the Oba owns all land), but this has been dismissed as a mistaken theory of Benin land tenure. Rather, the Oba in pre-colonial Benin only administered the land through the chiefs and heads of villages. Land was owned at the village level by communities and individuals could be granted rights of ownership and was inherited by eldest sons. Where a family went into extinction, ownership of such land reverted to the village head or Onogie who could reallocate such land to strangers with or without the precondition of tribute payment. Osagie, (2007) also observed that trade dispute resolution was also done in pre-colonial Benin.

Ancestral landmarks and natural boundaries like rivers or valleys were used to ascertain issues of trespass. Upon adjudication, the Ikhinmwin tree was used to demarcate such boundaries. Where a party was not satisfied with the decisions of the community elders, appeals were made to the monarch, who either affirmed the decision of the village elders or caused a commission of enquiry to be set up to look into the case and later decide, based on the report submitted. It was also sacrilegious to destroy economic crops in pre-colonial Benin. This was because Benin tradition frowned seriously at it and was regarded as Aghwa. It thus constituted a strong offence in Benin custom till date. Where a case of this nature was reported, the matter was referred to the elders of the community who investigated the matter and took decision. Oghi, (2013) raised a point here that, there was the belief that if such matter is not well handled could elicit the anger of the gods and ancestors, elders were expected to exercise caution and carry out thorough investigations before making pronouncements. Like arson, punishment for such offence included: the imposition of fines, performance of rites to cleanse the land, up to outright banishment from the community.

Africa Traditional and Western Models of Conflict Resolution

It is necessary to compare the workings of the African traditional methods of conflict resolution to the western methods of conflict resolution, as the doing so will help researchers to fully understand the degree of mutual relationship they could be subjected to. It also helps to measure the degree of relevance and application of one method to the other under whatever circumstance and capacity. Both methods are representative of a culture and civilization and product of totally different era and epoch of development. It is just good enough that both methods signified development process and experience of yet totally different people and psyche. The merger of the two methods symbolized cultural fusion brought about by acculturation for whatever purpose and motive. It is not in doubt, however, that the imperial tendency of the western method was an overriding clause subjecting the traditional method to reduction in substance and relevance.

According to Osaghae (2000), western model of conflict is very flexible in operation paving way for manipulation and pliability. This is absent in the traditional method which derived its mode of operation from the laid down customs and norms. This suggests to you that it is culture specific. Traditional method of conflict resolution recognized extrajudicial devices and power in the process of resolving conflict. The supernatural connectivity enforced sanctions

and plagued erring offenders. Western method of conflict resolution lacks such mundane powers. The outcome of western model of conflict is anchored on a tripod structure – win-win, win – loose and loose – loose (on rare occasion) (Osaghae, 2000). A lot depend on the level of manipulation or flexibility and the readiness of the parties to the conflict to state the facts clearly and with honesty of purpose and truthful disposition. In the case of traditional method, the parties to the conflict proportionately shared the blame and praise so inherent in the matter and were often adjudged to shift ground through the pronouncement of the dictum: “give a – little – get – a – little”.. The training of the peace makers or facilitators even though required for the traditional and western methods of conflict resolution, they quite varied. One requires informal training (traditional/method) with lots of experience through observation, the other demands for a formal training (western method) with experimental sensibility. Thus, the professionalism that was so required is also of different posturing. It requires the school system and rigorous systemization of the process (western method) while the other needs sound memory, closer observation and systemic demonstration (traditional method) of the process involved in comprehending conflict resolution in traditional African societies.

In the area of fundamental differentiation, traditional and western methods markedly varied. Too much of confidentiality is associated with the western method in the process of conflict resolution. In the case of the traditional method, you will find out that it is open-ended given room to structural application of principles and the dominance of custom and norms at the procedural level. In the resolution of conflict in traditional African societies, the audience included all members of the community and thus the result was always community focused, whereas western method of conflict resolution had the exclusive audience in the disputants.

Advantageously, western model saves time much more than litigation (which were the early pattern of western adjudicatory system). Traditional method can be rated much cheaper, quicker and peace-focused. There is enough evidence to attest to the desirability of party to the conflict through the end of conflict resolution ceremony. In that ceremony, you need to understand that parties to the conflict exhibited their peaceful disposition and acceptability of the resolution out come through palm wine drink, bean cake eating, kolanut chewing and warm embrace as well as glowing and beaming smiles to the admiration of members of the audience and the delight of the facilitators of the emergent peace and harmony.

CONCLUSION

The study researched into traditional institutions in the achievement of peace and development in Benin City, Edo State. The study found out that traditional institutions for conflict resolution include the traditional Benin Palace conflict resolution council, located in the Oba palace in Benin City, which handles divorce cases, power struggle cases and many other community based related conflict issues. The African Traditional Institution were very effective in resolving conflict social disputes, and the roles of the Benin traditional institutions in resolving conflicts were based on traditional principles which include rituals and retributions. African Traditional methods of conflict resolution is more accepted than the Western methods in Nigeria, as seen in the Benin kingdom. The art of resolving conflict in pre-colonial era of Africa was borne out of belief that conflict which is inevitable could and should not be left alone; it therefore needs to be put under control by interacting with relevant parties to develop common generalization or principles and practices that would return

cordial relationship against violence. During conflicts, traditional institutions therefore, undoubtedly played significant roles in managing these conflicts informally and arranging peace-making meetings when matters get out of hand. These governance institutions and structures were controlled by certain unwritten laws which formed part of the general social structure, and, its machinery of enforcing governance was well-organized to manage affairs, administered justice and resolve tension in the society. However, during colonial era, there was a role change as the roles and offices of traditional rulers were either usurped by the colonialist or their subjects.

Government efforts at managing violent conflicts in Nigeria have not yielded good results, as they largely remain coercive and dismissive of local concerns. Various measures such as police, the military, curfew, propaganda, judicial panel, compensations, creation of new structures, and an offer of amnesty to prevent escalation of violence in Nigeria are replete with lapses, although they have been institutionalized. Similarly, emerging alternative measures such as vigilantes, militias, and ethnic solidarity have resulted in mixed results, whereas the original traditional approaches to conflict management remain grossly repressed. A synergy of different strategies can help in mitigating the rising spate of violence in Nigeria. The contradiction and lack of integration in the extant conflict management strategies in Nigeria, has become general concern for peace, security, and development. This also remains central in both the traditional and modern strategies for conflict management despite the divergent approaches therein. Limitations of the official conflict management strategies and State failure to recognize and harness useful traditional approaches to social control have made conflicts uncontrollable in Nigeria. It is therefore pertinent that the strengths of both the traditional and modern strategies of conflict management are essential and should be integrated to promote peace and development. An innovative policy is needed in this direction. The proposed innovative peace policy would promote fruitful collaboration among stakeholders, transformational leadership and a combination of traditional and modern conflict management strategies to stimulate development in Nigeria. The fact that traditional and modern values have coexisted for centuries and would continue to do so provides additional justification for the proposed integration.

Useful aspects of traditional social institutions, when integrated with the official security apparatus ensures peace in conflict-ridden societies. Key areas that are addressed include the issues of land and social justice, as these promote security of lives and properties. The proportion of people that have been using traditional and modern means to eliminate their opponents over land disputes drastically reduces in traditional dispute resolution settings. Situations in which governments seize communal land and issue certificates of occupancy to the privileged few at exorbitant costs undermines peace-making efforts. Alternatively, governments can liaise with communities concerning the use of their lands for developmental purposes including the construction of infrastructures. When people perceive that the governments is ready to meet their needs, they are normally ready to serve the system and for peaceful coexistence. The question of resource control is also being addressed in using traditional conflict resolution methods. Governance with sincerity and transparency will promote security. A genuine integration of modern and traditional conflict management strategies, excluding their pitfalls, would provide lasting solutions to avoidable conflicts in Nigeria. This will result in building democratic institutions of accountability, social inclusion, transparency in governance, and constructive development in Nigeria. Essentially, traditional

communication infrastructure and ontological spirituality should be built into the synergized package for conflict management.

Recommendations

Based on the findings made in the study, the following recommendations are necessary:

- The government and relevant authorities should ensure that reliable laws and funds are made available to fully capacitate and ensure that the existing traditional councils are operational to the best practices, so as to ensure speedy justice system.
- Traditional facilities should be built to accommodate traditional conflict resolution mechanisms for the Nigerian people to assess and use as alternative to litigation facilities.
- The government and various stakeholders should ensure that the position of the king and queens are taken into consideration as judges and arbitrators in the justice system.
- Government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders should ensure that programmes are created and designed towards enlightening the public on need to approach the traditional institutions for the resolution of conflicts in society.
- The principle of rule of law should be entrenched in all aspects of public service delivery in Nigeria.
- Government should engage and enhance the capacity of the traditional councils to serve as viable options for the resolution of disputes among their subjects.

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