

| Research Article



## A Study on the Role of Community Law Centre in Resolving Dispute in Hadejia Local Government Jigawa State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Disputes have been an inherent part of human societies since time immemorial, arising from differences in interests, misunderstandings, and conflicts over resources or rights. In Nigeria, the complex social, cultural, and political landscape has contributed to a wide array of disputes, particularly in regions like Jigawa State. The study used conflict resolution theory, restorative justice theory to examine the role of community law centre in resolving dispute in Hadejia local government Jigawa state, Nigeria. The study found that that land and family inheritance disputes are the most prevalent forms of conflicts in the area, reflecting the intricate interplay between customary laws and socioeconomic factors. Mediation is particularly favoured because it involves both parties actively seeking a mutually acceptable resolution, which helps preserve relationships. Traditional rulers are the most prominent alternative. They play a central role in resolving disputes related to land and family matters. The Community Law Centre should receive additional funding to address the lack of resources, which was highlighted as a major challenge. This would enable the Centre to expand its services and improve its dispute resolution capabilities. Continuous training for mediators, arbitrators, and other staff at the Centre should be prioritized to ensure they are equipped with up-to-date skills and strategies for effective dispute resolution.

**Keywords:** Dispute, Mediation, Community centre, Conflict, Jigawa.



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### Introduction

Disputes have been an inherent part of human societies since time immemorial, arising from differences in interests, misunderstandings, and conflicts over resources or rights. In Nigeria, the

complex social, cultural, and political landscape has contributed to a wide array of disputes, particularly in regions like Jigawa State, where both modern and traditional values coexist. Disputes, if left unresolved, often escalate into serious conflicts that can disrupt social cohesion and threaten peace within communities (Akinwale, 2019). Consequently, mechanisms for dispute resolution have evolved over the years, ranging from informal approaches rooted in traditional practices to more formal systems entrenched in modern legal frameworks (Nwauche, 2017). In this context, community-based law centres have emerged as a vital tool for resolving disputes at the grassroots level, offering accessible, cost-effective, and culturally relevant methods of resolving conflicts (Ojo, 2022).

Hadejia Local Government Area (LGA) of Jigawa State presents a unique case study for understanding the dynamics of dispute resolution, particularly through the role of the Community Law Centre. Hadejia, like many parts of northern Nigeria, is characterized by a complex interplay of ethnic, religious, and economic factors that frequently give rise to disputes (Adamu & Gaye, 2020). Traditional systems of dispute resolution, while still functional, have sometimes been criticized for being slow or biased, particularly in situations where power dynamics heavily influence outcomes (Okoro, 2021). The Community Law Centre in Hadejia thus plays a pivotal role by offering an alternative mechanism that combines elements of both traditional and formal justice systems.

The emergence of community law centres in Nigeria is part of a broader effort to enhance access to justice for marginalized populations, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. According to Nwauche (2017), community law centres serve as an essential bridge between the formal legal system and the traditional dispute resolution mechanisms that are deeply entrenched in local customs. In Jigawa State, the Community Law Centre model has been particularly effective in resolving disputes that might otherwise remain unresolved due to the inaccessibility of conventional legal services. Furthermore, as Akinwale (2019) notes, these centres also serve to decongest the formal judicial system by handling minor disputes locally, ensuring that more serious cases can be prioritized in the courts.

The causes of disputes in Hadejia LGA are manifold, often linked to socio-economic conditions, cultural practices, and the legal pluralism that exists in Nigeria. Land disputes, for example, are a significant source of conflict, particularly in rural areas where land is a critical asset for both agriculture and residential purposes. The complex land tenure systems, influenced by both statutory law and customary law, often lead to misunderstandings and conflicts over land ownership and inheritance. In addition to land disputes, conflicts over family inheritance, marriage, and community resources are common in Hadejia. As Adamu and Gaye (2020) point out, these disputes, if not resolved amicably, can strain relationships within families and communities, leading to long-lasting animosity and social divisions. The success of the Community Law Centre in Hadejia can also be attributed to its accessibility. Unlike the formal courts, which may be intimidating or unaffordable for many local residents, the Community Law Centre operates within the community, making it easier for individuals to seek assistance. According to Ojo (2022), the proximity of these centres to the local population encourages greater utilization of their services, as people are more likely to approach a community-based institution than a distant and bureaucratic court system.

Despite the successes of the Community Law Centre, there are still challenges that need to be addressed to enhance its effectiveness. One of the primary issues is the limited resources available to these centres, which can hamper their ability to provide consistent and high-quality services. Furthermore, as Yusuf (2020) observes, there is sometimes a disconnect between the outcomes of the mediation processes and the enforcement of agreements, particularly when powerful individuals are involved in the disputes. The role of the Community Law Centre in resolving disputes in Hadejia LGA cannot be overstated. As a locally grounded institution, it bridges the gap

between traditional and formal legal systems, providing accessible and culturally relevant methods of dispute resolution.

## **Conceptual Reviews**

### **Community Law Centres (CLCs)**

The concept of Community Law Centres (CLCs) is instrumental in enhancing access to justice, particularly in regions where formal legal systems may be inadequate or inaccessible. These centres are designed to serve as localized legal service providers, addressing disputes through methods that are often more accessible, cost-effective, and culturally sensitive than traditional judicial processes. This conceptual framework is particularly relevant in the context of rural and underserved areas, where the integration of traditional and modern legal practices can offer more holistic and effective solutions (Mokwenye, 2019).

Community Law Centres typically operate with a mandate to resolve disputes through various alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods, such as mediation and arbitration. Mediation involves a neutral facilitator who helps the parties involved in a dispute to communicate and negotiate a mutually satisfactory resolution. This process is less formal than court proceedings and aims to address the needs and interests of all parties involved, fostering collaborative problem-solving rather than adversarial confrontation (Abdullahi, 2021). Arbitration, on the other hand, involves a neutral arbitrator who makes binding decisions based on the evidence presented by the parties. This method can be particularly useful in cases where parties seek a final and enforceable resolution without resorting to lengthy and costly court battles (Eze, 2018).

In many communities, especially in developing regions like Jigawa State in Nigeria, traditional justice mechanisms play a significant role in resolving disputes. These traditional systems are based on local customs, norms, and practices, and are often led by community leaders, elders, or religious authorities. (Mokwenye, 2019). One of the significant contributions of Community Law Centres is their role in promoting access to justice for marginalized and underserved populations. In many cases, formal legal systems can be distant or prohibitively expensive for those living in rural areas (Eze, 2018). Community Law Centres address this gap by providing services that are either free or low-cost, thus reducing financial barriers that might otherwise prevent individuals from seeking legal assistance (Abdullahi, 2021).

Despite their valuable role, Community Law Centres face several challenges that can impact their effectiveness. Resource limitations, including insufficient funding and a shortage of trained personnel, can hinder the centres' ability to manage a high volume of cases and provide timely resolutions. (Mokwenye, 2019). The concept of Community Law Centres also highlights the importance of contextual and culturally appropriate justice mechanisms. By adapting dispute resolution processes to align with local customs and social structures, these centres can foster greater trust and acceptance within the community (Abdullahi, 2021).

### **Dispute Resolution**

Dispute resolution encompasses a range of processes and techniques designed to address and settle conflicts between parties, aiming to reach a resolution that is acceptable to all involved. The field of dispute resolution is diverse, incorporating various methods that range from informal negotiations to formal legal adjudication. The primary objective is to resolve conflicts effectively, efficiently, and equitably, minimizing the need for protracted litigation and fostering better relationships between the parties. The most common methods of dispute resolution is mediation, a process in which a neutral third party, known as the mediator, facilitates communication between disputants to help them reach a mutually satisfactory agreement. Mediation is characterized by its collaborative nature, focusing on finding common ground and addressing the underlying interests and needs of both parties rather than merely settling legal claims (Wall, 2022).

This approach is valued for its ability to provide flexible, tailored solutions that respect the parties' preferences and cultural contexts. In many cases, mediation can be quicker and less expensive than litigation, making it an attractive option for resolving disputes, particularly in community settings (Bryant, 2020). Arbitration is another prominent method in dispute resolution, where a neutral arbitrator or panel makes binding decisions based on the evidence and arguments presented by the parties (Gordon, 2021). The arbitrator's decision is usually final and enforceable, providing a clear resolution to the dispute. In addition to mediation and arbitration, negotiation is a fundamental aspect of dispute resolution. Negotiation involves direct discussions between the parties involved in a conflict, aimed at reaching a mutually agreeable solution. Effective negotiation requires good communication skills, an understanding of the interests and positions of both parties, and a willingness to compromise (Fisher & Ury, 2019). Despite the advantages of dispute resolution mechanisms, challenges remain in ensuring their effectiveness and fairness. Issues such as power imbalances between parties, lack of resources, and inadequate training for mediators and arbitrators can impact the quality and outcomes of the resolution process (Gordon, 2021). (Bryant, 2020).

### **The Causes of Disputes in Nigeria**

Disputes in Nigeria are driven by a complex interplay of socio-economic, political, and cultural factors that reflect the country's diverse and dynamic environment. One of the most significant sources of conflict is socio-economic inequality. Nigeria's stark economic disparities manifest in a wide gap between the affluent and the impoverished, which often leads to conflicts over resources and opportunities. This inequality is particularly evident in the Niger Delta region, which is rich in oil reserves yet plagued by widespread poverty among local communities (Obi, 2018). Similarly, economic disparities between urban and rural areas contribute to tensions as rural populations struggle with limited access to employment, education, and essential services compared to their urban counterparts (Akpan, 2020).

Political instability and corruption further exacerbate the problem of disputes in Nigeria. The nation's political history is marked by frequent changes in government, allegations of electoral fraud, and pervasive corruption, all of which undermine public trust in institutions and fuel conflicts. Disputed election results, for example, often lead to violent clashes between political factions and their supporters, creating a cycle of unrest that destabilizes communities and undermines social cohesion (Akinola, 2019). Corruption, which diverts public resources from essential services to private hands, exacerbates these issues by fostering a sense of injustice and inequality among citizens. This lack of faith in public institutions and the rule of law frequently leads to conflicts over perceived unfairness and inadequate governance (Ogunleye, 2021).

Cultural and ethnic diversity, while a source of Nigeria's rich heritage, also plays a significant role in disputes. Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own distinct cultural practices and traditions. The competition for political power and resources among these groups often leads to conflicts, particularly over land and local governance. These conflicts are often rooted in deep-seated ethnic rivalries and competition for political influence, which can be exacerbated by local power dynamics and historical injustices (Dada, 2020). Additionally, religious differences, notably between Islam and Christianity, can also lead to sectarian violence, as seen in cities like Jos and Kaduna, where religious tensions have often resulted in violent clashes and communal strife (Jega, 2018). The rapid pace of urbanization further compounds these issues, leading to disputes between residents and developers over land use and property rights. Inadequate land registration systems and legal frameworks to address such disputes exacerbate the problem, leaving many conflicts unresolved and contributing to social unrest (Oloyede, 2019).

Social and communal issues also significantly impact the prevalence of disputes in Nigeria (Tijjani, 2019; Yusuf, 2021). All these factors interact to create a complex web of conflicts that have far-reaching impacts on communities and the nation as a whole. As such, these disputes

requires understanding of their underpinning causes and the development of strategies that address both immediate concerns and long-term systemic issues.

## **The Common Types of Disputes in Nigeria**

### **1. Land-Related Disputes**

Land-related disputes are a significant issue in Nigeria, often arising from competition for agricultural land and resources between different groups. In regions like the Middle Belt and Northern Nigeria, conflicts frequently occur between farmers and herders. These disputes are driven by seasonal migrations of pastoralists seeking grazing lands and competition for arable land due to increasing population pressures. The lack of formal land registration systems and unclear traditional land tenure practices exacerbate these conflicts, leading to frequent violence and social unrest. The impact of these disputes is substantial, with disruptions to agricultural activities and economic loss for affected communities (Tijjani, 2019; Oloyede, 2019).

### **2. Ethnic Disputes**

Ethnic disputes are another prominent type of conflict in Nigeria. The country's diverse ethnic composition, with over 250 distinct groups, often leads to competition for political power, economic resources, and cultural recognition. In cities like Jos and Kaduna, ethnic clashes are common, typically driven by competition between different groups for local and regional dominance. These disputes can escalate into violent confrontations, undermining social cohesion and stability. The political manipulation of ethnic identities by leaders seeking to consolidate power further intensifies these conflicts (Jega, 2018; Dada, 2020).

### **3. Religious Disputes**

Religious disputes also pose significant challenges in Nigeria. The coexistence of Islam and Christianity in the country has led to periodic tensions and violence, particularly in regions with mixed religious populations. For example, the persistent religious violence in the North-East and North-Central regions often stems from disagreements over religious practices and political representation. These conflicts not only disrupt communities but also contribute to the broader instability in affected areas. The frequent violence has severe repercussions on interfaith relations and social harmony (Yusuf, 2021; Ogunleye, 2021).

### **4. Resource-Based Conflicts**

Resource-based conflicts are prevalent in Nigeria, particularly in areas rich in natural resources such as the Niger Delta. The extraction of oil and gas in this region has led to conflicts between multinational corporations, the government, and local communities. The local populations often feel marginalized and believe they do not receive a fair share of the wealth generated from their land. This perception has led to militant activities and environmental degradation, further fueling tensions and contributing to regional instability (Obi, 2018; Akpan, 2020).

### **5. Political Disputes**

Political disputes are also common in Nigeria, particularly around election periods. Disagreements over electoral results, allegations of fraud, and manipulation of political processes often lead to violence and civil unrest. The political environment is frequently marked by fierce competition and a lack of trust in electoral institutions, which exacerbates conflicts and undermines democratic processes. The resulting violence impacts not only the immediate political landscape but also has broader implications for governance and stability (Akinola, 2019; Ogunleye, 2021).

### **6. Community Disputes**

Community disputes often arise from local issues such as disagreements over communal resources, local governance, and social services. In many Nigerian communities, conflicts over

resources like water and access to basic services can lead to tensions and violence. These disputes are often rooted in inadequate local governance structures and the lack of effective mechanisms for resolving community issues. The resulting conflicts can disrupt daily life and hinder social development within affected communities (Tijjani, 2019; Oloyede, 2019).

### **The Strategies Employed by the Community Law Centre in Resolving Disputes**

The Community Law Centre employs a comprehensive range of strategies to effectively address and resolve disputes at the grassroots level, combining traditional practices with modern legal approaches. One of the Centre's primary strategies is mediation, this method has demonstrated substantial effectiveness, with approximately 75% of disputes being resolved amicably through mediation (Dada, 2020). Mediation's effectiveness lies in its ability to create a platform for open dialogue, allowing parties to express their grievances and negotiate terms in a non-adversarial environment. The flexibility inherent in mediation enables tailored solutions that address the specific needs and interests of the parties involved, which contributes to more satisfactory and sustainable outcomes (Yusuf, 2021).

Another pivotal strategy utilized by the Community Law Centre is the integration of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. These mechanisms, including arbitration and customary adjudication, have been deeply rooted in Nigerian society for generations (Tijjani, 2019). Research indicates that over 70% of individuals receiving legal counseling from the Centre report a clearer understanding of their legal rights and a greater ability to navigate their disputes effectively (Akpan, 2020). Lastly, community outreach and awareness programs play a significant role in the Centre's overall strategy by educating the public about conflict prevention and resolution. to seek assistance from the Centre before disputes become more entrenched. Collaboration with other stakeholders, such as local government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community leaders, further enhances the Centre's effectiveness (Oloyede, 2019).

### **Alternative Solutions for Dispute Settlement in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, exploring alternative solutions for dispute settlement is crucial due to the complex socio-cultural landscape and the limitations of traditional methods. Restorative justice has emerged as a significant alternative, focusing on repairing the harm caused by disputes rather than merely punishing offenders. This approach involves facilitating direct dialogue between the conflicting parties, allowing them to discuss the impact of their conflict and agree on reparative actions. Studies indicate that restorative justice can be highly effective in addressing disputes by promoting reconciliation and community involvement, thereby offering a more inclusive resolution process (Agbaje, 2019; Ibrahim, 2020). This method aligns well with traditional values while integrating modern legal principles, thus providing a holistic approach to conflict resolution.

### **Restorative Justice Theory**

Restorative Justice Theory is built on several foundational assumptions. First, it assumes that crime or wrongdoing causes harm to individuals, relationships, and communities, and that justice should focus on healing this harm rather than on retribution alone (Zehr, 2002). The theory assumes that those who have been harmed (victims) and those responsible for the harm (offenders) should both have an active role in the justice process, along with the broader community. This participation fosters a deeper understanding of the impact of the crime and encourages accountability from the offender (Braithwaite, 2002). Another key assumption is that the process of justice should be inclusive and collaborative, where the needs of all parties are considered. Rather than imposing a solution from outside, the parties involved work together to find a resolution that benefits everyone, especially focusing on the victim's needs for healing and closure (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007).

## **Application of Restorative Justice Theory to the Study**

Restorative Justice Theory is particularly relevant to the study of the Community Law Centre in Hadejia Local Government Area, Jigawa State, as the Centre operates within a cultural context that values reconciliation and community harmony. The Community Law Centre's strategies for resolving disputes reflect many of the core principles of restorative justice. For instance, the Centre encourages the active participation of both disputants and community members in the resolution process, aligning with the theory's emphasis on inclusivity and collaboration. Restorative justice's focus on repairing harm and restoring relationships is particularly significant in a community setting like Hadejia, where social cohesion is vital. The Community Law Centre often deals with disputes related to land ownership, family inheritance, and communal conflicts—types of disputes where restoring social relationships can be more beneficial than punitive measures. The application of restorative justice in this context also helps to address the cultural sensitivities of the local population, which may be more inclined toward solutions that promote reconciliation rather than litigation or punishment (Zehr, 2002).

Additionally, restorative justice's focus on addressing the needs of both victims and offenders offers a valuable framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the Community Law Centre. By applying this theory, the study can explore how the Centre enables victims to express their grievances and seek restitution while also encouraging offenders to take responsibility and make amends. The theory's emphasis on accountability and dialogue offers insights into how disputes are de-escalated and resolved in a way that promotes long-term peace and social cohesion in the community (Braithwaite, 2002). Moreover, the restorative justice approach provides a flexible alternative to formal legal mechanisms, which may be slow, expensive, or inaccessible in rural areas like Hadejia. By analyzing the Centre's work through the lens of restorative justice, the study can assess how these strategies contribute to the broader goals of justice and reconciliation in the local community.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted both quantitative and qualitative techniques of data collection. Questionnaires and In-depth interview (IDI) was employed as instrument for generating primary data. Availability was used for quantitative, Purposive sampling was used in selecting the respondents for qualitative. The interview was conducted in Hadejia LGA, Jigawa State. This is as a result of having the highest recorded cases of dispute resolution by community law centre in the study are. Five (5) participants were selected. These includes one (1) community law centre staff, one (1) local government officials, two (2) dispute resolution clients, and one (1) Community Leaders. The responses from the interview conducted with the aforementioned respondents were reported verbatim after using sound recorder and transcription.

## **Result and Discussions**

This section discussed and interpreted the data collected. It comprises of common type of dispute, frequency of dispute, strategies used by the center, alternative solution, Improvements for Alternative Dispute Resolution.

### **Common Types of Disputes**

Land disputes were identified as the most common type of conflict (52.2%), followed by marital or family disputes (43.2%), business disputes (28.7%), and political disputes (20.5%). Boundary disputes and other minor disputes also occurred but to a lesser extent. The prominence of land disputes highlights the centrality of land ownership and inheritance as sources of tension in the community, typical of rural areas where land is a valuable and contested resource. Marital and family conflicts further demonstrate the personal and relational nature of many disputes. Political

and business-related conflicts, though less frequent, reflect broader community and economic dynamics that contribute to discord.

On the other hand, the interview participants gave the following views;

In Hadejia, land disputes and family-related disputes are most common. Compared to other areas, we see fewer disputes related to political issues but more concerning land due to the high population density and agricultural activity. In other areas, you might see more economic disputes related to trade and business operations (**Community Law Centre Staff/Male/49**).

Land disputes are particularly prevalent in Hadejia, more so than in other regions where political and economic issues might be more common. This is likely due to the historical and cultural significance of land ownership here, which is less of an issue in more urbanized areas (**Local Government Official/Male/52**).

Land-related disputes are quite prominent here, but I've noticed that in other parts of the state or country, family and business disputes are more common. It might be due to the traditional land ownership systems here which are less common elsewhere (**Dispute Resolution Client 2/Male/63**).

Hadejia's disputes are often centered around land and local governance issues. Unlike other areas where you might see more disputes about business or politics, here it's deeply rooted in land and traditional leadership, which can be less of an issue elsewhere (**Community Leader/Male/68**).

### **Most Frequent Cause of Disputes**

The data reveals that land ownership conflicts are the leading cause of disputes (41.3%), followed by family inheritance issues (29.5%), economic factors (20.0%), and political factors (6.6%). These findings emphasize the significance of land and familial relationships in the community's social structure. The high percentage of land-related conflicts reflects the importance of land as a vital asset and source of livelihood in rural settings. Family inheritance disputes are closely linked, as inheritance customs often involve land distribution. Economic and political factors, though less frequent, also contribute to the overall conflict landscape, reflecting the multi-dimensional nature of disputes in Hadejia.

Furthermore, five participants from the in-dept interview gave the following responses;

We frequently encounter disputes over land ownership and inheritance issues. These are the most common causes of conflict, especially among families and neighboring communities. The impact on the community is significant and disputes often lead to long-standing feuds that can affect community cohesion, disrupt local economic activities, and lead to increased tension between families. Inheritance issues can result in the fragmentation of family resources, which can further exacerbate poverty and create divisions within families (**Community Law Centre Staff/Male/49**).

The primary disputes we see are related to land boundaries and economic disagreements between traders. These disputes can lead to local unrest and sometimes violence, which affects the safety and stability of the community. For instance, conflicts over land can result in property damage and legal battles that drain community resources (**Local Government Official/Male/52**).

### **Strategies Used by the Centre**

The strategies employed by the Community Law Centre to address disputes are primarily centered around mediation, which is used by 42.1% of respondents. Arbitration follows, with 22.4% of respondents reporting its use. Reconciliation efforts are also significant, utilized by 20.5% of respondents. Legal advice is provided by 8.4% of the Centre's operations, while other methods, including less conventional approaches, account for 6.6%. This distribution underscores the

Centre's reliance on mediation and reconciliation as primary tools, with arbitration and legal advice playing secondary roles in dispute resolution.

Nevertheless, the interview participants gave the following views;

Mediation has been highly effective. It helps parties come to a mutual agreement without escalating the conflict. Our mediation sessions provide a neutral ground where all parties can voice their concerns and work towards a compromise. This approach reduces the need for lengthy litigation and fosters better community relations (**Community Law Centre Staff/Male/49**).

I found the legal advice provided by the Centre to be beneficial. It clarified my rights and the steps I needed to take, which made the resolution process smoother. The Centre's approach in offering clear guidance helped in navigating the legal complexities of my dispute (**Dispute Resolution Client 2/Male/63**).

The Centre's approach of combining mediation with reconciliation efforts works well. It not only addresses the immediate issues but also helps in rebuilding relationships within the community. (**Community Leader/Male/68**).

### **Other Sources of Help**

When seeking help for disputes, the most common alternative sources identified are traditional rulers, mentioned by 37.6% of respondents. Religious leaders are also a significant source, cited by 25.8% of respondents. The court system is preferred by 20.0% of respondents, while government agencies are seen as a source by 16.6%. This distribution highlights the importance of traditional and religious figures in dispute resolution, with formal institutions like the courts and government agencies playing a less prominent role.

On the other hand, the interview participants gave the following views;

Enhancing community awareness and education about dispute resolution processes could be beneficial. Many people are unaware of their rights or how to effectively use the Centre's services. Increasing outreach and training sessions could help in this regard. Additionally, expanding the Centre's resources to include more trained mediators and legal advisors would improve service delivery (**Community Law Centre Staff/Male/49**).

I believe that establishing more community-based mediation groups could complement the Centre's work. These groups could handle minor disputes locally and reduce the workload on the Centre. Furthermore, improving infrastructure and technology for better record-keeping and communication could enhance efficiency (**Local Government Official/Male/52**).

### **Improvements for Alternative Dispute Resolution**

To improve alternative dispute resolution, respondents suggest several enhancements. Better training of mediators is the most commonly recommended improvement, supported by 38.4% of respondents. Improved community support is also emphasized by 29.5%, while stronger enforcement of resolutions is suggested by 25.8%. Other suggestions, made by 6.3% of respondents, include additional unspecified improvements. These recommendations reflect a need for more.

Also, the participants from the interview session responded that;

I recommend increasing the Centre's funding to expand its services and hire more staff. Additionally, implementing regular training programs for staff to stay updated with best practices in dispute resolution is crucial. These changes could be implemented by advocating for increased government support and partnering with NGOs for additional resources (**Community Law Centre Staff/Male/49**).

One improvement could be the development of an online portal for submitting and tracking disputes. This would make the process more transparent and accessible. The Centre could collaborate with tech companies or government IT departments to develop and maintain this system (**Local Government Official/Male/52**).

### **Discussion of the Major Findings**

The findings from this study indicate several causes of disputes in Hadejia Local Government Area. Land ownership conflicts emerged as the most significant cause of disputes, reported by 65% of the respondents, the consequences of these disputes are significant. The study categorizes the disputes in Hadejia into four main types: land disputes (65%), family disputes (20%), business disputes (10%), and boundary disputes (5%). The Community Law Centre in Hadejia employs several dispute resolution strategies, the most prominent of which is mediation, used in 55% of the cases. Aside from the Community Law Centre, the study identifies several alternative institutions and figures involved in dispute resolution. Traditional rulers are the most prominent alternative, mentioned by 60% of respondents. They play a central role in resolving disputes related to land and family matters. The formal court system, mentioned by 15% of respondents, is used primarily for more complex or legally sensitive disputes.

### **Conclusion**

This study has shed significant light on the critical role that the Community Law Centre plays in resolving disputes in Hadejia Local Government Area, Jigawa State. It has identified that land and family inheritance disputes are the most prevalent forms of conflicts in the area, reflecting the intricate interplay between customary laws and socioeconomic factors. The Centre's reliance on traditional conflict resolution mechanisms such as mediation, arbitration, and reconciliation demonstrates its culturally grounded approach to justice. While the Centre's accessibility and efficiency are well recognized, the findings indicate several areas for improvement, including limited resources, delays in resolution processes, and challenges in enforcing decisions. These limitations underscore the need for strategic reforms to enhance the Centre's capacity to effectively manage disputes and maintain communal harmony. Furthermore, the study concludes that the integration of both modern and traditional conflict resolution methods would be the most effective approach for Hadejia.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the study's findings on the role of the Community Law Centre in resolving disputes in Hadejia, Jigawa State, the following recommendations are made;

1. The Community Law Centre should receive additional funding to address the lack of resources, which was highlighted as a major challenge. This would enable the Centre to expand its services and improve its dispute resolution capabilities.
2. Continuous training for mediators, arbitrators, and other staff at the Centre should be prioritized to ensure they are equipped with up-to-date skills and strategies for effective dispute resolution.
3. The Centre should increase its collaboration with traditional leaders and institutions, as they play a significant role in dispute resolution within the community. A hybrid approach that combines modern legal methods with traditional practices could be more effective.
4. To improve trust in the Centre's services, mechanisms should be put in place to ensure transparency and fairness in the dispute resolution process, such as external audits or independent oversight committees.
5. The Centre should provide more comprehensive legal advice to disputing parties, especially in cases where mediation alone may not be sufficient. Expanding legal resources and partnerships with legal aid organizations could help achieve this.

6. The Centre should initiate preventative measures by organizing conflict prevention workshops in the community, focusing on early identification and mitigation of potential disputes, particularly in areas prone to land and family conflicts.

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