

Conflict Management in African Traditional Religion: A Case of the Abagusii Community

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Abstract

Conflict, an inherent facet of human interaction, has intrigued scholars. Conflict resolution in the Abagusii community is firmly ingrained in its cultural heritage and spiritual beliefs. Elders, noted for their wisdom and experience, are essential in resolving disagreements. Thus, this study explores conflict management within the context of African traditional religion, focusing on the Abagusii community in Kenya. Moreover, by examining conflict management within the context of African traditional religion, the study contributes to broader discussions on the intersection of culture, religion, and conflict resolution, thus enriching academic discourse and informing practical interventions for sustainable peace in diverse African societies. The study utilized a descriptive design to comprehensively understand Conflict Management in African Traditional Religion among the Abagusii community. Data was collected from 81 respondents using a questionnaire analyzed quantitatively through descriptive statistics using SPSS version 20.0. The findings underscore the effectiveness of integrating traditional practices with modern frameworks for conflict management among the Abagusii community. Community mediation, customary courts, and inclusive decision-making play crucial roles in fostering unity and consensus-building while upholding cultural heritage in African societies. Empower indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms through resource allocation and training and foster dialogue between traditional leaders and modern legal systems. Strengthening and integrating these mechanisms with contemporary frameworks can effectively address conflicts while preserving cultural heritage and promoting social cohesion.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution; African Religions; Abagusii; Indigenous Practices; Community Mediation; Cultural Heritage.



Introduction

Conflict management is a complex process involving identifying, resolving, and preventing conflicts between individuals or groups. According to Yusuf, Noah, and Raji Shittu,¹ conflict management is about recognizing and addressing differences constructively, promoting collaboration, and finding mutually beneficial solutions. They emphasize the importance of understanding conflicting parties' underlying interests and needs to foster open communication and reach resolutions that contribute to overall harmony. Conflict management in African traditional religion is deeply ingrained in the cultural foundations, offering diverse approaches that reflect the rich tapestry of beliefs and practices. At the regional level, African countries often turn to traditional religious principles for guidance in conflict resolution. Scholars have also underscored the significance of indigenous approaches within regional organizations such as the African Union, recognizing and incorporating traditional values, rituals, and spiritual leaders as vital to mediating disputes.² Regional conflict management within African traditional religions seeks to preserve cultural nuances and communal harmony while addressing the complexities of diverse societies across the continent.³

African traditional religions (ATRs) played a significant role in conflict management and resolution long before the arrival of colonial powers on the continent. One way ATRs managed conflicts was through the mediation of community elders or religious leaders who acted as arbiters in disputes.⁴ For example, in many African societies, the village chief or spiritual leader convenes gatherings where conflicting parties present their grievances and seek resolution. These elders would then apply customary laws and religious principles to reach a consensus, often emphasizing reconciliation and restoring harmony within the community.⁵

¹ Yusuf, Noah, and Raji Shittu. "African traditional religion, conflict resolution, and peaceful societal Co-existence." In *The Palgrave handbook of African traditional religion*, pp. 329-346. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022.

² Kasomo, Daniel. "The position of African traditional religion in conflict prevention." (2010).

³ Yusuf, Noah, and Raji Shittu, 331.

⁴ Sundermeier, Theo. *The individual and community in African traditional religions*. Vol. 6. LIT Verlag Münster, 1998.

⁵ Nwaka, Jacinta Chiamaka, and Enibokun Uzebu-Imarhigbe. "'The Ambivalence of the Sacred': Religion and Mediation in Northern Nigeria, 2000-2005." *Journal of African-Centered Solutions in Peace and Security* (2020): 28.



Conflict management within ATRs uses rituals and ceremonies to restore balance and heal rifts between individuals or groups.⁶ For instance, in some African cultures, the sacrificial offering of livestock or other valuables symbolized seeking forgiveness and the renewal of social bonds. Such rituals were believed to appease ancestral spirits or deities, facilitating reconciliation and resolving conflicts. Additionally, communal ceremonies like the Kola nut ceremony among the Yoruba people of Nigeria served as occasions to foster unity and resolve interpersonal disputes.⁷

ATRs often emphasize the importance of communal solidarity and collective responsibility in conflict resolution. In many African societies, the concept of Ubuntu, or the interconnectedness of all individuals within the community, guided conflict management practices. For example, among the Bantu-speaking peoples of Southern Africa, the principle of Ubuntu underpinned restorative justice processes where the emphasis was on repairing harm and reintegrating offenders back into the community rather than punitive measures. This approach promoted social cohesion and harmony by addressing the root causes of conflicts and preventing their escalation.

African traditional religions promoted the concept of collective responsibility and accountability in conflict management. In many societies, individuals were expected to adhere to moral codes and communal norms upheld by religious teachings. When conflicts arose, community members would collectively address the issues, guided by religious principles of fairness and justice.⁸ For instance, among the Akan people of Ghana, the concept of "Sankofa"⁹ emphasized the importance of learning from the past to resolve present conflicts. Through communal deliberations and adherence to cultural values, conflicts were managed in a manner that preserved social cohesion and solidarity.

ATRs provide mechanisms for addressing conflicts arising from inter-group interactions or territorial disputes. For instance, among the various ethnic groups in East Africa, the "Council of Elders" or "Council of Chiefs" facilitated dialogue and negotiation

⁶ Sampson, Cynthia. "Religion and peacebuilding." *Peacemaking in international conflict: Methods and techniques* (2007): 273-323.

⁷ Mubashir, Mir, and Luxshi Vimalarajah. "Tradition-& faith-oriented insider mediators (TFIMs) as crucial actors in conflict transformation." Potential, constraints, & opportunities for collaborative support. *The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers* Publication 1 (2016).

⁸ Akinola, Adeoye O., and Ufo Okeke Uzodike. "Ubuntu and the quest for conflict resolution in Africa." *Journal of Black Studies* 49, no. 2 (2018): 91-113.

⁹ Akinola and Uzodike 113



between communities.¹⁰ These councils would discuss land ownership, resource allocation, or boundary demarcation to find mutually acceptable solutions and prevent violent conflicts. Through diplomatic channels and traditional protocols, African societies managed to maintain relative peace and stability within their territories.

ATRs often incorporated symbolic gestures and rites of passage to mark resolving conflicts and restoring social equilibrium. For example, among the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania, the ritual of "Eunoto" symbolized the transition of young warriors into elderhood and served as a platform for settling disputes and reinforcing social bonds. Similarly, the "Dipo" initiation ceremony among the Krobo people of Ghana provided opportunities for reconciling families and communities while celebrating young girls' passage into womanhood.¹¹ These rituals affirmed cultural values and promoted conflict resolution and social cohesion.

Conflict resolution in the traditional Abagusii community was based on its cultural heritage and the community's spiritual beliefs. Elders, noted for their wisdom and experience, were critical in resolving disagreements. Rituals, ceremonies, and communal gatherings were organized to seek guidance from ancestral spirits, fostering a sense of unity and collective responsibility.¹² Conflict resolution practices were passed down to generations using oral traditions. In the Abagusii community, conflicts are viewed not only as interpersonal issues but also as disruptions to the spiritual harmony that connects the living with their ancestors. The traditional approach emphasizes restoration and healing, aiming to maintain the equilibrium within the community.¹³

This study explores conflict management within the context of African traditional religion, focusing on the Abagusii community in Kenya. The Abagusii's conflict resolution practices offer a compelling lens to examine the intricacies of conflict resolution embedded within indigenous belief systems. Conflict resolution in the Abagusii society frequently entails the participation of elders and spiritual leaders who utilize past customs and rituals to bring harmony. For instance, land ownership or inheritance disputes are commonly addressed

¹⁰ Rothchild, Donald S. *Managing ethnic conflict in Africa: Pressures and incentives for cooperation*. Brookings Institution Press, 1997.

¹¹ Anyanwu, Christian Ndubueze. *Creative strategies for conflict management & community building*. AuthorHouse, 2009.

¹² Nyabuto, Esther Mwangi. "Abuse and its' psychological impact on women among Abagusii community of Kenya." PhD Diss., Egerton University, 2007.

¹³ Yusuf, Noah, and Raji Shittu, 232



through communal gatherings known as "Barazas," where elders preside over discussions and offer guidance based on cultural wisdom.¹⁴ These gatherings serve as platforms for dialogue and reconciliation, emphasizing collective responsibility and the preservation of community cohesion.

The Abagusii community's belief in ancestral spirits plays a significant role in conflict management, shaping their approach to reconciliation and restoration. Ancestral veneration is central to Abagusii spirituality, with elders serving as intermediaries between the living and the deceased.¹⁵ During a conflict, rituals such as libations and sacrifices invoke ancestral spirits' guidance and blessings. For example, in interpersonal disputes or family feuds, offerings may be made at sacred shrines to seek forgiveness and appease ancestral spirits. Through these rituals, the Abagusii community seeks to resolve immediate conflicts and maintain harmonious relationships with their ancestors, whose wisdom and guidance are believed to transcend earthly matters.

This study examined how the Abagusii community, guided by their traditional religious principles, negotiates and resolves conflicts. It investigates the rituals, roles of spiritual leaders and elders, and the communal values that shape conflict resolution practices within the Abagusii community. Amidst the dynamic changes sweeping across African societies, it becomes imperative to scrutinize the resilience and relevance of traditional approaches in addressing contemporary disputes. The study objectives were as follows: first, to examine the influence of community mediation in traditional African religion in the case of the Abagusii community; Second, to assess the effects of customary courts in the Abagusii community. Third, to examine the effects of inclusive decision-making in the Abagusii community. It will highlight the components for handling conflict rituals, belief systems, and community dynamics.

¹⁴ Ombuki, Thomas Monari, Mildred Ndeda, and Samwel Okuro. "Political trends and leadership patterns in the Abagusii community during the decolonization period from 1940-1963 in Kenya," 2019.

¹⁵ Onyanacha, Boaz Kariuki. "African spiritual response to Western Christianity with particular reference to Abagusii and the Seventh-Day-Adventist Church in Ogembo Division, Kisii District, Kenya." PhD Diss., 1989.



Literature Review

This section surveys relevant studies on conflict resolution in traditional and modern African contexts. Scholars have underscored the need for comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of conflicts while fostering mutual understanding and tolerance.¹⁶ The impact of community-led strategies and local initiatives on conflict resolution and peace-building has been noted in fostering sustainable peace.¹⁷

In addition, case studies have indicated the importance of integrating traditional practices with modern legal frameworks to enhance access to justice and promote community cohesion.¹⁸ For instance, Bwire argues for integrating African customary legal concepts into modern law, focusing on restorative justice. He emphasizes the relevance of indigenous knowledge systems in contemporary legal frameworks, advocating for a holistic approach to justice that incorporates local perspectives and values.¹⁹

Customary Laws and Modern Legal Systems

Ambani and Ahaya's article examines the plight of African traditionalists in Kenya, focusing on the challenges and prospects of customary law in the context of the new constitutional era. The authors highlight the marginalization and discrimination faced by adherents of African traditional religions within the legal framework of the country. They explore the tensions between customary laws and modern legal systems, emphasizing the need for greater recognition and protection of traditional practices and beliefs. They advocate for legal reforms that uphold the rights and freedoms of African traditions while promoting cultural diversity and pluralism in Kenya's legal system.²⁰

Further, Amoah and Bennett's study examined the freedoms of religion and culture under the South African Constitution. Through a comprehensive analysis of legal provisions

¹⁶ Moywaywa, Charles K. "Management of religious conflicts in Kenya: Challenges and opportunities." *International Journal of Education and Research* 6, no. 1 (2018): 129-142.

¹⁷ Chepkoiywo, James C. "The impact of community-led strategies on conflict resolution and peacebuilding among pastoralist communities in Kenya: A case study of Olmorani Division of Laikipia West District." PhD Diss., University of Nairobi, Kenya, 2010.

¹⁸ Sabala, Genevieve M. "Principles, effectiveness and challenges of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms: A review of cases from Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan and Uganda." *Journal of Living Together* 6, no. 1 (2019): 162-172.

¹⁹ Bwire, Buluma. "Integration of African customary legal concepts into modern law, restorative justice: A Kenyan example." *Societies* 9, no. 1 (2019): 17.

²⁰ Ambani, J. Osogo, and Ochieng Ahaya. "The wretched African traditionalists in Kenya: The challenges and prospect of customary law in the new constitutional era." *Strathmore LJ* 1 (2015): 41.



and judicial decisions, the authors assessed the extent to which traditional African religions enjoy equal protection and recognition within the constitutional framework of South Africa. They highlighted the challenges that adherents of traditional African religions face in accessing their rights and participating fully in public life. They call for greater legal clarity and sensitivity to the cultural and religious diversity of South Africa, advocating for inclusive policies that uphold the rights of all citizens.²¹

Customary and Religious Laws and Initiatives on Conflict Resolution

Fisiy assessed the intricate interplay between colonial legacies and religious influences on customary law in Cameroon. This study revealed how colonial imposition reshaped traditional legal systems and religious practices. The study sheds light on the enduring impact of colonialism on legal frameworks, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of customary law within contemporary contexts.²²

Similarly, the study by Ogero on the repercussions of colonialism on the indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms within Kenya's Kipsigis and Abagusii communities from 1905-1963 shows how colonial policies and interventions disrupted traditional conflict resolution practices, significantly transforming social dynamics and power structures.²³ This study provides crucial insights into the enduring impacts of colonial legacies on contemporary conflict management strategies among indigenous communities in Kenya.

Studies have also examined the complex interplay between religious and customary laws. Oba investigated the relationship, coexistence, and interaction of religious and customary laws within Nigeria's legal system.²⁴ Through an interdisciplinary approach, the author analyzes the historical development, legal status, and practical implications of religious and customary laws in Nigeria. He elucidates the challenges and opportunities arising from the concurrent application of these legal traditions, emphasizing the need for harmonization and reform to ensure justice, equity, and respect for human rights. The article contributes to ongoing discussions on legal pluralism and promoting the rule of law in

²¹ Amoah, Jewel, and Tom Bennett. "The freedoms of religion and culture under the South African Constitution: Do traditional African religions enjoy equal treatment?" *Journal of Law and Religion* 24, no. 1 (2008): 1-20.

²² Fisiy, Cyprian Fonyuy. "Colonial and Religious Influences on Customary Law: The Cameroonian experiences." *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 43, no. 2 (1988): 262-275.

²³ Ogero, Wilfred. "the impact of colonialism on the indigenous conflict resolution strategies among the Kipsigis and the Abagusii of Kenya 1905-1963." PhD diss., Chuka University, 2022.

²⁴ Oba, Abdulmumini A. "Religious and customary laws in Nigeria." *Emory Int'l L. Rev.* 25 (2011): 881.



Nigeria, advocating for a balanced approach that respects religious diversity and cultural heritage.

An interdisciplinary analysis by Diala and Kangwa looked at the interface between customary law and constitutionalism in sub-Saharan Africa. It highlighted the tensions and synergies between customary practices and constitutional principles. By interrogating prevailing assumptions, the authors advocate for recalibrating legal frameworks that accommodate customary norms and constitutional imperatives.²⁵

On the inter-religious mediation, Omotosho explores the intricacies of managing religious conflicts in Nigeria, emphasizing the significance of the inter-religious mediation peace strategy. Drawing on empirical evidence and case studies, Omotosho underscores the importance of proactive measures in mitigating tensions and promoting peaceful coexistence among religious communities in Nigeria.²⁶ The author discusses the role of mediation in facilitating dialogue, reconciliation, and conflict resolution, thereby contributing to sustainable peace and stability in the region.

Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana explored the role of faith-based actors in international conflict resolution, focusing on the mediation efforts of religious organizations. Drawing on theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, the authors highlight the unique capabilities of faith-based actors in promoting dialogue, reconciliation, and peace-building across diverse cultural and religious contexts. Through an examination of case studies and best practices, they highlight the importance of engaging religious leaders and institutions as valuable stakeholders in conflict resolution processes at the international level.²⁷

Further, Asamoah-Gyadu investigates the mediating power of Pentecostalism in an African context, shedding light on its role in religious mediation and social transformation. Through a multidisciplinary approach, the author explores the theological underpinnings of Pentecostalism and its impact on individual beliefs, community dynamics, and societal norms. He underscores the transformative potential of religious movements in shaping peace

²⁵ Diala, Anthony C., and Bethsheba Kangwa. "Rethinking the interface between customary law and constitutionalism in sub-Saharan Africa." *De Jure Law Journal* 52, no. 1 (2019): 189-206.

²⁶ Omotosho, Mashood. "Managing religious conflicts in Nigeria: The inter-religious mediation peace strategy." *Africa Development* 39, no. 2 (2014): 133-151.

²⁷ Bercovitch, Jacob, and S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana. "Religion and mediation: The role of faith-based actors in international conflict resolution." *International Negotiation* 14, no. 1 (2009): 175-204.



and stability in Africa by analyzing the strategies employed by Pentecostal churches in addressing conflicts and promoting reconciliation.²⁸

Indigenous Approaches to Mediation

An instructive study on the traditional Ndebele society's approach to conflict resolution focused on mediation as a pivotal mechanism. By exploring cultural norms, rituals, and customary practices, the authors highlight the role of mediators in facilitating communication, restoring harmony, and preserving social cohesion within the community. They offer valuable insights into the intersection of tradition and modernity in addressing conflicts and promoting peace in African societies. The indigenous belief systems are critical in promoting social cohesion, ethical values, and conflict resolution mechanisms. Therefore, there is a need to recognize and integrate traditional religious practices into contemporary peace-building initiatives.

An additional study by Orina explored the contributions of councils of elders to the resilience of African traditional religion, using the Njuri Ncheke in Meru County, Kenya. The author examined the role of indigenous governance structures in preserving cultural heritage and promoting social cohesion, highlighting their significance in contemporary contexts.²⁹

Inclusivity in Decision-Making

Anthony examined the concept of Igwebuiké as a philosophy of inclusive leadership within Igbo-African contexts. Elucidating the principles of Igwebuiké, emphasis is placed on the centrality of collective action and solidarity in fostering inclusive leadership practices. Through a rich exploration of Igbo cultural heritage, attention is drawn to the relevance of indigenous wisdom in addressing contemporary challenges, advocating for leadership models that prioritize collaboration and mutual respect.³⁰

Studies have advocated improving women's inclusiveness and participation at policy development levels.³¹ Their involvement is expected to rectify gender disparities, foster a

²⁸ Asamoah-Gyadu, Kwabena. "Mediating power and salvation: Pentecostalism and religious mediation in an African context." *Journal of World Christianity* 5, no. 1 (2012): 43-61.

²⁹ Orina, Hellen Kagwiria. "The contributions of councils of elders to the resilience of African traditional religion: A case of Njuri ncheke in Meru County, Kenya." PhD Diss., Egerton University, 2018.

³⁰ Anthony, Kanu Ikechukwu. "Igwebuiké as an Igbo-African philosophy of inclusive leadership." *Igwebuiké: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* 3, no. 7 (2017): 165-183.

³¹ Mbukanma, I., and Strydom K. "Theoretical Exploration on Improving Women Inclusiveness and Participation: A Study of South African Foreign Policy Decision-Making." *Gender and Behaviour* 19, no. 1 (2021): 17696-17712



more inclusive decision-making framework, and promote inclusive practices. Finally, inclusivity should promote the inherent dignity of individuals irrespective of disability.³²

The literature reviewed above provides valuable insights into various aspects of conflict management within African contexts. This study looked into the intricacies of conflict resolution mechanisms embedded within the traditional religious practices of the Abagusii community. This study shed light on how cultural norms, rituals, and leadership structures influence conflict management strategies, offering a deeper understanding of indigenous approaches to peace-building and reconciliation. Moreover, by examining conflict management within the context of African traditional religion, the study contributes to broader discussions on the intersection of culture, religion, and conflict resolution, thus enriching academic discourse and informing practical interventions for sustainable peace in diverse African societies.

Methodology

This study used the descriptive design, a scientific approach that entails watching and describing a subject's activity without altering it, to learn more about the variables in a specific topic of study.³³ Its goal is to paint a picture of a situation as it would appear in real life.³⁴ Thus, the chosen research design proved fitting for comprehending conflict management within the Abagusii community context. The study targeted 81 respondents, encompassing Ward administrators, Village Elders, and local Chiefs hailing from Nyamira and Kisii Counties. Employing a census sampling technique ensured the inclusion of the entire target population.³⁵ Given 21 Wards in both Kisii and Nyamira Counties, the study concentrated on engaging with 45 Ward administrators. Additionally, the focus extended to 11 Village Elders from Nyamira, 11 Village Elders from Kisii, and six local Chiefs from each county, culminating in a total sample population of 81 respondents.

³² Chataika, Tsitsi. "Cultural and religious explanations of disability and promoting inclusive communities in Southern Africa." *Dignity* 15, no. 1 (2013): 117.

³³ Omair, Aamir. "Selecting the appropriate study design for your research: Descriptive study designs." *Journal of Health Specialties* 3, no. 3 (2015): 153.

³⁴ Barbour, Virginia, Druin Burch, Fiona Godlee, Carl Heneghan, Richard Lehman, Rafael Perera, Joseph S. Ross, and Sara Schroter. "Characterisation of trials where marketing purposes have been influential in study design: A descriptive study." *Trials* 17 (2016): 1-10.

³⁵ Siedlecki, Sandra L. "Understanding descriptive research designs and methods." *Clinical Nurse Specialist* 34, no. 1 (2020): 8-12.



The study used a questionnaire strategy to collect data. This tool assisted the researcher in asking and collecting data on sensitive questions. The targeted respondents for the questionnaire were the sampled individuals from the target population. The researcher used self-administered questionnaire methods to collect the data. The study was analyzed and interpreted based on the study's objectives. The data collected was primarily quantitative and analyzed using descriptive analysis techniques. Descriptive statistics consists of procedures used to summarize and describe the essential characteristics of a set of measurements.³⁶ SPSS version 20.0 was used to analyze the findings presented in the frequency of tables, and data was summarized according to the study's specific objectives. The relationship between independent and dependent variables was analyzed using the regression equation below.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = African traditional religion

X1= community mediation

X2= customary courts

X3= inclusive decision-making

β_0 represents the intercept (constant term).

Findings of the Study

Community Mediation and African Traditional Religion

Table 1: Community mediation and African traditional religion

Statements on community mediation and African Traditional religion	Mean	Std. Deviation
Community mediation effectively resolves conflicts within our community.	4.04	1.210
Traditional customs and practices are seamlessly integrated into our mediation rituals.	3.96	1.210
Mediation efforts lead to increased unity among community members.	4.14	1.064
Consensus-building is an essential aspect of our conflict-resolution practices	3.85	1.143
The community actively engages in collaborative conflict resolution	4.08	1.225

³⁶ Barbour, et al., 1-10



The study shows a positive perception of community mediation within the context of African traditional religion, specifically in the Abagusii community. Participants express a high confidence level (Mean= 4.04, Std. Deviation= 1.210) in the efficacy of community mediation for conflict resolution. The integration of traditional customs and practices into mediation rituals is perceived as seamless (Mean = 3.96, Std. Deviation = 1.210), highlighting the cultural relevance of these processes. Furthermore, mediation efforts are believed to foster increased unity among community members (Mean= 4.14, Std. Deviation= 1.064), emphasizing the social cohesion aspect of this approach. The importance of consensus-building in conflict resolution practices is acknowledged (Mean= 3.85, Std. Deviation= 1.143), indicating a collaborative decision-making approach within the community. Overall, the findings strongly endorse community mediation as a valuable and culturally integrated tool for conflict resolution in the Abagusii community.

Customary Courts and African Traditional Religion

Table 2: Customary courts and African traditional religion

Statements on customary courts and African traditional religion	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customary courts preserve Abagusii legal traditions effectively.	3.92	1.202
Customary courts enhance community harmony by aligning with Abagusii values.	4.05	1.248
Customary courts uphold Abagusii cultural heritage in legal processes.	3.93	1.197
Customary courts efficiently resolve conflicts within the community.	4.04	.928
Customary courts exert a significant spiritual influence on legal matters	3.85	1.257

The study reveals a positive perception of customary courts within the framework of African traditional religion, specifically in the Abagusii community. Participants express confidence in preserving Abagusii legal traditions by customary courts (Mean= 3.92, Std. Deviation= 1.202). Additionally, aligning customary courts with Abagusii values enhances community harmony (Mean= 4.05, Std. Deviation= 1.248). These courts are recognized for upholding Abagusii cultural heritage in legal processes (Mean= 3.93, Std. Deviation= 1.197), emphasizing the integration of cultural elements. Moreover, the efficiency of customary courts in resolving conflicts within the community is acknowledged (Mean= 4.04, Std.



Deviation= 0.928), highlighting their practical effectiveness. The data also suggests a perceived spiritual influence of customary courts on legal matters (Mean = 3.85, Std. Deviation= 1.257), underlining the multifaceted role these institutions play in the Abagusii community's legal landscape.

Inclusive Decision-Making and African Traditional Religion

Table 3: Inclusive decision-making and African traditional religion

Statements on inclusive decision-making and African Traditional religion	Mean	Std. Deviation
Inclusive decision-making builds effective consensus in the Abagusii community.	4.23	1.222
Inclusive decision-making fosters harmonious relations among the Abagusii.	3.99	1.040
Inclusive decisions reflect a commitment to spiritual inclusivity in the Abagusii tradition	4.09	1.184
Inclusive decision-making promotes social equity in the Abagusii community	3.91	1.184
Inclusive decisions align with ancestral approval in Abagusii traditional beliefs.	4.12	1.122

The study indicates a positive perception of inclusive decision-making within the context of African traditional religion, particularly in the Abagusii community. Participants acknowledge that inclusive decision-making effectively builds consensus (Mean= 4.23, Std. Deviation= 1.222), highlighting its role in community cohesion. The fostering of harmonious relations (Mean= 3.99, Std. Deviation= 1.040) and a commitment to spiritual inclusivity (Mean= 4.09, Std. Deviation= 1.184) are recognized as outcomes of inclusive decision-making, emphasizing the holistic impact on both social and spiritual dimensions. Moreover, promoting social equity (Mean= 3.91, Std. Deviation= 1.184) is associated with this decision-making approach. Participants also believe that inclusive decisions align with ancestral approval in Abagusii traditional beliefs (Mean= 4.12, Std. Deviation= 1.122), suggesting a harmonious integration of inclusive decision-making within the cultural and spiritual fabric of the community.



Inferential Statistics

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.879 ^a	.859	.957		.18751

The model exhibits a strong explanatory capacity, indicated by an R-squared value of .859, signifying that approximately 85.9% of the variability in African traditional religion is accounted for by combining the independent variables (community mediation, customary courts, and inclusive decision-making). The adjusted R-squared value of .957 suggests that the model's goodness of fit remains robust even after considering the number of predictors.

Table 5 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regressi on	57.139	3	19.046	541.69 6	.000 ^b
	Residual	2.461	70	.035		
	Total	59.601	73			

The ANOVA results reveal the statistical significance of the regression model in predicting African traditional religion based on the independent variables (community mediation, customary courts, and inclusive decision-making). The highly significant F-statistic of 541.696 ($p < .000$) indicates that the overall model effectively explains the variance in African traditional religion. Therefore, these results suggest a strong and significant relationship between conflict management in African traditional religion in light of the Abagusii community.



Table 6: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	.235	.105		2.241	.028
Community mediation	.275	.065	.313	4.206	.000
Customary courts	.426	.064	.403	6.623	.000
Inclusive decision-making	.260	.080	.294	3.264	.002

a. Dependent Variable: African traditional religion

The regression coefficients provide insight into the relationship between the independent variables (community mediation, customary courts, inclusive decision-making) and the dependent variable (African traditional religion). The intercept, represented by the constant (.235), is statistically significant ($t = 2.241$, $p = .028$), suggesting a non-zero baseline. Each independent variable exhibits significant positive coefficients, indicating their respective contributions to the dependent variable. Specifically, community mediation (.275, $t = 4.206$, $p = .000$), customary courts (.426, $t = 6.623$, $p = .000$), and inclusive decision-making (.260, $t = 3.264$, $p = .002$) demonstrate positive standardized coefficients (Beta), emphasizing their influence on African traditional religion. These findings suggest that community mediation, customary courts, and inclusive decision-making significantly shape beliefs and practices within African traditional religions.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of community mediation and African traditional religion revealed a positive perception of community mediation within the context of African traditional religion, particularly among the Abagusii community. Participants demonstrate a high level of confidence in the efficacy of community mediation for resolving conflicts, reflecting the community's trust in this approach. Moreover, the seamless integration of traditional customs and practices into mediation rituals underscores their cultural relevance and effectiveness in facilitating conflict resolution. The perceived outcomes of mediation efforts, such as increased unity among community members and the emphasis on consensus-building, highlight the social cohesion fostered through this approach. Additionally, the significant positive coefficients observed for variables such as community mediation (.275, $t = 4.206$, $p =$



.000) further affirm their contributions to the dependent variable, reinforcing the importance of community mediation in resolving disputes within the Abagusii community. It resonates with this finding of Moywaywa and Sabala's research on conflict management in Kenya. Moywaywa underscores the necessity for comprehensive strategies to address religious conflicts, emphasizing mutual understanding and tolerance.³⁷ At the same time, Sabala advocates for the integration of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms with modern legal frameworks to enhance community cohesion.³⁸ The high confidence level in community mediation reflects a trust in its efficacy, supported by its seamless integration of traditional customs into conflict resolution rituals. These findings underscore the importance of collaborative approaches to conflict resolution, reinforcing the significance of incorporating traditional practices within modern frameworks to promote social harmony and address conflicts within African societies. Additionally, communal solidarity and collective responsibility played a significant role in conflict management among the Abagusii people. The principle of "Obuntubonisie," which emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals within the community, guided conflict resolution practices. For example, during communal gatherings or ceremonies, such as weddings or funerals, conflicts between families or clans would often be addressed through dialogue and negotiation to preserve social cohesion and maintain peace.

The findings of customary courts and African traditional religion underscore a positive perception of customary courts within the context of African traditional religion, particularly among the Abagusii community. Participants express confidence in the efficacy of customary courts in preserving Abagusii legal traditions, aligning with community values, and upholding cultural heritage, as indicated by the high mean scores and relatively low standard deviations. Notably, the significant positive coefficient observed for customary courts (.426, $t = 6.623$, $p = .000$) further validates their significant contribution to the dependent variable, reinforcing their integral role in the Abagusii community's legal landscape. This finding parallels the observed significance of community mediation in the previous analysis, emphasizing the importance of both community-based conflict resolution mechanisms in maintaining social cohesion and harmony within the community. This study's findings aligned with Ambani and

³⁷ Moywaywa, 129-142

³⁸ Sabala, 162-172



Ahaya's discussion on the tensions between customary practices and modern legal systems, which aligns with the acknowledgement of customary courts' efficacy in preserving cultural heritage and aligning with community values.³⁹ Similarly, Bwire's emphasis on the relevance of indigenous knowledge systems in contemporary legal frameworks supports the notion of customary courts' significant contribution to maintaining social cohesion and harmony within communities,⁴⁰ as indicated by the significant positive coefficient observed for customary courts. These insights underscore the importance of integrating traditional practices within modern legal systems to uphold cultural heritage while ensuring justice and community cohesion. Furthermore, traditional justice systems within the Abagusii community prioritized restorative justice over punitive measures. In wrongdoing or disputes, the focus was on reconciliation and rehabilitation rather than punishment. In instances of theft or property damage, perpetrators would be required to compensate the victims through restitution or community service, thereby restoring harmony and repairing relationships. This approach emphasized the importance of forgiveness, reconciliation, and community reintegration in resolving conflicts.

The findings of inclusive decision-making and traditional African religion indicate a positive perception of inclusive decision-making within the framework of traditional African religion, particularly among the Abagusii community. Participants acknowledge that inclusive decision-making effectively builds consensus, fosters harmonious relations, promotes spiritual inclusivity, and aligns with ancestral approval in Abagusii traditional beliefs. Specifically, inclusive decision-making exhibits a significant positive coefficient ($\beta = .260$, $t = 3.264$, $p = .002$), indicating its substantial contribution to the dependent variable. This underscores the importance of inclusive decision-making processes in shaping community cohesion and aligning with cultural and spiritual values within the Abagusii community. This study's findings were in line with the studies of Orina and Ogero, particularly in their exploration of indigenous governance structures and the impact of colonialism on traditional conflict resolution mechanisms among indigenous communities in Kenya. Orina's examination of the contributions of councils of elders to the resilience of African traditional religion underscores the significance of traditional practices in promoting social cohesion,

³⁹ Ambani, and Ahaya, 41

⁴⁰ Bwire, 17



aligning with the positive perception of inclusive decision-making depicted in this study.⁴¹ Similarly, Ogero's investigation into the repercussions of colonialism on indigenous conflict resolution strategies sheds light on how historical interventions disrupted traditional practices, aligning with the broader theme of the enduring impacts of colonial legacies on contemporary social dynamics and conflict management strategies within indigenous communities in Kenya.⁴²

Conclusion

In summary, the findings from studies on community mediation, customary courts, and inclusive decision-making among the Abagusii community reveal effective conflict management strategies within African traditional religions. These findings underscore the significance of integrating traditional practices with modern frameworks to address conflicts and promote social harmony. The high level of confidence in community mediation, positive perception of customary courts, and acknowledgement of inclusive decision-making highlight their crucial roles in fostering unity and consensus-building while upholding cultural heritage. Therefore, these insights emphasize the resilience and effectiveness of indigenous governance structures and practices, underscoring the importance of collaborative approaches to conflict resolution in African societies.

In light of the findings regarding community mediation, customary courts, and inclusive decision-making within the Abagusii community, it is recommended that indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms be further empowered and supported. This entails providing resources and training to community mediators and customary court officials and promoting dialogue between traditional leaders and modern legal systems to ensure mutual respect and collaboration. Additionally, efforts should be made to raise awareness and appreciation for traditional practices among community members and policymakers. By strengthening these traditional mechanisms and integrating them with contemporary frameworks, communities can effectively address conflicts while preserving their cultural heritage and promoting social cohesion.

⁴¹ Orina
⁴² Ogero



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