

Full Length Research Paper

Conflict Resolution Paradigms and their Influences to the Shona Societies in Zimbabwe

¹Dr Obediah Dodo and ²Mrs Jesca Majaha

¹Bindura University of Science Education Zimbabwa

²Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe

Corresponding Author's E-mail: obediahdodo@gmail.com and majaha81@gmail.com

Accepted 2nd October, 2018

The study of conflict resolution paradigms within the Shona societies in Zimbabwe was influenced by the ambiguities, confusion and lack of adequate information on the three concepts; indigenous, endogenous and exogenous conflict resolution systems. The study adopted a concept of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as its framework of analysis. For an effective analysis, the study used what it called 'Conflict Resolution Paradigms' Relationship Model' which exposed the nexus and the likely future positions of each of the three systems. In the analysis of reviewed literature, Manifest Content Analysis was employed to decipher surface meanings of earlier literature. The study established that indeed, there is a thin line in the eyes of the people separating indigenous, endogenous and exogenous conflict resolution systems. It was established that despite the effects of globalization, each had an invaluable role within the Shona societies and needed not be mistaken. The study found out that endogenous systems are gradually eating into the other two spheres owing to the effects of globalization and conservatism.

Key words: Conflict resolution, Endogenous, Exogenous, Indigenous, Paradigm, Concepts, Shona people.

INTRODUCTION

The study looks at the nexus among endogenous, indigenous and exogenous conflict resolution systems vis-à-vis their application within the Shona people in Zimbabwe. The study around these concepts is inspired by their application concurrently and sometimes interchangeably and yet failing to produce the desired results. The development of these conflict resolution concepts has a bearing on their effectiveness and impact on the ground. However, their development revolves around the era of manifestation and the area of origin of the group that might have introduced them. It is also to do with the influence of globalization. Most studies talk about indigenous approaches being innate in a people and often cite several examples. In other instances, scholars also talk about endogenous approaches citing examples but fail to theorise and

elaborate on the concept. Similarly, though exogenous approaches are talked about, there is little literature juxtaposing the concept to the other two with a view to highlighting the nexus. Therefore, the study sought to explain the three paradigms and outline their purposes, origins and relationship for both scholarly and operational purposes.

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

It has been noted that some scholars confuse indigenous conflict resolution systems with endogenous conflict resolution systems while others confuse exogenous conflict resolution systems with endogenous ones. As a result, there is a misunderstanding on why

some systems achieve desired goals while others fail and yet operationalised under the same conditions. In the operationalisation of some of the conflict resolution systems, there is often misplacement of some principles and strategies resulting in either further fueling conflicts or rendering a conflict unmanageable.

Most studies as explained in this study have not been clearly separating the three systems so much so that some readers and scholars end up getting confused. The concepts have just been defined and explained in passing especially in the first introductory sections leaving readers wondering if they are really important aspects in the field of conflict resolution. Some practitioners have also been failing to distinguish the concepts in their application in real life conflicts. All these problems and ambiguities have been emanating from the perceived similarities and interchangeabilities in the concepts.

It has also been noted that the three concepts have not been adequately researched on and documented for the benefit of the academia. It is against some of these ambiguities and misinterpretations of the three concepts that the study was undertaken with a view to further explain and create documentation. The study findings are handy especially in the area of social sciences and where conflict resolution practitioners want to be precise in the adoption and application of specific and appropriate tools and concepts.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted the concept of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as its framework of analysis. According to the protagonists of this concept like Fung & Wright (2003), Walzer (2005) and Fischer (2006); ADR is an area generally focused on addressing challenges in existing political regimes. It looks at some of the approaches that allow productive and equal contribution of societies in defining problems, finding solutions, influencing others, and making decisions.

Contextually, the study assumes that conflicts resolution in the Shona societies is not entirely complete and perfect without considering aspects from the other paradigms. Though some scholars (Murithi, 2008; Wasonga, 2009; Mutisi, 2009; Kwaku & Morena, 2010; Fiseha, 2011; Ajayi & Buhari, 2014; Dodo, 2015) believe that indigenous conflicts are best resolved using indigenous approaches, ADR helps in appreciating the importance of having a wide array of optional means of addressing conflicts. It also helps to understand the relevance of multi-disciplinary and hybrid approaches to conflict resolution. Therefore, the aspect of hybridity brings in the three conflict resolution paradigms of indigenous, endogenous and exogenous into the conflict

resolution arena. The three may be different, coming from different backgrounds and applied differently; they are complimentary in their effectiveness and efficiency. However, it is acknowledged that over time, indigenous and exogenous systems are getting eroded as the endogenous systems swell subsequently allowing the development of a culture-specific free system of resolving conflicts as outlined in the model of figure 1.

As indicated in the model, over time, the two systems; indigenous and exogenous will lose relevance in the Shona societies as they continue to assimilate exogenous while calling for the sustenance of the indigenous. However, given the impact of globalization, it is the endogenous system which will eventually swell at the peril of the other two.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative approach so that the findings could be presented descriptively, allowing a full and elaborate explanation of the concepts reviewed. The study employed a critical desk review approach focusing on relevant literature from across the field of conflict resolution. As much as possible, effort was made to contextualize and relate the reviews to the Shona people of Zimbabwe. Manifest Content Analysis was applied to understand the surface meanings of the literature and to categorise it into relevant themes. In the analysis, it was ensured that all the data around these concepts but which was irrelevant to the study was discarded. This allowed the mobilisation of pertinent literature and data.

ANALYSIS

For an effective analysis and juxtapose of the three conflict resolution systems, it is imperative that some critical review of previous studies be conducted. This helps us to understand the origins, application, challenges and strengths of each and the likely finality of their development over time within the studied society of the Shona people.

Indigenous Conflict Resolution Systems

The study of indigenous conflict resolution systems in the Shona people takes us to an understanding of the people themselves. This derives from the fact that being indigenous is about being originally local and of the native systems. Indigenous systems are basically about traditions, customs, legends, proverbs, folktales, songs, folk dramas and

myths and are transferred from generation to generation orally (Tasew, 2016). The systems are also guided by the idea of communal harmony and uprightness, reverence for elders, reciprocity, shared-labour, value for the environment, and concepts concerning taboos and prohibitions among others. In previous studies (Mutisi, 2009; Wasonga, 2009; Dodo, 2015), it is argued that indigenous conflict resolution practices are formulated over time and allowed to sink into the cultural, economic, social and religious practices of the people. They are inherent, innate and instinctive to a society. This means that the practices are part of a people by creation, ownership and belief. They form part of the traits of a people and do not easily change no matter the gravity of external influences like modernity and globalization. Indigenous practices by nature are in the blood of the local people since their creation such that they accept and own them (Dodo, 2015). Local people can explain and defend the practices because of the relationship and experience of having applied them in their social structures (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014). Such approaches include; *kutanda botso* (maternal misfortunes), *kuripa ngozi* (compensating avenging spirits), *kurova guva* (appeasement of the dead) and *nhaurirano* (negotiation) among others.

In conceptual terms, the study acknowledges that endogenous approaches to conflict resolution are more or less similar to indigenous conflict resolution. However, the differences highlighted in this study are based on the problems faced by systems of indigenous conflict resolution as noted by Boillat, (2007). However, Pohl et al, (2010) argues that indigenous approaches are linked to its bonds with particular historical contexts, ethnic groups, and ethnic identities which are hard to undo. Indigenous approaches have been noted to be conservative in that they want to cling on to their traditional practices unlike endogenous approaches which are highly dynamic (Boillat, 2007; Dodo, 2015).

Indigenous conflict resolution systems are important in the development of infrastructure and processes that ensure peace and social development. These indigenous systems are relevant to development of such areas as food mobilisation, agriculture, traditional medicine, community development, jurisprudence, poverty alleviation, and peaceful coexistence (Tasew, 2016). Therefore, Shona people apply their indigenous systems and practices to resolve conflicts which arise in their communities.

Indigenous conflict resolution systems in the Shona societies are kept by elders who are esteemed members of the community. These may include traditional leaders, spirit mediums, traditional healers and religious leaders among others. Kwaku & Morena (2010) and Fiseha, et al., (2011) posit that community elders are the main custodians of indigenous conflict

resolution systems given their experience and critical insight about their surroundings and livelihoods. The elderly people's insights vary from society to society and are intensely entrenched in various Shona groups. According to Fiseha et al (2011), some of the elders' insights arise from olden practices that have regulated the relations of the Shona communities. Accordingly, elders are associated with the cultural norms and values of the Shona, and derive their legality from the indigenous values (Dodo, 2015). Therefore, traditional conflict resolution systems function on the basis of indigenous customary practices.

Endogenous Conflict Resolution Systems

In modern-day societies, people live in two overlapping worlds, the western and traditional, and neither is entirely able to deal with conflicts. Wholly western approaches to conflict resolution are usually incongruent with the cultures of local people and fail to satisfy a lot of their expectations (Macfarlane, 2007). Therefore, to cater for these social and cultural differences, societies blended the best from both the indigenous (local) and exogenous (western) creating what is called endogenous approaches. Both have been inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing and internalized by years of tradition. They include *dare rashe* (traditional courts), *nhaurirano* (negotiation) and *zviera* (taboos) among others. Endogenous systems of conflict resolution cannot be really traced to a specific era as they have continued to grow and mutate since the merger of indigenous systems with civilization.

Endogenous conflict resolution approaches are sequential processes of continuous formulation and generation of other ways, organically emerged from society (Fiseha et al, 2016). According to Murithi (2008), endogenous approaches allow the integration of indigenous approaches with the modern and official ways. Endogenous approaches, by virtue of being a creation of amalgamation of various systems, tend to be highly dynamic fitting various situations over time and space. They mutate trying to satisfy whatever situation that develops within the Shona societies (Dodo, 2015). However, Mathez-Stiefel et al, (2007) argues that endogenous conflict resolution systems are commonly understood as processes of social creation carried out by a society that interacts on the basis of a shared world-view. Indeed, there is an element of interaction in all the other arguments.

Not all conflicts involving Shona people can be dealt with by Shona-specific conflict resolution approaches. Similarly, Shona-specific conflict resolution approaches may also not be suitable in conflicts between the Shona people and non-Shona participants.

Therefore, to accommodate both interests, endogenous approaches were crafted over time and at the same time assimilated into local religious, social and economic systems (Mathez-Stiefel et al, 2007) thus gaining acceptability by the Shona people. Endogenous systems are more acceptable to the local societies including the Shona because they accommodate local beliefs while respecting foreign practices. There are some scholars who share an understanding of endogenous conflict resolution systems that emphasise effective application of systems in communities that are bound together by a common set of social practices based on the production of values, rules, incentive structures, and sanctions through social institutions (Boillat, 2007; Pohl et al, 2010).

It is also argued that endogenous systems participate fundamentally in the social creation of conflict resolution systems that are as logical as possible and seek to link practices, institutions, principles, and basic beliefs all towards peace (Boillat, 2007; Pohl, 2008). Societies that believe in endogenous systems are to some extent superstitious and believe that whatever happens in their communities has some spiritual force behind. They are realists in nature. These believe that the spiritual world has some considerable control on the living so much so that the influence of exogenous practices is neutralised when it comes to critical matters like leadership selection, decision to engage in war and marriage aspects among others. Endogenous conflict resolution systems have to offer more than just explanations of how a certain conflicts arise. They also account for the stakeholders in conflicts, motivations for conflicts and spiritual influences to the conflicts among others (Pohl, 2008). They also want to know why certain phenomenon happened at specific moment. Knowing why something happened or why a conflict erupted is essential since this provides the starting point for determining how to deal with the conflict adequately (Fiseha, et al., 2011).

Exogenous Conflict Resolution Systems

Exogenous systems of conflict resolution are those that are alien in a given society especially with no traces within the various surrounding ethnic, cultural and religious groupings. They are also referred to as western approaches (Autesserre, 2010) on account of being foreign or having been largely introduced by the westerners. The system dates back to the early civilization era. Exogenous systems include litigation and shuttle diplomacy among others. Unlike indigenous and exogenous systems, exogenous is to some extent divorced from the consumers and recipients on the ground because, according to Macfarlane (2007), the

Shona people rarely share social, cultural and religious beliefs with the people introducing the systems. As a result, there is some element of resistance or delayed assimilation into the lives of the Shona recipients.

Both exogenous and endogenous forms of conflict resolution systems are considered to be products of social construction by societies that each share common foundations of beliefs and practices (Mohamed, 2009). This is because of the existence of an element of lack of ownership on both the Shona societies and western community. What has however been noted over the years is that because of globalization and the subsequent effects of the media, exogenous conflict resolution systems have penetrated almost every society and managed to influence their conception of conflict and peace (Autesserre, 2010). This explains why most indigenous systems and all endogenous systems continue to change.

Exogenous systems are more scientific in approach seeking to draw evidence from empirical data and processes before reaching a scientific conclusion (Mohamed, 2009). This is very much unlike indigenous systems that solely focus on the conflict at hand and apply the most convenient and easily available and acceptable approaches to address a conflict sustainably. This makes this approach more expensive and time consuming unlike the other two approaches. However, it has over the years earned more support from most societies because of the greater levels of civility and accuracy in its judgments and resolutions. Particularly, the Shona people are educated and civil. Therefore, they prefer exogenous systems that are more scientific and which are less associated with the spiritual world. Apparently, globalization and literacy have helped erode cultural and religious systems.

DISCUSSION

The study acknowledges the existence of the three systems in resolving conflicts. It also appreciates the individuality in their importance and the complimentary role that they also play. However, each of them has to be respected for its responsibilities and achievements if their continued existence in harmony is to be recorded. The study also observed that while most of these approaches may be alike, the differences lie in their application and how they are revered by the consumers. The thin line between indigenous and exogenous systems and between exogenous and endogenous systems is explained in the Conflict Resolution Paradigm Model of Figure 1.

The sustenance of both indigenous and endogenous conflict resolution systems basically anchors on the protection of traditional leadership

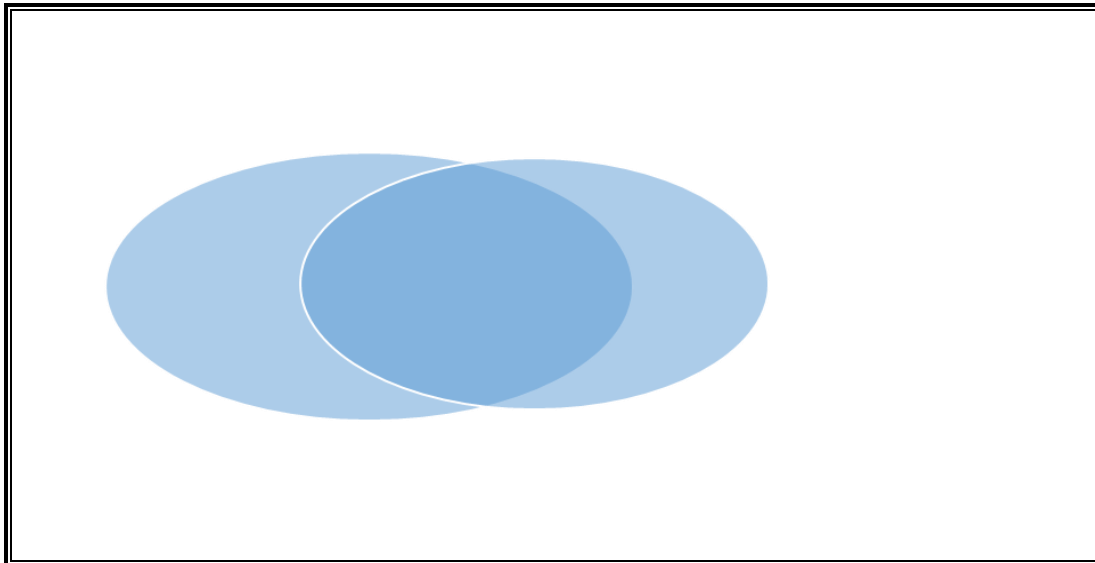


Figure 1: Conflict Resolution Paradigms' Relationship Model

systems and their traditional heritage. However, with appropriate protection, there is also the need for education and the development of some of the aspects within traditional structures. This is against a background where the world is fast moving into a globalised arena, where most traditional systems and practices will be abandoned and condemned forever. Therefore, to ensure continuity in indigenous systems, there is need for adaptation and transformation of some of the traditional and indigenous systems as argued by Tasew (2016) so that they keep in touch with modernity and civilization thus remains relevant and acceptable.

Closely akin to the above is that indigenous approaches are usually associated with the traditional spiritual world and other archaic aspects, which most Shona people in Zimbabwe no longer want to be publicly associated with. This is, according to the study, influenced by the fact that most people would want to associate with Christian religion where they allegedly find immediate salvation and solace in the face of poverty and joblessness. Exogenous systems, as alluded to by Pohl (2008); Mohamed (2009) and Autesserre (2010) have managed to castigate and outrightly condemn indigenous systems in the midst of the people.

The existence of all three systems complimenting each other has proven difficult often sparking further conflicts. The need to protect space and integrity by each of the three systems has seen the development of intolerance and competition for visibility in most societies as noted by Boillat (2007). Unless there are collective efforts towards the use of the three systems concurrently and complementarily, conflicts may

continue to arise and affecting the objectives of most conflict resolution efforts. Besides, the three must just be respected individually and religiously adhered to. The three are also equally important for social, political, religious and economic development.

It is unfortunate that in an endeavor to resolve conflicts within the Shona societies, some approaches are adopted, not for their efficiency but as a way of cutting on costs. Along the way, quality justice and service are compromised. While some of these conflict resolution approaches may look similar, it is advised that they never be confused or taken for the other in addressing critical conflicts. There are some critical traditional conflicts that only accept indigenous approaches while some more contemporary conflicts also require exogenous approaches.

The study also established that endogenous conflict resolution practitioners need to be conversant in other laws other than the organic laws for effective conflict resolution. With regards traditional leaders, their comprehension of exogenous practices and laws is different from how they understand and interpret indigenous laws and practices. Besides, they too need some induction in understanding and interpreting some of the concepts within indigenous approaches for appropriate application to communities of diverse backgrounds. Since most endogenous conflict resolution practitioners lack knowledge on appropriate laws, the risk is that results of their conflict resolution efforts are considered substandard and illegal in the eyes of societies. This is what has gradually eroded the value of indigenous approaches within the Shona societies with

most people opting for either exogenous or endogenous approaches.

SUMMARY

The study that was conducted primarily to explain the differences in the three conflict resolution systems especially in the eyes of the Shona people consulted various credible scholars before settling for any conclusion. The study explored the origins, the practices and application of each of the systems by the target group before establishing why and how the Shona people appreciate and perceive the systems. The study also juxtaposed the three with a view to finding their effectiveness and efficiency in addressing Shona society conflicts. Given the dynamism in endogenous systems, the study feels that there is more need for continued studies of the conflict resolution systems especially paying attention to the decimation of both indigenous and exogenous systems paving space for endogenous systems.

REFERENCES

- Ajayi, A. T., & Buhari, L. O. (2014). Methods of conflict resolution in African traditional society. *An International Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia*, 8(2), 138-157
- Autesserre S. (2010) *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Boillat S. (2007). 'Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Land Use and Ecosystem Diversity in the Tunari National Park, Bolivia' [PhD dissertation]. Bern, Switzerland: Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), University of Bern.
- Dodo O. (2015) *Endogenous Conflict Resolution Approaches: The Zezuru Perspective*. IDA, Harare
- Fischer F (2006). Participatory Governance as Deliberative Empowerment: The Cultural Politics of Discursive Space. *Am. Rev. Public Admin.*, 36(1): 19-40.
- Fiseha, A. et al. (2011). *The state of knowledge on customary dispute resolution in Ethiopia*. In: Yntiso, Gebre, Fekade Azeze and Assefa Fiseha (eds.), pp. 21–36.
- Fung A, & Wright E.O, (2003). "Countervailing Power in Empowered Participatory Governance." In A Fung and EO Wright (Eds.). *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*. New York: Verso. pp. 259-290
- Kwaku, O., & Morena, J. R. (2010). *Indigenous conflict resolution in Africa: The case of Ghana and Botswana*. University of Botswana.
- Macfarlane, J. (2007). Working towards restorative justice in Ethiopia: Integrating traditional conflict resolution systems with the formal legal system. *Cardozo Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 8(487), 487–509
- Mathez-Stiefel SL, Boillat S, Rist S. (2007). Promoting the diversity of worldviews: An ontological approach to bio-cultural diversity. In: Haverkort B, Rist S, editors. *Endogenous Development and Bio-cultural Diversity: The Interplay of Worldview, Globalization and Locality*. Leusden, The Netherlands and Bern, Switzerland: Comparing and Supporting Endogenous Development (COMPAS) and Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), pp 67–81
- Mohamed A.A, (2009). *Evaluating the Darfur Peace Agreement A Call for an Alternative Approach to Crisis Management*. Claude Ake Memorial Nordic Africa Institute Uppsala. p. 6.
- Murithi T. (2008), African indigenous and endogenous approaches to peace and conflict resolution, in (ed) David Francis p;16-30, *Peace and conflict in Africa*, Zed Books, NY
- Mutisi M. (2009), Gacaca Courts in Rwanda: An Endogenous Approach to Post-Conflict Justice and Reconciliation. *African Peace and Conflict Journal*, 2(1), 1726
- Pohl C, Rist S, Zimmermann A, Fry P, Gurung GS, Schneider F, Ifejika Speranza C, Kiteme B, Boillat S, Serrano E, Hirsch Hadorn G, Wiesmann U. (2010). Researchers' roles in knowledge co-production: Experience from sustainability research in Kenya, Switzerland, Bolivia and Nepal. *Science and Public Policy*, 37(4): 267–281.
- Pohl C. (2008). From science to policy through trans-disciplinary research. *Environmental Science and Policy* 11(1):46–53.
- Tasew T. (2016), Conflict Management through African Indigenous Institutions: A Study of the Anyuaa Community, *World Journal of Social Science*, 3(1), 1-32
- Walzer M. (2005). Deliberation and What Else? In S Macedo (Ed.). *Deliberative Politics:Essays on Democracy and Disagreement*. New York: Oxford University Press: p. 58-69.
- Wasonga J. (2009), Rediscovering Mato Oput: The Acholi Justice System and the Conflict in Northern Uganda. *African Peace and Conflict Journal*, 2(1), 2738