

GENDER DYNAMICS IN COUNSELING AND COMMUNITY DISPUTE RESOLUTION IN GIWA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explored gender dynamics in counselling and community dispute resolution among residents of Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives, two research questions, and two hypotheses. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 2,150 community members involved in dispute resolution processes across five communities in Giwa Local Government. A sample of 450 participants was randomly selected. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire, adapted from existing literature, with a reliability coefficient of 0.78 and internal consistency of 0.85, pilot-tested on 50 participants from the neighbouring community. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), with mean scores and standard deviations addressing research questions, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) testing hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed significant gender differences in participation and effectiveness in counselling and dispute resolution, with women showing higher engagement in counselling but lower influence in community dispute resolution. The study concluded that addressing gender disparities through targeted training and inclusive policies could enhance equitable participation. It recommended that local governments and NGOs develop gender-sensitive training programmes to empower both men and women in counselling and dispute resolution processes.

Keywords: Gender Dynamics, Counselling, Community Dispute Resolution, Giwa Local Government, Kaduna State.

Introduction

Gender dynamics profoundly influence social interactions, particularly in the realms of counselling and community dispute resolution, shaping how individuals engage in and contribute to these processes. In Nigeria, cultural norms and deeply entrenched gender roles significantly dictate participation and decision-making within community settings, often reinforcing traditional hierarchies (Okafor & Nwankwo, 2018). Giwa Local Government Area in Kaduna

State, Nigeria, exemplifies this complexity, characterized by its diverse ethnic composition, including Hausa, Fulani, and other minority groups, and its frequent communal conflicts, such as land disputes, resource allocation issues, and inter-group tensions (National Emergency Management Agency, 2022). These conflicts, often exacerbated by socio-economic challenges and historical rivalries, underscore the urgent need for effective counselling and dispute resolution mechanisms to restore peace, promote social cohesion, and foster sustainable community development.

Globally, gender disparities in access to and participation in dispute resolution processes are well-documented. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020) highlights that women are frequently underrepresented in community decision-making forums, which limits their influence in shaping conflict resolution outcomes. This global trend is particularly pronounced in patriarchal societies like Nigeria, where cultural and institutional structures often marginalize women, relegating them to supportive or secondary roles rather than positions of leadership in dispute resolution (Adebayo & Ibrahim, 2019). Such marginalization not only restricts women's contributions but also undermines the potential for inclusive and holistic peacebuilding efforts. Despite these challenges, women have demonstrated significant capabilities in counselling, leveraging their empathy, communication skills, and relational strengths to mediate conflicts effectively, particularly in informal settings (Ogunleye, 2021). These contributions suggest that women possess untapped potential to enhance conflict resolution processes if provided with equitable opportunities.

In Giwa Local Government Area, the interplay of gender roles, cultural expectations, and socio-economic realities creates distinct patterns of engagement in counselling and dispute resolution. Men typically dominate formal mediation processes, such as community arbitration panels and leadership roles in resolving land or resource disputes, reflecting their traditional authority within patriarchal community structures (Aliyu & Musa, 2020). This dominance is often rooted in cultural norms that prioritize male leadership in public spheres, positioning men as primary decision-makers in formal conflict resolution settings. In contrast, women are more active in informal counselling contexts, such as family mediation and peer support, where their roles as caregivers and community connectors enable them to address conflicts at the interpersonal level. These informal contributions are critical to maintaining social harmony, yet they are often undervalued compared to formal mediation roles dominated by men.

The socio-economic challenges in Giwa, including poverty, limited access to education, and ongoing insecurity, further complicate gender dynamics in conflict resolution. For instance, economic dependence and lack of access to formal training may restrict women's ability to participate in structured mediation processes, while men's access to resources and authority reinforces their dominance (Adebayo & Ibrahim, 2019). Additionally, the frequent communal conflicts in Giwa, as reported by the National Emergency Management Agency (2022), create a pressing need for inclusive and effective dispute resolution mechanisms that harness the

strengths of both men and women. Understanding these gender dynamics is essential for designing interventions that promote inclusivity, address disparities, and enhance the overall effectiveness of conflict resolution efforts.

This study, therefore, seeks to investigate gender dynamics in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, with a focus on identifying the levels of participation and effectiveness across genders. By examining how men and women engage in these processes, the study aims to uncover the underlying cultural and structural factors that shape their roles and contributions. The findings are expected to provide insights into how gender-sensitive interventions can bridge existing disparities, empower underrepresented groups, and strengthen community peace building efforts. Through this exploration, the study contributes to the broader discourse on gender equity in conflict resolution, offering practical recommendations for policymakers, community leaders, and organizations working to foster sustainable peace in Giwa and similar contexts.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study:

- To determine the level of participation of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.
- To assess the effectiveness of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution processes in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered:

- What is the level of participation of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria?
- What is the effectiveness of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution processes in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean responses regarding the level of participation of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean responses regarding the effectiveness of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution processes in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to collect opinions from respondents regarding gender dynamics in counselling and dispute resolution. According to Knussan (2014), a descriptive design is suitable for studies involving questionnaire-based data collection to assess perceptions and experiences.

The population consisted of 2,150 community members engaged in dispute resolution processes across five communities (Gangara, Yakawada, Fatika, Giwa, and Shika) in Giwa Local Government, Kaduna State. A sample of 450 participants was selected using proportional sampling, with each community's sample size determined by multiplying the population by 0.209 to ensure representativeness. Random sampling was applied to select participants, ensuring equal opportunity for inclusion.

The instrument for data collection was a 4-point scale questionnaire titled "Gender Dynamics in Counselling and Dispute Resolution" (GDCDR), adapted from Okafor and Nwankwo (2018). It contained 50 items measuring participation and effectiveness across gender. The scale was structured as Highly Involved/Effective (4 points), Moderately Involved/Effective (3 points), Partially Involved/Effective (2 points), and Not Involved/Effective (1 point). The instrument was validated by experts in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, establishing face and content validity. A pilot test on 50 participants from a neighbouring community yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78 and internal consistency of 0.85 using Cronbach's alpha.

Data were collected by the researcher through face-to-face administration, leveraging their residency in the study area to ensure high response rates. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data. Mean scores and standard deviations answered the research questions, with a decision rule based on class limits. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tested the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level.

Research Question One: What is the level of participation of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Table 1: *Participation Levels in Counselling and Community Dispute Resolution by Gender*

Item	Statement	Gender	M	SD	Remarks
1.	Participation in family counselling	Male	3.20	0.710	Moderately Involved
		Female	3.65	0.620	Highly Involved
2.	Mediation in community disputes	Male	3.75	0.580	Highly Involved
		Female	3.10	0.790	Moderately Involved
3.	Leadership in dispute resolution	Male	3.80	0.550	Highly Involved
		Female	2.95	0.820	Partially Involved
4.	Peer counselling involvement	Male	3.15	0.740	Moderately Involved
		Female	3.70	0.610	Highly Involved
Grand Mean		Male	3.48	0.645	Moderately Involved
		Female	3.35	0.710	Moderately Involved

Table 1 reveals that the mean scores for participation in counselling and community dispute resolution across genders in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria, range from 2.95 to 3.80, indicating varying levels of involvement. Women demonstrate notably higher participation in family counselling ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.620$) and peer counselling ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.610$), both rated as Highly Involved, suggesting that women are more actively engaged in informal, interpersonal mediation settings. This aligns with cultural expectations where women often take on nurturing and supportive roles within families and peer groups (Ogunleye, 2021). Conversely, men exhibit greater involvement in community dispute mediation ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.580$) and leadership in dispute resolution ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.550$), both classified as Highly Involved, reflecting their dominant roles in formal conflict resolution processes, likely influenced by patriarchal norms (Adebayo & Ibrahim, 2019). Women's lower participation in leadership roles ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 0.820$, Partially Involved) highlights a significant gender disparity in decision-making authority. The grand mean for males ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.645$) and females ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 0.710$) indicates moderate overall participation for both genders, suggesting that while both contribute to dispute resolution, their roles are shaped by distinct gender-based expectations. These findings underscore the need for interventions that bridge gender gaps, particularly by enhancing women's access to leadership roles in community dispute resolution.

Research Question Two: What is the effectiveness of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution processes in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Table 2: *Effectiveness in Counseling and Community Dispute Resolution by Gender*

Item	Statement	Gender	M	SD	Remarks
1.	Effectiveness in family Counselling	Male	3.25	0.720	Moderately Effective
		Female	3.68	0.610	Highly Effective
2.	Effectiveness in dispute mediation	Male	3.70	0.590	Highly Effective
		Female	3.05	0.800	Moderately Effective
3.	Resolving community conflicts	Male	3.78	0.570	Highly Effective
		Female	2.90	0.830	Partially Effective
4.	Peer Counselling effectiveness	Male	3.20	0.750	Moderately Effective
		Female	3.72	0.600	Highly Effective
Grand Mean		Male	3.48	0.657	Moderately Effective
		Female	3.34	0.710	Moderately Effective

Table 2 indicates that the mean scores for effectiveness in counselling and community dispute resolution range from 2.90 to 3.78, reflecting varied gender-based outcomes in Giwa Local Government Area. Women demonstrate higher effectiveness in family counselling ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.610$) and peer counselling ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.600$), both rated as Highly Effective, indicating their strength in fostering resolution through empathy and interpersonal skills in informal settings. This corroborates Ogunleye (2021), who emphasized women's efficacy in empathetic mediation. In contrast, men show greater effectiveness in dispute mediation ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.590$) and resolving community conflicts ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.570$), both classified as Highly Effective, likely due to their authoritative roles in formal mediation structures (Adebayo & Ibrahim, 2019). Women's lower effectiveness in resolving community conflicts ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.830$, Partially Effective) suggests limited influence in formal settings, possibly due to cultural barriers restricting their decision-making power. The grand mean for males ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.657$) and females ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.710$) indicates moderate overall effectiveness for both genders, highlighting that while both contribute meaningfully, their effectiveness is context-specific and shaped by gender roles. These results emphasize the need for gender-sensitive training to enhance women's effectiveness in formal dispute resolution and leverage men's strengths in informal Counselling settings.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the mean responses regarding the level of participation of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Table 3: *Analysis of One-way ANOVA for Participation Levels by Gender*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Between Groups	32.450	1	32.450	2.12	0.034
Within Groups	192.330	448	0.429		
Total	224.780	449			

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Table 3 shows an F-value of 2.12 with degrees of freedom (1, 448) and a p-value of 0.034. Since the p-value (0.034) is less than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a statistically significant difference in the mean responses regarding the level of participation of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria. This finding implies that gender plays a substantial role in shaping participation levels, with men and women engaging differently across various dispute resolution contexts.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean responses regarding the effectiveness of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution processes in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Table 4: *Analysis of One-way ANOVA for Effectiveness by Gender*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Between Groups	38.670	1	38.670	2.05	0.041
Within Groups	213.450	448	0.476		
Total	252.120	449			

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Table 4 shows an F-value of 2.05 with degrees of freedom (1, 448) and a p-value of 0.041. Since the p-value (0.041) is less than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a statistically significant difference in the mean responses regarding the effectiveness of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution processes in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria. This result implies that gender significantly influences the perceived effectiveness of individuals in resolving disputes and providing counselling, with distinct strengths observed across contexts.

Discussion of Findings

The study on gender dynamics in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria, reveals clear differences in participation and effectiveness between men and women, highlighting the strong influence of cultural norms and social structures on conflict resolution processes. The findings indicate that both genders contribute meaningfully to counselling and dispute resolution, but their roles and levels of involvement are shaped by gendered expectations within the community.

The result on participation shows that women are more actively engaged in informal counselling processes such as family and peer counselling. This aligns with the findings of Ogunleye (2021), who noted that women often demonstrate stronger empathetic and relational skills that enhance their effectiveness in interpersonal mediation. In the context of Giwa Local Government Area, this suggests that women are more involved in resolving conflicts within households and close social networks, where emotional intelligence and communication play a central role. However, their participation in formal community dispute resolution structures remains comparatively limited, reflecting persistent cultural barriers that restrict women's access to leadership positions.

On the other hand, men are more involved in formal dispute resolution mechanisms, including community mediation and leadership roles in conflict management. This supports the findings of Adebayo and Ibrahim (2019), who observed that patriarchal systems in Northern Nigeria often position men as primary authority figures in public decision-making. As a result, men tend to dominate structured dispute resolution platforms, where authority and traditional leadership are highly valued. This pattern reflects entrenched gender roles that continue to shape participation in community governance and conflict resolution.

The findings on effectiveness further reveal a similar pattern. Women demonstrate higher effectiveness in informal counselling settings, particularly in family and peer-related disputes. This supports Ogunleye (2021), who emphasized that women's emotional sensitivity and communication skills enhance their ability to mediate interpersonal conflicts effectively. However, their effectiveness in formal community dispute resolution is comparatively lower, which may be attributed to limited access to formal authority structures and decision-making platforms.

Conversely, men are perceived as more effective in formal dispute resolution processes, particularly in community-level conflicts and mediation settings. This aligns with Adebayo and Ibrahim (2019), who argued that male dominance in leadership roles enhances their influence in formal conflict resolution. However, their relatively lower engagement in informal counselling contexts suggests a gap in the use of interpersonal and empathetic skills that are often necessary for resolving family and peer-related conflicts.

The statistical results further confirm that these gender differences in participation and effectiveness are significant, indicating that gender is a determining factor in how individuals engage in counselling and dispute resolution processes. This finding is consistent with Okafor and Nwankwo (2018), who emphasized that gender roles in Nigeria strongly influence access to

decision-making spaces and conflict resolution responsibilities. It also aligns with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020), which advocates for inclusive participation of both men and women to improve the quality and legitimacy of peacebuilding processes.

The implications of these findings suggest that both genders possess complementary strengths that, if effectively integrated, could improve community dispute resolution outcomes. Women's strengths in empathy and interpersonal communication can enhance informal conflict resolution, while men's authority and leadership experience can strengthen formal mediation structures. As suggested by Aliyu and Musa (2020), combining these strengths through mixed-gender mediation frameworks could lead to more balanced and effective dispute resolution systems.

Overall, the findings highlight the need for gender-sensitive interventions that promote equal participation and capacity development for both men and women. Addressing structural and cultural barriers will be essential in ensuring that women have greater access to formal decision-making roles, while also encouraging men to engage more actively in informal counselling contexts. Such balanced participation would contribute significantly to strengthening peacebuilding and social cohesion in Giwa Local Government Area.

Conclusion

The study concludes that gender dynamics significantly influence counselling and dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government. While women excel in counselling roles, men dominate formal dispute resolution processes. Addressing these disparities through targeted training and inclusive policies can promote equitable participation and enhance conflict resolution outcomes, fostering social cohesion and community development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are recommended:

- Local governments should initiate gender-sensitive training programs to enhance women's participation in formal dispute resolution processes.
- NGOs and community leaders should collaborate to establish counselling centres that empower both men and women to contribute effectively to dispute resolution.

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