

**ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND MARITAL HARMONY IN NIGERIA:
A STUDY OF SELECTED MARRIAGES IN KIAGBODO, DELTA STATE NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

This work examined Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and Marital Harmony in Nigeria: A Study of Selected Marriages in Kiagbodo, Burutu, Local Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria. The goal of resolving conflict in a relationship is not victory or defeat. It is about reaching understanding and letting go. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is the settlement of conflicts by means other than resort to the courtroom. Descriptive research design was used. the study made use of the following objectives: To explore the effectiveness of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods in resolving marital disputes in selected marriages in Kaigbodo, Delta State, Nigeria, To examine the factors influencing the adoption of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms in marriages in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria, To assess the role of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in reducing case backlog in the judiciary in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria, To analyze the perception of dispute concerning Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria. The Study adopted the Conflict Theory; the theory is mainly credited to Karl Marx and the Integrative Negotiation Theory which focused on collaborative problem-solving and value creation during negotiation. Purposive and simple random sampling were used in the study. Data for this study was mainly primary and secondary sources. In-debt interview and focus group discussion were used to get data from respondents that formed the study. The study found that community members see Alternative Dispute Resolution as a veritable means of settling marital dispute in Kiagbodo especially for the fact that settling issues related to marriages in courtroom cost much and takes much time to conclude. Also, from oral interviews, it found that must divorces that occurs in Kiagbodo community are as a result of non-existence of professionals in issues of relating to Alternative Dispute Resolution. The study concludes by exploring Alternative Dispute Resolution and Marital Harmony in Nigeria with emphasis of selected marriages in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) offers a valuable pathway for fostering marital harmony by addressing conflicts in a constructive and collaborative manner. Unlike adversarial approaches that often escalate tensions, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods such as mediation, negotiation, and arbitration prioritize mutual understanding, empathy, and respect between spouses. Recommendations such as: there should be adequate promotion of awareness of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods in handling marital conflicts, that Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) should be incorporated into pre-marital counseling, there should be an established accessible Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Centers, Professional Training on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) practitioners should be encouraged, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) should be integrated into legal systems, Etc. conclusively, the study explored Alternative Dispute Resolution and Marital Harmony in Nigeria emphasizing on selected marriages in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) offers a valuable pathway for fostering marital harmony by addressing conflicts in a constructive and collaborative manner.

Keywords: Alternative Dispute Resolution, Marital Harmony, Delta State, Nigeria.

Introduction

The goal of resolving conflict in a relationship is not victory or defeat. It is about reaching understanding and letting go of our need to be right. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is the settlement of disputes/conflicts by means other than resort to the courtroom which involves settling disputes by litigation. Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, arising from differences in needs, interests, values, or perceptions. While litigation has long been one of the traditional methods of resolving disputes, it is often criticized for its adversarial nature, high costs, procedural delays, and the strain it places on relationships. These challenges have underscored the need for more flexible, cost-effective, and amicable mechanisms to address disputes, leading to the emergence and growing prominence of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) (Astor & Chinkin, 2002).

.According to Boule (2005), Alternative Dispute Resolution encompasses a range of practices and techniques designed to resolve disputes outside traditional courtrooms. These methods include negotiation, mediation, arbitration, conciliation, and hybrid processes. Alternative Dispute Resolution is characterized by its emphasis on cooperation, voluntary participation, and tailored solutions, offering parties an opportunity to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

The use of Alternative Dispute Resolution has expanded significantly in recent years, particularly in commercial, family, labour, and community disputes. Governments, international organizations, and judicial systems have increasingly endorsed Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms as an integral part of legal frameworks, citing their potential to decongest court dockets, reduce litigation costs, and foster more harmonious dispute resolution. For instance, the United Nations and the World Bank have promoted Alternative Dispute Resolution in international trade and investment disputes to ensure timely and equitable outcomes (Moffitt & Bordone, 2005).

In the African context, Alternative Dispute Resolution resonates deeply with traditional modes of dispute resolution, which emphasize dialogue, consensus-building, and reconciliation. Customary practices such as village councils and community elders serving as mediators align closely with modern Alternative Dispute Resolution principles, making its adoption culturally relevant. Moreover, Alternative Dispute Resolution has gained grip in addressing disputes related to land tenure, business contracts, and communal conflicts in developing nations where formal judicial systems may face limitations in accessibility and efficiency (Moffitt & Bordone, 2005).

In the Nigerian context, Alternative Dispute Resolution reflects long-standing indigenous systems of conflict management that emphasize dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation. Traditionally, disputes within families, communities, and marriages are often settled through the intervention of elders, family heads, religious leaders, and traditional rulers rather than through formal courts (Nwolise, 2005). These customary methods prioritize restoring social harmony and maintaining communal relationships, which are core principles of modern Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms (Okoye, 2012). As a result, Alternative Dispute Resolution has become an important complement to the formal judicial system in Nigeria, particularly in resolving family disputes, land matters, and community conflicts (Ogbu, 2013). The growing recognition of Alternative Dispute Resolution within the Nigerian legal framework is also linked to the need to reduce court congestion, promote faster dispute resolution, and encourage amicable settlements among disputing parties (Adewale, 2016).

In Delta State, these traditional mechanisms are also widely practiced and remain relevant in many rural and semi-urban communities. Communities such as Kiagbodo rely heavily on family meetings, community elders, and traditional institutions to mediate disputes before they escalate into formal litigation. Marital conflicts, in particular, are often addressed through mediation by respected community leaders, church leaders, or extended family members who seek to promote reconciliation between spouses. These practices closely align with modern Alternative Dispute Resolution processes such as mediation, negotiation, and conciliation.

Furthermore, the increasing caseload in Nigerian courts has encouraged the promotion of Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms to complement the formal justice system. In states like Delta State, Alternative Dispute Resolution is gradually gaining recognition as an effective means of resolving disputes quickly, affordably, and amicably. Consequently, the integration of ADR practices within communities such as Kiagbodo reflects a blend of traditional African dispute resolution systems and modern legal frameworks aimed at promoting peaceful conflict resolution and social stability (Moffitt & Bordone, 2005).

Despite its numerous advantages, the application of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) faces challenges, including limited awareness, regulatory inconsistencies, and skepticism from stakeholders accustomed to formal litigation processes. Understanding the evolution, effectiveness, and limitations of Alternative Dispute Resolution is crucial for developing strategies to enhance its adoption and integration into diverse socio-legal contexts.

This study, therefore, aims to explore the role of Alternative Dispute Resolution as an alternative mechanism for dispute resolution, examining its effectiveness, applicability, and potential to complement or substitute traditional litigation in resolving disputes across various domains especially as it relates to Marital Harmony in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In contemporary times, investigations and interviews indicate that out of every ten marriages one or two are face serious challenges which most times lead to separation or divorce. This situation begs for urgent attention due to its devastating impacts on the family, which in turn affects the upbringing of children where it exists. Resolution of disputes in marriages has become increasingly challenging due to the growing complexity of legal and social conflicts. Traditional litigation, while effective in some contexts, is often criticized for being expensive, time-consuming, and adversarial, leaving relationships strained and unresolved issues festering beneath the surface (Moore, 2014; Menkel-Meadow, 2016). Furthermore, overburdened court systems, particularly in developing countries, face significant backlogs, delaying justice and undermining public confidence in the judicial process (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2021; Bhatia, 2019).

Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms, including mediation, arbitration, conciliation, and negotiation, have emerged as viable solutions to address these challenges. However, despite their potential benefits, Alternative Dispute Resolution methods are underutilized and often misunderstood. Many individuals and organizations lack awareness of Alternative Dispute Resolution effectiveness in resolving conflicts amicably and efficiently. Additionally, challenges such as inadequate regulatory frameworks, lack of trained practitioners, cultural resistance, and

limited institutional support hinder the widespread adoption of. These barriers prevent Alternative Dispute Resolution from reaching its full potential in fostering access to justice, promoting social harmony, and reducing the burden on judicial systems. This problem necessitates a critical examination of the barriers to Alternative Dispute Resolution implementation and strategies to enhance its adoption and effectiveness. By addressing these issues, Alternative Dispute Resolution can become a transformative tool in conflict resolution, fostering equitable outcomes and sustainable peace in all aspects of human relationships, especially in settling disputes among married couples (Folger, 2017; Menkel-Meadow, 2016).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore the role of Alternative Dispute Resolution as an alternative mechanism for dispute resolution, examining its effectiveness, applicability, and potential to complement or substitute traditional litigation in resolving disputes across various domains, especially in dispute settlement amongst married couples.

Specifically, the study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To explore the effectiveness of Alternative Dispute Resolution methods in resolving marital disputes in selected marriages in Kaigbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.
2. To examine the factors influencing the adoption of Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms in marriages in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.
3. To assess the role of Alternative Dispute Resolution in reducing case backlog in the judiciary in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.
4. To analyze the perception of dispute concerning Alternative Dispute Resolution processes in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. How effective are Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms in resolving marital Dispute in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria?
2. What are the factors influencing the adoption and success of Alternative Dispute Resolution in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria?
3. In what ways does Alternative Dispute Resolution contribute to reducing the backlog of marital cases in courts in Kiagbodo, Delta State?
4. What are the perceptions of stakeholders on the efficiency and fairness of Alternative Dispute Resolution methods?

Significance of the Study

Practical Significance

Going by the importance of Alternative Dispute Resolution in society and institutions, its practical significances has been outlined in this work. First and foremost, it has been observed that Alternative Dispute Resolution, is cost-effective. Generally, it is more affordable than court litigation. It minimizes expenses related to court fees, lengthy legal processes, and associated costs such as hiring multiple legal experts. Another practical significant of Alternative Dispute Resolution is that it is time efficient.

Traditional court cases often take months or even years to resolve. Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanism for example mediation, arbitration, and negotiation can resolve disputes in a shorter period of the time. With the application of Alternative Dispute Resolution, relationships are preserved. Alternative Dispute Resolution emphasizes collaboration and mutual understanding,

which helps maintain or even strengthen personal, business, or community relationships. This is particularly useful in family disputes, workplace conflicts, or partnerships. Flexibility is another important significant of Alternative Dispute Resolution.

The methods used in Alternative Dispute Resolution can be design to the needs and preferences of the disputing parties. This flexibility in scheduling, process, and decision-making makes it more accommodating than the inflexible court proceedings.

Furthermore, there is emphasis on confidentiality when it has to do with Alternative Dispute Resolution. This is because Alternative Dispute Resolution ensures that the details of the dispute and its resolution remain private, unlike court cases that are often a matter of public record. In Alternative Dispute Resolution, parties involved have more control over the process and the resolution, as they actively participate in making sure proper solution is adopted in resolving conflicts.

Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, Alternative Dispute Resolution significance lies in its ability to propose or suggest frameworks and principles for resolving disputes outside the formal judicial process. Alternative Dispute Resolution has gained fame in academic discourse as scholars explore its efficacy, adaptability, and philosophical underpinnings. Here the theoretical contributions of other scholars and the gap this work covers was well highlighted. With references to four key scholars and their focus areas. Johan Galtung (1969); wrote on *The Theory of Conflict Transformation*. His Focused was on developing the concept of "Conflict Transformation." He contended that resolving disputes should not merely aim at ending conflict but also at addressing underlying structural and relational issues. The relevance of his work on Alternative Dispute Resolution, the theory underscores the importance of mediation and negotiation in fostering long-term peace by addressing the root causes of disputes, aligning with emphasis on collaborative problem-solving. William Ury (1981); was on *Interest-Based Negotiation*. He Focus on his influential work *Getting to Yes* (co-authored with Roger Fisher), William Ury introduced the concept of interest-based negotiation, which focuses on separating people from the problem and exploring mutual gains. The relevance of his work to Alternative Dispute Resolution, is that his principles form the theoretical foundation of mediation and negotiation within Alternative Dispute Resolution, he emphasizes on the importance of understanding parties' underlying interests rather than positional bargaining. Lon Fuller (1971); looks at the *Forms and Limits of Adjudication*. Focusing on examining the limitations of adjudication and advocated for informal dispute resolution methods as alternatives. He highlighted that some disputes are better resolved through dialogue and cooperation rather than formal legal processes. To him Fuller's work provides a theoretical basis for Alternative Dispute Resolution by suggesting that non-adversarial processes can be more effective in resolving interpersonal and community conflicts. John Paul Lederach (1995); wrote on the *Moral Imagination in Conflict Resolution*. He proposed a framework for conflict resolution that integrates cultural contexts, moral imagination, and relational aspects. He emphasized the role of mediators in fostering constructive dialogue. Lederach's work reinforces the theoretical importance of culturally sensitive and relationship-centered approaches in Alternative Dispute Resolution processes like mediation and community arbitration.

Scope of the Study

In every research, there is a scope which the research intends to cover. Based on that, the scope of this study is on Alternative Dispute Resolution and Marital Harmony: A study of selected marriages in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria. Kiagbodo is a community situated in Burutu Local

Government Area of Nigeria. Due to the high rate of divorce and separation which most often land parties to courtroom among married couples, the researcher had to delve into researching on the issue, thereby suggesting alternative methods of conflict resolution. In the course of this work, the researcher encountered various of challenges that resulted to the delay of completing this work. The challenges ranges from lack of adequate personnel to assist in gathering data for the study since the work was self-sponsored, community members were not willing to grant listening hear to the researcher, etc. These challenges especially as it concerned openness to get information from members of the community by the researcher was overcome when the researcher met with the Chairman of the community who took her and her team to the Royal Highness of the community that is the King. The king had to ask the youth leader to do public announcement to the community to allow us access to information. With this step, we got the information used for the study.

Methodology

This section examines the various methods that was applied in this work.

Research Design

This work adopted the descriptive survey research design to examine.

Population of the Study

The study population consists of indigenes and residents of Kiagbodo community. Through a process of purposive and simple random sampling, twenty in-depth interviews were conducted while five focused group discussions held with at least five families especially families facing marital challenges.

Sample Size

A sample can be defined as a smaller group of elements drawn through definite procedure from a specified population. The sample size for this study is one hundred (180) respondents.

Sources of Data

Data for this work was mainly primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data are data the researcher gathered directly from the respondents in the field.

Data Collection Methods

Questionnaires were administered to respondents, interviews, focus group discussion were the various processes used in getting information from the respondents.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data gathered for this work was analyzed using simple percentage and frequency tables. The descriptive method of analyzing data was used to analyze information got from respondents.

Presentation of Data and analysis

The result of the information or data got from the field are presented based on the objectives of the study. The data were analyzed using descriptive methods. The first section of analyses looks at the demographic characteristics of respondents.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Sex of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	120	66,7
Female	60	33.3
TOTAL	180	100

Source: Survey Data, 2026

Table 1 shows the various age bracket of respondents who provided information for the study. It shows that 120 of the respondents represented 66.7% are male. Whereas, 60 respondents representing 33.3% of the population are female.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
22 - 28 Years	15	7.5
29 – 36 Years	35	17.5
37 - 44 Years	70	38.9
45 and above	60	33.3
TOTAL	180	100

Source: Survey Data, 2026

Table 2 above demonstrates the age brackets of respondent who participated in the work. It shows that respondents between the ages of 22 to 28 years were 15. This number represent 7.5% of the population. 35 respondents between the ages of 29-36 years. This figure represents 17.5% of the population of the study, 70 respondents representing 38.9% are between the age bracket of 37-44 years and the final category are people who falls in the age bracket of 60 years and above. This group constitute 33.3% of the total population of the study.

Table 3: Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	16	8
Married	120	66.7
Divorced	4	2
Separated	10	5
Widow/Widower	30	15
TOTAL	180	100

Source: Survey Data, 2026

Table 3 shows the marital statuses of the various respondents that took part in this work. It indicates that 16 respondents are single and this shows a percentage of 8, whereas those married were 120 in number and this number represents 66.7% of the total population of the study, 4 respondents were seen to be divorced and this ratio represents 2% of the population, while 10 respondents are separated and it represents 5% of the population and 30 respondents who represents 15% of the population were widowed/widower.

Table 4: Highest Educational Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
FSLC & below	8	4
WASC	15	7.5
OND	5	2.5
B.Sc/HND	110	65
PGD	17	8.5
MSC	18	9
Ph.D. & above	7	3.5
TOTAL	180	100

Source: Survey Data, 2025

Table 4 above looks at the educational qualification of respondents who participated in the study. It was gathered that 8 respondents representing 4% of the population were those that had FSLC and below. The next category of respondents are those with WASC and its equivalent. This group comprised 15 respondents and 7.5% of the population, while those with OND were 5 in number representing 2.5%, people with B.Sc/HND were 110 in number representing 61.1% of the population, participants with PGD were 17 in number representing 8.5, while those with M.Sc. were 18 representing 9% and the final category are those with PhD and above. The number of this people are 7 representing 3.5%.

Analysis of Research Questions

This section analyzed data got from the field

Objective 1

To explore the effectiveness of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods in resolving marital disputes in selected marriages in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Respondents' Perception of the Effectiveness of ADR in Resolving Marital Disputes

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	70	38.9
Agree	65	36.1
Disagree	25	13.9
Strongly Disagree	20	11.1
Total	180	100

The table shows the respondents' views on the effectiveness of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods in resolving marital disputes in Kiagbodo, Delta State. A large proportion of the respondents strongly agreed (38.9%) that ADR methods are effective in resolving marital conflicts. Similarly, 36.1% agreed with this view. This indicates that the majority of respondents believe that ADR mechanisms such as mediation, negotiation, and reconciliation play a significant role in resolving marital disputes.

However, 13.9% of the respondents disagreed, while 11.1% strongly disagreed, suggesting that a smaller proportion of the respondents are skeptical about the effectiveness of ADR in marital conflict resolution.

Overall, the findings indicate that Alternative Dispute Resolution methods are widely perceived as effective in resolving marital disputes among couples in Kiagbodo, as the majority of the respondents expressed agreement with the statement.

Objective 2

To examine the factors influencing the adoption of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms in marriages in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Factors Influencing the Adoption of ADR Mechanisms in Marital Disputes

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	68	37.8
Agree	60	33.3
Disagree	30	16.7
Strongly Disagree	22	12.2
Total	180	100

The table presents respondents' opinions on the factors influencing the adoption of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms in marital disputes in Kiagbodo, Delta State. The results show that 37.8% of the respondents strongly agreed, while 33.3% agreed that several factors influence the adoption of ADR in resolving marital conflicts. These factors may include cultural acceptance, the influence of community leaders and family elders, accessibility of mediators, lower cost compared to litigation, and the desire to maintain family harmony.

On the other hand, 16.7% of the respondents disagreed, while 12.2% strongly disagreed, indicating that a smaller proportion of respondents do not consider these factors as major determinants in adopting ADR mechanisms.

Overall, the findings suggest that various socio-cultural and practical factors significantly influence the adoption of ADR methods in resolving marital disputes in Kiagbodo, as the majority of respondents expressed agreement with the statement.

Objective 3

To assess the role of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in reducing case backlog in the judiciary in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Role of ADR in Reducing Case Backlog in the Judiciary

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	72	40.0
Agree	63	35.0
Disagree	25	13.9
Strongly Disagree	20	11.1
Total	180	100

The table above shows respondents' opinions on the role of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in reducing case backlog in the judiciary in Kiagbodo, Delta State. The findings indicate that 40.0% of the respondents strongly agreed, while 35.0% agreed that ADR mechanisms contribute significantly to reducing the number of pending cases in the courts.

This suggests that ADR methods such as mediation, arbitration, and negotiation help resolve disputes more quickly and efficiently outside the formal judicial system, thereby easing the workload of courts.

However, 13.9% of the respondents disagreed, while 11.1% strongly disagreed, indicating that a minority of the respondents are of the opinion that ADR does not significantly reduce case backlog in the judiciary.

Overall, the results indicate that the majority of respondents believe that ADR plays an important role in reducing case congestion in the judiciary, thereby promoting faster and more effective dispute resolution in Kiagbodo, Delta State.

Objective 4

To analyze the perception of disputants concerning Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Perception of Disputants toward ADR Processes

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	66	36.7
Agree	64	35.6
Disagree	28	15.6
Strongly Disagree	22	12.2
Total	180	100

The table presents the perception of disputants regarding Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes in Kiagbodo, Delta State. The findings reveal that 36.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, while 35.6% agreed that ADR processes are perceived positively by individuals involved in marital disputes. This suggests that many disputants consider ADR mechanisms such as mediation and negotiation to be fair, accessible, and capable of promoting mutual understanding between conflicting parties.

However, 15.6% of the respondents disagreed, and 12.2% strongly disagreed, indicating that a minority of the respondents hold negative perceptions about ADR processes. These respondents may believe that ADR lacks the authority and formal procedures associated with the conventional judicial system.

Overall, the results indicate that the majority of respondents have a favourable perception of ADR processes, suggesting that ADR mechanisms are widely accepted as viable methods for resolving marital disputes in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Here the perceptions of the community members interviewed were described and analyzed.

Effectiveness of Alternative Dispute Resolution: Here the information gathered from respondents indicate that community members see Alternative Dispute Resolution as a veritable means of settling marital dispute in Kiagbodo especially for the fact that settling issues related to marriages in courtroom cost much and takes much time to conclude. Also, from oral interviews, it shows that

must divorces that occurs in Kiagbodo community are results of non-existence of professionals in issues of relating to Alternative Dispute Resolution.

The Community of Kiagbodo where the study carried out on Alternative Dispute Resolution has agreed to develop strategies to help in managing disputes in families especially as it concerns divorce and separations amongst married couples. Most of the people interviewed complained of lack of trust from their partners. The researcher encouraged and educate community members to learn to trust their partners because it is only when there is trust in marriage that the marriage can work. Majority of the respondents appreciated the invention that the research work brought to their community Kiagbodo).

Summary

The aim of this work was to examine the effectiveness of Alternative Dispute Resolution in managing marital crisis in Nigeria, especially as it concerns marriages in Kiagbodo Delta State, Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive research methods to investigate the research objectives. Indebt interview and focus group discussion were applied in gathering and analyzing data got from the field. Alternative Dispute Resolution serves as an effective tool for maintaining marital harmony by offering non-adversarial methods to address conflicts between couples. Methods such as mediation, negotiation, and arbitration emphasize collaboration and communication, enabling spouses to resolve disputes amicably while preserving their relationship. By focusing on mutual understanding and constructive dialogue, Alternative Dispute Resolution helps couples identify the underlying causes of their disagreements and work towards solutions that are fair and sustainable. This approach reduces emotional strain and avoids the hostility often associated with litigation, fostering a positive environment for reconciliation and long-term stability in marriages.

Alternative Dispute Resolution do not only benefits couples but also has a ripple effect on children and extended families, contributing to healthier family dynamics and stronger societal cohesion. Eventually, it highlights the potential for conflict resolution to transform challenges into opportunities for growth and deeper connection in marital relationships.

Conclusion

The study has explored Alternative Dispute Resolution and Marital Harmony in Nigeria with emphasis of selected marriages in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria. Alternative Dispute Resolution offers a valuable pathway for fostering marital harmony by addressing conflicts in a constructive and collaborative manner. Unlike adversarial approaches that often escalate tensions, Alternative Dispute Resolution methods such as mediation, negotiation, and arbitration prioritize mutual understanding, empathy, and respect between spouses. These techniques empower couples to identify the root causes of their conflicts, improve communication, and develop solutions that reflect their shared values and interests. By integrating Alternative Dispute Resolution into marital dispute resolution processes, families can preserve their relationships, minimize emotional stress, and build a foundation of trust and cooperation. This approach not only benefits the immediate parties involved but also positively impacts children, extended families, and the broader community by promoting stability and peace. Finally, embracing Alternative Dispute Resolution as a mechanism for resolving marital disputes emphasizes the importance of negotiation and compromise in realizing lasting harmony. It serves as a reminder that conflict, when managed sympathetically, can be a stepping stone to deeper understanding and stronger bonds.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

Objective 1

To explore the effectiveness of Alternative Dispute Resolution methods in resolving marital disputes in selected marriages in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.

1. Promote Awareness of Alternative Dispute Resolution Methods

Since the study found that Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods are effective in resolving marital disputes, governments, religious organizations, and community leaders should intensify awareness campaigns on the benefits of Alternative Dispute Resolution. Public enlightenment programmes, seminars, and workshops can educate couples on Alternative Dispute Resolution techniques such as mediation, negotiation, and reconciliation, which can help preserve marital harmony.

2. Incorporate Alternative Dispute Resolution into Pre-Marital Counseling

Pre-marital counseling programmes organized by churches, mosques, and marriage registries should include training on Alternative Dispute Resolution strategies. This will equip couples with practical conflict resolution skills that can help them effectively manage disputes and maintain stable marital relationships.

Objective 2

To examine the factors influencing the adoption of Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms in marriages in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.

3. Leverage Religious and Cultural Institutions

Given the influence of religious and cultural institutions in shaping social behaviour, these institutions should actively promote Alternative Dispute Resolution practices that align with community values and norms. Their involvement will increase the acceptance and adoption of Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms among couples experiencing marital conflicts.

Objective 3

To assess the role of Alternative Dispute Resolution in reducing case backlog in the judiciary in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.

4. Integrate Alternative Dispute Resolution into Legal Systems

The judiciary should encourage disputing couples to explore Alternative Dispute Resolution options before resorting to litigation. Court-annexed mediation and arbitration programmes can help resolve marital disputes more quickly and reduce the burden of excessive cases in the courts.

Objective 4

To analyze the perception of disputants concerning Alternative Dispute Resolution processes in Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.

5. **Establish Accessible Alternative Dispute Resolution Centers**

To improve public perception and accessibility of Alternative Dispute Resolution processes, governments and private organizations should establish Alternative Dispute Resolution centres within communities. These centres should be affordable and staffed with trained professionals to assist couples in resolving disputes amicably.

6. **Training of Professionals for ADR Practice**

Professionals such as counselors, mediators, therapists, and social workers should receive specialized training in Alternative Dispute Resolution techniques. This will enhance their ability to guide disputing couples effectively through the dispute resolution process and improve the credibility of Alternative Dispute Resolution systems.

7. **Constant Monitoring and Evaluation**

Regular monitoring and evaluation of Alternative Dispute Resolution programmes should be carried out to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability. Continuous assessment will help identify challenges and improve the quality of Alternative Dispute Resolution services provided to couples experiencing marital disputes.

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