

# Synthesis of the Nature and Characteristics of Conflict and Conflict Resolution

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## Abstract

## Review Article

This work presents a Synthesis of the Nature and Characteristics of Conflict and Conflict Resolution. Conflict is a mismanaged disagreement between persons, groups or states bordering on perceived differences and incompatible interests or goals. The work navigates through the nature and features of conflict in human existence and relationships, along with those of consequential conflict intervention and resolution, by requisite references. The study identifies some crucial and all-important characteristics of Conflict encompassing its types, sources, causes, consequences, as well as some beneficial outcomes. The study notes that no conflict lasts forever, and that it usually draws neutral third-party intervention for the purpose of its resolution. Some conflict resolution mechanisms including negotiation, mediation, conciliation and arbitration were uncovered and examined by the study. Data used for this study were obtained from primary and secondary sources of data collection and collation, and they were properly and scrupulously synthesised and analysed. From the data obtained, it was found by the study that conflict could be intra-personal, inter-personal and inter-communal. It was further discovered that conflict is rooted in some causative perspectives, namely, Doctrinal Perspective; Historical Perspective; Altruistic Perspective; and Socio-Political and Socio-Economic Perspective. The study concludes by stating that, because of its nature (conflict), resolution of conflict fosters renewed and stronger new-found peace, harmony and inter-relationships among erstwhile individual or communal conflictual parties. Such peace and harmony guarantee security, which in turn leads to progress and development for the benefit of all. In a nutshell, the study concludes that conflicts do have some beneficial outcomes.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Conflict Resolution

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## INTRODUCTION

Human history is replete with episodes of violent conflicts and oppression, contemporaneous with the rise and fall of civilization and empires. The rate of conflict was minimal, and violence scale was manageable prior to man's development and acquisition of weapons of massive human extermination. Early men were only primitively concerned with how to live together and survive happily and safely. Their lives was characterized by hunting and gathering, which entailed wandering about. Domination, exploitation of fellow human beings, and hegemonic tendencies were not their main considerations. Those developments, which gave rise to organized violence, started upon the replacement of that simple and largely amity era by structured and hierarchical social habitation and society, characterized by the concentration of powers in the hands of some individuals over other individuals, along with the misuse and abuse of such powers, leading to reactions by the victims, and counter reactions by the rulers.

Man is naturally and inherently a conflictual being, created and put in a conflictual world, whereas conflict can fundamentally be non-violent and violent. The conflictual nature of human being borders on the free-will granted him/her to choose and act between good and evil; virtues and vices; positive and negative; bodily (material) needs and soul nourishing (eternal) needs. Bereft of fear of God, human being often yields to evil, vice, negative and bodily temptations, and becomes self-conflictual in the process leading to his choice.

Conflict means disagreement, argument, quarrel, dispute, feud, opposition, antagonism, hostility, friction, strife, unrest, confrontation, contention, dissension, clash, difference, variance, discord, fight, battle, war, warfare, combat, contest, engagement, skirmish, fracas, brawl, encounter.<sup>2</sup> Conflict is the result of a disagreement between individuals or entities on the basis of perceived incompatible goals.<sup>3</sup> Theoretically, conflict and social division and differences are inevitable in all social structures and habitations, mainly because the mechanism

by which society integrates and exercises control over its members are characterized with vagaries, variations and failure.<sup>4</sup>

Conflict is intrinsic in man, and inherent in human habitation, existence, relationships, and in developmental mechanisms and processes. It borders on clash of contemporaneous interests, values, identities, just as conflict is multi-dimensional and does not occur in vacuum. It subsists among human beings, living, interacting and relating together. It could be violent, spontaneous, or uncontrollable; dominant, escalated or recessive, resolvable or intractable, depending on the peculiar circumstances of the conflict in question.<sup>5</sup>

### Statement of the Problem

Conflict is a natural phenomenon, negative and in some cases destructive. It is believed that as an aftermath of conflict, peace and harmony might be achieved. Hence, the necessity and relevance of conflict resolution. In other words, but for the mechanism of conflict resolution, peace, harmony, security and development would have been elusive. The work underscores the strong inter play between conflict and conflict resolution.

### Understanding Conflict

Conflict could be multi-diverse, multi-level and fluid, consistent with human nature. It results from mismanaged, misunderstood and mishandled differences and diversities, in the conflictual world of inherent differences and contemporaneous competing primordial interests. It thrives on negative perceptions, fears, and expectations. Within the realm of African traditional conflict management and resolution, conflict is a condition in which one identifiable human group, ethnic, linguistic, religion, socio-political, socio-cultural, professional group, etc, is in conscious opposition to one or more other identifiable human group because both groups are pursuing incompatible goals. Also, conflict is traditionally a struggle over values and claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the disputants are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals.<sup>6</sup>

### Characteristics of Conflict

Conflict is intrinsic in man, it subsists among human beings, living, interacting and relating together. It could be violent, spontaneous, or uncontrollable; dominant, escalated or recessive, resolvable or intractable, depending on the peculiar circumstances of the conflict in question. Conflict nature is about the characteristic features and antecedents of conflict, which are multi-diverse, multi-level and fluid, consistent with human nature. The notable and focal characteristics/features of conflicts include the followings:

- 1) Conflict is a natural phenomenon; it is human-related, as conflictual tendencies are inherent in human beings, with diverse idiosyncrasies. It is therefore intrinsic in human, and an inherent part of human society and human life.

- 2) It is generally limited to the material world (earth), which evokes the material interests of human beings that are diverse and contemporaneously conflictual.
- 3) Conflict is strongly related to primordial tendencies, in relation to human beings, and their perceptions and needs.
- 4) It is identity-related, in relation to ideology, ethnicity, religion, profession, geographical location, etc.
- 5) Conflicts are majorly masculine related and minimally feminine, as they are mainly perpetrated by men, especially violent and armed conflicts. Until recently, hardly were women purveyors of devastating, destructive and exterminating violence or conflicts.
- 6) Conflicts inflict heavy impact on the vulnerable groups in human population, namely, women, children and the elderly.
- 7) Conflicts are facilitated by production, proliferation and bearing of arms by purveyors and merchants of violence who are mainly men and minimally women.
- 8) Conflict inflicts heavy human casualties, as well as property and material destruction.
- 9) Some conflicts are contagious in nature, in relation to border spill-over or domino effects.
- 10) No conflict lasts forever, and after destruction at the battle field, resolution and peace, through diplomacy and negotiation are found at the table; hence, the popular saying that, 'all wars finally and eventually end at the table'.
- 11) Most contemporary conflicts in the world, and even local conflicts are orchestrated by some powerful interests and entities, as hegemonic, domineering and 'divide and rule' tactics, and also as means of sustaining arms production corporations for stupendous financial benefits and accruals to some global powers.
- 12) Conflicts at global level are consequences of international politics, competition and manipulation, and at continental and national level, they are symptoms of socio-political and socio-economic ineptitude, mismanagement, corruption, injustice, inequality, among other leadership and management deficiencies and defaults.

### Types of Conflict

Conflict is a multi-faceted, multi-level and multi-dimensional phenomenon and concept. Be that as it may, scholars on conflict and conflict resolution (peace) have developed divergent typologies and categorizations of conflicts, with each typology characteristically different from the other, based on causes, antecedents and outcomes. Conflicts could take different forms at anywhere, for instance, interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup, intragroup and inter-organizational conflicts. In addition to the above typologies of conflicts, Aruwa,

notes that conflict could be of Intra-Actor and Inter-Actor types, and explained that intra-actor conflict revolves around the 'self', (in-person), group or community, while Inter-Actor conflict revolves around different dual or multiple individuals, groups or entities.<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that the prefix inter means –between whereas the prefix intra means –within.

**Interpersonal Conflict** - Interpersonal conflict emphasizes the interaction of human factors among individual, groups or organizations. The concern here are those causative factors as they appear in a dynamic relationship. Conflict between people could arise from many individual differences, including personalities, attitude, values, and perceptions, among other differences. It may be substantive or emotional or both. Two persons debating each other aggressively on the merits of hiring a job applicant is an example of a substantive interpersonal conflict. Two persons continually in disagreement over each other's choice of work attire is an example of an emotional interpersonal conflict.<sup>8</sup>

**Intrapersonal Conflict** - Intrapersonal conflict is internal to the individual (though its effects could profoundly influence group or organizational activities) and it is perhaps the most difficult form of conflict to analyze and manage. Intrapersonal conflict is basically a conflict between two incompatible tendencies. It arises when a stimulus evokes two different and incompatible tendencies and the individual is required to discriminate between these tendencies. In such a situation it is common for individuals to experience frustrations and to allow their conflict situation to be expressed in a range of behavioural strategies ranging from apathy and boredom to absenteeism, excessive drinking or destructive behaviour.

**Intergroup conflict** - Intergroup conflict occurs among members of different teams or groups, and could also have substantive and/or emotional underpinnings. Intergroup conflict is quite common in organizations, and it could make the coordination and integration of tasks or activities very difficult. The classic example is conflict among functional groups or departments, such as marketing and manufacturing, in organizations. The growing use of cross-functional teams and task-forces is one way of trying to minimize such conflicts and promote more creative and efficient operations.<sup>9</sup>

**Intragroup Conflict** - Conflict that occurs within groups or teams is called intragroup conflict. There are two types of intragroup conflict: Task conflict and Relationship conflict. Task conflict is a perception of disagreement among group members or individuals about the contents of their decisions, and involves differences in viewpoints, ideas and opinions. For example, task conflict about the distribution of resources, about procedures or guidelines and about the interpretation of facts. Relationship conflict is a perception of interpersonal incompatibility and includes annoyance and animosity among individuals.<sup>10</sup>

**Inter-organisational Conflict** - Conflict that occurs between two or more organizations is called inter-organisational conflict. Competition could heighten inter-organisational conflict. Corporate take-over, mergers and acquisitions could also produce inter-organisational

conflict. Ikeda, observed that organisational conflict involves interpersonal conflicts with colleagues or supervisors, or intergroup conflicts within different sections of an organisation. According to him, there are two essential types of conflict in organisations: vertical and horizontal. Vertical conflict occurs in groups of different hierarchical levels, such as supervisors and salesmen, whereas horizontal conflict occurs between individuals of the same level, such as managers in the same organization. In the vertical conflict, differences in status and power between groups are in general, larger than in the horizontal conflict because these aspects tend to equalise in equivalent hierarchical levels.<sup>11</sup>

For the purpose of this work, the 'Schmid's typology' is examined as well. Schmid, in his work, highlighted seven types of conflict at a global level, even though, subject to varied degrees, the seven typologies had occurred, and continue to occur in Africa, including Nigeria. The seven (7) Schmid types of conflicts are:

1. Intra-state ethno-nationalists conflicts – They are considered as the most pervasive, persistent, and in most cases prolonged types of contemporary armed conflicts in Africa and elsewhere. Cessation and or resolution of these types of conflicts always result from concessions being made by either the state (Government) to the agitators, or vice versa; or the former over-powering the latter militarily. The examples of these conflicts are the Indegenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Eastern Security Network (ESN) against the Nigerian Government conundrum in Nigeria's South-East geopolitical zone; the Yoruba (Oduduwa) Nation agitators in Nigeria's South-West geopolitical zone and the Boko Haram, and Bandits menace in the Nigeria's North-East and North-West geopolitical zones.
2. Inter-state conflicts – These are conflicts between two independent countries or nations, usually occasioned by either territorial ambition or border disputes, or support to dissidents or hostile alignments, and proxy wars. The Russia – Ukraine war (ongoing as at the time of this work) which started in 2022; Iran – Iraq war (1980 – 1988), the short-lived Mali – Burkina Faso war (1985), America invasion of Iraq in the 90s; Ethiopia – Eritrea conflict (1991), etc are examples.
3. Intra – ethnic (tribal) conflict – Another reference to this type of conflict, is communal or ethnic conflict. It could occur in form of inter-tribal-intra-community; intra-tribal-inter-communal, or inter-communal conflict. For instance, land disputes, ponds, border issues, chieftaincy, resource ownership and control, aborigine and tenant controversy, acquisition and control of projects and benefits from government, etc. Examples of these types of conflicts are found in the Hutu – Tutsi violent conflict in Rwanda; the Ife-Modakeke intra communal conflict in Osun State, Nigeria in the 90s; the Umulere – Agulere conflict in Anambra State, Nigeria. In Kogi State, the violent border (land) dispute, following crude oil discovery and production between Ibaji community in Kogi State

and Aniocha community in Anambra State in 2015 – 2016 provided an example of inter-ethnic and inter communal conflicts.

4. Anti – Government, Political and Ideological Conflict – Insurgency, insurrection, rebellion, protest, sabotage by citizens and or groups with entrenched vested interests, seeking either regime change or freedom, or independence, against, and or from the establishment, are examples of these types of conflicts. Such groups include, liberation movements, religious sect, like Boko Haram in Nigeria; organised trade unions (labour) like Nigeria Labour Congress and Trade Union Congress in Nigeria. Kenyan’s protest against their government over tax, increase debate and bill in Kenya parliament (2024), and also the #endbadgovernance protest, 2024 in Nigeria, etc, are examples of this typology.
5. Decolonisation Conflict cum Foreign – State Occupation – The conflict here pertains to a scenario where decolonised territories are annexed and controlled by the non-colonisers, either because they liberated those territories, or by sheer force of expansionist tendencies. Examples are, the control of Saharawi Arab Republic, otherwise referred to as Western Sahara, by Morocco; Eritrea, under Ethiopia, prior to 1991 – 1992. Also, is the Palestine ordeal in the hands of Israel backed by the United States of America and Europe. Even Nigeria had Northern Cameroons as part of its territory before it was ceded. So also, the Bakassi Peninsula, bordering Nigeria and Cameroun.
6. Gang Conflicts (Wars) – This typology pertains to a mixed non-state cum criminal elements group – generated conflicts. Examples are the festering gang war in Haiti (2023 -2024); the Eastern Security Network (ESN) and its violent agitations and activities in Eastern Nigeria; all Cultists’ conflicts and violence everywhere, are examples of this typology.
7. Genocide – Genocidal conflict or war, portrays the extermination activities by the powerful and stronger side over the contemporaneous weaker side. According to Schmid; “This is state organised mass murder and crimes against humanity characterised by the intention to exterminate a particular national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Mass murder committed against members of a particular political group (policide) or social group (democide) are equally horrifying crimes against humanity”.<sup>12</sup> The contemporary examples of genocidal conflict and wars include the Israeli war against Hamas in Gaza, Palestine, which started in October, 2023; the Bosnia Hezergovina genocidal war against the Muslims, and the Hutu-Tutsi genocidal war in Rwanda in the 90s.

## Causes of Conflict

The causes of conflict are categorized by this work into four perspectives, namely: the Doctrinal

Perspective; the Historical Perspective; the Altruistic Perspective; and the Socio-Political and Socio-Economic Perspective.

**Doctrinal Causative Perspective** – The doctrinal perspective as a cause of conflict relates to the identifiable causes of conflict in the episode between God and Adam in the Garden of Eden, on the one hand,<sup>13</sup> and the episode between Adam’s two children, namely; Cain, also called Kabila and Abel, also called Habila, on the other hand.<sup>14</sup> The former depicts non-violent conflict, while the latter depicts violent conflict.

**The Historical Perspective:** As originating cause of conflict, it pertains to the hegemonic and domineering tendencies of stronger nations (empires) against weaker ones. The Byzantine, Persian, Roman, Othman civilisations or empires, and much later, the British colonisation, and Western civilisation and hegemony, are examples of the historical perspective regarding causes of conflict. The poser is: How safe and conflict-free is the world or places left by these erstwhile civilizations? The poser is particularly poignant in respect of the British colonisation and western hegemony in the world generally, and Africa in particular. This perspective cause of conflict operated on the praxis of plunder, exploitation, balkanisation, divide and rule, and surrogate perpetuation.

**Altruistic Causative Perspective:** Man was put on the surface of the earth and made to toil for his sustenance. In doing so he exploits his environment and consequently corrupts it, because, being a fallible creature, he is corruption – prone. This is occasioned by the free-will which he is endowed with, while alive, by God, his creator. Shorn of fear of God, the free-will becomes the source of corruption in man, and by him. For that, he exercises his endowed free-will to his self interest in the course of his toils for sustenance. Quite often, he over indulges himself as a result of greed, insatiability and insensitivity to his environment and other persons.

In other words, material prosperity of individuals and nations does not automatically translate to peace and security, where there are agonizing social and economic inequalities and imbalances. Or where the management of material resources, property and general leaderships are inept, melancholic and riddled with corruption.<sup>15</sup>

**Socio-political and Socio-economic Perspective** – The ‘identify-with-them, alienate-from-them’; and the ‘divide and rule’ governance and leadership syndromes; the ‘use and dump’ tactics by elites and most leaders, the governmental and elite exploitation of ethnic, tribal and communal differences, form one of the major causes of conflict, particularly where politicking youths are recruited, armed, used and then dumped with arms in their hands. The scenario is rampant in developing countries, and particularly so in Nigeria. Miller notes on this perspective thus: *The complex dynamics between the forces of authority on the one hand, and the society over which it presides on the other hand, has been at work since time immemorial. Violence has always been a necessary part of the contestation over the legitimacy of that authority, and aspirations to power have perpetually suffered from the temptation to seek consequences beyond*

*the realistic possibilities at hand (iron-fist reactionary leadership). Rulers, whether religious or secular, who seek to enforce authority, and insurgents who contest that power have been drawn to violence across the countries.*<sup>16</sup>

From the Socio-political and Socio-economic Perspective, it is tempting to say that democratic governance has become sour taste in the mouth of the masses, given its philosophy as, 'Government of the people, for the people and by the people'. Hence, Gould Carol C. noted thus: *Democratic governments are detached from the governed and incapable of confronting the powerful economic interests (cabals) that tend to dominate everyday life. Economically, pervasive and persistence inequalities mark contemporary economies, which though thriving and productive, nonetheless fail to provide many individuals with adequate livelihoods or dignified conditions of work.*<sup>17</sup>

The earning, minimum, living and affordable wage saga and conflict between Governments and Organised Labour; between employers and employees, bordering on agitation against exploitation, reflects the socio-economic perspective and cause of conflict, on the one hand. On the other hand, failed campaign promises, policy and programme summersaults, nepotism and ineptitude, corruption and marginalisation, among other leadership defaults, cumulatively reflect the socio-political perspective and cause of conflict.

### Consequences of Conflict

Conflict, particularly contemporary conflicts, and particularly too, armed or violent conflicts inflict colossal human and material costs on humanity generally, and on the conflicting parties in particular. Conflicts hamper economic development of the involved nations or groups, in the form of low production, exports, and invariably lead to higher domestic and foreign debts, low Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as well as low Direct Foreign Investment (DFI).

The ripple effects or costs of conflict outlast the conflict itself, because, as it is popularly said: 'It is easier to destroy than to rebuild'. In terms of governance and the society, stunted development and institutional deformation which result from conflict could, if not in themselves, tactically managed, provide an avenue to return the conflict.<sup>18</sup>

Damage to cultural and heritage sites, physical scars, human rights abuse, genocide, crimes against humanity are all some of the negative effects and costs of violent conflict that are capable of traumatising those concerned generally. The effects, impact and costs of violent (armed) conflict in Africa have been articulately researched, documented and presented by some scholars of conflict and conflict resolution. Excerpts from their works are reproduced thus: Beyond the toll of direct combat related death, civil wars increase infant and adult mortality, as a result of disease, famine, displacement and the collapse of health and other services. The indirect deaths usually outweigh the direct effects of wars. In developing countries conflicts frequently cause food shortages and famines, due to either deliberate use of hunger as a weapon or the unplanned effect of fighting on production and distribution. The land

may be mined, the wells may be poisoned. People are forced to flee their homes and abandon their means of livelihood.<sup>19</sup>

However, referencing Audu, M. S., Aruwa highlighted some benefits of conflict as follows:

- i. It fosters or promotes necessary change, leading to 'new found' love, peace, harmony and unity.
- ii. It raises or reinforces morality, sanity, security and cohesion.
- iii. It fosters individual, communal and collective development by virtue of post-conflict, reconstruction, rehabilitation, re-settlement and re-integration.
- iv. It fosters post-conflict psychological, emotional and behavioural maturity, intelligence and balance through introspection and adjustment.<sup>20</sup>

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION – APPROACH AND METHODOLOGIES

Conflict, especially violent conflict, is satanic and destructive while peace is divine and constructive. The eruption of the former among conflictual parties invokes the activation of the latter by neutral third parties. The eruption of conflict disrupts the subsistence of peace; moreso, in a victor and vanquished scenario, while war, violent battle or conflict might be won militarily, peace and harmony could only be amicably and ceaselessly attained through resolution at the table. Therefore, conflict resolution is a *sine qua non* post-conflict management mechanism and process.

Resolution, Reconciliation and Settlement, are mutually inclusive, meaning that all of them connote the same thing, which is the successful result or outcome of third party mediation or intervention into conflict between two or more disputants or parties. Cumulatively, they mean restoring broken relationships and accepting to live non-violently even with differences mild or radical.<sup>21</sup> However, the thin line of differences between the three terms are that, reconciliation and settlement are the basic goals of conflict resolution; resolution is the process while reconciliation and settlement are the outcomes, results or consequences of that process. To that effect, reconciliation means restoring broken relationships and accepting to cohabit peacefully, even with obvious differences.<sup>22</sup>

### Nature of Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution relates with a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-level approach targeting the transformation of the interest, relationship and structure of a given conflict. Through the module of 'conflict analysis', conflict resolution peers into the root causes of the conflict with a view to resolving it and preventing subsequent reoccurrence. Conflict resolution is a concept or process entailing third party intervention into conflict in the form of mediation, arbitration or conciliation through the methodology of conflict analysis, and adopting requisite conflict handling styles, with a view to resolving and possibly transform the conflict among, and for the

conflicting parties. The above definition highlights, for synoptical discussion, some key method, elements or components of conflict resolution exercise, namely: (i) Negotiation, Mediation, Arbitration and Conciliation; (iii) Conflict analysis; (iv) Conflict handling styles.

## Negotiation

Negotiation is a conflict resolution process which offers mutual platform to the two or more contending parties to engage themselves; discuss the underlying issues in their conflict; and through mutual compromises resolve the conflict, with or without the presence and instrumentality of third party mediator. Albert, defines negotiation as: *The process whereby two or more parties, who are faced with a problem of conflict about some limited resources, attempt to agree on how best to solve the problem or resolve the conflict.* He equally views negotiation as: *Any form of communication adopted with the aim of reaching a common ground and compromise.*<sup>23</sup>

In other for a fruitful and effective negotiation to be achieved, the following features must be observed by the concerned parties and stakeholders:

- i. Negotiating hinges on proffering solutions, not a shouting match or arguing to claim right or prove the opponent wrong and guilty.
- ii. Disagreement with any of the negotiation processes or terms should be gently expressed and asserted. It must not assume a cantercarous and demeaning power struggle.
- iii. By i and ii above, negotiation must not be confrontational because it is neither a battle nor contest that must be won. It is a solution seeking process which must be carefully and gently navigated with understanding, cooperation and compromise.
- iv. Taking responsibility for the conflict could reduce tension and induce understanding and cooperation, while to blame or condemn could inflame passion and earn negative outcomes.

## Mediation

Mediation is a conflict resolution mechanism in which the mediator, usually a neutral third party fosters understanding, communication, interface and negotiation among two or more conflictual parties with the vision and mission to amicably resolve their conflict. Successful mediation thrives on the mediator possessing and constantly exhibiting the same basic characteristics of a third party. They include: Acceptability; Neutrality; Impartiality; Confidence and Trust. Mediation was defined by Moore as: *The intervention in a negotiation or conflict of an acceptable third party who has limited or no authoritative decision-making power but who assists the involved parties in voluntarily reaching a mutually acceptable settlement of issues in dispute.*<sup>24</sup>

The above definition indicate that mediation is a problem solving negotiation exercise in which an outside, impartial and mutually accepted neutral party works with, and

assists conflictual parties to reach a mutually satisfactory and acceptable negotiated agreement in the interest of peaceful relationship and harmonious co-existence.

## Conciliation

Conciliation is a fence-mending process of taking, processing and passing peace messages in between conflictual parties, with a view to preventing and or resolving their real or ostensible fracas. Conciliation, which is a third party intervention mechanism, could be in the form of consultation, facilitation; admonition and coordination. In all these, it is an informal third party process, and an effort at reducing tension between the disputants, by improving communication, clarifying issues, providing technical assistance, fashioning potential solutions and bringing about a negotiated settlement, either formally or, in a subsequent platform, through formal mediation.<sup>25</sup>

The Black's Law Dictionary defines Conciliation as: *A process in which a neutral person meets with the parties to a dispute and explores how the dispute might be resolved...a relatively unstructured method of dispute resolution in which a third party facilitates communication between parties in an attempt to help them settle their differences.*<sup>26</sup>

## Arbitration

An Arbitrator is a neutral, impartial and disinterested outsider to the conflictual parties of equal or near equal powers, rights or interests. Arbitration becomes essential where, hardened by self-interest or obstinacy, two or more parties disagree over their interests, rights, obligations or duties, and are unable to reach a resolution by themselves. By definition, arbitration is a process by which parties to an irresolvable conflict, dispute or disagreement among themselves, willingly and mutually refer it to an impartial third party for the purpose of hearing their respective presentations in evidence form, and arriving at a binding and enforceable decision.<sup>27</sup> Ojielo, defines arbitration as: *A procedure for the settlement of disputes, under which the parties agree to be bound by the decision of an arbitrator whose decision is, in general, final, and legally binding on the parties.*<sup>28</sup>

## Conflict Handling Styles

By way of approach and methodology, conflict resolution entails careful handling. Conflict handling is one of the essential processes of resolving conflict by de-escalating and transforming it, through its resolution, to durable peace. There are five established conflicting handling styles, which suggests that there is no one-fits-all style in managing and resolving conflicts. In other words, conflict is a dynamic phenomenon and so must be its handling and management. According to Jeong, various dispute settlement methods are not mutually inclusive, as different techniques can be applied in a complementary manner.<sup>29</sup> The five (5) established major conflict handling styles are: (i) Collaboration (ii) Accommodating (iii) Compromising (iv) Avoiding (v) Competing.

## Benefits of Conflict Resolution

- i. Through conflict resolution, using negotiation, the following conflicts were resolved and settled: Apartheid system in South Africa; the Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala Government – Rebel wars; the settlements in Mozambique; in Namibia and the Lebanon war that ended through an accord in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, among many others such amicable resolutions across the world.
- ii. Peaceful resolution and settlement of conflict is a better, cheaper and constructive option in handling conflicts than to allow them to continue and fester, especially violent ones which are often destructive, expensive and retrogressive in relation to human lives, property and material resources.
- iii. Resolution of conflict fosters renewed and stronger new-found peace, harmony and inter-relationships among erstwhile individual or communal conflictual parties. Such peace and harmony guarantee security, which in turn leads to progress and development for the benefit of all.
- iv. It provides third party interveners the opportunity, not only to demonstrate and practice their conflict management and resolution expertise, but to attain further and better relevance and prominence in conflict resolution industry, of course depending on their innate competence and integrity.
- v. In relation to African Traditional Dispute Resolution Processes, no conflict that is effectively resolved would reoccur over a very long period because of the positive inherent resolution nuances.
- vi. Similarly, African Traditional Dispute Resolution reflects the relevance and effectiveness of culture and tradition in conflict resolution mechanisms. Its model are not only cheap, fast and durable, they are also inherent and domicile in the conflicting community or environment, and so, cannot be obstinately defaulted without dire consequences.

## CONCLUSION

This paper presents the synthetic view of the nature and characteristics of conflict and the consequential conflict resolution in their synoptical ramifications. It ploughed through the nature, types, causes and consequences of conflict to the nature, structure, approach, methodologies and benefits of conflict resolution. It highlighted conflict handling styles which are critical and rigorous but succinct approaches, methodologies and processes of resolving conflict by de-escalating and transforming it to peace and amity.

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