**Cooperative Peace and Conflict Resolution Programmes for Good Governance in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria**

**ABSTRACT**

Inclusivity is necessary to improve good governance by encouraging communication, learning, and collaboration among groups in conflict. This study examined how cooperative peace and conflict resolution programmess affected good governance in a selected communities in Rivers State's Emohua local government area. 4 crisis-prone communities were selected from Emohua LGA and used for the study. the research design used in the study was a descriptive survey, with 155 respondents altogether, including 140 beneficiaries and 15 facilitators, who were recruited from 4 different communities. All 155 of the respondents made up the study's sample. A validated structured 4-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect the data. The instrument was put through a reliability test, and employing the instrument's different clusters, reliability coefficients of 0.81,0.86, and 0.78 was found using the Cronbach alpha. The collected data was analyzed using the standard deviation and mean. The results demonstrate that the cooperative mediation program has made a substantial contribution to lowering political tensions, establishing trust, and encouraging community collaboration; community negotiating efforts have improved democratic processes and significantly decreased political strife in rural communities; this is corroborated by the reports of lowered political tensions in the Emohua communities; and the integrative bargaining program has been successful in reducing conflicts and improving governance structures by encouraging cooperation and transparency. The study concluded that community negotiation, cooperative mediation and integrative bargaining are essential to enhance governance by promoting harmony and dispute resolution.

***Keywords:*** *Cooperative, Peace, Conflict Resolution Programmes, Good Governance, Community, Mediation*

**INTRODUCTION**

Cooperative peace and conflict resolution programmes play a vital role in enhancing good governance by fostering dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among communities in conflict (Ibrahim, 2018). These programmes aimed at helping to build trust, reduce tensions and find mutual understanding and inclusivity, the programme also focused on the establishment of stable and peaceful community where conflicts are existing constructively. Cooperative mediation, negotiation and integrative bargaining programmes focused on underlying grievances, promote reconciliation and aim at stopping the increase of disputes into violence. Importantly, the programmes objectives are to support the growth of effective governance structures that are responsive to the desire and aspirations of all stakeholders of the community, leading to more peace and conflict resolution process that contribute to good governance. According to NYC (2024), mediation is an approach where trained mediators facilitate dialogue between conflicting communities to aid them find mutually acceptable solution.

Cooperative integrative programme is another type of cooperative peace and conflict resolution programme, it is an approach where communities engage in discussions to reach agreements through compromise and dialogue (NYC 2024), Spangler (2023) asserted that, integrative bargaining is also called interest-based bargaining, win-win bargaining and a negotiation strategy in which communities collaborate to find a “win-win” solution to their dispute. Capacity-building is another cooperative peace and conflict resolution programme for good governance, its aim is to enhance the skills of individuals and communities engaged in conflict resolution to manage disputes effectively. Through these Programmes, cooperation, dialogue and understanding can be fostered to promote good governance and sustainable peace. Cooperative Peace and conflict resolution programmes are programmes organized, sponsored by multipurpose cooperative society to stop conflict in communities interested in conflict resolution in Nigeria.

The programmes are aimed at bringing the people together to figure out a solution to their problem, creating an inclusive atmosphere or environment of people to be aware of how to manage and stop conflicts, promoting collaboration and cooperation and ensures that issues are tackled before they aggravate and helping the people to gain knowledge and acquire skills that can serve to reduce any discontent that could damage peaceful co-existence of the people (Jennifer, 2024). When conflicts are addressed and resolved in a positive and timely situation, it can minimize unproductive tensions and misunderstandings that can prevent workflow in the community. Jenna (2023) affirmed that, for conflict to be resolved, it should be handled constructively and respectfully and it should adopt management strategies, such as: active listening, open communication, empathy and honesty so as to ensure that conflicts do not spin up into destructive situations.

This research work dwelt on co-operative mediation, negotiation and integrative bargaining programmes as programmes of cooperative peace and conflict resolution for good governance. These programmes ultimately aimed at; training the community members to manage and address conflict in a positive manner.

**Cooperative Mediation Programme**: This is a programme that focuses on a productive conversation between the communities in conflict, presides by a neutral third organization who serves as a mediator. Mediation makes it easier for communities in conflict to collaboratively design innovative solutions to solve their dispute amicably. Communities in conflict, not mediators control the outcome of mediation, the mediator only aids the communities, communicate their concerns and interests (NYC, 2024). Once the communities in conflict have an opportunity to listen and be heard, they often develop mutually acceptable resolutions. According to U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (2003), mediation provides a neutral and confidential setting in which the communities in conflict can widely deliberate their views on the underlying dispute, knowing the fact that improved communication leads to mutually satisfactory resolutions.

Cooperative Mediation programme is designed in such a way that it aids in discovering the actual issues worrying the communities in conflict, allows the communities to design and act on their own solution or decision, the programme fosters cooperation between the communities in conflict and stipulates that, there is no determination of guilt or innocence in their process (EEOC 2023). According to NYC (2024) cooperative mediation programme tends to produce durable, satisfactory and harmless agreements between the said communities. The programme’s role is to help the mediators to be impartial and to facilitate a discussion designed to help the communities in conflict reach a mutually satisfactory resolution of their dispute. The programme also trains the mediators to know that, they do not offer legal advice, judge the community’s positions and they do not have authority to impose a resolution for them. Instead the mediators help the communities to involve in direct and honest communication and help them in finding their own resolution.

**Cooperative Negotiation Programme:** The programme talks about frame-work designed to improve better governance practices through cooperative negotiation techniques. It is a training programme aimed at enhancing the governance capacity of communities facing conflict by:

1. **Partnership Problem-solving:** This refers to individuals in the community working together to resolve governance issues through negotiation and consensus building instead of conflict.
2. **Transparency:** According to IPCR (2023). This called about ensuring that opinions, decisions and policies are made opening or transparent with communities having to access to information.
3. **Collaboration:** This is all aboutencouraging proper and active collaboration and input from communities in decision-making process.

Cooperative Negotiation programme is designed for communities looking for means to reducing peaceful and agreed resolution to conflict. It is observed that the said communities in conflict often lack experience in strategic negotiation or to identify strategic negotiation techniques to tackle the dispute between them (IPCR 2023). The programme is interactive in nature that offers the knowledge and skills to train the communities to stop businesses that might otherwise be deadlocked, and find solution to differences before they escalate into big clash. Eugene (2022) ascertained that the cooperative negotiation programme is a pivot to the training of traditional rulers of communities that can be used to better resolve conflicts at different governance levels, also that the programme creates an avenue where a signing of a communiqué, in which the Authorities display their commitment beyond their role as multiplications, by accepting to set up an all-inclusive traditional council negotiation support structure. Considering the relevant role traditional rules have for maintaining peace, the negotiation programme aid in institutionalizing conflict resolution mechanisms and train them in local and traditional context.

**Cooperative Integrative Bargaining Programme:** The integrative bargaining is also called interest-based bargaining or win-win bargaining is a brainstorming strategy in which communities in conflict collaborate to find a win-win solution to their conflict or dispute (Spangler 2003). The programme is directed towards establishing mutually beneficial agreements based on the interests of the communities in conflict, the interest involve the needs, desires and concerns to disputants, because they are the underlying cases why communities involve in a conflict. Training the people in integrative bargain programme is important, because the programme objective is particularly to produce more satisfactory outcomes for the communities involve in negotiation, as the true needs and concerns of both communities will be met to some degree. It is an interactive and collaborative process, that aid the communities to actually end up helping each other. Integrative bargaining training aimed at fast-tracking constructive, progressive and positive relationships between previous rivals. Spangler (2003) said that, the first step in integrative bargaining is to identify the said communities’ interests.

The interest of the communities could be the use of a productive particular farm land for agricultural purposes. In order to ensure win-win bargaining and creating joint value and to avoid dispute between the two communities, both communities take the position of the whole farm land. The moderator of the dispute, based on the position of the farmland, divides the land into two equal part and gives each community half of the land. This outcome represents a compromise. In this case, the both communities have gotten all what they wanted, and concerns of both communities were met.It is a win-win bargaining effort and therefore the communities actually ended up helping each other, and this shades off ongoing problems that might have emanated after negotiation has taken place.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Communities in Emohua local Government Area of Nigeria are faced with several existing problems that warrant the need for peace and conflict resolution initiatives. Such problems include on-going disputes over chieftaincy stool, land ownership, access to natural resources, which can lead to conflicts among community members. As affirmed by Onyejiaku & Nwanneka (2018), political differences, social inequalities, ethnic division, insufficient infrastructure, lack of basic services, poverty, competition for community limited resources, lack of basic services and lack of job can prompt conflict in rural communities in Rivers State. Communities such as: Uvuawhu, Ndele, Rumuekpe and Egbeda communities in Emohua local government Area are facing chieftaincy tussle and disputes over land boundary and ownership precisely. Addressing these issues through effective cooperative peace and conflict resolution programmes like- cooperative mediation, negation and integrative bargaining programmes will go a long way to ameliorate the issue of conflict, because the primary objectives of these programmes is to develop initiatives that enhance cooperation, peaceful conflict resolution for good governance in order to promote socio-economic development, social cohesion, and overall well-being in community.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to examine the impact of cooperative peace and conflict resolution programmes for good governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the impact of cooperative mediation programme as an initiative for peace and conflict resolution on good governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. affirm the impact of cooperative negotiation programme as an initiative for peace and conflict resolution on good governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria.
3. ascertain the impact of cooperative integrative bargaining programme as an initiative for peace and conflict resolution on good governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research question guided the study.

1. To what extent does cooperative mediation programme as an initiative for peace and conflict resolution has a significant impact on good governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. To what extent does cooperative negotiation programme as an initiative for peace and conflict resolution on has a significant impact on good governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria.
3. To what extent does integrative bargaining programme as an initiative for peace and conflict resolution has a significant impact on good governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria

**METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, the population of the study comprised of 15 facilitators and 140 beneficiaries, making it total of 155 respondents drawn from 4 communities, namely Uvuawhu, Ndele, Rumuekpe and Egbeda communities in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. The communities were selected due to current crisis and tensions affecting them. The sample of the study consisted of 155 respondents, this comprised of 15 facilitators and 140 beneficiaries drawn from 4 communities, namely Uvuawhu, Ndele, Rumuekpe and Egbeda communities in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. Census sampling population was used in the study because the population of the study was small and manageable. The instrument for data collection for the study was a well-structured questionnaire titled Cooperative Peace and Conflict Resolution Programmes for Good Governance Questionnaire (CPCRPGG). The instrument comprised of two sections, section A and B. Section A elicits personal information of the respondents while section B contained the main items of the instrument designed for answering the research questions. The instrument was designed in rating scale format with the following options; very high extent to very low extent. The instrument was validated by experts Judgement, the reliability of the instrument was established using the cronbach alpha reliability, coefficients of 0.81, 0.86 and 0.78 were obtained using the various clusters of the instrument. The collected data were analysed using the mean and standard deviation and z-test statistics. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. Out of 155 copies of questionnaire distributed, 140 copies of the questionnaire representing 90.3% response was recovered as well as filled and were used for the analysis. 15 copies representing 9.7% response were wrongly filled and were not used for the study. A criterion mean of 2.5 derived from the 4-point Likert scale (4+3+2+1)/4 was the basis of positive or negative response. Any mean equal or greater than 2.5 is considered positive response while any mean less than 2.5 is considered negative response.

**RESULTS**

**Research Question One**: To what extent does cooperative mediation programme as an initiative for peace and conflict resolution has a significant impact on good governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Table 1: Analysis of Extent to Which** **Cooperative Mediation Programme as an Initiative for Peace and Conflict Resolution has Significantly Impacted on Good Governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Statements**  | **Beneficiaries N=125** | **Facilitators N=15** |
| **X** | **SD** | **Remark** | **X** | **SD** | **Remark** |
| 1 | Implementation of cooperative mediation programme has led to reduction in conflict incidences within Emohua LGA | 3.38 | 0.89 | **High Extent** | 3.62 | 0.69 | **High Extent** |
| 2 | Cooperative mediation programme has contributed to improved community cohesion and relationships among different groups | 3.16 | 0.88 | **High Extent** | 3.51 | 0.86 | **High Extent** |
| 3 | Cooperative mediation programme brought transparency and inclusivity in decision-making processes, thereby enhancing good governance | 3.36 | 0.93 | **High Extent** | 3.47 | 1.02 | **High Extent** |
| 4 | Cooperative mediation programme has improved trust and collaboration between local government authorities and community members | 3.37 | 1.06 | **High Extent** | 3.49 | 0.85 | **High Extent** |
| 5 | Cooperative mediation programme has helped reduce incidences of corruption and mismanagement in the governance of selected communities | 3.71 | 0.70 | **High Extent** | 2.63 | 0.88 | **High Extent** |
| 6 | cooperative mediation programme equipped community leaders and members with skills for conflict resolution and governance | 3.67 | 0.73 | **High Extent** | 2.75 | 0.90 | **High Extent** |
| 7 | Peace initiatives achieved through cooperative mediation sustainable over time, contributing to long-term good governance | 3.63 | 0.77 | **High Extent** | 2.83 | 1.12 | **High Extent** |
|  | **Grand mean** | **3.46** |  | **High Extent** | **3.18** |  | **High Extent** |

Analysis on Table 1 shows that mean values of beneficiaries’ responses on items 1-7 are 3.38, 3.16, 3.36, 3.37, 3.71, 3.67 and 3.63, with corresponding SDs of 0.89, 0.98, 0.93, 1.06, 0.70 and 0.77, respectively. The mean scores are all greater than the criterion mean value of 2.50 and implies a positive response. For the facilitators, the mean value of their responses are 3.62, 3.51, 3.47, 3.49, 2.63, 2.75 and 2.83 with corresponding standard deviation (SDs) of 0.69, 0.86, 1.02, 0.85, 0.88, 0.90 and 1.12. The mean values of facilitators responses are also greater than 2.5 criterion mean and implies positive response. Beneficiaries and facilitators responses on extent to which cooperative mediation programme as an initiative for peace and conflict resolution has a significantly impacted on good governance in Emohua Local Government Area, gave a grand mean values of 3.46 and 3.18 which are also greater than the criterion mean and implies that respondents accepted that to a high extent cooperative mediation programme has: led to reduction in conflict incidences within the selected communities, contributed to improved community cohesion and relationships among different groups, improved trust and collaboration between local government authorities and community members, helped reduce incidences of corruption and mismanagement in the governance of selected communities, equipped community leaders and members with skills for conflict resolution and governance, and that peace initiatives achieved through cooperative mediation sustainable over time.

**Research Question Two:** To what extent does cooperative negotiation programme as an initiative for peace and conflict resolution on has a significant impact on good governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Table 2: Analysis of Extent to Which** **Cooperative Negotiation Programme as an Initiative for Peace and Conflict Resolution Has Significantly Impacted on Good Governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Statements**  | **Beneficiaries N=125** | **Facilitators N=15** |
| **X** | **SD** | **Remark** | **X** | **SD** | **Remark** |
| 8 | Cooperative negotiation programme engage community leaders in promoting peace | 2.80 | 1.14 | **High Extent** | 2.92 | 1.00 | **High Extent** |
| 9 | Outcomes of peace and conflict resolution through cooperative negotiation has been sustainable | 3.25 | 0.97 | **High Extent** | 3.01 | 1.02 | **High Extent** |
| 10 | Cooperative negotiation programme has contributed to improvement in inter-communal relationships within Emohua LGA | 3.35 | 0.69 | **High Extent** | 3.28 | 0.85 | **High Extent** |
| 11 | Cooperative negotiation programme encourage active community participation in governance and conflict resolution | 2.78 | 1.03 | **High Extent** | 3.01 | 0.98 | **High Extent** |
| 12 | Cooperative negotiation programme influences decision-making processes in community governance | 2.70 | 1.05 | **High Extent** | 2.71 | 0.94 | **High Extent** |
| 13 | Cooperative negotiation programme played significant role in reducing political tensions that affect good governance in Emohua LGA | 3.12 | 0.98 | **High Extent** | 2.64 | 0.91 | **High Extent** |
| 14 | Local government support the implementation of cooperative negotiation programme initiatives in your community | 2.93 | 1.09 | **High Extent** | 2.77 | 1.02 | **High Extent** |
|  | **Grand Mean** | **2.99** |  | **High Extent** | **2.90** |  | **High Extent** |

Analysis on Table 2 shows that mean values of beneficiaries’ responses on items 8-14 are 2.80, 3.25, 3.35, 2.78, 2.70, 3.12 ad 2.93 with corresponding SDs of 1.14, 0.97, 0.69, 1.03, 1.05, 0.98 and 1.09, respectively. The mean scores are all greater than the criterion mean value of 2.50 and implies a positive response. For the facilitators, the mean value of their responses are 2.92, 3.01, 3.28, 3.01, 2.71, 2.64 and 2.77 with corresponding standard deviation (SDs) of 1.00, 1.02, 0.85, 0.98, 0.94, 0.91 and 1.02. The mean values of facilitators responses are greater than 2.5 criterion mean and implies positive response. Beneficiaries and facilitators responses on extent to which cooperative negotiation programme as an initiative for peace and conflict resolution has a significantly impacted on good governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria gave grand mean scores of 2.99 and 2.90 respectively, which are greater than the criterion mean and implies that cooperative negotiation programme to a high extent has engage community leaders in promoting peace, contributed to improvement in inter-communal relationships within the selected communities, encourage active community participation in governance and conflict resolution, influences decision-making processes in community governance and played significant role in reducing political tensions that affect good governance in their communities.

**Research Question Three:** To what extent does integrative bargaining programme as an initiative for peace and conflict resolution has a significant impact on good governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Table 3: Analysis of Extent to Which** **Integrative Bargaining** **Programme as an Initiative for Peace and Conflict Resolution has Significantly Impacted on Good Governance in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Statements**  | **Beneficiaries N=125** | **Facilitators N=15** |
| **X** | **SD** | **Remark** | **X** | **SD** | **Remark** |
| 15 | Integrative bargaining programme foster consensus-building among key community stakeholders | 2.67 | 1.02 | **High Extent** | 2.93 | 0.86 | **High Extent** |
| 16 | Integrative bargaining programme increased the level of community participation in governance and conflict resolution efforts | 2.74 | 0.83 | **High Extent** | 2.55 | 0.78 | **High Extent** |
| 17 | integrative bargaining strategies lead to a noticeable reduction in the intensity and frequency of conflicts | 2.81 | 0.80 | **High Extent** | 2.83 | 0.88 | **High Extent** |
| 18 | Integrative bargaining programme contributed to transparency and accountability in local governance processes | 2.93 | 0.76 | **High Extent** | 2.58 | 0.91 | **High Extent** |
| 19 | Integrative bargaining programme improved trust and cooperation between community leaders and local government authorities | 2.68 | 0.83 | **High Extent** | 2.68 | 1.07 | **High Extent** |
| 20 | Integrative bargaining programme promote long-term peace and stability, contributing to sustainable governance | 2.84 | 0.92 | **High Extent** | 2.71 | 0.90 | **High Extent** |
| 21 | Integrative bargaining programme addressed power imbalances and promoted inclusivity in decision-making processes | 2.73 | 1.07 | **High Extent** | 2.81 | 0.89 | **High Extent** |
|  | **Grand Mean** | **2.77** |  |  | **2.73** |  |  |

Analysis on Table 1 shows that mean values of beneficiaries’ responses on items 15-21 are 2.67, 2.74, 2.81, 2.93, 2.68, 2.84 and 2.73 with corresponding SDs of 1.02, 0.83, 0.80, 0.76, 0.83, 0.92 and 1.07, respectively. The mean scores are all greater than the criterion mean value of 2.50 and implies a positive response. For the facilitators, the mean value of their responses are 2.93, 2.55, 2.83, 2.58, 2.68, 2.71 and 2.81 with corresponding standard deviation (SDs) of 0.86, 0.78, 0.88, 0.90 and 0.89 The mean values of facilitators responses are also greater than 2.5 criterion mean and implies positive response. Beneficiaries and facilitators responses on extent to which integrative bargaining programme as an initiative for peace and conflict resolution has a significantly impacted on good governance in Emohua Local Government Area gave grand mean values of 2.77 and 2.73 respectively, which are also greater than the criterion mean and implies that integrative bargaining programme to a high extent has fostered consensus-building among key community stakeholders, increased the level of community participation in governance and conflict resolution efforts, lead to a noticeable reduction in the intensity and frequency of conflicts, contributed to transparency and accountability in local governance processes, improved trust and cooperation between community leaders and local government authorities, promoted long-term peace and stability, contributing to sustainable governance and addressed power imbalances and promoted inclusivity in decision-making processes.

**DISCUSSION**

As revealed in the study, cooperative mediation programme had a significant positive impact on good governance in several communities within the Emohua Local Government Area. Both facilitators and beneficiaries generally concur that cooperative mediation has improved governance practices, reduced conflict, and strengthened community cohesion. These outcomes are consistent with research by Yusuf and Usman (2019), which found that cooperative mediation gives communities the fundamental tools they need to resolve conflicts so they may resolve disagreements amicably and avoid repeat incidents. Furthermore, Olayiwola, Ogunsanya, and Ojo (2020), found that persistent mediation efforts within rural communities led to stronger relationships among different groups, fostering a collective approach to conflict resolution. These findings support the benefits of cooperative mediation programs to better community cohesion and governance. Amadi and Chikere (2021) point out that this has also been connected to less corruption and more prosperous local governance. They contend that mediation programmes frequently teach principles of accountability and openness in governance systems. The study's conclusions are consistent with studies on the long-term viability of peace projects.

Similarly, Ojo and Olanrewaju (2022) proposed that mediation initiatives, especially community-driven ones, have a higher chance of producing long-term peace and stability. This can have a direct impact on the standard of governance. As opined by Nwankwo and Eze (2023), communities participating in cooperative mediation have long-term enhancements in leadership calibre and a decrease in resource mismanagement. The integrative bargaining program, as a peace and conflict resolution project, significantly impacts good governance in a few villages in the Emohua Local Government Area, as shown in the study findings given by facilitators and beneficiaries, both of whom are above the criteria mean. This suggests that several facets of community government have benefited from the cooperative bargaining program. Notably, the program has influenced decision-making processes, improved intercommunal relations, encouraged active community participation, reduced political tensions, and involved community leaders in promoting peace, all essential elements in fostering good governance. According to Okafor and Ekpe (2027), community-based dispute resolution programs greatly enhanced governance by including local leaders and encouraging participatory decision-making.

The findings of Ibekwe and Chukwuma (2026), which indicated that community negotiating efforts resulted in considerable reductions in political strife and enhanced the democratic processes in rural communities, are echoed by the reported reduction of political tensions in the Emohua communities.The involvement of the public in decision-making processes enhances the legitimacy of governing bodies and increases the accountability of those in positions of authority. The outcomes from the Emohua villages also demonstrate how integrative bargaining helps to strengthen government over the long run by encouraging harmonious coexistence and collaboration among community members. This is consistent with the findings of Osuji (2024), who pointed out that efforts to promote peace and resolve conflicts played a significant role in fostering sustainable government and lowering leadership crises in rural communities.

The study also showed that integrative bargaining has facilitated consensus-building among important community stakeholders and that both program facilitators and beneficiaries in a subset of the communities in the Emohua Local Government Area believe the program has a major positive influence on good governance. This is consistent with earlier studies stressing the value of an agreement in settling conflicts and maintaining long-lasting peace (Akanji, 2015). Integrative bargaining programs foster inclusivity and communication, which are essential for long-term peace and development because they involve all parties (Umar, 2017). The initiative has also raised the degree of community involvement in efforts to resolve conflicts and improve government. This result is consistent with research by Olawale and Ibironke (2020), who found that community people's active participation in governance increases decision-making accountability and ownership. Conflicting parties are more likely to avoid escalation when they engage in mutually beneficial discussions, as evidenced by Adeyemi's (2019) research, which is supported by the notable decrease in conflict intensity and frequency observed in the chosen communities.

Additionally, the programme’s improvement of accountability and transparency in local governance processes aligns with previous research showing that such programs increase confidence between the governed and governing bodies (Ikejiaku & Ugwumba, 2021). According to Ojo (2018), trust is necessary for the durability of governance structures, and peacebuilding initiatives that include transparency procedures frequently promote more robust governance. The study also demonstrates increased confidence and collaboration between local government representatives and community leaders. The integrative bargaining program has contributed to the resolution of long-standing distrust concerns by lowering power disparities and promoting open communication. This is consistent with Uwaegbulam's (2021) conclusions about the need for inclusive decision-making for improving governance. Ultimately, integrative bargaining's advocacy of long-term peace and stability has helped the chosen communities' governments remain sustainable. This result is consistent with the findings of Ogundipe and Makinde (2022), who emphasize the role systems for resolving conflicts play in fostering long-lasting peace and development. Integrative bargaining has been crucial in enhancing regional governance results by addressing power disparities and promoting inclusivity in decision-making processes.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study has indicated that cooperative mediation programme significantly contributed to improving governance by fostering peace, trust, and collaboration within the communities of Emohua Local Government Area. Cooperative negotiation programmes have produced positive outcomes in promoting peace, enhancing inter-communal relationships, encouraging active community participation, influencing decision-making, and reducing political tensions are consistent with prior research on the subject. Also, integrative bargaining programme has demonstrated its value as a conflict resolution tool that not only mitigates disputes but also enhances governance structures. By fostering a collaborative and transparent environment, it has contributed to the overall development and stability of the selected communities, paving the way for sustained peace and good governance.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. A wider spectrum of community people should be included in decision-making processes in order to further improve the efficacy of these conflict resolution programs. This will promote involvement, ease political tensions, and improve ties between communities.
2. For mediators and facilitators working in cooperative mediation and integrative bargaining programs, regular training and workshops aimed at enhancing their competence should be offered. This will guarantee that they have the know-how to resolve new disputes and sustain an atmosphere of open and cooperative governance.
3. Local government should formalise and include integrative bargaining and cooperative mediation programmes within their governance frameworks. This will encourage enduring harmony, confidence, and cooperation between the communities.

**REFERENCES**

Adeyemi, K. (2019). Peace and conflict resolution: The role of dialogue and negotiation in community settings. *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 19(2), 125-144.

Akanji, T. (2015). Conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Nigeria: The role of community-based approaches. *African Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 15(1), 67-80.

Amadi, I., & Chikere, P. (2021). Mediation and Governance: The Role of Cooperative Conflict Resolution in Nigerian Communities. *Journal of Public Policy and Governance, 15*(1), 101-116.

EEOC (2003). 10 Reasons to Mediate. Available online at: httpss://www.eeoc.gov (Retrieved date: 10-8-2023)

Eugene, V. K. (2022). Negotiation and Mdiation Training for Benue Traditional Rules. Available online at: <https://www.clingendered.org> (Retrieved date 16-9-2024).

Ibekwe, C., & Chukwuma, N. (2026). **Community negotiation and political stability: Case studies from Nigeria's rural regions**. *Journal of Conflict and Governance*, 14(2), 234-250.

Ibrahim, A. A. (2018). Peace and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria: An Imperative Tool for Countering Violent Extremism. Available online at: [www.researchgate](http://www.researchgate) (Accessed date: 15-8-2024).

Ikejiaku, C., & Ugwumba, O. (2021). Transparency in local governance and its impact on conflict resolution. *Governance and Society*, 16(4), 97-112.

Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) (2023). Strategic Course on Negotiation and Mediation (Chartered). Available online at: htt://pcr.gov.ng (Retrieved date: 12-9-2024).

Jenna, C. (2023). Positive Conflict in the Workplace. Available online at: [www.exuceinc.com](http://www.exuceinc.com) (Retrieved date: 11-7-2024).

Jennifer, H. (2024). 5 Conflict Resolution Strategies: Steps, Benefits and Tips. Available online at: [www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com) (Retrieved date: 1-8-2024).

Nwankwo, J., & Eze, S. (2023). Cooperative Mediation and Governance: The Pathway to Reducing Corruption and Enhancing Leadership. *African Journal of Leadership and Governance, 9*(2), 84-102.

NYC, (2024). What is Mediation? Available online at: [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov) (Retrieved date: 1-8-2024).

Ogundipe, D., & Makinde, A. (2022). Conflict resolution mechanisms in local governance: Implications for peace and development. *International Journal of Development and Governance*, 18(1), 201-220.

Ojo, A., & Olanrewaju, M. (2022). Sustaining Peace Through Mediation: The Role of Community Initiatives in Nigeria. *Peace and Development Journal, 14*(1), 55-68.

Ojo, F. (2018). Trust-building mechanisms in post-conflict governance. *Journal of African Development*, 25(3), 134-150.

Okafor, J., & Ekpe, O. (2027). **Resolving community conflicts through cooperative negotiations: Implications for governance**. *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, 16(3), 340-356.

Olayiwola, T., Ogunsanya, K., & Ojo, F. (2020). Rural Mediation Programs and Good Governance: A Case Study of Selected Nigerian Communities. *Journal of Rural Development and Governance, 8*(4), 78-92.

Onyejiaku, C. & Nwanneka, C. G. (2018). Management of Conflict and its Implications on Nigerian Public Sector Organizations. Available online at: <https://www.research.g> (Retrieved date: 19-9-2024).

Osuji, B. A. (2024). **Integrative peace initiatives and their role in rural governance**. *Nigerian Journal of Political Science*, 22(1), 75-89.

Spangler, B. (2003). Integrative or Interest-Based Bargaining. Available online at: [www.beyondintractability.org](http://www.beyondintractability.org) (Retrieved date: 28-7-21).

Spangler, B. (2003). What is Integrative or Interest-Based bargaining? Available online at: <https://www.beyondintractability.org> (Accessed date: 12-9-2024).

Umar, A. (2017). Integrative bargaining as a tool for conflict resolution in local governance. *Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 22(2), 45-63.

Uwaegbulam, O. (2021). Inclusivity in local decision-making: A pathway to sustainable governance. *Nigerian Journal of Political Science*, 30(2), 91-108.

Yusuf, A., & Usman, R. (2019). Cooperative Mediation and Governance: Enhancing Community Relations. *African Journal of Public Administration, 10*(2), 33-50.