



Assessing the Effectiveness of Mediation and Arbitration as an Alternative Dispute Resolution in Resolving Interfaith Disputes among Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State

*Dr. Lawal Abdullahi Sifawa¹ and Dr. Hadiza Marafa²

^{1,2} Department of Islamic Studies, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, Nigeria.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.21187600

Submission Date: 26 May 2026 | Published Date: 04 July 2026

*Corresponding author: **Dr. Lawal Abdullahi Sifawa**

Department of Islamic Studies, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, Nigeria.

Abstract

This study assesses the use and effectiveness of mediation and arbitration as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism for resolving conflicts among Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State, Northwest Nigeria. Using a mixed-methods convergent parallel design, quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 384 respondents (192 Muslims and 192 Christians), while qualitative data were generated via 20 in-depth interviews with religious leaders and ADR/legal practitioners. Findings show a high level of ADR awareness (88.5%) and significant utilization (personal use 54.7%; witnessed only 28.6%). Mediation is largely facilitated by religious leaders (Imams/Pastors) rather than court-connected mediators. Respondents generally perceive mediation as effective due to faster settlement, lower cost, and improved relationship preservation, though major challenges include religious bias and enforcement gaps. The study concludes that mediation especially faith-anchored mediation plays a critical role in maintaining inter-community peace, but requires improved legitimacy, procedural safeguards, and stronger linkage with enforceable mechanisms.

Keywords: assessing, effectiveness, mediation, arbitration alternative dispute resolution, resolving interfaith disputes Muslims, Christians, Kaduna, state.

Introduction

Ethno-religious conflicts in Kaduna State repeatedly strain social relationships and weaken communal trust. When tensions rise, communities often turn to Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), particularly mediation, because it can help prevent disputes from escalating, maintain relationships, and restore peace without relying only on formal courts. Mediation and arbitration, as understood in ADR scholarship, is a process in which a neutral third party facilitates dialogue so that the parties involved can reach a voluntary settlement (Moore, 2014). Empirical studies also suggest that mediation typically reduces delays and costs compared to litigation, while improving satisfaction since agreements are negotiated by the disputants rather than imposed by judges (Boulle & Nesic, 2017).

However, mediation in religiously diverse settings comes with special challenges. Mediators may be viewed as biased, and agreements may be difficult to enforce if they remain limited to informal social or religious systems. For this reason, this study examines how mediation is used and how effective it is for resolving conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the introduction of the Multi-Door Courthouse in Kaduna and peace-building efforts by both government and non-government organizations, ethno-religious conflicts still occur. Although ADR is widely promoted as a solution, there appears to be a major gap between what ADR theory says and what actually happens in practice on the ground.

Many studies have examined conflict causes in Kaduna or the general legal framework of ADR in Nigeria (Agbibo, 2019). Yet, there is limited empirical research that looks specifically at whether Muslim and Christian communities in

Kaduna accept, use, and benefit from mediation and arbitration. Important questions remain: Do religious leaders and followers truly trust ADR processes? Or do they see them as outside, imposed systems? In addition, it is not fully clear whether the current way ADR is implemented adequately respects the legal and doctrinal requirements of Islamic and Christian law.

In other words, a mechanism that works well for commercial disputes may not automatically work for conflicts that are deeply religious and identity-based. This study addresses that gap by assessing the use, challenges, and effectiveness of mediation and arbitration in resolving Muslim–Christian conflicts in Kaduna State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

Broad Aim

The broad aim of this study is to assess the use of mediation as an ADR mechanism for conflict resolution among Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine the level of awareness and utilization of mediation among Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State.
2. To evaluate how effective mediation is in promoting lasting peace between the two religious groups.
3. To analyze whether ADR practices align with Islamic and Christian religious laws in the Kaduna context.
4. To identify socio-cultural and institutional barriers to ADR implementation in Kaduna State and suggest workable solutions.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What level of awareness and utilization of mediation exists among Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State?
2. How effective is mediation in resolving ethno-religious conflicts in Kaduna State when compared to traditional litigation?
3. How far do Islamic principles of Sulh and Christian principles of reconciliation shape the acceptance of ADR mechanisms in Kaduna State?
4. What challenges hinder the effective implementation of mediation for inter-religious conflict resolution in Kaduna State?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two theories to explain why ADR may succeed or fail in ethno-religious conflict settings: Human Needs Theory and Conflict Transformation Theory.

1. Human Needs Theory

Human needs theory (as developed by John Burton) argues that conflicts arise not only from opposing interests, but also from the denial of fundamental human needs such as identity, security, recognition, and participation (Burton, 1990). These needs are not easily negotiated away like interests can be. In Kaduna, recurring violence between Muslims and Christians is often connected to deeper needs for religious recognition and political inclusion. Courts tend to focus on rights and legal outcomes, but may not address the root needs. Mediation provides a space where parties can express those deeper concerns and negotiate solutions that speak to identity, security, and recognition. As Azeez (2021) notes, ADR can be effective in Nigeria because it allows parties to raise grievances beyond technical legal issues, which helps to address the real causes of ethno-religious tension.

2. Conflict Transformation Theory

Conflict Transformation Theory, associated with John Paul Lederach, emphasizes that conflict should not merely be “ended,” but transformed. Transformation involves changing relationships, attitudes, and structures that sustain violent conflict (Lederach, 2003). This theory fits well with this study because it highlights how mediation and arbitration can do more than produce legal outcomes they can also improve how groups relate and cooperate. Unlike court judgments that often create winners and losers (and leave bitterness), mediation and arbitration can support restorative outcomes aimed at rebuilding communal relationships. Salihu (2020) similarly argues that sustainable peace in the Middle Belt requires a shift away from punitive justice toward restorative justice, which aligns closely with ADR practice.

Concept of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

ADR has grown from a secondary option into a key pillar of justice systems both globally and in Nigeria. ADR refers to dispute resolution methods that take place outside traditional, formal, adversarial court litigation. It includes different processes designed to resolve disputes through a neutral third party and/or direct negotiation, rather than through court trials.

UNCITRAL describes ADR as a voluntary, generally non-binding process where a neutral third party helps disputants reach a mutually acceptable agreement. This definition highlights two important features:

- **Voluntariness:** parties must agree to participate.
- **Facilitation:** the third party assists negotiation rather than imposing a decision.

In Nigeria, ADR has received strong statutory encouragement, partly because courts are often overburdened and the litigation process can be slow, expensive, and overly technical. Unlike the adversarial court system, ADR prioritizes practical resolution and party interests while allowing flexibility and faster access to justice. Olatunji (2022) emphasizes that ADR is not “alternative to justice” but an alternative to the burdensome process of litigation.

Nigeria’s ADR framework is supported through constitutional encouragement of dispute settlement methods such as mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and negotiation. In addition, the Multi-Door Courthouse model—first developed in Lagos and later adopted in places like Kaduna represents a formal institutional approach to ADR. The Multi-Door Courthouse provides a “single window” for directing disputes to the most appropriate resolution pathway such as mediation, arbitration, or neutral evaluation.

For this study, mediation is the primary ADR mechanism of interest. It is also useful to understand ADR as a spectrum of “control.” Negotiation gives parties full control, while mediation usually involves a mediator and can result in enforceable outcomes. Recognizing this difference helps explain how mediation may handle complex religious disputes differently from purely legal adjudication.

Concept of Mediation

Mediation is one of the most collaborative forms of ADR. It is a structured process where an impartial mediator assists parties in resolving conflict using communication and negotiation techniques. Unlike a judge or arbitrator, a mediator does not have the power to impose a decision. Instead, the mediator facilitates dialogue, reduces hostility, helps parties clarify interests, and guides them toward a mutually acceptable agreement (Moore, 2014).

A key principle behind mediation is party autonomy the parties keep control over both the dispute resolution and the final terms. In practice, mediation often involves private sessions with each party (caucuses). These private interactions help the mediator understand underlying fears and interests that may not be openly discussed in joint meetings. This is especially important in high-tension conflicts, including religious disputes, where people may fear retaliation. Mediation is often preferred in ethno-religious conflicts because:

1. **It is non-adversarial:** court outcomes can create “winners” and “losers,” which may fuel future hostility.
2. **It preserves relationships:** reaching agreement requires cooperation and listening, which helps rebuild trust.
3. **It reflects socio-cultural realities:** in African communities where harmony and communal living are important, mediation is more culturally aligned than strict legalism.
4. **It offers confidentiality:** sensitive religious issues can be discussed privately, reducing the risk of public escalation.
5. **It is flexible:** parties can choose neutral venues instead of facing intimidating court settings.

Nevertheless, mediation depends on the mediator’s skill and the parties’ willingness to compromise. Because it is voluntary, mediation cannot force agreement. Still, mediation’s relationship-focused and restorative nature makes it valuable for peacebuilding in Kaduna State.

The Concept of *Sulh* (Mediation/Reconciliation)

Meaning and Islamic Basis

Sulh comes from the Arabic root connected to making peace, doing good, and repairing relationships. In Islamic law, *Sulh* refers to voluntary agreements reached between disputing parties to settle differences, often assisted by a trusted intermediary or mediator (*Muslih* or *Wasta*). Islamic teachings strongly encourage *Sulh* and often prioritize it over judicial adjudication for many types of disputes.

Islamic jurists generally allow *Sulh* in most disputes, except where public justice requires formal punishment in cases involving Hadd offenses. In civil, family, commercial, and tort disputes, *Sulh* is strongly recommended and may sometimes become necessary if the dispute threatens wider disorder.

Qur’anic Foundations

The Qur’an supports mediation through divine guidance on third-party intervention in resolving disputes. For example, *Surah An-Nisa* (4:35) highlights appointing two arbitrators for marital disagreement, with reconciliation emphasized when both parties seek peace. The same principle of seeking settlement and peace extends beyond marriage into other disputes. Another relevant verse (4:128) also emphasizes the value of settlement as “best,” indicating that reconciliation can be more spiritually rewarding than a purely adversarial outcome.

How *Sulh* Works

Sulh typically follows stages such as:

- **Negotiation (*Mufawadah*):** parties attempt direct resolution.
- **Mediation (*Wasilah*):** an intermediary shuttles between them to soften hearts and explore settlement.
- **Reconciliation (*Sulh*):** the mediator facilitates a formal agreement.

In Northern Nigeria, the *Muslih* is often a person of high trust such as an *Imam*, community leader (*Sarkin Gari*), or respected elder. The *Muslih* does not usually force outcomes; instead, persuasion and moral guidance are central.

Relevance to Kaduna State

In Kaduna's socio-cultural setting, *Sulh* is not only religious practice but also deeply connected to cultural expectations of honor and community reputation. Public court battles can be seen as shameful because they may expose family problems publicly. For many Muslims in Kaduna, *Sulh* is preferred because it is conducted in line with Islamic principles, protects privacy, and strengthens the moral authority behind the settlement.

In Muslim-Christian disputes, *Sulh* can also help ensure that terms of agreement respect Islamic conscience requirements. This religious legitimacy is one reason peace agreements may be more durable than agreements made without spiritual support.

Research Design

The study adopted a Mixed-Methods Research Design, specifically the Convergent Parallel Design. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed separately but during the same phase, then combined to provide a fuller understanding.

- **Quantitative component:** used a Descriptive Survey approach to measure awareness, perceptions, and utilization of ADR among Muslim and Christian residents in Kaduna State.
- **Qualitative component:** used an Exploratory approach through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders (religious leaders, legal practitioners, and ADR experts). This helped uncover cultural and religious nuances that statistics alone cannot fully capture.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire and interview guide were reviewed by the supervisor and two other experts in related departments (Islamic Studies and Law). Feedback was used to improve unclear items and ensure the instruments fully matched the research objectives.

The instruments were further vetted by both an Islamic scholar and a Christian theologian to ensure religious and cultural terminology was appropriate.

Reliability

A pilot study was conducted using 30 participants (15 Muslims and 15 Christians) who were not part of the main study. The internal consistency of the questionnaire items was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which produced a coefficient of 0.75. Since this value is above the 0.70 threshold recommended by Nunnally (1978), the instruments were considered reliable for the main study.

Population of the Study

The study population includes Kaduna State residents in a context where both Muslims and Christians live as major communities and where ethno-religious conflicts have occurred. The population was grouped into three categories:

1. **General residents** (18 years and above) from Muslim and Christian communities in Kaduna Metropolis and key satellite towns such as Zaria and Kafanchan.
2. **Legal practitioners and ADR experts** (lawyers, mediators, and people experienced in disputes with religious dimensions).
3. **Religious leaders** (Imams, Islamic scholars, Pastors, and church elders who often serve as the first point of contact during disputes), because Kaduna's total population is very large (estimated at over 8 million), the study focused on accessible residents across the three senatorial zones: Kaduna Central, Kaduna North, and Kaduna South.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Sampling Techniques

- **Stratified Random Sampling:** the general population was divided into strata based on religion (Muslim/Christian) and geography (Kaduna Central/North/South), ensuring balance across groups.

- **Purposive Sampling:** used for selecting key informants in the qualitative study, including religious leaders and experienced legal practitioners.
- **Convenience Sampling:** used selectively to administer questionnaires to willing participants in public spaces such as markets, worship centers, and motor parks.

Sample Size

Using the Taro Yamane formula (1967) for a finite population with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, the quantitative sample size was 384 questionnaires distributed as:

- 192 Muslims
- 192 Christians

For the qualitative phase, 20 in-depth interview key informants were selected:

- 6 religious leaders (3 Muslim Imams, 3 Christian Pastors)
- 8 legal practitioners/mediators
- 6 officials from peace/ADR agencies in Kaduna (e.g., KSMDC)

Instruments for Data Collection

The study used two main instruments:

1. **Structured Questionnaire:** for general respondents, divided into four sections:
 - Section A: demographics (age, gender, religion, education, location)
 - Section B: awareness and utilization of ADR
 - Section C: perceptions of effectiveness (Likert-scale items on speed, cost, fairness)
 - Section D: challenges/barriers
2. **In-depth Interview Guide (IDI):** for key informants, containing open-ended questions such as:
 - “What role do you play in resolving disputes among your followers?”
 - “How does religious doctrine influence your preference for mediation or arbitration?”
 - “What challenges affect ADR in resolving Muslim–Christian conflicts in Kaduna State?”

Ethical Considerations

This study involves sensitive ethno-religious conflict issues; strict ethical safeguards were observed:

- The purpose of the study was explained to participants.
- Written or verbal informed consent was obtained.
- Respondents’ names were not required for questionnaires.
- Interview participants were given pseudonyms (e.g., “Imam A,” “Pastor B”).
- Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time without penalty.
- Interviews were conducted in safe and neutral environments, neutrality was maintained, and no religious beliefs were ridiculed or judged.

Data Analysis

Completed questionnaires were sorted, coded, and entered into SPSS version 26.0. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. Qualitative interview data were analyzed thematically.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	215	56.0
	Female	169	44.0
	Total	384	100.0
Age	18 – 25 years	65	16.9
	26 – 35 years	140	36.5
	36 – 45 years	110	28.6
	46 years & above	69	18.0
	Total	384	100.0
Religion	Islam	192	50.0
	Christianity	192	50.0
	Total	384	100.0
Education	No Formal Education	25	6.5

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Secondary School Certificate	145	37.8
	NCE / ND / Diploma	80	20.8
	First Degree (B.Sc / B.A)	100	26.0
	Postgraduate Degree	34	8.9
	Total	384	100.0

Table 1 shows that 56% of the respondents were male, while 44% were female. This indicates a fair gender representation, though slightly skewed towards males, which may reflect the public nature of conflict discussions in Kaduna State. The age distribution reveals that the majority of respondents (65.1%) fall within the active working age bracket of 26–45 years, suggesting that the views captured are from those who are economically active and likely to be involved in community disputes. The religious distribution was perfectly balanced (50% Muslim, 50% Christian) as per the stratified sampling technique, ensuring a comparative analysis is possible. Furthermore, 62.7% of the respondents possess at least a tertiary education (Diploma/First Degree), indicating a high level of literacy, which implies that their responses regarding legal concepts like ADR are informed.

Analysis of Research Question 1: Awareness and Utilization of ADR

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness and utilization of mediation and arbitration among Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State?

Table 2: Level of Awareness of Alternative Dispute Resolution

Awareness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	340	88.5
No	44	11.5
Total	384	100.0

Table 2 reveals that the vast majority of respondents (88.5%) are aware of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) or its religious equivalents (*Sulh* for Muslims and Biblical Reconciliation for Christians). Only 11.5% claimed ignorance. This high awareness suggests that the concept of settling disputes out of court is culturally embedded in Kaduna State.

Table 3: Utilization of Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

Utilization	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Used Personally	210	54.7
Witnessed Only	110	28.6
Never Used	64	16.7
Total	384	100.0

From Table 3, 54.7% of respondents indicated they have personally used ADR, while 28.6% have witnessed it. Combining these (83.3%), it is evident that ADR is not just a theoretical concept but a practical reality in Kaduna.

Table 4: Preferred Facilitators of ADR

Facilitator	Muslim Response (n=192)	Christian Response (n=192)	Total %
Religious Leader (Imam/Pastor)	140 (72.9%)	130 (67.7%)	70.3%
Traditional Ruler	35 (18.2%)	45 (23.4%)	20.8%
Court-Connected Mediator	10 (5.2%)	12 (6.3%)	5.7%
Lawyer/Advocate	7 (3.7%)	5 (2.6%)	3.2%

Table 4 highlights a critical finding: Religious Leaders are the dominant ADR facilitators. 72.9% of Muslims prefer Imams, and 67.7% of Christians prefer Pastors. Only 5.7% of respondents have used formal court-connected mediators (like the Multi-Door Courthouse). This suggests that in Kaduna, "formal" state ADR is struggling to compete with the "informal" religious ADR which people trust more.

Analysis of Research Question 2: Effectiveness of ADR

Research Question 2: How effective are mediation and arbitration in resolving ethno-religious conflicts in Kaduna State compared to traditional litigation?

To answer this, a 4-point Likert Scale was used: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree. A Mean score of 2.50 and above was the criterion for agreement.

Table 5: Effectiveness of ADR Metrics

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Remark
1.	ADR resolves disputes faster than regular court.	3.55	0.65	Effective
2.	ADR is cheaper than litigation.	3.62	0.71	Effective
3.	ADR helps preserve relationships/peace.	3.48	0.82	Effective
4.	ADR respects religious beliefs.	3.40	0.89	Effective
5.	ADR outcomes are usually respected/followed.	3.20	0.95	Effective
6.	Secular courts do not understand our religious/cultural nuances like ADR experts.	2.85	1.10	Effective

Table 5 shows that all items had a mean score above 2.50, indicating that respondents generally perceive ADR as effective. The highest rated factors were Cost (Mean 3.62) and Speed (Mean 3.55). This supports the literature review which identified delay and cost as the major drawbacks of the formal judicial system. Item 6 had a mean of 2.85, meaning respondents agree that secular courts lack the cultural and religious sensitivity required to handle disputes in Kaduna, further validating the preference for religious ADR.

Analysis of Research Question 3: Religious Influence

Research Question 3: To what extent do Islamic principles of *Sulh* and Christian principles of reconciliation influence the acceptance of ADR mechanisms?

A hypothesis was tested using the Independent Sample t-test to determine if there is a significant difference in the preference for ADR based on religion.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the perception of ADR effectiveness between Muslims and Christians.

Table 6: T-Test Comparison of ADR Perception by Religion

Religion	N	Mean	Std. Dev	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Muslim	192	3.55	0.52			
Christian	192	3.48	0.61	1.24	0.21	Not Significant

The t-test result in Table 4.6 shows a p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.21. Since 0.21 is greater than the standard alpha level of 0.05, we accept the null hypothesis. This means there is no significant difference between Muslims and Christians regarding the effectiveness of ADR. Both groups value the process equally, though they tend to utilize their own religious leaders (as seen in Table 4). The analysis confirms that ADR is a unifying concept across religious lines in Kaduna State.

Analysis of Research Question 4: Challenges Facing ADR

Research Question 4: What are the challenges hindering the effective implementation of mediation and arbitration for inter-religious conflict resolution in Kaduna State?

Table 7: Challenges of ADR Implementation

Challenge	Frequency (Yes)	Percentage (%)
Religious Bias	250	65.1
Lack of Legal Enforcement	180	46.9
High Cost of Professional Mediators	120	31.3
Lack of Awareness of Formal ADR	90	23.4

Table 7 reveals that Religious Bias (65.1%) is the biggest challenge. During the qualitative interviews, many respondents explained that in inter-religious conflicts, Muslims often fear a Christian-dominated state mediation, and vice versa. The second major challenge is Lack of Legal Enforcement (46.9%). Respondents noted that while a Pastor or Imam might settle a dispute, there is no legal mechanism to force compliance if one party changes their mind later, unlike a court judgment.

Qualitative Analysis of In-Depth Interviews (Themes)

To complement the quantitative data, 20 Key Informants (Imams, Pastors, and Lawyers) were interviewed. Three major themes emerged:

Theme 1: The Primacy of Religious Trust

- *People come to me first because they trust the Mosque. A court is a stranger's house.* — Imam A (Muslim Leader).
- *"In Kaduna, if you take a brother to court, you destroy the relationship forever. Here in the church, we mediate to save the soul and the family."* Pastor B (Christian Leader). This reinforces the data in Table 4.4. Religious bodies are the first line of defense because they possess the "social capital" and trust that the state lacks.

Theme 2: The Inter-Faith Dilemma

- *"It is very hard to mediate between a Muslim and a Christian if both parties demand that the mediator be from their own faith. We often have to use a panel of one Imam and one Pastor to balance the trust."* Barrister C (ADR Expert). This confirms the data in Table 7 regarding "Religious Bias." The homogeneity of Alternative Dispute Resolution (Imams for Muslims, Pastors for Christians) works well for internal disputes but creates a barrier for *inter-religious* conflicts.

Theme 3: The Enforcement Gap

- *"We settle the matter in the Mosque (Sulh), but if the husband refuses to pay the maintenance, the woman has nowhere to go but the High Court, which takes years."* Legal Practitioner D. This highlights the disconnect between the success of Alternative Dispute Resolution (settlement) and the failure of enforcement (legal backing). While Alternative Dispute Resolution solves the dispute immediately, the lack of statutory backing for some religious settlements remains a weakness.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study corroborate and expand on existing literature.

The Religious Preference for ADR: The finding that religious leaders dominate ADR in Kaduna supports the works of Yakubu (2021) and Ojo (2022). Yakubu (2021) argued that *Sulh* is the most encouraged method of dispute resolution in Islam due to its alignment with Sharia principles. Similarly, Ojo (2022) found that Christians prefer church mediation to avoid the secular injunction against believers suing one another (1 Corinthians 6). The current study validates these theories by showing that in practice, this preference is the reality in Kaduna. The trust placed in religious leaders stems from the "Prophetic model" for Muslims and the "Christ-like model" for Christians, which secular judges do not possess.

The Ineffectiveness of State Alternative Dispute Resolution: The low patronage of the Multi-Door Courthouse (MDC) aligns with Adeyemi's (2019) study on the Lagos MDC, which found that ADR is largely used for commercial disputes. The current study extends this by showing that in Kaduna, socio-religious disputes are largely kept away from state-run MDCs. This is likely due to the "cultural distance" between the formal legal system and the religious realities of the people. As noted in the literature review, the concept of *Sulh* and Biblical Mediation is "restorative," whereas the state system is "adjudicative." The data confirms that Kaduna residents prioritize restoration over formal legal validation.

The Challenge of Inter-Religious Mediation: The finding that religious bias is a major challenge supports the Conflict Transformation Theory proposed by Lederach (2003). The theory posits that conflict is rooted in relationships and identity. When a conflict involves a Muslim and a Christian, the identity of the mediator becomes crucial. If the mediator is Muslim, the Christian may fear the outcome, and vice versa. This explains why, despite the high level of awareness, inter-religious conflicts in Kaduna often escalate into violence the "neutral ground" required for mediation is often missing.

The Enforcement Gap: The study's finding on the lack of enforcement aligns with Chukwuemeka (2019), who argued that the bureaucratic process of registering Alternative Dispute Resolution agreements is discouraging. In Kaduna, many *Sulh* agreements or church settlements remain unregistered. This creates a false sense of security; peace is established verbally but remains fragile because it lacks the force of law. This disconnect highlights a critical gap between the "spiritual validity" of Alternative Dispute Resolution and its "legal validity."

Summary of Findings

Based on the data collected and analyzed, the following key findings were established:

1. **High Level of Awareness and Utilization:** The study found a high level of awareness (88.5%) of ADR mechanisms among both Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State. More than half of the respondents (54.7%) have personally utilized Alternative Dispute Resolution, and an additional 28.6% have witnessed it. This indicates that ADR is not a foreign concept but an established practice in the state.
2. **Dominance of Religious Leaders as Facilitators:** A significant finding was the overwhelming preference for religious leaders as Alternative Dispute Resolution facilitators. 72.9% of Muslims preferred Imams for *Sulh*, and 67.7% of Christians preferred Pastors for mediation. Conversely, the utilization of formal state mechanisms like

the Multi-Door Courthouse was low (5.7%). This suggests that in Kaduna, the "church" and the "mosque" are functioning as the primary courts of first instance.

3. **Effectiveness Driven by Cost and Speed:** Respondents perceived Alternative Dispute Resolution as highly effective because it is faster (Mean 3.55) and cheaper (Mean 3.62) than litigation. The study confirmed that the delays associated with the formal judicial system in Nigeria drive people toward religious and traditional dispute resolution.
4. **Convergence of Views Across Religions:** The hypothesis test revealed no significant difference (p-value 0.21) in the perception of Alternative Dispute Resolution effectiveness between Muslims and Christians. Both groups agreed that ADR preserves relationships and respects religious beliefs. This finding aligns with the Human Needs Theory, suggesting that the desire for peace, justice, and speed is universal across both religious groups.
5. **Challenges of Bias and Enforcement:** Despite the high utilization, the study identified two major challenges. First, Religious Bias (65.1%) remains a barrier to inter-religious conflict resolution; Muslims often distrust Christian mediators and vice versa. Second, Lack of Legal Enforcement (46.9%) hampers the long-term efficacy of religious Alternative Dispute Resolution, as settlements made in mosques or churches are not automatically backed by state power.

Conclusion

This study concludes that mediation is not only viable but is strongly preferred for resolving conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State. However, ADR in Kaduna is mainly driven through religious systems rather than secular state mechanisms. Mediation supports social harmony due to its flexibility, speed, and low cost—but it struggles where ethno-religious divides are deep.

For ADR to reach its full potential in Kaduna, the state must recognize, support, and formally integrate religious ADR approaches into the broader justice framework. Relying only on state-run ADR is unlikely to fully solve Kaduna's conflicts, just as relying only on religious ADR without legal backing leaves settlements fragile.

Recommendations

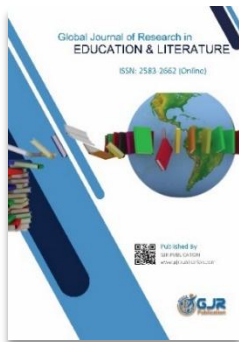
1. **Kaduna State Judiciary and Government (Formalizing Religious ADR):**
Establish a Faith-Based ADR Desk within the Multi-Door Courthouse to accredit Imams and Pastors as mediators. When religious mediators settle disputes (e.g., Sulh), the agreement should be filed for legal enforceability to close the enforcement gap.
2. **Religious Leaders (Inter-faith mediation):**
Create inter-faith mediation panels for Muslim–Christian disputes, ideally with both an Imam and a Pastor co-mediating to reduce trust barriers. Conduct joint peace workshops based on Islamic Sulh and Christian reconciliation to emphasize common ground.
3. **Legal Practitioners and ADR Experts:**
Encourage clients to use the Multi-Door Courthouse while respecting the role of religious ADR. Provide training to religious mediators on how agreements can meet legal requirements to withstand future scrutiny.
4. **CSOs and NGOs:**
Run public enlightenment campaigns promoting inter-religious tolerance and encouraging ADR as both a peacebuilding tool and a religious duty.

References

1. Agbiboa, D. E. (2019). The politics of ethno-religious conflicts in Kaduna, Nigeria. *African Security Review*, 28(3), 312–330.
2. Azeez, B. (2021). Human needs theory and the management of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria. *Peace and Conflict Studies Review*, 7(4), 22–39.
3. Boulle, L., & Nesic, M. (2017). *Mediation: Principles, process, practice* (4th ed.). LexisNexis. (Please verify the edition and publisher, as several versions exist.)
4. The Holy Qur'an. (n.d.). Surah An-Nisa (4:35, 4:128) and Surah Al-Hujurat (49:9).
5. Lederach, John Paul. (2003). *The little book of conflict transformation: Clear articulation of the guiding principles of a new paradigm in conflict resolution*. Good Books.
6. Moore, Christopher W. (2014). *The mediation process: Practical strategies for resolving conflict* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
7. Olatunji, E. (2022). *The principles and practice of ADR in Nigeria*. Heinemann Educational Books.
8. Salihu, M. (2020). From conflict to peacebuilding: A study of the Middle Belt. *African Security Review*, 29(2), 145–160.
9. Yamane, Taro. (1967). *Statistics: An introductory analysis* (2nd ed.). Harper & Row.

CITATION

Sifawa, L. A., & Marafa, H. (2026). Assessing the Effectiveness of Mediation and Arbitration as an Alternative Dispute Resolution in Resolving Interfaith Disputes among Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State. In *Global Journal of Research in Education & Literature* (Vol. 6, Number 4, pp. 1–9).
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21187600>



Global Journal of Research in Education & Literature

Assets of Publishing with Us

- **Immediate, unrestricted online access**
- **Peer Review Process**
- **Author's Retain Copyright**
- **DOI for all articles**