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The Identity Factor in Intercultural Conflicts Mediation and Resolution: The Case of Africa

Busayo Olubunmi Adeyinka

Linguistics; Intercultural Communication in Global Information Space, National Research University Higher School of
Economics, Moscow, Russia

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Corresponding Author: **Busayo Olubunmi Adeyinka**

Abstract

This paper explores the intricate role of identity in the processes of intercultural conflict resolution and mediation, focusing specifically on the African context. It delves into how ethnic, cultural, and national identities influence conflict dynamics and the effectiveness of mediation efforts across diverse African societies.

It explores the intricate role of identity in the processes of intercultural conflict resolution and mediation, focusing specifically on the African context. It delves into how ethnic, cultural, and national identities influence conflict dynamics and the effectiveness of mediation efforts across diverse African societies. This research also explores how cultural identities, encompassing ethnicity, religion, and social groups, influence conflict dynamics and complicate peacebuilding efforts. Drawing on case studies of prominent African conflicts, interview sessions with some affected Africans and a target audience survey questionnaire, the dissertation analyses how:

- **Identity-based grievances** fuel conflict escalation.
- **Misunderstandings of cultural norms** hinder communication and trust during mediation.
- **Exclusion of certain identity groups** from peace processes undermines their legitimacy and sustainability.

The research highlights the pivotal role that identity plays in both exacerbating conflicts and facilitating their resolution. The study employs a multidisciplinary approach, integrating

theories from history, sociology, and conflict resolution to understand the complex interplay between identity and intercultural conflicts. By examining successful mediation practices that have effectively addressed identity-based tensions, the dissertation offers valuable insights into developing more culturally sensitive and effective conflict resolution strategies. The dissertation proposes a conflict resolution game and course specially designed for Africans for incorporating **culturally sensitive** and **identity-conscious** mediation strategies. This framework emphasizes:

- **Pre-mediation training** for mediators on cultural competency and identity dynamics.
- **Inclusive dialogue** that acknowledges and respects diverse perspectives.
- **An African inspired Conflict resolution game** which is infused with ways on how the concept of identity can be used for successful mediations
- **Power-sharing mechanisms** that address underlying inequalities between identity groups.

By integrating these strategies, the research argues that mediation can be more effective in resolving and preventing future conflicts in Africa. The dissertation contributes to the ongoing dialogue on intercultural conflict resolution by offering a nuanced understanding of the interplay between identity and peacebuilding in a critical region.

Keywords: Intercultural Conflict Resolution, Mediation, Identity, Africa, Ethnic Conflict, Cultural Sensitivity, Ethnic Tensions

Introduction

Intercultural conflicts are inevitable in societies where globalization creates melting pot of cultures, ideas, and values. The intricate interactions with people from diverse cultural backgrounds challenge traditional mediation and conflict resolution practices. These relationships are deeply rooted in identity, which influences expectations, attitudes, and perceptions. Identity factors encompass nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, and even professional and organizational ties. People act through

the prism of their cultural self-conceptions, highlighting the importance of identity in conflict scenarios. Studies show that acknowledging one's identity can either exacerbate or alleviate intercultural disputes. Therefore, identity factors can both cause conflicts and be tools for resolving them. To design culturally sensitive mediation procedures, it's essential to acknowledge and understand these identity factors. New opportunities and challenges in conflict resolution arise from the changing intercultural communication landscape. Mediators must navigate not only cultural norms but also the unique identities of participants that influence communication and bargaining strategies.

In Africa, a continent with immense cultural diversity, conflicts often arise from the intersection of various identities. The myriad of ethnic groups, each with its own language, religion, and traditions, contribute to this complexity. The continent's diversity, while a strength, can also be a source of conflicts, both within each culture and across borders. Investigating how identity influences intercultural conflicts is crucial for understanding and resolving them effectively. All social interactions occur against the backdrop of culture, a shared system of symbols, meanings, values, and standards. Culture profoundly impacts communication processes and shapes individual and communal identities. A person's sense of self and group belonging is defined by their identity, which consists of personal, social, ethnic, and national characteristics. Cultural identification influences behavior, giving individuals a sense of belonging and affecting relationships between groups.

Conflicts are would most often happen in cross-cultural contexts where people or groups display diverse cultural norms and behaviors. When participants feel that their identities are being misrepresented or threatened, conflicts often intensify. Intercultural conflicts manifest as both internal psychological struggles and external confrontations. Successful resolution depends on addressing fundamental components of identity and perceived identity threats.

Mediation techniques in intercultural settings like Africa must be culturally sensitive and aimed at promoting a greater understanding of the identities at stake. Cultural diversity should be perceived as something valuable and special rather than a hindrance in conflict resolution. Mediators play a crucial role in creating an atmosphere supportive of affirming and celebrating cultural identities while resolving disagreements. Changes in communicative styles influenced by identity salience can significantly impact conflict resolution outcomes. To gain a deeper understanding of how identity dynamics affect mediation and resolution processes, theoretical stances from conflict resolution, identity studies, and intercultural communication must be integrated into a coherent analysis. By expanding knowledge in this field, practitioners will be equipped with valuable insights and tactics to manage conflicts in our culturally varied and globally integrated society. Africa serves as an important case study, highlighting the complexities of intercultural conflicts and the significance of identity in their resolution.

Theoretical Background

Conflict is a multifaceted phenomenon that has been studied across various disciplines. Different perspectives exist regarding the nature and meaning of conflict. Some scholars view conflict as a distinct behavioral phenomenon, while others see it as a social construction dependent on

perception (Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2018) [33]. This presupposes that conflict is also a pervasive phenomenon woven into the fabric of human interaction, observable across various levels – interpersonal, intergroup, and international. Understanding its nature and the diverse conceptualizations of conflict is crucial for researchers and practitioners alike.

Conflict arises from the incompatibility of needs, desires, or goals between two or more parties (Blau, 1974) [7]. This incompatibility can manifest in various ways – competition for resources, ideological differences, or perceived injustices. Conflict often involves a struggle for power, where each party attempts to assert their interests at the expense of the other (Coser, 1956) [11].

Furthermore, conflict is not a singular entity but comprises various forms that interrelate in complex ways, impacting societal mobilization and political institutionalization (Duvall & Welfling, 1973) [16]. The institutionalization of party systems can influence the level of conflict within a society (Duvall & Welfling, 1973) [16]. Additionally, cognitive conflict plays a role in science concept learning, inducing a discrepant event that triggers conflicting beliefs (Kang et al., 2004; Duijzer et al., 2019) [26, 15]. Moreover, conflict is not limited to individual interactions but extends to organizational and societal levels. In organizational settings, conflict can be instrumental in achieving certain goals or can arise as a result of differing perceptions of reality (Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2018) [33]. Peaceful territorial transfers have been observed to positively impact state-to-state relations by replacing negative territorial peace with mutually accepted borders (Gibler & Tir, 2010) [22]. Furthermore, the concept of conflict is not confined to human interactions but also extends to the realm of psychoanalytic processes, where repression and splitting play significant roles (Savvopoulos et al., 2011) [41]. Understanding conflict is crucial in various contexts, such as intimate partner violence, workplace dynamics, and even mathematical creativity. Conflict escalation is a key aspect of how patterns of intimate partner violence develop (Dokkedahl & Elklit, 2019) [13]. Work-family conflict has been a focal point in organizational behavior research, with studies exploring the antecedents and outcomes of conflicts between work and family domains (Taylor et al., 2009) [44]. Additionally, integrating proof-writing in phenomenon-based learning can enhance students' mathematical creativity by engaging them in real-life issues and promoting important skills like problem-solving and teamwork (Asahid & Lomibao, 2020) [2].

Typology of Conflict. Intercultural Conflict. Ethnic and Racial Conflict

A typology of conflict serves as a valuable framework for understanding the diverse manifestations of conflict in various contexts. Deciphering the complexities of intercultural, ethnic, and racial conflicts—especially those affecting the African continent—requires an understanding of conflict typologies. Personal, organizational, communal, and international conflicts are just a few examples of the various contexts in which conflicts can be classified (Pinkley & Northcraft, 1994) [36]. Every category has its own problems and answers that are intrinsic to the identities of the people involved. Interactions between people with diverse cultural origins can lead to interpersonal conflict, which is known as intercultural conflict (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001) [47]. These kinds of conflicts frequently arise in

the African context because of the cultural diversity of the continent and the possibility of misinterpretation and misunderstanding stemming from different cultural norms and practices.

Intercultural conflict, a specific form of conflict arising from cultural differences, plays a significant role in shaping interactions between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Understanding the dynamics of intercultural conflict involves recognizing the impact of cultural norms, values, and communication styles on conflict escalation and resolution. It also delves into the complexities of conflict arising from interactions between individuals or groups from diverse cultural backgrounds. It is a burgeoning field that transcends traditional conflict resolution approaches by acknowledging the profound influence of cultural norms, values, and communication styles on the nature, escalation, and potential resolution of conflict.

Another type of conflict typology is ethnic and racial conflicts, which are centered on disagreements between groups according to ethnic and racial identities (*Horowitz, 1985*)^[25]. Due to the diversity of ethnic groups and the heritage of colonial borders that merged various communities into nation-states, frequently causing tensions, these conflicts are more pronounced in Africa than any other part of the world. We must also take into consideration that ethnic and racial conflict is often deeply rooted in historical grievances, identity politics and power struggles.

Universality and Variations of Intercultural Conflicts: The Identity Factor

The identity issue is an ever-present component in the mediation and resolution of these conflicts that mediators must address to bring about enduring peace. According to (*Fearon and Laitin, 2000*)^[18], identity refers to the shared cultural, ethnic, or racial traits that provide a group a sense of identity and belonging. Identity disputes in the African environment can result from disparities in languages, customs, or historical accounts.

Africa's intercultural conflicts must be resolved by taking recognition of the deeply ingrained identity issues that fuel them. Cultural identity influences how people perceive the world, handle disagreement, and participate in the negotiating process (*Avruch & Black, 1991*)^[5]. To promote communication, mediators need to create an atmosphere that values cultural identities and makes use of cultural knowledge (*LeBaron, 2003*)^[29]. Given the historical and sociopolitical conditions that have produced group identities, it is imperative to be sensitive to ethnic and racial conflicts (*Horowitz, 1985*)^[25]. In Africa, people's devotion to their ethnic and racial identities frequently stems from colonial times and the attempts that followed to retain or recover cultural heritage. Since these identities are typically at the center of the conflict, mediators must try to comprehend these identities and their significance to the parties involved (*Rothman, 1997*)^[40].

A comprehensive comprehension of the underlying causes and manifestations of African intercultural, ethnic, and racial conflicts is necessary for successful mediation (*Rothman, 1997*)^[40]. Culturally competent communication and negotiation techniques must be a part of settlement strategies, with an emphasis on maintaining everyone's dignity and preserving face (*Lederach, 1995*)^[30]. By doing this, mediation fosters social cohesiveness and lays the groundwork for preventing future conflicts in addition to

resolving the current issue and assisting in the construction of bridges between disparate groups. When combining intricate conflict typology frameworks in an African context, it becomes evident how important it is to acknowledge and handle the identity component. In the rich and diverse tapestry of African societies, using identity-sensitive approaches in the mediation and resolution of intercultural, ethnic, and racial disputes provides a road towards lasting peace.

African intercultural disputes offer a striking example of how identity affects the processes of mediation and resolution. The interaction of conflicting interests, viewpoints, and objectives is fundamental to the concept of conflict. However, the diversity of cultural identities further compounds these factors within the framework of intercultural conflicts (*Avruch, 1998*)^[4]. With its diverse array of cultures, languages, and ethnic groups, the African continent offers a dynamic environment where identity plays a critical role in determining the form and resolution of conflicts. Researchers studying conflicts have described them as a process that happens when people or organizations believe their needs, interests, or worries are under danger as a result of a disagreement (*Moore, 2003*)^[34]. In this larger setting, the African situation serves as an example of how conflict is about notions of identity and the recognition—or lack thereof—of identity in addition to concrete results. According to (*Ting-Toomey 2017*)^[46], misunderstandings and identity conflicts that happen when people from diverse cultural backgrounds interact are largely to blame for the strife.

In this sense, identity refers to how people and groups perceive themselves, which is influenced by a range of social, cultural, and personal experiences (*Fearon, 1999*)^[17]. These identities are not static in Africa; a variety of circumstances such as migration patterns, socio-political developments, and colonial history all have an impact. It is often acknowledged that identity plays a significant role in mediation, as mediators must traverse both overt and covert identity concerns that may lie at the heart of the conflict (*Lind, 2001*)^[31]. A community's shared system of symbols, meanings, values, and standards that direct behavior is its culture, according to Hofstede (1980). This term is especially pertinent in light of the various cultural contexts found throughout Africa, where various cultural frameworks can influence expectations and methods for resolving disputes. (*Gudykunst and Kim 2003*) draw attention to the ways in which culture affects communication processes and, in turn, the approaches taken in mediation and negotiation. Therefore, mediators need to be skilled at appreciating and understanding these cultural disparities. When it comes to the mediation and resolution of conflicts, the importance of taking these cultural and identity issues into consideration increases. (*Bush and Folger 1994*)^[10] assert that the mediator's job is to create an atmosphere that values cultural identity in addition to helping to resolve immediate disagreement. The goal of this identity identification is to turn disagreement into a chance for intercultural learning and development.

The idea of social identity theory, which contends that a person's sense of self is dependent on their membership in a community, is covered by (*Tajfel and Turner 1986*)^[43]. This theory contributes to the understanding of why conflicts can have significant effects on both individual and collective identities in an African context characterized by strong

group loyalties. It also highlights how crucial it is to use intercultural conflict mediation techniques that take these complex identities into account. Moreover, (Lyons 2001) ^[32] contends that for arbitration to be successful in reaching a settlement, intercultural disagreements frequently take the form of external confrontations as well as internal psychological struggles. Conflict resolution techniques need to be especially sensitive to these psychological aspects in Africa, where a variety of cultural norms and behaviors are common (LeBaron, 2003) ^[29].

Although intercultural disputes occur everywhere, the complex influence of cultural identities causes a wide range of variations in their expression and resolution. These conflicts always result from the collision of disparate cultural norms, values, and communication modalities; the identities of the individuals or groups involved shape their behaviors and perceptions (Gudykunst, 2005). The ways in which these conflicts manifest themselves, however, vary depending on cultural settings, historical contexts, and social systems. The Case of Africa is a microcosm in which the diversity and universality of intercultural conflicts are eloquently illustrated due to its heterogeneous blend of ethnicities, languages, and customs. A wider pattern of universal elements, including power dynamics, societal development, and rivalry for resources, is reflected in intercultural conflicts in Africa. However, colonial legacies, diverse tapestry of identities across the continent, and local histories have left a distinct mark on them (Asante, 1980; Avruch & Black, 1991) ^[3, 5].

The identity component is crucial to understanding both the similarities and differences in intercultural disputes. For both people and communities, identity acts as a psychological anchor, influencing their worldviews and how they interact with others (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) ^[42]. Conflicts are likely to arise in cross-cultural contexts when these identities are endangered or misinterpreted (Ting-Toomey, 1999) ^[45]. Identity in Africa is not merely personal; it has nationalistic, ethnic, and regional connotations and greatly influences the dynamics of conflict (Nnoli, 1998) ^[35]. It is crucial to recognize the universal significance of identity while accommodating its diversity in the mediation and resolution of these disputes. To create effective treatments, mediators need to use a thorough awareness of the cultural identities at play. This necessitates striking a balance between acknowledging basic human needs like respect and acknowledgement and modifying strategies to account for cultural differences that influence the parties' expectations and actions (LeBaron, 2003) ^[29].

Hence, understanding the universality and variations of intercultural conflicts, with a focus on the identity factor, is a critical component to addressing the complexities of such disputes in Africa. An identity-informed approach to mediation acknowledges both the commonalities and diversities of human experiences, shaping pathways to peace that are as diverse as the identities themselves.

Conflict Management as Mediation and Resolution

Conflict management encompasses a broad spectrum of approaches aimed at preventing, mitigating, and resolving disagreements arising between individuals or groups. Within this framework, two key strategies emerge: mediation and resolution. While often used interchangeably, these concepts possess distinct characteristics and functionalities within the conflict management process (Raiffa, 1982) ^[38].

All the techniques and procedures that people or organizations employ to successfully address and resolve conflicts are included in conflict management. One of the most important of these techniques for resolving intercultural disputes is mediation, which is a process of negotiation facilitated by a third party. Mediators employ various techniques, including active listening, reframing, and problem-solving, to facilitate constructive dialogue and generate creative solutions (Folger, Poole, & Stutman, 2020) ^[20].

Research indicates that mediation contributes to enhanced satisfaction and relationship restoration among disputants (Kressel & Pruitt, 1985) ^[27]. By providing a platform for disputants to express their perspectives and concerns, mediation helps in clarifying misunderstandings and building empathy, leading to durable agreements (Bouille & Nesic, 2016) ^[9]. Moreover, mediation offers flexibility in addressing complex issues and preserving long-term relationships, which is particularly beneficial in organizational contexts (Rahim, 2011) ^[37].

Mediation is a process where a neutral third party, the mediator, facilitates communication and negotiation between conflicting parties (Folger *et al.*, 2004) ^[21]. The mediator's primary role is not to dictate a solution but to guide the parties towards a mutually agreeable outcome through the following actions:

- **Structured Dialogue:** The mediator establishes a safe and respectful environment for communication, ensuring each party is heard and understood.
- **Active Listening:** Skilled mediators actively listen to both sides, identifying underlying interests and concerns that may lie beneath stated positions (Kopelman *et al.*, 2009).
- **Promoting Empathy:** Mediators can encourage each party to consider the other's perspective, fostering empathy and understanding.
- **Creative Problem-Solving:** By employing creative problem-solving techniques, mediators can work with the parties to identify potential solutions that address the needs of all involved.

Conversely, resolution denotes a conclusion wherein the fundamental concerns of the conflict are resolved to the satisfaction of all involved parties (Moore, 2003) ^[34]. Understanding and appreciating one's identity is fundamental to managing these issues in the African context. The identity component is crucial to consider when looking at intercultural conflict mediation and resolution. When people and groups are in conflict, identity constructions frequently influence their perceptions, actions, and responses (Ting-Toomey, 1999) ^[45]. Strong cultural and ethnic identities are especially noticeable in intergroup contacts and conflict situations in Africa (Ajulu, 2002) ^[1]. An approach that considers the identities of the parties, which shape their viewpoints and narratives, in addition to focusing solely on dispute resolution is necessary for the effective management of these conflicts (Avruch, 1998) ^[4].

While distinct, mediation and resolution are often intertwined within the conflict management process. Mediation serves as a crucial stepping stone towards achieving resolution. Through effective facilitation, a mediator can help parties reach a point where they are prepared to engage in constructive dialogue and ultimately arrive at a definitive resolution (Kriesberg, 2017) ^[28].

Resolution strategies aim to resolve conflicts by addressing their underlying causes and dynamics. These strategies encompass various approaches, such as negotiation, compromise, and problem-solving, tailored to the specific context and nature of the conflict. Negotiation involves bargaining and trade-offs to find a mutually acceptable solution, while compromise entails concessions from both parties to reach a middle ground (Lewicki, Saunders, & Barry, 2015).

Research suggests that integrative approaches, such as problem-solving, are particularly effective in resolving conflicts by identifying shared interests and generating win-win solutions (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011) [19]. Problem-solving strategies focus on collaborative problem-solving, emphasizing joint exploration of underlying issues and brainstorming of solutions (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2006) [12]. This approach fosters cooperation and trust, leading to sustainable resolutions and improved relationships among conflicting parties (Wall & Callister, 1995) [48].

The specific approaches adopted for mediation and resolution will vary depending on the context of the conflict. Factors such as the severity of the conflict, the power dynamics between the parties, and the resources available will influence the most effective strategies (Weingart *et al.*, 2007) [49].

As a dispute resolution tool, mediation requires careful balance. Recognizing that every conflict scenario, especially in African contexts, carries the weight of history, cultural norms, and social expectations, mediators must navigate between the universality of conflict experiences and the specificity of cultural identities (LeBaron, 2003) [29]. Along with facilitating the conversation and negotiations, the process includes verifying the participants' identities. This creates an environment where disagreements can be respectfully addressed and where solutions have a higher chance of lasting (Lederach, 1995) [30]. In addition, the resolution tactics need to be sensitive to the cultural setting. Community and restorative justice processes have a deep history in Africa and are frequently ingrained in the local cultures (Boege, 2006) [8]. These native customs, which are identity-affirming by nature, might provide guidance on how to modify dispute resolution procedures to meet the requirements and dynamics of the many parties involved. Therefore, to effectively manage identity-driven intercultural conflicts, international conflict resolution frameworks need to be adaptable and receptive to absorbing local knowledge and practices (Bercovitch, 1996) [6]. It becomes clear that a diversified strategy that acknowledges the intricate layers of identity is required when considering the role that identity plays in intercultural conflict resolution within the African environment. A deeper comprehension of the underlying causes of disputes and the development of solutions that respect the identities and cultures at stake are made possible by the incorporation of these insights into mediation and settlement procedures. Conflict management advances beyond merely resolving conflicts and toward fostering true reconciliation and social cohesiveness via this recognition (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011) [39]. Indeed, managing intercultural conflicts effectively implies recognizing that the identity factor is not just an adjunct issue but is central to understanding, mediating, and resolving disputes in a manner that is respectful of, and responsive to, the myriad identities and cultures that

populate the African landscape.

Conflict resolution is the ultimate goal of conflict management. It refers to the process of achieving a definitive end to a conflict, where the underlying causes are addressed, and the parties move forward in a more positive and constructive manner (Druckman, 2005) [14]. Here are some key aspects of conflict resolution:

Identifying Root Causes: Effective resolution requires understanding the fundamental issues fueling the conflict. This may involve addressing issues of power dynamics, unmet needs, or misperceptions.

Implementing Solutions: Once the root causes are identified, the parties must agree upon and implement solutions that address those causes. This could involve collaborative decision-making, compromise, or formal agreements.

Sustainable Outcomes: The goal of conflict resolution is to achieve outcomes that are not only satisfactory in the short term but also sustainable in the long run, preventing future recurrences of the conflict.

Research Findings

Case Analysis

The Case of African student in Russia (An Interview)

Context: Educational institutions in Africa are becoming increasingly diverse. Conflicts may arise from language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and differing learning styles.

Interviewer: Good day. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. Could you please introduce yourself?

Interviewee: Hello, my name is Kwame, and I'm a student from Ghana currently studying in Russia.

Interviewer: Thank you, Kwame. Can you tell me about the incident that occurred with the police?

Kwame: Certainly. It was a typical day, and I was walking back to my dormitory after classes. Suddenly, a police officer stopped me and asked for my identification papers. I complied and handed over my documents. However, instead of checking them, he started questioning me aggressively, asking what I was doing in Russia and whether I had a visa.

Interviewer: That must have been quite stressful. How did you respond?

Kwame: At first, I tried to remain calm and explain that I was a student with all the necessary documents. But the officer kept pressing me, and I started to feel frustrated. I raised my voice, telling him that I had every right to be in Russia and that he had no reason to detain me.

Interviewer: Did the situation escalate after that?

Kwame: Unfortunately, yes. My raised voice attracted the attention of other officers, and they surrounded me, accusing me of being aggressive and uncooperative. Before I knew it, they handcuffed me and took me to the police station for further questioning.

Interviewer: It sounds like a misunderstanding escalated quickly. Do you think your reaction was influenced by cultural factors?

Kwame: Absolutely. In Ghana, when someone is falsely accused or feels unfairly treated, it's common to speak up and defend yourself. It's seen as a way to assert your rights and dignity. However, I realize now that my response might have been perceived differently in

Russia, especially because of cultural differences in communication styles and norms of authority.

Interviewer: *How did the situation get resolved?*

Kwame: *Thankfully, after some time, the situation calmed down. I was able to provide the necessary documents, and the misunderstanding was cleared up. But it was a wake-up call for me to be more mindful of cultural differences and how they can affect interactions, especially with authorities.*

Interviewer: *That's an important lesson to learn. Do you think this incident could have been avoided if there was more awareness of cultural differences?*

Kwame: *Definitely. If the police officers had a better understanding of cultural norms and communication styles from different backgrounds, they might have interpreted my response differently. Likewise, if I had been more aware of how my behavior might be perceived in Russia, I might have reacted differently too.*

Interviewer: *Thank you, Kwame, for sharing your experience. Your story highlights the importance of cultural awareness and understanding in preventing misunderstandings and conflicts, especially in diverse societies like Russia.*

Mediation Strategies

In the scenario described, where an African student in Russia encounters a misunderstanding with the police due to cultural differences, several mediation strategies could have been employed to de-escalate the situation and resolve the conflict peacefully:

Cultural Sensitivity Training for Police Officers: Implement training programs for law enforcement officers that focus on cultural sensitivity and awareness of different communication styles. Provide education about the cultural norms and behaviors of international students, including those from African countries.

Community Policing and Engagement: Foster positive relationships between the police and diverse communities, including international students. Organize community events where students can interact with police officers in a friendly, non-confrontational environment.

Crisis Intervention and De-escalation Techniques: Train police officers in crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques to defuse tense situations effectively. Emphasize active listening skills and empathetic communication to understand the perspective of the individual involved.

Interpreter Services: Ensure access to interpreter services for individuals who may have limited proficiency in the local language. Utilize interpreters to facilitate communication and prevent misunderstandings during interactions with non-native speakers.

Mediation and Conflict Resolution Training: Provide mediation and conflict resolution training for both police officers and community members. Teach de-escalation strategies, negotiation techniques, and ways to address conflicts peacefully.

Cultural Liaison Officers: Appoint cultural liaison officers within the police force who can serve as intermediaries between law enforcement and diverse communities. These officers should have a deep understanding of different cultures and languages and act as bridges to facilitate communication and understanding.

Preventive Measure: Implement proactive measures to prevent misunderstandings, such as distributing information pamphlets to international students about local laws, customs, and expectations. Host workshops or seminars to discuss cultural differences and foster mutual understanding between police and diverse communities.

By employing these mediation strategies, authorities can mitigate cultural misunderstandings, improve communication, and promote harmonious interactions between diverse communities and law enforcement agencies.

Conflict Resolution Failures: A Case Analysis of Selected Conflicts Across Africa that Escalated into Wars

The complexities of conflicts across Africa highlight significant failures in conflict resolution strategies, often rooted in a lack of understanding and respect for cultural identities. This analysis delves into the Nigerian Biafran War, Xenophobia in South Africa, and the Genocide in Rwanda, showcasing how an in-depth knowledge of cultural identity by mediators could have potentially averted these devastating events.

The Nigerian Biafran War (1967-1970) was fueled by ethnic, political, and economic disparities, with the southeastern Igbo region's attempt to secede and form the Republic of Biafra triggering the conflict. One of the primary conflict resolution failures was the political exclusion and marginalization of the Igbo people. Mediators' lack of understanding of the Igbo people's grievances and their historical experiences of marginalization led to ineffective conflict resolution. Additionally, initial peace talks, such as the Aburi Accord, were marred by misinterpretation and mistrust, showing a disregard for the cultural and historical context of the conflict. Had mediators possessed a deep understanding of Nigeria's ethnic dynamics, they could have fostered more effective dialogue, acknowledged the specific cultural and historical contexts of the Igbo people and proposed culturally sensitive solutions that addressed their unique needs and fears, potentially preventing the war.

In South Africa, xenophobic violence, primarily targeting African immigrants, has been a recurring issue since the end of apartheid, driven by economic hardship and social tensions. Conflict resolution failures here included government inaction and a lack of community integration efforts. The initial responses lacked urgency and failed to address the underlying socio-economic issues and cultural tensions between locals and immigrants. Efforts to integrate immigrants into local communities were insufficient, leading to misunderstandings and hostility. Mediators with insights into the cultural identities of both South Africans and immigrants could have facilitated better community integration and mutual understanding. Understanding cultural fears and prejudices would have enabled mediators to design programs that reduce xenophobic sentiments and promote social cohesion.

The Rwandan Genocide (1994) saw the mass slaughter of the Tutsi ethnic minority by Hutu extremists, resulting in approximately 800,000 deaths over 100 days. Failures in conflict resolution included the historical ethnic divisions exacerbated by Belgian colonial rule, which were not adequately addressed in post-colonial reconciliation efforts. Additionally, the international community's lack of timely

intervention and inadequate peacekeeping efforts failed to prevent the genocide. Knowledgeable mediators who understood the deep historical roots of Hutu-Tutsi tensions could have crafted more effective reconciliation strategies post-independence. Recognizing the signs of escalating ethnic tensions, these mediators could have pushed for earlier and more robust international intervention to prevent the genocide.

These cases underscore the critical importance of mediators possessing deep knowledge of cultural identities in conflict resolution. Mediators who are well-versed in the cultural identities of the conflicting parties can facilitate more effective communication, understanding cultural norms, languages, and historical grievances to build trust and ensure all parties feel respected and heard. Moreover, conflict resolution strategies tailored to the cultural contexts of the conflicting groups are more likely to be accepted and effective, addressing root causes comprehensively and fostering long-term peace. Early recognition of cultural tensions and grievances allows for proactive measures to prevent conflicts from escalating into full-scale wars. In cases like xenophobia in South Africa, mediators who understand the cultural dynamics can promote social cohesion through community engagement and education, reducing prejudices and fostering integration.

Survey Administered: General Overview

The survey was administered to a targeted audience, people from Africa in different sectors of the community, like governance, healthcare, education, politics and so on. Also, mediators across Africa administered the survey, thereby creating an equilibrium as mediators who responded to the survey were at 50% while laymen were also 50%. The survey had over seventy respondents all across the political zones of Africa.

The questions administered in the survey were intended to find out if mediators were aware of the concept of identity in conflict mediation and resolution. The questions here not only targeted mediators but laymen who would have met and interacted with other people from different cultures in their community. Generally, 95% of these laymen confirmed that they meet with people from different cultures at least once a week, this asserts the fact that indeed Africa is a global village.

After the results have been analyzed, it turns out that the hypothesis that most mediators in Africa are not even aware of the concept of identity as it influences conflict resolution and mediation was correct. The analysis revealed that 65% percent of mediators are either indifferent to the concept of identity or have never implemented them in mediation patterns.

Also, when we asked respondents to narrate the conflict they experienced, the conflicts mostly highlighted are identity related, conflicts ranging from language barriers, religious issues, land dispute and ethnicity issues.

Mediators were quick to identify that the conflicts they mediated did not have long lasting effect, most of these conflicts were quick to resurface again, they also felt that the reasons this long-lasting effect of peace did not occur is because the parties involved in the conflict did not implement the agreed-upon solutions.

Furthermore, the survey shockingly revealed that 83% percent of mediators cannot be neutral in resolving cross-cultural conflicts, they agreed that their own cultural

background, ethnicity, political views or religious beliefs might influence their approach to the conflict. This reinforces the salient fact that the mediation processes in Africa need a deep and urgent restructuring.

An Intercultural Conflict Case in Access Bank Plc: An Auto-Ethnographic Analysis of Identity Issues

Access Bank Plc, one of the largest banks in Nigeria, prides itself on its diverse workforce and inclusive corporate culture. However, diversity can sometimes lead to complex identity conflicts, especially in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious context like Nigeria. This case study explores a significant conflict within Access Bank Plc, focusing on how issues of ethnic identity led to tensions and disruptions within the organization.

Access Bank Plc operates in a culturally diverse environment with employees from various ethnic backgrounds, including Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and many minorities ethnic groups. The bank's corporate culture emphasizes unity and collaboration, but beneath this surface, deep-seated ethnic identities and prejudices can emerge, causing conflict.

In early 2022, a conflict erupted in the bank's headquarters in Lagos, involving two senior managers from different ethnic backgrounds—Mr. Adewale, a Yoruba, and Ms. Nwankwo, an Igbo. Both managers were vying for the newly created position of Regional Director, a role critical for the bank's expansion plans.

The conflict began during a meeting to discuss the selection criteria for the new position. Mr. Adewale, who had been with the bank for over 15 years, suggested that the role should prioritize candidates with extensive experience within the bank and a deep understanding of its corporate culture. Ms. Nwankwo, with 10 years of service but a track record of innovative projects and external collaborations, argued that the role should focus on candidates with a vision for the future and a proven ability to drive change.

While the disagreement initially appeared to be about qualifications and vision, underlying ethnic tensions quickly surfaced. Some Yoruba employees rallied behind Mr. Adewale, viewing his proposal as a way to maintain the status quo and protect their interests within the bank. Conversely, Igbo employees supported Ms. Nwankwo, seeing her as a champion of innovation and progress that could benefit all, especially underrepresented groups.

The conflict escalated when an anonymous email circulated among the staff, accusing the bank's leadership of ethnic bias in past promotions and hinting that the new role was being tailored for a Yoruba candidate. This email sparked heated debates within the bank, with town hall meetings turning into platforms for airing grievances about perceived ethnic favoritism.

The bank's HR department intervened, organizing mediation sessions and diversity training workshops. Despite these efforts, the underlying issues persisted. The leadership decided to form a diverse selection committee, including members from various ethnic backgrounds and external consultants, to ensure a fair and transparent process.

Eventually, the position was awarded to an external candidate with no prior ties to the bank, a decision aimed at neutralizing the ethnic tensions. While this resolved the immediate conflict, it left a lasting impact on the organization's internal dynamics.

Auto-Ethnographic Reflection

As a Yoruba employee and participant in the mediation process, I witnessed firsthand the complexities of ethnic identity within a corporate setting. The conflict revealed how deep-seated prejudices can influence perceptions and decision-making, even in a professional environment. It also highlighted the need for ongoing efforts to foster true inclusivity and address the root causes of ethnic tensions.

This case at Access Bank Plc illustrates the profound impact of ethnic identity on workplace dynamics. It underscores the importance of creating structures and policies that not only promote diversity but also actively work to bridge divides and foster a genuinely inclusive culture. For Access Bank Plc, and similar organizations, the journey towards true inclusivity is ongoing and requires constant vigilance and commitment.

Conclusion

This paper embarked on a journey to explore the intricate relationship between identity and intercultural conflict resolution within the African context.

Traditional mediation approaches often struggle to address the complexities of identity-based conflicts in Africa, as evidenced by our findings. A "one-size-fits-all" approach fails to acknowledge the unique cultural nuances that shape these conflicts. Tailored mediation strategies that address identity concerns, promote power-sharing mechanisms, and incorporate culturally competent mediators can significantly improve the effectiveness of conflict resolution.

Thus, we recommend based on the finding in this research that understanding identity dynamics is crucial. Mediators must possess a deep understanding of how cultural identities shape communication, power dynamics, and perceptions of conflict. Pre-mediation training focused on cultural competency and identity sensitivity is essential.

Creating a space for open and respectful dialogue that acknowledges the diverse perspectives of all identity groups is critical. This fosters empathy and allows for the identification of common ground.

Effective mediation strategies should address unequal power dynamics between identity groups, a factor often contributing to conflict, through power-sharing arrangements and mechanisms for ensuring the fair treatment of all groups.

Mediation processes should incorporate culturally sensitive practices that respect the communication styles, traditions, and values of the parties involved and finally, sustainable peace requires ongoing engagement beyond the immediate resolution of a conflict. This may involve promoting cultural awareness workshops and fostering dialogue between diverse communities to prevent future conflicts.

Looking forward we strongly believe by integrating these findings into conflict resolution practices, we can move towards a future where identity is not a source of division but rather a foundation for understanding and collaboration in Africa. This research contributes to the ongoing dialogue on intercultural conflict resolution, offering a framework for culturally sensitive mediation that can foster lasting peace across the continent. The complex interplay between identity and conflict in Africa demands a nuanced and evolving approach to peacebuilding. By acknowledging the centrality of identity and implementing culturally sensitive mediation strategies, we can work towards a brighter future for all communities in Africa.

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