

Nupe and Igbo Traditional Justice Systems: Customary Law, Consensus, and Communal Harmony in African Conflict Resolution

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ABSTRACT

African societies developed sophisticated systems of justice and conflict resolution long before the introduction of colonial legal institutions. Among these indigenous mechanisms, the traditional justice systems of the Nupe and Igbo peoples of Nigeria stand out for their emphasis on customary law, consensus-building, communal participation, and the restoration of social harmony. This study comparatively examines the philosophical foundations, institutional structures, and conflict resolution practices of the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems with a view to understanding their contributions to contemporary peace building and restorative justice discourse. The study is anchored on Restorative Justice Theory, Lederach's Peace building Framework, and Galtung's concept of Positive Peace, while adopting an Afrocentric perspective that recognizes indigenous African knowledge systems as legitimate frameworks for understanding justice and social order. Employing a qualitative desk-review methodology, data were derived from scholarly literature, ethnographic accounts, historical records, and documented studies on indigenous African conflict management. Findings reveal that despite their cultural, religious, and political differences, both the Nupe and Igbo justice traditions share a strong commitment to communalism, dialogue, consensus, restitution, and the restoration of broken relationships. The study further demonstrates that justice in both traditions is conceived not primarily as punishment or retribution, but as a process of repairing social relationships and preserving communal harmony. While challenges relating to gender inclusivity, urbanization, and integration with formal legal systems persist, the study argues that both traditions offer valuable insights for contemporary conflict resolution, restorative justice, and peace building initiatives in Nigeria and beyond. The paper concludes that indigenous African justice systems remain relevant resources for addressing contemporary conflicts and promoting sustainable peace in multicultural societies.

KEYWORDS

Nupe, Igbo, Traditional Justice System, Customary Law, Restorative Justice, Consensus Building, Conflict Resolution, Peace building

I. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human existence and social interaction. Throughout history, societies have developed various mechanisms for regulating human conduct, resolving disputes, and maintaining social order. In Africa, long before the emergence of modern state legal systems, indigenous communities established elaborate institutions of justice rooted in their cultural values, customary norms, and collective worldviews. These traditional justice systems served not only as mechanisms for resolving disputes but also as instruments for preserving communal harmony, promoting social cohesion, and ensuring

the continuity of societal values across generations. Unlike contemporary adversarial legal systems that often emphasize legal technicalities and punitive sanctions, African indigenous justice systems generally prioritize dialogue, consensus, reconciliation, and the restoration of social relationships.

Among the numerous indigenous justice traditions in Nigeria, the Nupe and Igbo justice systems represent two distinct yet philosophically related approaches to conflict resolution and social regulation. The Nupe people of North-Central Nigeria developed a justice system deeply influenced by communal authority, customary law, and traditional institutions that seek to preserve social stability through mediation and reconciliation. Similarly, the Igbo people of South-Eastern Nigeria evolved a decentralized system of justice grounded in *omenala* (customary law), communal participation, and consensus-building. In both societies, justice extends beyond the determination of guilt or innocence to encompass the restoration of social equilibrium and the maintenance of harmonious relationships among individuals and groups.

The growing interest in indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms has emerged partly as a response to the limitations of formal legal systems in many African states (Jegade & Afatakpa, 2021). Contemporary courts are frequently criticized for delays, high costs, procedural complexities, and their inability to adequately address the relational dimensions of conflict. Consequently, scholars, policymakers, and peace building practitioners have increasingly turned their attention to traditional justice systems as alternative frameworks capable of promoting sustainable peace and social reconciliation. Indigenous African institutions are now being recognized as valuable reservoirs of knowledge that can complement modern approaches to conflict management and restorative justice.

Despite this renewed scholarly attention, much of the existing literature on African traditional justice systems tends to focus on individual ethnic groups or specific cultural contexts. While studies have examined the Nupe and Igbo systems independently, there remains limited comparative scholarship exploring the philosophical foundations, operational structures, and conflict resolution mechanisms of both traditions. This gap in the literature is particularly significant because comparative analyses provide deeper insights into the shared values and distinctive features of African indigenous justice systems. Without such comparative studies, opportunities to understand the broader contributions of African customary institutions to contemporary peace building and justice reform remain underexplored.

It is against this backdrop that this study undertakes a comparative examination of the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems. The study investigates how customary law, consensus-building, and communal harmony function within both societies and how these principles shape indigenous approaches to conflict resolution. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions: How do the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems utilize customary law in the administration of justice? What roles do consensus-building and communal participation play in the resolution of disputes within the two societies? To what extent do these systems promote communal harmony and social cohesion? What similarities and differences exist between the Nupe and Igbo approaches to justice and conflict resolution? Finally, what lessons can contemporary peace building and restorative justice initiatives draw from these indigenous systems?

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the growing body of scholarship on indigenous African governance, customary law, and restorative justice. By comparatively examining the Nupe and Igbo justice traditions, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how indigenous institutions have historically maintained peace and social order. The findings are expected to enrich contemporary debates on legal pluralism, conflict resolution, and peace building while providing insights for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners seeking culturally relevant approaches to justice administration in Africa. Furthermore, the study highlights the enduring relevance of indigenous knowledge systems in addressing contemporary social challenges and reinforces the need to preserve and integrate valuable traditional practices within broader frameworks of justice and development.

The central argument advanced in this paper is that despite differences in historical experiences, social organization, and institutional structures, the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems share a common restorative orientation grounded in customary law, communal participation, consensus-building, and the pursuit of social harmony. As such, they represent important indigenous models of conflict resolution whose principles continue to offer valuable lessons for contemporary peace building, restorative justice, and sustainable conflict management in Africa.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of indigenous African justice systems has attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent decades as researchers increasingly recognize the relevance of traditional institutions in promoting peace, social cohesion, and conflict resolution. Long before the establishment of colonial and post-colonial legal systems, African societies developed sophisticated mechanisms for regulating social behaviour, resolving disputes, and maintaining communal harmony. These systems were deeply embedded in cultural values, customary norms, and collective understandings of justice. Unlike Western legal traditions that often emphasize adversarial procedures and punitive sanctions, African indigenous justice systems generally prioritize reconciliation, restitution, consensus-building, and the restoration of social relationships.

Scholars have argued that the philosophical foundation of African traditional justice lies in communalism and collective responsibility. According to Kariuki (2017), African customary law is not merely a body of legal rules but a social institution designed to preserve communal stability and reinforce shared values. Justice within traditional African societies is therefore viewed as a communal responsibility rather than an exclusively state-centered function. This perspective explains why dispute resolution processes often involve family members, elders, lineage representatives, and community leaders who collectively seek solutions capable of restoring social equilibrium.

The literature on traditional conflict resolution in Nigeria similarly highlights the centrality of dialogue and consensus in indigenous justice systems. Traditional Mechanisms of Conflict Resolution in Africa (2025) notes that many African societies rely on consultative and participatory approaches to conflict management that emphasize negotiation, mediation, and reconciliation. Such approaches are grounded in the belief that disputes affect not only the immediate parties involved but also the wider community. Consequently, successful

conflict resolution requires the active involvement of stakeholders whose collective intervention helps restore damaged relationships and prevent future disputes.

Studies focusing on the Igbo traditional justice system reveal a highly participatory and decentralized structure of governance and dispute resolution. Umezurike (2016) observes that justice among the Igbo is administered through institutions such as family councils, village assemblies, age grades, title holders, and councils of elders. These institutions derive their legitimacy from *omenala* (customary law), which regulates social conduct and prescribes appropriate remedies for violations. Similarly, *An Appraisal of the Igbo Traditional Method of Conflict Resolution* (2016) argues that the Igbo system places significant emphasis on consensus-building, mediation, and communal participation. Rather than focusing solely on punishment, the system seeks to reconcile disputants, restore social harmony, and preserve the integrity of the community.

The principle of restorative justice is particularly evident within the Igbo worldview. The concepts of *Ofo na Ogu*, which symbolize truth, justice, and moral righteousness, guide the administration of justice and encourage ethical conduct among community members. Research Repository (n.d.) notes that traditional Igbo justice functions as an important mechanism of social control by promoting accountability while simultaneously fostering reconciliation and reintegration. Afatakpa (2025) further argues that traditional Igbo notions of justice and punishment are rooted in communal ethics, where sanctions are designed not merely to punish offenders but also to restore damaged relationships and maintain social balance.

The literature on the Nupe traditional justice system, though relatively limited compared to studies on the Igbo, reveals similar commitments to communal harmony and social order. Afatakpa and Olufunmilayo (2026) observe that indigenous justice systems among the Nupe are anchored on customary law, communal participation, and restorative practices. Traditional authorities, family heads, and community elders play significant roles in resolving disputes through mediation and dialogue. Justice is conceived as a means of preserving communal stability rather than imposing retributive sanctions. This orientation reflects broader African conceptions of justice that prioritize social cohesion and collective well-being.

Comparative studies of indigenous African conflict resolution mechanisms have identified several common features across different societies. *TIV and Igbo Conflict Management Mechanisms: A Comparative Study* (2016) found that African traditional justice systems generally emphasize mediation, consensus-building, restitution, and reconciliation. Similarly, *African Traditional Justice Systems* (2018) argues that elders occupy central positions within most indigenous justice structures because of their experience, moral authority, and knowledge of customary norms. Their role extends beyond adjudication to include counselling, peace building, and the preservation of communal values.

The growing global interest in restorative justice has further renewed scholarly attention on indigenous African justice systems. *A Comparative Analysis of Restorative Justice Practices in Africa* (2025) argues that many contemporary restorative justice principles mirror practices that have existed within African societies for centuries. Restorative justice emphasizes repairing harm, restoring relationships, and involving communities in the

resolution process rather than focusing exclusively on punishment. This perspective closely aligns with the conflict resolution practices observed among both the Nupe and Igbo peoples. Similarly, Norris (2013) contends that reconciliation processes are more sustainable when they address the relational dimensions of conflict and encourage the reintegration of affected parties into their communities.

The literature also highlights the importance of deliberative processes in achieving peaceful outcomes. Dryzek (2000) and Man Bridge (1999) argue that deliberation and inclusive participation enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of decision-making processes. These insights are particularly relevant to indigenous African justice systems, where consensus-building and communal dialogue serve as fundamental mechanisms for resolving disputes. The emphasis on collective participation not only strengthens community ownership of outcomes but also reduces the likelihood of recurring conflicts.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on indigenous conflict resolution, significant gaps remain in the literature. Most studies focus on individual ethnic groups and examine traditional justice systems in isolation. While considerable attention has been devoted to Igbo customary law and conflict resolution practices, scholarly analyses of Nupe indigenous justice remain relatively limited. Furthermore, few studies have undertaken a systematic comparative examination of the two traditions with particular emphasis on customary law, consensus-building, and communal harmony. Consequently, there is insufficient understanding of the similarities, differences, and broader contributions of these systems to contemporary peace building and restorative justice discourse.

This study addresses this gap by providing a comparative analysis of the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems. By examining their philosophical foundations, institutional structures, and conflict resolution practices, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of indigenous African approaches to justice and highlights their continuing relevance in contemporary efforts toward peace building, social cohesion, and conflict management.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Restorative Justice Theory and Lederach's Peace building Theory. These theoretical perspectives provide a useful framework for understanding the philosophical foundations and operational dynamics of the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems. Both theories emphasize reconciliation, relationship-building, community participation, and the restoration of social harmony, principles that are deeply embedded in indigenous African approaches to conflict resolution.

Restorative Justice Theory emerged as an alternative to conventional retributive models of justice that focus primarily on punishment and legal sanctions. The theory argues that conflict and wrongdoing should be understood not merely as violations of laws but as injuries to individuals, relationships, and communities. Consequently, justice should seek to repair harm, restore damaged relationships, and reintegrate offenders into society. According to restorative justice scholars, effective conflict resolution requires the active participation of victims, offenders, and the wider community in identifying the causes of conflict and developing mutually acceptable solutions. The emphasis is therefore placed on dialogue,

accountability, restitution, forgiveness, and reconciliation rather than retribution and exclusion.

The relevance of Restorative Justice Theory to this study is evident in the operational principles of both the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems. In both societies, disputes are not treated as purely private matters between individuals but as disruptions of communal harmony that affect the broader social fabric. Consequently, conflict resolution mechanisms are designed to restore relationships and social equilibrium rather than simply punish offenders. Traditional institutions such as family councils, elders' assemblies, lineage heads, and community leaders facilitate dialogue between disputing parties, encourage admissions of wrongdoing where necessary, and seek outcomes that promote reconciliation and social reintegration. Sanctions, where imposed, often take the form of restitution, compensation, public apology, or symbolic acts of reconciliation aimed at restoring peace within the community.

The study is further informed by Lederach's Peace building Theory, which emphasizes the transformation of relationships as the foundation of sustainable peace. Lederach (1997) argues that conflict is not merely a problem to be managed but an opportunity to transform relationships, rebuild trust, and create conditions for long-term social stability. According to the theory, sustainable peace can only be achieved when conflict resolution processes address the underlying causes of disputes and foster constructive relationships among individuals and groups. Peace building therefore extends beyond the cessation of conflict to include reconciliation, dialogue, healing, and the strengthening of social institutions.

Lederach's framework is particularly relevant to indigenous African justice systems because of their strong emphasis on community participation and relationship restoration. Among both the Nupe and Igbo peoples, traditional dispute resolution mechanisms are designed to preserve social cohesion by addressing the relational dimensions of conflict. Elders and traditional authorities serve not merely as adjudicators but as mediators and peace builders whose primary objective is to restore harmony and prevent the recurrence of disputes. Through consultation, consensus-building, and communal deliberation, these institutions create opportunities for disputing parties to rebuild trust and restore social relationships.

The integration of Restorative Justice Theory and Peace building Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems. While Restorative Justice Theory explains the emphasis on reconciliation, restitution, and social reintegration, Peace building Theory illuminates the broader objective of sustaining peaceful relationships and communal harmony. Together, the theories demonstrate that indigenous African justice systems are not simply mechanisms for resolving disputes but are also institutions for preserving social order, strengthening community bonds, and fostering long-term peace.

The framework therefore enables this study to examine how customary law, consensus-building, and communal participation function within the Nupe and Igbo justice traditions to promote conflict resolution and communal harmony. It also provides a basis for assessing the contemporary relevance of these indigenous systems in addressing modern challenges of peace building, restorative justice, and sustainable conflict management in African societies.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design utilizing a desk-review approach to examine the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems as indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution and social regulation in Nigeria. The qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it facilitates an in-depth understanding of the philosophical foundations, institutional structures, and conflict management practices embedded within traditional African societies. Given the historical and cultural nature of the subject matter, the study relied on documentary sources rather than primary field data.

Data for the study were obtained from secondary sources, including scholarly journal articles, books, conference papers, historical documents, policy reports, and other relevant academic publications on African indigenous justice systems, customary law, restorative justice, and conflict resolution. Particular attention was given to literature addressing the administration of justice among the Nupe and Igbo peoples as well as broader studies on African traditional governance and peace building institutions.

The study employed a comparative analytical approach to identify similarities and differences between the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems. The analysis focused on three major variables: customary law, consensus-building, and communal harmony. These variables served as analytical categories for examining how justice is conceived, administered, and sustained within the two societies. Through comparison, the study explored the philosophical principles, dispute resolution mechanisms, and institutional arrangements that characterize each system.

Data were analysed using thematic content analysis. Relevant literature was systematically reviewed, categorized, and interpreted according to recurring themes relating to indigenous justice, mediation, reconciliation, restorative practices, communal participation, and social cohesion. The thematic approach enabled the identification of key patterns and perspectives within the existing body of knowledge while facilitating a critical comparison of the two justice traditions.

The choice of a qualitative desk-review methodology is justified by the study's objective of generating a conceptual and comparative understanding of indigenous justice systems rather than measuring variables quantitatively. By synthesizing existing scholarly literature, the study provides insights into the continuing relevance of Nupe and Igbo traditional justice mechanisms in contemporary discussions on conflict resolution, restorative justice, and peace building in Africa.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Customary Law as the Foundation of Justice in Nupe and Igbo Societies

The study found that customary law constitutes the foundation upon which both the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems are built. In both societies, justice is derived from established customs, cultural values, communal norms, and ancestral traditions that regulate social behaviour and guide dispute resolution processes. Rather than relying on

codified statutes and formal judicial procedures, both systems draw legitimacy from the collective acceptance of customary rules and practices that have evolved over generations. Among the Igbo, *omenala* serves as the principal source of law and social regulation. It prescribes acceptable conduct, outlines sanctions for misconduct, and provides mechanisms for resolving disputes within families and communities. Traditional institutions such as family councils, village assemblies, age grades, and councils of elders' function as custodians and interpreters of these customs. Similarly, among the Nupe, customary law governs social relationships and provides the framework through which conflicts are addressed. Traditional rulers, family heads, and community elders play central roles in interpreting customs and ensuring compliance with communal values.

The findings reveal that in both societies, customary law extends beyond legal regulation to encompass moral and social obligations. Justice is therefore understood not merely as compliance with rules but as the preservation of social harmony and communal well-being. This finding supports Kariuki's (2017) argument that African customary law functions as a social institution designed to maintain order, reinforce communal values, and promote collective responsibility. It also aligns with Restorative Justice Theory, which emphasizes repairing social relationships rather than merely imposing sanctions for wrongdoing.

B. Consensus-Building and Communal Participation in Conflict Resolution

A major finding of the study is that consensus-building occupies a central place in both the Nupe and Igbo justice traditions. Dispute resolution processes in both societies are characterized by extensive consultation, dialogue, and collective deliberation aimed at achieving outcomes that are acceptable to all parties. Unlike adversarial legal systems where judgments are imposed by judicial authorities, indigenous justice mechanisms emphasize mutual understanding and negotiated settlements.

Within Igbo communities, disputes are typically discussed in family meetings, village assemblies, and elders' councils where all concerned parties are given opportunities to express their views before decisions are reached. The process seeks to foster agreement and social reconciliation rather than create winners and losers. Similarly, the Nupe justice system employs communal consultations involving elders, lineage representatives, and respected members of society who facilitate discussions and guide disputants toward mutually acceptable resolutions.

The emphasis on consensus reflects a broader African philosophy of collective responsibility and social interdependence. Dryzek (2000) argues that deliberative processes enhance legitimacy because decisions emerge from dialogue and collective reasoning. Likewise, Man Bridge (1999) contends that inclusive participation strengthens acceptance of outcomes and reduces the likelihood of future conflicts. The findings suggest that both the Nupe and Igbo systems derive much of their effectiveness from their participatory nature, which encourages community ownership of decisions and promotes lasting peace.

C. Elders as Custodians of Justice and Social Order

The study further found that elders occupy a pivotal position within both traditional justice systems. Their authority is derived not from formal legal powers but from their experience, wisdom, moral standing, and knowledge of customary law. Elders serve as mediators,

arbitrators, counsellors, and custodians of communal values whose primary responsibility is to preserve peace and social order.

In Igbo society, councils of elders play significant roles in interpreting customary law, hearing disputes, and recommending appropriate remedies. Their decisions are generally respected because they are perceived as impartial custodians of communal interests. Similarly, among the Nupe, traditional authorities and elders facilitate mediation processes and guide disputants toward reconciliation. Their interventions often prevent conflicts from escalating and contribute to the maintenance of social stability.

These findings corroborate the position of African Traditional Justice Systems (2018), which identifies elders as central actors in indigenous conflict management because of their legitimacy and moral authority. The findings also support the assumptions of Peace building Theory, which emphasizes the role of respected community actors in fostering dialogue, rebuilding trust, and strengthening social relationships.

D. Communal Harmony as the Ultimate Goal of Justice

The analysis revealed that the ultimate objective of both justice systems is the restoration and preservation of communal harmony. In contrast to modern legal systems that often prioritize punishment and deterrence, the Nupe and Igbo traditions focus on repairing damaged relationships and restoring social equilibrium. Conflict is viewed as a disruption of community life rather than simply a violation of individual rights.

Among both peoples, mechanisms such as apology, restitution, compensation, reconciliation rituals, and communal mediation are frequently employed to heal social divisions and restore trust among disputing parties. Offenders are encouraged to acknowledge wrongdoing and take responsibility for their actions, while victims are provided opportunities to seek redress and reconciliation. The community itself plays an active role in ensuring that relationships are repaired and that peace is sustained.

This finding aligns with contemporary restorative justice scholarship, which argues that justice should seek to repair harm and strengthen social relationships rather than focus exclusively on punishment. It also reflects Lederach's (1997) contention that sustainable peace depends on the transformation of relationships and the restoration of trust among individuals and groups.

E. Comparative Analysis of Nupe and Igbo Traditional Justice Systems

The comparative analysis revealed substantial similarities between the Nupe and Igbo justice traditions. Both systems are rooted in customary law, communal participation, mediation, and reconciliation. Both rely heavily on elders and traditional authorities to facilitate dispute resolution, while emphasizing dialogue and consensus as preferred mechanisms for addressing conflicts. In both societies, justice is conceived as a communal responsibility aimed at preserving social harmony and preventing the recurrence of disputes.

However, certain differences were observed. The Igbo justice system operates within a largely decentralized socio-political structure where authority is distributed among family heads, elders, age grades, and village assemblies. By contrast, the Nupe system historically

evolved within a more centralized political framework influenced by traditional ruler ship institutions. Consequently, traditional rulers exercise a more pronounced role in the administration of justice among the Nupe than is typically observed in Igbo communities. Despite these structural differences, the two systems share a common philosophical commitment to reconciliation, social cohesion, and communal well-being.

F. Contemporary Relevance of Indigenous Justice Systems

The findings indicate that the principles underlying the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems remain relevant in contemporary efforts to promote peace, justice, and conflict resolution. Growing concerns regarding court congestion, high litigation costs, procedural delays, and limited access to justice have renewed interest in indigenous approaches that emphasize mediation, dialogue, and reconciliation. The participatory nature of traditional justice systems enhances their legitimacy and acceptance, particularly within local communities. Furthermore, the restorative orientation of these systems offers valuable lessons for contemporary Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms and peace building initiatives. As African societies continue to confront communal conflicts, identity-based tensions, and governance challenges, indigenous justice traditions provide culturally grounded approaches capable of complementing formal legal institutions. Their emphasis on consensus-building, communal responsibility, and relationship restoration demonstrates the enduring value of African indigenous knowledge systems in addressing contemporary social challenges.

Overall, the findings establish that the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems represent significant indigenous models of conflict resolution whose principles continue to offer practical and theoretical insights for restorative justice, peace building, and sustainable conflict management in Africa.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study comparatively examined the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems with particular emphasis on the role of customary law, consensus-building, and communal harmony in the resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of social order. The analysis revealed that both societies developed sophisticated indigenous institutions of justice long before the introduction of colonial legal systems, and that these institutions continue to provide valuable insights into African approaches to conflict management and peace building.

The study established that customary law serves as the foundation of justice administration in both Nupe and Igbo societies. Through established customs, cultural values, and communal norms, traditional institutions regulate social behaviour and provide mechanisms for resolving disputes in ways that preserve collective well-being. The findings further demonstrated that consensus-building and communal participation constitute central features of both justice systems. Rather than relying on adversarial procedures and punitive sanctions, disputes are addressed through dialogue, consultation, mediation, and collective deliberation aimed at achieving mutually acceptable outcomes.

The study also found that elders and traditional authorities play indispensable roles as custodians of customary law and mediators of conflict. Their legitimacy derives from communal trust, experience, and moral authority, enabling them to facilitate reconciliation and maintain social stability. Most importantly, the findings revealed that the ultimate objective of both justice systems is the restoration of communal harmony. Justice is conceived not merely as the determination of guilt or innocence but as a process of repairing damaged relationships, restoring trust, and promoting peaceful coexistence within the community.

Although differences exist in their institutional structures, particularly regarding the level of political centralization, the Nupe and Igbo justice traditions share a common philosophical orientation rooted in communalism, restorative justice, and social cohesion. Their emphasis on reconciliation, restitution, and consensus underscores the enduring relevance of indigenous African approaches to conflict resolution.

The study therefore concludes that the Nupe and Igbo traditional justice systems represent important indigenous models of justice whose principles remain valuable in contemporary society. At a time when many formal legal systems face challenges such as judicial delays, high litigation costs, and increasing social conflicts, the restorative and participatory approaches embedded in these traditional institutions offer viable alternatives for promoting peace and social harmony. Consequently, greater scholarly attention, policy support, and institutional recognition should be given to indigenous justice systems as complementary mechanisms for conflict resolution, restorative justice, and sustainable peace building in Nigeria and Africa as a whole.

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