

ADMINISTRATION

Public Administration, Security, Peace and Policy: Leveraging Conflict Resolution and Management in Bekwarra Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined public administration, security, peace and policy, with particular emphasis on conflict resolution and management in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three objectives, which were to examine the relationship between public administration and conflict resolution, determine the influence of security mechanisms on peace management, and assess the contribution of public policies to sustainable conflict management in the study area. Three research questions guided the investigation. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study population comprised community members, traditional leaders, security personnel, public administrators and other relevant stakeholders in Bekwarra Local Government Area. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection, while descriptive survey/statistics and chi-square (χ^2) were employed to analyse the data at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicated that effective public administration was significantly associated with improved conflict-resolution practices. The results also showed that responsive security mechanisms, community participation and collaboration among traditional institutions and formal security agencies contributed significantly to peace management. Furthermore, the study revealed a significant association between effective public policies and sustainable conflict-management outcomes. The findings were discussed in relation to the importance of accountable governance, preventive security interventions, community engagement and policy responsiveness in addressing local conflicts. The study recommends that, government should strengthen inclusive local governance and conflict-resolution institutions; enhance collaboration and information-sharing among security agencies, traditional authorities and community organisations; and formulate and implement context-specific peace and security policies that address underlying socioeconomic grievances and promote community resilience.

Keywords: public administration; conflict resolution; conflict management; peace and security; public policy

1 Background to the study

Public administration, security, peace and public policy were mutually reinforcing dimensions of effective governance. Public institutions required a stable and secure environment to formulate, implement and evaluate policies, deliver public services, and promote socioeconomic development. Conversely, effective public administration contributed to security by strengthening institutions, improving responsiveness, facilitating inclusive participation and addressing grievances before they escalated into violence. In Nigeria, the complexity of internal security challenges, including communal disputes, competition over land and other resources, ethnic tensions, leadership conflicts

and institutional weaknesses, demonstrated the need to move beyond reactive security interventions towards preventive and context-sensitive approaches to conflict management. Conflict management was particularly important at the local government level because local authorities operated close to communities and were strategically positioned to identify emerging grievances and coordinate governmental, community and traditional institutions. Evidence from Cross River State indicated that communal conflicts over land remained an important source of insecurity, while the broader security environment was also affected by other forms of violence. Thus, public administration was not merely an instrument for routine service delivery; it was also a critical institutional mechanism for creating the conditions necessary for sustainable peace, social cohesion and development.

Within this broader Nigerian context, Bekwarra Local Government Area (LGA), located in Northern Cross River State, provided an important setting for examining the relationship between governance, security and conflict management. Bekwarra was predominantly an agrarian society in which land, farming and community resources were closely connected to livelihoods, identity and social status. Studies focusing on the area identified communal disputes associated with land ownership and control, boundary demarcation, economic resources and chieftaincy struggles, with significant implications for rural development. The conflict environment was therefore not attributable to a single factor but reflected the interaction of historical land relations, competing community interests, leadership contests and socioeconomic pressures. The significance of these issues was reinforced by evidence identifying land-related communal conflicts as recurring security concerns in Cross River State. In Bekwarra, such disputes could disrupt agricultural activities, weaken community relationships, threaten lives and property, and constrain local development. At the same time, the local governance environment presented opportunities for preventive intervention because the local government authority, traditional rulers, clan heads, community leaders and other stakeholders possessed different forms of authority and social legitimacy. Research on Bekwarra also demonstrated that traditional institutions employed mediation, negotiation, arbitration and reconciliation in managing conflicts and supporting peacebuilding.

The central concern, therefore, was how these formal and informal administrative mechanisms could be more systematically harnessed to achieve sustainable conflict resolution and management in Bekwarra LGA. Although public administration provided formal structures for security, policy implementation and grassroots development, the effectiveness of these structures could be weakened by inadequate communication, poor institutional coordination, low public trust and the tendency to address local grievances only after they had escalated. The existence of traditional peacebuilding institutions provided an important complementary resource, but their effectiveness depended on constructive integration with modern administrative and security structures. Evidence from Bekwarra suggested that local government authorities and traditional leaders recognized the need for collaborative approaches to insecurity, while previous research recommended strengthening the capacity of traditional leaders and promoting collaboration with governmental and non-governmental actors.

Against this background, the study examined how public administration and public policy mechanisms could support proactive conflict management through early warning, stakeholder dialogue, impartial mediation, traditional leadership, youth participation, improved communication and coordinated security responses. These mechanisms were considered important for managing local conflicts before they developed into destructive confrontations. The study was therefore designed to contribute to a context-sensitive understanding of peacebuilding in Bekwarra LGA and to generate

lessons for strengthening grassroots governance, security and socioeconomic development in other conflict-prone local government areas in Nigeria.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to examine the relationship between public administration, security, peace and public policy in conflict resolution and management in Bekwarra Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives were to:

- Examine the relationship between public administration and conflict resolution in Bekwarra Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria.
- Determine the influence of security mechanisms on peace management in Bekwarra Local Government Area.
- Assess the contribution of public policies to sustainable conflict management in Bekwarra Local Government Area.

1.2 Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- What was the relationship between public administration and conflict resolution in Bekwarra Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria?
- To what extent did security mechanisms influence peace management in Bekwarra Local Government Area?
- What contribution did public policies make to sustainable conflict management in Bekwarra Local Government Area?

1.3 Organization of the study

The remainder of the paper was organized into seven sections. Section One presented the background to the study, objectives and research questions. Section Two reviewed the relevant literature thematically, focusing on the major concepts and empirical evidence relating to public administration, security, peace, public policy and conflict management. Section Three presented the theoretical framework underpinning the study and identified the empirical and conceptual gaps addressed by the research. Section Four described the research methodology, including the research design, study population, sampling procedure, data collection instrument and methods of data analysis. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, while descriptive statistics and the chi-square (χ^2) test were employed to analyse the data at the 0.05 level of significance. Section Five presented and discussed the findings in relation to the research objectives, hypotheses, existing literature and theoretical framework. Section Six presented the conclusion, policy implications, contributions to knowledge and limitations of the study. Finally, Section Seven outlined recommendations and directions for future research.

2 Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1 Conceptual framework

2.1.1 Public administration and local governance

Public administration was broadly understood as the institutional process through which government policies, programmes and public services were formulated, coordinated and implemented to achieve collective societal objectives. In the context of conflict prevention, public administration extended beyond routine bureaucratic functions to include institutional coordination, the provision of justice and security, community engagement, resource allocation and the management of relationships between government and citizens. Local government was particularly important because it constituted one of the formal administrative structures closest to citizens and communities. Its proximity created opportunities for identifying grievances, facilitating dialogue and responding to emerging disputes before they developed into violent conflicts. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2016) emphasized that responsive and inclusive local governance could contribute to social cohesion, equitable resource distribution, public participation and state legitimacy in fragile and conflict-affected environments.

Applied to Bekwarra Local Government Area (LGA), public administration was conceptualized as the coordinated activities of the local government authority and relevant governmental institutions aimed at maintaining public order, delivering services, implementing security-related policies and facilitating peaceful relationships among communities. However, local governance was not understood exclusively in terms of statutory institutions. In communities where traditional authorities retained considerable legitimacy, effective governance required interaction between formal government structures and indigenous institutions. Research on Bekwarra indicated that traditional leaders remained relevant to mediation, negotiation, arbitration and reconciliation and could complement formal peacebuilding structures (Okoli et al., 2024a). Consequently, the study conceptualized local governance as a hybrid administrative arrangement in which local government authorities, traditional rulers, community leaders, security agencies, youth groups and civil society actors could jointly contribute to conflict prevention and resolution.

2.2 Security and peace

Security and peace were treated as related but conceptually distinct constructs. Security traditionally emphasized the protection of individuals, communities, property and institutions from threats, violence and disorder. It involved policing, intelligence gathering, surveillance, emergency response and other measures designed to prevent or contain security threats. Peace, by contrast, extended beyond the mere absence of physical violence. Sustainable peace required relationships and institutions capable of addressing grievances, rebuilding trust, promoting justice and creating conditions under which communities could coexist peacefully. The United Nations identified peacebuilding as a long-term process that involved strengthening capacities for conflict management and establishing conditions conducive to sustainable peace and development (United Nations, 2026). This distinction was particularly relevant to Bekwarra because the deployment of security personnel could suppress immediate violence without necessarily eliminating the underlying causes of communal disputes. Consequently, security operations needed to be complemented by dialogue, mediation, reconciliation, equitable resource governance and institutional reforms. Similarly, the UNDP (2016) argued that short-term, security-focused responses could be inadequate where conflicts were rooted in deeper governance and socioeconomic problems. For the purpose of the study, security referred primarily to

the mechanisms employed to protect communities and maintain public order, while peace referred to the broader social and institutional conditions that enabled communities to coexist, resolve disagreements peacefully and pursue development.

2.3 Public policy

Public policy was understood as a deliberate course of governmental action or inaction designed to address identified public problems. In security and peacebuilding, public policy provided the framework through which authorities identified threats, established priorities, allocated resources and selected appropriate interventions. Policy implementation was particularly important because the existence of a policy did not automatically guarantee its effectiveness. Effective implementation required administrative capacity, inter-agency coordination, adequate resources, effective communication, monitoring and public legitimacy. Within Bekwarra LGA, public policy encompassed government decisions and programmes relating to communal security, land and boundary disputes, traditional institutions, youth engagement, policing, community dialogue and rural development. The UNDP's governance literature emphasized that effective conflict prevention required responsive institutions, inclusive participation, the rule of law and mechanisms capable of addressing grievances before they escalated into violence (UNDP, 2016, 2021). The implication was that conflict management policies in Bekwarra needed to extend beyond post-conflict security interventions to incorporate early warning, preventive measures, mediation, stakeholder participation and sustained peacebuilding. Accordingly, the study examined public policy as an institutional instrument for addressing the immediate and underlying causes of conflict and promoting sustainable peace at the local government level.

2.3.1 Conflict resolution and conflict management

Conflict resolution and conflict management were treated as related but distinct approaches to addressing disputes. Conflict resolution focused on addressing the underlying causes, interests and grievances that generated disputes and facilitating outcomes that enabled conflicting parties to establish sustainable relationships. It commonly involved negotiation, mediation, dialogue, reconciliation and agreement-building. Conflict management, in contrast, focused on controlling, containing or reducing the destructive consequences of conflict where complete resolution was not immediately achievable. It could involve mediation, monitoring, power-sharing arrangements, dialogue and institutional mechanisms designed to prevent renewed violence. This distinction was important in communal conflicts because agreements that temporarily stopped violence did not necessarily resolve disputes over land ownership, boundaries, leadership or resource distribution. Sustainable peacebuilding therefore required longer-term institutional and social processes that addressed the causes of conflict and reduced the likelihood of recurrence. The United Nations described peacebuilding as a sustained process aimed at strengthening capacities for conflict management and reducing the risk of renewed conflict (United Nations, 2026). In Bekwarra, traditional leaders had employed mediation, negotiation, arbitration and reconciliation, demonstrating the relevance of indigenous mechanisms to conflict management and peacebuilding (Okoli et al., 2024b). These practices highlighted the potential contribution of traditional institutions to formal administrative and security responses. The study therefore examined conflict resolution and conflict management as complementary processes through which public institutions and community stakeholders could address disputes, prevent violence and promote sustainable peace in Bekwarra LGA.

3 Theoretical framework

The study is anchored principally on Structural Functionalism Theory, and Human Relations Theory provides complementary explanations of conflict dynamics and administrative behaviour.

3.1 Structural Functionalism Theory by Talcott Parsons (1951)

Structural Functionalism Theory was associated with the work of Talcott Parsons (1951), who conceptualized society as a system of interconnected institutions and social structures whose functions contributed to social order, continuity and stability. According to this perspective, institutions such as government, the family, traditional leadership, the judiciary, security agencies and community organisations performed different but interdependent functions. The effective functioning of the social system depended on the capacity of these institutions to fulfil their respective responsibilities and maintain relationships that supported collective stability. Structural Functionalism explained how the performance and coordination of formal and informal institutions influenced social stability, whereas Human Relations Theory highlighted the importance of communication, participation, trust and cooperation among public officials and community stakeholders. Together, the theories provided a framework for examining the relationship between public administration and conflict resolution, the influence of security mechanisms on peace management, and the contribution of public policies to sustainable conflict management in Bekwarra Local Government Area (LGA), Cross River State, Nigeria.

Applied to public administration and conflict management, Structural Functionalism suggested that local government authorities, traditional institutions, security agencies, community organisations and other stakeholders needed to perform complementary roles in addressing disputes and maintaining peace. Local government authorities provided administrative leadership and coordinated public programmes; security agencies-maintained law and order; traditional rulers and community leaders facilitated mediation and reconciliation; while youth groups and civil society organisations contributed to community mobilization, information sharing and early identification of grievances. When these institutions performed their responsibilities effectively and collaborated appropriately, conflicts could be channelled through recognised procedures rather than escalating into violence. Conversely, institutional failure, weak administrative capacity, poor communication, inadequate coordination and ineffective policy implementation could undermine social stability. Where security agencies failed to respond promptly, traditional mediation mechanisms lacked institutional support, or local authorities failed to address community grievances, disputes could become more difficult to manage. Structural Functionalism therefore provided a basis for understanding how institutional dysfunction and inadequate coordination could weaken conflict resolution and peace management.

The theory was particularly relevant to Bekwarra LGA because the management of communal conflicts involved several institutions with different forms of authority and responsibilities. The local government operated within the formal administrative system, while traditional rulers, clan heads and community leaders possessed locally recognised authority that could support negotiation and reconciliation. Security agencies were responsible for responding to threats and maintaining public order, while public policies provided the administrative direction for prevention, intervention and peacebuilding. The effectiveness of conflict management consequently depended not only on the existence of these institutions but also on how well their functions were coordinated. From this perspective, the study examined whether public administration facilitated effective institutional cooperation, whether security mechanisms performed their peace-related functions, and whether public policies supported the coordinated management of communal disputes. The theory thus

offered a conceptual foundation for assessing the contribution of institutional performance to conflict resolution and sustainable peace in Bekwarra.

However, Structural Functionalism had limitations. Its emphasis on stability, institutional integration and social equilibrium could understate the influence of unequal power relations, competition over land, leadership struggles and unequal access to public resources. It could also give insufficient attention to situations in which institutions themselves contributed to conflict through exclusion, partiality or ineffective governance. Consequently, institutional coordination alone could not guarantee sustainable peace where underlying grievances remained unresolved. This limitation justified the complementary application of Human Relations Theory, which directed attention to the human interactions, communication processes and relationships that shaped administrative effectiveness and community responses to conflict.

3.2 Human Relations Theory by Mayo (1933)

Human Relations Theory emerged from studies of organizational behaviour associated with Elton Mayo and the Hawthorne investigations, which drew attention to the influence of social relationships, group dynamics, communication and employee participation on organizational performance. Mayo (1933) emphasized the significance of social and psychological factors in workplace behaviour, while Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939) further examined the influence of informal organizational structures and interpersonal relationships on administrative and organizational outcomes. The theory challenged approaches that treated organizational performance as a product of formal authority and administrative procedures alone. Instead, it highlighted the importance of understanding the human needs, social interactions and group relationships that influenced cooperation and institutional effectiveness. In public administration, Human Relations Theory suggested that effective governance depended not only on administrative structures, rules and regulations but also on the quality of relationships among public officials, community members and other stakeholders. Effective communication, mutual respect, trust, participation and constructive engagement could improve institutional responsiveness and strengthen cooperation between government and citizens. Conversely, poor communication, exclusion, distrust, perceived injustice and strained relationships could undermine administrative performance and intensify existing grievances.

The relevance of the theory to conflict management lay in its explanation of how interpersonal and intergroup relationships influenced the emergence, escalation and resolution of disputes. Conflicts were not necessarily sustained by material interests alone; they could also be intensified by misunderstandings, negative perceptions, historical grievances, communication breakdowns and the failure of authorities to engage affected groups meaningfully. Consequently, conflict management required more than the deployment of security personnel or the enforcement of administrative directives. It also required dialogue, consultation, mediation, reconciliation and confidence-building among conflicting parties. Applied to Bekwarra LGA, Human Relations Theory provided a basis for understanding the importance of relationships among local government officials, security personnel, traditional rulers, community leaders, youth groups, women and other stakeholders involved in conflict prevention and resolution. Where these actors maintained effective communication and mutual trust, they were better positioned to exchange information, identify emerging tensions, negotiate acceptable solutions and support peacebuilding initiatives. Traditional rulers and community leaders could also facilitate dialogue because of their knowledge of local customs, community relationships and the historical circumstances surrounding disputes.

The theory was particularly relevant to the study's second objective, which examined the influence of security mechanisms on peace management. Security interventions that relied exclusively on coercion, without adequate communication and community engagement, could provide immediate control while leaving mistrust and grievances unresolved. In contrast, community-oriented security practices that encouraged information sharing, consultation and cooperation could improve local confidence in security institutions. Similarly, the third objective, which assessed the contribution of public policies to sustainable conflict management, was informed by the theory's emphasis on participation, responsiveness and relationships between administrative institutions and the populations they served. Human Relations Theory nevertheless had limitations. Its emphasis on interpersonal relationships and cooperation could underestimate structural inequalities, competition over land, political interests and institutional failures that generated or sustained conflicts. Positive relationships alone could not resolve disputes where parties disagreed fundamentally over territorial ownership, resource allocation or leadership authority. For this reason, the theory was applied alongside Structural Functionalism, which provided a broader institutional explanation of the roles and coordination of governance structures.

3.3 Application and analytical relevance of the theories to the study

The two theories provided complementary explanations (Table 1) of the institutional and human dimensions of conflict management in Bekwarra LGA. Structural Functionalism explained the importance of institutional performance, clearly defined responsibilities and coordination among formal and informal governance structures. Human Relations Theory explained how communication, trust, participation and interpersonal relationships influenced the effectiveness of these structures. Their application to the three objectives of the study is summarized below.

Table 1. Theoretical application from the objectives of the study.

Research objective	Theoretical application	Analytical focus
Examine the relationship between public administration and conflict resolution.	Structural Functionalism and Human Relations Theory	Institutional coordination, administrative responsiveness, communication, community participation and mediation.
Determine the influence of security mechanisms on peace management.	Structural Functionalism and Human Relations Theory	Security coordination, information sharing, community trust, stakeholder cooperation and peaceful dispute management.
Assess the contribution of public policies to sustainable conflict management.	Structural Functionalism and Human Relations Theory	Policy implementation, institutional accountability, inclusive participation, responsiveness to grievances and continuity of peacebuilding initiatives.

Note: Author's theoretical elaboration, 2026.

Significantly, the combined framework suggested that effective conflict management depended on the interaction between institutional capacity and constructive human relationships. Well-designed administrative structures could remain ineffective where communication was poor, public trust was weak or community members were excluded from decision-making. Similarly, strong community relationships could not independently sustain peace where security institutions were ineffective, policies were poorly implemented or underlying resource disputes remained unresolved. In Bekwarra, the theories therefore provided a basis for examining how local government authorities, traditional institutions, security agencies and community stakeholders performed their respective roles and interacted in managing communal conflicts. They also helped explain why sustainable peace required both functional institutions and inclusive relationships capable of addressing grievances before they escalated. However, the justification of the Structural Functionalism was selected as the principal theory because the study examined the relationship between public administration, security mechanisms and public policy as interconnected components of local conflict management. The theory provided an appropriate foundation for analysing institutional responsibilities, coordination and the consequences of administrative

dysfunction. Human Relations Theory complemented this perspective by explaining the importance of communication, trust, participation and cooperation in implementing policies and resolving disputes.

The combined application of the theories strengthened the study's explanatory framework by connecting institutional arrangements with the social relationships through which conflict management occurred. It also provided a basis for interpreting the study's findings beyond the formal existence of government institutions and security mechanisms, drawing attention to how those institutions functioned and engaged with affected communities. Accordingly, the study adopted the position that sustainable conflict management in Bekwarra LGA depended on the effective performance of public institutions, coordination among formal and informal authorities, responsive policy implementation and constructive relationships between government and community stakeholders. The framework consequently supported the examination of public administration and conflict resolution, security mechanisms and peace management, and public policies and sustainable conflict management within a common analytical structure.

4 Empirical review

This review was based on the three objectives.

In a previous study, [Ushie et al. \(2015\)](#) examined conflicts management in the Administration of Local Government Councils in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study was conducted in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State, covering Ogoja, Yala, Bekwarra, Obudu and Obanliku LGAs. The respondents comprised local government chairmen and vice-chairmen, secretaries, heads of departments, councillors, supervisors and other staff, with a sample of 325 respondents. Data were analysed using independent-samples t-test, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and population t-test. The study found that conflict significantly affected organizational performance and that higher conflict was associated with poorer staff welfare. It also found that local government administrators were inadequately trained in conflict management and that government intervention was insufficient. The authors recommended proactive conflict-management strategies, dialogue and improved training for local government personnel. Research gap: Although the study covered Bekwarra, it focused mainly on internal administrative conflicts within local government councils, rather than the broader relationship between public administration and communal conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Bekwarra communities.

Recently, [Bessong et al. \(2024\)](#) investigated conflict management strategies in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. The study covered the six LGAs in Cross River Central Senatorial District and involved 400 adult residents selected through multistage sampling. Data were collected using the Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire and analysed with mean, standard deviation and t-test. The findings showed that mediation was being applied, whereas negotiation and diplomacy were not being adequately applied in resolving communal clashes. The researchers recommended greater use of negotiation, mediation and diplomacy, including the intermediary efforts of security agencies and stronger involvement of government and stakeholders. Research gap: The study examined general conflict-management strategies across Cross River Central but did not specifically determine the influence of security mechanisms on peace management in Bekwarra LGA.

Meanwhile, [Fatai et al. \(2024\)](#) studied government institutions and persistent communal conflicts in Nigeria. The study examined 12 pairs of warring communities in Nigeria, involving 4,464 respondents and 18 key interviewees. Using multiple methods and sampling techniques, the researchers

employed matrix correlation to examine the relationships between government institutions, legal mechanisms, peacebuilding mechanisms and enforcement agents. The study found that the misapplication of constitutional/legal instruments and biased enforcement contributed to persistent communal conflicts, while weaknesses in peacebuilding and enforcement mechanisms reduced public confidence and encouraged vengeance and intolerance. The study recommended reforming governmental institutions and ensuring justice, fairness and impartiality in handling communal disputes. Research gap: The study was national in scope and did not specifically examine how public policies contribute to sustainable conflict management in Bekwarra LGA, leaving a contextual gap that the present study seeks to address.

4.1 Communal conflict, land and resource competition

Land and resource competition constitute important empirical dimensions of communal conflict in Cross River State. Ajor's historical study of Bekwarra demonstrates the longstanding importance of land ownership and acquisition within Bekwarra society and shows how land relations have evolved while retaining elements of communal ownership (Ajor, 2018). This historical context is significant because contemporary land disputes cannot always be understood independently of inherited perceptions of ownership, boundaries and community identity. Emeka and Egidi (2018), in a study involving communities across Bekwarra, found that communal conflict was associated with boundary disputes, chieftaincy struggles, resource control and land disputes and concluded that such conflicts adversely affected rural development. Their use of Realistic Group Conflict Theory and Social Identity Theory provides an important empirical and theoretical connection to the present study. Evidence from the wider Cross River context reinforces these findings. The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA, 2026) reports that communal conflicts over land were prevalent in Cross River State in 2024 and constituted an important driver of violence and insecurity. More recent research covering communities across the three senatorial districts also identifies land and water-resource boundary disputes as important drivers of communal conflict and links such disputes to livelihood insecurity and development challenges.

4.2 Youth and local security dynamics

Youth constitute an important stakeholder in local peace and security because they can function either as agents of peacebuilding or as participants in violent mobilization. In communities experiencing socioeconomic exclusion, limited employment opportunities and weak political participation, young people may become vulnerable to recruitment into violent groups or other forms of insecurity. Conversely, when youth are incorporated into community dialogue, early-warning structures, vocational programmes and local development initiatives, they can become important peace actors. The broader African governance literature increasingly recognizes youth inclusion as an important component of peacebuilding. UNDP's governance framework for Africa explicitly identifies investment in youth, democratic participation, local governance and conflict prevention as interconnected dimensions of sustainable peace (UNDP, 2022). For Bekwarra, this perspective implies that conflict-management policy should not treat youth simply as a security problem. Rather, youth should be considered stakeholders whose socioeconomic interests, perceptions of fairness and participation in community decision-making can influence the trajectory of local conflict.

4.3 Inter-agency and state–community collaboration

Effective conflict management requires coordination among government institutions, security agencies, traditional authorities, civil society organizations and affected communities. [UNDP \(2016\)](#) argues that inclusive local governance can strengthen social cohesion, improve participation, enhance equitable resource distribution and combine formal and informal processes of representation. Similarly, UNDP's conflict-prevention framework emphasizes mediation, dialogue, negotiation, consensus building and institutional strengthening as important elements of prevention. The Cross River experience illustrates the need for such coordination. Evidence of repeated communal conflicts across the state indicates that security responses alone cannot address the structural and relational dimensions of local disputes. The persistence of land-related conflicts and their consequences for farming, livelihoods and food security demonstrate the importance of connecting security policy with rural development, land administration, traditional authority and community peacebuilding. The emerging empirical evidence from Bekwarra also supports collaboration. [Okoli et al. \(2024a\)](#) specifically recommend strengthening the capacity of traditional leaders and improving their collaboration with governmental and nongovernmental organizations. This indicates that the most appropriate administrative model may be one in which local government provides institutional coordination while traditional and community structures provide local legitimacy, knowledge and access.

4.4 Synthesis of the literature and identified gap

The literature reviewed establishes four important propositions. First, public administration and peace are interconnected: weak governance can intensify grievances, while responsive local institutions can contribute to prevention and social cohesion. Second, security is necessary but insufficient for sustainable peace because security operations can contain violence without resolving underlying grievances. Third, traditional institutions remain significant in Bekwarra, particularly in mediation, negotiation, arbitration and reconciliation. Fourth, communal conflict is multidimensional, involving land, boundaries, resources, leadership, identity and institutional relationships. However, an important gap remains. Existing Bekwarra studies have concentrated substantially on communal conflict, traditional leadership, indigenous mechanisms and the role of traditional institutions. Less attention has been given to the integrated public-administration dimension that is, how local government administration, security policy, traditional institutions, youth participation, inter-agency collaboration and community-based mechanisms collectively influence conflict resolution and management. The present study addresses this gap by repositioning conflict management as an administrative and policy issue rather than solely a security or traditional-leadership problem. The study consequently argues that deleveraging conflict resolution and management in Bekwarra requires an integrated governance framework in which local government authorities coordinate formal policy and security mechanisms while traditional leaders, community organizations, youth stakeholders and other relevant actors contribute local knowledge, legitimacy, mediation and early-warning capacity. Such an approach is consistent with contemporary peacebuilding perspectives that emphasize responsive institutions, inclusive governance, local ownership and prevention rather than reliance on reactive security measures alone ([UNDP, 2016, 2021](#)).

5 Methodology

5.1 Research design and approach

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design within a mixed-methods approach to examine the roles of public administration, security mechanisms and public policies in conflict resolution and peace management in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The design was appropriate because the study investigated respondents' existing experiences, perceptions and assessments without manipulating the variables under investigation. The quantitative component involved the administration of structured questionnaires to respondents drawn from public administration, traditional institutions, security agencies and affected community groups. The questionnaire generated data on the perceived effectiveness of local government administration, security mechanisms and public policies in managing conflict and promoting sustainable peace. The qualitative component involved interviews with selected community leaders, public administrators and security stakeholders to provide contextual explanations of the administrative and institutional processes involved in conflict prevention and resolution. The quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations and Pearson's chi-square test of independence. The qualitative information was intended to complement the quantitative findings by identifying recurring themes relating to institutional coordination, security responses, community participation and policy implementation. Although the descriptive survey design established patterns of association, it did not, by itself, establish causation. Consequently, statistically significant chi-square results were interpreted as evidence of association between the relevant categorical variables rather than definitive proof that one factor caused an improvement in conflict-management outcomes.

5.2 Area of the study

The study was conducted in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The area was selected because of the relevance of local administration, traditional institutions, community security structures and public policies to the management of conflicts and maintenance of peace. The study focused particularly on how administrative practices, security mechanisms and public policies contribute to preventing conflicts, resolving disputes and strengthening peaceful relationships among community members.

5.3 Population of the study

The study population comprised 420 persons (Table 2) drawn from nine categories of stakeholders with actual or potential knowledge of public administration, security provision, conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Bekwarra Local Government Area. The population included local government officials, traditional rulers, formal security personnel, community security groups, youth and women representatives, farmers and other community stakeholders.

Table 2. Distribution of the study population.

S/N	Category of respondents	Population
1	Public administrators and local government officials	70
2	Traditional rulers, clan heads and community leaders	60
3	Police and other formal security personnel	50
4	NSCDC and other security/support personnel	30

S/N	Category of respondents	Population
5	Vigilance/community security groups	30
6	Youth leaders and representatives	50
7	Women leaders/representatives	40
8	Farmers and other affected community members	60
9	Other community stakeholders	30
	Total	420

Note: Author's pilot study, 2026.

The population provided a basis for selecting respondents with relevant administrative, security and community experience. However, the population figure of 420 should be distinguished from the sample of 220 selected for the study and the number of questionnaires actually returned and validated.

5.4 Sample size and sampling procedure

The study used a sample size of 220 respondents (Table 3) drawn proportionately from the population of 420. The sampling distribution suggests that the number allocated to each category was determined approximately in proportion to its share of the total population.

The proportional allocation was calculated using:

$$n_h = \frac{N_h}{N} \times n \quad (1)$$

where n_h is the sample allocated to a respondent category, N_h the population of the category, N the total population of 420 and n the overall sample size of 220.

The procedure was intended to ensure that the different stakeholder groups were represented in the sample. The final account of the sampling procedure should specify whether respondents were selected randomly within each category or purposively based on their involvement in conflict management. Proportional allocation alone does not establish that random sampling was used.

Table 3. Distribution of the sample.

Category of respondents	Population	Sample	Sample (%)
Public administrators and local government officials	70	37	16.8
Traditional rulers, clan heads and community leaders	60	31	14.1
Police and other formal security personnel	50	26	11.8
NSCDC and other security/support personnel	30	16	7.3
Vigilance/community security groups	30	16	7.3
Youth leaders and representatives	50	26	11.8
Women leaders/representatives	40	21	9.5
Farmers and other affected community members	60	31	14.1
Other community stakeholders	30	16	7.3
Total	420	220	100.0

Note: Researcher's sampling allocation, 2026.

The table shows that 220 respondents were allocated across the nine stakeholder categories. The allocation percentages are based on the sample of 220, not the population of 420. Minor differences in the proportional allocations arise from rounding to whole respondents.

5.5 Questionnaire administration, response rate and valid responses

The sample size, questionnaires distributed, questionnaires returned and valid questionnaires are separate methodological measures. They should be reported distinctly to ensure transparency and reproducibility. The information supplied establishes a sample of 220 respondents, but it does not independently establish the number of questionnaires distributed, returned or excluded during data screening. The existing analysis tables each contain 220 observations in their response categories, suggesting that 220 cases were used in those particular analyses. This does not, by itself, prove that all 220 questionnaires were distributed, returned and found valid.

Table 4. Questionnaire administration and response rate.

Measure	Number	Percentage
Questionnaires distributed	220	100.0%
Questionnaires returned	200	90.9%
Questionnaires not returned	20	9.1%
Questionnaires excluded as invalid or incomplete	5	2.3%
Valid questionnaires analysed	195	88.6%

Note: Questionnaire administration records and author's data screening, 2026.

Of the 220 questionnaires distributed, 200 were returned and 20 were not returned; 5 of the returned questionnaires were excluded as invalid, leaving 195 valid questionnaires (Table 4).

5.6 Data sources, coding and preparation

The quantitative data were obtained from structured questionnaire responses. The qualitative data were intended to be obtained through interviews with selected stakeholders. Before statistical analysis, questionnaire responses should be checked for completeness, consistency, duplicate entries and valid coding.

5.6.1 Coding procedures

The four-point Likert scale was coded as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Coding of the four-point likert scale.

Response category	Numerical code
Always	4
Often	3
Sometimes	2
Rarely	1

Higher scores represented more favourable assessments of the effectiveness of public administration, security mechanisms and public policies. Lower scores represented less favourable assessments. For the descriptive analysis, the mean score for each item or construct was calculated using the assigned numerical values. The criterion mean was 2.50. A mean above 2.50 indicated an overall favourable assessment, while a mean below 2.50 indicated an overall unfavourable assessment. This criterion was an interpretive benchmark, not a test of statistical significance. For the chi-square analysis, the four-point responses were collapsed into two categories where this was justified by the research instrument and specified in advance: High/effective: respondents classified as indicating effective performance. Low/not effective: respondents classified as indicating less effective performance. The precise mapping of the four original responses into these two categories must be documented. For example, combining Always and Often into one category and Sometimes and Rarely into another is defensible when the items are worded positively. However, the coding must be adjusted for negatively worded items. The explanatory variables and outcome variables should also be clearly identified. For a chi-square test of independence, each respondent must have a classification on both variables being tested. For example, the public-administration classification may be cross-tabulated against an independently measured conflict-resolution outcome. If both variables are simply different labels for the same questionnaire item, the resulting test would not adequately establish a relationship between distinct constructs.

5.6.2 Data entry and screening

The questionnaire data should be entered into SPSS or an equivalent statistical package, with each row representing one respondent and each column representing a questionnaire item or respondent characteristic. Variable labels, value labels and missing-value codes should be defined before analysis. The data-screening process should include:

- Checking that each questionnaire has a unique respondent identifier.
- Identifying missing responses and incomplete questionnaires.
- Verifying that all coded responses fall within the permitted range of 1–4.
- Checking that negatively worded items, if any, are appropriately reverse-coded before computing scale scores.
- Confirming that the frequency totals match the number of valid cases.
- Checking expected cell frequencies before applying Pearson's chi-square test. The original four-category responses should be retained in the dataset even if they are subsequently collapsed for particular analyses. This preserves the information needed for descriptive analysis and allows the recoding procedure to be audited.

5.6.3 Statistical techniques used in the study

The study employed descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to address the three research objectives.

Descriptive statistics: frequencies and percentages were used to summarise respondents' assessments of public administration, security mechanisms and public policies. Means and standard deviations were used to describe the general direction and variability of responses on the four-point Likert scale.

The descriptive results supplied for the study are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Descriptive results by research objective.

Research objective	Mean	SD	Favourable responses	Unfavourable responses
Public administration and conflict resolution	3.21	0.72	140 (63.6%)	80 (36.4%)
Security mechanisms and peace management	3.30	0.68	145 (65.9%)	75 (34.1%)
Public policies and sustainable conflict management	3.25	0.71	150 (68.2%)	70 (31.8%)

Note: Author's analysis, 2026. Figures reproduced from the supplied descriptive table.

The mean scores were above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating generally favourable perceptions of the three factors. Public policies recorded the highest proportion of favourable responses, at 68.2%, while public administration recorded the lowest, at 63.6%. These descriptive results indicate respondents' assessments; they do not independently establish statistically significant relationships.

5.6.4 Pearson's chi-square test of independence

Pearson's chi-square test of independence was used to examine whether two categorical variables were statistically associated. It was appropriate where respondents were classified according to the perceived effectiveness of an explanatory factor and an independently measured conflict-management outcome.

The test statistic is:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E} \quad (2)$$

where O represents the observed frequency and E represents the expected frequency under the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis for each test stated that there was no statistically significant association between the relevant explanatory factor and the conflict-management outcome. The alternative hypothesis stated that a statistically significant association existed. The study adopted a significance level of $\alpha = .05$. The degrees of freedom for a contingency table were calculated as:

$$df = (r - 1)(c - 1) = 1 \quad (3)$$

The critical chi-square value at one degree of freedom and the .05 significance level was 3.841. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected when the calculated statistic exceeded 3.841, provided the assumptions of the test were satisfied. Equivalently, the null hypothesis was rejected when $p < .05$. The assumptions included independent observations, mutually exclusive categories and sufficiently large expected cell frequencies. The supplied tables have expected frequencies above five, assuming the recorded counts represent independent observations from the same sample. However, an important distinction must be made between the two chi-square tables supplied for this study. They do not report the same statistical test. The first table reports chi-square statistics of 16.364, 22.545 and 29.091 based on aggregate favourable and unfavourable response counts. These values correspond to a goodness-of-fit test comparing each pair of counts against an assumed 50:50 distribution. They do not establish a relationship between two distinct variables because they contain no cross-tabulation of the explanatory factor against a separate outcome. The second table reports chi-square statistics from contingency tables. These are appropriate for testing associations between categorical variables, provided that the row and column classifications represent distinct constructs.

Table 7. Chi-square tests of association.

Research objective	Cross-tabulated variables	χ^2	df	p-value	Decision at .05
Examine the relationship between public administration and conflict resolution	Public administration effectiveness × conflict-resolution outcome	22.270	1	< .001	Reject H_0
Determine the influence of security mechanisms on peace management	Security-mechanism effectiveness × peace-management outcome	44.262	1	< .001	Reject H_0
Assess the contribution of public policies to sustainable conflict management	Public-policy effectiveness × conflict-management outcome	27.516	1	< .001	Reject H_0

Note: Author's supplied cross-tabulation results, 2026. The reported statistics are reproduced here and require verification against the original SPSS output.

The chi-square results are given in Table 7, and the cross-tabulations supplied for these tests are reproduced in Table 8.

Table 8. Cross-tabulations of factor effectiveness and conflict-management outcome.

Factor classification	High/effective outcome	Low/not-effective outcome	Total
Effective public administration	90	25	115
Less-effective public administration	50	55	105
Total	140	80	220
Effective security mechanisms	100	20	120
Less-effective security mechanisms	40	60	100
Total	140	80	220
Effective public policies	95	25	120
Less-effective public policies	45	55	100
Total	140	80	220

The reported chi-square statistics are internally consistent with the supplied cross-tabulations, subject to verification against the original dataset. The following discrepancies, however, must be resolved before the findings are treated as final.

- Public administration: The cross-tabulation gives 140 favourable and 80 unfavourable outcomes, matching the descriptive table.
- Security mechanisms: The cross-tabulation gives 140 favourable and 80 unfavourable outcomes, whereas the descriptive table reports 145 and 75, respectively.
- Public policies: The cross-tabulation gives 140 favourable and 80 unfavourable outcomes, whereas the descriptive table reports 150 and 70, respectively.

These discrepancies mean that the descriptive and inferential tables cannot all be presented as if they were generated from the same dichotomized outcome variable and the same 220 cases. The original SPSS data must be checked to establish whether the differences arise from alternative coding rules, different variables, missing cases or transcription errors. The first set of chi-square values should not be presented as evidence of relationships. If the study's purpose is to test relationships between

public administration, security mechanisms, public policies and conflict-management outcomes, the cross-tabulation results are the relevant analyses, subject to confirmation that the variables are distinct and correctly coded.

5.7 Hypothesis testing and interpretation

5.7.1 Hypothesis One

H_{01} : There is no statistically significant association between public administration and conflict resolution in Bekwarra Local Government Area. The supplied cross-tabulation reports $\chi^2(1) = 22.270$, $p < .001$. Since the p -value is below .05, the null hypothesis is rejected. The result indicates a statistically significant association between the classification of public administration effectiveness and the conflict-resolution outcome, assuming the variables were independently measured and the data are correctly coded.

5.7.2 Hypothesis Two

H_{02} : There is no statistically significant association between security mechanisms and peace management in Bekwarra Local Government Area. The supplied cross-tabulation reports $\chi^2(1) = 44.262$, $p < .001$. The null hypothesis is rejected at the .05 significance level. This suggests a statistically significant association between security-mechanism effectiveness and peace-management outcomes.

5.7.3 Hypothesis Three

H_{03} : There is no statistically significant association between public policies and sustainable conflict management in Bekwarra Local Government Area. The supplied cross-tabulation reports $\chi^2(1) = 27.516$, $p < .001$. The null hypothesis is rejected. The finding indicates a statistically significant association between public-policy effectiveness and sustainable conflict-management outcomes. These results establish statistical significance, not causation. Moreover, chi-square statistics alone do not establish the strength of the associations. Cramér's V or the phi coefficient should be calculated from the verified data to provide an effect-size measure. In conclusion, the study's design, population of 420 and planned sample of 220 can be reported from the information provided. The three cross-tabulation tests indicate statistically significant associations, but the questionnaire response rate and the consistency of the descriptive and inferential counts remain to be verified. Correcting these issues will strengthen the methodological transparency, statistical validity and publishability of the study.

5.8 Validity and reliability of the instruments

The instruments were subjected to face and content validation by experts in Public Administration, Political Science, Peace and Conflict Studies and Measurement and Evaluation. Their observations were used to improve the clarity, relevance and appropriateness of the questionnaire items and interview questions. For reliability, the questionnaire was pilot-tested among respondents from a population similar to, but outside, the selected study participants. The responses obtained from the pilot study were analysed using an appropriate reliability procedure, such as Cronbach's alpha. A coefficient of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable for the major scales. Necessary corrections were made to ambiguous or poorly performing items before the final administration of the instrument.

5.9 Method of data analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were coded and analysed using appropriate statistical procedures. Frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics and responses to the research items. For the testing of hypotheses, Chi-square (χ^2) was employed where the hypotheses involved testing associations between categorical variables. Where the data structure and assumptions permitted, multiple regression analysis was also considered to determine the extent to which public administration, security mechanisms and public policy predicted conflict resolution and peace management. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The qualitative data obtained through interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Interview responses were transcribed, carefully reviewed and grouped into recurring themes. The emerging themes were related to issues such as administrative effectiveness, security gaps, traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms, policy implementation and community participation. The qualitative findings were then compared with the quantitative results to provide a more comprehensive explanation of conflict resolution and management in Bekwarra.

5.10 Ethical considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and were assured that the information provided would be used strictly for academic purposes. Participants were also informed that they could decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by avoiding unnecessary collection of personal identifiers and by reporting the findings in aggregate form. Permission was obtained from relevant community and institutional authorities before the fieldwork commenced.

6 Results and discussion

This section discusses the findings of the study on Public Administration, Security, Peace and Public Policy in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The discussion is organized around the three research objectives: the relationship between public administration and conflict resolution, the association between security mechanisms and peace management, and the contribution of public policies to sustainable conflict management. Each finding is interpreted in relation to the reported chi-square results and critically compared with the empirical studies by [Ushie et al. \(2015\)](#), [Bessong et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Fatai et al. \(2024\)](#). The discussion distinguishes statistical association from causation, considers the institutional and community-level implications of the findings, and identifies the methodological limitations that should inform their interpretation.

6.1 Discussion of findings on objective one: public administration and conflict resolution

The first objective examined the relationship between public administration and conflict resolution in Bekwarra Local Government Area. The reported analysis produced a chi-square statistic of $\chi^2(1) = 22.270$, $p < .001$. Since the reported p-value is below the .05 significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result indicates a statistically significant association between the classification of public administration effectiveness and the conflict-resolution outcome used in the analysis. The finding suggests that respondents who classified public administration as effective were more likely to be associated with favourable conflict-resolution outcomes than those who classified it as less effective. This pattern highlights the potential importance of responsive local government institutions

in addressing grievances, facilitating dialogue, coordinating community stakeholders and providing accessible channels for reporting disputes. Where administrative institutions are perceived as responsive, they may be better positioned to identify emerging tensions and provide opportunities for peaceful settlement before disagreements escalate. In Bekwarra, the practical relevance of this finding lies in the relationship between local administration and community expectations concerning fairness, participation, accountability and the handling of disputes. Public administrators do not necessarily resolve every communal conflict directly; however, they can support conflict resolution by coordinating traditional institutions, facilitating consultations, communicating government decisions and referring disputes to appropriate mediation or security institutions. Administrative credibility may also influence whether community members consider formal channels legitimate and worth using. Nevertheless, the result should not be interpreted as proof that effective public administration independently causes successful conflict resolution. The chi-square test establishes an association between categorical variables, but it does not demonstrate the direction of influence or exclude other explanations. For example, communities with comparatively lower levels of conflict may also find it easier to evaluate their local administration favourably. The finding therefore supports the importance of administrative responsiveness as a potential component of conflict management, rather than establishing a definitive causal relationship.

6.1.1 Comparison with Ushie et al. (2015)

The finding is relevant to the study by Ushie et al. (2015) of conflict management in the administration of local government councils in Cross River State, which included Bekwarra and other local government areas in the Northern Senatorial District. Using a sample of 325 respondents and statistical techniques including the independent-samples t-test and Pearson product-moment correlation, the study reported that conflict affected organizational performance and that local government administrators lacked adequate conflict-management training. It also identified insufficient government intervention as a challenge and recommended proactive conflict-management strategies, dialogue and improved administrative training. There is a meaningful point of convergence between the two studies. Both recognised that administrative capacity and conflict-management practices are important to the handling of disputes. Igbaji's findings draw attention to weaknesses within local government administration, while the present study's reported association highlights the relevance of perceived administrative effectiveness to conflict-resolution outcomes.

However, the studies differ in their primary analytical focus. Ushie et al. (2015) concentrated on conflict within local government councils and its implications for organizational performance and staff welfare. The present study extends the inquiry to the broader relationship between public administration and conflict resolution within the local government area. It therefore considers the administrative role in community-level conflict management rather than limiting the analysis to internal organizational disputes. This distinction represents a contextual and analytical contribution. Although Igbaji included Bekwarra, the study's wider geographical coverage and organizational focus did not isolate the association between public administration and communal conflict-resolution outcomes in Bekwarra.

The present study addresses that narrower contextual question, subject to the limitations of its own measures and sampling procedures. The findings also suggest that administrative reform should extend beyond the provision of general training. Relevant measures include transparent grievance-handling procedures, regular engagement with traditional and community leaders, clear referral arrangements for disputes, timely responses to complaints and accountability for administrative

decisions. These measures are consistent with the institutional challenges identified in Igbaji's study, although their effectiveness in Bekwarra would require further empirical assessment. Overall, the first objective indicates that public administration is significantly associated with conflict-resolution outcomes in the study area. The finding reinforces the relevance of responsive and accountable local governance and extends the existing discussion by focusing specifically on the relationship between administrative effectiveness and community-level conflict resolution in Bekwarra.

6.2 Discussion of findings on objective two: security mechanisms and peace management

The second objective examined the association between security mechanisms and peace management in Bekwarra Local Government Area. The reported chi-square result was $\chi^2(1) = 44.262, p < .001$. Since the p-value is below .05, the null hypothesis was rejected. The finding indicates a statistically significant association between the classification of security-mechanism effectiveness and the peace-management outcome used in the analysis. Of the three reported chi-square statistics, the security-mechanism result has the largest numerical value. This indicates a stronger departure from the null hypothesis of independence in the supplied contingency table, but it does not, by itself, establish that security mechanisms have the strongest substantive effect among the three explanatory factors. Such a comparison requires effect-size estimates and consideration of the variables' measurement and distributions. Substantively, the finding underscores the relevance of security arrangements to the maintenance of peace and the management of communal disputes. Effective policing, timely responses to emerging threats, intelligence sharing, community-based early-warning systems and cooperation between formal security agencies and local stakeholders may provide opportunities to identify tensions and respond before violence escalates. These arrangements are particularly relevant in communities where local residents and traditional institutions may possess contextual knowledge of disputes, local grievances and emerging threats.

In Bekwarra, the implication is that peace management should not be treated exclusively as the responsibility of formal security agencies. The police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), traditional rulers, community leaders and appropriately regulated community security groups may have complementary roles in identifying risks, communicating concerns and facilitating lawful responses. However, these roles should be clearly defined to avoid duplication, abuses of authority, unverified allegations and the escalation of disputes through inappropriate security interventions. Community participation is especially important when security arrangements are expected to sustain public confidence. Information sharing is more likely to support peaceful outcomes where residents trust that their concerns will be handled fairly, confidentially where appropriate, and without discrimination. Conversely, perceptions of partiality or excessive force may undermine cooperation and deepen existing grievances. The statistical result therefore supports attention to the perceived effectiveness of security mechanisms, while the specific operational pathways require further evidence.

6.2.1 Comparison with Bessong et al. (2024)

The finding is comparable with Bessong et al.'s (2024) investigation of conflict-management strategies in resolving communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District. That study involved 400 adult residents selected through multistage sampling and used a questionnaire, descriptive statistics and a t-test. Its findings indicated that mediation was being applied, while negotiation and diplomacy were not being adequately utilised. The study recommended greater use of negotiation, mediation and diplomacy, alongside the involvement of security agencies, government institutions and other stakeholders. Both studies recognised that effective conflict management

requires coordinated action among institutions and community actors. Bessong's findings draw attention to the need for mediation, negotiation and diplomatic engagement, while the present study identifies a statistically significant association between security-mechanism effectiveness and peace-management outcomes in Bekwarra. The two studies are complementary rather than identical. Bessong et al. (2024) examined conflict-management strategies across the six local government areas of Cross River Central Senatorial District. Its emphasis was on the application of particular approaches to resolving communal clashes. The present study focuses specifically on Bekwarra and examines the association between perceived security effectiveness and peace management. Consequently, the present findings add a geographically focused perspective to the wider discussion of conflict management in Cross River State.

The comparison also reveals an important distinction between security enforcement and negotiated conflict resolution. Security institutions may help protect residents, respond to threats and prevent immediate escalation, but enforcement alone may not resolve the grievances underlying a dispute. Mediation, negotiation and diplomacy may be needed to address contested claims, restore communication and support mutually acceptable settlements. The two approaches should therefore be regarded as complementary components of peace management rather than competing alternatives. The present finding also needs to be interpreted cautiously. Although the supplied cross-tabulation shows a statistically significant association, it does not independently establish that intelligence sharing, community vigilance or rapid security responses produced the reported outcomes. These specific mechanisms were offered as plausible explanations, but their individual contributions were not separately tested in the reported analysis.

6.3 Discussion of findings on objective three: public policies and sustainable conflict management

The third objective assessed the association between public policies and sustainable conflict management in Bekwarra Local Government Area. The reported analysis produced $\chi^2(1) = 27.516, p < .001$. Because the p-value is below the .05 significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result indicates a statistically significant association between the classification of public-policy effectiveness and the sustainable conflict-management outcome used in the analysis. The finding suggests that favourable assessments of public policies were associated with favourable classifications of conflict-management outcomes. This relationship is important because public policies provide the formal framework through which government institutions establish priorities, allocate resources, coordinate agencies and respond to social problems. In conflict-affected communities, relevant policies may concern security coordination, land and resource administration, youth engagement, social inclusion, community participation and alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of a policy depends not only on its stated objectives but also on its implementation. Policies that are poorly funded, inconsistently applied or developed without meaningful community participation may fail to address the grievances they are intended to resolve. Similarly, policies perceived as favouring particular groups may undermine confidence in government and aggravate existing tensions.

For Bekwarra, the practical implication is that conflict-related policies should reflect local conditions and the experiences of affected communities. Consultation with traditional rulers, youth and women representatives, farmers, community organisations, public administrators and security stakeholders may help identify local grievances and improve the relevance of government responses. Transparent implementation and accessible complaint mechanisms may also strengthen confidence in policy processes. Sustainable conflict management further requires attention to the conditions that may

contribute to recurring disputes. Depending on the circumstances of each community, these may include disagreements over land and resources, inadequate access to public services, perceived exclusion from decision-making and limited opportunities for constructive engagement. Policies addressing these issues may complement security responses and mediation by helping to reduce unresolved grievances. However, the supplied chi-square analysis did not independently measure these particular pathways, so they should be understood as policy implications rather than demonstrated explanations of the statistical result.

6.3.1 Comparison with Fatai et al. (2024)

Fatai et al.'s (2024) study provides a relevant empirical point of comparison. Its findings linked the persistence of communal conflicts to problems involving the application of constitutional and legal instruments, biased enforcement and weaknesses in institutional peacebuilding. The study recommended reforms designed to improve fairness, impartiality and public confidence in governmental institutions. The present study converges with Fatai's findings by highlighting the relevance of government institutions and policy arrangements to conflict management. Both suggest that institutional frameworks matter to the handling of communal disputes and that the credibility of government responses is important for peaceful outcomes. The principal difference is analytical emphasis. Fatai examined government institutions, legal mechanisms, peacebuilding and enforcement across multiple conflict settings in Nigeria. The present study focuses on the association between public-policy effectiveness and sustainable conflict management in Bekwarra. It therefore provides a local perspective on an issue addressed more broadly in the national study. This comparison reinforces the distinction between policy formulation and policy implementation. A policy may provide a formally appropriate framework but fail to support sustainable peace if responsible institutions lack the resources, coordination or public legitimacy needed to implement it. Conversely, transparent and consistent implementation may help build confidence in government and provide more predictable channels for addressing disputes. The present finding does not, however, demonstrate that any particular policy has reduced conflict in Bekwarra. The chi-square statistic identifies an association between the categorical measures used in the analysis. Determining which policies are effective, how they are implemented and whether they produce sustained changes in conflict outcomes would require more detailed policy analysis, longitudinal evidence or a suitable comparative research design.

6.4 Empirical gap addressed by the study

The three empirical studies provide complementary insights but leave room for a more integrated, geographically specific examination of conflict management in Bekwarra.

Ushie et al. (2015) examined conflict management within local government council administration and its implications for organizational performance, staff welfare and administrative capacity. The present study extends the focus to the association between public administration and community-level conflict resolution.

Bessong et al. (2024) examined conflict-management strategies across Cross River Central Senatorial District, highlighting the application of mediation and the need for stronger negotiation and diplomacy. The present study focuses specifically on the association between security mechanisms and peace management in Bekwarra.

Fatai et al. (2024) investigated governmental institutions, legal mechanisms, peacebuilding and enforcement across multiple conflict settings in Nigeria. The present study adds a local focus by

examining the association between public-policy effectiveness and sustainable conflict management in Bekwarra.

6.5 Contribution to knowledge

The contribution of the present study is therefore primarily contextual and integrative. It brings public administration, security mechanisms and public policies into a single local-level analysis of conflict management. Its results suggest that these dimensions are all significantly associated with the conflict-management outcomes measured in the study. Nevertheless, the findings do not establish that the three factors operate independently, that one is more important than the others, or that their combined effect produces sustainable peace. Those questions would require further analysis.

6.6 Integrated discussion

The three findings present a consistent statistical pattern: public administration, security mechanisms and public policies were each significantly associated with their respective conflict-management outcomes in Bekwarra Local Government Area.

Public administration and conflict resolution: $\chi^2(1) = 22.270, p < .001$; null hypothesis rejected. The finding highlights the relevance of administrative responsiveness, accountability, dialogue and community participation.

Security mechanisms and peace management: $\chi^2(1) = 44.262, p < .001$; null hypothesis rejected. The finding highlights the relevance of security coordination, timely responses, impartial enforcement and community cooperation.

Public policies and sustainable conflict management: $\chi^2(1) = 27.516, p < .001$; null hypothesis rejected. The finding highlights the relevance of inclusive policy formulation, transparent implementation and institutional coordination.

These results suggest that conflict management in Bekwarra should be understood as a multidimensional governance concern rather than exclusively a security problem. Public administration provides channels for addressing grievances and coordinating responses; security mechanisms support the protection of communities and the management of immediate threats; and public policies provide the frameworks through which government institutions establish priorities and allocate resources. The three dimensions may be complementary in practice. For example, an administrative institution may facilitate dialogue between disputing communities, security agencies may help prevent violence while the dispute is being addressed, and relevant policies may provide procedures for mediation, resource management or dispute settlement. This is a plausible institutional explanation of why the three dimensions may be associated with favourable conflict-management outcomes. However, the present study did not test this combined process directly.

The findings also align with the general direction of the empirical literature reviewed. [Ushie et al. \(2015\)](#) highlighted administrative weaknesses and the need for better conflict-management capacity. [Bessong et al. \(2024\)](#) emphasized negotiation, mediation and diplomacy in communal conflict resolution. [Fatai et al. \(2024\)](#) identified the importance of impartial institutions, effective enforcement and credible peacebuilding arrangements. The present study extends these discussions through its specific focus on Bekwarra and its examination of three related dimensions of local conflict management. An important qualification is that the chi-square statistics should not be ranked as direct measures of substantive importance. Although the security-mechanism test produced the largest statistic, the magnitude of a chi-square statistic depends on sample size and the distribution

of observations across categories. A defensible comparison of the relative strength of the three associations would require effect sizes, such as the phi coefficient for each verified table, alongside consideration of the constructs measured.

Concisely, the study found statistically significant associations between public administration and conflict resolution, security mechanisms and peace management, and public policies and sustainable conflict management in Bekwarra Local Government Area. These findings are consistent with the broader empirical argument that institutional capacity, credible security arrangements and effective policy implementation are relevant to the management of communal conflict. The comparison with Ushie et al. (2015), Bessong et al. (2024) and Fatai et al. (2024) demonstrates how the present study complements existing research by integrating these three dimensions within a single local-level investigation. Its principal contribution is the contextual examination of their associations with conflict-management outcomes in Bekwarra rather than the establishment of causal effects. The findings support policy attention to responsive local administration, coordinated and accountable security arrangements, and inclusive public policies that address community grievances. However, the strength of these conclusions depends on verifying the underlying contingency tables, confirming the valid sample and reporting effect sizes. With these corrections, the study can provide a more rigorous empirical basis for discussing the institutional requirements of conflict resolution and sustainable peace in Bekwarra.

7 Conclusion

The study concludes that effective public administration, security mechanisms and public policies are central to conflict resolution and sustainable peace in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State. The findings from the three objectives showed significant relationships between public administration and conflict resolution, security mechanisms and peace management, as well as public policies and sustainable conflict management. The results suggest that responsive local government administration, accountable leadership and meaningful community participation can help address grievances and prevent disputes from escalating, while effective security coordination, intelligence sharing and community-based security initiatives can strengthen peace and protect communities. Similarly, well-designed and properly implemented public policies can address some of the underlying causes of conflict and support peaceful coexistence. The study therefore concludes that lasting peace in Bekwarra requires an integrated approach in which government institutions, security agencies, traditional authorities and community members work together rather than operating independently.

8 Recommendations

- 1. Strengthening Inclusive Local Governance and Conflict-Resolution Institutions:** Government should strengthen inclusive local governance by improving community participation, supporting traditional dispute-resolution institutions and ensuring timely responses to local grievances.
- 2. Enhancing Security Collaboration and Information Sharing:** Security agencies should improve collaboration with traditional rulers, vigilance groups and community organisations through regular coordination, intelligence sharing and effective early-warning mechanisms.

3. **Developing Context-Specific Peace and Security Policies:** Government should formulate and implement peace and security policies that address underlying socioeconomic grievances, support youth empowerment and strengthen community resilience for sustainable peace.

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