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MULTI-DOOR COURTHOUSE AND LAND DISPUTE RESOLUTION IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA (2017–2024)

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Abstract
Land disputes are a major source of social instability, economic disruption, and governance challenges in Ogun State, Nigeria. This is especially true due to rapid urbanization and the state's proximity to Lagos. To address the limitations of traditional litigation, the Ogun State Multi-Door Courthouse (OMDC) was set up in 2017. It serves as a court-connected Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism that aims to improve efficiency and access to justice. This study looks at how effective the Multi-Door Courthouse (MDC) model has been in resolving land-related disputes in Ogun State from 2017 to 2024. A qualitative research design was used, which included sixteen Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with institutional actors, legal practitioners, and community stakeholders. It also involved a documentary analysis of OMDC records and judicial reports. The findings show that the MDC significantly reduced the time needed for dispute resolution, lowered procedural and financial barriers, and improved user satisfaction compared to traditional court processes. The combination of mediation and other ADR methods under judicial supervision has strengthened institutional legitimacy and improved compliance with settlement outcomes. The involvement of customary authorities has also increased cultural acceptance and community trust. However, structural issues such as inadequate funding, limited rural awareness, and delays in turning mediated agreements into enforceable judgments limit the model's overall impact. While the MDC has improved access to justice and helped prevent conflicts over land, its long-term sustainability relies on administrative reforms and wider public engagement.

Keywords: Alternative Dispute Resolution, Judicial Reform, Justice, Land Disputes, Multi-Door Courthouse

Introduction

Land remains one of the most valuable economic, social and cultural resources in Nigeria. It serves as the foundation for agriculture, housing, industrial development and commercial activities while also representing an important source of identity, inheritance and community cohesion. Consequently, disputes over ownership, boundaries, inheritance, tenancy and compulsory acquisition have become increasingly common across many parts of the country. The rapid pace of urbanisation, population growth, commercial expansion and increasing land values have further intensified land-related conflicts, particularly in rapidly developing states such as Ogun State.

These disputes frequently undermine social stability, discourage investment, delay infrastructure development and place considerable pressure on the formal judicial system.

Conventional litigation has traditionally been the principal mechanism for resolving land disputes in Nigeria. However, court proceedings are often characterised by prolonged delays, high litigation costs, procedural complexity and congested court dockets. These challenges have limited timely access to justice and encouraged many disputants to resort to informal or self-help mechanisms, sometimes resulting in violence and prolonged community conflicts. The need for more accessible, efficient and less adversarial dispute-resolution mechanisms has therefore become increasingly important within Nigeria's justice sector. This concern aligns with global recognition that effective justice systems should provide affordable, timely and people-centred mechanisms for resolving disputes while promoting public confidence in the rule of law (United Nations Development Programme, 2022; World Justice Project, 2023).

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has emerged as an important complement to conventional litigation by providing flexible, cost-effective and consensual procedures for resolving disputes. ADR encompasses mediation, arbitration, conciliation and negotiation, all of which seek to promote mutually acceptable settlements while preserving relationships between disputing parties. Within the Nigerian justice system, ADR has increasingly been institutionalised through court-connected mechanisms designed to improve access to justice and reduce judicial delays. Among these innovations, the Multi-Door Courthouse (MDC) model has become one of the most significant judicial reforms.

The Multi-Door Courthouse concept was originally proposed by Frank E. A. Sander during the 1976 Pound Conference in the United States. The model advocates a justice system in which disputes are directed to the dispute-resolution process most appropriate to their nature, thereby improving efficiency, reducing costs and increasing user satisfaction. Since its introduction, the MDC model has been adopted in several jurisdictions as a means of integrating ADR into the formal judicial system while expanding access to justice.

Nigeria institutionalized the Multi-Door Courthouse (MDC) model through the establishment of the Lagos Multi-Door Courthouse (LMDC) in 2002, the first court-connected Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) centre in Africa (Lagos Multi-Door Courthouse, 2023). Building on the success of the LMDC, several states, including Ogun State, subsequently established similar court-connected ADR centres to improve access to justice and enhance judicial efficiency (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022). The OMDC integrates mediation, arbitration, conciliation and other ADR mechanisms into the formal court system, with particular relevance for land disputes, which constitute a substantial proportion of civil cases before the courts.

Despite these institutional reforms, land disputes remain widespread in Ogun State. Rapid industrialisation, urban expansion, increasing land speculation, boundary disagreements, family inheritance disputes and competing customary and statutory land claims continue to generate significant litigation and social tension. Although the OMDC has been operational for several years, there remains limited empirical evidence assessing its effectiveness specifically in resolving land-related disputes. Much of the existing Nigerian literature has concentrated on ADR generally or on the experience of the Lagos Multi-Door Courthouse, with comparatively little scholarly attention devoted to the Ogun State model and its contribution to land dispute resolution.

It is this gap that the present study seeks to address by evaluating the effectiveness of the Multi-Door Courthouse in resolving land disputes in Ogun State between 2017 and 2024. The study examines the extent to which the OMDC has enhanced access to justice, assesses how its institutional framework supports the resolution of land-related disputes, and identifies the institutional and structural challenges affecting its effectiveness. The study is guided by the Access to Justice Framework developed by Cappelletti and Garth (1978), which emphasizes accessibility, affordability, procedural fairness, and institutional effectiveness as essential components of a responsive justice system.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Clarifications

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) refers to a range of structured procedures for resolving disputes outside the formal judicial process. These procedures commonly include mediation, arbitration, conciliation, negotiation and early neutral evaluation. ADR is designed to provide parties with flexible, efficient and cost-effective mechanisms for resolving disputes while minimizing the procedural complexity, expense and adversarial nature associated with conventional litigation. Unlike court proceedings, ADR emphasizes voluntary participation, party autonomy, confidentiality and collaborative problem-solving, thereby encouraging mutually acceptable outcomes and preserving social and commercial relationships (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020).

The increasing global acceptance of ADR reflects a broader transformation in justice administration towards people-centred and accessible dispute resolution. Rather than assuming that litigation is the most appropriate response to every dispute, contemporary justice systems recognize that different categories of disputes require different resolution mechanisms. This philosophy promotes proportionality in dispute resolution by directing parties towards procedures that best correspond with the nature, complexity and relational context of their disputes. Consequently, ADR has become an important component of justice sector reforms aimed at reducing court congestion, improving procedural efficiency and expanding access to justice (United Nations Development Programme, 2022).

Within the Nigerian context, ADR is deeply rooted in indigenous systems of conflict management that predate the colonial legal system. Traditionally, disputes relating to land ownership, inheritance, family relations and communal boundaries were resolved through mediation, negotiation and customary arbitration facilitated by family heads, councils of elders and traditional rulers. These customary mechanisms emphasized reconciliation, restoration of social harmony and community cohesion rather than adversarial determination of legal rights. Although contemporary ADR has been institutionalized within the formal justice system, its underlying principles remain consistent with these long-standing African traditions of consensual dispute settlement (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020).

Despite its numerous advantages, ADR is not without limitations. Processes conducted entirely outside the formal judicial framework may encounter challenges relating to procedural consistency, legal enforceability and accountability, particularly where disputes involve statutory rights, commercial transactions or unequal bargaining

power between parties. Settlement agreements reached through informal mechanisms may also lack effective enforcement unless incorporated into judicial processes. These limitations have encouraged many jurisdictions to institutionalize court-connected ADR, whereby consensual dispute-resolution processes operate under judicial supervision while retaining their flexibility and party-centred orientation (Frank E. A. Sander & Stephen B. Goldberg, 1994).

In Nigeria, judicial reforms over the past two decades have increasingly promoted ADR as an important complement to conventional litigation. The establishment of court-connected ADR institutions, particularly Multi-Door Courthouses, reflects the judiciary's commitment to improving access to justice, reducing delays in civil proceedings and providing disputants with efficient and affordable mechanisms for resolving disputes. These reforms are particularly significant in relation to land disputes, which frequently involve continuing social relationships and therefore benefit from consensual rather than purely adversarial methods of dispute resolution.

The Multi-Door Courthouse (MDC) Model

The concept of the Multi-Door Courthouse (MDC) was first proposed by Frank E. A. Sander during the 1976 National Conference on the Causes of Popular Dissatisfaction with the Administration of Justice, commonly known as the Pound Conference, held in St. Paul, Minnesota, United States. Sander introduced the idea of a justice system that would function as a comprehensive dispute resolution centre by offering multiple dispute resolution mechanisms rather than relying exclusively on traditional litigation. The central premise of the model is that disputes should be directed to the procedure most appropriate to their nature, complexity, and the interests of the disputing parties, thereby improving the efficiency and effectiveness of justice delivery (Sander & Goldberg, 1994).

The Multi-Door Courthouse represents a significant shift from the traditional litigation-centred approach to justice administration. Rather than assuming that every dispute should proceed through formal adjudication, the model recognizes that different disputes require different methods of resolution. Consequently, disputes are assessed at the point of entry and referred to appropriate mechanisms such as mediation, arbitration, conciliation, neutral evaluation, negotiation, or litigation. This philosophy is encapsulated in Sander's well-known expression, "fitting the forum to the fuss," which emphasizes matching each dispute with the most suitable resolution process (Sander & Goldberg, 1994).

The primary objective of the MDC model is to improve access to justice by providing disputants with faster, less costly, and more flexible procedures while reducing congestion within the formal court system. By integrating Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) into judicial administration, the model seeks to enhance procedural efficiency, promote consensual settlement, preserve relationships between disputing parties, and reduce the financial and emotional costs associated with prolonged litigation. Unlike stand-alone ADR programmes, the Multi-Door Courthouse operates under judicial supervision, thereby ensuring procedural legitimacy and enhancing the enforceability of settlement agreements (Menkel-Meadow, 2016).

Experience from jurisdictions where the Multi-Door Courthouse has been implemented demonstrates its contribution to judicial reform and effective dispute management. In the United States, court-connected ADR

programmes have contributed to reducing court backlogs, shortening case disposition times, lowering litigation costs, and improving user satisfaction while allowing courts to allocate judicial resources more efficiently (U.S. Department of Justice, 1990). Similar experiences have informed the adoption of Multi-Door Courthouse systems in several countries seeking to modernize their justice sectors and expand access to justice through institutionalized ADR mechanisms (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022).

The MDC model is particularly suitable for disputes that involve continuing social, commercial, or community relationships, including land disputes. Such disputes frequently require solutions that extend beyond legal adjudication to include dialogue, consensus-building, and the restoration of relationships. By combining the flexibility of ADR with the authority and oversight of the judiciary, the Multi-Door Courthouse bridges the gap between formal justice institutions and community-oriented dispute resolution. Consequently, it has become an important judicial innovation for improving access to justice and promoting sustainable dispute resolution.

Institutionalization of the Multi-Door Courthouse in Nigeria

Nigeria institutionalized the Multi-Door Courthouse (MDC) model through the establishment of the Lagos Multi-Door Courthouse (LMDC) in 2002, the first court-connected Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) centre in Africa. The LMDC was established to integrate ADR into the formal judicial system by providing litigants with multiple dispute resolution options, including mediation, arbitration, conciliation, early neutral evaluation, and hybrid processes. Its establishment marked a significant milestone in Nigeria's judicial reform agenda by promoting faster, less costly, and more accessible dispute resolution while reducing the burden on conventional courts (Lagos Multi-Door Courthouse, 2023; Sander & Goldberg, 1994).

Following the success of the Lagos model, the MDC framework gradually expanded across Nigeria. Similar court-connected ADR centres were subsequently established in the Federal Capital Territory and several states, including Ogun, Kano, Kaduna, Enugu, Rivers, and Akwa Ibom, as part of broader judicial reforms aimed at improving access to justice, enhancing case management, and reducing court congestion. This expansion reflects the growing recognition by the Nigerian judiciary that consensual dispute resolution complements rather than replaces conventional litigation by providing disputants with procedures that are better suited to the nature of particular disputes (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022).

In Ogun State, the Ogun State Multi-Door Courthouse (OMDC) commenced operations in February 2017 under the supervision of the Ogun State Judiciary. The establishment of the OMDC forms part of the state's broader commitment to improving justice delivery through institutionalized ADR. The centre provides mediation, arbitration, conciliation, expert determination, and early neutral evaluation for civil disputes arising within the jurisdiction of the State High Court. Through its judicial divisions in Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode, Sagamu, and Ota, the OMDC seeks to promote timely, affordable, and efficient dispute resolution while reducing delays associated with conventional litigation (Ogun State Judiciary, 2017).

The institutionalization of the OMDC is particularly significant in the context of land disputes, which constitute a substantial proportion of civil cases before Nigerian courts. By integrating ADR within the formal judicial system, the OMDC enables disputants to resolve conflicts through consensual procedures while ensuring judicial oversight

and the enforceability of settlement agreements. This institutional arrangement strengthens public confidence in dispute resolution, improves access to justice, and contributes to the efficient administration of civil justice in Ogun State.

Land Disputes, Legal Dualism and Conflict Dynamics in Nigeria

Land occupies a strategic position in Nigeria's socio-economic and political development. Besides serving as a productive resource for agriculture, housing, commerce, and industrial development, land represents an important source of cultural identity, political authority, inheritance, and social status. Consequently, disputes relating to ownership, boundaries, inheritance, tenancy, and compulsory acquisition remain among the most common categories of civil disputes across the country (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2002).

The complexity of land disputes in Nigeria is largely attributable to the coexistence of statutory and customary land tenure systems. Under the Land Use Act of 1978, all land within each state is vested in the Governor to be held in trust for the use and common benefit of the people. Nevertheless, customary institutions continue to regulate land ownership, allocation, inheritance, and transfer in many rural and peri-urban communities. This legal pluralism frequently produces overlapping ownership claims, inconsistent land documentation, jurisdictional uncertainty, and administrative bottlenecks, thereby increasing the incidence and complexity of land disputes (John Griffiths, 1986).

Evidence indicates that land disputes remain one of the most frequently reported justice problems in Nigeria. According to the The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law, disputes involving land ownership, boundaries, inheritance, land grabbing, and fraudulent transactions continue to account for a significant proportion of civil justice problems experienced by Nigerians (HiiL, 2023). In many communities, unresolved land disputes have resulted in prolonged litigation, displacement, destruction of property, communal violence, and threats to livelihoods, thereby highlighting the importance of effective, accessible, and institutionalized dispute resolution mechanisms.

Within this broader national context, Ogun State presents a particularly relevant case. Its strategic location adjacent to Lagos State, coupled with rapid urbanization, industrial expansion, population growth, and increasing real estate investment, has intensified competition for land and contributed to frequent disputes involving families, communities, private developers, and corporate organizations. Media reports have documented several incidents of violent land-related conflicts in parts of the state, illustrating how unresolved disputes can escalate into wider security and development challenges (Punch Newspapers, 2023; Vanguard Media Limited, 2023, 2024). These realities provide a strong empirical justification for examining the effectiveness of the Ogun State Multi-Door Courthouse in resolving land-related disputes.

ADR and the Multi-Door Courthouse as a Response to Land Conflict

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has emerged as an effective complement to conventional litigation by providing flexible, timely, and cost-effective mechanisms for resolving disputes. Unlike adversarial court proceedings, ADR emphasizes dialogue, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and consensus-building, enabling

disputing parties to reach mutually acceptable solutions while preserving social and commercial relationships (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020). These characteristics make ADR particularly suitable for land disputes, which frequently involve continuing relationships among family members, neighbouring communities, customary institutions, and private investors. By reducing procedural complexity and encouraging collaborative problem-solving, ADR contributes to faster dispute resolution and improved access to justice (United Nations Development Programme, 2022).

Despite these advantages, ADR is not without limitations. Because many ADR processes rely on voluntary participation and negotiated settlement, disparities in bargaining power, inadequate legal representation, and the absence of binding precedent may disadvantage weaker parties. Furthermore, agreements reached through informal ADR mechanisms may face enforcement challenges where they are not incorporated into judicial procedures (Carrie Menkel-Meadow, 2016). These concerns have encouraged the development of court-connected ADR systems that combine procedural flexibility with judicial oversight and legal enforceability.

The Multi-Door Courthouse (MDC) model addresses many of these limitations by integrating ADR within the formal judicial system. Under the MDC framework, disputes are screened upon entry into the justice system and referred to the dispute resolution mechanism most appropriate to their nature, complexity, and the interests of the parties. This institutional arrangement preserves the flexibility and consensual nature of ADR while ensuring judicial supervision, procedural accountability, and enforceability of settlement agreements (Frank E. A. Sander & Stephen B. Goldberg, 1994).

Within Ogun State, the Ogun State Multi-Door Courthouse (OMDC) operationalizes this approach by providing mediation, arbitration, conciliation, and other ADR services under the supervision of the judiciary. This institutional framework is particularly relevant to land disputes, which often involve overlapping statutory and customary rights, family inheritance, communal ownership, and competing development interests. By directing disputes to the most appropriate resolution process, the OMDC enhances procedural efficiency, promotes mutually acceptable settlements, reduces the likelihood of prolonged litigation, and contributes to sustainable conflict management. Consequently, the integration of ADR within the Multi-Door Courthouse framework represents an important judicial innovation for improving land governance and strengthening access to justice in Ogun State.

Access to Justice and Peacebuilding

Access to justice constitutes one of the fundamental principles of democratic governance, the rule of law, and sustainable peace. According to Mauro Cappelletti and Bryant Garth (1978), legal rights have practical significance only when individuals possess effective opportunities to enforce them through accessible, affordable, and impartial justice institutions. Their access-to-justice framework emphasizes that justice systems should remove financial, procedural, and institutional barriers that prevent citizens from obtaining timely and equitable remedies.

In many developing countries, including Nigeria, access to justice continues to be constrained by high litigation costs, prolonged court delays, procedural complexity, geographical limitations, and limited public awareness of legal rights. These barriers disproportionately affect low-income households, rural communities, women, and other vulnerable groups, thereby limiting their ability to resolve disputes effectively (United Nations Development

Programme, 2022; World Justice Project, 2023). Court-connected ADR mechanisms, particularly the Multi-Door Courthouse, seek to address these challenges by providing affordable, accessible, and less adversarial procedures that complement conventional litigation while expanding opportunities for citizens to obtain justice.

Beyond dispute resolution, effective access to justice contributes significantly to peacebuilding and social stability. Persistent land disputes undermine social cohesion, discourage investment, weaken livelihoods, and increase the risk of communal violence. Conversely, accessible and credible dispute resolution institutions promote trust in public institutions, strengthen the rule of law, and reduce the likelihood that unresolved grievances will escalate into violent conflict (United Nations Development Programme, 2022). By facilitating timely, consensual, and legally enforceable settlements, the Multi-Door Courthouse contributes not only to efficient justice delivery but also to conflict prevention, community reconciliation, and sustainable peacebuilding. Consequently, the effectiveness of the Ogun State Multi-Door Courthouse extends beyond judicial administration to encompass broader objectives of social stability, equitable land governance, and inclusive development.

Research Gap

Existing scholarship demonstrates that the Multi-Door Courthouse (MDC) has become an important institutional innovation for promoting Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and improving access to justice through court-connected dispute resolution mechanisms (Sander & Goldberg, 1994; Menkel-Meadow, 2016; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022). Previous studies have generally reported that the integration of ADR into formal judicial systems contributes to reduced court congestion, shorter dispute resolution periods, lower litigation costs, and increased user satisfaction. However, much of this literature has concentrated on the conceptual evolution of the MDC model, its legal framework, and its application in commercial, contractual, and family disputes, particularly within the Lagos Multi-Door Courthouse and other pioneering ADR institutions in Nigeria.

Although the establishment of Multi-Door Courthouses has expanded across several Nigerian states, including Ogun State, empirical evidence assessing their effectiveness in resolving land-related disputes remains limited. Land disputes differ significantly from commercial disputes because they frequently involve overlapping statutory and customary tenure systems, communal ownership, family inheritance, competing development interests, and long-term social relationships. These characteristics require dispute resolution mechanisms that not only determine legal rights but also preserve social cohesion and promote sustainable peace. Despite the increasing incidence of land conflicts in rapidly urbanizing states such as Ogun, relatively few empirical studies have examined how court-connected ADR mechanisms respond to these unique challenges.

Methodologically, much of the available literature relies on doctrinal legal analysis, policy reviews, or descriptive assessments of ADR practice, with comparatively limited application of qualitative or mixed-method approaches that capture the experiences of disputants, mediators, legal practitioners, judicial officers, and other stakeholders. Consequently, existing studies provide limited insight into stakeholder perceptions of the effectiveness, accessibility, procedural fairness, enforceability of settlement agreements, and operational challenges associated with the Ogun State Multi-Door Courthouse. Furthermore, relatively little attention has been paid to the

contribution of the MDC model to broader objectives of access to justice, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding within the context of land governance.

This study addresses these gaps by undertaking a systematic evaluation of the Ogun State Multi-Door Courthouse (OMDC) in the resolution of land disputes between 2017 and 2024. Unlike previous studies that have focused primarily on legal doctrine or institutional descriptions, the present study examines the effectiveness of the OMDC from the perspectives of disputants, legal practitioners, mediators, and judicial officials. Specifically, it evaluates dispute resolution outcomes, stakeholder experiences, accessibility of ADR services, operational constraints, and the contribution of the OMDC to access to justice and sustainable peacebuilding. By focusing on land disputes in Ogun State, the study provides context-specific empirical evidence that enriches the literature on Alternative Dispute Resolution, judicial reform, land governance, and access to justice in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to examine the effectiveness of the Multi-Door Courthouse (MDC) model in resolving land disputes in Ogun State, Nigeria, between 2017 and 2024. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled an in-depth exploration of institutional practices, stakeholder experiences, and operational challenges associated with court-connected Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). The study was conducted in four Local Government Areas Abeokuta South, Ijebu-Ode, Ado-Odo/Ota, and Sagamu which host key operational centres of the Ogun State Multi-Door Courthouse (OMDC). Sixteen purposively selected key informants participated in the study, comprising institutional officials, ADR practitioners, legal professionals, community disputants, and traditional leaders with direct knowledge of land dispute resolution through the OMDC.

Data were collected between January and May 2025 through semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and documentary analysis. Interviews, lasting approximately 45–60 minutes, were conducted face-to-face, audio-recorded with participants' consent, and transcribed verbatim. Documentary sources included OMDC annual reports, judicial records, policy documents, and relevant scholarly publications. The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis, while documentary evidence was subjected to content analysis following Bowen's (2009) document analysis framework. Findings from both sources were triangulated to enhance the credibility and depth of interpretation. To ensure trustworthiness, the interview guide was reviewed by experts in law and conflict resolution and pilot-tested before fieldwork. Credibility was strengthened through data triangulation and cross-validation across participant categories. Ethical standards were observed by obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, maintaining confidentiality, and anonymising participants throughout the study. A limitation of the study was the restricted access to confidential case files, which limited independent verification of some institutional records. This limitation was mitigated through triangulation of interview data with official documents and multiple stakeholder perspectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the qualitative findings obtained from sixteen (16) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and documentary sources. The findings are organised according to the three research questions and

corresponding hypotheses. Data from judicial officers, accredited mediators, legal practitioners, officials of the Ogun Multi-Door Courthouse (OMDC), traditional rulers, land administrators and community representatives were analysed thematically. Documentary evidence, including OMDC Annual Reports (2018–2024), the Ogun State Multi-Door Courthouse Practice Directions and relevant policy documents was used to triangulate and validate the interview findings. The discussion is anchored on the Access to Justice Framework, which emphasises accessibility, affordability, procedural fairness and institutional effectiveness in justice delivery (Cappelletti & Garth, 1978; UNDP, 2022).

Respondent Profile

Sixteen key informants participated in the study. They comprised judicial officers, accredited mediators, legal practitioners, OMDC administrators, officials of the Ministry of Justice, traditional rulers, land administrators and community representatives. Their professional experience and direct involvement in land dispute resolution provided rich institutional and [community perspectives on the effectiveness of the Multi-Door Courthouse model in Ogun State.

Research Question One

To what extent has the Multi-Door Courthouse improved the resolution of land-related disputes in Ogun State?

Thematic Findings from the Key Informant Interviews

The analysis identified improved efficiency, reduced cost, enhanced accessibility and preservation of social relationships as the dominant themes. Respondents consistently indicated that mediation under the OMDC resolves land disputes more quickly than conventional litigation, thereby reducing court congestion and legal expenses. Participants also noted that the availability of OMDC centres in Abeokuta, Sagamu, Ota and Ijebu-Ode has improved physical access to ADR services for many residents. However, respondents observed that utilisation remains considerably lower in rural communities due to limited public awareness and inadequate sensitisation.

Documentary Evidence

Documentary evidence corroborates these findings. OMDC Annual Reports (2018–2023) indicate that a substantial proportion of land disputes were resolved through mediation within three to six months, whereas comparable cases in conventional courts frequently extended beyond one year. The reports further show a steady increase in the number of land-related matters referred to ADR during the review period.

Discussion of Findings

The findings demonstrate that the Multi-Door Courthouse has significantly enhanced access to justice by providing a faster, less costly and less adversarial mechanism for resolving land disputes. The reduction in litigation costs and procedural delays has increased users' willingness to utilise ADR services, particularly in urban areas where awareness is relatively high. These findings are consistent with the proposition that Alternative Dispute Resolution

enhances judicial efficiency while promoting mutually acceptable outcomes (Menkel-Meadow, 2016). They also support the Access to Justice Framework, which emphasises affordability and timely justice as essential dimensions of an effective justice system (UNDP, 2022).

Decision on Hypothesis One

Based on the thematic and documentary evidence, Hypothesis One is supported. The findings demonstrate that the Multi-Door Courthouse has significantly improved the effectiveness of land-related dispute resolution in Ogun State.

Research Question Two

How has the institutional framework of the Multi-Door Courthouse improved access to justice in resolving land disputes in Ogun State?

Thematic Findings from the Key Informant Interviews

Four principal themes emerged: institutional legitimacy, judicial integration, legal pluralism and public confidence. Respondents agreed that the incorporation of ADR within the formal judicial system has increased public confidence in mediation. Judicial referrals from the High Court and walk-in cases were identified as major channels through which disputants access OMDC services. Participants further indicated that collaboration between the OMDC and customary institutions, particularly traditional rulers and family heads, has enhanced the legitimacy and acceptability of mediated settlements. Nevertheless, respondents acknowledged that administrative delays in converting mediated settlements into consent judgments occasionally reduce operational efficiency.

Documentary Evidence

The Ogun State Multi-Door Courthouse Practice Directions (2018) institutionalised judicial referrals to ADR and strengthened the legal framework for mediation. OMDC operational reports further indicate increasing numbers of referrals from the High Court and growing public utilisation of ADR services.

Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that institutional integration has strengthened access to justice by embedding ADR within the formal judicial system while accommodating customary dispute-resolution mechanisms. This institutional arrangement reflects the principles of legal pluralism, whereby statutory and customary institutions complement each other in resolving disputes (Griffiths, 1986). Although respondents acknowledged administrative delays in enforcing mediated settlements, the overall institutional framework has enhanced public trust, procedural legitimacy and compliance with negotiated outcomes.

Decision on Hypothesis Two

The evidence supports Hypothesis Two. The institutional framework of the Multi-Door Courthouse has significantly improved access to justice in resolving land-related disputes in Ogun State.

Research Question Three

What institutional and structural challenges affect the effectiveness of the Multi-Door Courthouse in resolving land-related disputes in Ogun State?

Thematic Findings from the Key Informant Interviews

The analysis identified four major challenges: inadequate funding, limited public awareness, administrative bottlenecks and infrastructure constraints. Respondents consistently reported that insufficient financial resources limit staff development, technological innovation, public sensitisation and the establishment of additional mediation centres. Participants also observed that awareness of OMDC services remains considerably lower in rural communities than in urban centres. Furthermore, delays in converting mediated settlements into enforceable consent judgments were identified as a recurring administrative challenge affecting confidence in the enforcement process.

Documentary Evidence

OMDC Annual Reports (2021–2024) similarly identify inadequate funding, limited infrastructure, insufficient public awareness programmes and operational capacity constraints as persistent challenges affecting institutional performance and service expansion.

Discussion of Findings

Although the Multi-Door Courthouse has achieved considerable success in improving land dispute resolution, the findings indicate that institutional sustainability depends on adequate financial support, continuous public sensitisation and administrative reforms. These observations are consistent with contemporary access-to-justice scholarship, which argues that institutional innovations require sufficient financial, human and technological resources to remain effective and sustainable (World Justice Project, 2023; UNDP, 2022). Addressing these structural challenges is therefore essential for extending equitable access to justice, particularly in underserved rural communities.

Decision on Hypothesis Three

The findings support Hypothesis Three. Institutional and structural constraints continue to affect the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of the Multi-Door Courthouse in Ogun State.

Overall Synthesis of Findings

The study demonstrates that the Multi-Door Courthouse has substantially improved the resolution of land-related disputes in Ogun State by providing accessible, affordable and timely ADR services. Institutional integration within the formal judicial system has enhanced public confidence and strengthened the legitimacy of mediation, while collaboration with customary institutions has promoted voluntary compliance with settlements. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of the OMDC continue to be constrained by inadequate funding, limited rural awareness, infrastructure deficiencies and administrative delays in enforcing mediated agreements. These findings

reinforce the Access to Justice Framework by demonstrating that meaningful justice requires not only legal reforms but also adequate institutional capacity and equitable service delivery.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the Multi-Door Courthouse has become an effective institutional mechanism for resolving land-related disputes in Ogun State. Through the integration of Alternative Dispute Resolution into the formal judicial system, the OMDC has improved access to justice by reducing dispute resolution time, lowering litigation costs and promoting consensual settlement of disputes. The institutional collaboration between statutory and customary authorities has further enhanced public confidence and the legitimacy of mediated outcomes. Nevertheless, sustaining these achievements requires stronger institutional investment, improved administrative efficiency and broader public sensitisation, particularly in rural communities where awareness and utilisation remain comparatively low.

Recommendations

The recommendations align with the study's three major findings.

1. Enhance the operational effectiveness of the OMDC by providing adequate and sustainable government funding to expand mediation centres, strengthen digital case-management systems and improve institutional capacity for timely resolution of land disputes.
2. Strengthen the institutional framework for access to justice by streamlining the administrative process for converting mediated settlements into consent judgments and deepening collaboration between the judiciary, customary institutions and accredited mediators.
3. Address institutional and structural barriers through sustained public awareness campaigns, particularly in rural communities, alongside continuous capacity building and infrastructure development to improve equitable access to Alternative Dispute Resolution services.

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