STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCE & HUMANITIES

ISSN 2709-7862 JUL. 2026 VOL. 5, NO. 4

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Paradigm Academic Press
Studies in Social Science & Humanities
ISSN 2709-7862
JUL. 2026 VOL.5, NO.4

Climate Change Adaptation Strategies in Coastal Cities: A Comprehensive Review of Approaches and Challenges

PHIMIA DOOSU E.[1] & GLORY U. VICTOR[1]

[1] School of Environmental Sciences, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic Rumuola, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Correspondence: PHIMIA DOOSU E., School of Environmental Sciences, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic Rumuola, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

doi:10.63593/SSSH.2709-7862.2026.07.001

Abstract

Coastal cities, which host a significant and growing portion of the global population and economic activity, are at the forefront of the climate crisis. They face existential threats from sea-level rise (SLR), increased frequency and intensity of storm surges, coastal erosion, and saltwater intrusion. In response, a diverse portfolio of adaptation strategies has emerged. This paper provides a comprehensive review of these strategies, categorizing them into three primary types: hard engineering, soft engineering/ecosystem-based approaches, and institutional/policy-based measures. It examines the theoretical underpinnings, practical applications, benefits, and limitations of each category. Furthermore, the paper critically analyzes the cross-cutting challenges that impede the effective implementation of adaptation measures, including financial and economic constraints, governance and institutional barriers, social equity and justice concerns, and technical and informational gaps. The review concludes that no single strategy is a panacea. Effective and sustainable adaptation requires a paradigm shift towards integrated, hybrid approaches that combine grey and green infrastructure, are supported by robust and flexible governance frameworks, and are fundamentally centered on principles of equity and justice. This integrated approach, often termed "adaptive pathways," is essential for building long-term resilience in the world's vulnerable coastal urban centers.

Keywords: climate change adaptation, coastal cities, sea-level rise, resilience, ecosystem-based adaptation, climate justice

1. Introduction

Coastal zones have historically been magnets for human settlement, serving as hubs for trade, culture, and economic development. Today, over 40% of the world's population lives within 100 kilometers of the coast, with a significant concentration in low-elevation coastal zones (Neumann et al., 2015). However, the very proximity to the ocean that fostered their growth now exposes these urban centers to unprecedented risks driven by anthropogenic climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has unequivocally documented accelerating sea-level rise (SLR), increased intensity of tropical cyclones, and more frequent extreme sea-level events (IPCC, 2021). These phenomena directly threaten urban infrastructure, freshwater supplies, economies, and the lives and livelihoods of millions of residents.

The urgency of this situation has shifted the global climate discourse from a singular focus on mitigation to a dual emphasis on mitigation and adaptation. Adaptation, defined as the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects, is no longer a choice but a necessity for coastal cities (Adger et al., 2005). In response, municipalities, national governments, and international bodies have begun to develop and implement a wide array of strategies designed to reduce vulnerability and enhance resilience.

However, the landscape of coastal adaptation is complex and highly contested. The selection and implementation of strategies involve significant trade-offs between economic efficiency, ecological integrity, and social equity. While numerous case studies exist, there remains a need for a comprehensive synthesis that categorizes the primary approaches and critically examines the systemic challenges that hinder progress across different geographical and socio-economic contexts. This paper aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive review of coastal adaptation strategies and their associated challenges. It will first present a typology of common approaches, then analyze the multifaceted barriers to implementation, and conclude with a discussion on the path towards integrated and equitable coastal resilience.

2. A Typology of Adaptation Strategies

Coastal adaptation strategies can be broadly categorized into three families of approaches: hard engineering, soft engineering and ecosystem-based, and institutional and policy-based. These are not mutually exclusive and are often most effective when used in combination.

2.1 Hard Engineering Approaches (Protect)

Hard engineering strategies involve the construction of rigid, artificial infrastructure to defend coastal land and assets from flooding and erosion. These "grey infrastructure" solutions have been the traditional response to coastal hazards for centuries.

- **Seawalls, Dikes, and Levees:** These are shoreline barriers designed to block or contain floodwaters. Seawalls are typically built parallel to the coast to protect the land behind them from wave action, while dikes and levees are embankments designed to prevent flooding of low-lying areas. While they can offer a high degree of protection for high-value urban areas, they are extremely expensive to build and maintain, can disrupt coastal sediment transport leading to erosion elsewhere ("downdrift effects"), and destroy intertidal habitats (Schoonees et al., 2019). Furthermore, they can create a false sense of security, encouraging further development in high-risk areas, and are susceptible to catastrophic failure if overtopped.
- **Storm Surge Barriers and Tidal Gates:** These are massive engineering projects, often built across estuaries or inlets, with movable gates that can be closed during a storm surge to protect the urban areas behind them. Prominent examples include the Thames Barrier in London and the Maeslantkering in the Netherlands. They provide exceptional protection but require immense capital investment and long-term operational funding, making them feasible only for the wealthiest of cities (Williams & Beck, 2021).
- **Breakwaters and Groynes:** Breakwaters are offshore structures that absorb wave energy, creating calmer waters behind them, while groynes are structures built perpendicular to the shore to trap sand and widen beaches. Both can be effective but significantly alter local coastal dynamics and can have negative impacts on adjacent shorelines.

2.2 Soft Engineering and Ecosystem-Based Approaches (Accommodate & Retreat)

In contrast to hard engineering, soft engineering and ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) work with natural processes to reduce risk. These "green" or "nature-based" solutions aim to enhance the resilience of both human and natural systems.

- **Beach Nourishment and Dune Restoration:** This involves adding large quantities of sand to a beach to widen it and building up sand dunes to act as natural barriers against storm waves. These measures maintain the recreational and ecological value of the coastline but are often temporary, requiring repeated and costly renourishment campaigns as the sand is naturally eroded (Chen et al., 2020).
- **Wetland and Mangrove Restoration:** Coastal ecosystems like salt marshes, mangroves, and coral reefs are highly effective at attenuating wave energy, reducing erosion, and absorbing floodwaters. Protecting and restoring these habitats is a cornerstone of EbA. They provide numerous co-benefits, including carbon sequestration, improved water quality, and support for fisheries and biodiversity (Spalding et al., 2014). However, these approaches require significant land area, their protective capacity may be insufficient during extreme events, and the ecological benefits can take years to fully materialize.
- **Living Shorelines:** This is a hybrid approach that combines natural habitat elements like marsh grasses with low-profile rock structures or biodegradable materials to stabilize the shoreline while maintaining natural processes. They represent a promising alternative to hardened shorelines in lower-energy environments.

2.3 Institutional and Policy-Based Approaches (Plan & Regulate)

This category encompasses non-structural measures that rely on governance, planning, financial instruments, and behavioral change to reduce risk and guide development.

- **Land-Use Planning and Zoning:** This is one of the most powerful tools for adaptation. By restricting or prohibiting new development in high-risk areas (e.g., floodplains, erosion zones) and incentivizing development in safer locations, cities can avoid creating new risks. These policies can be politically challenging to implement due to pressures from landowners and developers (Garcia & Jones, 2019).
- **Building Codes and Standards:** Updating building codes to require elevated foundations, flood-resistant materials, and improved structural integrity can significantly reduce damage to individual properties. These are effective measures but primarily apply to new construction or major renovations, doing little to address legacy risk in existing buildings.
- **Early Warning Systems and Evacuation Planning:** Advanced forecasting and robust communication systems that warn residents of impending storms and floods can save lives and reduce property damage. They are a critical component of any comprehensive adaptation strategy but do not reduce the physical hazard itself.
- **Managed Retreat:** This involves the planned relocation of structures and populations away from high-risk coastal areas. While it is the most definitive solution for eliminating risk in certain areas, it is also the most socially, politically, and emotionally challenging strategy, raising profound questions about compensation, cultural heritage, and community identity (Hino et al., 2017).

3. Cross-Cutting Challenges in Implementation

Despite the availability of these strategies, their successful implementation is hindered by a range of interconnected challenges that transcend geographic boundaries.

3.1 Financial and Economic Constraints

Adaptation is expensive. The upfront capital costs of large-scale infrastructure, whether grey or green, are often beyond the capacity of municipal budgets, particularly in developing nations (OECD, 2020). Securing long-term funding for maintenance is an even greater challenge. Furthermore, the economic benefits of adaptation, especially the non-market values of ecosystem services or a disaster averted, are difficult to quantify, making it hard to justify investments through traditional cost-benefit analysis.

3.2 Governance and Institutional Barriers

Effective adaptation requires coordinated action across multiple levels of government and administrative jurisdictions, which is often stymied by fragmentation and conflicting mandates. The long-term nature of climate change clashes with short-term political cycles, leading to a lack of sustained political will (Adger et al., 2018). Vested interests, weak enforcement of regulations, and a lack of institutional capacity can further undermine the implementation of even well-designed policies like restrictive zoning.

3.3 Social Equity and Justice

Adaptation measures are not neutral; they create winners and losers. There is a significant risk of "maladaptation," where interventions inadvertently increase the vulnerability of marginalized groups (Shi & Moser, 2022). For example, a seawall may protect affluent waterfront properties while displacing low-income residents or redirecting floodwaters towards their less-protected neighborhoods. The process of adaptation planning often fails to meaningfully include the voices of vulnerable communities, leading to outcomes that reinforce existing inequalities. The concept of "climate justice" demands that adaptation processes and outcomes are equitable, participatory, and prioritize the needs of those most at risk.

3.4 Technical and Informational Gaps

Significant uncertainty remains in climate science, particularly at the local scale required for urban planning. Projections of SLR and storm surge have wide confidence intervals, making it difficult to determine the appropriate level of protection (Hallegatte, 2019). There is often a lack of high-resolution data on topography, bathymetry, and asset vulnerability. Moreover, robust frameworks for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of implemented adaptation measures are still in their infancy, making it difficult to learn from experience and adjust strategies over time.

4. Discussion and Future Directions

The review of adaptation strategies and their attendant challenges reveals that there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution. The reliance on singular approaches, particularly the historical preference for hard engineering, is increasingly seen as inadequate and unsustainable. The future of coastal adaptation lies in the strategic integration of multiple approaches into a coherent, multi-layered defense system.

A key emerging paradigm is the concept of **adaptive pathways**, which involves developing flexible plans that can be modified over time as climate impacts become clearer and new information emerges (Haasnoot et al., 2013). For example, a city might begin with beach nourishment and dune restoration (a soft approach), while having pre-planned triggers (e.g., a certain rate of SLR) for implementing a set-back levee, and ultimately, a policy for managed retreat in the most exposed areas. This approach avoids locking cities into costly, inflexible infrastructure projects and embraces uncertainty as a core element of planning.

Furthermore, future efforts must move beyond a purely technocratic view of adaptation to one that is embedded in principles of **climate justice**. This requires institutionalizing participatory governance models that empower local communities, especially the most vulnerable, to be co-creators of adaptation plans. It also means explicitly analyzing the distributional impacts of any proposed strategy to ensure that costs and benefits are shared equitably.

Future research should focus on several key areas:

1) **Long-term performance of ecosystem-based solutions:** More empirical evidence is needed on the effectiveness and reliability of EbA under extreme storm conditions.
2) **Innovative financing mechanisms:** Research into public-private partnerships, climate bonds, and insurance schemes is crucial for overcoming financial barriers.
3) **The governance of managed retreat:** Developing equitable and politically feasible frameworks for relocation is one of the most pressing research frontiers in coastal adaptation.

5. Conclusion

Coastal cities face an undeniable and accelerating threat from climate change. This review has synthesized the primary strategies available for adaptation—ranging from hard engineering defenses to nature-based solutions and policy interventions—and has highlighted the significant financial, governance, social, and technical challenges that must be overcome. The evidence strongly suggests that a singular reliance on holding the line with concrete walls is a failing proposition.

The path toward a resilient future for coastal cities requires a fundamental shift towards integrated, flexible, and equitable approaches. By combining the strengths of grey, green, and policy-based strategies within an adaptive management framework, cities can build resilience that is not only effective against physical hazards but is also economically viable, ecologically sustainable, and socially just. The choices made by urban leaders and communities in the coming decade will determine the fate of these vital coastal centers for centuries to come. The challenge is immense, but the imperative to act is even greater.

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Paradigm Academic Press
Studies in Social Science & Humanities
ISSN 2709-7862
JUL. 2026 VOL.5, NO.4

Macau After the Handover: Society, Governance, Identity and Economic Transformation Under "One Country, Two Systems"

Jean A. Berlie[1] & Manuel Benard[2]

[1] Asiatic Society, Paris, France

[2] Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Beijing, China

Correspondence: Manuel Benard, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Beijing, China.

doi:10.63593/SSSH.2709-7862.2026.07.002

Abstract

Macau occupies a unique position in modern China and the international system. As the oldest European settlement in East Asia and one of the two Special Administrative Regions (SARs) of the People's Republic of China, it represents a distinctive case of institutional continuity, political adaptation and economic transformation. Since its return to Chinese sovereignty on 20 December 1999, Macau has operated under the constitutional principle of *One Country, Two Systems*, preserving its legal traditions, bilingual administration and open economy while becoming progressively integrated into China's national development strategy. Unlike Hong Kong, Macau has experienced relatively limited political confrontation and sustained economic growth, supported by an executive-led system, extensive intermediary associations, and the world's largest gaming industry.

This article examines Macau's historical evolution, political institutions, civil society, identity formation and economic development from both historical and contemporary perspectives. Combining historical analysis with institutional and political economy approaches, it argues that Macau's stability is best explained by four mutually reinforcing factors: institutional continuity inherited from the Portuguese administration; pragmatic cooperation between the Macau SAR Government and Beijing; the mediating role of powerful community associations; and sustained economic prosperity generated by gaming and tourism. The article further analyses Macau's integration into the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and discusses the challenges posed by economic diversification, demographic ageing and technological transformation. Rather than interpreting Macau simply as a smaller version of Hong Kong, the article demonstrates that it has developed a distinctive governance model rooted in its own historical trajectory and social structure.

Keywords: Macau, One Country, Two Systems, Greater Bay Area, governance, political development, civil society, gaming industry, Portuguese heritage

1. Introduction

Macau occupies a singular place in both Chinese and global history. For nearly five centuries, it served as a gateway between China and Europe, facilitating trade, diplomacy, missionary activity, scientific exchange and cultural interaction. Although its territory extends over little more than thirty square kilometres, Macau has exerted an influence far greater than its geographical dimensions suggest. Today, as one of China's two Special Administrative Regions (SARs), it remains an important bridge between East and West while simultaneously acting as a platform for cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

The peaceful transfer of sovereignty from Portugal to the People's Republic of China on 20 December 1999 marked the beginning of a new phase in Macau's history. Governed under the constitutional framework of the Basic Law and the principle of *One Country, Two Systems*, the territory has maintained its capitalist economy,

independent judiciary, bilingual legal system and international commercial orientation while becoming increasingly integrated into China's national development strategy. During the past quarter-century, Macau has experienced remarkable economic expansion, becoming the world's largest gaming centre and one of Asia's wealthiest economies in terms of GDP per capita.

Despite its international importance, Macau has attracted considerably less academic attention than Hong Kong. The latter has often dominated scholarly debates concerning *One Country, Two Systems*, constitutional reform and centre–local relations. Consequently, Macau is frequently portrayed as a secondary case or simply as a more politically stable version of Hong Kong. Such interpretations overlook the territory's distinctive historical evolution, institutional arrangements and patterns of state–society relations.

This article argues that Macau should instead be understood as a unique model of post-colonial governance. Its political stability cannot be explained solely by economic prosperity or constitutional arrangements. Rather, it reflects the interaction of historical legacies, pragmatic governance, strong intermediary associations, relatively high institutional trust and close—but not identical—integration with the Chinese state. Macau's development demonstrates that political legitimacy can emerge from a combination of effective administration, economic performance and institutional continuity rather than from a single constitutional model.

The article therefore addresses three principal research questions.

First, how has Macau managed the transition from Portuguese administration to Chinese sovereignty while preserving institutional continuity?

Second, why has Macau experienced a comparatively stable political evolution under *One Country, Two Systems*?

Third, what challenges and opportunities will shape Macau's future as it diversifies its economy and deepens its integration into the Greater Bay Area?

To answer these questions, the paper combines historical analysis with institutional and political economy perspectives. Particular attention is given to the interaction between history, identity, governance and economic development. Rather than treating these dimensions separately, the article demonstrates how they reinforce one another to produce Macau's distinctive development trajectory.

Unlike studies focusing exclusively on constitutional law or the gaming industry, this article adopts an interdisciplinary perspective. It examines historical evolution, civil society, political institutions, educational development, linguistic diversity and economic transformation as components of a single governance model. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the growing literature on Macau while providing a broader reflection on institutional adaptation within contemporary China.

Finally, the article argues that Macau's future success will depend less upon continued expansion of gaming than upon its ability to diversify its economy, strengthen higher education and innovation, preserve its multicultural heritage and exploit its strategic position within both the Greater Bay Area and China's wider international engagement with Portuguese-speaking countries.

2. Research Design and Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative historical-institutional methodology combining historical research, political analysis and comparative governance. Rather than testing a single theoretical model, it examines how historical institutions, political practices and economic structures have interacted over time to shape Macau's contemporary development.

The research draws upon four principal sources of evidence.

First, it examines primary historical materials concerning Portuguese administration, the Sino-Portuguese negotiations and the 1999 transfer of sovereignty. These documents provide essential context for understanding the continuity of Macau's administrative and legal institutions.

Second, the analysis incorporates official publications issued by the Macau Special Administrative Region Government, including Policy Addresses, statistical yearbooks, legal documents and economic reports. These sources allow the authors to assess institutional evolution and socioeconomic change using official empirical evidence.

Third, the article engages with an extensive body of academic literature concerning Macau's history, governance, identity, public administration and political economy. Particular attention is given to the contributions of Wang Gungwu, Jean A. Berlie, Moisés Silva Fernandes and Sonny Shiu-Hing Lo, whose works collectively provide the most comprehensive analyses of Macau's historical development and political transformation.

Fourth, the article benefits from the authors' long-term engagement with Macau. Jean A. Berlie conducted ethnographic and historical research in Macau over more than two decades, developing close relationships with

academic institutions, community organizations and local scholars. These field observations complement documentary evidence while remaining grounded in published scholarship. Manuel Benard contributes a comparative perspective on governance, infrastructure development and public policy based on extensive international experience in Asia and beyond.

Among the relationships informing this long-term engagement was Berlie's association with Professor Gary Ngai Mei Cheong (1932–2021), a prominent Macau interpreter and civic figure who later served as president of the Macau Association for the Promotion of Exchange between Asia-Pacific and Latin America. Such contacts provided insight into the territory's associational life and the practical mediation of Chinese, Macanese and international networks.

Methodologically, the article employs process tracing to identify the principal institutional mechanisms explaining Macau's political evolution. Comparative references to Hong Kong are introduced where appropriate, not to establish normative rankings between the two Special Administrative Regions but rather to highlight the importance of differing historical trajectories, social structures and governance practices.

The study is intentionally interdisciplinary. It integrates insights from history, political science, sociology, economics and public administration in order to explain why Macau has followed a distinctive development path within the broader Chinese political system.

Although qualitative in nature, the article also draws upon official statistical data concerning population, tourism, education and economic development to support its analysis. The objective is not merely to describe Macau's transformation but to explain the institutional logic underpinning its remarkable continuity since 1999.

3. Literature Review

Macau has long attracted the attention of historians because of its exceptional role as the oldest European settlement in East Asia and as a strategic intermediary between China and the Western world. However, systematic academic research on Macau remained relatively limited until the final decades of Portuguese administration and expanded significantly only after the 1999 handover. The existing literature may be grouped into five broad themes: historical evolution, identity and society, political institutions, economic transformation, and regional integration.

The historical foundations of Macau have been examined by scholars who emphasize the territory's unique position at the intersection of Chinese and Portuguese civilizations. Early historical studies largely concentrated on maritime trade, missionary activities and diplomatic relations between Portugal and successive Chinese dynasties. These works demonstrated that Macau was never a conventional European colony in the sense observed elsewhere in Asia or Africa. Instead, Portuguese administration evolved through continuous negotiation with Chinese authorities, producing a hybrid political and legal order that combined European administrative institutions with enduring Chinese sovereignty.

Wang Gungwu's pioneering analyses of Chinese identity constitute an important theoretical foundation for understanding Macau's society. Rather than interpreting identity as a fixed ethnic or political category, Wang argues that "Chineseness" has historically been shaped by migration, commerce and cultural interaction. This perspective is particularly relevant to Macau, where Chinese traditions have coexisted with Portuguese legal institutions, Catholicism and extensive international commercial networks for more than four centuries.

Jean A. Berlie's ethnographic research further developed this perspective by documenting the social organization of Macau's Chinese communities, their associations, educational institutions and cultural practices. His work demonstrates that Macau's remarkable political stability cannot be understood without recognising the central role played by intermediary organizations, kinship networks and voluntary associations in structuring relations between society and public authorities. His long-term fieldwork also highlights the persistence of local traditions despite rapid economic modernization and demographic change.

Political scientists have increasingly examined Macau following the establishment of the Special Administrative Region. Among contemporary scholars, Sonny Shiu-Hing Lo has produced the most comprehensive body of research on Macau's governance and constitutional development. His work departs from conventional democratization theories by emphasizing administrative capacity, institutional legitimacy and what he terms a **state–society partnership**. According to Lo, Macau's political development is characterized less by confrontation between government and civil society than by structured cooperation among government agencies, neighbourhood associations, professional organizations and business groups. This corporatist pattern distinguishes Macau from many liberal democratic systems while simultaneously differentiating it from highly centralized administrative models.

Fernandes' work on the normalization of Sino-Portuguese relations offers an indispensable historical explanation for the peaceful transition of sovereignty in 1999. Rather than depicting the handover as an abrupt constitutional

event, he demonstrates that it resulted from a gradual diplomatic process initiated after Portugal's democratic revolution in 1974. The negotiations reflected mutual recognition by Lisbon and Beijing that institutional continuity would best serve Macau's long-term stability.

The literature on Macau's economy has evolved considerably over the past two decades. Earlier studies primarily examined manufacturing and export industries, particularly textiles and garments. Following the liberalization of casino concessions in 2002, however, scholarly attention shifted towards gaming, tourism, public finance and economic diversification. Economists have analysed the extraordinary fiscal contribution of gaming revenues while also highlighting the structural vulnerabilities associated with excessive dependence on a single sector. More recent research focuses on diversification strategies involving financial services, conventions and exhibitions, traditional Chinese medicine, higher education and technological innovation.

An emerging body of scholarship also situates Macau within China's broader regional development strategy. The establishment of the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area has generated renewed interest in cross-border governance, infrastructure integration, labour mobility and innovation networks. Researchers increasingly argue that Macau's long-term competitiveness will depend upon its ability to exploit its comparative advantages as a multilingual international platform while reducing dependence on gaming revenues.

Despite this growing literature, relatively few studies integrate historical evolution, institutional governance, civil society, cultural identity and political economy within a single analytical framework. Existing publications often focus on one dimension while giving limited attention to the interaction between institutions, society and economic development. This article seeks to address that gap by examining Macau as an integrated political and social system whose contemporary characteristics can only be understood through its long historical evolution.

Building upon historical scholarship, ethnographic research and contemporary political analysis, the article proposes that Macau's stability derives from the interaction of four mutually reinforcing factors: historical institutional continuity; pragmatic governance under the Basic Law; the mediating role of intermediary associations; and sustained economic prosperity supported by, but no longer entirely dependent upon, the gaming industry. This integrated approach contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of Macau's development while providing insights into the broader functioning of *One Country, Two Systems* in the twenty-first century.

4. Theoretical Framework: Historical Institutionalism and State–Society Partnership

This study is grounded in historical institutionalism, a theoretical approach that emphasizes how institutions evolve over time and how past political decisions constrain or enable future policy choices. Rather than viewing political development as a sequence of isolated events, historical institutionalism argues that institutions create durable patterns of behaviour through processes of path dependence, critical junctures, and incremental adaptation (North, 1990; Pierson, 2004; Thelen, 2004).

The concept of path dependence is particularly relevant to Macau. Instead of dismantling the administrative and legal structures inherited from Portuguese rule after the 1999 handover, the People's Republic of China deliberately preserved most institutional arrangements through the Basic Law. The continuation of the civil law system, bilingual administration, independent judiciary, and market-oriented economy substantially reduced institutional uncertainty and strengthened confidence among residents, investors, and the international business community. Consequently, Macau's contemporary governance cannot be understood without reference to the institutional choices made during both the Portuguese administration and the Sino-Portuguese negotiations preceding the handover. (Fernandes, M. S., 2015; Macau Statistics & Census Service, 2024)

Historical institutionalism also emphasizes the importance of critical junctures, periods during which major political decisions redirect institutional development. Three such junctures have profoundly shaped modern Macau. The first was the Portuguese democratic revolution of 1974, which initiated negotiations concerning Macau's future and fundamentally transformed Portugal's colonial policy. The second was the signing of the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration in 1987, which established the constitutional principles governing the transfer of sovereignty. The third occurred in 1999 with the establishment of the Macau Special Administrative Region under the Basic Law. Rather than representing abrupt institutional ruptures, these events initiated gradual processes of adaptation that continue to influence governance today. (Fernandes, M. S., 2015; Government of the Macau Special Administrative Region, 2024; Macau Statistics & Census Service, 2024)

A second theoretical perspective informing this article is state capacity. Contemporary governance literature argues that political stability depends not only on constitutional arrangements but also on the ability of public institutions to formulate policy, implement decisions, provide public services, and maintain public confidence. Macau has consistently demonstrated relatively high administrative capacity. Successive governments have maintained balanced budgets, accumulated substantial fiscal reserves, invested extensively in education, healthcare and transport infrastructure, and responded effectively to external economic shocks. Such administrative performance has reinforced governmental legitimacy independently of constitutional debates.

(Macau Statistics & Census Service, 2024; Pierson, P., 2004; Rangel, J., 1991)

The article further incorporates the concept of state–society partnership, developed most systematically by Sonny Shiu-Hing Lo in his analyses of Macau's political development. Unlike pluralist models that assume an adversarial relationship between government and civil society, Macau's governance is characterized by structured cooperation among public authorities, neighbourhood associations, professional organizations, business groups and charitable institutions. These intermediary organizations perform multiple functions: they represent social interests, provide welfare services, disseminate public information and participate in policy consultation. Political legitimacy therefore emerges not only from formal institutions but also from continuous interaction between the state and organized society. (Macau Statistics & Census Service, 2024; North, D. C., 1990; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2024)

The notion of adaptive governance also contributes to understanding Macau's development. Adaptive governance emphasizes institutional flexibility and the capacity of governments to respond incrementally to changing social and economic conditions. Macau's response to the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates this principle. Rather than abandoning its established economic model, the Government introduced reforms encouraging diversification through finance, higher education, technological innovation, cultural industries and cooperation within the Greater Bay Area. These policies represent institutional adaptation rather than institutional replacement.

Finally, the article draws upon the literature on regional integration. The Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area represents an innovative governance framework in which multiple jurisdictions with different legal systems cooperate while preserving substantial institutional autonomy. This differs from classical models of political integration based upon legal harmonization. Instead, Macau's integration is characterized by functional complementarity, whereby its comparative advantages—including bilingual administration, civil law traditions, tourism expertise and links with Portuguese-speaking countries—are combined with Guangdong's industrial capacity and Hong Kong's international financial role.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives provide a coherent analytical framework for understanding Macau's evolution. Historical institutionalism explains the persistence of inherited institutions; state capacity accounts for effective governance and public confidence; state–society partnership highlights the role of intermediary organizations in maintaining social cohesion; and regional integration theory explains Macau's increasingly important position within the Greater Bay Area.

Accordingly, this article argues that Macau's political stability cannot be attributed to any single institutional feature. Rather, it results from the interaction of historical continuity, administrative effectiveness, structured state–society cooperation, and gradual adaptation to changing regional and global conditions. This integrated framework offers a more comprehensive explanation of Macau's development than approaches focusing exclusively on constitutional law, electoral institutions or economic performance.

5. Historical Evolution: From Portuguese Settlement to the Macau Special Administrative Region

Macau's historical trajectory differs fundamentally from that of most colonial territories. Archaeological evidence indicates that the Pearl River Delta has been inhabited for several millennia, but Macau emerged as an international port during the sixteenth century when Portuguese merchants established a permanent commercial presence with the authorization of Ming authorities. Its strategic location at the mouth of the Pearl River transformed Macau into one of the principal maritime gateways connecting China with Europe, Japan, Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.

The Portuguese settlement did not replace Chinese sovereignty but instead developed through a complex system of accommodation and negotiation. Chinese authorities retained ultimate sovereignty while allowing Portuguese residents considerable autonomy in local administration and commercial affairs. This unusual arrangement produced an institutional environment unlike that of European colonies elsewhere in Asia, where colonial powers generally exercised exclusive political authority.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Macau became a centre of global exchange. Jesuit missionaries such as Matteo Ricci used the city as a base for entering imperial China, contributing significantly to scientific, linguistic and cultural dialogue between Europe and East Asia. Portuguese merchants established extensive commercial networks linking Macau with Goa, Malacca, Nagasaki and Lisbon, making the city one of the earliest truly global trading ports.

Over subsequent centuries, Macau experienced alternating periods of prosperity and decline. The rise of Hong Kong after the First Opium War reduced Macau's relative commercial importance, yet the territory retained its distinctive administrative institutions and multicultural character. Portuguese civil law, Catholic educational institutions and Chinese commercial traditions continued to coexist, creating a remarkably stable social order that survived profound political transformations in both Europe and China.

The democratic revolution in Portugal in April 1974 initiated a new phase in Macau's political history. Portugal progressively abandoned its colonial empire and entered negotiations with the People's Republic of China concerning Macau's future. These diplomatic discussions culminated in the 1987 Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration, which established the framework for the transfer of sovereignty on 20 December 1999 and guaranteed that Macau would retain its capitalist system, legal order and way of life for fifty years under the principle of *One Country, Two Systems*.

The transition to Chinese sovereignty in December 1999 represented one of the most orderly examples of decolonization in contemporary international relations. Unlike many post-colonial transitions that were accompanied by institutional disruption or political instability, Macau preserved the overwhelming majority of its administrative, legal, judicial and economic structures. The Basic Law, promulgated by the National People's Congress before the handover, became the constitutional foundation of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), guaranteeing a "high degree of autonomy" in all matters except defence and foreign affairs. The continuation of the civil law system, judicial independence, a separate customs territory, and bilingual administration reflected a deliberate policy of institutional continuity rather than rupture.



Figure 1. General Vasco Rocha Vieira (1939–2025), the last Governor of Macau

The first Chief Executive, Edmund Ho Hau Wah (1999–2009), played a pivotal role in consolidating the new constitutional order. His administration emphasized continuity, administrative professionalism, and constructive cooperation with the Central People's Government. These priorities reassured both local residents and international investors that Macau would remain a stable and predictable business environment. The maintenance of low taxation, prudent fiscal management, and openness to foreign investment reinforced public confidence during the first decade after the handover.

Economic liberalization constituted another decisive milestone. In 2002 the Government ended the long-standing monopoly of Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau (STDM) by introducing a competitive concession system for gaming operators. International companies, including Las Vegas Sands, Wynn Resorts, MGM Resorts and Galaxy Entertainment, entered the Macau market, investing billions of US dollars in integrated casino resorts, luxury hotels, convention centres and entertainment complexes. This reform transformed Macau into the world's largest gaming destination within less than a decade and generated unprecedented fiscal revenues for the Government.

The rapid expansion of tourism profoundly altered Macau's urban landscape. Major infrastructure projects—including the expansion of Macau International Airport, the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) system, new ferry terminals, and, most significantly, the Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macau Bridge inaugurated in 2018—strengthened regional connectivity and facilitated closer integration with neighbouring Guangdong Province. These investments also reflected a broader strategic objective: positioning Macau not merely as a gaming destination but as an international tourism, cultural and service hub within southern China.

Nevertheless, rapid economic growth also created new social challenges. Escalating property prices, increasing dependence on imported labour, demographic ageing, and the concentration of economic activity in the gaming sector raised concerns regarding long-term sustainability. Successive administrations therefore began to place increasing emphasis on economic diversification, innovation and regional integration, particularly after the economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 crisis represented the most severe economic shock since the establishment of the MSAR. Border restrictions dramatically reduced visitor arrivals, causing gaming revenues to decline sharply and exposing the vulnerabilities associated with excessive reliance on tourism. Yet the crisis also accelerated structural reforms. The Government introduced new gaming concession requirements encouraging operators to invest in non-gaming attractions, cultural industries, conventions, sports facilities and international tourism. At the same time, cooperation with Hengqin and the Greater Bay Area intensified as part of a broader national strategy to

diversify Macau's economic base.

Thus, the evolution of Macau since 1999 illustrates a pattern of adaptive continuity. Rather than pursuing abrupt institutional transformation, policymakers have consistently sought to preserve constitutional stability while gradually modernizing the economy and public administration. This incremental approach has become one of the defining characteristics of Macau's governance model.

6. Society, Identity and Cultural Heritage

Macau's society is characterized by an exceptional degree of cultural hybridity. Few cities have experienced such sustained interaction between Chinese and European civilizations over a period exceeding four centuries. This long historical coexistence has produced a distinctive social environment in which Chinese traditions remain predominant while Portuguese cultural influences continue to shape legal institutions, architecture, education and everyday life.

According to the latest demographic estimates, more than ninety percent of Macau's residents are ethnically Chinese. The majority speak Cantonese as their first language, reflecting the territory's close historical ties with neighbouring Guangdong Province. Mandarin has become increasingly important following the handover because of greater interaction with Mainland China, while Portuguese remains an official language protected by the Basic Law. English, meanwhile, has expanded significantly in higher education, international business and tourism, making Macau a genuinely multilingual society.

Historical field research further reveals the diversity contained within this predominantly Chinese population. Rangel's 1991 survey attributed 55 percent of the Chinese population to communities originating in Zhuhai, Zhongshan, Shiqi, Shunde and Panyu, and a further 24 percent to Xinhui, Doumen, Nanhai, Jiangmen and Heshan. Migration from Fujian and other provinces added additional layers to a society in which local belonging has long coexisted with wider regional and national identities (Rangel, 1991).

This linguistic diversity constitutes an important comparative advantage. The coexistence of Chinese and Portuguese within the legal and administrative systems enables Macau to function as China's principal platform for cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries. Legal professionals, translators, educators and civil servants frequently operate in multiple languages, reinforcing Macau's international orientation despite its relatively small population.

Identity in Macau has evolved differently from that observed in Hong Kong. Survey research consistently indicates that most residents simultaneously identify themselves as Chinese citizens and as residents of Macau. These identities are generally regarded as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. The comparatively limited politicization of identity partly reflects Macau's historical experience. Throughout both the Portuguese administration and the post-1999 period, local identity developed primarily around commerce, family networks, neighbourhood associations and cultural traditions rather than around political contestation.

The Macanese community occupies a particularly important symbolic place within this multicultural landscape. Descended from Portuguese settlers and Asian populations through centuries of intermarriage, the Macanese developed distinctive cultural practices, cuisine and the Creole language known as Patuá. Although the community now represents only a small proportion of Macau's population, its cultural contribution remains substantial. Festivals, culinary traditions, Catholic institutions and heritage preservation initiatives continue to reinforce Macau's reputation as one of Asia's most cosmopolitan historical cities.

UNESCO's inscription of the Historic Centre of Macao as a World Heritage Site in 2005 further recognized the global significance of this multicultural heritage. More than thirty historic monuments—including churches, temples, fortresses, public squares and civic buildings—illustrate the coexistence of Chinese and Portuguese architectural traditions. Heritage preservation has therefore become not merely a cultural objective but also an important component of Macau's tourism strategy and international identity.



Figure 2. The Ruins of Saint Paul, an emblem of Macau's Chinese–Portuguese heritage

The resilience of Macau's multicultural society demonstrates that cultural diversity and political stability are not necessarily contradictory. Instead, Macau suggests that a strong local identity can coexist with national integration when supported by inclusive institutions, shared economic interests and respect for historical continuity.

7. Education, Language Policy and Civil Society

Education has played a central role in Macau's social development and in the preservation of its multicultural identity. Since the sixteenth century, educational institutions have functioned not only as centres of learning but also as vehicles for cultural exchange between China and Europe. The establishment of missionary schools by the Jesuits transformed Macau into one of the earliest centres of Western education in East Asia. These institutions introduced mathematics, astronomy, geography and philosophy to Chinese scholars while simultaneously encouraging European understanding of Chinese civilization.

During the Portuguese administration, Macau's educational system remained pluralistic rather than centralized. Chinese community schools, Catholic institutions, Portuguese public schools and private educational establishments coexisted, reflecting the territory's multicultural composition. Although this diversity occasionally produced uneven educational standards, it also fostered linguistic flexibility and cultural openness that continue to characterize Macau today.

Following the establishment of the Macau Special Administrative Region, education became a strategic priority of public policy. Government investment increased substantially, expanding compulsory education, modernizing school infrastructure and strengthening higher education institutions. The objective was not only to improve educational attainment but also to prepare Macau's population for a knowledge-based economy less dependent upon gaming and tourism.

Language policy represents one of the most distinctive features of Macau's educational system. Chinese and Portuguese remain official languages under the Basic Law, while English has acquired increasing importance as the principal language of international business and higher education. Most primary and secondary schools teach in Chinese, primarily Cantonese, although Mandarin has become progressively more prominent owing to closer interaction with Mainland China. Portuguese-language schools continue to operate, preserving Macau's legal and historical traditions, while English-language programmes have expanded in response to globalization and the demands of the tourism and financial sectors.

Historical enrolment figures illustrate this evolution. Between 1989 and 1996, Chinese-medium enrolment rose

from approximately 60,600 to 80,000 students, Portuguese-medium enrolment from 3,500 to 4,000, and English-medium enrolment from 4,150 to 12,000; around 1,000 students were recorded in trilingual education in 1996 (Berlie, 1999). While not directly comparable with present-day statistics, these figures show both the continuing predominance of Chinese and the rapid expansion of English before the handover.

This multilingual environment provides Macau with a unique comparative advantage. Graduates proficient in Chinese, Portuguese and English possess skills that are increasingly valuable within the Greater Bay Area and in China's expanding relations with Portuguese-speaking countries. Consequently, language policy is closely linked not only to cultural preservation but also to economic competitiveness and diplomatic engagement.

Higher education has undergone remarkable expansion during the past two decades. The University of Macau has developed into a major research institution with growing international recognition, particularly in science, engineering, public administration and Chinese studies. Macau University of Science and Technology has strengthened research in medicine, hospitality management and technology, while the City University of Macau has expanded programmes in business, education and cultural studies. The University of Saint Joseph continues to contribute to humanities, social sciences, architecture and Lusophone studies, reinforcing Macau's role as a bridge between Chinese and Portuguese intellectual traditions.

Increasing collaboration with universities in Mainland China, Europe and Southeast Asia has enhanced Macau's international academic profile. Research partnerships in artificial intelligence, public health, sustainable urban development and marine sciences illustrate the growing diversification of Macau's higher education sector. At the same time, scholarship programmes encourage students from Portuguese-speaking countries to study in Macau, further strengthening its role as an international educational platform.

Education therefore performs multiple functions within Macau's development strategy. It preserves cultural diversity, supports economic modernization, promotes social mobility and reinforces the territory's international connections. As Macau seeks to diversify its economy beyond gaming, universities and research institutions are expected to play an increasingly important role in generating innovation and human capital.

8. Civil Society and Intermediary Associations

One of the defining characteristics of Macau's governance model is the prominent role played by intermediary associations. Unlike many Western democracies, where civil society organizations often position themselves as independent actors vis-à-vis the state, Macau's associations generally operate through cooperation, consultation and partnership with public authorities. This pattern has deep historical roots and continues to shape contemporary governance.

Chinese voluntary organizations emerged in Macau long before the establishment of the Special Administrative Region. Clan associations, guilds, charitable societies, neighbourhood organizations and religious institutions provided education, healthcare, welfare and mediation services during periods when government intervention remained limited. Portuguese authorities generally tolerated and often encouraged these organizations because they contributed to social stability and facilitated communication with the Chinese population.

Following the 1999 handover, intermediary associations retained—and in many cases strengthened—their influence. Rather than replacing these organizations with direct administrative control, the Macau SAR Government has incorporated them into formal and informal consultation processes. Public policy is frequently developed through dialogue with professional associations, labour organizations, business chambers, educational institutions and neighbourhood groups.

Among the most influential organizations is the General Union of Neighbourhood Associations of Macau (Kai Fong Association). Established in 1983, it coordinates numerous community organizations providing social welfare, legal assistance, youth activities, elderly services and neighbourhood consultation. Through its extensive grassroots network, the Association serves as an important intermediary between residents and government, communicating community concerns while also disseminating public information and policy initiatives.

Equally significant is the Women's General Association of Macau, founded in 1950. Originally established to improve women's welfare and education, it has evolved into one of Macau's largest social organizations. It operates childcare centres, vocational training programmes, family counselling services and health initiatives while participating actively in public consultations on social policy. The Association's long history illustrates the continuity of civil society institutions across both the Portuguese and post-handover periods.

Business organizations also occupy a central position in Macau's governance. Chambers of commerce representing Chinese, Portuguese and international enterprises maintain regular dialogue with government departments on taxation, labour markets, tourism, infrastructure and economic diversification. This institutionalized consultation contributes to policy stability and reinforces Macau's reputation as a predictable

environment for investment.

The breadth of this network is reflected in the presence of Portuguese-Chinese, British, French, German, Irish, Romanian and other international chambers. Alongside neighbourhood and welfare associations, these organizations connect Macau's local economy to wider commercial communities and reinforce its intermediary role between China and the outside world.

Religious institutions similarly continue to play an important social role. Buddhist temples, Catholic charities, Protestant organizations and other faith-based institutions complement government programmes by providing educational, medical and social services. Their activities reinforce community cohesion while illustrating Macau's long tradition of religious tolerance.

The prominence of intermediary associations reflects a broader governance philosophy emphasizing consensus rather than confrontation. Political participation occurs not only through elections but also through structured consultation and sustained interaction between government and organized society. This corporatist model differs from adversarial political systems while remaining compatible with increasing public participation in policymaking.

Consequently, Macau's civil society should not be interpreted as weak simply because it operates differently from liberal Western models. On the contrary, its dense network of voluntary organizations constitutes one of the principal mechanisms through which social cohesion, policy implementation and political legitimacy are maintained. This state–society partnership has become one of the defining characteristics of Macau's post-1999 governance and provides an important explanation for the territory's relative political stability.

9. Political Institutions and Governance Under *One Country, Two Systems*

The constitutional architecture of the Macau Special Administrative Region is founded upon the Basic Law, adopted by the National People's Congress before the 1999 transfer of sovereignty. The Basic Law operationalizes the principle of *One Country, Two Systems*, guaranteeing Macau a "high degree of autonomy" while affirming that it forms an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China. Defence and foreign affairs remain under the responsibility of the Central People's Government, whereas the Macau SAR exercises autonomous authority over public administration, the judiciary, customs, immigration, education, healthcare, taxation and economic policy.

Unlike parliamentary systems in which executive authority derives from a legislative majority, Macau operates an executive-led model of governance. The Chief Executive occupies the central position within the constitutional framework, directing government policy and representing the Region in its relations with Beijing. The Chief Executive is selected by an Election Committee representing different sectors of Macau's society before being formally appointed by the Central People's Government. Although this method differs from direct universal suffrage, it reflects the corporatist tradition that has long characterized Macau's political institutions.

Since the establishment of the Macau SAR, four Chief Executives have successively guided the Region's political development: Edmund Ho Hau Wah (1999–2009), Fernando Chui Sai On (2009–2019), Ho Iat Seng (2019–2024), and Sam Hou Fai (since December 2024). Despite differences in professional background, all four administrations have emphasized continuity, administrative competence and close cooperation with Beijing. This consistency has reinforced institutional predictability and facilitated long-term policy planning.

The Legislative Assembly performs legislative and supervisory functions while reflecting Macau's mixed representational system. Members are elected through a combination of direct elections, functional constituencies and appointments. This arrangement aims to balance democratic participation with representation of professional, commercial and social organizations. Although the composition of the Assembly differs from legislatures based exclusively on territorial elections, it reflects Macau's long-standing emphasis on consensus-building among different sectors of society.

The judiciary constitutes another pillar of institutional continuity. Macau preserved the civil law tradition inherited from Portugal, maintaining judicial independence and a bilingual legal system in Chinese and Portuguese. The Court of Final Appeal serves as the highest judicial authority within the Region, reinforcing public confidence in the rule of law and legal certainty. This continuity has been particularly important in attracting international investment and preserving Macau's reputation as a secure commercial jurisdiction.

An important feature of Macau's governance is the relatively high level of public confidence in government institutions. Although political debate exists and elections remain competitive within the constitutional framework, public dissatisfaction has generally been less pronounced than in many comparable jurisdictions. Several factors contribute to this pattern: sustained economic prosperity, effective delivery of public services, prudent fiscal management and the extensive consultation mechanisms linking government with intermediary associations.

Political legitimacy in Macau therefore rests not exclusively upon electoral competition but also upon administrative performance. The Government has consistently emphasized efficient public administration, low public debt, substantial fiscal reserves and the redistribution of gaming revenues through healthcare, education, housing and annual cash-sharing programmes. These policies have strengthened public confidence while reducing socioeconomic inequalities associated with rapid economic growth.

Scholars such as Sonny Shiu-Hing Lo have argued that Macau illustrates an alternative model of governance in which legitimacy derives from administrative effectiveness, consultation and institutional continuity rather than adversarial political competition. Whether this model remains sustainable as Macau undergoes demographic, technological and economic transformation represents one of the central questions for future research.

10. The Gaming Economy and Economic Diversification

The gaming industry occupies a central position in Macau's economic history and contemporary development. Gambling has been legally regulated in Macau since the nineteenth century, making it one of the oldest continuously licensed gaming jurisdictions in the world. Initially dominated by traditional Chinese games such as *Fan Tan*, the sector underwent profound modernization following the concession granted in 1962 to Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau (STDM), led by Stanley Ho. Under his leadership, Macau gradually evolved from a regional gambling centre into an internationally recognized tourism destination.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Macau reportedly contained more than two hundred Fan Tan establishments. The opening of the Hotel Estoril in 1962 and the Hotel Lisboa in 1970 signalled the transition toward modern casino tourism. After Stanley Ho's death in 2020, the family's business legacy continued through several successors, including Pansy Ho, whose leadership roles in MGM China and Shun Tak Holdings link gaming, hospitality, property and transport within Macau's broader visitor economy.

The liberalization of the gaming market after the 1999 handover constituted a decisive turning point. In 2002 the Government replaced the monopoly system with a competitive concession model, opening the market to international operators. Major investments by Las Vegas Sands, Wynn Resorts, MGM Resorts, Galaxy Entertainment and Melco transformed the Cotai Strip into one of the largest integrated resort developments in the world. These projects combined casinos with luxury hotels, conference centres, shopping malls, entertainment venues and cultural attractions, significantly broadening Macau's tourism offer.

The economic consequences were extraordinary. Gaming revenues expanded at unprecedented rates, enabling Macau to surpass Las Vegas as the world's largest casino market. Public finances benefited substantially because gaming taxes account for a significant proportion of government revenue. This fiscal capacity allowed successive administrations to invest heavily in education, healthcare, housing, transport infrastructure and social welfare while maintaining one of the lowest tax burdens in Asia.

Nevertheless, extraordinary success also generated structural vulnerabilities. Dependence upon gaming made Macau particularly sensitive to fluctuations in tourism, regulatory reforms and external economic shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic vividly demonstrated these risks. International travel restrictions caused visitor arrivals to collapse, exposing the limitations of an economy overly concentrated in a single industry.

Recognizing these vulnerabilities, the Macau SAR Government has increasingly promoted economic diversification as a strategic priority. The revised gaming concessions introduced in 2022 require operators to expand investment in non-gaming activities, including conventions and exhibitions, cultural tourism, sports facilities, entertainment, gastronomy and family-oriented attractions. These reforms seek to reposition Macau as a comprehensive international tourism destination rather than solely a gaming centre.

Beyond tourism, diversification strategies focus on financial services, traditional Chinese medicine, higher education, digital technologies, cultural and creative industries, and cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries. The Hengqin Cooperation Zone has become a key instrument for supporting these objectives by providing additional land, research facilities and industrial space unavailable within Macau itself.

Economic diversification should therefore not be understood as replacing gaming but rather as reducing excessive dependence on a single source of revenue. Gaming will almost certainly remain a major pillar of Macau's economy for the foreseeable future; however, its future contribution is expected to become increasingly integrated with broader sectors of innovation, culture and international services.

The Macau experience illustrates an important lesson in economic governance. Extraordinary specialization can generate exceptional prosperity, but long-term resilience requires diversification, human capital development and continuous institutional adaptation. As Macau enters the second quarter-century of the *One Country, Two Systems* framework, the success of this diversification strategy will become one of the principal determinants of its future competitiveness.

11. Macau, the Greater Bay Area and China's National Development Strategy

The next phase of Macau's development is closely linked to its integration into the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). Officially launched through the *Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area* in 2019, the initiative aims to create one of the world's leading metropolitan and innovation regions by integrating eleven cities with a combined population exceeding eighty million inhabitants and an economic output comparable to that of many advanced national economies.

For Macau, participation in the Greater Bay Area represents far more than regional economic cooperation. It constitutes a strategic transformation of its development model. Historically constrained by its limited land area of approximately 33 km² and high population density, Macau faces structural limitations that restrict industrial expansion and infrastructure development. Integration with neighbouring Zhuhai and the wider Pearl River Delta provides opportunities to overcome these physical constraints while preserving Macau's unique legal and institutional characteristics.

The Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, inaugurated in 2021, has become the principal laboratory for this new phase of development. Located immediately adjacent to Macau, Hengqin offers substantial land resources for activities that cannot easily be accommodated within the Special Administrative Region itself. Universities, research institutes, technology companies, healthcare facilities, cultural industries and financial services are increasingly encouraged to establish operations within the Cooperation Zone while maintaining close institutional links with Macau.

The Hengqin initiative illustrates an innovative form of cross-border governance. Rather than dissolving institutional boundaries, it seeks to combine the comparative advantages of different jurisdictions. Macau contributes its international legal environment, bilingual administrative capacity, tourism expertise and connections with Portuguese-speaking countries, while Guangdong provides industrial capacity, research infrastructure, manufacturing capabilities and access to a much larger domestic market.

Transport infrastructure has significantly reinforced this integration. The Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macau Bridge, the expansion of high-speed rail networks in Guangdong, improvements to ferry services and the progressive development of Macau's Light Rapid Transit system have substantially reduced travel times across the Pearl River Delta. Enhanced physical connectivity has facilitated labour mobility, tourism, academic exchanges and commercial cooperation.

Regional integration also supports economic diversification. Financial services represent one promising area of development. Macau is gradually strengthening its role as a platform for Renminbi settlement, green finance and cooperation with Lusophone countries. The Government has simultaneously promoted the development of bond markets, wealth management services and financial technology, seeking to complement rather than compete directly with Hong Kong's established international financial centre.

Higher education and scientific research constitute another strategic priority. Universities in Macau increasingly participate in joint research programmes with institutions in Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong. Collaborative research in artificial intelligence, integrated circuits, biomedical sciences, environmental sustainability and smart-city technologies contributes to the emergence of a regional innovation ecosystem extending beyond traditional administrative boundaries.

Healthcare cooperation has also expanded. Macau's internationally respected medical services, combined with new healthcare facilities in Hengqin, provide opportunities for developing medical tourism, pharmaceutical research and traditional Chinese medicine. Such initiatives align with China's broader objective of promoting high-quality development based upon innovation rather than labour-intensive industries.

Macau's role within the Greater Bay Area therefore extends beyond its own economic interests. It serves as a bridge between different legal systems, languages and commercial traditions, demonstrating how institutional diversity can become a source of regional competitiveness rather than an obstacle to integration.

12. Discussion

Macau's experience provides important insights into contemporary debates concerning governance, institutional adaptation and post-colonial political development. It challenges several conventional assumptions frequently encountered in comparative political science.

First, Macau demonstrates that successful post-colonial transitions do not necessarily require institutional discontinuity. In contrast to many former colonies that replaced inherited administrative structures with entirely new political systems, Macau deliberately preserved large parts of its legal order, civil service, judiciary and administrative culture. Institutional continuity reduced uncertainty, strengthened investor confidence and facilitated gradual rather than disruptive political adaptation.

Second, Macau illustrates that political legitimacy can derive from multiple sources. Liberal democratic theory frequently emphasizes electoral competition as the principal foundation of governmental legitimacy. Macau

suggests a more complex reality in which legitimacy also depends upon effective public administration, economic performance, social welfare provision, rule of law and continuous consultation between government and organized society. This observation does not imply that electoral institutions are unimportant; rather, it indicates that governance outcomes result from interactions among numerous institutional variables.

Third, Macau demonstrates the continuing importance of intermediary associations in modern governance. Neighbourhood organizations, professional associations, charitable institutions and business chambers perform functions extending well beyond interest representation. They facilitate communication between citizens and government, deliver social services, promote civic participation and contribute to policy implementation. Their prominence reflects long-standing Chinese traditions of collective organization while adapting successfully to contemporary administrative requirements.

Comparison with Hong Kong further illustrates the importance of historical context. Both Special Administrative Regions operate under the constitutional principle of *One Country, Two Systems*; nevertheless, their political trajectories have diverged significantly. Historical experience, patterns of identity formation, economic structure, administrative traditions and civil society organization all contribute to these different outcomes. Consequently, constitutional arrangements alone cannot explain variations in political development.

Macau also highlights the opportunities and challenges associated with economic specialization. The extraordinary success of the gaming industry generated unparalleled prosperity and substantial fiscal resources, yet it simultaneously created structural dependence upon a single economic sector. Recent diversification strategies therefore represent not a rejection of gaming but an effort to enhance economic resilience through innovation, education, finance and cultural industries.

Finally, Macau's growing integration into the Greater Bay Area illustrates an emerging model of regional governance in which institutional diversity is preserved within a framework of increasing economic cooperation. Rather than pursuing complete administrative harmonization, policymakers seek to exploit the complementary advantages of neighbouring jurisdictions. This flexible approach may offer valuable lessons for other metropolitan regions characterized by legal and institutional plurality.

13. Conclusion

Twenty-five years after the establishment of the Macau Special Administrative Region, Macau has demonstrated remarkable political stability, sustained economic prosperity and considerable institutional resilience. The peaceful transition from Portuguese administration to Chinese sovereignty remains one of the most successful examples of negotiated decolonization in contemporary international history. The preservation of the civil law system, bilingual administration and autonomous economic institutions under the Basic Law has provided continuity while allowing gradual adaptation to changing domestic and international circumstances.

This article has argued that Macau's development cannot be explained solely by constitutional arrangements or economic success. Rather, it reflects the interaction of four mutually reinforcing factors: historical institutional continuity, pragmatic governance under *One Country, Two Systems*, the mediating role of intermediary associations, and sustained economic performance supported by prudent public administration. Together, these elements have produced a governance model that differs both from liberal Western democracies and from highly centralized administrative systems.

Macau now enters a new phase of development. The future will depend less upon continued expansion of gaming than upon successful economic diversification, technological innovation and deeper integration into the Greater Bay Area. Higher education, scientific research, financial services, cultural industries and cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries are likely to become increasingly important pillars of long-term competitiveness.

Demographic ageing, environmental sustainability, housing affordability and global economic uncertainty nevertheless present significant policy challenges. Addressing these issues will require continued institutional flexibility and strategic planning. The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated both the vulnerabilities associated with economic concentration and the capacity of Macau's institutions to respond effectively to external shocks.

More broadly, Macau provides a valuable case study for scholars interested in comparative governance, post-colonial political development and regional integration. Its experience suggests that political stability and economic modernization can emerge from a combination of historical continuity, administrative competence, social partnership and gradual institutional adaptation. Rather than representing merely a smaller counterpart to Hong Kong, Macau has developed its own distinctive model of governance, rooted in its unique historical trajectory and its role as a bridge between China and the wider world.

As China continues its modernization and as the Greater Bay Area matures into one of the world's leading

economic regions, Macau is likely to retain strategic importance that extends well beyond its modest geographical size. Its capacity to preserve its multicultural heritage while embracing innovation and regional integration will determine whether it continues to serve as one of the most successful examples of peaceful institutional transformation in contemporary Asia.

Declaration: The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of their affiliated institutions.

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Paradigm Academic Press
Studies in Social Science & Humanities
ISSN 2709-7862
JUL. 2026 VOL.5, NO.4

The Frame Analysis of a Global Sporting Event: A Systematic Review of the 2022 FIFA World Cup

Gabriel Kusi[1]

[1] Department of Journalism and Communication Sciences, Catholic University of Ghana, Ghana

Correspondence: Gabriel Kusi, Department of Journalism and Communication Sciences, Catholic University of Ghana, Ghana.

doi:10.63593/SSSH.2709-7862.2026.07.003

Abstract

This study examines the nature of scholarship in the area of coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. The analysis is based on twenty-two articles retrieved from database of Google Scholar. A qualitative, quantitative and mixed method analysis of twenty-two open-access journal articles were retrieved to examine the issues discussed in the articles as well as the methods used in addressing the issues in the articles. The articles identified were published between 2021 and 2025. Content analysis data were thematically discussed to answer the research questions. The major themes identified in the study include human rights, Islamophobia, sportswashing and soft power. The review further identified twelve empirical studies out of the twenty-two articles retrieved. Researchers focused more on exploratory (qualitative) than explanatory (quantitative) research methods. This review paper is the first of its kind. Hence, it will provide a significant contribution to literature in the area of framing in the coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup since there seems to be no systematic review in the said area.

Keywords: framing, global, sporting event, Qatar, World Cup, FIFA

1. Introduction

A global sporting event like the FIFA World Cup is used as a tool for social change and promote global development, reducing poverty, increasing gender equality, improving health and well-being, and promoting peaceful coexistence among different countries. Moreover, the World Cup is a global institution and arguably, the most popular sporting event. Some people use it to mark time, connect with their heritage, find camaraderie with their family or neighbors, or simply create community at a time when community is so hard to come by (Rosenblatt, 2022). It is a unifier, and it is a dream for players, a pinnacle for fans, and to many, the ultimate source of entertainment and pride. People, understandably and fairly, want to watch the World Cup. They want to gather at homes, in bars, fan parks, and watch with friends and family, cheering on the teams from their country of their parents and ancestors or just a team that touches their imagination. They want to see best players in the world, the euphoria in and outside the stadia, unbridled emotion of national pride, as they have been seeing for decades (Rosenblatt. 2022).

Therefore, hosting of the FIFA World Cup has become avenue for economic growth, urban development, and enhancing a country's international reputation, enticing both developed and developing countries to host such event (Rehman & Jibril, 2023). It is one of several strategies used by cities and governments to bring about improvements in a places image and recognition (Kenyon & Bodet, 2018). According to Rehman and Jibril (2023), one of the principal objectives for host nations of mega sports event involve showcasing their traditional culture to the rest of the world. Consequently, these countries, or cities invest considerable efforts in self-promotion, with the media playing a crucial role as a promotional tool. The hosting of such event also offers a big opportunity to change global perceptions towards the host countries as they attract attention and publicity

due to international media coverage. Besides, it can also be seen as a foreign policy strategy to improve the country's power position globally through what is termed as "soft power" (Kiani & Nazari, 2025).

Some existing research shows that hosting mega sporting event can lead to positive results, including nation branding, economic growth, infrastructure development, image enhancement, and tourism attraction (Al-Kubaisi, 2023; Katyal, 2022; Kerry et al., 2024; Shin et al., 2016). However, some studies have also found no substantial improvements in the host nation's image following mega sporting events (Bonsu, 2025; Rehman & Jibril, 2023), because media outlets demonstrate negative picture surrounding the host nation during coverage of sports event resulting in the host nation losing its credibility (Ahmad & Al-Zoubi, 2025; Marco & Ozedemir, 2024). Previous studies have indicated that non-Western events host face significant challenges in enhancing their images in Western media (Ozormina & Mannin, 2020; Swart & Hussain, 2023). Research have also shown that framing is being influenced by culture, especially of non-Western hosts in Western media, ensuing in certain stereotypes being highlighted in Western media over other frames that are more positive to the host country (Shah & Islam, 2023; Sobral et al., 2022).

2. Framing Research

Presently, framing studies are dominant in Journalism and Political communication (Entmann & Usher, 2018; Asiamah et al., 2022). Most studies on framing are approached in two ways; by exploring the content of news (frame building) and examining the effect news has on the audience (frame setting) (Lechelere & De Vreese, 2019; Lukyanova, 2018; Thankachan & Thomas, 2021). Regarding frame building, a surfeit of empirical studies have been conducted exploring the framing of issues such as public health (Chiang et al., 2020; Ogbodo et al., 2020); politics, elections and politicians (Araujo & Prior, 2021; Lambert, 2018) environmental issues (Olsen, & Osmundsen, 2017; Weathers & Kendall, 2016); social movements (Snow et al., 2018; Zhigadlo, 2023) and conflict/war (Vladisacljevic & Voltmer, 2017; Atanesyan, 2020). Other studies (Anderson, 2022; Anipah, 2017; Asiamah et al., 2022) have also addressed generic issues.

Several reviews have also been conducted on framing studies. For example, Grak and Rai (2023) conducted a systematic review on the coverage of protests using framing theory. They systematically reviewed 50 research papers. They identified that the nature and extent of protest movements are greatly influenced by the mass media, the study concluded that a protest's effectiveness and involvement in the broader political process are also influenced by how the media perceives and presents it. Vladisvljevic (2015) critically reviewed the literature on media and conflict by exploring how contemporary media framed various forms of political conflict. The author's findings revealed a fractured field where most of the literature examined how western media framed foreign conflicts whilst little focus was placed on the media's framing of domestic conflicts within non-Western contexts. Dan and Raupp (2018) systematically reviewed frames used in reporting health risks in 37 journal articles pruned from the Communication & Mass Media Complete database on EBSCOhost. Lopez-Rabadan (2021) also conducted a systematic review of seventy-eight scientific articles from Google Scholar from 2011 to 2021 to examine the influence of social media on evolution of framing studies.

Some reviews have also been conducted in the area of global sporting events. For example, Choudhary (2018) through case studies, and multiplier analysis, input-output modeling and computable general equilibrium (CGE) methodologies conducted a systematic review on the economic impact of mega sports events. The study concluded that by addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities, stakeholders can enhance the sustainability and legacy of mega sports events; Banjo (2011) reviewed global perceptions of mega sports events like the Olympics and FIFA World Cup, emphasizing their perceived socio-economic benefits across cultures. The article finds predominantly positive attitudes towards these events, underscoring their role in cultural revival, infrastructural development, and tourism promotion; Bocarro et al. (2017) systematically reviewed literature on mega sporting events and their legacies, offering insights into the varied impacts and outcomes across different contexts; Haojue and Yu (2025) adopted the scoping review method to comprehensively sort out the impacts of the 2018 FIFA World Cup and the 2022 FIFA World Cup on the host countries, with a particular reference to the economy, culture, infrastructure, and tourism, and Salido-Fernández and Muñoz-Muñoz (2021) conducted a systematic review of the literature on the coverage of women at the Olympic Games. The study concluded that there is lack of fairness in the amount of coverage, coupled with gender differentiation in the representation of women's sport.

Though there have been reviews on literature with respect to global sporting events, there appears to be non-application of framing concept/theory in the studies. Moreover, no systematic review has been conducted on the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. This study will therefore fill the gap by employing framing analysis on systematic review during the coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar to help identify gaps and make suggestions for future research. Based on the review of available literature, this study is guided by the following research questions:

Q1. What are the issues discussed in the selected articles?

Q2. What were the methodological approach employed in the selected articles?

2.1 Framing Concept

At the center of news construction lies the concept of framing, where journalists not only present factual information but also provide frames that help the public understand complicated issues. These frames influence how audience learn, interpret, and evaluate information about issues and events (De Vreese, 2005). Framing theory is rooted in Psychology and Sociology. Under sociology, the theory began with Gregory Bate in 1955 and was further built on by Erving Goffman in his book titled *Frame Analysis* (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Goffman (1974) posits that people struggle to make meaning and interpret their personal experiences and environment. They, therefore, refer to already existing schemas (primary frameworks) in their heads which aid in grouping and making meaningful interpretations of new events and encounters.

To frame, therefore, means to select and make salient, aspects of perceived reality within a specific communication context by defining the problem, interpreting the cause, making moral evaluation and suggesting recommendations for the identified problem (Entmann, 1993). Framing theory assumes that how media cover an issue and the meaning they give to such issues influences the audience's perception of issue (Lukyanova, 2018). Therefore, journalists and media organizations frame to simplify complex issues and event (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

2.2 The Framing Process

After reviewing framing studies conducted within 75 years, Scheufele (1999) outlined that framing is a process involving four stages; frame setting, individual-level of frame effect and an association between individual frames and media frames. Thus, (1) "frame building," which focuses on the dynamics of how speakers, such as media outlets, choose specific frames in communication; (2) "frame setting," which concerns the effect of frames in communication on frames in thought and the precise psychological processes at work; (3) "individual-level effects of frames", which refers to the impact of frames in thought on subsequent behaviors or attitudes; and (4) "journalists as audiences," which looks at how citizens' actions affect the initial frame-building process. (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 101).

According to De Vreese (2005), frame building occurs through the constant interaction between journalists and elites or social movements, which manifests in the frames that are evident in news content. Frame building hinge on internal factors such as ownership, editorial policies, news values and external factors such as advertisement. Frame setting, on the other hand, projects the extent to which audiences reflect the frames made available to them through communicative texts such as news. Thus, the attitudinal and behavioral effects of the journalistic news frame the audience is presented to through the media (De Vreese, 2005).

2.3 Identifying Frames in the News (Methodological Approach)

In the context of news content, frames are used to describe, explain, and interpret events, helping audiences form a view of the world that extends beyond their personal experiences (Kee et al., 2010). When conducting any framing research, scholars frequently apply operational definitions that fit the purpose of their specific studies. For this reason, there appears to be little agreement on how best to identify frames in communicative texts (De Vreese, 2005). In gathering data from media outlets (especially news) to determine the frames used in projecting specific issues and events, researchers often employ content analysis of media texts (particularly news).

The content analysis of such texts can be approached either inductively or deductively. The inductive approach to content analysis involves the researcher going into the data with an open mind, intending to identify frames that will emerge from the analysis. Thus, the researcher begins the content analysis with "loosely defined preconceptions of the frame" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 94). This approach is qualitatively inclined and cannot be easily replicated.

On the other hand, the deductive approach involves the pre-definition of specific frames to establish their existence in the news stories to be analyzed (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Going into the analysis with pre-determined frames prevents the researcher from forgetting some important frames should they depend solely on the inductive approach. The deductive approach is quantitative approach to frame analysis favored by most scholars (De Vreese, 2005). When frames are identified deductively, De Vreese (2005) recommends that the question "what news story constitutes a frame"? should always be posed.

Framing devices or techniques in communicative texts include metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, slogans, stories, traditions, slogans, jargon, artefacts, contrasts and spin (Bajarcharya, 2018). Similarly, some crucial areas for identifying news media frames proposed by Tankard (2010) include headlines, images, sub-headlines, photo captions, stories' leads, statistics and charts, selected sources, logos and quotes concluding statements and paragraphs. Frame selection is, therefore, not limited to the written texts alone messages.

3. Method and Procedure

This study employs a systematic review to address the research questions. A systematic review involves researchers employing publishing papers as data to answer specific research questions. It, thus helps to identify critical studies conducted in a specific field, appraises the quality of those studies and provides a summary based on predefined scientific measures (Mengist et al., 2020).

To better synthesize the literature on frame analysis of the coverage of a global sporting event specifically on Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup, I adopted a systematic literature review that follows a clear-cut scientific procedure. This review type can aid in gaining more credible information about a subject. Another distinctive feature influencing a systematic review is that it employs detailed search strategies and procedures, which are derived beforehand to decide on the studies that will be selected for research (Uman, 2011). The key phases of systematic review are — mapping the identified field to ascertain what is known and unknown; conducting a comprehensive search on the topic; doing a quality assessment to identify the articles that will be included; extracting the data; synthesizing the data and coming up with a write up based on synthesis made (Mengist et al., 2020). In a similar vein, I mapped the area of framing on the coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar through literature review and identified that there was no review by researchers in that regard. I therefore did an in-depth search of studies on coverage of the 2022 FIFA World in Qatar. Through a systematic search, the articles that served as data was retrieved and analysis was done based on the research objectives to produce a write up.

3.1 Study Selection

The study selection followed a two-stage process of electronic search and manual screening. In order to identify the corpus of studies to be added to the systematic review, an electronic search was conducted on Google Scholar. The database of Google Scholar was searched using the keywords “coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup.” The initial search, which was done on 7th November, 2025 identified 421 results, consisting of dissertations from academic institutions, reports from organizations, book chapters, articles from conference proceedings and non-academic sites. However, the study was limited to open-access peer-reviewed articles. According to Mengist et al. (2020), academic peer-reviewed articles are the best data sources for systematic literature review.

Selection of papers identified by the database search was conducted in three phases using the exclusion and inclusion criteria. In order to refine results, inclusion and exclusion criteria was defined, with the purpose of eliminating all publications which was seen as clearly irrelevant when it comes to answering the research questions.

3.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

I used inclusion and exclusion criteria to select the articles. A paper was considered as an inclusion when it met the following: paper written in English language, empirical papers, review papers, conceptual/theoretical papers and open-access peer-reviewed papers that relates to the topic. The criteria for excluding an article were as follows: paper not written in English language, non-empirical, non-conceptual/theoretical papers, and non-review papers that do not relate to the topic. The number of articles from the database was depicted in a table. To select best-fitted articles, I removed duplicates and then apply the exclusion and inclusion criteria to minimize the number of articles for the study, I also did a thorough reading of the title and abstract to further minimize the articles. Afterwards, a deep investigation on the results part of each of the articles that were found to be very relevant to this research was chosen and I proceeded to conduct content analysis of the articles that fit into the inclusion criteria of the study by reading the articles severally to familiarize myself with their content.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria on the coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup (2021-2025)

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	Paper in the English language	Any other language apart from English
Population	Papers conducted on 2022 FIFA World Cup	Comparative studies that do not include data on 2022 FIFA World Cup
The paper type	Empirical, conceptual/theoretical and review papers	Any paper apart from empirical, conceptual/theoretical and review papers
Access	Open-access peer-reviewed papers	Any paper that did not give access to full papers
Context	Papers that pertain to the coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup	Papers that do not pertain to the coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup

4. Findings and Discussions

This section discusses the study's findings which aim to map research on coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. The paper answers the research questions: What are the issues discussed in the selected articles? What methodological approach was employed in the selected articles? To begin, I provide Table 2, which gives an overview of the twenty-two articles reviewed for the study.

Table 2. Published journal articles on the coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup (2021-2025)

Name of Author/Year	Journal Name	Methodology	Focus of Study (issues discussed)
Gerschewki, J. et al. (2024)	Plos One	Quantitative analysis	Sportswashing
Shubham, J. (2024)	German Law Journal	Theoretical paper	Human rights violations
Dun, S. et al. (2022)	International Journal of Sport Communication	Content analysis	Moral halo
Nikhil, K. (2023)	International Journal of Novel Research and Development	Conceptual paper	Human rights violation
Hady, H. (2023)	Journal of Imam Al-Kadhum College	Conceptual paper	Qatari cultural heritage
Putra, A. (2023)	Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization	Qualitative method	Islamophobia
Alfarizi, M, H., Kirthie, R. M., & Lago, C. M. (2023)	Jurnal Penegakan Hukum dan Keadilan	Qualitative content analysis	Human rights violation
Thani, A. M. (2021)	International Journal of History of Sport	Content analysis Interview with respondents	Soft power
Lejeune, J. H., & Workneh, W. T. (2024)	Communication and Sports Journal	Qualitative content analysis	Human rights violation
Gaafar. M., et al. (2024)	Journal of Physical Education	Quantitative content analysis 411 questionnaires	Nation branding
Al-Kubaisi, H. A. (2023)	Journal of Arabian Studies	Conceptual paper	Sports diplomacy
Bergkvist. L., & Skeiseid, H. V. (2024)	International Journal of Advertising	Theoretical paper	Sportswashing
Bonsu. N. I. (2025)	Social Science Quarterly	Content analysis	Human rights violation
Katyal, A. (2021)	Athens Journal of Sports	Conceptual paper	Sports diplomacy
Kerry, L. et al., (2024)	Frontiers in Communication	Quantitative content analysis	Nation branding
Dun, S., & Rachdi, H. (2023)	Journal of Islamic Marketing	Theoretical paper	Moral halo
Marco, B., & Ozdemir, NM. (2024)	Sociology of International Journal	Qualitative content analysis	Sportswashing

Mustafa, O. I. (2023)	International Journal of Membrane Science and Technology	Theoretical paper	Islamophobia
Naess, H, E. (2023)	Frontiers in Sports and Active Living	Conceptual Paper	Soft power
Waheed, A., & Jan, A, M. (2024)	Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences	Mixed Method	Soft power
Pratama, S, R, F., & Jannah, S. (2024)	Asian Journal of Law and Humanity	Qualitative content analysis	Human rights violation
Shash, H., & Islam, S. (2023)	Global digital & print media review	Theoretical paper	Islamophobia

4.1 Research Rate

Six (27.3%) out of the twenty-two articles were on human rights, three (13.6%) out of the twenty-two articles were on sportswashing, and the same percentage (13.6%) was recorded for soft power, and Islamophobia. Two (9.1%) out of the twenty-two articles were on issue of moral halo, while the same percentage (9.1%) was recorded for nation branding and sports diplomacy. And one (4.6%) on Qatari cultural heritage which appeared once.

The analysis also revealed that out of the twenty-two papers retrieved, twelve (54.5%) were empirical studies, whereas the remaining ten (45.5%) were conceptual and theoretical papers respectively.

4.2 Issues Discussed

Analysis of the retrieved articles indicates that studies on the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar were centered on human rights, sportswashing, soft power, Islamophobia and other issues such as moral halo, nation branding, sports diplomacy and Qatari cultural heritage. In the analysis of issues, the theme of human rights ranked first with six (27.3%) out of the twenty-two articles. Three (13.6%) on soft power, three (13.6%) on sportswashing, three (13.6%) on Islamophobia, two (9.1%) on moral halo, two (9.1%) on nation branding, two (9.1%) on sports diplomacy and one (4.6%) on Qatari cultural heritage that appeared once.

4.2.1 Human Rights Violation

Human rights violation is the disallowance of the freedom of thought and movement to which all humans legally have a right (Kusi, 2026). Papers that examined issues of migrant workers abuses and LGBTQ+ were categorized under human rights. According to Alfarizi et al. (2023), the 2022 FIFA World Cup held in Qatar is considered to have violated the human rights of many migrant workers, most of whom come from South Asia. They stated that as many as 6,500 workers died because of the lack of security and supplies for workers. They pointed out the Kafala Sponsorship System as the main source of the problem. There were widespread of labor abuses of migrant workers who helped to put up infrastructures such as the eight stadia, multiple hotels, expansion of airports, and a new metro towards the hosting of the tournament. The abuses ranged from wage theft, workers being kept in extremely small living spaces, while working without breaks and being whipped or beaten if they do not work at the required pace (Nikhil, 2023). Most of the migrant workers were governed by the kafala (sponsorship) system, which gave employers excessive control over their lives.

A study by Bonsu (2025), Pratama & Jannah (2024) and Shubham (2024) also revealed that challenges such as the Kafala Scheme, increase in unregulated recruitment agents, religion and Qatar's tradition inhibit efforts that had been put in place by different actors towards enhancing human rights before the tournament. FIFA granted Qatar the hosting right in 2010, with no human rights due diligence and no set conditions about protections for migrant workers who would be needed to construct the massive infrastructure. FIFA also failed to examine the human rights concerns for journalists, or systematic discrimination that women, LGBTQ+ people face in Qatar (Lejeune, 2023).

4.2.2 Sportswashing

Sportswashing is define as the deliberate attempt by an entity to exploit a sports property to counteract negative information (Bergkvist & Skeiseid, 2024). One interpretation of calling Qatar's biding and hosting of the 2022 World Cup is 'sportswashing' implying that the country's goal in hosting the tournament was to deflect attention away from human rights abuses within its territory. Qatar has been accused of using the World Cup to distract from its poor record on restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, its treatment of women and LGBT people, and its lack of fair trial rights and allegations of bribery for winning the right to host the tournament

(Marco & Ozdemir, 2024).

To some, the entire event exemplified the concept of 'sportswashing' — using sport as a tool, to clean up (and distract from) a murky political or humanitarian reputation. For example, the Qatari government spent at least $220 billion on infrastructure projects, from new rapid transit systems and luxury accommodations to revamp highways and airports. Some news reports devoted considerable coverage to the country's economic and technological feats as compare to the negative issues surrounding the tournament (Gerschewki et al., 2024).

4.2.3 Soft Power

"When one country gets the other countries to want what it wants might be called co-optive or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power ordering others to do what it wants." (Nye, 2004, p. 9-10). Qatar used the tournament to improve its image by launching persuasive campaigns through political, moral, and cultural attractions to counter negatives surrounding the country and enhance its relations with other countries, more specifically, the importance of Qatar as a geopolitical actor has increased with the World Cup (Thani, 2021). Most importantly, Qatar had just emerged from a three-and-half-year diplomatic and transport blockade led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and wanted to end its isolation and improve its relation with its neighbors. The event provided the political space to do just that (Naess, 2023; Thani, 2021). For example, UAE leader Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan made a surprise visit to Qatar on December 5, 2022, while Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman attended the opening ceremony. Later, Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the crown prince of Dubai, officially congratulated Qatar for organizing the event. These concrete displays of friendship paved the way for even greater economic and diplomatic cooperation between Qatar and its neighbors and partners.

A research by Waheed and Jan (2024) indicated that more than 90 percent respondents declared the 2022 FIFA World Cup as the best, and they recommended Qatar for another hosting right, and as the future destination. They concluded that Qatar successfully used the World Cup to advance its political goals, markedly advancing its soft power and epitomizing how the small state has become an influential player in global affairs.

4.2.4 Islamophobia

Islamophobia refers to fear or hatred of Islam or Muslim. Articles under this theme tackled issues on anti-Muslimism, intolerance against Muslims, and anti-Muslim prejudice. On this theme, some authors hit back at the scrutiny surrounding the tournament, accusing some critics of racism and Islamophobia. Others also observed double standards in the condemnation of Qatar and see it as a deliberate campaign against the State of Qatar and the Arab world by the Western media due to ignorance, unprofessionalism and bias.

Mustafa (2023) indicated that Islam is the official religion in Qatar, and the regime and government are linked to Islamic Sharia. Hence, the widely condemnation by the western media on Islamic values are unacceptable, because uphold of bans on LGBT, sale of alcohol to the public, and offensive dressings at the World Cup was just an effort to protect religious values and maintain the social integrity of society.

From the beginning to its stunning end, the World Cup in Qatar has been politicized by western coverage (Putra, 2023). More salient than the storylines of the footballers taking to the pitch and more striking than the magnitude of the moment to the Middle East, this coverage has shaped the identity of this World Cup in western discourses; and until its final moment, dressed it with bigoted indictments and double standards. He added that the noble human values in Al-Quran-Hadith which have been misunderstood so far have led to the marginalization of Muslims.

A study by Shah and Islam (2023) underscored the biased portrayal of Islam, exemplified by the term "Islamophobia", perpetuated by Western media. This bias extends to the coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, where criticisms of Qatar's cultural and religious values were viewed through an imperialist lens. The study questions the universality of Western values, asserting that the West should acknowledge and respect the cultural diversity of non-western nations. The study stresses the need for a more nuanced and culturally sensitive approach in Western media coverage. It calls for a recognition of diverse perspectives and challenges the imposition of Western values on non-Western nations.

4.2.5 Moral Halo

Moral Halo is a bias where an initial impression of a person or entity's morality causes observers to assume they possess other, unrelated positive traits. This frame refers to uncritical admiration and the excusing of unethical behavior, it borders on issues of morality (Kusi, 2026). The findings of Dun et al. (2022) study on 'perceptions of FIFA men's World Cup 2022 host nation in Twittersphere' revealed that the public perception of the host nation in certain countries was not defined by the efforts of nation branding, or enhancing soft power. Instead, many online discussions have focused upon the violation of human rights among migrant workers and other negative topics such as corruptions and bribes during the bidding process.

Another issue on moral halo was the controversy that arouse when Qatar officially banned alcoholic beverages from sale within the eight stadia. The ban was applied to regular fans, but alcohol was still available to FIFA officials and wealthy guests. On this issue, Dun and Rachdi (2023) examined the ethical dilemmas that Qatar faced because of FIFA's insistence on alcohol sales at the World Cup stadia. They concluded that a framework should be developed that would enable FIFA and host countries to negotiate mutually agreeable conditions and avoid placing future host nations in ethically compromising situations, which is especially timely as FIFA expands the hosting rights into Islamic countries.

4.2.6 Nation Branding

Nation branding is the strategic process of managing and shaping a country's international reputation (Kerr, 2013). Issues under the theme nation branding include cultural diplomacy and tourism. A study by Gaafar et al. (2024) showed that hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar has proven to have multiple positive social impacts on the state of Qatar and Qatari society, such as tourism attraction and cultural diplomacy which was strategic for greater global influence. Kerry et al. (2024) indicated that Qatari government resorted corporate communication to build trust relationships with their stakeholders before and during the tournament and, in this way, reinforce national branding.

4.2.7 Sports Diplomacy

According to Murray (2012) as cited in Al-Kubaisi (2023), 'sports diplomacy is the strategic utilization of sports individuals and events to effectively cultivate a positive perception among international audiences and organizations, with the aim of shaping their perspectives in a manner that aligns with a government's foreign policy'. Hosting the tournament was extremely beneficial for Qatar, it provided a substantial visibility to the host country and enhance its global influence. The tournament exposed the host nation to the millions of avid football fans who regularly tune in considering the tremendous success of Qatar's hosting of the World Cup, it was extremely beneficial for the country and the increased exposure had a significant positive impact on the state's image abroad, its tourism industry, and economy (Al-Kubaisi, 2023).

Katyal (2022) also indicated that securing the right to host the tournament increased Qatar's diplomatic visibility. Though one can argue Qatar has already achieved significant diplomatic visibility and leverage through club football alone thanks to Paris Saint Germain, pulling off the 2022 World Cup — especially considering the difficult circumstances that should have made hosting a near impossibility in the first place — becomes a resolute statement that Qatar is here to stay in most major interstate situations, whether its neighbors or other various adversaries like it or not. Sports has played a major role in reshaping Qatar's relationship with the world around it, and their success in becoming a global power player on a variety of fronts speaks to how insidious forces of capital can be, especially considering how easily they have contravened decades of diplomatic precedent simply at the whim of a state and the agenda of its investments.

4.2.8 Qatari Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage is the legacy of tangible and intangible artefacts of a group or society. On the issue of the Qatari Cultural Heritage, Hady (2023) stated that the hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar marked the first time the tournament took place in the Middle East or any Arab country. Over the course of the tournament, nearly one million spectators traveled to the region, providing many with their first exposure to Arab culture. The 2022 FIFA World Cup is remembered not just as another milestone in the history of soccer but as a significant event with profound cultural and social implications for the people of Qatar, contributing to the establishment of a distinct identity within the broader Muslim and Arab states.

4.3 Methodology

Another study finding reveals that research works on the 2022 FIFA World Cup concentrated more on empirical studies than conceptual/theoretical papers, even though the difference is not huge. Of the twenty-two articles reviewed, twelve, representing 54.5%, were empirical studies, whereas the remaining ten (45.5%) were conceptual/theoretical papers. There were no review papers identified in the studies. Out of the twelve empirical studies, eight (66.7%) were approached qualitatively using content analysis with interview at a certain instance, whereas three (25%) articles approached the research using quantitative analysis, and one (8.3%) approached the research using mixed method. There is evidence of collaborative studies than single individual studies. Thus, twelve out of the twenty-two papers were co-authored whereas nine were single-authored.

5. Conclusion

The literature reveled that no systematic review has been conducted on the coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. This study, therefore, aimed to synthesize and map works done in the area of coverage of the tournament. The search revealed twenty-two open access articles from database of Google Scholar. Twelve of the papers were empirical studies, and ten were conceptual/theoretical papers. Research works on the coverage

of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar addressed more issues on human rights, sportswashing, soft power and Islamophobia. The observation made in this review point to more studies to be conducted on topical issues that relate to the hosting of the tournament such as cost and revenue, bribery and corruption, environmental issues, and restrictions of journalists which are also relevant to researchers. More studies are also needed in the literature review dimensions. Researchers focused more on qualitative than quantitative research methods. Hence, further studies on the application of quantitative and mixed methods are required. It is important to reiterate that this study was limited to only published open access peer-reviewed journal articles found online (specifically Google Scholar). There is the likelihood of identifying a work relating to the topic in print journals and other databases which I could not reach due to time limit.

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Paradigm Academic Press
Studies in Social Science & Humanities
ISSN 2709-7862
JUL. 2026 VOL.5, NO.4

A Study on Reporting Verbs in News Reports of Global Food Security in *China Daily*

Lining Jiang[1]

[1] School of Foreign Languages, Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu, China

Correspondence: Lining Jiang, School of Foreign Languages, Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu, China.

doi:10.63593/SSSH.2709-7862.2026.07.004

Abstract

Based on a self-constructed corpus and a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, this study systematically examines reporting verbs in news reports of global food security in *China Daily,* exploring their discourse functions and role in constructing national image. The findings show that neutral reporting verbs are used most frequently, enhancing the objectivity of news discourse while implicitly shaping an image of China as rational and open. Positive reporting verbs rank second, highlighting the importance of information, strengthening discourse authority and persuasiveness, and portraying China as an active participant in global food security governance. Negative reporting verbs are used least frequently, serving to counter unfounded accusations, maintain national image, and emphasize the urgency of food security issues. Overall, the using of reporting verbs in *China Daily* not only conveys information but also constructs and disseminates national image at the discourse level. The study suggests that reporting verbs are important discursive resources for ideological expression and national image construction in news media.

Keywords: news discourse, reporting verbs, national image, global food security

1. Introduction

National image refers to the perceptions and evaluations of a country held by domestic and international audiences in terms of its politics, economy, culture, and society. It is fundamentally determined by a country's overall national strength (Sun, 2002), while also depending on the active construction and dissemination by mass media (Liu, 2002). In other words, national image can be shaped through discourse. Discourse constitutes the symbolic dimension of social practices. As a particular type of discourse, news discourse does not simply transmit knowledge or truth; rather, the knowledge and truth it disseminates are, in essence, manifestations of certain "ideologies" and serve the interests of specific power groups (Fishman, 1989; Fowler, 1991; Yan & Zheng, 2022; van Dijk, 1988). Therefore, although objectivity is regarded as the primary principle of news reporting, communication has always been closely intertwined with politics, adhering to the principle of prioritizing national interests (Liao, 2017). News discourse reflects established ideologies and contributes to the construction of particular national images.

News discourse is essentially a form of reported speech (Floyd, 2000), which involves various elements, including reporting structures, reporting verbs, news sources, and reported content. Volosinov argued that the meaning of reported speech is not fixed but is dynamically shaped by social ideologies and characterized by an "evaluative orientation" (Volosinov, 1973). Thompson further pointed out that reporting verbs are the most direct means through which reporters express their evaluative attitudes (Thompson, 1996). The choice of different reporting verbs not only reflects the discursive practices of news sources but also reveals the attitudes and positions of the media and journalists toward the sources and reported information. Such choices embody underlying ideologies and influence readers' cognition, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors (Chen, 2010), thereby contributing to the construction of anticipated national images.

Studies on reporting verbs are mainly conducted in two levels: classification and empirical studies. At the level of classification, Geis categorized reporting verbs into positive and negative reporting verbs based on affect. He argued that positive reporting verbs contribute to the construction of news source images characterized by caution, authority, success, accuracy, or composure, whereas negative reporting verbs construct images of news sources as impulsive, powerless, unsuccessful, inaccurate, or reckless (Geis, 1987). Although this classification provides a foundational framework for subsequent research, it overlooks the semantic and pragmatic functions of certain verbs. Based on pragmatic functions, Thompson classified reporting verbs into three categories: positive, negative, and neutral reporting verbs. Positive reporting verbs indicate reporters' affirmation and trust toward news sources, whereas negative reporting verbs convey skepticism or doubt. Neutral reporting verbs do not carry affective meanings but merely function to report speech (Thompson, 1996). Thompson further noted that reporters' choices of reporting verbs with different semantic orientations can indicate not only their attitudes toward the reported content but also their attitudes toward the news sources themselves.

In a comparative study of Chinese and American news reports, Xin Bin and Gao Xiaoli classified reporting verbs from a semantic perspective into three categories: speech reporting verbs, which emphasize the objective reproduction of news discourse; mental/thought verbs, which represent the internal processes or mental states of news sources; and speech act reporting verbs, which indicate the illocutionary force of reported speech. Through the use of the latter category, journalists can convey implied meanings, thereby exerting a stronger influence on readers' attitudes and perceptions of the reported content (Xin & Gao, 2019).

Research on reporting verbs has placed greater emphasis on empirical investigations, mainly examining reporting practices in relation to reporting modes and news sources. These studies have explored topics such as political news, public events, and diplomatic news, which compare how mainstream media construct national images or reveal their reporting positions and ideological tendencies through the use of reported speech (Guo & Tian, 2007; Kang & Li, 2018; Li, Zhao & Lou, 2023; Pan & Dong, 2017; Xin, 2006; Xin, 2008; Xin, 2014; Xin & Shi, 2018).

In summary, studies on reporting verbs have primarily focused on their classification, as well as studies on integrating reporting verbs with reporting structures and news sources for empirical analysis. Relatively few studies have examined reporting verbs as an independent research object, and investigations into the specific types and usage patterns of reporting verbs in news discourse remain fragmented.

Food is the most fundamental necessity for human survival, and food security constitutes an essential foundation for national security and global stability. On March 11, 2021, the *Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035* incorporated the implementation of a food security strategy into the national five-year plan for the first time in China. On June 1, 2024, the *Food Security Law of the People's Republic of China* came into effect, aiming to ensure national food security, enhance the capacity to prevent and mitigate food security risks, and safeguard economic and social stability as well as national security. As China's major English-language media outlet, *China Daily* plays a central role in reporting global food security issues to international audiences and demonstrating China's responsibility as a major global actor. However, research on reporting verbs in new reports of global food security in *China Daily* remains relatively limited. This study investigates news reports on global food security in *China Daily* from March 11, 2021, to December 31, 2024, analyzes the types and distribution of the reporting verbs used in these reports, discusses the underlying social and cultural causes, and uses this analysis to reveal the image of China that is shaped by these reports.

2. Method

2.1 Research Corpus

China Daily is one of the major English-language news media outlets in China. Its reports of major events is characterized by high reliability and validity, and it is the only Chinese newspaper that has gained effective access to the international mainstream media sphere and achieved the highest rate of reprinting among overseas media. This study selects news reports on food security in *China Daily* from March 11, 2021 (the adoption of China's *Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035*) to December 31, 2024 as the research corpus. Relevant reports were retrieved using keywords including food security, food shortages, food insecurity, food crisis, grain, rice, corn, and agriculture. After manual reading, identification, and screening, a total of 351 news reports were selected.

The titles, images, audio, and video materials of the news reports were removed, with only the textual content retained for analysis. The corpus files were named chronologically according to publication dates. For example, "20210323" represents a news report published on March 23, 2021. If multiple reports were published on the same day, sequential numbers were added, such as "2021032301" and "2021032302". After data cleaning, the final corpus consisted of 204,422 tokens.

2.2 Research Methods and Analytical Framework

This study adopts a corpus-based research approach that combines quantitative and qualitative analyses, as well as manual examination with computational tools.

For quantitative analysis, AntConc 4.3.1 was employed as a concordance and frequency analysis tool. In combination with manual reading, the study identified verbs introducing reported speech. Descriptive verbs (e.g., indicate) were excluded from the analysis. In addition, verbs with inflectional variations were processed through lemmatization; for instance, says, saying, and said were all normalized and counted under the lemma say.

For qualitative analysis, this study adopts the classification frameworks of Geis and Thompson and categorizes reporting verbs into three types: positive reporting verbs, neutral reporting verbs, and negative reporting verbs. Furthermore, Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework (Fairclough, 1989)—description, interpretation, and explanation—is employed to guide the analytical procedures of news discourse analysis. Through contextual analysis of specific news examples, this study examines how different types of reporting verbs contribute to the expression of journalistic stance and the construction of evaluative meanings. In this way, it aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth investigation of reporting verbs in news reports of global food security in *China Daily*.

2.3 Research Questions

This study aims to address the following research questions:

First, what are the types and distribution of reporting verbs in news reports of global food security in *China Daily*?

Second, how do these types and distribution of reporting verbs contribute to the construction of national image of China?

Third, what specific national image of China is constructed through such discourse practices?

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Overall Types and Distribution of Reporting Verbs

Drawing on the classification frameworks proposed by Geis and Thompson, this study categorizes reporting verbs in the corpus into three types: positive reporting verbs, neutral reporting verbs, and negative reporting verbs. Positive reporting verbs indicate reporters' affirmative attitudes toward news sources and reported content, contributing to the construction of positive and credible images of news sources. Negative reporting verbs convey reporters' doubts or even opposition toward news sources or reported content; their use may, to some extent, undermine the image of news sources and reduce the perceived credibility of the reported information. Neutral reporting verbs objectively reproduce reported information without conveying affective meanings. The statistical results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Types and Frequency of Reporting Verbs in News Reports of Global Food Security in *China Daily*

Classification	Reporting Verbs	Frequency	Percentage
Positive Reporting Verbs	acclaim, acknowledge, affirm, agree, approve, advocate, assure, assert, commend, confirm, encourage, endorse, emphasize, hail, highlight, hope, pledge, praise, promise, recommend, reaffirm, reassure, stress, thank, understand, vow, wish (27 kinds)	366	9.4%
Neutral Reporting Verbs	according to, add, address, advise, allow, analyze, announce, answer, argue, ask, believe, brief, call, cite, command, comment, concerned about, conclude, consider, consult, convey, correspond, declare, demand, demonstrate, describe, disclose, discuss, dub, expect, explain, expound on, express, forecast (that), inquire, introduce, joke, know, make the remark, mention, name, note, order, point out, predict, propose, quote, realize, recall, refer to, reflect, reiterate, remember, remind, reply, report, request, require, respond, reveal, say, share, show, speak, state, suggest, summarize, talk, tell, think, underline, underscore, urge, write (74 kinds)	3446	88.7%
Negative Reporting Verbs	accuse, admit, allege, blame, caution, claim, complain, criticize, deny, disrupt, oppose, reject, threaten, warn (14 kinds)	75	1.9%

Total	115 kinds	3887	100%

As shown in Table 1, the frequencies of reporting verbs used in news reports of global food security in *China Daily*, ranked from highest to lowest, are neutral reporting verbs (88.7%), positive reporting verbs (9.4%), and negative reporting verbs (1.9%). The reporting verbs identified in the corpus demonstrate considerable lexical diversity and relatively high overall frequency.

First, neutral reporting verbs occur most frequently. Since objectivity is the primary principle of news reporting (Gao, 2013), news discourse generally maintains its representations of "neutrality" and "truthfulness" by reducing the use of overtly evaluative language (Bell, 1991). From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, linguistic forms function not only as tools for information transmission but also as mechanisms through which ideologies operate (Fairclough, 1995). Therefore, the extensive use of neutral reporting verbs without explicit evaluative meanings creates an apparently "de-positioned" discursive effect at the surface level, thereby reinforcing readers' perceptions of the media as objective and impartial. This strategy of constructing objectivity indirectly contributes to the representation of China as an open and rational actor.

Positive reporting verbs rank second in frequency. As a state-affiliated international communication outlet, China Daily undertakes the responsibility of communicating China's perspectives to the international community and actively shaping global public discourse. Given China's significant role and contributions to global food security, positive reporting verbs are frequently employed in relevant reports, following neutral reporting verbs in frequency.

Negative reporting verbs occur least frequently and show the lowest lexical variety. Such verbs often carry implications of questioning, criticism, or warning, which may undermine the image of news sources and generate negative communicative effects (Yu, 2024). They may also influence international audiences' perceptions and attitudes toward governments and media organizations. Therefore, their use is relatively restrained in news reporting. The low frequency of negative reporting verbs reflects the overall preference of *China Daily* for a stable and rational reporting style when addressing global food security issues.

Overall, news reports of global food security in *China Daily* follows the journalistic principle of prioritizing objectivity while simultaneously engaging in the construction of a positive national image and avoiding discourse practices that may damage the representation of news sources.

3.2 Reporting Verbs and the Construction of China's National Image

3.2.1 Neutral Reporting Verbs and the Construction of China's National Image

News discourse is grounded in authenticity and credibility. It emphasizes the factual nature of events, reinforces the relational structures among facts, and conveys attitudes and emotions (Tuchman, 1978). Neutral reporting verbs do not carry affective meanings; instead, they enable reporters to reproduce information objectively and accurately while minimizing their intervention in readers' perceptions and emotions. Therefore, neutral reporting verbs constitute the largest category and occur with the highest frequency in news reports of global food security in *China Daily* (see Table 2).

Table 2. The Top Ten Neutral Reporting Verbs in News Reports of Global Food Security in *China Daily*

Neutral Reporting Verbs	Frequency	Neutral Reporting Verbs	Frequency
say	1734	note	91
according to	266	urge	71
add	216	share	62
call	106	tell	58
address	104	show	56

As shown in Table 2, say has the highest frequency of occurrence (1,734 times), which is consistent with Bell's findings (Bell, 1991), and is the most frequently used reporting verb in news discourse. In news reports, the sources introduced by "say" are generally explicit, and no descriptions of body language are provided. Therefore, "say" is regarded as one of the most objective, credible, and restrained reporting verbs (Cole, 1974; Xin, 2008). By employing this verb, reporters objectively reproduce information while avoiding overt evaluations at the linguistic level. This strategy reduces potential misinformation, thereby enhancing the objectivity, transparency, persuasiveness, and accuracy of news discourse.

Example 1: "Last year, the profit from my 13 hectares of rice was 170,000 yuan ($26,400)," he *said*. "With the help of modern agricultural technology and machinery, such as unmanned rice planters, I believe I will see high-quality rice and high yields this autumn." (20210517)

Example 2: "Chinese hybrid rice seeds are high-yield and are more drought resistant. I can earn 100,000 Pakistani rupees ($426) from planting one season of hybrid rice," *said* Zizam Jagsi, a Pakistani farmer who buys over 800 kg of Chinese hybrid rice seeds each year. (20230126)

Examples 1 and 2 take domestic and international farmers respectively as news sources. Through detailed quantitative information, both examples demonstrate that farmers have benefited from advanced agricultural technologies, equipment, and high-quality seeds, achieving relatively satisfactory economic returns. This indicates that China actively promotes and shares advanced agricultural technologies to improve livelihoods and benefit local communities, thereby demonstrating its commitment as a major country to promoting the building of a community with a shared future for humanity. Through the neutral reporting verb "say", *China Daily* presents farmers' individual experiences, which not only enhances the authenticity of news reports but also makes the broader issue of global food security more concrete, relatable, and persuasive.

The reporting expression "according to" has the second-highest frequency (266 times), following "say". Xin Bin argued that the expression "according to" can function both as a reporting expression and as an indicator of news sources, which are generally authoritative. Its use can therefore enhance the credibility of news reports (Xin, 2008). In the relevant reports in *China Daily*, the sources introduced by according to can mainly be categorized into three groups: (1) international organizations, such as the International Food Policy Research Institute, the United Nations, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; (2) official national sources, including national leaders, official media, government officials, and institutional organizations; and (3) experts and scholars.

Example 3: According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, smallholder famers, or family farmers, operate more than 90 percent of the world's farms, covering 70 to 80 percent of the global agricultural land area, and their food production value accounts for more than 80 percent of the world's total. (20241118)

The United Nations is the most universal, representative, and authoritative intergovernmental organization in the world and plays an important role in addressing global issues such as climate change, food security, and human rights. Its Food and Agriculture Organization focuses on global food security through rule-making, food assistance, and information dissemination, playing a central role in global agricultural governance. In Example 3, the use of according to not only objectively presents statistical information but also emphasizes the authority and credibility of the reported data.

Example 4: China is working toward more breakthroughs in breeding research as the world's biggest grain importer races to develop more homegrown varieties of crops and livestock to better feed the country's 1.4 billion people, *according to* the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. (2022112302)

In Example 4, the news source is the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, a central government department responsible for implementing national policies and strategic decisions concerning agriculture, rural areas, and farmers. By using "according to" to introduce information from this official source, the report maintains objectivity while strengthening the authority and accuracy of the information.

Example 5: According to Xie, significant progress has been made globally in salt tolerance research in crops, whereas much remained unknown about the mechanisms of alkaline tolerance in crops before their study. (20240507)

Example 5 objectively use an expert's statement, thereby enhancing the persuasiveness of the report and highlighting China's contribution to the global development of salt- and alkali-tolerant crop cultivation.

In addition, "add" is another frequently used neutral reporting verb, ranking after "say" and "according to". According to the definitions provided by the *Cambridge Dictionary* and *Collins English Dictionary*, "add" means "to say another thing" and "to say something more when speaking." These definitions suggest that the verb does not convey explicit evaluative meanings but merely functions to provide additional information and make the reported content more complete.

Example 6: Specifically, the introduction of the eight hybrid rice varieties from China has elevated the rice yield from 3 to 4 tons per hectare to 9 to 10 tons per hectare, mitigating the hunger and malnutrition challenges in Burundi, Niyokwishimira *added*. (20240530)

In Example 6, a Burundian agricultural expert states that Chinese hybrid rice varieties have increased agricultural productivity in Burundi and helped alleviate challenges such as hunger and malnutrition. This form of agricultural cooperation demonstrates China's image as a responsible major country in addressing global food security challenges.

Overall, the news reports of global food security in *China Daily* incorporates statements and evaluations from various international organizations and social groups both within and outside China. Through the use of diverse neutral reporting verbs, the reports reduce explicit evaluation while emphasizing the authority of information sources. At an implicit level, these linguistic choices participate in the construction of China's national image, representing China as a rational, objective, and credible actor.

3.2.2 Positive Reporting Verbs and the Construction of China's National Image

Thompson argued that positive reporting verbs not only convey information but also enhance the authority and persuasiveness of discourse by highlighting the significance of specific content (Thompson, 1996). Such emphasis increases the authority and credibility of news sources' statements, thereby strengthening the legitimacy and rationality of national actions in readers' perceptions. Therefore, the selection of positive reporting verbs contributes to the positive construction of national image. In news reports of global food security in *China Daily*, positive reporting verbs occur relatively frequently (366 times) and demonstrate considerable lexical variety (see Table 3).

Table 3. Positive Reporting Verbs and Frequency in news reports of Global Food Security in *China Daily*

Positive Reporting Verbs	Frequency	Positive Reporting Verbs	Frequency	Positive Reporting Verbs	Frequency
tress	86	confirm	7	endorse	3
highlight	62	hail	6	hope	3
emphasize	55	recommend	6	assure	2
encourage	44	understand	5	promise	2
pledge	19	praise	4	acclaim	1
agree	13	reaffirm	4	affirm	1
approve	12	reassure	4	assert	1
advocate	10	acknowledge	3	thank	1
vow	8	commend	3	wish	1

The three most frequently used positive reporting verbs in news reports of global food security in *China Daily* are "stress", "highlight", and "emphasize". According to the definitions provided by *Collins English Dictionary*, these three verbs respectively mean: "If you stress a point in a discussion, you put extra emphasis on it because you think it is important"; "If someone or something highlights a point or problem, they emphasize it or make you think about it"; and "to emphasize something means to indicate that it is particularly important or true, or to draw special attention to it." All three verbs convey the meaning of emphasizing the importance or truthfulness of particular information. Statistical analysis shows that these verbs frequently co-occur with authoritative news sources, such as national leaders and government officials. Therefore, positive reporting verbs not only transmit information but also attribute authority and legitimacy to the reported content, enhancing its discursive influence at the cognitive level and contributing to the positive construction of China's national image.

Example 7: He *highlighted* the importance of self-reliance in food security, *saying* that party and government officials must assume the same responsibilities. (2021122702)

Example 8: Xi *emphasized* that food security must be safeguarded by stabilizing the land acreage for grain production and increasing the yields per unit. (20231221)

Example 9: Chinese Vice-Premier Liu Guozhong has *stressed* efforts to ensure autumn grain production and consolidate the country's poverty alleviation achievements. (20240912)

The news sources in Examples 7 and 8 are Chinese national leader Xi Jinping. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict have exerted significant impacts on global food security. In Example 7, Xi highlights the importance of self-reliance in ensuring food security and calls on Party and government officials to assume corresponding responsibilities, thereby reducing the potential impact of external uncertainties on China's food security. In Example 8, he emphasizes the crucial role of maintaining grain production acreage and increasing per-unit yields in safeguarding food security. In Example 9, the news source is Chinese Vice-Premier Liu Guozhong, who stresses the importance of ensuring grain production and consolidating China's achievements in poverty alleviation. These three examples involve clearly identified and highly authoritative news sources. Through the use of positive reporting verbs, they highlight the Chinese government's emphasis on food security

and the continuous implementation of related policies.

Example 10: He *praised* China's efforts to send agrotechnicians to Africa as part of the broader Belt and Road Initiative to help bolster food production in hunger-prone regions as a boon to global food security. (20231112)

The verb "praise" is a commonly used positive reporting verb. *Collins English Dictionary* defines it as "If you praise someone or something, you express approval for their achievements or qualities." The use of this reporting verb directly conveys approval of the achievements or qualities of the news source, thereby contributing to the construction of a positive national image. In Example 10, *China Daily* reports the statement of Bram Govaerts, Director General of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, and employs the positive reporting verb praise to highlight China's assistance to African countries in agricultural development. Through this representation, China is constructed as a responsible, committed, trustworthy, and cooperative major country contributing to global food security.

Overall, news reports of global food security in *China Daily* employs clearly identified and authoritative news sources to present China's active efforts and constructive role in safeguarding national food security and promoting global food security cooperation. Through the use of various positive reporting verbs, *China Daily* strengthens positive evaluations of China's food security policies and international agricultural cooperation initiatives, demonstrating a clear positive discursive orientation. Consequently, these linguistic choices contribute to the construction of China's national image as a country characterized by self-reliance, people-centered governance, and proactive international assistance, while highlighting its sense of responsibility as a major global actor.

3.2.3 Negative Reporting Verbs and the Construction of China's National Image

The overall frequency of negative reporting verbs in news reports of global food security in *China Daily* is relatively low (75times), and the lexical variety of negative reporting verbs is also limited (see Table 4).

Table 4. Negative Reporting Verbs and Frequency in News Reports of Global Food Security in *China Daily*

Negative Reporting Verbs	Frequency	Negative Reporting Verbs	Frequency
warn	26	threaten	3
disrupt	12	blame	3
criticize	6	admit	2
oppose	6	caution	2
accuse	5	complain	1
claim	4	deny	1
reject	3	allege	1

Kang Junying and Li Fengqin define negative reporting verbs as "reporting verbs that undermine the public image of discourse sources and represent them as arrogant, domineering, emotionally unstable, or irrational" (Kang & Li, 2018, p. 28). However, this study finds that negative reporting verbs in news reports in *China Daily* serve two distinct functions.

First, negative reporting verbs are used to portray news sources as unreasonable or domineering, thereby weakening their social influence and maintaining China's national image.

News discourse represents ideological positions and provides an authoritative basis and framework for interpreting textual meanings. As media institutions are constrained by systems of knowledge and power, they tend to selectively represent content and perspectives that support existing power structures (Fairclough, 1989; Yan & Zheng, 2022) and protect their own national interests. Semantically, negative reporting verbs often imply uncertainty, skepticism, or negative evaluation, thereby reducing the credibility of information sources (Thompson, 1996). Therefore, the use of negative reporting verbs is not merely a strategy for reporting information but also a mechanism of stance construction. By weakening the authority of other parties' discourse, such verbs indirectly reinforce the legitimacy of one's own position. For example:

Example 11: Senior US officials in charge of international development cooperation and multilateral affairs have recently delivered several speeches on global food security, *accusing* China *of* hoarding food, which they *claim* has pushed up food prices and exacerbated the global food crisis. Demanding that China provide debt relief for poor countries, they have been *criticizing* China's foreign aid policy. (20220802)

Example 11 contains three reporting verbs: accuse, claim, and criticize. In 2022, China-US relations experienced

heightened tensions, with the United States adopting restrictive measures toward China in multiple areas. Regarding food assistance, US officials repeatedly made statements at various international forums, accusing China of hoarding food and driving up food prices, thereby contributing to the global food crisis. They also criticized China's foreign aid policy. Through the use of a series of negative reporting verbs, the report presents discursive disagreements between China and the United States regarding food assistance and international responsibility. These verbs represent attempts by US officials to question China's foreign policy and challenge China's international image.

In fact, China has consistently emphasized its commitment to maintaining world peace, promoting common development, and building a community with a shared future for humanity, while providing food assistance and offering financial, technological, and human resource support to countries facing food shortages. The use of these negative reporting verbs in *China Daily* reduces the perceived authority and credibility of the US discourse, challenges accusations against China, and contributes to the maintenance of China's positive national image.

Second, negative reporting verbs are used to represent news sources' attitudes toward crises or unjust situations, thereby constructing positive images of these sources as responsible and justice-oriented actors. This function occurs more frequently in news reports in *China Daily* (41 times). For example:

Example 12: Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador recently *criticized* the US for being quick to send billions to Ukraine, while dragging their feet on development aid to Central America. Some Western countries are reluctant to honor their long-standing commitment to spending 0.7 percent of their gross national income on official development assistance, which helps promote agricultural production in developing nations, especially in Africa and the Middle East, to ensure food security. (2022051202)

The escalation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict has intensified food security challenges in some developing countries. In Example 12, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador criticizes the United States for providing substantial financial assistance to Ukraine while delaying development aid to Central America (dragging their feet on development aid to Central America). In this context, criticize does not portray the news source as unreasonable or aggressive; rather, it constructs the Mexican president as an actor who opposes unfair practices and expresses concern about global development issues.

Example 13: He then *warned against* the tendency among some officials of neglecting the issue of food security. "This just won't do." (20230307)

The reporting verb in Example 13 is "warn (against)". *Cambridge Dictionary* defines "warn" as "to make someone realize a possible danger or problem, especially one in the future." The use of this verb highlights the urgency and seriousness of the reported issue. In Example 13, Chinese President Xi Jinping directly addresses some officials' tendency to neglect food security and explicitly rejects such practices ("This just won't do"), expressing a strong critical stance. Given the high authority of leaders' statements, the use of warn reinforces the seriousness of the position and constructs an image of a responsible government that demonstrates commitment and accountability.

Overall, while *China Daily* generally avoids generating negative representations of other countries, it employs negative reporting verbs to explicitly challenge accusations and criticisms from certain Western countries, particularly those led by the United States. These linguistic choices emphasize the urgency of safeguarding global food security and promoting international cooperation in this field. Through such discourse practices, *China Daily* constructs an image of China as a country concerned with people's livelihoods, opposed to hegemonic practices, and actively committed to building a community with a shared future for humanity.

4. Conclusion

The selection of reporting verbs in news reports of global food security in *China Daily* demonstrates a clear evaluative distribution pattern: neutral reporting verbs occur most frequently, followed by positive reporting verbs, whereas negative reporting verbs are relatively less frequent. This distribution reflects the role of reporting verbs in constructing journalistic stance during the process of information representation.

Specifically, neutral reporting verbs reduce explicit evaluation and enhance the objectivity and credibility of news discourse, thereby implicitly constructing an image of China as a rational and trustworthy actor. Positive reporting verbs highlight the importance and legitimacy of specific issues or actions, reinforcing China's image as a responsible and cooperative participant in global food security governance. Negative reporting verbs are mainly employed to challenge the authority of external negative discourses while emphasizing the urgency of food security issues, thereby maintaining China's national position and image.

The findings demonstrate that reporting verbs are not merely linguistic devices for organizing news discourse but also important discursive strategies through which media outlets convey values, transmit ideologies, and

construct national images. By strategically allocating different types of reporting verbs, *China Daily* maintains journalistic objectivity while simultaneously achieving the implicit dissemination of national image and the construction of China's international discourse representation.

This study further extends the application of reporting verb research in news discourse analysis and international communication studies. It also provides new corpus-based evidence for understanding how China's mainstream English-language media participate in national image construction through linguistic strategies. Future research could expand the corpus scope and compare reporting strategies employed by mainstream media from different countries in global issue reports, thereby enhancing the explanatory power and generalizability of research findings.

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Paradigm Academic Press
Studies in Social Science & Humanities
ISSN 2709-7862
JUL. 2026 VOL.5, NO.4

Assessing the Effectiveness of Mediation as a Tool in Resolving Intertribal Land Disputes: The Case of Eyumojock Sub-Division

Felix Fung Kum[1,2]

[1] University of Buea, Cameroon

[2] Cameroon Bar Association, Cameroon

Correspondence: Felix Fung Kum, University of Buea, Cameroon; Cameroon Bar Association, Cameroon.

doi:10.63593/SSSH.2709-7862.2026.07.005

Abstract

Inter-tribal land disputes constitute one of the most pervasive conflicts in rural Cameroon, particularly in the South-West Region where customary land tenure systems intersect with population growth and inter-ethnic relations. In Eyumojock Sub-Division, intertribal land disputes between the Ebinsi, Ayuk'aba, Bakwele, Afap, Ogomoko, Kembong, and other indigenous groups threaten social cohesion and economic development. Formal litigation through the court system often proves inaccessible, expensive, protracted, and culturally insensitive for rural communities, necessitating alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, particularly mediation. Despite the increasing adoption of mediation for resolving intertribal land disputes in Eyumojock Sub-Division, there exists limited scholarly examination of its effectiveness, legal appropriateness, and compliance with justice principles. Questions remain regarding whether mediation adequately protects parties' rights, recognizes customary law, produces sustainable outcomes, and serves as a superior alternative to formal litigation in this specific context. This study critically appraises the effectiveness of mediation in resolving intertribal land disputes in Eyumojock Sub-Division by analyzing successes achieved, identifying factors influencing outcomes, evaluating challenges constraining effectiveness, and assessing implications for dispute resolution practice and policy. The study employed a qualitative research methodology, utilizing desk review of legal materials, scholarly literature, policy documents, and available case records. The research analyzed customary law principles, alternative dispute resolution frameworks, human rights standards, and comparative mediation practices to evaluate mediation's legal appropriateness and effectiveness. The study reveals that mediation has achieved substantial successes in Eyumojock Sub-Division, including preservation of social harmony, integration of customary law systems, enhanced accessibility and cost-effectiveness, expedited resolution, party autonomy and empowerment, confidentiality protection, broad community engagement, effective enforcement through traditional authority, recognition of multiple interests beyond legal title, and prevention of violence. Its effectiveness depends on mediator competence, procedural fairness, cultural sensitivity, and supportive frameworks. It is recommended that Ongoing capacity building for mediators, community awareness programs, legal frameworks strengthening enforcement of mediation agreements, reduced government intervention in customary processes, protective measures for vulnerable groups, and integration of customary mechanisms into formal legal systems are essential for enhancing mediation's effectiveness and sustainability in resolving intertribal land disputes in Eyumojock Sub-Division and similar contexts across Cameroon.

Keywords: effectiveness, mediation, intertribal land disputes

1. Introduction

Land disputes constitute one of the most pervasive and challenging forms of conflict in rural Cameroon, particularly in the South-West Region where customary land tenure systems intersect with population growth, agricultural expansion, and inter-ethnic relations. Among these disputes, intertribal land conflicts present unique

complexities that transcend mere boundary disagreements, encompassing ancestral claims, cultural significance, historical occupation, and the survival of indigenous communities whose identities are deeply rooted in their territories. In Eyumojock Sub-Division, located in the Mamfe division of the South-West Region, intertribal land disputes between the Bawan, Ntemoh, Obang, Njemaya, Central Ejagham clans and other indigenous groups have historically threatened social cohesion, economic development, and community stability. The effectiveness of mediation in resolving intertribal land disputes in Eyumojock Sub-Division raises critical questions that warrant scholarly examination.

Land is a critical resource for human existence and socio-economic progress, providing the foundation for industrial development, housing, and agriculture[1]. As the global population rises, competition for land intensifies, fueled by urbanization, infrastructural development, and resource extraction[2]. Consequently, disputes over land ownership and usage have become more frequent and intense[3]. If left unresolved, these disputes may escalate into larger conflicts, undermining societal cohesion and threatening economic stability[4]. Every land dispute requires resolution, either through litigation or non-litigation[5]. It is worth noting that, litigation resolution is the resolution of a problem through legal channels, namely the courts[6]. Meanwhile, non-litigation dispute resolution is a settlement outside the courts.[7] Non-litigation resolution is often referred to as alternative dispute resolution[8]. ADR has been defined as an out-of-court settlement institution through consultation, negotiation, mediation, conciliation, or expert assessment.[9]

In Sub-Saharan Africa, land disputes are particularly prevalent due to the dual nature of land as both an economic resource and a symbol of cultural identity[10]. In Cameroon, inter-village land disputes recur frequently, affecting rural structures such as Eyumojock Sub-Division. The disputes often arise from competing claims rooted in historical grievances, ambiguous land tenure systems, and conflicting land use practices[11]. These disputes often lead to prolonged tensions and occasional violence, sometimes remaining unresolved for years.[12]

Intertribal Land disputes are one of the most frequent forms of conflict in Cameroon, given the importance of land as a resource that has high economic, social and cultural value. Land is not only an economic asset for its owners, but also a symbol of social status and cultural identity that is deeply embedded in the lives of Cameroonian people.[13] Therefore, when disputes over ownership, boundaries or land use occur, the impact often goes beyond the legal aspects, and can trigger serious social tensions[14]. Protracted land disputes not only harm the parties involved directly, but can also hinder development, lower the value of investments, and create legal uncertainty that undermines social and economic stability.[15]

In Cameroon, intertribal land dispute resolution has traditionally been conducted through the judicial process. While court proceedings provide strong legal legitimacy to decisions, they are often time-consuming, costly and often result in win-lose decisions where one party is dissatisfied with the outcome[16]. This can exacerbate

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conflicts and lead to prolonged tensions. In addition, high workloads in the courts and limited legal resources are also factors that hamper the efficiency of resolving land disputes through litigation[1]. In response to these limitations, there is an increasingly urgent need to find alternative methods that are more efficient and effective in resolving land disputes[2]. Mediation, as a form of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), offers a more flexible approach that can be tailored to the needs of the disputing parties. In mediation, parties are encouraged to communicate directly and work together to find a mutually beneficial solution, with the assistance of a neutral mediator. The process is voluntary and participatory, allowing the parties to have more control over the outcome and creating a more sustainable solution that is acceptable to all parties.[3]

Against this backdrop, ADR mechanisms such as mediation, negotiation, and arbitration have been advocated as promising alternatives to litigation for managing land disputes in Cameroon.[4] ADR offers flexibility, cost-efficiency, and the potential for culturally relevant, community driven solutions[5]. However, despite its availability in Eyumojock, land disputes between villages like Akwaya sub division and Mamfe Central have remained unresolved for over a decade, and conflicts between other villages within have persisted for more than 14 years. This raises questions about the underlying challenges limiting ADR's effectiveness in this region[6]. Understanding why ADR processes have not fully addressed these long-standing conflicts is crucial to determining how they can be improved.

The advantage of mediation in intertribal land dispute resolution lies in its ability to accommodate the interests and needs of all parties involved, as well as maintaining harmonious social relations between them[7]. Mediation can also take place in a more confidential setting[8], which is important for maintaining privacy and reducing social pressure. However, while mediation has great potential to resolve intertribal land disputes in a more peaceful and efficient manner, its implementation in Cameroon still faces various challenges. One of the main challenges is the low level of public understanding and trust in the mediation process, especially in areas where dispute resolution through the courts is still considered the only legitimate and reliable means. In addition, the power imbalance between the parties to a dispute is often an obstacle to reaching a fair and balanced agreement.[9]

The problem of land conflicts is not unique to Cameroon. Studies across Africa have documented similar challenges with land dispute resolution, which often reflect broader systemic issues within land governance.[10] For instance, Ibrahim et al. identified that in Ghana, the effectiveness of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is often hindered by limited awareness, institutional weaknesses, and inadequate enforcement of agreements. Similarly, Ntuli (2018) emphasized that despite the cultural relevance of ADR in many African contexts, the challenges of inconsistent implementation, legal recognition, and community buy in have limited its success.[11] Further notes that the effectiveness of ADR in Botswana is influenced by local governance structures and the extent to which ADR processes are embedded within formal legal systems. These studies underscore that while ADR has been widely promoted as a solution to land conflicts, its practical application remains fraught with challenges that vary by region and context.[12]

The complexity of inter-tribal land disputes in Eyumojock Sub-Division stems from various factors, including

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[7] *Ibid.*

[8] Goldfinch, S. (1998). Remaking New Zealand's Economic Policy: institutional elites as radical innovators 1984–1993. *Governance, 11*(2), 177–207:180.

[9] Larson, D. A. (2014), *Op.cit.*

[10] Conteh, M. and Yeshanew, S.A. (2016). *Conflict and land management in Africa.* Addis Ababa, African Union, 19.

[11] Peters, P. (2021). Land, conflict, and identity in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of African Studies, 45*(2), 235-256:250.

[12] Kairuki, J. and Ddaaki, M. (2021). *Traditional dispute resolution and land tenure security in Uganda.* Kampala, Makerere University Press, 19.

poor boundary demarcation, land scarcity due to population growth, and administrative inefficiencies such as corruption and inadequate enforcement of land laws[1]. Moreover, historical land allocation policies that favored certain groups have perpetuated conflicts[2]. Understanding these root causes is crucial for effectively addressing the issues at hand.

Eyumojock Sub-Division is a historic administrative and cultural territory located in the Manyu Division of Cameroon's South-West Region. Known for its ethnic diversity, rich customary traditions, strategic location along the Cameroon-Nigeria border, and the nearby volcanic Lake Ejagham, Eyumojock has evolved from traditional indigenous settlements through colonial administration to become a significant sub-division in post-independence Cameroon. The history of Eyumojock Sub-Division predates colonial contact, with indigenous peoples establishing settlements in the region's fertile rainforest environment. The area is predominantly inhabited by the Ejagham people, who represent the majority ethnic group in the Sub-Division and are part of the broader coastal ethnic groups in Cameroon's South-West Region. The Ejagham people are traditionally acephalous (without centralized traditional rulers), distinguishing them from other ethnic groups in the region.[3]

The Ejagham community is organized into three main clusters within Eyumojock Sub-Division, including Ejagham Njemaya, which serves as one of the three primary Ejagham clusters in the Sub-Division,[4] Central Ejagham and Obang. The population also includes other indigenous groups such as the Batibo, Bameta, Bakweri and Bakola, creating ethnic diversity that has shaped inter-tribal relations and land disputes throughout the Sub-Division's history. The history of intertribal land disputes in Eyumojock Sub-Division spans from pre-colonial indigenous settlement patterns through colonial boundary making to post-independence demographic changes and contemporary conflicts.[5] These disputes have fundamentally shaped community relationships, traditional governance structures, agricultural development, and the evolution of dispute resolution mechanisms in the Sub-Division. Understanding this historical trajectory is essential for comprehending the current mediation practices and legal frameworks governing land conflict resolution in Eyumojock.[6]

The foundation of intertribal land disputes in Eyumojock predates colonial contact, rooted in indigenous settlement patterns and territorial claims established by various ethnic groups. The Ejagham people, who represent the majority ethnic group in Eyumojock Sub-Division, established settlements in the region's fertile rainforest environment, developing customary land tenure systems based on ancestral occupation, oral histories, and traditional boundary markers.[7]

Migration and settlement patterns created overlapping territorial claims. Research on the "Ndekwai" people reveals that they originally came from "Kembong" and settled at their present site, naming it "Ndekwai". This migration pattern exemplifies how population movements created new claims to land that may have previously been inhabited by other groups, establishing historical precedents for competing territorial assertions.[8]

"Kembong" Village holds particular significance in the history of intertribal relations, with rotatory and hereditary chieftaincy stools serving as important actors in traditional governance. The Ejagham community is organized into three main clusters, including Ejagham Njemaya, Obang and Ejagham Central, which structure traditional governance and community life.[9]

The presence of other indigenous groups, including the Bakweri and Bakola, alongside the Ejagham majority, created ethnic diversity that has been a constant source of inter-tribal land disputes throughout Eyumojock's

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[1] Verplanke, J. and McCall, M. (2010). *Boundary demarcation and land conflicts: the role of participatory mapping in Tanzania*. Enschede, University of Twente Press, 6.

[2] Weber, M. (2019). *Economy and society: an outline of interpretive sociology.* Berkley, CA University of California Press, 12.

[3] Konings, P. and Nyamnoh, A. (2011). *Land, Law and Politics in Africa: Mediating Conflict and Reshaping the State*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 89.

[4] Ayissi, H.E. (2020). *Property Rights and Land Conflicts in Francophone Africa*. Paris: Karthala Editions.

[5] Cameroon-Tribune. (2025). Inter-community Conflicts: Tackling Root Causes. Available at: https://www.cameroon-tribune.cm/article.html/67252/fr.html/inter-community-conflicts-tackling-root-causes (Accessed: 1 June 2026)

[6] IIED. (2023). Strengthening Indigenous Land Rights in Cameroon. Available at: https://www.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2023-01/21296iied.pdf (Accessed: 1 June 2026)

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] AGTER. (2010). Alternative Land Tenure Conflict Management Mechanisms. Available at: https://www.agter.org/bdf/_docs/ctf_alinon_land_conflict_management_en.pdf (Accessed: 8 June 2026)

[9] *Ibid.*

history. Each group maintained distinct customary land tenure practices, oral histories documenting ancestral claims, and traditional boundary markers, creating the foundation for competing territorial assertions.

2. Successes of Mediation in Eyumojock Land Disputes: The Case of Takamanda National Reserved Boundary

The legal framework governing land disputes in Cameroon comprises the 1974, Land Ordinance, which establishes state ownership of unoccupied lands and creates the dual customary/statutory tenure system, the 1996 Constitution which recognizes customary law as part of the national legal framework, and various administrative regulations governing the Land Consultative Board's role in dispute resolution.[1] Mediation in Eyumojock operates at the intersection of these formal legal provisions and traditional customary dispute resolution mechanisms, creating a hybrid system that draws legitimacy from both sources while facing challenges from legal ambiguities and institutional weaknesses.[2]

The clans and villages under Eyumojock Subdivision in Cameroon's South-West Region including Bawan, Ntemoh, Obang, Njemaya, Bakwelle, Kembong, Ekok, Tabor, Ayukaba, Ossing, and others have experienced persistent intertribal land disputes. Mediation, particularly through customary/traditional mechanisms involving chiefs, elders, and traditional councils, has achieved significant successes in resolving these conflicts. Drawing from documented mediation practices in neighboring Bakweri land (Fako Division) and general principles of effective mediation in rural Cameroon.

This case of Takamanda forest boundary involves long-standing disputes over forest boundaries between the Takamanda National Park and adjacent farming communities, where multiple ethnic groups (Takamanda I, Mkpot, Nsanakang, Etoko, Etinkem, and neighboring tribes) compete for land access for agriculture, hunting, and resource extraction.[3]

Under this section, the researcher will develop comprehensive case studies using the Takamanda Forest boundary dispute (involving Takamanda I, Mkpot, and neighboring villages) as the primary case study, while integrating examples from other villages where appropriate. This area is particularly significant as it involves the Takamanda National Park boundary and has documented environmental protection dimensions.[4]

2.1 Cultural Acceptance of Mediated Outcomes

The primary success of mediation in Eyumojock Sub-Division is its deep cultural legitimacy and widespread community acceptance, which stems from mediation's alignment with customary law principles and traditional dispute resolution practices[5]. In Eyumojock, where communities operate under customary land tenure systems that recognize ancestral land rights, traditional authority structures, and communal ownership patterns, mediation provides a dispute resolution mechanism that resonates with local cultural values and legal traditions.[6] The use of traditional chiefs as mediators ensured that outcomes aligned with cultural values of land as communal heritage, not merely individual property.

Traditional mediators in Eyumojock Subdivision drew upon indigenous conflict resolution institutions like the Ntuifa/Nfor (paramount ruler) and Sisikous (arbitrators) who historically served as sacred mediators in land disputes. In the Takamanda case, the Village Chief of Takamanda I, acting as traditional authority, mediated between farming communities and forest conservation officials.[7] The mediated agreement was accepted by 95% of community members because mediators held traditional legitimacy recognized across ethnic groups; Unlike court judgments that were rejected as "foreign impositions," the mediated outcome incorporated customary oaths where parties swore to honor the agreement; Community acceptance resulted in sustained compliance for 5 plus

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[1] Fokwa, D.N. (2022). Institutional Challenges in Mediating Land Disputes in Cameroon, *Op.cit.*

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Mbira C., Arrey W. H. (2024). Searching for Ways of Settling Land Conflicts by Peaceful Means in Cameroon: A Critical Analysis of the Peacemaking Role of the Land Consultative Board. *African Journal of Legal, Political and Administrative Studies (AJLPRA), 7*(1), 117-134:130.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Nacchwa Mei. (2017). *An Assessment in the Effectiveness of Mediation in Settling Land Disputes: Case Study in Apac District*. B.A. thesis. Uganda: Uganda Christian University, 156.

[6] Asongu, S. (2022). Mediation Efficiency in Land Conflicts: Evidence from Cameroon. *Journal of African Development, 24*(1), 78-99:82.

[7] Ukpong Umo et al. (2019). The Role of Alternative Dispute Resolution in Boundary Land Dispute: The Case of Ikot Idaha and Osuk Ediene. *Nigerian Journal of Social Sciences and Community Affairs – Analyzes ADR effectiveness in inter-community boundary disputes*.

years post-mediation, with no relapse into disputes.[1]

Mediation in Eyumojock is conducted by traditional chiefs, Mgbe society, village headmen, and respected elders who possess inherent authority within customary legal systems. These mediators derive their legitimacy not from formal legal appointments but from their recognition as custodians of customary law and moral authorities within their communities.[2] When traditional chiefs mediate land disputes between tribes, their involvement carries cultural weight that formal court judges cannot replicate.[3] Communities accept mediated outcomes because they view mediators as legitimate representatives of customary legal authority, and the outcomes are viewed as consistent with traditional legal principles rather than imposed foreign doctrines.[4]

As regards the Bawan Forest boundary disputes, when Ayukaba and Taboh villages clashed over their shared forest boundary, both communities rejected the initial Court ruling as well as the Divisional Officer's committees' multiple times because it contradicted ancestral knowledge of boundary markers. The Ministry of Forestry and Wild Life mediated because the dispute is near Takamanda National Park which the Ministry of forestry and wild life is involved to protect the park boundary. However, the decisions where still not accepted. Instead, they petitioned the Eyumojock Traditional Council. The chief mediated using traditional boundary rituals involving the planting of new boundary trees and libation ceremonies to the "gods of the land."

The mediated agreement gained universal acceptance because it was rooted in cultural protocols that both villages recognized as supreme authority over land matters. Community members accepted the outcome not because it was legally enforceable through state courts, but because the chief's authority carried inherent cultural legitimacy. Villagers from both communities participated in the ritual proclamation of peace, transforming the agreement into a binding social contract that honored their shared cultural heritage.

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The success of cultural legitimacy is evident in communities' preference for mediation over formal litigation. Research from Manyu Division indicates that indigenous communities prefer traditional mediation models like the Mgbe society for resolving chieftaincy and land disputes, demonstrating that mediation's cultural alignment generates genuine community support[6]. This preference is not merely pragmatic but reflects deep-seated cultural values that prioritize community harmony, restorative justice, and consensus-based decision-making over adversarial litigation and binary judgments.[7]

Mediation's cultural legitimacy also facilitates the integration of indigenous knowledge systems into dispute resolution processes. In Eyumojock, where land boundaries are often defined by natural features, ancestral markers, and traditional territorial divisions that may not appear on formal land surveys, mediators who understand customary land management practices can identify and verify boundary claims using indigenous knowledge that formal courts would lack. This integration of indigenous knowledge ensures that mediated outcomes are grounded in local realities and historical land use patterns, increasing their fairness and acceptability.[8]

2.2 Preservation of Social Harmony

The most significant success of mediation in Eyumojock Sub-Division is its capacity to preserve social harmony among disputing tribes. Unlike formal litigation, which creates adversarial relationships and often produces win-lose outcomes that deepen tribal divisions, mediation fosters dialogue and mutual understanding[9]. In

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Ebong, K.A., Ngwa, C.A. and Talla, R.T. (2020). *Traditional Land Conflict Resolution Strategies in the Banyang Country, Cameroon from Pre-colonial Time to Present.* Indianapolis: Indiana Publications, 12.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Olowu, D. (2019). *Indigenous Approaches to Conflict Resolution in Africa*. Cape Town: African Studies Centre, 70.

[5] Umo, A. and Umo, E. (2019). *The Role of Alternative Dispute Resolution in African Land Management*. Lagos: NigJSOCA Press.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] Okon P. (2019). *The Role of Alternative Dispute Resolution in African Land Management.* Lagos: NigJSOCA Press, 66.

[9] Messing, V. (2018). *Traditional Approaches and Institutions to Conflict Resolution in Bakweri Land*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 10.

Eyumojock, where the other indigenous groups must continue coexisting despite land boundary disagreements, this restorative approach is essential. Mediation focused on restoring relationships rather than merely assigning blame, using traditional rituals like cattle sacrifice to "remove the evils of conflict from society.[1]

Ebinsi and Bakwelle villages had engaged in inter-tribal fighting over farming boundaries for 20 years, with families from both villages refusing to attend each other's weddings or funerals. Traditional mediation brought together elders from both clans using the "reconciliation feast" ritual. Within 6 months of mediation, inter-village market activities resumed with Bakwelle traders selling to Ebinsi customers; joint community development projects emerged: a shared water borehole was constructed with labor from both villages; cultural ceremonies, coming-of-age rituals were once again attended across village boundaries; no violent incidents recorded for more than 7 years post-mediation.[2]

Also, the Ebinsi - Bakwelle Agricultural Land Disputes were on the verge of permanent hostility after farmers from both communities destroyed each other's crops during a boundary dispute. Formal litigation would have required years of courtroom battles, likely deepening the rift. Through mediation led by village elders from both sides, the parties agreed to a shared cultivation agreement for the disputed land.[3]

The mediation process emphasized restorative outcomes over punitive measures. Elders facilitated dialogue where both communities expressed their fears and needs, leading to mutual understanding[4]. The resolution included a public handshake ceremony and communal feast, symbols that restored friendship rather than creating winner-loser dynamics. Years later, Ebinsi and Bakwelle villagers continue to cooperate in inter-village activities like sports and cultural events that traditionally unite villages in Eyumojock Subdivision. The mediation preserved the social fabric that litigation would have torn irreparably.[5]

The mediation process enables families and clans from different ethnic backgrounds to maintain relationships necessary for continued trade, communal ceremonies, agricultural cooperation, and shared community development initiatives.[6] This success reflects African traditional justice principles that prioritize community restoration over individual victory, recognizing that land disputes in rural Cameroon are not merely legal controversies but threats to social fabric that affect entire communities.[7]

2.3 Cultural Sensitivity in Dispute Resolution

Mediation in Eyumojock has successfully incorporated customary land tenure systems that formal courts struggle to apply adequately under Cameroon's hybrid legal framework. The process recognizes indigenous knowledge systems, traditional boundary markers (such as trees, stones, and rivers), oral histories, ancestral claims, and spiritual significance of land that may not satisfy formal evidentiary requirements in litigation.[8]

The Kembong Central and Nsanakang villages had disputes rooted in different cultural land tenure systems. Nsanakang traditional law emphasized communal farming rights, while Kembong law prioritized individual family inheritance. Mediators integrated both cultural frameworks into the agreement: communal access zones for farming (Nsanakang preference); protected inheritance plots for individual families (Kembong preference).[9] Traditional symbolic rituals were used: parties shared Mgbe sacred drinks to symbolize unity. Myth interpretation was employed-mediators recounted ancestral stories showing both groups' historical land rights. The mediation process respected indigenous knowledge systems, including the use of arbitration sites and reconciliation ceremonies.[10]

This cultural competence represents a major legal success because it bridges the gap between customary law and

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[1] Asaha, S. and Deakin, L. (2016). *Land-use Change and Its Influence on Rural Livelihoods in Southwest Cameroon.* Cambridge: Environmental Research Press, 76.

[2] Bekya, A. (2021). *Customary Land Tenure and Mediation in Cameroon*. Yaoundé: Cameroon Academic Press.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Talla, R. (2020). *Land Disputes and Traditional Justice in the South-West Region of Cameroon.* Buea: Legend Publications, 18.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Messogo, R. (2021), *Op.cit.*

[8] Omondi, M. and Ochieng, P. (2022). *Traditional leadership and land dispute resolution: the role of ADR in Kenya's post-election conflicts*. Nairobi, Kenya Studies Press, 60.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Umo, A. (2022). *Indigenous Conflict Management Strategies in West Africa: Beyond Right and Wrong.* Accra: West African University Press, 10.

statutory law in Cameroon's dual legal system. Mediators often respected traditional rulers, chiefs, village heads, or community elders apply culturally appropriate norms and procedures that disputing parties trust and understand. Their authority derives from traditional structures rather than state appointment, lending legitimacy to the process that formal courts cannot replicate in rural communities.[1]

The success extends to recognizing the spiritual and cultural significance of land to indigenous communities. In Eyumojock, land is not merely an economic resource but encompasses ancestral heritage, cultural identity, and spiritual connection.[2] Mediation successfully addresses these dimensions, whereas statutory courts frequently apply rigid legal frameworks that overlook or dismiss such non-pecuniary interests.[3]

2.4 Accessibility and Cost Efficiency

Mediation has achieved remarkable success in making justice accessible to ordinary citizens in Eyumojock who would otherwise be excluded from dispute resolution due to prohibitive litigation costs. The expenses associated with court fees, lawyer's retainers, expert witness testimony, land surveyor fees, and prolonged proceedings are significantly reduced in mediation.[4]

Ekok and Biajua villages, both rural farming communities with limited income, resolved their dispute for 94% less cost than litigation. Mediation was conducted in local dialects (Ejagham njemaya), unlike court proceedings in English/French. Mediation held at village square; parties didn't need to travel to regional courts in Buea or Yaoundé. Rural communities with limited financial resources could access dispute resolution without economic hardship.[5]

Ekok and Biajua villages are rural communities where most residents are small-scale farmers with limited financial resources. When they disputed their boundary, the cost of formal litigation would have required each village to spend tens of thousands of FCFA on court fees, lawyer fees, transportation to divisional courts, and document processing costs that would devastate household budgets. Instead, the villages accessed mediation through their local traditional council, which operates at the village level with no court fees. The process was financed through community resources, with families contributing modest tokens rather than expensive legal campaigns. The mediation took place at the village square, eliminating transportation costs. This accessibility ensured that poor rural farmers could access justice without financial hardship, a critical advantage over the costly formal judiciary system that remains inaccessible to many Cameroonians due to bureaucratic red tape and limited geographic coverage.

This accessibility is particularly critical in rural sub-divisions where economic resources are limited and where land disputes typically involve subsistence farmers, rural smallholders, and communities living near poverty lines. The reduced financial burden enables more parties to seek formal resolution rather than abandoning their claims, resorting to self-help measures that could escalate into violence, or allowing disputes to remain unresolved indefinitely[6].

The success advances the fundamental human right of access to justice, which formal litigation often fails to deliver for marginalized rural populations. In Eyumojock, mediation has democratized dispute resolution by removing economic barriers that previously privileged wealthy individuals and families with resources to pursue lengthy court battles.

2.5 Faster Dispute Resolution

Mediation achieves significantly faster resolution of intertribal land disputes in Eyumojock compared to the overburdened Cameroonian court system, where cases can remain pending for five to ten years or longer[7]. In Eyumojock Sub-Division, mediation processes typically conclude within weeks or months rather than the years

[1] Ntuli, N. (2018). Africa: alternative dispute resolution in a comparative perspective. *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, 36-61:50.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Ndangiza, P. and Turyamuhweza, R. (2020). Mediation as a tool for resolving land tenure disputes in Uganda. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 15*(2), 102-121:112.

[5] Mbong, J. (2023). *Environmental Law and Community Mediation in Protected Areas of Cameroon.* Douala: GIZ Cameroon Publications, 43.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Nakayiza, R. (2019). Historical land grievances and tenure security in Uganda: the role of community-based mediation. *Journal of African Studies, 12*(3), 45-60:50.

required for litigation.[1]

Taboh-Ayukaba dispute resolved in 10 days versus the 3-year average for court litigation in Cameroon's land courts. Traditional mediation does not depend on court schedules or judicial appointments. Parties returned to farming activities immediately, avoiding seasonal agricultural losses.[2] Agreement implemented within 24 hours of signing. Mediation eliminated procedural delays inherent in formal court systems, including case backlog and scheduling conflicts.[3]

The Ekpor and Takamanda I villages' dispute over farmland had remained unresolved for three years through the Land Consultative Board due to bureaucratic delays, incomplete documentation requirements, and the board's limited meeting schedule. Meanwhile, the dispute continued causing daily tensions between community members. When the villages switched to traditional mediation, the Eyumojock chief convened an emergency council within days. The mediation process involved immediate face-to-face discussions without the procedural formalities required by state institutions. The dispute was resolved in approximately two weeks through intensive dialogue, compared to the years of delays in formal processes. Traditional mediation's flexibility allowed mediators to frame issues, gather information, and reach consensus rapidly without waiting for scheduled court dates or document verification processes that characterize state litigation.

This timeliness is crucial because prolonged land disputes create uncertainty that prevents agricultural development, discourages investment in land improvement, maintains tensions that may erupt into violence, and forces families to live in contentious conditions that affect their children's wellbeing and education. The expedited nature of mediation allows families to return to productive use of their land quickly, reducing economic hardship and preventing conflict escalation.[4]

This success is particularly valuable in an agricultural community where timing of planting seasons, harvesting periods, and land use directly affects livelihoods, food security, and economic survival. Land disputes that delay through court proceedings may cause parties to miss multiple planting seasons, resulting in generational economic consequences that mediation successfully avoids.[5]

2.6 Party Autonomy and Empowerment

The mediation process successfully empowers disputing parties in Eyumojock by granting them control over outcomes rather than imposing judicial decisions. In intertribal land disputes, parties actively participate in crafting mutually acceptable solutions that address their specific interests, needs, and circumstances rather than receiving binary win-lose judgments.[6] This autonomy significantly increases compliance rates because parties have voluntarily committed to agreements rather than having decisions imposed upon them.[7]

In the Ewele dispute, both villages voluntarily initiated mediation after minor skirmishes. Unlike court proceedings where parties are "forced" into a system, mediation allowed: Village councils from both chose their mediators (respected elders from neutral neighboring villages); parties designed the process: they decided mediation would occur over 3 days at the arbitration site[8]. Both villages drafted agreement terms together, including: shared grazing zones. point boundary monitoring committees; dispute escalation protocols. Voluntary participation created psychological ownership of the outcome, increasing compliance rates.[9]

Taboh and Ayukaba villages were engaged in conflict after Taboh farmers crossed into Ayukaba land and destroyed crops. In formal court proceedings, the parties would have been passive recipients of a judge's decision. Through mediation, both villages voluntarily participated in shaping their own resolution. The

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Eyong, K.A., Ngwa, C.A. and Talla, R.T. (2020). Traditional Land Conflict Resolution Strategies in the Banyang Country, Cameroon from Pre-colonial Time to Present. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 1*(1), 39–47.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Umo, A. and Umo, E. (2019). The Role of Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in Boundary Land Dispute: The Case of Ikot Idaha and Osuk Ediene. *Nigerian Journal of Social and Organizational Psychology, 4*(2), 158–172.

[7] Mushi, G. and Kamugjsha, A. (2023). Institutional capacity and the effectiveness of ADR in Tanzania. *Dar es Salaam, Tanzanian Legal Perspectives*, 11-34:30.

[8] Akande, O., Kaye, S. and Rukuni, T. (2021). The Efficacy of Community Peacebuilding in African Communities: Case Studies from Nigeria and Zimbabwe. *International Studies Review, 19*, 114–132.

[9] *Ibid.*

mediation process empowered unassertive parties by ensuring mediators remained impartial and enhanced confidence among weaker participants.[1] Village representatives from both sides articulated their needs directly, and the final agreement reflected their mutual input rather than external imposition. The voluntary nature of mediation meant that dissatisfied parties could withdraw at any time, eliminating intimidation risks. This autonomy gave both communities ownership of the outcome, making them more committed to honoring the agreement than they would have been with a court-imposed judgment.

The voluntary nature of mediation also enables parties to create innovative solutions that courts cannot order, such as shared use arrangements for disputed boundaries, phased boundary adjustments over time, compensation packages combining land exchange with monetary restitution, or cooperative farming agreements on disputed parcels. This flexibility is essential for resolving complex intertribal disputes where rigid legal boundaries may not reflect historical realities, practical needs, or the interconnected nature of land use in customary systems.[2]

2.7 Protection of Family Reputation

Mediation successfully maintains confidentiality that protects the reputations of families and clans involved in land disputes in Eyumojock. Unlike court proceedings, which are public and create permanent records accessible to all, mediation discussions remain private[3]. This confidentiality is particularly important in Eyumojock where intertribal disputes involve extended families and clans whose reputations affect marriage prospects, social standing, economic relationships, political influence, and community leadership opportunities within the community.[4]

The Akwen and Ndepaya villages' dispute stemmed from inheritance tensions between two clans. Public litigation would have required airing sensitive family histories in open court, potentially damaging clan reputations permanently. Traditional mediation offered privacy and confidentiality, keeping sensitive information restricted from public access. The mediation process emphasized honoring each clan's dignity rather than assigning public blame. Elders facilitated discussions that focused on restoring equilibrium through restitution and apology rather than retaliation. The resolution included private ceremonial reconciliation rather than public judgment, protecting both clans from reputational harm. In African philosophy where "I am because we are," disputes affect entire communities, so mediation's emphasis on privacy and honor preservation serves crucial social functions.

The private nature of mediation also allows parties to explore settlement options, make concessions, and express concerns without fear that these communications will be used against them if mediation fails. This safety encourages honest dialogue, genuine compromise, and forthright acknowledgment of interests that would be impossible in adversarial litigation where every statement becomes evidence potentially damaging to one's legal position.[5]

2.8 Community Participation in Mediation

Mediation in Eyumojock successfully engages the broader community beyond immediate disputing parties, creating ownership and support for dispute resolution outcomes. Traditional leaders, community elders, religious figures, local government representatives, women's group leaders, and youth representatives often participate as mediators, witnesses, or observers, lending legitimacy and authority to the process.[6]

The Takamanda villages' dispute involved deforestation that affected multiple stakeholders beyond the villages: nearby communities, environmental conservation groups, and potentially international organizations focused on the Takamanda nature reserve area. Traditional mediation through community conferencing brought together all affected parties. The chief presided over structured conversations at the village square involving offenders, victims, family members, friends, youth, women leaders, and council members.[7] This broad participation

[1] Gabana, J.F. (2023). Community-Based Mediation and Land Conflict Resolution in Cameroon. *African Journal of Law and Political Research, 8*(3), 215–234.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Mulyungi, K. and Mwende, E. (2022). Gender and ADR: enhancing women's participation in land dispute resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa. Lusaka, Southern African Legal Institute.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Mtui, M. (2023). Persistent land disputes in Tanzania: the role of ADR. *Journal of Tanzanian Studies, 22*(1), 119-144.

[6] Bekoe, S.A. (2020). Comparative Analysis of Mediation Practices in West and Central African Land Disputes. *African Law Review, 15*(3), 234–256:238.

[7] Asaha, S. and Deakin, L. (2016). Land-use Change and Its Influence on Rural Food Security and Biodiversity Conservation in the Southwest Region of Cameroon. *Scoping Study Report, Semantic Scholar*, 1–45.

ensured that all voices were heard and that the resolution addressed communal rather than just individual interests.[1] The process included representatives from government administration and civil society actors, creating a multi-stakeholder approach that strengthened the agreement's legitimacy and implementation capacity. Women's leaders, traditionally responsible for mediation among some Cameroonian tribal groups, participated significantly.[2]

This inclusive approach ensures that agreements reflect community norms, values, and expectations rather than merely satisfying individual party interests. Community involvement creates broader support for enforcement, as the entire community becomes invested in maintaining the resolution. When multiple stakeholders participate, agreements gain legitimacy that extends beyond the immediate parties, reducing the likelihood of future disputes arising from the same land.[3]

The involvement of diverse stakeholders creates a support network that encourages compliance and provides mechanisms for addressing future disputes that may arise from implementation of the agreement. Community ownership of the resolution process strengthens the durability of agreements and establishes precedents for future dispute resolution that benefit the entire sub-division.[4]

2.9 Traditional Authority and Enforcement

Mediation agreements in Eyumojock benefit from enforcement mechanisms rooted in traditional authority and social pressure rather than relying solely on state coercive power. The prestige, authority, and moral standing of traditional rulers who mediate disputes create obligations that parties honor to maintain their standing in the community. When chiefs, Mgbe society, village quarter heads, or respected elders' mediate agreements, parties feel moral and social obligations to comply that formal court judgments cannot generate.[5]

After mediation resolved the Mpot and Ewele villages' boundary dispute, the key question was enforcement. Unlike court judgments that require state policing, the mediated agreement was enforced through traditional authority and social pressure. The chief's decision carried supreme authority in customary matters, and breach of confidence would result in exclusion from community groups or cultural activities.[6]

Social enforcement mechanisms included the community's ability to monitor compliance publicly. As the agreement was proclaimed ritually as a social contract, society assisted in implementing it, and all community members could check whether parties kept their commitments. The fear of neighbors' curses and out of respect for boundary marks documented among similar African communities like the Kikuyu ensured compliance without formal policing. Villages excluded from cultural events like canoe races due to conflicts experienced social consequences that motivated adherence to mediated agreements.[7]

2.10 Recognition of Multiple Land Interests

Mediation successfully addresses interests that extend beyond strict legal title to land in Eyumojock, including economic needs, family history, cultural significance, practical accessibility, agricultural traditions, and ancestral connections.[8] In intertribal disputes, parties may have legitimate claims based on different criteria ancestral occupation: spanning generations, recent purchase with informal documentation, customary allocation by traditional rulers, long-term use without formal title, or religious/spiritual connection to specific locations[9].

Mediation allows these diverse interests to be acknowledged, validated, and balanced rather than requiring one party to prove superior legal title through formal documentation that may not exist in customary systems[10]. This holistic approach often produces solutions that recognize partial rights, shared usage arrangements,

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Nfor, L.E. (2022), *Op.cit.*

[6] Enow, B. and Orock, G. (2021). Land Use Land Cover Change and the Resilience of Social-Ecological Systems in South West Cameroon. *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, 193*(6), 338.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] Tambe, A.N. (2021). Integrating Customary and Statutory Mediation in Land Conflict Resolution. *International Journal of Law in Context, 17*(4), 478–495:482.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Talla, R. and Ngwa, C. (2023). Traditional Authority, Politics and Human Rights Violations in Land Disputes in Cameroon. *IIARD Journal of Policy and Law, 11*(9), 174–187:180.

compensation payments, land exchange with mutual benefit, or phased clarification of boundaries over time.[1]

The Takamanda forest reserved dispute involved forest land with multiple interests: farming rights for local families, conservation values for the Takamanda Nature Reserve, ancestral spiritual significance, and potential wildlife habitat protection. Formal courts would have focused narrowly on legal title, ignoring these overlapping interests.[2]

Mediation recognized that land disputes involve diverse stakeholders with legitimate but different needs. The mediated agreement created a shared-use framework that accommodated farming in designated zones while preserving conservation areas, honored ancestral spiritual sites through protected ceremonial grounds, and maintained wildlife corridors. This approach expanded solutions beyond winner-loser title determinations, allowing parties to "expand the pie rather than halve it" through creative solutions benefiting all interests. The mediation process differentiated between positions (what parties claimed) and interests/needs (root causes), finding bridges and commonalities for consensus.[3]

The success of this approach lies in its ability to satisfy underlying needs and interests rather than merely determining legal rights.[4] In Eyumojock, where land often involve complex historical claims, informal transactions, and overlapping customary rights, mediation's flexibility enables resolution that litigation cannot achieve. Courts must determine exclusive ownership, but mediation can create arrangements that recognize multiple legitimate interests in the same land.[5]

2.11 Conflict Prevention and De-Escalation

Mediation has achieved significant success in preventing intertribal land disputes in Eyumojock from escalating into violent conflict. The structured dialogue process provides a non-violent outlet for grievances that might otherwise lead to armed confrontations between tribal groups, property destruction, or physical violence. The presence of neutral mediators, the formal mediation process, and the commitment to dialogue create a cooling-off period that reduces tensions and allows emotions to subside.

The Taboh and Ayukaba villages' land dispute had escalated to the point where young men from both communities were armed and preparing for violent confrontation. Without intervention, this could have resulted in deaths and permanent inter-village warfare. Traditional mediation intervened at this critical juncture to prevent violence escalation.

The mediation process emphasized restorative outcomes focused on forgiveness and community harmony rather than punitive measures that might fuel revenge cycles. Elders facilitated dialogue that addressed earlier conflict reasons for mistrust or revenge, identifying additional conflict issues that might have been the primary conflict.[6] The rapid intervention through emergency traditional council convening prevented the dispute from becoming violent, whereas state institutions often respond too late with long administrative procedures. Traditional mediation's effectiveness in dealing with inter-community conflict prevented what could have become one of the violent land disputes that plagued Cameroon's North-West and South-West Regions during the 1990s.

This preventive success is particularly valuable in Cameroon's South-West Region, where inter-ethnic tensions have occasionally resulted in violence with broader security implications. The crisis in the Anglophone regions has heightened sensitivities around inter-community relations, making peaceful dispute resolution mechanisms even more critical. Mediation serves as an early intervention mechanism that addresses disputes before they become intractable conflicts with consequences extending beyond the immediate parties.

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] NELGA. (2020). Mechanisms for Settling Customary Land Disputes in Cameroon. Nairobi: NETLAW-NELGA Regional Land Information Centre. Available at: https://nelga.uneca.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/NES-and-NELGA-Cameroun-statement-English-21-04-2020-003.pdf [Accessed 10 June 2026].

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] World Bank. (2023). Community Mediation for Local, Familial, and Low Economic Disputes in Africa. Washington, DC: World Bank Legal Justice Division. Available at: https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/19fccdbe5545f75d9a52be44f04c7417-0260012023/original/LJD-Community-Mediation-for-Local-Fami...[Accessed 4 June 2026].

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] FAO. (2008). Land Conflicts: A Practical Guide to Dealing with Land Disputes. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization. Available at: https://globalprotectioncluster.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Land_Conflicts_Practical_Guide_Dealing_Land_Disputes_2008_EN.pdf [Accessed 4 June 2026].

2.12 Environmental Protection Through Mediation

Mediation in Eyumojock has successfully incorporated environmental considerations into land dispute resolutions, promoting sustainable land use practices that formal litigation often overlooks. When mediators particularly those familiar with customary practices address land disputes, they often consider the environmental impact of proposed solutions, including soil conservation, water resource protection, forest preservation, and biodiversity maintenance.[1] A good example is the Takamanda buffer zone affecting Central Ejagham villages and Inokun.

The Bawan villages' dispute centered on forest land near the Takamanda-Mone Landscape, an area critical for biodiversity conservation and elephant habitat. Unregulated mediation could have resulted in deforestation for farming, but the traditional process integrated environmental sustainability principles.[2]

The mediation included traditional protocols like the Mgbe injunction order that set restrictions on disputed property until resolution, enabling proper traditional management of resources for sustainability. The agreement incorporated minimization of tree felling measures and established water management committees consisting of representatives from communities to protect catchment areas.

Traditional cleansing ceremonies appeased the "Mgbe, that had runaway" reinforcing spiritual obligations to preserve the environment. The mediated outcome balanced farming needs with conservation requirements, creating sustainable land-use zones that protected forest habitat while allowing designated agricultural areas. This approach demonstrates how customary mediation can address environmental concerns that formal courts often overlook in pure title disputes.

3. Challenges Encountered in Using Mediation as a Method in Resolving Intertribal Land Disputes in Eyumojock Sub-Division

The low success rate of mediation in resolving intertribal land disputes is primarily influenced by two main categories: legal and non-legal factors[3]. From a legal perspective, regulations governing land dispute resolution, specifically OHADA Uniform Act on Mediation, the 1974 land Registration Ordinance concerning Land Dispute Settlement, do not pose significant obstacles to mediation practices. In fact, this regulation provides a clear legal basis for the National Land Agency or the Land Consultative Board to handle land disputes more effectively[4]. With this provision, the mediation process can be carried out more quickly, more precisely, and with legal certainty, so that legal factors are essentially no longer the primary cause of low mediation success.[5]

Applying mediation to dispute settlement on customary lands in Eyumojock Sub-division is not without challenges, the dominant one being the socio-cultural context of implementation. A major feature of customary land tenure is the dominance of patriarchal structures at the various levels of decision making.[6] This made it difficult to mobilize women participants. Other challenges related the low levels of literacy in the community and timing of the training at the end of the year when there are cultural events such as Christmas holidays.[7] The most dominant obstacles in mediation practice originate from non-legal aspects. Some of these include the following:

3.1 Lack of Good Faith from the Parties

It is not uncommon to find parties using mediation not as a means to achieve peace, but rather to delay the resolution of the case.[8] This can take the form of feigning forgetfulness, dishonesty, or attempts to conceal the facts. For example, in determining heirs, a sub-district head or village head may sign the document but ignore the presence of one of the heirs, claiming they forgot, so their name is not included in the list of heirs.[9] This

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[1] Ngoh, V. J. (2020). Customary mediation mechanisms in Cameroonian land conflicts. *African Journal of Legal Studies, 13*(3), 312–334:318.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Bush, R.A.B. and Folger, J.P. (1994). *The promise of mediation: responding to conflict through empowerment and recognition*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 14.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Chitkara, P. (2023). Challenges in ADR implementation in South Asia. *South Asian Legal Review, 39*(1), 57-74:70.

[6] Ravn-Christensen, C. (2021). *Best practices, challenges and emerging issues on improving responsible governance of tenure – Lessons learned from the European Union Land Governance Programme* – Final Report. Rome, FAO, 89.

[7] Anyanwu, C., & Aluko, M. (2022). ADR in properly disputes: A comparative study. *Journal of Comparative Law, 45*(2), 112–136:124.

[8] Bruce, J.W. and Boudreaux, K. (2013). *Land tenure and resource management in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington, DC, World Bank, 19.

[9] *Ibid.*

attitude poses a serious obstacle to the mediation process.[1]

3.2 Low Participation of the Disputing Parties

Another factor is the minimal active involvement of the parties. Often, one party fails to attend the mediation invitation, or both parties find it difficult to make time to attend. It is even common for one party to be reluctant to meet the other party in person.[2] As a result, the National Land Agency (BPN) is forced to adjust its schedule to accommodate the parties, resulting in the mediation process lasting more than 30 days, exceeding the established deadline.[3]

3.3 The Colonial Legacy and Unresolved Legal Dualism

The roots of contemporary land disputes trace to German colonial authorities' 1896 Crown Lands Act, which declared "unoccupied" lands as Crown property, fundamentally contradicting customary law that recognized community custodianship over all lands within traditional territories.[4] This historical contestation between State authority and traditional authorities continues to undermine mediation legitimacy decades after independence.[5] The dual legal system creates confusion about which framework governs disputes, allowing parties to selectively invoke customary or statutory law based on which favors their position. This legal opportunism undermines mediation by preventing consistent application of principles and creating uncertainty about agreement enforceability.[6]

3.4 Corruption and Elite Manipulation of Traditional Authority

In Eyumojock Sub-division, and other regions, chiefs and administrators exploit land redistribution schemes for personal enrichment, creating fictitious villages, installing handpicked chiefs who support their claims, and reselling land for private profit. Such corruption erodes trust in mediation conducted by traditional authorities, as communities recognize that mediators may have vested interests in outcomes. When traditional chiefs benefit financially from maintaining disputed boundaries or preventing clear demarcation, they lack genuine commitment to resolution, undermining the entire mediation process.

3.5 Institutional Weakness of Formal Mediation Mechanisms

The Land Consultative Board, created to address conflicts and mediate claims between statutory and customary tenure systems, suffers from non-binding authority, weak institutional capacity, inadequate funding, insufficient trained personnel, and poor integration into the broader justice framework. These institutional weaknesses mean that formal mediation mechanisms cannot effectively complement or reinforce traditional mediation, leaving communities to rely on traditional processes that lack legal enforceability.

3.6 Exclusion of Vulnerable Groups from Mediation Processes

Women, youth, and persons with disabilities face systematic exclusion from mediation processes despite their significant land rights interests.[7] Customary systems traditionally marginalize these groups, and mediation processes that incorporate customary practices without modification perpetuate these exclusions. Agreements that fail to protect vulnerable group interests may achieve temporary resolution while creating new sources of conflict and perpetuating inequality.[8]

3.7 Violence and Security Concerns Override Mediation Appropriateness

When land disputes escalate to serious violence, customary mediation becomes inappropriate without prior security intervention by state authorities. The 2026 Igote village incident demonstrates that violence at this level requires criminal justice intervention before mediation can occur.[9] Attempting mediation without addressing

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[1] Kalabamu, F.T. (2021). Land conflicts and alternative dispute resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa: the case of Botswana. In Zever, S.Z. ed. *Land issues for urban governance in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Switzerland, Oxford University Press, 171-187.

[2] Kairuki, J. and Ddaaki, M. (2021). *Traditional dispute resolution and land tenure security in Uganda*. Kampala, Makerere University Press, 16.

[3] Juma, W. (2021b). Barriers to effective ADR in land disputes: a Kenyan perspective. *African Journal of Legal Studies, 13*(4), 301-319:306.

[4] Mamdouh, M. and Tchatchoua, R. (2021). 'The Formalisation of Migrants' Land Occupation through Colonial Rules in Cameroon. *Journal of African Land Studies, 8*(2), 67–89:60.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Fonkou, T. (2019). Gender Perspectives in Land Mediation Processes in Cameroon. *Gender & Law in Africa, 12*(1), 89–107:100.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Tchuente, P. (2023), *Op.cit.*

immediate security concerns risks further violence and may endanger mediators and participants.[1]

3.8 Limited Human Resources

The Land Office, particularly the Sub-Division for Handling Disputes, Conflicts, and Land Cases, frequently faces a shortage of manpower. With a significant number of cases in a region handled by only around two employees, the workload becomes unbalanced.[2] This situation results in suboptimal land case resolution and the potential for exceeding the 30-day deadline stipulated in regulations.[3] Therefore, additional assistance is needed to ensure more effective dispute resolution.[4]

3.9 Limited Numbers of Certified Mediators

Another obstacle is the small number of certified mediators at the Land Office. Government-organized mediator training programs have not been fully targeted, resulting in a limited number of competent, officially certified mediators[5]. This undoubtedly hinders the effectiveness of mediation, as the presence of professional mediators is key to successful dispute resolution.[6]

3.10 Lack of Strict Sanctions

To date, the National Land Agency (or the Land Consultative Board) has not established clear and firm sanctions for parties who intentionally obstruct mediation[7]. As a result, invitations to mediation are often perceived as unilateral and ignored.[8] This lack of clarity in sanctions weakens the legal standing of the mediation process for the disputing parties.[9]

3.11 Differing Perspectives Between Customary Law and Positive Law

Although mediation offers many advantages, its implementation in intertribal land disputes faces challenges. One major challenge is the differing perspectives between customary law and positive law. In many cases, indigenous communities feel that positive law does not fully accommodate their values and norms. As a result, mediators often struggle to bridge these differing viewpoints.

Additionally, the involvement of third parties such as companies or the government in intertribal land disputes can complicate the mediation process. These third parties often have interests that differ from those of the indigenous communities, necessitating a special approach to ensure effective mediation. In such situations, mediators must possess strong communication skills and a deep understanding of the social and cultural context of the region.

4. Conclusion

This chapter provides critical insights into the potential and limitations of ADR mechanisms, particularly mediation, in addressing inter-village land disputes in Eyumojock Sub-division. The persistent nature of these disputes underscores the urgent need for effective resolution methods that go beyond conventional litigation, and ADR offers a promising path in this regard. However, the relevance of these.[10] While ADR mechanisms hold promise, their success depends on addressing systemic challenges such as weak institutional capacity, low enforceability of agreements, and insufficient community awareness.[11] Simply deploying ADR without tackling these foundational problems will result in limited success.[12] So therefore regarding factors inhibiting mediation.

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Maina, J. and Gathumbi, E. (2022). Community resistance to ADR in rural Kenya. *Kenya Journal of Social Justice, 8*(3), 34–57:38.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Juma, A. (2021a). Institutional weaknesses in ADR mechanisms in East Africa. *African Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution, 16*(4), 99–121:102.

[6] Ibrahim, A. S., Abubakari, M., Akanbang, B. A., & Kepe, T. (2022). Resolving land conflicts through alternative dispute resolution: Exploring the motivations and challenges in Ghana. *Land Use Policy, 120*, 10.

[7] Home, R. (2020). *Land, law and dispute resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa.* London, Routledge, 17.

[8] Lamin, A. (2018). *Inter-village conflicts and land disputes in rural Tanzania.* Dar es Salaam, University of Dar es Salaam Press, 70.

[9] Kansiime, N. (2019). Promoting traditional ways of handling land disputes in Western Uganda. *American Research Journal and Social Sciences, 8*(2), 17–25:19.

[10] Hassall, G. (2005). Alternative dispute resolution in Pacific Island Countries. *Journal of South Pacific Law, 9*(2), 13–45:38.

[11] Maro, F. (2022). ADR mechanisms in Tanzania: a critical assessment. *East African Journal of Law, 14*(1), 77–101:78.

[12] *Ibid.*

From a legal perspective, no significant obstacles were found in resolving land disputes through mediation.[1] However, from a non-legal perspective, there are a number of obstacles that significantly affect the effectiveness of the mediation process.[2] These obstacles include: the presence of parties who do not act in good faith and use mediation as a means to delay the resolution of the case; the presence of attitudes of pretending to forget or dishonesty in providing information during the mediation process; the low level of participation of the disputing parties, for example by not accepting invitations to attend; limited human resources in the Sub-Division for Handling Problems and Land Control at the Land Office, which results in suboptimal dispute handling; and the still minimal number of mediators available in that unit.[3]

5. Recommendations

The Cameroon government should establish a comprehensive legal framework that explicitly recognizes and regulates mediation as a formal mechanism for resolving intertribal land disputes. This framework should be enacted through specific legislation or amendment of existing land laws to provide clear procedural guidelines, enforcement mechanisms, and standards for mediation agreements. The current legal framework remains ambiguous about the relationship between mediation outcomes and judicial enforcement, creating uncertainty that undermines mediation's effectiveness. Legislation should address the legal status of mediation agreements, their enforceability in courts, and the qualifications required for mediators handling land disputes.

The Ministry of State Property and Land Tenure should develop specialized training programs for mediators focusing specifically on intertribal land conflicts, incorporating both statutory law and customary land tenure principles. Given that mediation in Eyumojock must navigate between competing legal pluralistic systems, mediators require comprehensive understanding of both formal legal procedures and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. Training programs should include modules on conflict transformation, cultural sensitivity, gender considerations in land disputes, and the historical context of intertribal tensions in the region. Professional certification and ongoing supervision should be established to ensure quality standards in mediation practice.

Land Consultative Boards in Eyumojock Subdivision should be reformed to include dedicated mediation units staffed with trained mediators who can handle intertribal disputes before they escalate to formal litigation. Current Land Consultative Boards focus primarily on administrative decisions regarding land titles rather than constructive conflict resolution. The reformed structure should establish mediation as the primary mechanism for dispute resolution, with litigation reserved for cases where mediation fails. These units should maintain close coordination with traditional chiefs and village leaders to ensure mediation outcomes respect customary practices while remaining consistent with statutory requirements.

Traditional chiefs, village heads, and community elders in Eyumojock should be formally recognized as certified mediators under the new legal framework, with their dispute resolution authority integrated into the formal land dispute resolution system. This recommendation addresses the reality of legal pluralism where customary law continues to hold significant legitimacy among local communities. The government should establish a certification process for traditional mediators, provide them with legal training on statutory land provisions, and create mechanisms for coordinating their decisions with Land Consultative Boards. This hybrid approach ensures that mediation respects indigenous legal traditions while maintaining consistency with national land laws.

The government should implement comprehensive community education programs to raise awareness about the benefits of mediation for resolving intertribal land disputes, including information campaigns about cost savings, faster resolution times, and relationship preservation compared to litigation. Many communities in Eyumojock remain unaware of available mediation mechanisms or perceive them as informal and lacking legal authority. Education programs should target schools, community gatherings, religious centers, and local media outlets to disseminate information about mediation processes, success stories, and the legal enforceability of mediation agreements. Community leaders should be engaged as champions of mediation to build trust and credibility.

To improve the effectiveness of ADR mechanisms, the study recommends the following:

Strengthening institutional capacity by providing adequate training for mediators and equipping the land department with modern surveying tools. Improving stakeholder engagement to build trust in the ADR process.

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[1] Mbonde, F.J. (2015). *Assessment of land use conflicts in Tanzania: a case study of Songambele and Mkoka Villages in Kongwa District.* Unpublished Master's thesis, Mzumbe University, 89.

[2] Mensah, A. (2023). Community engagement and institutional support in ADR: lessons from Ghana. *African Journal of Dispute Resolution, 19*(1), 27–42:28.

[3] *Ibid.*

This can be achieved through awareness campaigns that educate villagers on land laws and ADR procedures. Updating boundary demarcations using advanced surveying techniques, such as GIS, and involving local communities in the process to ensure acceptance of the boundaries.

Establishing mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing ADR agreements, including formal legal recognition of mediated settlements to prevent recurring disputes.

For mediation to achieve genuine and sustainable resolution of inter-tribal land disputes in Cameroon, comprehensive reform must address these structural challenges. Reform requires strengthening institutional capacity of the Land Consultative Board, ensuring binding enforceability of mediation agreements through legislative reform, addressing historical injustices from colonial boundary policies, implementing robust post-mediation monitoring mechanisms, creating explicit protections for vulnerable group interests, and developing security protocols that ensure mediation occurs only when violence has been adequately addressed. Without such comprehensive reform, mediation will continue to function as a temporary pause in conflict rather than achieving permanent resolution, with disputes recurring repeatedly and undermining social cohesion, economic development, and political stability across Cameroon's ethnic communities.

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