

# Indigenous Conflict Management: Factors Contributing to the Effectiveness of the Strategies. A Systematic Review

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**Abstract:** There are several possible ways to respond to conflict situations as a managerial intervention to solve it. The current understanding of such conflict management strategies was framed without adequately considering indigenous practices. Therefore, the objective of this systematic review was to explore the contributors and determinants of the effectiveness of indigenous conflict management strategies. The findings indicated that factors such as shared dialogue, empowering indigenous structures, symbolic ritual procedures, flexibility, ease, friendliness, compassion, less costless, timeliness, transparency, inclusiveness, adequate interests representation, power sharing, and diversity recognition contributed positively to its effectiveness. Nonetheless, poor language choice and communication barriers, lack of legal empowerment, corrupt behavior of negotiators, and negative attitudes became hindrances to its value. This review identified that

indigenous conflict management strategies have valuable managerial application potential in the field of conflict interventions. However, the review was limited to only positive and negative contributors to indigenous conflict management strategies.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Conflict management, Effectiveness, Indigenous strategies, Systematic review.

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## Introduction

Etymologically, the word conflict originally derived from “*Confligere*” which connotes “to strike together” in Latin (Lamle *et al.*, 2019). According to Howell (2014), conflict originally meant to strike at another,

to fight with an enemy, or to do battle with an opposing force. Conflict is often defined as the incompatibility of ideas, beliefs, behaviors, roles, needs, desires, values, and so on among individuals. In most literature, conflict was explained as the process which begins when one party notices that another has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of his (Curcija *et al.*, 2019).

Conflict arises from differences in outlook, opinions, and values about specific issues (Kemp *et al.*, 2011). It is a natural and normal phenomenon in all spheres of our lives and an unavoidable component of human activity (Curcija *et al.*, 2019; Omisore & Abiodun, 2014). The issues themselves can be cultural, social, political, or economic. Conflict can arise in virtually any social setting; they can be at individual, community, national or international levels (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014; Peng, 2017).

If not handled with care; it has so many detrimental impacts on the conflicting parties as well as the society at large. The conflict has a positive relationship with cost, time, and resources, meaning it directly influences these three project constraints and has a negative relationship with quality, workforce productivity, protection of the environment, and safety (Irfan *et al.*, 2019). An organization could be affected in several ways such as decreased employee satisfaction, insubordination, decreased productivity, economic loss, fragmentation, and poor performance (Awan & Saeed, 2014, Sandu, 2015). These are just the tip of the iceberg for the negative effects of conflict on employees, organizations, and society.

However, conflict is not always destructive as constructive conflict can manifest through frustration, debate, and discussion, and can lead to increased understanding among collaborators impact the collaboration between stakeholders, and ultimately secure a positive development outcome (Curcija *et al.*, 2019). For instance, task conflict had a constructive effect on project performance, whereas relationship conflict and process conflict had destructive effects (Wu *et al.*, 2020). The results were determined by the way how we handled the conflicts. Managing conflict is extremely important for the effective functioning of organizations and for the personal, cultural, and social development of employees in the workplace (Lamle *et al.*, 2019).

Conflict management strategies are defined as the behavioral methods used to resolve conflict (Rahmawati *et al.*, 2020). Conflict can be managed in several possible ways and it involves the ongoing process of responding to identified instances of conflict (Curcija *et al.*, 2019; Shen *et al.*, 2019). In any of these ways, we want to attain three aims such as *resolution*, *managing*, and keeping conflict at an optimum level or *transforming* it (Rahmawati *et al.*, 2020).

Numerous forms of conflict strategies have become more pronounced in the last twenty years (Tafere, 2013; Oduma-Aboh *et al.*, 2018; Oladotun & Emmanuel, 2019; Yousaf & FurrukhZad, 2020; Debisa, 2022). Most researchers advocate that the western

approaches to the management of conflicts as superior (Adkoli & Pawar, 2018) though some conflicts that were resolved using western strategies relapsed (Bello & Olutola, 2016); and the role of customary laws in maintaining peace and order were increased from time to time (Mengesha *et al.*, 2015, Sandu, 2018; Chereji & Sandu, 2018). Therefore, recent research works tried to promote integrative and contextualized homegrown solutions to conflicts (Lundy *et al.*, 2021; Yousaf & FurrukhZad, 2020; Chereji & Sandu, 2021; Sandu, 2020) and while others engage in hybrid forms of the management of conflict having flavors from both (Kohlhoffer-Mizser, 2019; Pop & Sandu, 2019).

This indicates, the current understanding of conflict management practices and strategies was framed in various approaches and a comprehensive perspective is not emerged yet as many conflict situations were ignored (Alakavuklar *et al.*, 2016; Nwaoma & Omeire, 2014). Similarly, there is growing recognition and appreciation of traditional approaches toward peace and conflict resolution across the world because colonial legacies have failed to prevent, manage, resolve, or transform conflicts in post-colonial states (Yousaf & FurrukhZad, 2020). If we want to manage conflicts and live in a harmony, the indigenous conflict management strategies have to be adopted for the country as a system of governance such as *Gada* which is '*conflict medicine*' (Negari & Mishra, 2018). Osimen and Aisedion (2019) argued that traditional institutions will certainly continue to shape the African landscape of conflict resolution. That means indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms have great untapped potential in maintaining social solidarity in a multiethnic and multicultural society in this vein (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018; Wanyoike *et al.*, 2018). Integrating indigenous strategies is the most preferred style of managing conflicts as measured by indigenous scales in different researched settings (Akhtar & Hassan, 2021).

Despite their significance, indigenous strategies became hardly a priority for respective post-colonial governments and the international community (Appiah-Thompson, 2020; Yousaf & FurrukhZad, 2020; Yousaf & Poncian, 2018). Few attempts were made to bring evidence of whether these types of conflict management approaches are effective and thus the literature reviews done so far insufficiently addressed the contexts in which the strategies are most helpful (Lundy *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, the current review was concerned only with journal articles that made inquiries from 2010–2022 on indigenous strategies for conflict management and what determines their effectiveness either positively or negatively in their localized contexts as a scope in this review.

## **Materials and Methods**

More recently, there are a lot of empirical pieces of evidence getting published over the last decade in favor of the success of indigenous conflict management practices in diverse cultural and localized contexts across the world (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014; Mohammed *et al.*, 2017; Shen *et al.*, 2019). Some attempts were made to synthesize the literature on

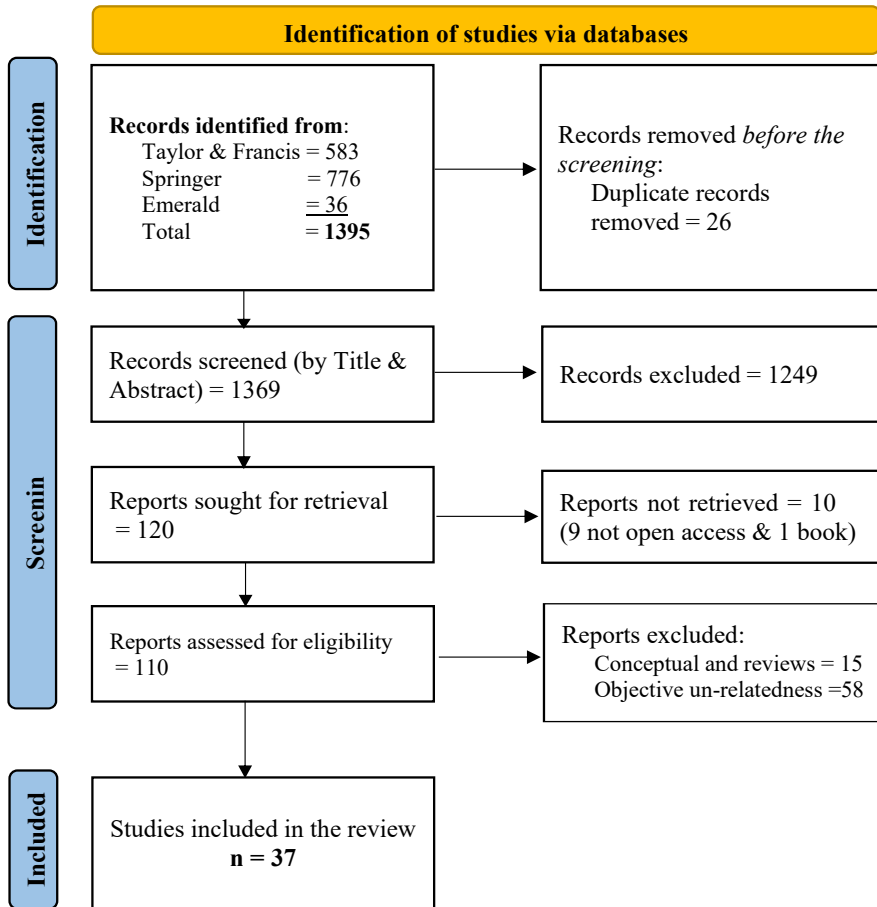
conflict management. Firstly, such reviews have been limited to western types of conflict management practices based on individual responses to conflict situations, such as avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromise, and collaboration. This focus neglects other alternative interventions fitting to environmental contingencies and organizational contextual factors of conflict situations mainly the indigenous strategies (Caputo *et al.*, 2018). Secondly, the reviews done were mainly narrative reviews (John-Eke & Akintokunbo, 2020; Nwosu & Makinde, 2014; Tamunomiebi *et al.*, 2020) though some scholars tried a few systematic reviews in this stream (Caputo *et al.*, 2019). Thirdly, the use of indigenous conflict management in business settings was low, and hence drawing scholarly lessons to present interdisciplinary knowledge (Stepanova *et al.*, 2020) from empirical works was timely agenda in the field cognizant to emerging economies growth and multinational foreign direct investments to see the factors contributing to and challenges against the effectiveness of indigenous conflict management strategies (John-Eke & Akintokunbo, 2020; Tamunomiebi *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, it is valuable to explore and synthesize the lessons from the success and failure histories accrued to indigenous conflict management strategies and practices to address these gaps. In this disposition, framing systematic review questions is required (Shamseer *et al.*, 2015), and the current systematic review is dedicated to answering the following questions:

- How effective indigenous conflict management strategies are in resolving disputes?
- What are those factors (both positive and negative) found to be more critical in managing conflicts in the localized context in which they occur?

Searching for high-quality empirical research evidence could be a daunting task, yet it is an integral part of the evidence-based systematic review process (Hiebl, 2021). Therefore the review followed **PRISMA** (preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analysis) (Adeyinka-Ojo, 2021). According to the PRISMA, the search terms were developed using Boolean operators based on the research questions and the inclusion/exclusion criteria detailed earlier (Page *et al.*, 2021). Searches were performed on 10 March 2022 from the four targeted databases using the search term “[All: effectiveness of indigenous conflict] AND [All: management] AND [[All: strategies] OR [All: practices] OR [All: tactics]] AND [All: organizational] AND [All: behavior outcomes]”. Four research databases having open accesses feature were consulted in obtaining the pertinent information regarding this review; viz., *Taylor & Francis*, *Springer*, *Google Scholar*, and *Emerald Insights*. Some articles were included by snowball sampling from *IJCM* (International Journal Conflict Management) which was included in the Emerald database and Google scholar since using only keyword searches is misleading in some instances (Lecy & Beatty, 2012; Wohlin, 2014). It was also limited to research published later than 2010 to 2022 to consider recent developments in the field of the study.

The inclusion criteria mainly focused on those articles found to be original empirical research that was used for the systematic review. But some of the articles which are

reviewed in the mentioned databases and other sources might be used for substantiating the need for this systematic review in the introduction and cited for backing the review arguments in the remaining parts as needed. Articles in the English language were considered in the search because the researcher could not translate other languages. Moreover, the selection of individual studies followed the PRISMA flow diagram (Page *et al.*, 2021). The screening process generated 37 articles to be included in this systematic review as indicated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** PRISMA Flow Diagram for the Systematic Review

In addition, as systematic reviews were comprehensive reviews of the topic of interest and therefore to improve the quality of the review, 20 empirical articles from the international journal of conflict management (*IJCM*) and another 19 empirical papers were added from *Google scholar* using the snowball sampling to complement search string limitations (Lecy & Beatty, 2012). Therefore, the total number of empirical studies

involved in this systematic review comprises 76 peer-reviewed journal articles. Articles published in reputable journals and the mentioned databases fulfilling these criteria were considered as quality because the conclusions drawn from systematic literature reviews are completely dependent on the quality of the literature selected for the review (Yang *et al.*, 2021). A thematic content analysis was performed for extracting data based on the research questions of the systematic review. Two members of the review team met to discuss and agree on the selection and the evidence grading. In points of a tie on the decision whether to include or exclude the papers, the consensus was arrived at by discussion based on the set criterion.

## Results

The 76 full-text articles considered for review were examined to extract the practices of indigenous conflict management across the globe. Firstly, the overall evaluations of indigenous conflict management practices made by the studies involved in the review were sorted out whether they are effective or ineffective in solving conflicts. Secondly, what contributed to their success or failure extracted. The ultimate aim of the review was to draw lessons from the conflict management body of knowledge and how we may make use of them was seen to identify indigenous conflict management interventions that suit the contemporary management paradigm based on empirical findings (Nnah Ugoani, 2020; Yammarino & Dansereau, 2009).

### Characteristics of the Reviewed Articles

The research works involved in this review were collected from available databases and it contains research works from multiple directions and cultural settings both west and east as well as addressed the north and global south in its coverage. Out of the 76 papers reviewed, the majority of 53 (69.7%) used a qualitative approach, 16 (21.1%) employed a quantitative method, and the remaining 7 (9.2%) did by mixed approach.

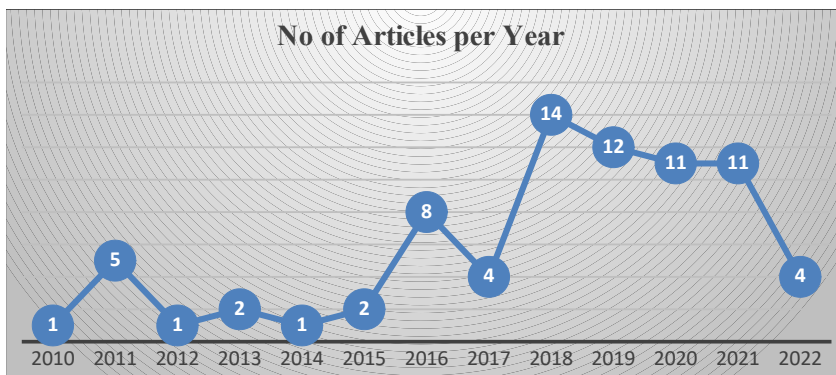


Figure 2. Publication trend of reviewed papers

As the trend given in the following graph the number of publications was increasing on the issue indicates that it gains the attention of scholars more recently.

### **Effectiveness of Indigenous Conflict Management Strategies**

The world has diverse conflict management approaches in localized contexts. Among others, the Chinese *Yin-Yang* model (Chin & Liu, 2015); the *Reeda-Gudagambela* of Kambata (Mengesha *et al.*, 2015); the *Gondooro-Guma* of the Oromo (Gumi Boru, 2016); the *Tor-bue* in Nigeria (Kpae, 2018); *Agila* in Nigeria (Oduma-Aboh *et al.*, 2018); the *TSJBCM* traditional Somali approach (Wanyoike *et al.*, 2018); Pakistani *Pashtun-Jirga* (Yousaf & FurrukhZad, 2020; Yousaf & Poncian, 2018); vendetta and oath in northern Ethiopia (Abraham, 2019); blessing and cursing (Handino & Bekele, 2020); *Wabar* (Hassan, 2020); *Gada* system (Negash, S. D., 2021; Debisa 2022); *Farqasa* pilgrim center in Arsi community of the Oromo (Worku, 2021); *Tolfena-Chaffe* (Mossie, 2020); *Amare* council of elders in Jama (Tesfaye, 2021); *Gepi-Tato* of Sheka people (Bekele & Akako, 2022) were just some of the approaches and traditional ways of managing conflicts in their contexts seen in the papers reviewed.

Besides the approaches indicated in their specific local names, indigenous-led grass-root engagements became the resolutions in industrialized contexts too. The conflicts occurred in pipelines between US and Russia (Tysiachniouk *et al.*, 2021), the Northern Ireland conflict (Croucher, 2011; Fissuh *et al.*, 2012), culturally friendly policing as a remedy to conflict situations in Saskatchewan Canada (Akca & Jewell, 2022), maintaining adequate local representation in Bolivia (Barié, 2020) and Peruvian Amazon basin (Fisher *et al.*, 2020), legal empowerment of local entities (Waldorf, 2019), the use of responsible leadership honoring cultures (Günsoy, 2020), and utilization of *Māori* local leaders in New Zealand (Haar *et al.*, 2019) can be mentioned as strategies unknotted the conflict situations without overlooking the role of localization. Moreover, in some conflict-prone areas religious perspectives and institutions were used to arbitrate conflict situations as evidenced in *Islamic intervention* strategies emphasizing the role of women in conflict interventions in Northern Israeli's Arab communities (Pely, 2011), Syria focused on power-sharing (Groarke, 2016), Indonesia (Surono, 2018), Malaysia *Lahad Datu Sabah* (Malik *et al.*, 2018), Jordan (Caputo, 2018), and India (Croucher *et al.*, 2011; Pless *et al.*, 2022).

In almost all of the papers reviewed in this systematic review, there was an indication of the supremacy of the indigenous method of conflict resolution over modern approaches originating from western cultures. Those studies that explicitly indicated the superiority of indigenous methods of conflict resolution involves the ones of Mengesha, Yesuf, and Gebre (2015), Gumi Boru (2016), Tenaw (2016), Alemie and Mandefro (2018), Kpae (2018), Olowu (2018), Peng (2017), Yousaf and Poncian (2018), Hassan (2020), Mossie (2020) and Tesfaye (2021). But in their study, Okeke-Ogbuafor, Ani, and Gray

(2019) argued that indigenous African conflict management systems were inferior to the western approaches because they were inherently and potentially a source of conflicts; moreover, they bring conflicts by themselves than resolving the conflicts. This argument was refuted by Lundy *et al.* (2021) having opposite findings regarding the effectiveness of indigenous conflict management strategies. Tysiachniouk *et al.* (2021) compared two different cultures in conflict development and resolution and found similarities in approaches as well as results. Kpae (2018) also advocated that reverting to indigenous conflict management was a mandatory move for those who want to have constructive resolutions of conflicts they encounter.

### **What Makes Indigenous Approaches More Effective?**

The scholarly articles identified in this review indicated that the basic aim of conflict resolution was different from that of the modern way of calculating conflict responses by conflicting parties. This was so clear in the empirical findings of Alemie and Mandefro (2018) that indicated indigenous conflict resolution was based on shared dialogue not a punishment to conflicting parties which could bring harmony and solidarity among each other. It starts to constructively deal with the conflict situation to transform it into communal harmony (Olowu, 2018), empower people by their structures, nature, and cultural power (Rodríguez & Inturias, 2018); the symbolic procedures and rituals create its heartedly full acceptance by conflicting entities (Abraham, 2019) which further enhance adaptation to the situations (Mbih, 2020), innovations, creativity and sustainability (Appiah-Thompson, 2020). Therefore, we can say that indigenous conflict management strategies could play a significant role in bringing a cohesive trust-based community (Wanyoike *et al.*, 2018) and leadership (Worku, 2021), restoring justice (Tesfaye, 2021), making peace durable and convert conflicts to constructive situations as seen in the findings of Akano & Bamigbose (2019), Lundy *et al.* (2021), Osimen & Aisedion (2019) and Wanyoike *et al.* (2018).

The reason that made it preferable to the modern approach of conflict resolution, unlike litigation procedures, is inherently drawn from its basic features. For instance, indigenous conflict management practices are suitable to local circumstances (Mengesha *et al.*, 2015), flexible to different arrangements (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018; Mengesha *et al.*, 2015; Tafere, 2013), uniquely adapt and fitting situations of localized contexts (Bello & Olutola, 2016; Lundy *et al.*, 2021), easier, cheaper and less time to adopt and practice (Hassan, 2020; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019; Kpae, 2018) and it is compassionate and friendlier (Kpae, 2018; Wei *et al.*, 2016). This enhances its transparency and willingness to participate and take part in the process of resolution by parties affected by conflict (Olowu, 2018; Tafere, 2013).

Besides the preferences, its effectiveness also emanates from similar factors related to its transparency and enhanced participation. For instance, adequate representation of



interests or clans (Tafere, 2013), co-management of issues at hand (Teferra & Beyene, 2014), provisions of schemes of power-sharing (Groarke, 2016), bottom-up process ownership (Kimokoti *et al.*, 2014), respecting national ethos (Lewin, 2016), recognition of shared goals (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018), building trust and respect via moral and traditional authority (Ibrahim 2018; Bekele & Akako 2022), involvement and commitment (Kpae, 2018), inclusiveness (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019), provisions to protect the disadvantaged minorities (Barié, 2020) and indigenous cognizant to diversity and unity (Negash, S. D., 2021; Debisa 2022).

Other socio-cultural tools, like religious acceptability, also enhanced the effectiveness of these indigenous models of conflict resolution (Akano & Bamigbose, 2019; Appiah-Thompson, 2020; Caputo, 2018; Croucher, 2011; Croucher *et al.*, 2011; Fissuh *et al.*, 2012; Hughes & Sasse, 2016; Surono, 2018). This was empirically evidenced by Malik *et al.* (2018) and Surono (2018) in their study that analyzed *the Islamic* model of conflict resolution. According to Caputo (2018), the religious motivation seriously influences which style of conflict management is going to be adopted. Social sanctions are also used as an enforcement tool to shape the behavior of conflicting practices and help in the effectiveness of indigenous conflict management practices (Muluken, 2020). Blessing and cursing (Handino & Bekele, 2020), oath (Abraham, 2019), and other customary laws (Teferra & Beyene, 2014) may be taken as a resort to enforce the decisions made through some studies raised the limitation of enforcing agencies for indigenous institutions.

### **Factors Inhibiting the Efficacy of the Indigenous Approaches**

Factors limiting the value of indigenous conflict management practices were overlooked in most studies. However, the review identified some aspects jeopardizing the effectiveness of indigenous models of conflict management in a few studies involved in the review. For example, poor language choice creates communication barriers (Oladotun & Emmanuel, 2019), lack of legal empowerment (Waldorf, 2019), absence of clear policy direction (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018), corrupt behavior of elders and negative attitudes towards the value of the practice (Handino & Bekele, 2020), etc., were some of the limitations, among others. These problems by themselves originated from the negligence of stakeholders, as indicated in Oduma-Aboh *et al.* (2018) and Olowu (2018). According to Osimen and Aisedion (2019), the indigenous approaches to the management of conflict were not special to be protected from the truncation of colonial masters. Therefore no strong and formal institution was formed as required to see in the modern conflict adjudication system (Bekele & Akako, 2022). In some extreme cases, it confronted with the challenge of limited use in the modern conflict resolution arena due to social, economic, and political pressures (Mengesha *et al.*, 2015; Oduma-Aboh *et al.*, 2018; Olowu, 2018; Tafere, 2013). Due to this neglect and other reasons the challenge of extinction was also the risk for indigenous systems, as indicated in Tafere (2013), and hence with heightened nationalism and extremist religiosity conflicts became leveraged than resolved

in recent years (Hughes & Sasse, 2016). However, in all the cases raised in the articles reviewed, the strength of indigenous conflict management outweighs its weaknesses as compared to the modern approaches (Adewuyi *et al.*, 2021; Negash, Y. M., 2021).

## **Discussions**

### ***1. Implications for policy and practice***

As indicated in the review, the results of the indigenous conflict management strategies uniquely fit local circumstances (Bello & Olutola, 2016) through continuous adaptation and resilience (Mbih, 2020) due to their flexible nature (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018; Mengesha *et al.*, 2015; Tafere, 2013). When effectively adopted, it will bring innovation, creativity, and sustainability (Appiah-Thompson, 2020), meaning transforming destructive conflicts into constructive communal harmony (Olowu, 2018) and lasting peace (Yousaf & FurrukhZad, 2020). Moreover, conflict styles and their management affects employee commitment and, hence, performance (Akhtar & Hassan, 2021). But, the question here is how to make use of indigenous strategies for conflict management in the modern workplace.

The indigenous strategies employ cooperative conflict resolution rather than competitive management styles (Wong *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, cultivating a culture of an organization and having employees with a strong emphasis on group interest over self-interest has paramount importance since employees with a strong need to self-interest prefer competitive methods to manage conflicts (Meng *et al.*, 2018). This implies that collective-personality fit is a more important behavior than its dispersion to adopt indigenous methods (Seong & Hong, 2020). Neglecting individual employees and indigenous conflict management may escalate conflict situations due to their subjective evaluation bias toward labor relations (Xiong & Wang, 2018). To this end, the *Confucian model* of self-cultivation for individual-level development brought compassion as evidenced by (Wei *et al.*, 2016). Maintaining deep and non-transactional collaboration pays off in reinforcing this kind of behavior (Fisher *et al.*, 2020).

At the group level, improving the social skills of employees have the utmost importance here. According to Rahim, Civelek, and Liang (2018), situational awareness, situational responses, cognitive empathy, and other social skills are required to effectively solve problems in the contexts they are threatened. Poor communication was identified as one of the sources of indigenous strategies' ineffectiveness (Igbokwe & Amobi, 2020). Therefore, skill development in language choice and conflict communication was the important ingredient in group-level requirements for indigenous strategies which involve a balanced mix of integrated open communication with strategic silence (Guo & Cionea, 2017). Moreover maintaining social norms such as humility, altruism, collectivism, authenticity, and long-term orientations are very important to bring effective

indigenous conflict resolution and cohesive work units (Haar *et al.*, 2019). For instance, the friendly police supervision model adopted in native Canada reduced violence (Akca & Jewell, 2022).

It is difficult to increase effectiveness when managers are taught management theories that contradict their cultures (Adeleye *et al.*, 2020). To put it in another way, consuming useful indigenous management practices by integrating them into modern systems pays off. For indigenous conflict management strategies, considering and understanding the situations holistically is required for institutional-level adoption (Guo & Cionea, 2017). For example, the situation of COVID-19 affected conflicts as well as their management and eroded homegrown practices in Nigeria (Ossai, 2021); neglecting culture and religion couldn't be affordable (Akano & Bamigbose, 2019). The integrative approach to indigenous conflict strategies needs ambidextrous practices and collectivist responses (Ramesh *et al.*, 2017), responsible leadership (Pless *et al.*, 2022) at all dimensions of justice, like organizational, procedural, and interactional (Kemp *et al.*, 2011).

The review team of this systematic review argues that solutions to conflicts be reached through effective cooperation and teamwork. The review indicated that on the majority of the occasions, modern approaches were not effective as well as adequate (Negash, Y. M., 2021). Even though a complete turnaround to the traditional system was proposed by scholars such as Kpae (2018), integrating indigenous with formal structures will be advisable to all concerned bodies to bring the effectiveness of the systems (Tenaw 2018; Anggraini *et al.*, 2019; Lamle *et al.* 2019). To improve the existing condition of extinction, danger preservation activities are needed and the promotion of available methods to be used by community members might be the option (Kimokoti *et al.*, 2014; Osimen & Aisedion, 2019). Lastly, revisiting and giving more emphasis starting from the national constitution is very important not to lose such cultural heritages of having multifaceted values (Oduma-Aboh *et al.*, 2018). However, its implementation didn't get adequate support to the expected level (Gumi Boru, 2016).

## **2. Implications for further research**

Based on his review, Yi (2019) identified the factors affecting conflict management at the organizational and individual levels. He also sorted out the outcome variables of conflict management interventions taken by the leadership of the organization. But here in the reviewed articles, including the recent work of Lundy *et al.* (2021) that the behavioral outcomes of indigenous ways of managing conflicts couldn't be seen at either personal or collective organizational levels. However, the impact of different conflict management methods was primarily manifested in specific organizational behavior and individuals' psychological states of mind (Yi, 2019). This implies that overall organizational performance and productivity is the total of individuals' and groups' performance and hence the analysis should involve multi-level research (Bai *et al.*, 2015; Costa *et al.*, 2013).

The majority of the studies involved in this systematic review are qualitative and exploratory in nature which could be an indication of infancy and the growing level of maturity of the topic that gained recent attention since the literature was dominated by the western culture of conflict management. That means indigenous modalities captured the attention of scholars when triggering events occur and for this, the work of Gebretsadik (2022) can be exemplary when formal structures collapsed and indigenous mechanisms took over to fill the vacancy. Such exploratory studies suffer from statistical generalizability problems and need to be tested with adequate representative samples by researchers in the future.

Cultural differences and values also affect the results (Günsoy, 2020; Saito & Ohbuchi, 2013) though the mechanisms and approaches might have similar ends (Yousaf & Poncian, 2018) as tested in Pakistan, Tanzania, US and Russia (Tysiachniouk *et al.*, 2021). The role of women in conflict resolution was ignored except in the study conducted by Pely (2011) whose findings exposed that the contribution of women to traditional dispute resolution was significant yet sometimes invisible.

## **Conclusions**

Lately, after the decolonial thesis and theories, it became an alternative for practitioners to exploit indigenous conflict management strategies. However, no one has attempted to bring synthesized evidence on whether these types of conflict management approaches are effective, nor have the literature reviews done so far sufficiently addressed the contexts in which the strategies are most helpful to which this systematic review focused. The findings of the review explicitly indicated the superiority of indigenous methods of conflict resolution over modern approaches. Therefore, it could be said that indigenous conflict management strategies play a significant role in bringing cohesive and trust-based lasting relationships. Use of shared dialogue, not punishment; empowerment of people by their structures; the symbolic procedures and rituals; flexibility to different arrangements; besides its ease, less costliness, friendliness, compassionateness and timeliness, transparency, inclusiveness, adequate representation, power sharing, and recognition of diversity in unity are some of the factors that contributed to its effectiveness. However, there are limitations also such as poor language choice, communication barriers, lack of legal empowerment, corrupt behavior of elders, and negative attitudes towards the value of the practice that pose hindrances to its use as well as success. Despite such obstacles, its benefits become prominent in resolving conflicts. Therefore, adopting these preferred strategies in localized contexts would be recommendable in organizations and situations to which it becomes relevant.

## **Limitations**

This systematic review was done using open accessed database sources for searching articles. That means the review was limited to *Emerald insights, Google scholar, Springer,*

and *Taylor and Francis*. The review was also limited to both positive as well as negative contributors to the effectiveness of indigenous conflict management strategies.

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