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RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN PRACTICE: ASSESSING DISPUTANTS' SATISFACTION WITH DRC ABBOTTABAD

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ABSTRACT

Dispute Resolution Councils (DRCs) were established as hybrid Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms as a response to the inefficiencies of formal state-led courts and informal justice mechanisms like Jirgas. Grounded in the framework of restorative justice, DRCs aim to actively engage stakeholders to reach a tailor-made resolution. This article aims to evaluate the effectiveness of DRC Abbottabad. To achieve the objective, the study builds upon the framework of restorative justice to assess disputants' satisfaction with the DRCs proceedings. Employing a quantitative case study approach, primary data was collected from a sample of 27 DRC beneficiaries whose cases were heard in DRC Abbottabad in the year 2024. The respondents recorded their experiences through a structured survey based upon Likert Scale. Survey statements were designed in such a way as to align them with major aspects of restorative justice including active participation, fairness and neutrality, respectful treatment, restoration of relationships, etc. Results were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages. While some areas such as reconciliation and restoration of relationships showed mixed results, overall findings suggest that DRC Abbottabad embodies the principles of restorative justice indicating that DRC Abbottabad is effective in concluding sustainable dispute resolutions.

Keywords: *Alternative Dispute Resolution, Dispute Resolution Councils, DRC Abbottabad, Restorative Justice, Sustainable Peace*

1. INTRODUCTION

DRCs were established in 2014 as an institutionalized mechanism of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). Conceived as a community-based platform, DRCs are based upon the principles of restorative justice of active engagement between the victim, offender, and communities in pursuit of reconciliation by addressing their needs ("Dispute ResolutionCouncils Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police" 2014). The underlying aim of DRCs is to resolve petty disputes through open dialogue, fostering mutual understanding and harmony.

The framework of restorative justice revolves around the notion that 'since injustice hurts, justice should heal' (Braithwaite 2004). It underscores active participation of the disputants, fairness and neutrality during the proceedings of dispute resolution, and respectful treatment of the disputants. Under this framework, dispute

resolution is not about labelling losers and winners rather it seeks to repair harm and restore relationships. Therefore, DRC proceedings are designed in such a way as to enable the stakeholders to engage in open dialogue and find a path to a mutually agreed resolution.

While the formal state-led courts in Pakistan are marred with high litigation costs, procedural delays, and monumental case backlogs, informal mechanisms like Jirgas and Panchayats have also become inefficient overtime. In the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Jirgas have remained a prominent source of dispute resolution. However, it has become less efficient due to elite capture, corruption and nepotism (Braithwaite and Gohar 2014, 536). Moreover, as Abbas (2013) highlights, Jirgas are characterized by the exclusion of women. Jirgas are male dominated and women participation is considered abhorrent even if they are direct party to a dispute. Therefore, it hampers justice to them. Changes need to be introduced to make the procedures and decisions of jirgas in line with state provisions to avoid such setbacks (Mahmood et al. 2018, 27).

This justice vacuum led to the formation of DRCs. It is where these institutions serve as hybrid justice mechanisms wherein the attributes of both informal justice and formal justice mechanisms can be found. Nawaz and Aman(2022) have done a detailed study in this regard where they have labeled DRCs as the 'personification of Jirgas'. They argue that indigenous practices which are prevalent in the Jirga system can be found in DRC too. Mediation, community involvement, and disputants' participation are part of both these institutions. The difference between them lies in the fact that Jirgas operate out of legal oversight. Despite allegations of elite capture, Jirgas have developed trust and acceptance among the locals. To mitigate these shortcomings, DRCs were established to incorporate not only the principles of ADR, but also provide a strong legal backing.

Despite growing literature upon the evaluation of DRCs, empirical studies based upon indicators derived from the framework of restorative justice is very limited. While abundant studies have been made on various DRCs, the DRC in District Abbottabad is completely neglected. It highlights that geographical, institutional, and theoretical gap persists in the contemporary literature.

Against this backdrop, this article seeks to assess the effectiveness of DRCs through disputants' satisfaction. This article explores disputants' satisfaction through the lens of restorative justice, focusing on key factors like active participation, fairness and neutrality, respectful treatment, restoration of relationships and inclusivity. The study aims to examine proceedings of DRC Abbottabad with respect to disputants' satisfaction. This article is beneficial in developing a better understanding of informal justice setups by devising novel indicators to assess effectiveness of DRCs and contributing towards sustainable dispute resolution.

2. Literature Review

DRCs were established to open new hybrid system of dispute resolution that involves not only indigenous practices, like Jirga, but also have a legal backing (Nawaz and Aman 2022, 147). This novel concept led to the liking of the local people in various districts of KP. Given its expedient nature of settling disputes free of cost, common people have termed it better than the traditional legal system (Nouman et al. 2022, 50). Furthermore, due to the similarities in structural and organizational setup between Jirga and DRC, the people of Shangla and Peshawar considers DRC as the extension of the traditional Jirga system and uses DRC and Jirgas interchangeably (Nawaz and Aman 2022, 155).

DRCs are mainly based on mediation. Mediation essentially revolves around the values that are sensitive to the disputants. They may include ethics, morals, and religious teachings. While litigation revolves strictly around law, mediation incorporates values along with law to reach a sustainable agreement (Attas et al. 2022, 245). These attributes of mediation bring it into comforting with the principle of restorative justice. This is where focus is not just upon the speedy settlement of disputes, but strives to mend relationship between the victim and offender (Mok and Wong 2013, 341)

Restorative justice is essential for lasting peace in the society. Legal system is mostly based on

retribution where the focus lies on holding the offender guilty and devising punishment for the wrong doing (Naseer et al. 2023, 819). However, justice when restorative in nature is the complete opposite. It revolves around the 4-Rs i.e. Repair, Restore, Reconcile and Reintegrate (Latha and Thilagaraj 2013, 309; Menkel-Meadow 2007, 162). Repair focuses on the harm done by someone's wrongdoing. It emphasizes that the offender must come forward and make amends. Restore indicates that relationships between the disputants must be rebuilt. Reconcile emphasizes the need for direct communication between parties. Communication ultimately fosters understanding between the disputants, thus, leading to amity. Lastly, reintegration focuses on destigmatization of the offender. It calls for community to accept the offender back into the community as a constructive and productive member, While it is mainly associated with criminal cases, it has paramount potential for resolving civil disputes (Halim 2023, 883).

According to Braithwaite (2004), restorative justice is based on the notion that since injustice hurts, justice should heal. Restorative justice puts a stop to the vicious cycle of retribution which is nothing but pain replying with pain. Furthermore, he argues that restorative justice calls for communication between the parties which unfolds into an understanding between them. Furthermore, understanding between the parties helps them to tailor the resolution as per their own needs which in turns increase the ratio of compliance (Menkel-Meadow 2007, 165)

According to Attas (2022, 245–47), restorative justice propagates that crime is basically a violation of relation relations. Therefore, for restorative justice to prevail it is essential that the victim and offender develops an understanding with one another. Apology from the perpetrator for the wrongdoing committed by them ultimately blurs the victim's desire for revenge. This show of compassion from both sides is a roadmap for lasting peace, not just between the disputants but also for the community as a whole.

Furthermore, Ness (2012, 2–4) have delved more deep into the understanding of restorative justice. They argue that restorative justice stands on three basic principles. Firstly, it strives to restore the injuries inflicted by a crime upon the victims, offenders, and communities. Secondly, the concept of restorative justice revolves around the participation by victim, offender and community to its full extent. Lastly, they segregate the role of government and community by holding the former responsible for preservation of order and the latter for entrenching peace.

The platform of DRC for indigenous dispute resolution has been very efficient. This is primarily because it is based upon the principles of restorative justice. As underscored in the literature above, restorative justice revolves around 4Rs i.e. Repair, Restore, Reconcile, and Reintegrate. Unlike retribution where the focus is upon punishing the offender for the wrongdoing, restorative justice calls for reconciliation between the disputants. It focuses upon healing the harm done and requires the offender to mend the damage inflicted upon by his actions. Furthermore, it requires active participation of both the parties in the process of resolution where their needs are addressed. Where retribution enhances enmity, restorative practices tend to produce sustainable resolutions.

Extensive literature is present upon the study of DRCs in various districts of KP. However, most of these studies are very holistic in nature. This article strives to evaluate the effectiveness of DRC by incorporating various aspects of restorative justice. Similarly, the district of Abbottabad has completely been neglected in this regard. Therefore, this article aims to evaluate the effectiveness of DRC Abbottabad in a distinct manner by application of theoretical framework of restorative justice.

3. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach to case study. A case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and with-in its real-life context (Yin 2018, p. 45). Case studies are in a bounded system (Saumure 2007, 81). This study is geographically (District Abbottabad), institutionally (DRC Abbottabad), temporally (cases from year 2024, and thematically (land disputes) bounded.

The study is based entirely upon primary data obtained through survey conducted from the beneficiaries of DRC. Survey questionnaire is prepared to gauge the satisfaction level of the beneficiaries. Survey questions are designed in a way to assess their experience in DRC Abbottabad with respect to the basics of restorative justice.

This study employs purposive and snowball sampling technique for data collection. Purposive sampling is the type of sampling technique which gives the researcher the power of decision to select participants on the basis of certain criteria and parameters (Rai and Thapa, n.d., 5). It allows for deliberation and selection of individuals on the basis of some distinct features such as age, gender, educational qualification, etc. Snowball sampling is usually used to reach a distant population. Usually, a researcher first reaches agreeable participants and then ask them to recommend and connect with other participants who fit in the same criteria (Parker et al. 2020, 3). Snowball sampling complements purposive sampling as some participants is hard to reach.

To gauge their satisfaction, survey questionnaires were prepared in the light of principles of restorative justice. Survey statements were prepared and divided into different categories each highlighting a distinctive aspect of restorative justice i.e. Active participation, fairness & neutrality, procedural transparency, reparation, reconciliation & restoration of relationships, reintegration & community trust. Participants were required to record their satisfaction level regarding each of these aspects on a Likert scale. Dividing survey statements according to various aspects of restorative justice was proved to be very beneficial as each of these dimensions were analyzed in isolation and later integrated to evaluate the disputants' satisfaction with DRC Abbottabad.

This article, thus, portrays a case study confined to the geographical boundary of District Abbottabad. Through purposive and snowball sampling, respondents are selected to record their experience at DRC Abbottabad during the study time period of the year 2024. The data obtained is analyzed quantitatively and the results are portrayed in the from of graphs and tables. Henceforth, this article aims to assess disputants' satisfaction with respect to DRC Abbottabad through the lens of restorative justice.

4. Results and Analysis

A structured survey questionnaire was designed to assess beneficiaries' satisfaction level with respect to the DRC Abbottabad's proceedings. A total of 27 respondents agreed to give their feedback on the DRC proceedings. All responses were obtained in face-to-face mode. Supporting staff of DRC Abbottabad contacted the beneficiaries and requested them to come to the premises. 27 respondents came and their perception regarding DRC Abbottabad was recorded through a survey questionnaire. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the beneficiaries' perception regarding active participation, fairness & neutrality, transparency, restoration of relationships, reparation, and reintegration into community. Survey questionnaire consisted of close-ended statements. Respondents were instructed to rate their experience on a Likert Scale. A five-point Likert scale is used where 1 equal Strongly Disagree up to 5 which equals Strongly agree.

4.1 Active Participation

This section was designed to assess the measure of satisfaction of beneficiaries with respect to the active participation experienced at the proceedings. Five statements were devised to provide respondents with adequate opportunity to express their experience. Likert scale was provided for the respondents to express their satisfaction. The obtained data and their results are illustrated below:

Table 1 Statements for Active Participation

No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
S1	You were given adequate opportunity to present your side of the dispute	13 (48%)	11 (41%)	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	1 (4%)
S2	All parties were allowed to speak and express their views freely	10 (37%)	14 (52%)	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	1 (4%)
S3	DRC facilitated open dialogue between parties	14 (52%)	10 (37%)	2 (7%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
S4	You were comfortable speaking in front of DRC members and the other party	15 (56%)	8 (30%)	1 (4%)	3 (11%)	0 (0%)
S5	DRC members encouraged mutual understanding and empathy between parties	17 (63%)	5 (19%)	3 (11%)	0 (0%)	2 (7%)

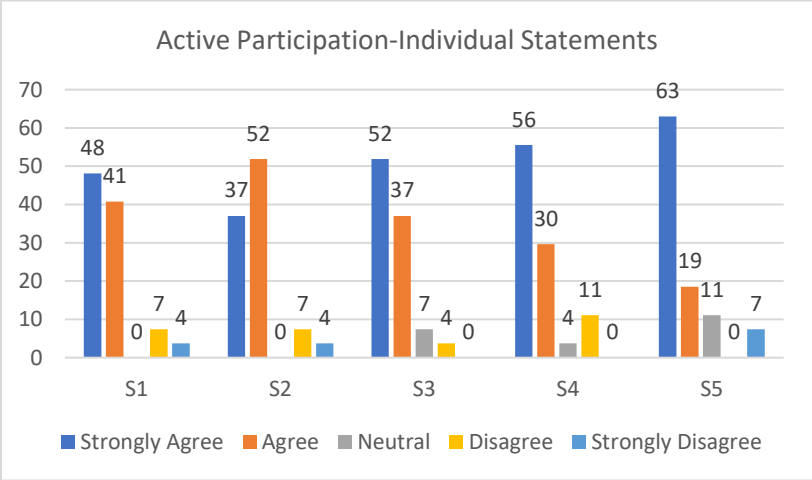


Figure a: Graph for Active Participation

Results indicate that majority of the respondents were very satisfied with their experience at DRC Abbottabad in terms of active participation. An overwhelming 89% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that DRC Abbottabad encouraged active participation in the proceedings. Respondents believed that they were given adequate and equal opportunity to voice their concerns and were allowed to express their needs in a free and comfortable environment. Given the comfortable nature of DRC's proceedings, 86% respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they were confident and comfortable in speaking for their needs. When inquired about the facilitative nature of DRC members, 63% of the respondents strongly agreed that panel members encourage dialogue to enhance mutual understanding. An additional 19% respondents agreed to this statement, thus, cementing the notion that active participation of the disputants is a key attribute of proceedings of DRC Abbottabad.

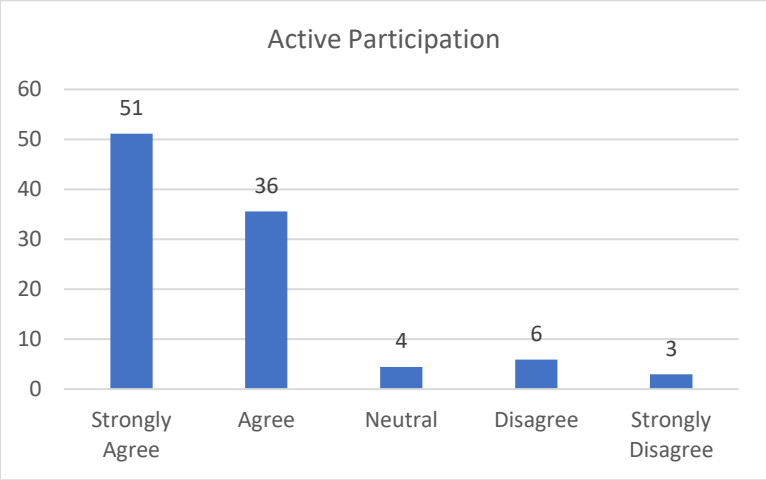


Figure b: Overall Percentage of Active Participation

To sum it up, 51% of the respondents strongly agreed whereas 36% agreed to the statement that active participation is encouraged at DRC Abbottabad. These results indicate that DRC Abbottabad holds this principle of restorative justice in high regard. These results are also in line with the findings extracted from semi-structure interviews with the DRC members. Henceforth, results of the survey complements findings of interviews highlighting that active participation is key strength of DRC Abbottabad which directly supports the sustainability of resolutions.

4.2 Perceived Fairness & Neutrality

Fairness & neutrality of dispute resolution proceedings are essential ingredients of a sustainable settlement. Four statements under this theme were devised to gauge beneficiaries' satisfaction in this regard. These statements were designed to inquire about the perceived impartiality of DRC members, fact-based proceedings, and equal treatment of the parties by DRC members. Findings with respect to perceived fairness and neutrality are highlighted below:

Table 2 Statements for Fairness & Neutrality

No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
S6	The DRC members were impartial and unbiased	11 (41%)	12 (44%)	1 (4%)	2 (7%)	1 (4%)
S7	DRC decisions were based on facts and fairness rather than personal influence or power	16 (59%)	6 (22%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	1 (4%)
S8	How would you rate the respect shown by DRC members toward you and other parties	18 (67%)	5 (19%)	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)
S9	All participants (including the opposing party) receive equal treatment from DRC members	17 (63%)	6 (22%)	1 (4%)	3 (11%)	0 (0%)

The aforementioned results unveil that up to 85% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed to the impartial and unbiased nature of DRC members. 41% of these emphasized that panel members impartial, neutral, and fair in their conduct. In addition, 59% of the respondentsstrongly agreed that hearings are conducted upon facts and figures with little or no

room for any misconduct. Furthermore, more than 85% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed to the claim that disputants were treated in respectful manner with the provision of equal opportunities. Therefore, these figures indicate that beneficiaries of DRC Abbottabad are largely satisfied as far as fairness & neutrality is concerned.

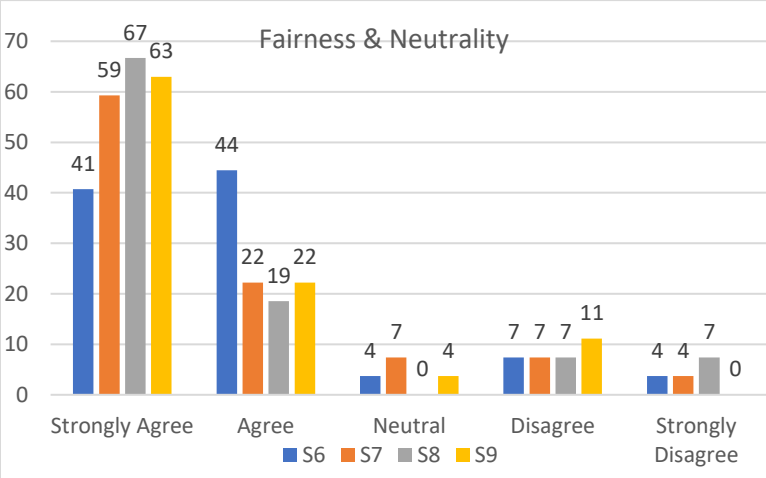


Figure c: Graph for Fairness & Neutrality

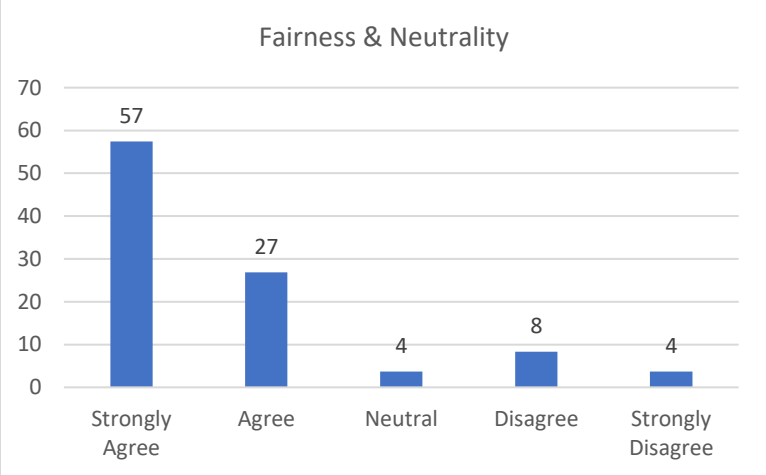


Figure d: Overall Percentage of Fairness & Neutrality

Conclusively, approximately 84% of the respondents are satisfied with the fair and neutral conduct of the DRC members. While 12% respondents feel that there exists a certain element of unbiased treatment, however, largely proceedings at DRC Abbottabad are conducted in an impartial manner. These findings align with the findings of interviews where DRC members ensured that DRC Abbottabad functions upon the very principles of fairness and neutrality.

4.3 Procedural Transparency

Procedural transparency is an imminent factor in the success of any institution. This not only have positive impacts upon the overall functioning of an institution, but also helps to bridge the public trust deficit. Under the section of procedural transparency, three statements were structured to assess the beneficiaries' perception regarding transparent mechanism of DRC Abbottabad. Respondents were inquired about the preliminary procedure before the start of hearing as well as the documentation at the conclusion of settlement.

Results obtained from the survey responses are illustrated below:

Table 3 Statements for Procedural Transparency

No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
S10	Procedure of DRC were explained to you adequately before hearing	16 (59%)	9 (33%)	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)
S11	You understood the reasoning behind the final decision	12 (44%)	7 (26%)	3 (11%)	5 (%19)	0 (0%)
S12	DRC provided written documentation of the decision or settlement	18 (67%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)	4 (15%)	3 (11%)

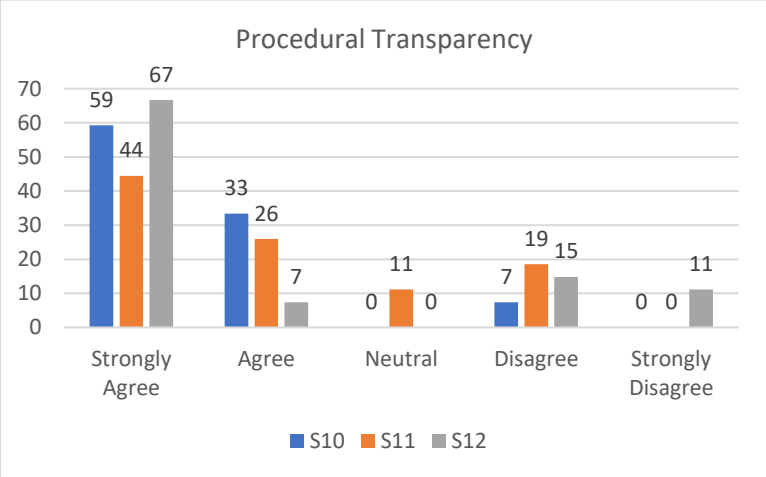


Figure e: Graph for Procedural Transparency

According to the survey responses, 93% strongly agreed and agreed when inquired about the general procedure of DRC Abbottabad. It highlights the fact that before hearing begins, DRC Abbottabad take the disputants into confidence by outline the general procedures and Standard of Procedures (SOPs) regarding the conduct of dispute hearing. However, when inquired about the reasoning of a settlement after it, 70% of the respondent's showed satisfaction. While 11% stayed neutral, 19% of the respondents showed unsatisfactory signs. Similarly, the proportion of the respondents, approximately 26%, were not satisfied when asked about the written documentation of the reached settlement. The drastic increase of unsatisfied disputants in this sphere of procedural transparency indicates that DRC lacks in the domain where awareness regarding the proceedings is concerned.

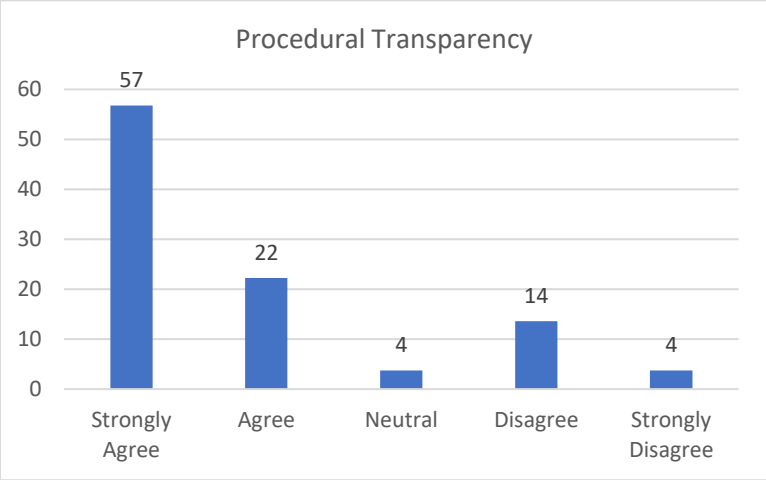


Figure f: Overall Percentage of Procedural Transparency

In short, 79% respondents were highly satisfied with the procedural transparency of DRC Abbottabad. However, 18% showed unsatisfactory signs in this regard. Majority of the respondents strongly agreed with procedural transparency of DRC Abbottabad which complements the findings obtained during analysis of the interviews. The mechanism elaborated by the DRC members ensured in-depth analysis of dispute involving document verification and on-site visitation is evident in the fact that 79% respondents emanated satisfaction.

4.4 Reparation

Reparation refers to any material or non-material compensation that may be in the form of money, apology, or land compensation. The essence of indigenous dispute resolution mechanism is to reach a mutually agreed settlement in a positive-sum game. Restorative justice calls for repairing the harm done whether that be through material or non-material means. This section was designed to assess beneficiaries' satisfaction in the context of reparation. Five statements were designed and filled by the respondents. Table below illustrates the results:

Table 4 Statements for Reparation

No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
S13	DRC process help you recover your rights or losses related to the land dispute	9 (33%)	5 (19%)	6 (22%)	2 (7%)	5 (19%)
S14	Material or non-material reparations were agreed upon	12 (44%)	3 (11%)	2 (7%)	4 (15%)	6 (22%)
S15	Did the decision address the underlying harm caused by the dispute?	2 (8%)	12 (46%)	1 (4%)	6 (23%)	5 (19%)
S16	The process focused more on restoring fairness than assigning blame	19 (70%)	5 (19%)	1 (4%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)

S17	The resolution brought satisfaction and closure to the issue	11 (41%)	2 (7%)	5 (19%)	5 (19%)	4 (15%)

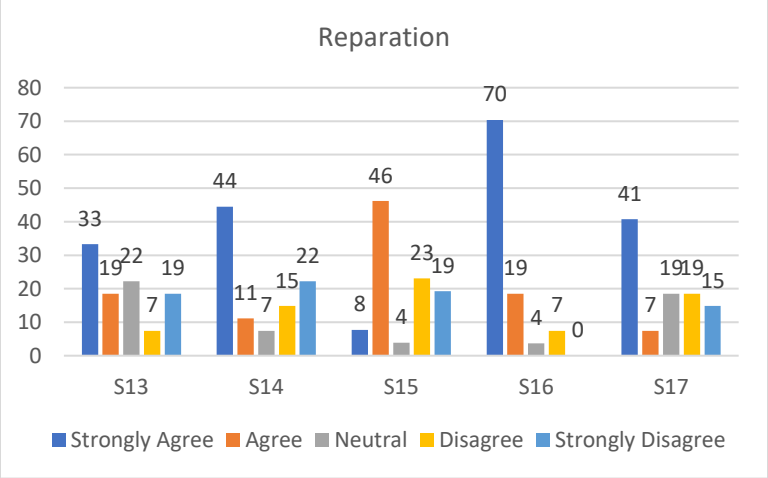


Figure g: Graph for Reparation

Respondents were required to mark the measure to which they agree that DRC Abbottabad's proceedings led to recovery of their losses and any material or non-material reparations that were agreed upon settlement. More than 52% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed to the statements. While more than 20% strongly disagreed to the statements showing signs of discontent. In addition, up to 54% respondents claimed that DRC proceedings helped address the foundational cause of the dispute. However, 89% respondents claimed that the focus of DRC's proceedings are not focused upon blaming either party rather its aim is to restoring fairness and repairing the harm done.

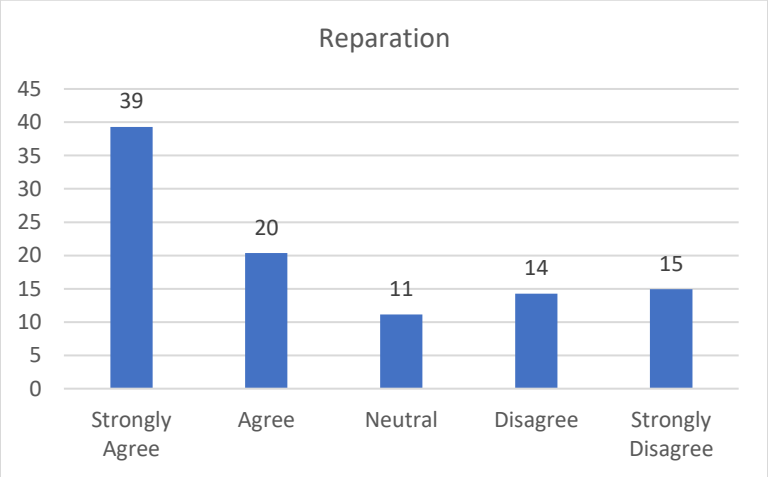


Figure h: Overall Percentage for Reparation

Henceforth, 59% respondents were very well satisfied with the way DRC Abbottabad makes sure that reparations are agreed upon. It lies as a very core principle of restorative justice that harm must be repaired in the pursuit of dispute resolution. Thus, this section highlights beneficiaries' satisfaction in the case of reparations.

4.5 Reconciliation & Restoration of Relationships

Reconciliation and restoration of relationships is a pertinent aspect of restorative justice. This section was specifically designed to assess beneficiaries' satisfaction in this regard. Four statements were structured to evaluate their experiences regarding the aftermath of resolution at DRC Abbottabad. The data obtained through survey is illustrated below:

Table 5 Statements for Reconciliation & Restoration

No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
S18	Your relationship with the other party improved after the DRC decision	9 (33%)	3 (11%)	4 (15%)	8 (30%)	3 (11%)
S19	DRC encouraged lasting mutual respect and understanding between parties which is also present today	7 (26%)	13 (48%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	3 (11%)
S20	You or the other party maintained peaceful relations since the case was resolved	4 (15%)	8 (30%)	5 (19%)	5 (19%)	5 (19%)
S21	You and the other party interacted positively since the resolution	9 (33%)	5 (19%)	3 (11%)	5 (19%)	5 (19%)

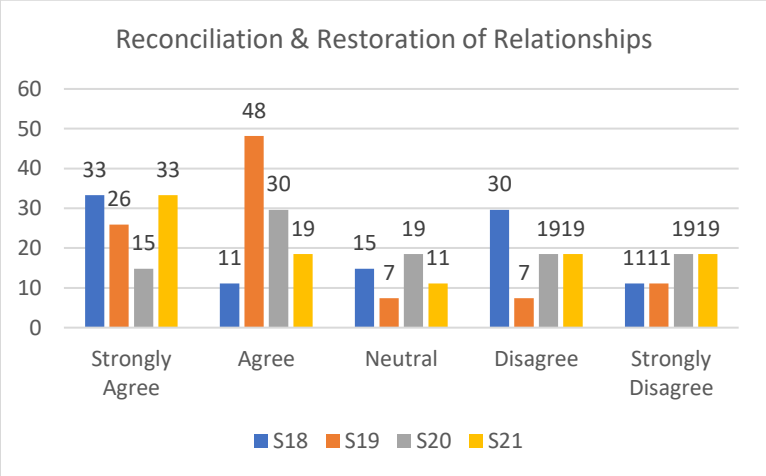


Figure i: Graph for Reconciliation & Restoration

More than 44% of the respondents agreed to the statement that their relationship with the other party were restored. 15% remained neutral while 41% disagreed and refuted any claims of the restoring relationships. However, when inquired about DRC's efforts to mend relationships, 74% of the respondents agreed that members tried their best to conduct proceedings in such a way to restore relationships. Furthermore, more than 38% of the respondents refuted the statement regarding positive engagement and peaceful relationships with the other party. While there were many unsatisfactory signs in the sphere of restoration of relationships, it is pertinent to note here that most of the disputants that took the survey were not related. All those disputes which involved family members were found to be very sustainable as the beneficiaries claimed their

relationships has been restored. Other disputes for example dispute between a client and real estate agent, a common man and influential encroachers, etc. were not restored given the fact that they had not long-lasting contact between them.

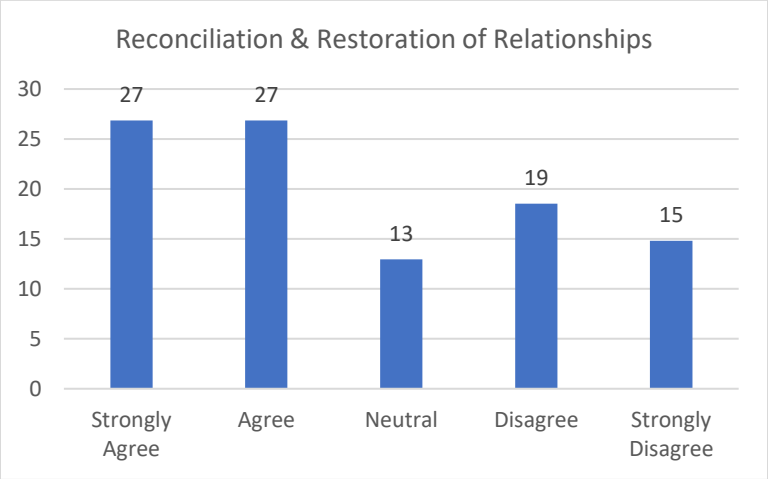


Figure j: Overall Percentage for Reconciliation & Restoration

In summation, 63% respondents were found to be satisfactory in the domain of restoration of relationships. They highlighted the fact that DRC Abbottabad tries its best to not just find resolution to a dispute, but also aims to restore the relationships that are harmed by the dispute. Therefore, DRC Abbottabad embodies this specific principle of restorative justice and contributes towards sustainable resolution of disputes in the region.

4.6 Reintegration & Community Trust

Reintegration in the community is an essential step after dispute resolution. While the formal state-led courts stigmatize the disputants, DRCs help in integration of the disputants in the community. This fosters a peaceful environment and helps build community trust in the justice dispensation platform. To assess beneficiaries' satisfaction in this regard, this section was devised along with five statements to evaluate their experiences. The data obtained during the process is mentioned below:

Table 6 Statements for Reintegration & Community Trust

No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
S22	You feel accepted and respected in your community after the DRC process	10 (37%)	9 (33%)	4 (15%)	3 (11%)	1 (4%)
S23	DRC outcome contributed to a greater sense of peace or harmony in your neighborhood	10 (37%)	9 (33%)	3 (11%)	4 (15%)	1 (4%)
S24	DRC's work increased your trust in local justice mechanisms?	17 (63%)	5 (19%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	1 (4%)
S25	Others should also choose DRC over formal courts for resolution of land disputes	18 (67%)	5 (19%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)

S26	Overall, DRC was effective in resolving your dispute?	13 (48%)	4 (15%)	3 (11%)	4 (15%)	3 (11%)

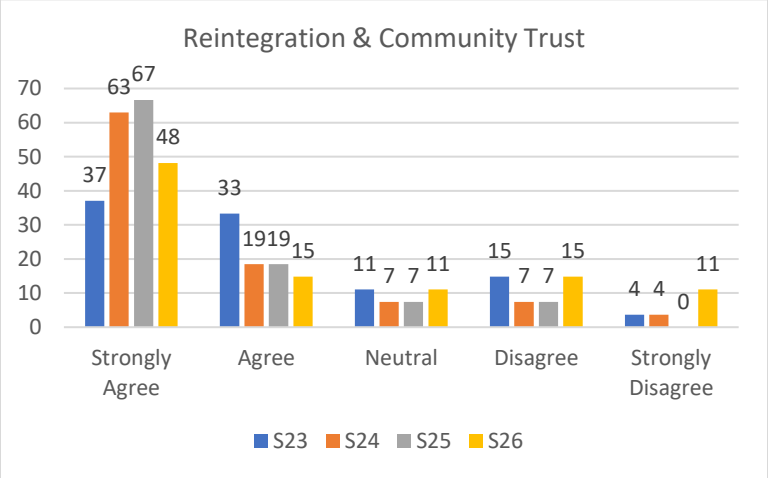


Figure k: Graph for Reintegration & Community Trust

Beneficiaries were inquired about acceptance into community after their dispute was heard in the DRC. 70% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed to the statement and showed satisfaction in this regard. In addition, the respondents also claimed that fair treatment and positive-sum resolution in the DRC have in fact contributed towards a peaceful and respectful society. Furthermore, more than 83% of the respondents were of the view that seamless hearings at DRC Abbottabad have restored their trust in justice dispensation. Lastly, 63% disputants strongly agreed and agreed to the statement that DRC was helpful in effective resolution of their disputes. To express their satisfaction, they also marked strong agreement with the statement that they others should also choose DRC over formal state led courts for the resolution of land disputes.

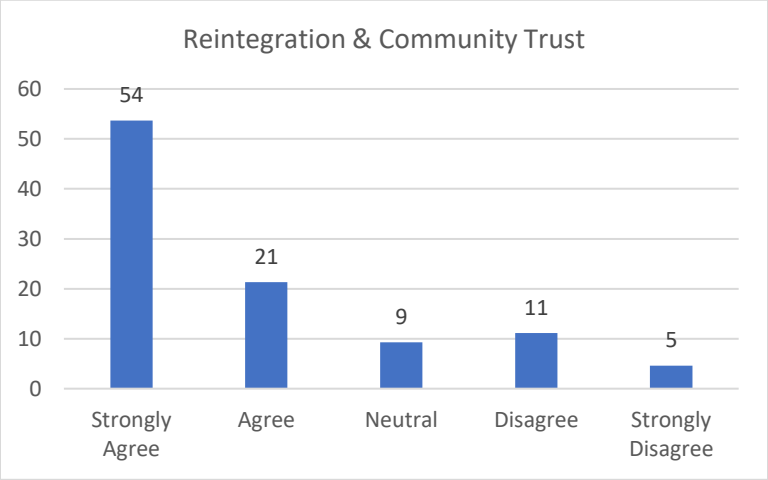


Figure l: Overall Percentage for Reintegration & Community Trust

To sum it up, 75% respondents showed immense satisfaction in the process of dispute resolution reached at DRC. Their experience at DRC Abbottabad has led them to prefer this institution over the formal state led courts for the settlement of disputes. Beneficiaries' satisfaction is further

proof that DRC Abbottabad embodies principles of restorative justice. Thus, resolutions reached at DRC are far more sustainable when compared to formal courts.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Survey responses obtained through interaction with the beneficiaries of DRC Abbottabad were descriptively analyzed to assess disputants' satisfaction with the proceedings as per their experience. Respondents used Likert Scale to agree or disagree with the statements. This helped in gauging the degree to which beneficiaries of DRC Abbottabad were satisfied with respect to their own experiences.

27 statements of the survey were divided into various sections. These involved active participation, fairness & neutrality, procedural transparency, reparation, restoration of relationships, and reintegration & community trust. These sections were devised to enable seamless corroboration of the disputants' experience with the interviews of DRC members. Findings indicated that more than 87% of the respondents strongly believed that DRC Abbottabad encourages active dialogue between the disputants. Similarly, 84% of the respondents agreed that DRC Abbottabad is operating in fair, impartial and neutral manner. In addition, 77% of the respondents were satisfied with the procedural transparency observed during their experiences. In case of reparations, 59% respondents were found to be satisfied as some sort of reparations were agreed upon during the proceedings. 63% of respondents agreed that their relationships were restored and 75% were satisfied that DRC proceedings are effective.

Descriptive analysis of the survey highlighted that a majority of the respondents were satisfied with the way their disputes were resolved or heard at DRC Abbottabad. Respondents overwhelmingly enunciated that they were encouraged to actively participate in the process. This helped in enhancing the perceived fairness & neutrality in DRC proceedings leading to the enhancement of building public trust. These statistics indicate that beneficiaries of DRC Abbottabad were satisfied with their experiences, thus, cementing the notion that settlements reached at DRC Abbottabad through principles of restorative justice are sustainable.

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