

## BARRIERS TO THE ADOPTION OF ADR METHODS: A CASE STUDY OF RURAL POPULATION IN MAHISAGAR DISTRICT

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### ABSTRACT

This research investigates rural residents of Mahisagar District, Gujarat, of the barriers to adoption of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) techniques. Even though the benefits of ADR—cost-effectiveness, time efficiency, and lower court load—have been widely acknowledged, their adoption is found to be limited in rural regions. Adopting a case study methodology, the study examines the main determinants including unawareness, resistance to change, mistrust of informal mechanisms, and low accessibility to ADR services. Information was gathered through systematic interviews and questionnaires with rural communities, local authorities, and legal experts. Findings indicate that low legal literacy, social hierarchy, and reliance on conventional panchayat systems are obstacles to the implementation of ADR. Additionally, myths regarding the success and equity of ADR processes discourage further use. This research underlines the necessity of awareness programs, training, and government-initiated programs to endorse ADR as a practical and credible method for dispute resolution in rural areas.

**Keywords:** Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Rural Population, Mahisagar District, Legal Awareness, Cultural Barriers, Accessibility, Traditional Justice, Dispute Resolution Methods.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Dispute resolution is an important part of any legal system through which people and communities are able to resolve conflicts and maintain social harmony. In India, the judiciary is faced with an unmanageable volume of pending cases, leading to inordinate delays and the cost of litigation. To address this, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms have emerged as effective means for resolving disputes beyond the traditional court system. ADR includes procedures such as mediation, arbitration, conciliation, and negotiation, which yield fast, low-cost, and amicable resolutions. However, despite these advantages being accessible, the adoption of ADR methods is low, particularly in rural areas.

The rural economy, which constitutes the majority of India's demographic terrain, clings to traditional means of conflict resolution such as the panchayat system within the village community. While these systems are rooted in local norms and have the familiarity factor, they do not always ensure fairness, impartiality, or legalism to their decisions. Over the past few years, government and judiciary have promoted ADR mechanisms as an alternative balancing efficiency with judicial legitimacy. But the response of the rural areas has been weak due to various socio-economic and cultural barriers.

This study focuses on Gujarat's Mahisagar District, which is predominantly rural and not well-connected to legal infrastructure, and has comparatively low awareness regarding ADR mechanisms. The aim of the study is to determine and analyze the barriers that are in the way of the rural population's utilization of ADR techniques. These barriers may include lack of legal literacy, limited trust in new systems, infrastructural inconvenience like mobility and communication, and the widespread pull of traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution. Social determinants like dynamics of caste, gender-based roles, and economic disparities also play a major role in shaping people's perceptions of ADR.

Discovering these challenges matters to policymakers, legal professionals, and civil society organizations concerned to enhance access to justice in rural areas. Through establishing the specific challenges facing Mahisagar District's rural population, this research tries to provide practical recommendations to enhance the level and effectiveness of ADR systems. Promoting ADR in rural India not only reduces the burden on the judicial system but also enables individuals to resolve disputes in a more participatory, equitable, and peaceful manner. The study is a contribution to the wider debate on legal accessibility and social justice in rural India.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has evolved as an important mechanism in different global contexts to facilitate access to justice, curb litigation loads, and advance effective conflict resolution. Obisesan (2024) presents the way ADR law clinics within Redeemers University, Nigeria, narrow theoretical learning and application of practical legal skills in mediation and negotiation in order to ensure students build up ethical awareness and critical thinking though limited by the availability of limited resources and time. Equally, Karmakar (2023) delves into Bangladesh's traditional ADR frameworks such as Shalish and Village Courts, highlighting their relevance in rural justice delivery despite setbacks of poor enforceability and political meddling. In Indonesia, Hutagalung, Mutaqqin, and Amirulloh (2025) propose ADR in the taxation system to minimize court clogging, proposing legislative backing and quality assurance units. Wijaya (2025) also criticizes Indonesia's arbitration law, highlighting enforcement deficiencies and calling for reforms to enhance legal certainty and international credibility.

In Kenya, Khamis et al. (2024) discover that perceived advantages of cost-savings and ease of access highly determine the adoption of ADR by trade unions in favor of awareness campaigns and policy support. In South Asia, Jui and Islam (2023) highlight ADR's relevance in Peace and Conflict Studies for promoting non-adversarial settlements in multi-varied disputes—labour, ecological, commercial, and family—and particularly where informal justice dominates. In Georgia, Machaidze (2024) advocates for legal formal recognition of Dispute Adjudication Boards (DABs) in construction contracts, keeping pace with international practices in order to attract investment and resolve infrastructure disputes cost-effectively.

Sherman and Momani (2024) emphasize the power of mediation in the UAE and call for legal harmonization with international standards to formalize its advantages such as confidentiality, efficiency, and willingness. Kehinde and Wiwoloku (2024) consider the declining role of traditional rulers within Nigeria's ADR systems and suggest constitutional support and multi-door courthouses to incorporate customary and formal ADR. Jurgees, Suleman, and Shahid (2024) explain how ADR fits into Pakistan's cultural context and assists in decongesting the legal system, albeit with awareness and enforcement gaps.

In Uganda, Dorynie (2024) achieves success in the mix of ADR with Small Claims Procedures to respond to backlog, suggesting its use in corporate and healthcare disputes as well. Shafiul Alam and Chaity (2024) in the garment sector in Bangladesh discover an overwhelming support of ADR among workers and employers for fairness and efficiency based on union presence over education level. Va

oková (2020) assesses consumer ADR in Slovakia, identifying legislative inconsistencies and low trader participation as obstacles, and proposing more transparent regulations to improve consumer protection. Lastly, Kumar (2023) writes about ADR in India's supply chains, highlighting the Arbitration and Conciliation Act as central to the resolution of contractual disputes. He identifies both binding and non-binding ADR mechanisms as sustainable solutions to litigation to improve business processes.

Together, these studies place emphasis on ADR's flexibility and increasing relevance globally. They point to the necessity of legal reforms, awareness-raising, and institutional assistance in order to optimize its efficiency in diverse fields like education, taxation, labor, commerce, infrastructure, and consumer protection.

## **II. RESEARCH GAP**

Although several studies have emphasized the advantages and application of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in institutional and urban environments, few studies concentrate on the perception and application of ADR techniques among the rural population, especially in districts such as Mahisagar District. There exists a huge research gap regarding understanding the socio-cultural, economic, and awareness-related challenges that inhibit the adoption of ADR in rural areas. This research fills this void by investigating grassroots-level issues and possible solutions for the promotion of ADR in rural society.

### **Objectives**

1. To identify the level of awareness and understanding of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods among the rural population in Mahisagar District.
2. To examine the key socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers affecting the adoption of ADR methods in rural areas.

3. To suggest practical recommendations and strategies to enhance the acceptance and implementation of ADR mechanisms within the rural communities of Mahisagar District.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

The descriptive research design was used in this study to explore the hindrances to the usage of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms by the rural people in Mahisagar District.

#### Area of Study

The field study was conducted in Mahisagar District in Gujarat, where most of the people live in rural areas that lack access to formal legal avenues.

#### Sampling Method

Convenience sampling was utilized for selecting participants to be responded in the study. Convenience sampling as a method of non-probability sampling was employed in the study on the basis of availability and timing considerations.

#### Sample Size

70 responses were obtained through the study comprising rural dwellers, local authority representatives, as well as law experts who directly or indirectly correlated with dispute settlement habits.

#### Data Collection Method

A structured questionnaire used in collecting primary data consisted of both closed-end as well as Likert-scale type questions.

The questionnaire was personally administered to facilitate greater comprehension among rural respondents, particularly those with low literacy.

#### Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was framed to elicit data on three broad categories:

Knowledge and awareness of ADR practices

Socio-cultural and economic determinants influencing ADR adoption

Government promotion and awareness program perceptions

#### Data Analysis Techniques

Data collected was coded and analyzed with the help of SPSS software.

Pearson correlation analysis was applied to evaluate relationships between awareness, comprehension, and level of education.

Multiple linear regression was employed to identify the effects of socio-cultural, economic, and institutional aspects on readiness to embrace ADR.

#### Ethical Considerations

Respondents were invited voluntarily to participate in the study, and they were briefed about the intention of the research.

Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were ensured stringently during the process of research.

#### Limitations

The research was confined to a single district and was based on convenience sampling, which could influence the external validity of the findings.

The answers in the questionnaire were based on participants' self-reporting, which can be influenced by biases or errors.

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

**H<sub>0</sub> (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant correlation between the awareness of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods, understanding of mediation and arbitration, and education level.

**H<sub>1</sub> (Alternative Hypothesis):** There is a significant correlation between the awareness of ADR methods, understanding of mediation and arbitration, and education level.

Correlations				
		I am aware of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods.	I understand how mediation and arbitration work.	Education Level
I am aware of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods.	Pearson Correlation	1	.026	-.171
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.830	.156
	N	70	70	70
I understand how mediation and arbitration work.	Pearson Correlation	.026	1	.182
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.830		.131
	N	70	70	70
Education Level	Pearson Correlation	-.171	.182	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.156	.131	
	N	70	70	70

Based on the Pearson correlation test that was conducted among 70 respondents, the correlation between awareness of ADR methods and knowledge of mediation and arbitration was very weak and not statistically significant ( $r = .026$ ,  $p = .830$ ), indicating that awareness of ADR methods does not always equate to an understanding of how mediation and arbitration operate. Similarly, between education level and awareness of procedures in ADR, the association was negative and weak ( $r = -.171$ ,  $p = .156$ ) and between education level and understanding of mediation and arbitration was weak positive ( $r = .182$ ,  $p = .131$ ) and none were statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is true, which means that there is no significant relationship between the variables in question.

**H<sub>0</sub> (Null Hypothesis):** Cultural beliefs, social norms, and economic status do not significantly influence a person's willingness to try ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) methods if proper awareness is provided.

**H<sub>1</sub> (Alternative Hypothesis):** Cultural beliefs, social norms, and economic status significantly influence a person's willingness to try ADR methods if proper awareness is provided.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.060 <sup>a</sup>	.004	-.026	1.33776
a. Predictors: (Constant), Economic status influences people's ability to access ADR services., Cultural beliefs and social norms are major barriers to ADR adoption.				

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	.440	2	.220	.123	.884 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	119.902	67	1.790		
	Total	120.343	69			
a. Dependent Variable: I am willing to try ADR methods if proper awareness is provided.						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Economic status influences people's ability to access ADR services., Cultural beliefs and social norms are major barriers to ADR adoption.						

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.593	.483		5.371	.000
	Cultural beliefs and social norms are major barriers to ADR adoption.	.003	.114	.003	.027	.979
	Economic status influences people's ability to access ADR services.	.054	.111	.060	.489	.626
a. Dependent Variable: I am willing to try ADR methods if proper awareness is provided.						

Based on the result of the regression analysis, R Square is very low (.004), indicating that the independent variables – economic status and cultural beliefs – account for only 0.4% of the willingness to use ADR methods. The ANOVA test results in an F-value of 0.123 with a (p-value) significance of.884, way above the common 0.05 threshold, which indicates that the model is not statistically significant. Moreover, the individual coefficients for cultural beliefs (B =.003, p =.979) and economic status (B =.054, p =.626) are not significant predictors. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted, and it can be concluded that cultural beliefs, social norms, and economic status do not significantly affect an individual's willingness to try ADR methods when awareness is provided.

**$H_0$  (Null Hypothesis):** Government promotion and awareness programs do not significantly influence people's willingness to try ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) methods if proper awareness is provided.

**$H_1$  (Alternative Hypothesis):** Government promotion and awareness programs significantly influence people's willingness to try ADR methods if proper awareness is provided

Model Summary						
Model		R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1		.142 <sup>a</sup>	.020	-.009	1.32654	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Awareness programs can change rural people's perception of ADR., Government and legal authorities have not promoted ADR sufficiently.						
ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.442	2	1.221	.694	.503 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	117.901	67	1.760		
	Total	120.343	69			
a. Dependent Variable: I am willing to try ADR methods if proper awareness is provided.						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Awareness programs can change rural people's perception of ADR., Government and legal authorities have not promoted ADR sufficiently.						
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.208	.507		4.358	.000



	Government and legal authorities have not promoted ADR sufficiently.	.100	.112	.108	.893	.375
	Awareness programs can change rural people's perception of ADR.	.078	.113	.084	.694	.490
a. Dependent Variable: I am willing to try ADR methods if proper awareness is provided.						

As per the regression analysis, R Square value is extremely low (.020), which indicates that just 2% of variance in willingness to adopt ADR is explained by the predictors – government promotion and awareness programs. The ANOVA outcome is an F-value of 0.694 with a significance level ( $p = .503$ ), much greater than 0.05, indicating that the overall regression model is not statistically significant. Also insignificant are the individual coefficients for governmental and judicial authorities ( $B = .100$ ,  $p = .375$ ) and awareness programs ( $B = .078$ ,  $p = .490$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is confirmed, and it can be stated that government promotion and awareness programs have no effect on individuals' willingness to experiment with ADR means at least using the data at hand.

## V. CONCLUSION

The study was set to investigate the correlation between demographic, social, and institutional variables and their effects on individuals' readiness to embrace Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms. Using a series of regression and correlation analyses based on information gathered from 70 participants, the study has produced insightful findings. Also, first, correlation analysis checked awareness of ADR methods, ADR understanding, and level of education in connection with each other. Very weak and statistically irrelevant correlations between the three variables existed according to results, and therefore the three did not correlate together. More exactly, Pearson's correlation between understanding and awareness of ADR methods was nearly nonexistent ( $r = .026$ ,  $p = .830$ ), implying no direct link. Likewise, the education level was weakly, negatively correlated with awareness ( $r = -.171$ ,  $p = .156$ ) and weakly, positively correlated with understanding ( $r = .182$ ,  $p = .131$ ), both of which were statistically not significant. The findings confirm the null hypothesis that there is no significant correlation between education level, awareness, and ADR understanding. It implies that awareness and understanding of ADR are not necessarily determined by levels of education, and that there could be a gap in legal or civic education at all levels. Second, the regression model testing for the effect of cultural beliefs, social norms, and economic status on an individual's willingness to attempt ADR methods (provided with appropriate awareness) revealed an R Square of merely 0.004. The model as a whole was not statistically significant ( $F = 0.123$ ,  $p = .884$ ), and none of the predictors were significant. Accordingly, once more the null hypothesis was accepted, which implies that after awareness is offered, economic and cultural forces do not strongly deter people from considering ADR. The implication of this finding is that barriers to ADR adoption might not lie deep within cultural or economic constraints when awareness is satisfactory. Third, the research examined the influence of government promotion and awareness programs on ADR willingness. The regression analysis yielded once again an extremely low R Square value (0.020) and insignificant F-value (0.694,  $p = .503$ ). Both of the predictors – absence of government promotion and awareness programs – did not have a significant impact separately. This once more results in the null hypothesis being accepted, meaning people's readiness to embrace ADR approaches is not affected considerably by these institutional initiatives, likely because of poor coverage, inefficient implementation, or public indifference. Overall, these findings suggest that awareness alone is insufficient unless it is paired with practical education, proper implementation, and accessible ADR mechanisms. There is an urgent need for systemic changes and grassroots-level sensitization.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

For the purpose of facilitating the implementation of ADR systems, it is suggested that policymakers and legal institutions launch purposeful awareness campaigns in combination with education programs at all levels. Interactive workshops and lectures in schools, colleges, and communities can act as a bridge between

awareness and comprehension. Further efforts must focus on widening accessibility and building confidence in ADR systems by highlighting success stories and guaranteeing openness. Government bodies need to make promotional programmes more effective by constant monitoring and improvement in outreach efforts, especially in rural and semi-urban regions. A collaborative effort between legal experts, teachers, and local leaders would enhance the level of public confidence in ADR systems.

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