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Mediation in Saudi Arabia: An Empirical Inquiry into Awareness, Effectiveness and Reform

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Abstract

This article presents the findings of one of the first large-scale empirical studies on reconciliation and mediation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Based on survey data from 384 participants across diverse professional, academic, and social backgrounds, it examines levels of awareness, patterns of utilisation, perceived effectiveness, and key obstacles to mediation within the Kingdom. While mediation enjoys high levels of recognition and is widely regarded as effective compared to litigation, its actual adoption remains uneven, reflecting structural, cultural, and institutional barriers. The study highlights gaps in awareness, trust, and regulatory frameworks, while also identifying the qualities and competencies required of mediators to foster credibility. Comparative insights particularly from Singapore's mature mediation ecosystem and global findings from the SIDRA Survey are used to frame recommendations for reform. The article situates mediation within the broader Vision 2030 agenda, arguing that institutionalisation and innovation, including AI integration, are pivotal for mediation's future in Saudi Arabia.

Key words: Mediation, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Saudi Arabia, Empirical Survey, Dispute Resolution Reform

Introduction

Over the past three decades, mediation has steadily evolved from being an ancillary dispute resolution technique to a cornerstone of global alternative dispute resolution (ADR) frameworks (Strong 2016, 1976). Across jurisdictions as diverse as Singapore, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, and the United States, mediation has been institutionalised through legislation, court-annexed programmes, and professional accreditation schemes (Bharadwaj et al 2025). This development has been reinforced by the adoption of the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation (Singapore Convention) in 2019 (United Nations 2018). The Convention provides a framework for the cross-border enforcement of mediated settlement agreements and has contributed to strengthening the international legitimacy of mediation in commercial practice. Within this broader global trend, interest in mediation is also increasing across the Arab world, driven by judicial reform and wider socio-economic transformation initiatives.

The Saudi Arabia occupies a particularly important position in this context. As part of the Saudi Vision 2030 reforms, the Kingdom has placed considerable emphasis on modernising its legal system and enhancing the attractiveness of its dispute resolution infrastructure for both domestic and international users (Basrawi 2018). Arbitration has already received strong institutional support, while mediation although historically rooted in Islamic traditions of reconciliation such as *sulh* is only recently developing as a structured and professionalised mechanism (Jose 2025). Around the world, mediation has moved from being perceived as a peripheral or “alternative” mechanism to being recognised as a core element of commercial dispute resolution (Davies 2024). It is in this context that a new empirical study on reconciliation and mediation in Saudi Arabia was conceived and executed in early 2025.

The survey was designed to provide one of the first large-scale empirical examinations of mediation in the Arab world. Rather than relying on anecdotal observations, it aimed to capture a systematic picture of prevailing attitudes, practices, and challenges among stakeholders involved in reconciliation and mediation. The study collected statistical data from key participants and examined their perceptions of the role of



mediation in dispute resolution in Saudi Arabia, including its perceived effectiveness in comparison with litigation and the factors influencing its successful use.

The survey therefore contributes to assessing the current state of reconciliation and mediation in the Kingdom while identifying areas that may require further development. Building on this empirical foundation, the present article adopts a two-fold methodology. First, it undertakes a systematic analysis of the survey findings, focusing on levels of awareness, patterns of use, perceived effectiveness, and obstacles to mediation. Second, it situates these findings within a comparative perspective, with particular attention to Singapore, which represents one of the most developed mediation ecosystems globally.

This comparative dimension is particularly instructive. Empirical studies such as the SIDRA International Dispute Resolution Survey 2024 illustrate how mediation has become firmly embedded in commercial dispute resolution in several jurisdictions (Alexander et al. 2024). Singapore offers a notable example of this institutional maturity. Over the past two decades, it has invested in specialised mediation institutions, statutory frameworks, and structured accreditation pathways for mediators (Pandjaitan 2022). Mediation has also been integrated into court processes and supported through sustained awareness initiatives involving legal professionals, businesses, and educational institutions (Pandjaitan 2022).

Against this background, the article addresses three interrelated research questions: what insights does the Saudi survey provide regarding the current practice of mediation; how do these findings compare with international models, particularly Singapore; and what reforms might assist Saudi Arabia in further institutionalising mediation as a credible and widely used dispute resolution mechanism. By examining these questions, the article seeks not only to illuminate the Saudi experience but also to contribute to broader discussions on the future development of mediation across the Arab world.

Survey Methodology

This study employs an empirical survey to examine the role, effectiveness, and utilisation of reconciliation and mediation within the dispute resolution framework of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The survey was designed to assess levels of public awareness, attitudes toward mediation as an alternative to litigation, and the key factors influencing its adoption and development. By analysing the perspectives of individuals from diverse professional and social backgrounds, the study seeks to provide a clearer understanding of the current state of reconciliation and mediation in Saudi Arabia and to identify potential pathways for strengthening these mechanisms within the broader judicial and institutional framework.

The survey sample consisted of 384 respondents, determined on the basis of statistical criteria ensuring a 95% confidence level and a 0.05% margin of error, thereby providing a representative dataset for analysing stakeholder perceptions.¹ Prior to its full distribution, the questionnaire was piloted on a smaller sample drawn from different sectors of society in order to test clarity, identify potential ambiguities, and ensure alignment with the research objectives. Feedback obtained during this stage enabled the refinement of certain questions, enhancing the reliability and accuracy of the data collected.

The questionnaire was structured to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights. It incorporated a combination of closed-ended questions, which allowed respondents to select predefined options for statistical analysis, and open-ended questions, which provided participants with the opportunity to express views and suggestions in greater depth. The survey was designed to progress from general questions concerning awareness and perceptions of mediation to more specialised questions addressing experiences, challenges, and recommendations for development.

¹ Cochran's formula is used in statistics to determine the sample size in surveys when the population size is unknown, ensuring accurate representation of the sample based on the confidence level and margin of error. The sample size was calculated using the following formula:

$$n = Z^2 * p * (1 - p) / e^2$$

By applying $Z = 1.96$ for a 95% confidence level, $p = 0.5$ as a default proportion, and a margin of error (e) = 0.05, the sample size was determined to be 384 participants.

To maximise accessibility and reach, the questionnaire was developed and distributed using the Google Forms platform, enabling electronic participation across different regions of Saudi Arabia. It was disseminated between 5 February and 7 March 2025 (6 Sha'bān to 7 Ramaḍān 1446 AH) through a variety of digital channels, including WhatsApp, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), Telegram, and professional networks. Targeted outreach was conducted to ensure diversity among respondents, including licensed lawyers, legal consultants, law students, dispute resolution practitioners, public and private sector professionals, and individuals involved in reconciliation and mediation processes. The distribution and monitoring of responses were overseen by a research team of four legal researchers under the supervision of the author.

To maintain neutrality and encourage candid participation, the questionnaire allowed respondents to complete the survey anonymously, with personal information such as names and contact details remaining optional. Follow-up communication with participants was limited to facilitating completion of the questionnaire and did not involve any form of influence on the responses. This approach ensured that the data collected reflected the genuine views and experiences of the participants while preserving the integrity of the research process.

Data Analysis

This survey is distinguished by the diversity of its sample population and the methodological approach employed. By adopting a comprehensive analytical methodology, the data collected underwent both quantitative and qualitative analysis aimed at uncovering the current reality of reconciliation and mediation and measuring their effectiveness. The findings were illustrated using graphical representations, and practical recommendations were derived to strengthen the reconciliation and mediation framework in Saudi Arabia.

To ensure the highest level of objectivity, the study took care to include participants with diverse backgrounds in terms of expertise and specialization. Notably, it also incorporated insights from individuals who have direct experience with reconciliation processes. This approach lends greater credibility to the findings and offers a realistic depiction of reconciliation and mediation practices in Saudi Arabia.

The questionnaire titled *“The Role of Reconciliation and Mediation in Dispute Resolution in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”* received 384 responses from individuals with varying degrees of engagement with dispute resolution processes. Respondents were asked to provide demographic and professional information including job title, age group, and academic qualifications in order to contextualise the survey findings.

As illustrated in Charts 1–3, the sample is composed predominantly of legal practitioners, particularly lawyers and legal consultants, alongside participants from the public and private sectors and a smaller number of individuals directly involved in reconciliation and mediation activities. The age distribution indicates that the survey largely reflects the perspectives of mid-career professionals, many of whom are likely to have practical experience with legal processes. The educational profile of respondents also shows a high level of academic attainment, with most participants holding university degrees and a substantial proportion possessing postgraduate qualifications. Taken together, these characteristics suggest that the survey captures informed perspectives from individuals professionally engaged in, or closely familiar with, dispute resolution practices in Saudi Arabia.

In contrast, the SIDRA Survey is based on data collected from 211 respondents across 26 countries (Alexander et al. 2024). The sample is dominated by legal professionals, with External Counsels (dispute resolution and corporate lawyers) accounting for 90% of respondents, while Client Users (in-house counsel and corporate executives) make up the remaining 10% (Alexander et al. 2024). Within the External Counsel group, the overwhelming majority (84%) are dispute resolution lawyers (Alexander et al. 2024). Geographically, the respondent base is concentrated in Asia, with almost half of External Counsels (49.7%) being based in Singapore, followed by the United Kingdom (6.9%) and the Philippines (6.3%) (Alexander

et al. 2024). The pool of respondents ensures diverse perspectives, as they represent countries operating under common law, civil law, and hybrid legal systems.

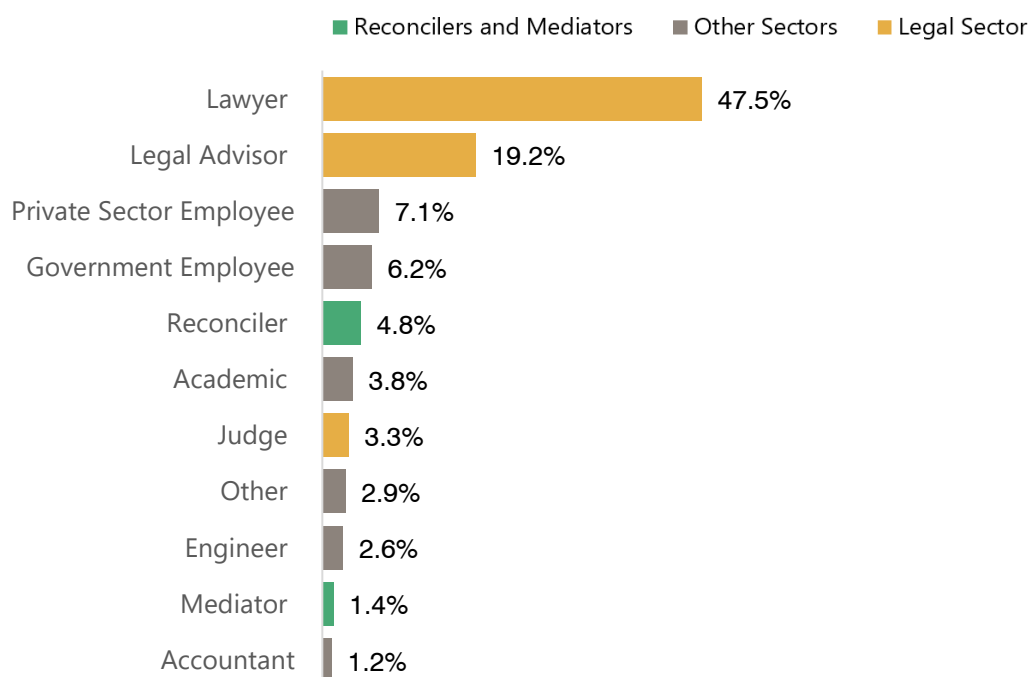


Chart 1: Relative Distribution of Participants by Job Title

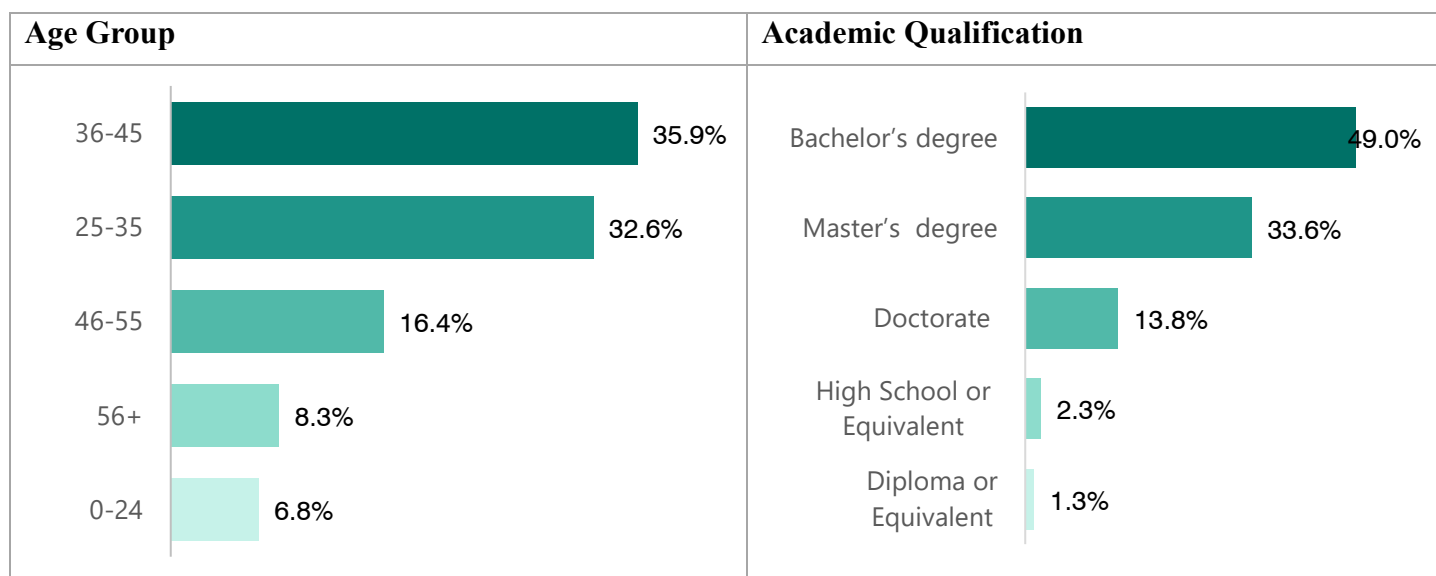


Chart 2: Relative Distribution of Participants by Age Group

Chart 3: Relative Distribution of Participants by Academic Qualifications

Findings

The survey questionnaire was designed to address the following seven main themes:

- i. Awareness and knowledge of reconciliation and mediation.
- ii. The effectiveness of reconciliation and mediation in comparison with litigation.
- iii. The role of the conciliator or mediator in facilitating amicable settlements between disputing parties.
- iv. Personal experiences in resorting to reconciliation and mediation.
- v. Challenges and obstacles facing reconciliation and mediation.
- vi. Promoting a culture of reconciliation and mediation within society.
- vii. The role of technology and artificial intelligence in reconciliation and mediation.

The questions as well as the findings from the same have been detailed below.

Awareness and Knowledge of Reconciliation and Mediation

This section examines participants' familiarity with reconciliation and mediation and their perceptions of how frequently these mechanisms are used in practice. Respondents were first asked to assess their level of familiarity with reconciliation and mediation as dispute resolution mechanisms. Four response categories were provided: high, moderate, somewhat, and low.

As shown in Chart 5, most respondents reported a relatively strong degree of familiarity with these mechanisms. A majority indicated either high or moderate knowledge, while only a small minority reported limited familiarity. All respondents who identified themselves as reconciliators or mediators indicated a high level of familiarity. Similarly, most judges, lawyers, and legal consultants reported either high or moderate knowledge.

These results suggest that the survey responses largely reflect the views of individuals who are professionally exposed to dispute resolution processes. However, because the measure relies on self-assessment, the depth of respondents' knowledge cannot be independently verified and may reflect differing interpretations of what constitutes a "high" level of familiarity.

Participants were also asked to indicate how frequently reconciliation and mediation are used across different areas of dispute resolution, using a scale ranging from "always" to "never". The responses suggest that these mechanisms are perceived to be used relatively frequently, with more than half of participants indicating regular use in practice. At the same time, a substantial proportion reported that reconciliation and mediation are used only occasionally, while a smaller group perceived their use as relatively rare.

The findings highlight a possible gap between awareness and perceived application. While familiarity with mediation appears relatively widespread among respondents—particularly among legal professionals the perceived extent of its practical use appears more uneven. This may indicate that, despite broad awareness, reconciliation and mediation are not yet consistently integrated into everyday dispute resolution practice.

Question (1.1): To what extent are you familiar with the concept and mechanism of reconciliation and mediation as a means of dispute resolution?

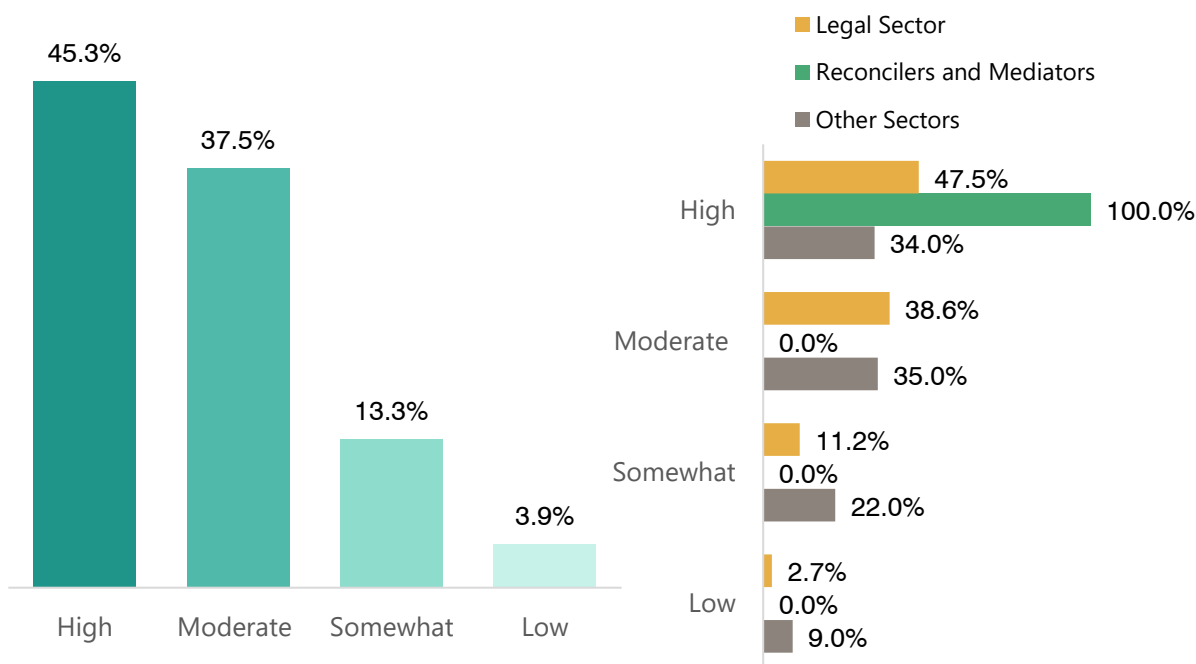


Chart 4: Participants' Level of Knowledge of the Concept of Reconciliation and Mediation

Chart 5: Assessment of the Level of Knowledge of the Concept and Mechanism of Reconciliation and Mediation Across Different Sectors

Question: (2.1): Based on your experience and knowledge, to what extent are reconciliation and mediation utilized as mechanisms for dispute resolution?

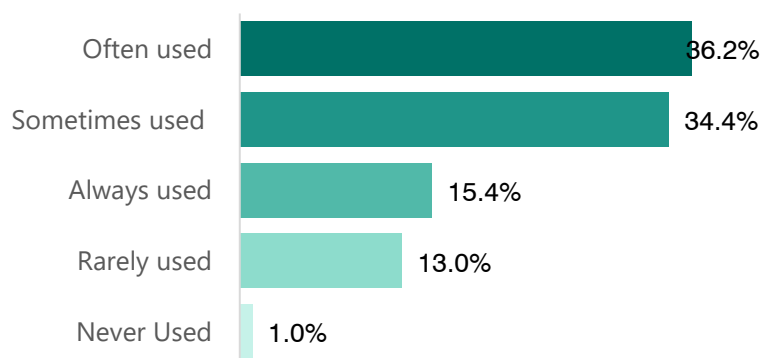


Chart 6: The Extent of Utilizing Reconciliation and Mediation as Mechanisms for Dispute Resolution

The Effectiveness of Reconciliation and Mediation in Comparison with Litigation

This section examines participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of reconciliation and mediation compared with litigation. Respondents were asked to assess whether these mechanisms are very effective, somewhat effective, ineffective, or whether they were unsure.

As shown in Chart 8, respondents generally expressed a positive view of reconciliation and mediation as dispute resolution mechanisms. A clear majority regarded them as effective to varying degrees, while only a small minority expressed scepticism.

Some variation is visible across professional groups. Conciliators and mediators reported the highest level of confidence, with all respondents in this group evaluating these mechanisms positively. Legal professionals also expressed largely favourable views, although a greater proportion characterised reconciliation and mediation as "somewhat effective" rather than "very effective." Participants from other sectors similarly reported strong confidence in their effectiveness.

Comparative insight from the SIDRA Survey helps to clarify this point. The SIDRA Survey shows how awareness in other jurisdictions is actively channelled into practice (Alexander et al. 2024). Two factors were especially influential: external counsel's advice (67%) and contractual obligations (50%), often in the form of mediation clauses that make mediation a mandatory first step before arbitration or litigation (Alexander et al. 2024). These mechanisms mean that users are not only aware of mediation but are also guided toward using it.

By contrast, the findings of the present survey suggest a somewhat different dynamic. While respondents reported high levels of familiarity with mediation and generally recognised its effectiveness, perceptions of its practical use appear more mixed. Many participants indicated that reconciliation and mediation are used only occasionally in practice.

Collectively, these findings point to a potential gap between perceived effectiveness and actual utilisation. Although reconciliation and mediation are widely regarded as credible alternatives to litigation, they may not yet be fully integrated into routine dispute resolution practices. This may suggest the importance of institutional frameworks, contractual practices, and professional guidance in translating awareness and confidence into more consistent use.

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Question (1.2): In your opinion, to what extent can reconciliation and mediation be considered effective options for dispute resolution compared to litigation?

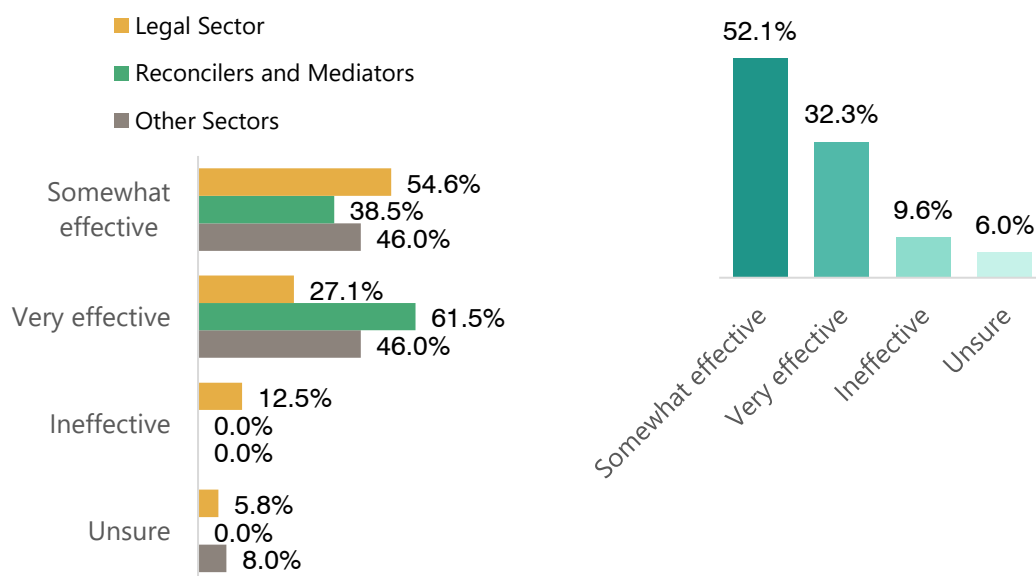


Chart 7: The Extent of the Effectiveness of Reconciliation in Comparison to Litigation from the Perspective of Various Respondents

Chart 8: The Effectiveness of Reconciliation in Comparison to Litigation

Question (2.2): What are the main advantages that reconciliation and mediation offer in comparison to litigation?

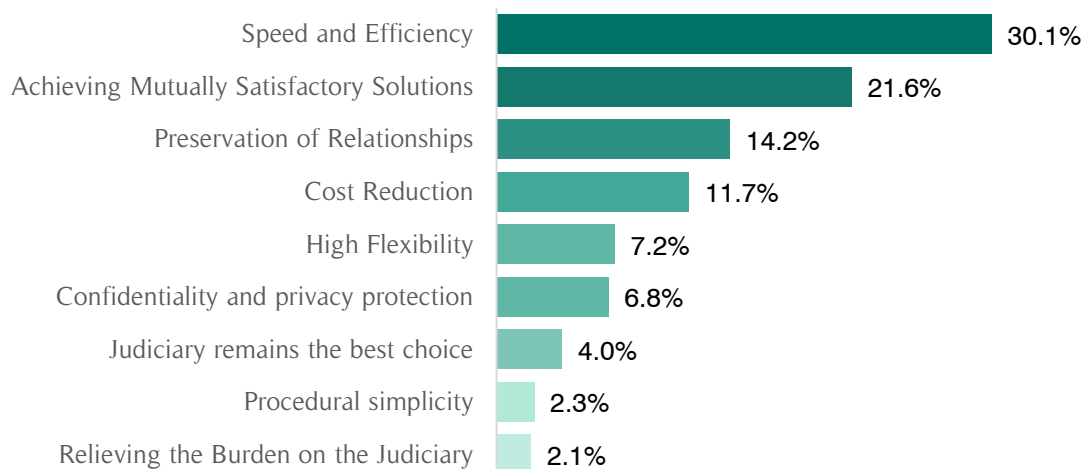


Chart 9: Advantages of Reconciliation Compared to Litigation

Participants were also asked to identify the principal advantages of reconciliation and mediation compared with judicial proceedings. As illustrated in Chart 9, several benefits were selected by respondents.

The most frequently selected option was speed and efficiency. This result may indicate that respondents associate reconciliation and mediation with more streamlined dispute resolution processes than litigation, which often involves formal procedures and longer timelines. It may also reflect the perception that mediation allows disputes to be addressed more directly and flexibly.

Another commonly selected advantage was the possibility of reaching mutually satisfactory solutions. This finding could suggest that respondents view mediation as a process that allows parties to participate more actively in shaping the outcome, in contrast to judicial decisions that impose a binding resolution.

Respondents also selected preservation of relationships as a notable advantage. This may reflect the perception that reconciliation and mediation, by emphasising dialogue and cooperative problem-solving, are better suited to maintaining ongoing commercial, familial, or professional relationships.

Other options chosen by participants included cost reduction, procedural flexibility, and confidentiality. These selections may indicate that respondents associate mediation with lower financial burdens, greater procedural autonomy, and the ability to resolve disputes in private settings where sensitive information can remain protected. A smaller proportion of respondents identified institutional benefits, such as the potential for reconciliation and mediation to reduce pressure on courts. Only a limited number of participants considered these mechanisms to offer negligible advantages, suggesting that most respondents view them as valuable alternatives to litigation.

The SIDRA Survey reinforces these themes at a global level. Its respondents ranked cost (88%), speed (79%), and impartiality (79%) as the three most important factors in deciding whether to use mediation, with satisfaction levels largely aligned: 75% satisfied with cost, 83% with speed, and 67% with impartiality (Alexander et al. 2024, 37). These priorities closely mirror the Saudi survey, where participants identified speed and efficiency as the leading advantage of mediation, followed by the ability to achieve mutually satisfactory solutions, the preservation of relationships, and cost reduction. Both surveys highlight that mediation's appeal lies less in procedural formality and more in its capacity to deliver efficient, fair, and relationship-sensitive outcomes. The comparison suggests that whether in Saudi Arabia or internationally,

user confidence in mediation stems primarily from its practical advantages over litigation rather than from abstract endorsement of ADR.

The Role of the Conciliator or Mediator in Facilitating Amicable Settlements between Disputing Parties

This section examined the qualities and professional requirements expected of conciliators and mediators, given their central role in facilitating reconciliation and mediation processes. Respondents were asked to identify the attributes they considered important for enabling a fair and effective resolution of disputes.

Participants could select one or more qualities from a list that included professional qualifications and skills, neutrality and independence, objectivity in dealing with the parties, effective communication, and legal capacity and civil rights. As shown in Chart 10, many respondents selected multiple attributes, suggesting that these qualities are often viewed as complementary rather than independent.

Among the individual attributes, professional qualifications and skills were selected most frequently, followed by objectivity in dealing with the parties and communication ability. Legal capacity and civil rights were chosen less often in comparison. Respondents who identified themselves as conciliators or mediators were particularly likely to select the option indicating that all listed qualities should be present. This pattern may suggest a perception among practitioners that effective mediation requires a combination of professional competence, impartiality, and interpersonal skills, rather than reliance on any single attribute.

Question (1.3): In your opinion, what are the most important qualities a conciliator or mediator should possess to ensure the success of the dispute resolution process?

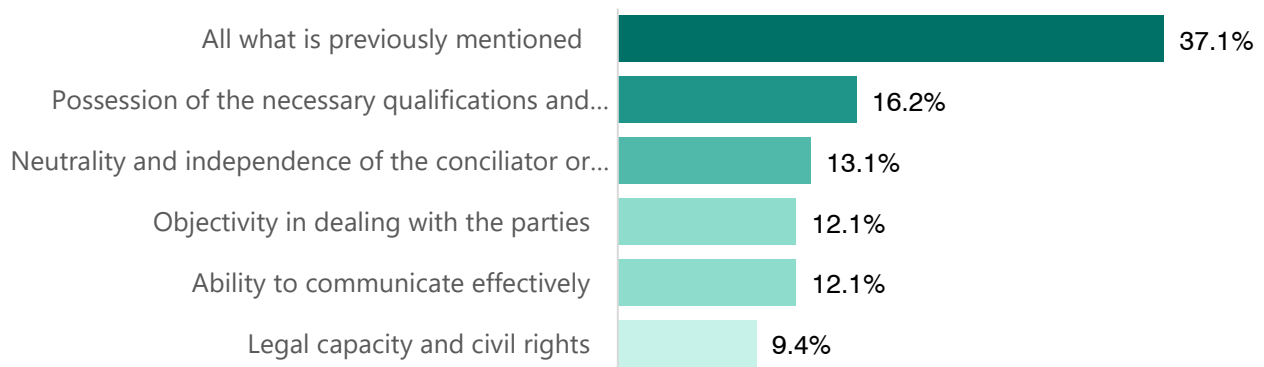


Chart 10: Key Qualities of the Conciliator or Mediator

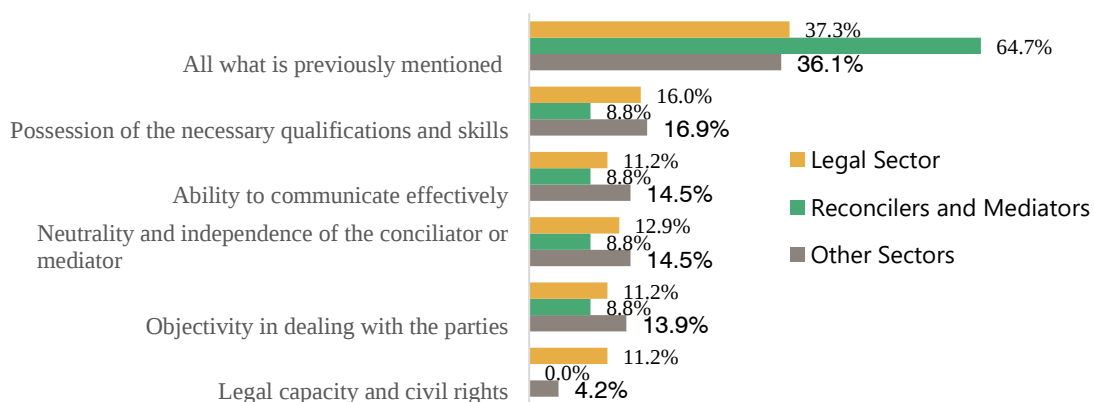


Chart 11: Key Qualities of the Conciliator or Mediator from the Perspective of Different Sectors

Building on this discussion of professional qualities, the questionnaire also explored whether legal specialisation is necessary for individuals serving as conciliators or mediators. Participants were asked to indicate whether the role should be limited to those with formal legal training, whether individuals from other academic backgrounds could perform the role provided they receive appropriate training, or whether practical skills and experience should be considered more important than academic specialisation.

The responses reveal no single dominant view, but rather a relatively balanced distribution of opinions. As shown in Chart 12, the largest group of respondents supported the view that conciliators or mediators may come from any academic background provided they receive appropriate training. Other participants emphasised either the importance of formal legal specialisation or the primacy of practical skills and professional experience over academic credentials. Interestingly, respondents who were themselves conciliators or mediators expressed similar views, with a slight preference for the importance of training and professional competence rather than strict legal specialisation.

These findings suggest that while legal knowledge is widely valued, many participants consider training, skills, and professional competencies to be equally if not more important in ensuring the effectiveness of reconciliation and mediation processes.

This prioritisation resonates strongly with international findings. The SIDRA Survey showed that the top two factors influencing the choice of mediators were dispute resolution experience (92%) and good ethics (92%) (Alexander et al. 2024, 45). These were also the leading criteria in the 2022 and 2020 SIDRA reports, underscoring their enduring importance (Alexander et al. 2024, 45). These were followed by possession of industry/issue specific knowledge (88%) and cultural familiarity (88%). Satisfaction levels were correspondingly high: 92% of users were satisfied with their mediators' ethics and cultural familiarity, and 88% with their dispute resolution experience and industry/issue-specific knowledge (Alexander et al. 2024, 45). Interestingly, while only 67% of respondents viewed formal qualifications as essential, 79% reported satisfaction with mediators' qualifications suggesting that, in practice, users value skills and experience more than paper credentials, but still appreciate professional grounding (Alexander et al. 2024, 45). These findings imply that while formal legal qualifications and academic specialization can enhance the credibility of a conciliator or mediator, practical skills, experience, and comprehensive training are the decisive factors in ensuring effective dispute resolution. In essence, the success of mediation hinges less on credentials alone and more on the integrative combination of expertise, ethical conduct, and the ability to manage disputes impartially and competently.

Question (2.3): Do you believe that a conciliator or mediator should be specialized in law, or is professional training and qualification sufficient?



Chart 12: Assessment of the Importance of Legal Specialization for the Conciliator

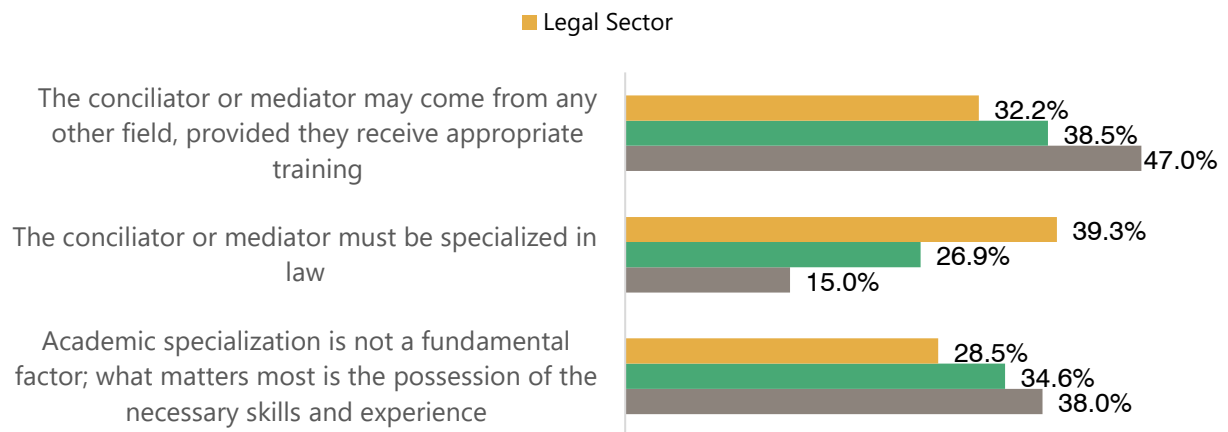


Chart 13: Assessment of the Importance of Legal Specialization for the Conciliator from the Perspective of Different Sectors

Personal Experiences in Resorting to Reconciliation and Mediation

This part of the questionnaire examined the extent to which individuals rely on reconciliation and mediation centres for dispute resolution. Participants were asked to indicate whether they had previously used such centres and, if so, to reflect on the outcome of that experience. Those who had not used them were asked whether they would consider doing so in the future.

As shown in Chart 14, the largest group of respondents reported that they had not yet used reconciliation or mediation centres but expressed interest in doing so. A substantial proportion of participants also indicated that they had previously resorted to such centres and had positive experiences, suggesting that users who engage with these mechanisms generally view them favourably.

By contrast, a smaller number of respondents reported unsuccessful experiences, while a notable minority indicated that they did not perceive any benefit in resorting to reconciliation or mediation centres, despite having no prior experience with them. This finding points to the presence of perceptual barriers, where scepticism persists even among individuals who have not directly engaged with the process.

These results suggest that while actual experience with reconciliation and mediation remains relatively limited, there is a significant level of latent interest among respondents. This indicates potential for wider adoption if awareness initiatives and institutional support mechanisms continue to expand.

Interestingly, even respondents who identified themselves as conciliators or mediators expressed interest in experiencing reconciliation or mediation from the perspective of disputing parties. This further reflects the perceived value of these mechanisms and the willingness among practitioners to engage with them beyond their professional roles.

Question (1.4): Have you ever resorted to a reconciliation or mediation centre to resolve a dispute with another party?

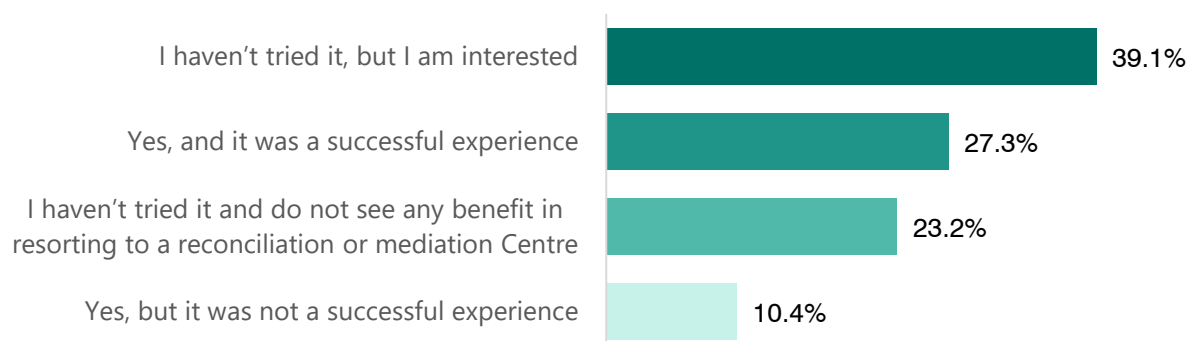


Chart 14: Experience of Resorting to Reconciliation Centres

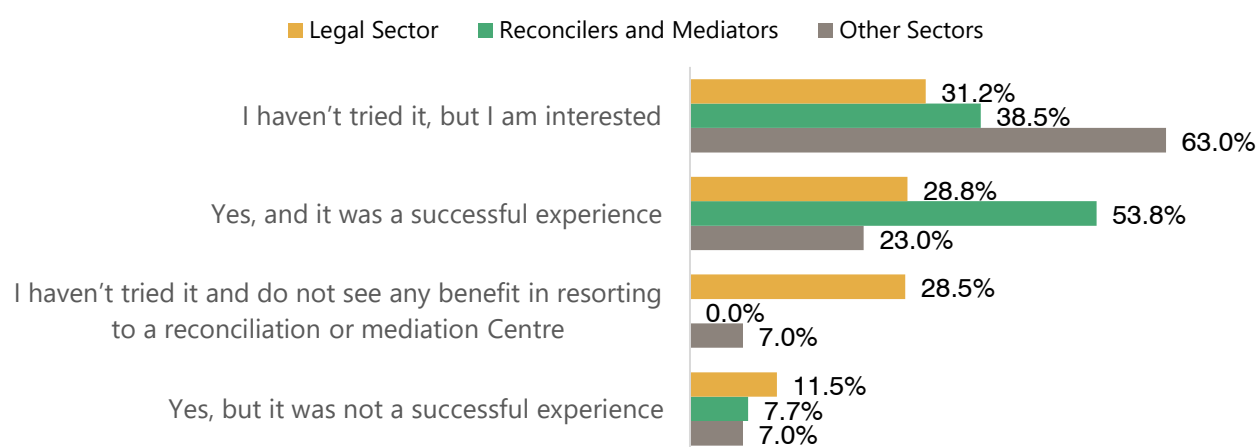


Chart 15: Experience of Different Sectors in Resorting to Reconciliation Centres

Challenges and Obstacles to Reconciliation and Mediation

This section of the questionnaire explored the factors that may hinder the broader adoption of reconciliation and mediation as mechanisms for dispute resolution. Participants were asked to identify the primary reason why disputing parties may be reluctant to resort to reconciliation and mediation centres. Four possible explanations were provided, including lack of awareness of the benefits of mediation, weak legal and regulatory frameworks, lack of confidence in the centres' ability to resolve disputes, and the cost of mediation services.

As illustrated in Chart 16, the most frequently cited factor was lack of awareness of the benefits of reconciliation and mediation. This response was particularly prominent among specialists in the field, including conciliators and mediators, as well as respondents from other professional sectors. The result indicates that insufficient public understanding of these mechanisms remains a major barrier to their wider use.

The second most frequently identified obstacle was lack of confidence in the ability of reconciliation and mediation centres to resolve disputes effectively. This concern was expressed across multiple respondent groups, including legal professionals and participants from other sectors, suggesting that perceptions of institutional credibility play an important role in shaping parties' willingness to engage with these mechanisms.

Other factors were viewed as comparatively less influential. A smaller proportion of respondents pointed to weak legal and regulatory frameworks, while high fees were generally considered a less significant barrier. As a whole, these findings suggest that the limited use of reconciliation and mediation is driven less by structural or financial constraints than by perceptual factors, particularly limited awareness and concerns about institutional effectiveness.

These results highlight the importance of strengthening public awareness initiatives and reinforcing confidence in reconciliation and mediation centres, both of which are essential for encouraging wider recourse to these mechanisms in dispute resolution.

The SIDRA Survey findings provide a useful comparative perspective, highlighting factors that influence users' choice of mediation institutions and their satisfaction with these services. Over 80% of respondents in the SIDRA survey considered efficiency (88%), cultural familiarity of the mediator panel (83%), and the quality of services in administering proceedings (83%) as either 'absolutely crucial' or 'important' (Alexander et al. 2024, 39). Correspondingly, high satisfaction levels were reported: 83% were satisfied with institutional efficiency, while 75% expressed satisfaction with both the cultural familiarity of mediators and the quality-of-service administration (Alexander et al. 2024, 29). When juxtaposed with the current survey's findings, a clear pattern emerges: while lack of public awareness and confidence remains a significant barrier locally, users who do engage with mediation institutions tend to value and appreciate the same operational and qualitative features emphasised in international contexts. This suggests that promoting awareness and building trust in reconciliation and mediation centres—particularly by highlighting their efficiency, cultural competence, and service quality—could significantly increase uptake and public confidence in these mechanisms.

Question (1.5): In your opinion, what is the main reason behind the limited recourse to reconciliation and mediation centres for dispute resolution?

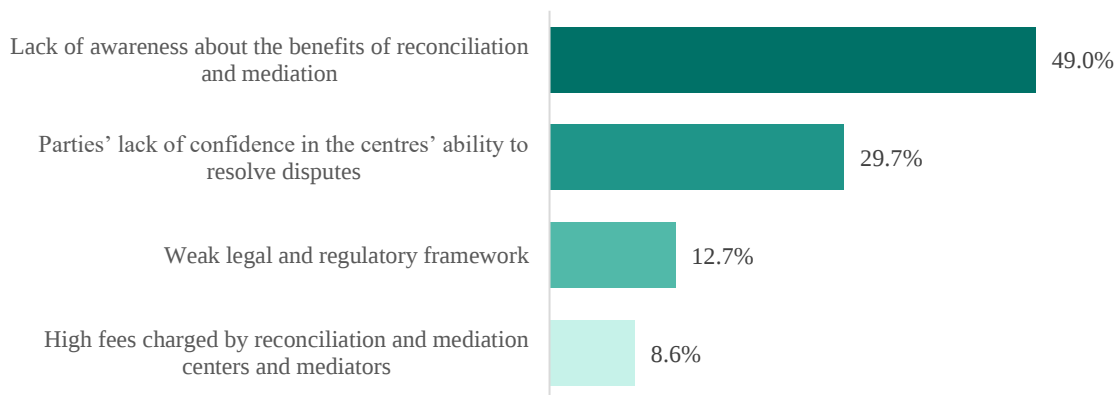


Chart 16: *Reasons for the Limited Recourse to Reconciliation and Mediation Centres*

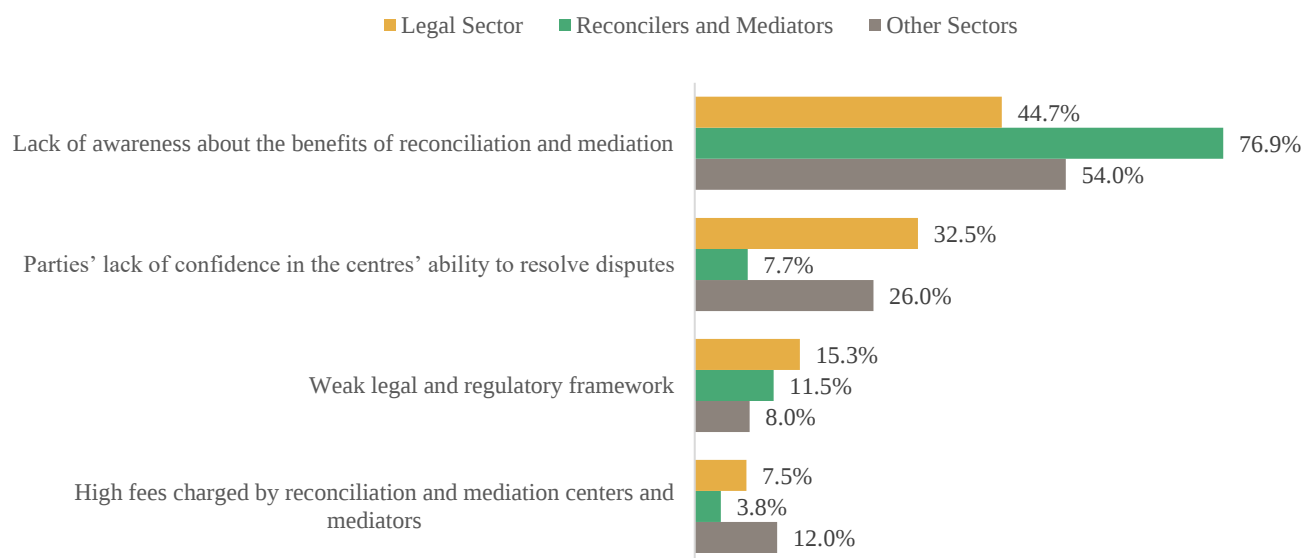


Chart 17: Reasons for the Limited Recourse to Reconciliation and Mediation Centres Across Different Sectors

Participants were also asked to identify the principal reasons why reconciliation and mediation processes may fail. As illustrated in Chart 18, respondents selected factors relating to the performance of mediators, the nature of disputes, institutional challenges, and the conduct of the parties.

The most frequently selected factor concerned the performance of the conciliator or mediator. This result may indicate that respondents associate unsuccessful outcomes with concerns about mediators' expertise, experience, or perceived neutrality. It could also suggest that issues such as coordination between mediators and legal representatives, or procedural practices such as long intervals between sessions, may affect confidence in the process.

Another commonly selected factor related to the complexity of legal issues involved in certain disputes. This may reflect a perception that highly technical or multifaceted disputes require specialised expertise and may be more difficult to resolve through mediation.

Respondents also selected institutional and perceptual factors, including limited confidence in reconciliation and mediation centres and insufficient public awareness of their purpose and benefits. These selections may indicate concerns about institutional capacity, uncertainty regarding the enforceability of settlement agreements, or broader misconceptions about the role of mediation in dispute resolution.

A smaller proportion of respondents highlighted procedural and behavioural factors, including lack of consequences for non-cooperation and the conduct of disputing parties, such as inconsistent participation or limited engagement in the mediation process. Communication difficulties between mediators and parties were also selected as potential contributing factors.

These findings may suggest that the perceived success of reconciliation and mediation depends on a combination of professional competence, institutional credibility, and constructive participation by the parties. They may also indicate the potential importance of strengthening mediator training, institutional capacity, and public awareness of mediation frameworks.

Question (2.5): What are the main reasons that lead to the failure of reconciliation and mediation between disputing parties?

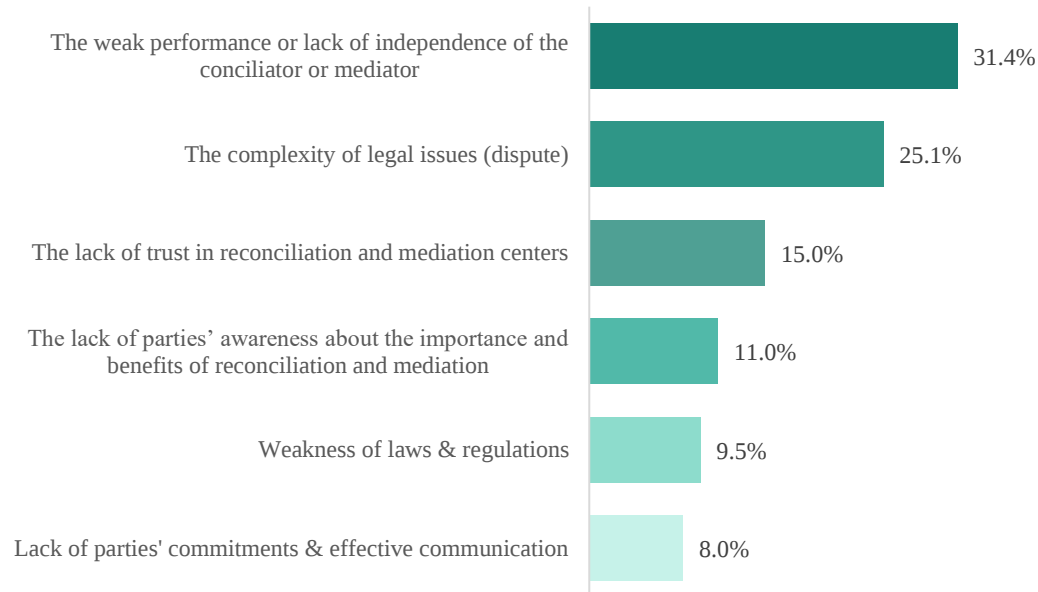


Chart 18: Reasons for the Failure of Reconciliation and Mediation Between Disputing Parties

Participants were also asked to identify the most significant obstacles faced by disputing parties when turning to reconciliation and mediation. As shown in Chart 19, respondents selected challenges relating to awareness, social attitudes, procedural constraints, and technical barriers.

The most frequently selected obstacle concerned limited awareness of reconciliation and settlement mechanisms. This finding may suggest that insufficient understanding of the purpose and potential benefits of these processes is perceived as a barrier to their wider use. It may also indicate that limited awareness could be associated with lower levels of confidence in mediators and reconciliation centres.

Another group of responses related to psychological and social barriers, including entrenched perceptions, negative past experiences, and reluctance to engage directly with opposing parties. These selections may reflect the view that reconciliation is sometimes perceived as less effective than litigation or as requiring concessions that parties may be unwilling to make.

Respondents also selected procedural and enforcement-related challenges, such as limited availability of mediation centres, difficulty accessing qualified mediators, procedural complexity, scheduling constraints, and uncertainty regarding the enforceability of settlement agreements. These responses may indicate concerns about the accessibility and reliability of reconciliation mechanisms.

Additional responses referred to technical barriers, including limited familiarity with digital platforms and insufficient administrative or institutional support. A smaller proportion of respondents selected lack of willingness among disputing parties as a potential obstacle, while only a small number indicated that there were no significant barriers or raised concerns about possible misuse of reconciliation processes.

These responses may suggest that perceived obstacles to reconciliation and mediation extend beyond legal frameworks and include awareness, institutional capacity, and behavioural factors. They may also indicate the potential value of awareness initiatives, institutional strengthening, and improved procedural accessibility in supporting the broader use of these mechanisms.

The SIDRA Survey provides a comparative perspective, revealing that while availability of specialist dispute resolution professionals and political sensitivity were factors with the lowest satisfaction levels (50%), transparency (38%) and political sensitivity (50%) were considered least important in choosing mediation (Alexander et al. 2024, 37). When juxtaposed with the current survey's findings, a pattern emerges: local participants are primarily concerned with practical and trust-related barriers, whereas users' satisfaction in broader contexts depends heavily on the availability and competence of neutrals. This suggests that improving the accessibility and visibility of qualified mediators, alongside awareness and trust-building measures, could substantially increase engagement with reconciliation and mediation.

Question (3.5): What are the main obstacles or challenges that parties face when pursuing reconciliation and mediation?

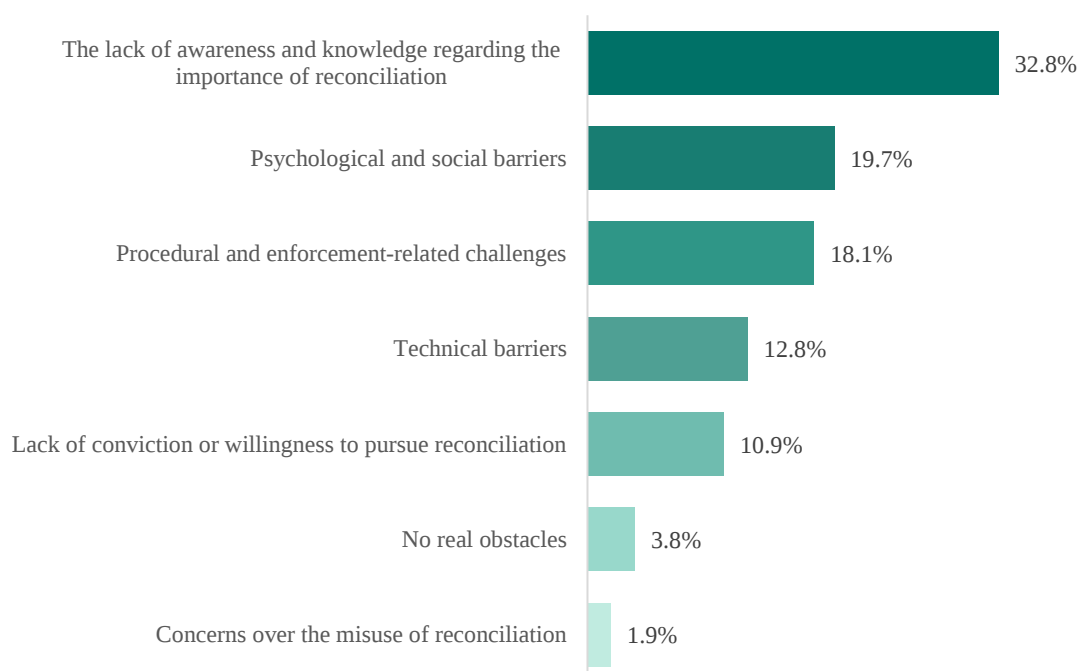


Chart 19: Obstacles Faced by Parties When Pursuing Reconciliation or Mediation

Promoting a Culture of Reconciliation and Mediation Within Society

This part of the questionnaire explored possible initiatives to strengthen the adoption of reconciliation and mediation within society. Participants were invited to identify measures that could support the wider use of these mechanisms. Their responses, summarised in Chart 20, indicate several potential areas of focus relating to awareness, institutional support, and professional capacity.

The most frequently selected proposals concerned education and public awareness. Respondents indicated support for initiatives such as incorporating mediation concepts into school and university curricula, organising workshops and training programmes, and using media platforms to increase public familiarity with reconciliation processes. Some participants also referred to the role of religious and cultural values, including references to Islamic teachings that emphasise reconciliation.

Another group of responses related to legal and institutional measures. Participants selected options including expanding the use of mediation prior to litigation in certain disputes, strengthening legislative frameworks regulating mediation, and encouraging public institutions to include mediation clauses in contracts. These responses may suggest a perceived role for government and regulatory frameworks in

promoting broader acceptance of mediation. Respondents also identified initiatives aimed at strengthening mediation infrastructure and professional capacity, such as expanding reconciliation centres, improving access to trained mediators, and developing specialised training and certification programmes. Some participants additionally supported the establishment of community-level mediation services to improve accessibility.

Finally, a smaller group of responses referred to incentives for public engagement, including providing mediation services at low or no cost, supporting mediation initiatives through external funding, and publicising successful settlement outcomes.

This may indicate that expanding the use of reconciliation and mediation could involve a combination of awareness initiatives, institutional development, and professional training.

Question (1.6): How can the role of reconciliation and mediation be strengthened through actions and initiatives that contribute to establishing them as a sustainable societal culture?

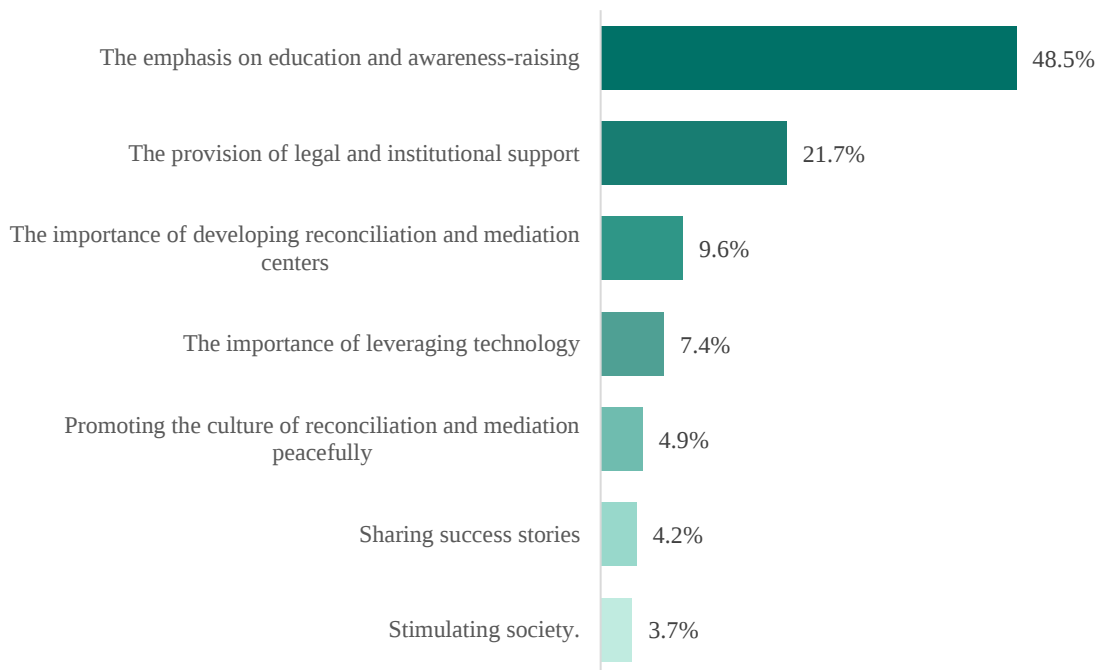


Chart 20: Measures and Initiatives to Promote the Role of Reconciliation as a Societal Culture

The questionnaire also examined standards that may contribute to trust in reconciliation and mediation centres. Participants were invited to identify institutional and professional factors that they considered important in strengthening confidence in these mechanisms.

The most frequently selected responses related to integrity, impartiality, and transparency. These selections may indicate that respondents view neutrality and fairness as key elements in ensuring that parties are treated equally and that mediation processes are conducted in an open and balanced manner. Another commonly selected factor concerned professional competence and qualifications. Participants indicated the importance of mediators possessing appropriate academic training and practical experience, as well as continuing professional development in negotiation and dispute management. Some respondents also selected options relating to clearer licensing frameworks or the involvement of experienced legal practitioners in complex disputes. Responses also highlighted confidentiality and institutional credibility.

These selections may suggest that maintaining the confidentiality of mediation proceedings and operating within recognised regulatory frameworks are perceived as important in fostering confidence in mediation centres. Participants additionally identified procedural clarity and accessibility, including transparent rules, clear information about procedures and costs, and accessible communication channels. Efficient case management, flexible procedures, and the use of digital services were also selected as factors that could support the effective functioning of mediation centres.

A smaller number of responses referred to institutional accountability and continuous improvement, such as evaluation of mediators' performance, public information on qualifications, and the adoption of recognised professional standards. Some participants also selected factors including neutral venues, reasonable costs, and reliable enforcement of settlement agreements. Collectively, this may indicate that confidence in reconciliation and mediation centres is associated with a combination of professional competence, confidentiality, transparent procedures, and credible institutional frameworks.

The SIDRA Survey reinforces the Saudi findings on the standards required to build trust in mediation. Globally, efficiency (88%), cultural familiarity of mediators (83%), and the quality of institutional services (83%) were identified as the most influential factors in the choice of mediation institutions, with satisfaction levels remaining high (Alexander et al. 2024, 29). These results echo the priorities highlighted by Saudi respondents, who stressed integrity, impartiality, and transparency as foundational qualities, followed closely by professional competence and qualification, and by confidentiality and official oversight. Together, both surveys demonstrate that whether viewed globally or regionally, confidence in mediation rests on a common core: parties want processes that are fast and efficient, led by competent and impartial mediators, administered transparently, and supported by trustworthy institutions that safeguard confidentiality and enforceability.

Question (2.6): What Are the Most Important Standards That Reconciliation and Mediation Centres Must Meet to Ensure the Trust of the Parties?

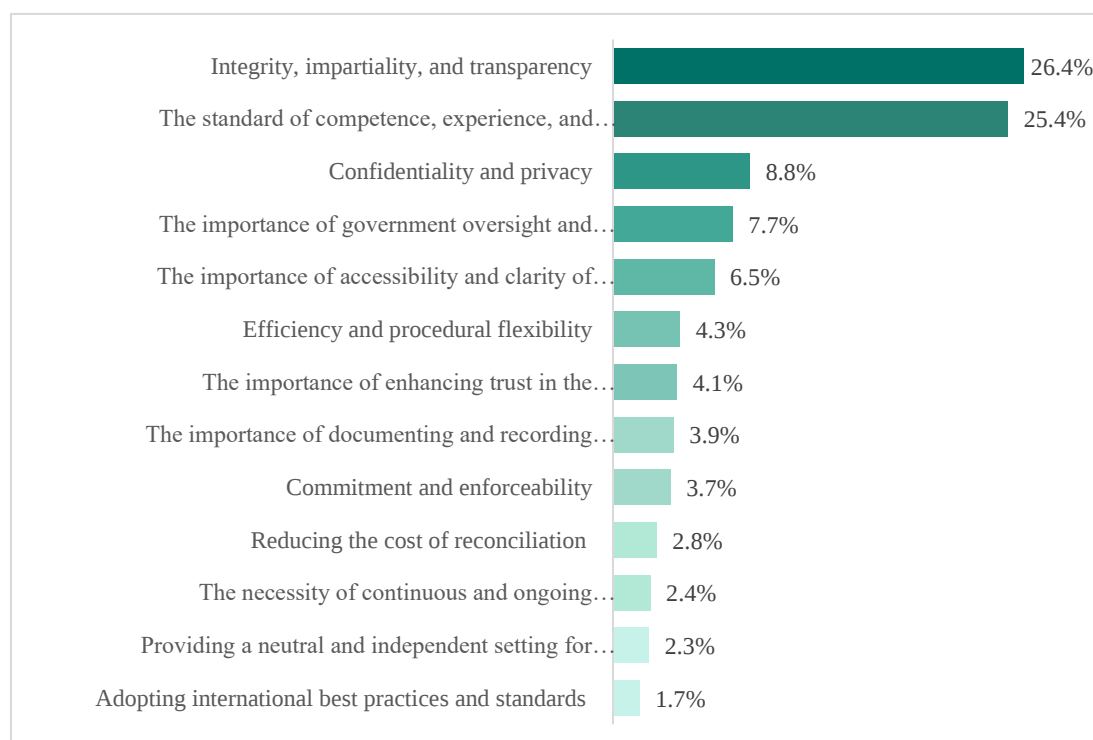


Chart 21: Standards Required in Reconciliation Centres to Enhance Public Trust

The Role of Technology and Artificial Intelligence in Reconciliation and Mediation

This part of the questionnaire explored the potential role of modern technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), in reconciliation and mediation processes. Participants were asked to indicate how AI tools might support dispute resolution in Saudi Arabia.

The most frequently selected responses related to AI-assisted dispute analysis and solution support. Participants indicated potential uses such as analysing case information, identifying patterns from previous disputes, searching relevant regulations and precedents, and assisting in the selection of appropriate mediators. Some responses also referred to possible applications including identifying areas of agreement between parties and supporting multilingual communication through translation tools. Another group of responses concerned administrative and procedural efficiency. Participants selected options suggesting that AI could assist with tasks such as document management, case scheduling, summarising submissions, and drafting settlement agreements. AI-based chatbots and simulation tools were also identified as possible resources for answering procedural queries and supporting mediator training.

At the same time, a number of respondents selected options indicating reservations regarding the use of AI in mediation. These responses may suggest concerns that excessive reliance on technology could overlook the interpersonal and evaluative aspects of mediation. From this perspective, AI may be viewed primarily as a supportive tool rather than a substitute for human mediators. A smaller proportion of responses referred to the possibility of integrated digital platforms enabling online case submission, case tracking, and remote mediation sessions.

These responses may indicate that AI is perceived as having potential value in supporting analysis, administrative efficiency, and accessibility, while the role of human mediators remains central to the mediation process. The SIDRA Survey identified three technologies as most impactful for mediation: communications platforms for virtual hearings (96%), dedicated online dispute resolution platforms with case management features (58%), and e-filing systems (46%) (Alexander et al. 2024, 48). By contrast, Saudi participants highlighted the transformative role of AI in conducting dispute analysis, proposing solutions, and streamlining administrative processes, while also recognising its potential to provide training and even build integrated virtual platforms. The comparison suggests a difference in emphasis: while global respondents prioritise tools already in widespread use that enhance accessibility and efficiency, Saudi respondents look ahead to more advanced, AI-driven applications aligned with the Kingdom's digital transformation agenda. Taken together, the findings imply that Saudi Arabia has the opportunity not only to adopt proven global technologies, but also to position itself at the forefront of innovation by embedding AI into reconciliation and mediation in support of Vision 2030.

Question (7.1): How can artificial intelligence and its tools contribute to improving and enhancing the effectiveness of the reconciliation and mediation mechanism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

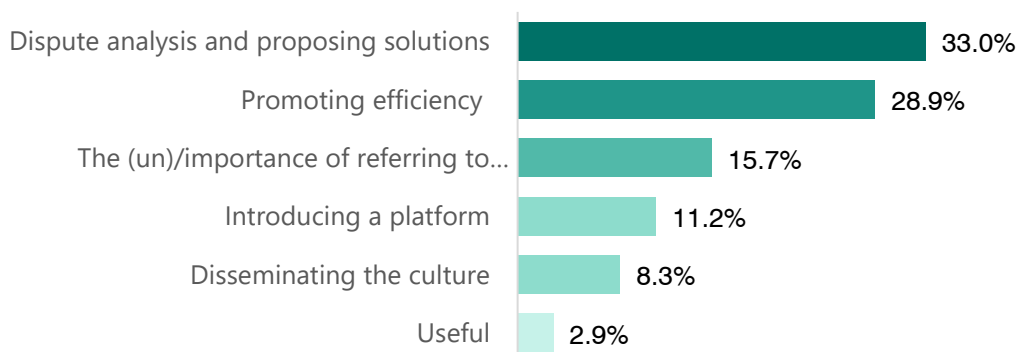


Chart 22: The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Reconciliation and Mediation

Findings and Recommendations for Enhancing the Reconciliation and Mediation System in Saudi Arabia

In light of the results and data analysis derived from this study conducted across the seven aforementioned axes a set of conclusions and recommendations has been developed. These aim to enhance the effectiveness of the reconciliation and mediation system, increase its efficiency, and ensure its integration with the judicial framework in the Kingdom. The recommendations have been categorized under four main thematic areas:

Recommendations Concerning the Regulation of the Reconciliation and Mediation Process

To strengthen the reconciliation and mediation framework in Saudi Arabia, it is imperative to provide and disseminate clear guidelines and procedures that enhance accessibility and reinforce the binding legal weight of reconciliation documents through sustained public awareness efforts. The anticipated enactment of a unified Mediation Law will play a pivotal role in creating the necessary legislative and regulatory foundations, including provisions that impose penalties for breaches of confidentiality and sanctions for failure to attend mediation sessions. Alongside this, specialized rules and procedural manuals should be formulated in line with international best practices and tailored to the distinct nature of disputes—ranging from commercial and real estate matters to intellectual property, financial, and medical malpractice claims—thereby encouraging mediator specialization. Accessibility can also be enhanced by introducing community-based solutions, such as sliding-scale fees and endowments to subsidize costs, ensuring inclusivity. A unified regulatory body should be established to accredit mediators, set training standards, and oversee service delivery, while specialized centres, such as the Tamayouz Program and initiatives under the National Centre for Family-Owned Enterprises, should be supported and expanded. Institutional reforms should further encourage the legal sector to integrate mandatory mediation clauses in contracts, starting with government agreements and extending to private sector practice. Complementary initiatives include promoting comparative legal knowledge through engagement with advanced international models, and supporting the licensing of specialized mediation institutions under privatization strategies, provided confidentiality and regulatory safeguards are preserved.

Recommendations Concerning Capacity-Building for Mediators and Reconcilers

Strengthening mediator capacity requires a comprehensive framework of training, accreditation, and performance evaluation. Targeted training programs should be developed to enhance mediators' negotiation and dispute resolution skills, with particular attention to lawyers, who formed a significant portion of the survey sample and represent central actors in the dispute resolution ecosystem. To ensure consistency and professional credibility, clear standards must be established and accreditation certificates issued, providing benchmarks that mediators are required to meet before practicing. Beyond technical expertise, cultural sensitivity training is essential, enabling mediators to appreciate the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of parties and thereby enrich the reconciliation process. Mediators should also be empowered to provide psychological support, including preparatory consultations and counselling, to help disputing parties manage emotions and expectations. Finally, adopting measurable performance indicators will ensure accountability, encourage continuous skill development, and prevent premature or inadequate resolution efforts, while also supporting parties' confidence in mediation as a credible and effective pathway for dispute resolution.

Recommendations for Promoting a Culture of Reconciliation and Mediation in Society

Promoting a culture of reconciliation and mediation requires a multifaceted strategy that combines awareness, education, and institutional integration. Public awareness campaigns should be developed and widely implemented to improve understanding of mediation, especially in light of survey findings showing

that a significant proportion of participants possessed only moderate knowledge or viewed its use as occasional. Educational programs, including workshops, guidance sessions, and promotional materials, are crucial to highlight mediation's advantages over litigation, with respondents themselves emphasizing the importance of stronger awareness efforts. Media content—such as awareness videos, podcasts, and success stories—can further embed mediation values within society. Collaboration between independent mediators and the non-profit sector should also be strengthened through formal frameworks of cooperation, ensuring broader outreach and social support. At the academic level, reconciliation and mediation should be integrated into curricula across schools and universities, with postgraduate programs designed to prepare future practitioners. Finally, institutionalizing new professional roles such as “Dispute Resolution Specialists” within government, semi-governmental bodies, and private organizations would further normalize mediation practice and embed it within the wider legal and commercial environment.

Recommendations on Activating the Role of Artificial Intelligence in Reconciliation and Mediation

The integration of technology and artificial intelligence into mediation offers significant potential to enhance both efficiency and accessibility. Existing digital platforms should be upgraded and new AI-driven systems developed to streamline processes such as case tracking, document management, and party communication, while also harnessing data analysis and predictive insights to support effective dispute resolution a priority highlighted by nearly a third of survey participants. To maximise these benefits, mediators must be trained in the practical use of AI tools, enabling them to incorporate technology into their practice without compromising the human dimension of mediation. At the same time, robust safeguards for information security and data protection are essential to preserve confidentiality and maintain party trust in electronic proceedings. Finally, regular evaluations of AI tools should be conducted to assess their effectiveness, ensure user confidence, and continuously refine the quality of mediation services in a digital environment.

Conclusion

The findings of this empirical study underscore that the future success of mediation in Saudi Arabia depends not only on raising awareness but also on addressing structural and institutional gaps within the system. Central to this is the establishment of a unified accreditation and qualification framework, ensuring that mediators undergo structured training and achieve professional licensing before practice. Equally important is the creation of a centralized authority to oversee mediation, harmonize procedures, and prevent overlapping roles among existing institutions. A clear distinction must also be drawn between judicial reconciliation—often provided free of charge in limited disputes and broader mediation tracks, both domestic and international, which require tailored regulations to attract investment and address complex, cross-border disputes.

To ensure sustainability, mediation centres should be granted greater financial and administrative autonomy, while the private sector must be empowered to play a more active role through independent initiatives and regulated freelance practice. Comprehensive legislation is needed to consolidate the framework, eliminate inefficiencies, and promote clarity. Crucially, stakeholder participation in drafting such laws will be essential to avoid the shortcomings witnessed in other jurisdictions. Finally, separating the licensing and accreditation of mediators from the actual provision of mediation services will safeguard neutrality, prevent conflicts of interest, and foster healthy competition. Ultimately, these measures provide a roadmap for institutionalising mediation in line with Vision 2030 and positioning Saudi Arabia as a regional leader in alternative dispute resolution.

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