

The Influence of Traditional Governance in Local Government Administration in Ondo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Traditional governance in Nigeria, marked by the roles of Obas, Chiefs, and Community Councils, remains a vital component of local authority. These structures influence decisions on land matters, dispute resolution, cultural preservation, community mobilisation, and political education. However, this institution in modern governance has been subject to the formal administration of local government. The study focused on the effect of traditional governance on local government administration in Ondo State of Nigeria using Akure North and Owo Local Government Areas as a case study.

A mixed-method approach was adopted, and a multistage sampling procedure was employed to select participants. Akure North and Owo Local Government Areas (LGAs) were purposively selected as representatives of Ondo Central and Ondo North Senatorial Districts of Ondo State, Nigeria. A total of 173 questionnaires were retrieved and analysed from the questionnaires distributed and 12 key traditional rulers from both local government areas were interviewed. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were used.

Findings indicated that traditional governance contributed significantly to political responsibilities, with respondents affirming that traditional leaders effectively represent community interests (81.2%), contributed to local policy formulation and implementation (78.5%), and remain accountable to their communities (79.8%). In terms of economic responsibilities, traditional institutions were perceived to facilitate social amenities (77.7%), lobby for development projects (80.2%), promote local economic development (80%), and facilitate trade and commerce (82.3%). The Friedman test confirmed that variations in economic roles were significant ($\chi^2 = 14.581$, $p < .05$), while political roles exhibited no significant differences ($\chi^2 = 8.221$, $p > .05$). Findings further showed the positive influence of traditional governance structures on decision-making and policy implementation in areas such as elections (87.6%), infrastructure development (82%), and economic strategies (73.7%), as well as in social welfare, youth engagement, and conflict resolution, with averaged support across items at 79.2%. The chi-square test confirmed this influence ($\chi^2 = 179.060$, $p < .05$).

The study finally showed that traditional governance is a significant force in the governance of local government in the locality of the study (Akure North and Owo Local Government Areas of Ondo State) and recommended that there should be an integrated management of traditional governance and local government in the study area that will ensure that there is less conflict, better governance and better grassroots development.

Keywords: Traditional governance, Local government administration, Traditional rulers, Political mobilisation, Grassroots development.

INTRODUCTION

Local government, as a tier of government, has generated exciting debates among scholars in the academic world, practitioners, and politicians (Etebom and Wijaya, 2022; Mustapha & Bukar, 2019; Fasunwon, 2018; Osakede & Ijimakiwa, 2015; Tonwe & Osemwota, 2013; Raji, Garuba, and Letswa, 2010; Edmund, 2006).

It has attracted the attention of various scholars across the globe, thereby resulting in multiple conceptualizations and views by different scholars. The need to understand what local government is arises because it is the unit of government, and different meanings or names are used in different countries in referring to local government as a tier of government (Etebom and Wijaya, 2022).

Development programmes and policy agendas in most societies are often generated from the needs and demands of the people at the grassroots level (Fasunwon, 2018). The efficiency of governance is largely measured by the extent to which the developmental and survival needs of the local people are met. This position aligns with the Efficiency-Service School of thought, which argues that the essence of local government is not only democratic participation but also the provision of essential services that directly improve the welfare of the people (Fasunwon, 2018). In line with this argument, local government is regarded as the closest tier of government to the people and therefore better positioned to articulate local demands and facilitate grassroots development.

The system of local government is very crucial to the development process all over the world because it is designed to develop rural areas and improve the welfare of the people. Thus, among other things, local government is expected to provide essential social amenities such as good roads, pipe-borne water, market infrastructure, and primary healthcare centres in fulfilment of its political and economic responsibilities (Raji, Garuba, and Letswa, 2010; Fasunwon, 2018). Fasunwon (2018) further notes that the 1976 Local Government Reforms in Nigeria reinforced the need for decentralization in order to harness local resources for rapid grassroots development. This constitutional recognition was further strengthened by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which assigned important political, economic, environmental, and social responsibilities to local government councils.

Provision of essential services at the local level made compulsory collaboration between the local government officials and the traditional institutions. Local government and traditional institutions must therefore work closely together for local community development. Hence, traditional institutions play a very crucial role in the local government administrative process even before, during, and after the advent of colonialism in Nigeria (Etebom and Wijaya, 2022). Nigeria had a well-structured and functional system of operation during its pre-colonial existence as traditional institutions were seen as the system of government that had shaped appropriate policies for their respective regions and communities, made decisions, and generated funds to meet the needs of their respective communities (Tonwe & Osemwota, 2013).

The function and structure alongside the influence of traditional institutions are deeply grounded in their history, cultures, and traditions, which make people refer to the traditional leaders as semi-gods because of their historical and cultural credibility (Mustapha & Bukar, 2019). Osakede & Ijimakinwa (2015) also emphasize how the traditional societies before colonial administration had a well-organized and established system of administration where public order, native laws, intercommunal and tribal conflicts were provided, maintained, implemented, and settled. The existence of Local government has long been supported because it is an essential component of the democratic process, and ensures an increase in the number of people participating in the decision-making process at large. The primary goal of local government is to provide social goods and services, while the other is to represent the interests of its communities. (Ikelegbe, 2005) Traditional institutions as an integral part of local government play significant roles by sustaining the cultures and traditions of the communities, attending and resolving communal conflict, ensuring peace and harmony, and acting as the custodian of the oral traditional history of their communities.

However, in Local Government, the relationship between traditional governance and local government administration is marked by persistent tensions and power struggles. Traditional rulers, who enjoy deep-rooted cultural legitimacy, often compete with elected officials over authority and influence in local decision-making, leading to conflicts in governance priorities (Adegbite & Akanbi, 2018; Mustapha & Bukar, 2019). The absence of a clearly defined legal framework outlining the roles and boundaries of traditional institutions exacerbates these tensions, resulting in overlapping responsibilities in areas such as land administration, dispute resolution, and community development (Osakede & Ijimakinwa, 2015). This ambiguity contributes to inefficiencies, delays, and confusion among the citizenry. More so, the generational

divisions between tradition-oriented rulers and reform-driven elected officials further hinder collaborative policy implementation in critical sectors like education, infrastructure, and healthcare. Financial constraints also force the local government to rely on traditional institutions for support, a situation that undermines administrative autonomy and creates opportunities for favoritism and corruption (Fasunwon, 2018; Goddey, 2015).

Therefore, this paper focuses on Akure North Local Government Area and Owo Local Government Area of Ondo State as a complementary case for examining the interface between traditional governance and local government administration. The two local governments reflect a strong presence of traditional institutions that continue to influence community leadership structures and local decision-making processes. The area presents similar dynamics of authority contestation, especially in matters relating to land administration, development priorities, and dispute resolution. By incorporating both Akure North Local Government Area and Owo Local Government Area, the study provides a more comparative understanding of traditional–modern governance interactions in Ondo State.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of governance, particularly at the local level, has been a recurring issue in the political history of Nigeria (Olu-Adeyemi, 2019). Nigeria, a country with a rich tapestry of cultural diversity, has long witnessed the existence of traditional governance systems while local government in Nigeria started during the colonial era when it was vested in traditional rulers (Olu-Adeyemi, 2019); its longevity, resilience, efficiency, effectiveness, and relevance in Nigeria have made it a pivotal system of government (Akhakpe, Fatile, and Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2012). Traditional governance structures are deeply embedded in the nation's cultural and historical fabric, and perform key roles in structuring the socio-political and economic system at the local level (Adegbite & Akanbi, 2018).

Goddey (2015) shows that local government administration in Nigeria has passed through rigorous readjustment politically, administratively, structurally, and financially since the colonial era till date for effective democratic governance and political participation at the grassroots. Wilson (2011) adds that the zeal for democratic governance at the grassroots level led to the establishment of local government as a democratic institution for the governance of the rural communities. However, it appears the local governments are not given the desired capability as a democratic institution to achieve effective democratic governance and participation in the rural politics of their area (Goddey, 2015). Therefore, the existence of traditional governance structures in Nigeria's local government raises questions about the overall functionality and effectiveness of the administrative systems. Despite the historical significance and cultural relevance of traditional governance, there is a dearth of comprehensive studies that systematically evaluate its impact on local government dynamics (Adegbite & Akanbi, 2018).

The existing studies on traditional governance in Nigeria's local government structures has explored various aspects of its influence, but significant gaps remain, particularly regarding specific case studies that highlight regional variations such as the nature of traditional governance; centralised or decentralised, methods and rituals made in enthroning into traditional positions, hierarchy of leadership among others. While historical roles of traditional institutions in governance have been studied, there is limited empirical research focusing on their current influence at the local government level, particularly in areas such as the Akure North Local Government Area and Owo Local Government Area. Therefore, this paper is primarily purposed to assess the influence of traditional governance on local government administration in Nigeria, with a comparative focus on Akure North and Owo Local Government Areas of Ondo State, Nigeria.

Aim and Objective

This paper assessed the influence of traditional governance in local government administration in Ondo State, Nigeria, with a specific focus on the Akure North Local Government Area and Owo Local Government Area.

The specific objectives are:

- To examine the political responsibilities and roles assigned to traditional leaders within the framework of local governance in the Akure North Local Government Area and Owo Local Government Area.
- To examine the economic responsibilities and roles assigned to traditional leaders within the framework of local governance in the Akure North Local Government Area and Owo Local Government Area.
- To investigate how the influence of traditional governance structures shapes decision-making processes and policy implementation in the Akure North Local Government Area and Owo Local Government Area.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

There are numerous concepts to clarify in this section

Traditional Institutions

Traditional institutions are a prominent and defining aspect of many states within African traditional societies (Saka-Olokungboye, Ilugbami, & Olateru-Olagbegi, 2023). However, offering a single definition is challenging due to the wide variations in political and administrative systems across different communities in Africa (Saka-Olokungboye et al., 2023). These institutions serve as guardians of the customs, cultural values, and practices of their respective peoples (Mustapha & Bukar, 2019). Traditional institutions shape social, political, and economic life across various societies, especially in regions with deep historical roots such as Africa (Frankel, 2018). These institutions include structures like councils of elders, traditional courts, and chieftaincy systems, which have been part of community governance and conflict resolution. One of the primary functions of traditional institutions is their role in maintaining social order and justice through mechanisms that are deeply embedded in the local culture (Gereb, 2022).

The persistence and influence of traditional institutions can often be traced back to pre-colonial times. In the former British colonies, indirect rule was more commonly practiced. There is a notable continuity of these institutions. This is because colonial administrations often co-opted and relied on traditional leaders to govern, thus reinforcing their authority and structures. In contrast, in former French colonies, where direct rule was prevalent, traditional institutions were more likely to be suppressed or sidelined (Gereb, 2022). The process of choosing traditional leaders varies across African societies, including Nigeria, as it is influenced by the unique customs of each ethnic group (Saka-Olokungboye et al., 2023). For example, in the Benin Kingdom of Edo State, only the first male child of the reigning monarch is eligible to succeed to the throne, whereas in other local areas, all male descendants of both current and former royal leaders may be considered for kingship. Traditional institutions represent the rights, privileges, laws, customs, and traditions of the indigenous people (Mustapha & Bukar, 2019).

Governance

The word “governance” comes from the Greek word “kubernaein” and the Latin verb “gubernare,” which means “to steer” (Grindle, 2017). Having the same linguistic root, the term was often used interchangeably with the term “government”. Yet, while government is broadly defined as a set of institutions established by constitutions and laws, governance broadly refers to a behavioral relationship between the governors and the governed. The United Nations defines governance as “the structures and processes whereby a social organization, from a family to a corporate business to an international institution, steers itself, ranging from centralized control to self-regulation”.

The United Nations has also defined governance more simply, as referring to “the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented” (UNESCAP, 2019). Still, the terms “governance” and “government” are closely linked: government institutions produce laws and provide public services, whereas “governance” refers to a wider set of relationships between ordinary citizens and public officials who apply the laws and deliver the services; between different government

institutions (sometimes conceptualized as “checks and balances”) and private entities involved in policy design and delivery; and between formal and informal institutions. In other words, governance refers to how those with power exercise that power, formally and informally, and it describes how institutions work and how states relate to societies more broadly, rather than just through standard government bodies (Grindle, 2017).

Local Government

Local government has been the concern of every responsive political system in the world. This is because local government as supported by Obaje (2015) basically is the involvement of the grassroots in the provision of social and economic amenities to the local areas. Local government has always been defended on the basis that it is a crucial aspect of democratization and the intensification of mass participation in the decision-making process.

According to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria local government as (1) The system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this Constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the Government of every State shall, subject to section 8 of this Constitution, ensure their existence under a law that provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance, and functions of such councils. (2) The person authorized by law to prescribe the area over which a local government council may exercise authority shall (a) define such area as clearly as practicable and (b) ensure, to the extent to which it may be reasonably justifiable, that in defining such area, regard is paid to (i) the common interest of the community in the area, (ii) traditional association of the community, and (iii) administrative convenience. (2) of this section, and to this end, an economic planning board shall be established by a law enacted by the House of Assembly of the State. (3) It shall be the duty of a local government council within the State to participate in economic planning and development of the area referred to in subsection (4) The government of a state shall ensure that every person who is entitled to vote or be voted for at an election to the House of Assembly shall have the right to vote or be voted for at an election to a local government council. (5) The functions to be conferred by law upon local government councils shall include those set out in the Fourth Schedule to this Constitution. [Fourth Schedule] (6) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, (a) the National Assembly shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local government councils in the Federation, and (b) the House of Assembly of a State shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local government councils within the State (Nigeria 1999 constitution).

Local government serves a two-fold purpose. The first is the administrative purpose of supplying goods and services; the other purpose is to represent and involve citizens in determining specific local public needs and how these local needs can be met (Obaje, 2015). Local government in Nigeria helps greatly in the governance and development of the country, serving as the third tier of government alongside the federal and state levels. Local government is designed to bring governance closer to the people; the local government system in Nigeria aims to ensure that public services are effectively delivered at the grassroots level (Victor, 2017).

Historically, Nigeria's local government system has evolved significantly. Before colonial rule, local governance was managed by traditional authorities such as chiefs and village heads. The British colonial administration later introduced a more structured local governance system through the Native Authority system, which laid the groundwork for modern local governance. Post-independence Nigeria sees several reform aim at improving local governance, with the most significant being the 1976 Local Government Reform (Victor, 2017).

This reform established the current system, which sought to create uniformity and efficiency in local administration across the country. The 1999 Nigerian Constitution provides the legal ground for local government operations, ensuring that local governments have a democratically elected council responsible for their administration (Teslim, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various studies have researched the influence of traditional governance in Nigeria's local government. The two central divisions of local government administration in Nigeria were made clear by Garba, Jingi, and Mamman (2018): the centralized local authorities and the decentralized local authorities which were well practiced by the three major ethnic groups in pre-colonial Nigeria. In the pre-colonial era, the roles of traditional institutions differed across the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. In the northern region, traditional roles were a mixture of Indigenous political values and religion, but the other two ethnic groups, the southwest and the southeast, operated purely on the value of the African political system (Garba, et al, 2018). The limited personnel of the colonial government create opportunities for traditional institutions to thrive.

The British colonial administration modified traditional administration in Nigeria and created its colonial policy to generate costs for the colonies and manage the volatile law and order situations of the colonies themselves. Adesoji (2015) emphasized how the colonial masters introduced an indirect rule system for administrative convenience, and this indirect rule system they introduced made it convenient for them to rule the people through their traditional institutions. Onyebuchi (2019) posited on how indirect rule was only a colonial governance system in which British officials oversaw the administration through traditional institutions with their customary laws and values. Traditional institutions advice was not binding on elected local government councilors. Though given advisory roles in the 1979 Constitution, Okonkwo (2017) elucidates that the constitution gave traditional rulers access to represent their people in the Federal Council of State, but they are not allowed to perform any administrative role.

Also, they served as advisory bodies to State Governors on matters of traditional rules, inter-communal relations, royalty issues, and local peace and tranquility (Okonkwo, 2017). Thus, the 1999 constitution is radical in quashing, abrogating, and eschewing the traditional institutions from exercising any political power in Nigeria (Garba, et al, 2018). The constitutional arrangement of 1999 and the laws governing the traditional institution are enacted at the state government level only and provide strictly for consultative and advisory functions for the state. Nevertheless, the positions of traditional institutions in Nigeria need several considerations, as their positions are yet to be defined and upheld.

Saka-Olokungboye et, al, (2023) submitted that although traditional institutions are very relevant in contemporary Nigeria, they are clamoring for constitutional role and recognition in the constitution. To them, military rule in modern Nigerian society brought certain changes in the political future of the traditional institutions in Nigeria, and the charges were seen in the gradual decline in the power and influence enjoyed by the traditional leaders. Amusa and Ofuafor (2014) examined and realized that the fact that traditional institutions do not enjoy constitutional recognition or responsibilities does not mean that they are not relevant or that they have outlived their importance. To them, what is happening to the traditional institutions in contemporary Nigeria is just a manifestation of her inability to fashion out a suitable political system that would reflect our social, economic, and political realities as opposed to the colonial and military-imposed political structures of the colonial era and post-independence period, respectively.

Despite this, traditional institutions and traditional rulers have continued to exercise considerable influence and play an active role in the political administration at all levels of government in Nigeria, albeit informally (Emordi & Osiki, 2015). Eniola (2022) pointed out that the interference of political elites in the selection of traditional leaders in various communities across the country has reduced the authority attached to traditional institutions and made them inferior to political officeholders.

According to Eniola (2022), in the olden days, the selection of traditional rulers was exclusively reserved for kingmakers who could not be easily bought over. The kingmakers are highly versed in the traditional oracle of each royal family, and their divine counsel of the Ifa, as in the case of the Yoruba in the selection of a prospective king, makes the process credible and devoid of acrimony.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts the structural functionalism theory to conceptualize the traditional rulership institution as a functional component of Nigerian society. The foundational ideas of prominent sociologists such as Auguste Comte (1798–1857), Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), and Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) significantly inform our understanding of how societal elements contribute to social stability and cohesion. From the structural-functionalist standpoint, society is perceived as a complex system made up of interdependent parts that work collaboratively to maintain societal balance and achieve shared objectives. In this context, each societal institution plays a role in supporting the others, thereby contributing to the smooth functioning of the whole system. Structural functionalism suggests that all societies operate based on commonly accepted norms and values, principles that are often embedded in legal frameworks.

Traditional rulers, in this view, serve as enforcers and custodians of these communal norms and values within their jurisdictions (Ja'afar, 2018). Durkheim provides further insight into social cohesion through his theory of solidarity. In his work *Division of Labor in Society*, he differentiates between two forms of solidarity: mechanical and organic. Mechanical solidarity characterizes smaller, close-knit communities bonded by tradition and personal ties. However, as societies expand and become more complex through urbanization, a shift occurs toward organic solidarity, where social cohesion relies on the interdependence of individuals performing specialized roles (Ihemeje, 2018). Durkheim introduces the concept of “social facts”—institutions, values, and norms that exert influence beyond the individual and shape collective behavior. For Durkheim, collective conscience, a shared moral order, ensures social integration and cohesion (Ja'afar, 2018).

Furthermore, Talcott Parsons (1964), as cited in Ja'afar (2018), identifies four essential functional prerequisites necessary for societal survival: Adaptation, Goal Attainment, integration, and pattern maintenance. These functions represent challenges that any society must address to thrive. For instance, Adaptation relates to the interaction between traditional rulers and their communities, suggesting that traditional institutions must wield some degree of influence over societal affairs to remain relevant. Goal Attainment underscores the necessity for communities to formulate and pursue developmental goals, often facilitated by traditional leadership. Integration deals with conflict resolution and legal standardization within the community to ensure social harmony. Finally, Pattern Maintenance focuses on preserving and transmitting cultural values that sustain community identity and cohesion (Ja'afar, 2018).

Structural functionalism thus views society as an organized whole composed of interconnected elements. Traditional institutions, such as chieftaincies and monarchies, are interpreted as essential social organs contributing to the overall functioning of their communities. Chiefs and Kings have historically upheld cultural heritage, functioned as community representatives, and exercised authority rooted in customary law (Ihemeje, 2018). Their responsibilities include mediating disputes, enforcing traditional laws, mobilizing community development efforts, and contributing to local governance. These rulers also play roles in economic and infrastructural development, such as tax mobilization, religious leadership, and community-led projects like constructing health centers, markets, roads, and public utilities (Ja'afar, 2018).

However, their authority is typically restricted to specific geographical areas, as no traditional ruler governs across the entirety of Nigeria. Ihemeje (2018) emphasizes that the country's cultural diversity and pluralism make broad generalizations about traditional political systems problematic. Nonetheless, traditional institutions continue to serve as vital governance structures, particularly in local contexts, where they enhance democratic engagement and grassroots administration, much like they did during colonial rule.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed-methods approach, which involved quantitative and qualitative data, to study the traditional governance system in Akure North Local Government Area and Owo Local Government Area of Ondo state Nigeria. The data were collected using structured questionnaire which was structured on 4-point likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) and in-depth interview with selected

traditional rulers with secondary sources including journals, textbooks, published materials etc. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select respondents. Two LGAs were purposively selected, one from each senatorial district of Ondo North and Ondo Central because the governance structures are good and they are strong representatives of the two senatorial districts. According to Thomas (2022), the population of the study areas is 542,300 which include 200,900 in Akure North and 341,400 people in Owo. The study population is also spread across the major communities/quarters which were Iju, Ita Ogbolu, Ogbese, Oba-Ile, Igoba in Akure North and Ipele, Uso, Iyere, Upenmen, Idasin, Ilale, Isuada, Emure-Ile, and Amurin in Owo, each with several constituent villages and quarters. At the second stage, the study area was divided into rural and urban settlements to ensure that the traditional governance structures were evenly distributed in the various socio-spatial settings. Finally, simple random sampling was done to select communities in the strata. Following this procedure, Aiyede Ogbese and Oba-Ile were picked from Akure North while Emure-Ile, Upenmen and Ilale were picked from Owo Local Government Area. The selection of these communities was made because of the significant historical and cultural importance of traditional governance in the communities. The interview employs an open-ended response format in which the key twelve (12) traditional rulers were interviewed from the selected Local government areas.

The sample size of this study is 400 or 0.05% of the sampling frame.

The study follows the Yamane to determine the sample size. The Yamane formula is:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size

e = margin of error (usually expressed as a decimal, e.g., 0.05 for 5%)

If we use a margin of error of 5% (0.05) and a population size (NN) of 542,300, the calculation becomes:

Now, calculate n:

$$n = \frac{542,300}{1 + 542,300(0.05^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{542,300}{1 + 542,300(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{542,300}{1 + 1355.75}$$

$$n = \frac{542,300}{1356.75}$$

$$n = 399.7$$

So, using Taro Yamane's formula with a 5% margin of error, the estimated sample size for a population of 542,300 is approximately 400. Remember, since the sample size must be a whole number, you might round up to the nearest whole number, resulting in a sample size of 400. The sample is further divided into two to give affordable, quality and original sample for this study. $400/2 = 200$, therefore n then is 200. However, only 173 valid questionnaires were retrieved and used for analysis. In addition, key traditional rulers were purposively selected for qualitative interviews based on their authority and involvement in local governance processes

RESULT

Table 1; Demographic Characteristics

Factor	Options	Frequency	%
Respondents by Local Government Area	Akure North Local Government Area	75	43.35
	Owo Local Government Area	98	56.65
	Total	173	100.0
Gender	Male	100	57.8
	Female	73	42.2
	Total	173	100.0
Age	20–40 Years	44	25.5
	41–60 Years	91	52.5
	61 Years and Above	38	22.0
	Total	173	100.0
Highest Educational Attainment	Primary School	21	12.1
	Secondary Education	35	20.2
	NCE	21	12.1
	OND	21	12.1
	HND	25	14.5
	BSc	27	15.6

	Master's Degree	11	6.4
	Doctoral Degree	9	5.2
	Others	3	1.7
	Total	173	100.0
Marital Status	Unmarried	22	12.7
	Married	112	64.7
	Divorced	22	12.7
	Separated	5	2.9
	Widowed	9	5.2
	Others	3	1.7
	Total	173	100.0
Traditional Rulers Interviewed	Olisa of Aiyede Ogbese	1	8.3
	High Chief Orilodun of Emure-Ile	1	8.3
	High Chief Olujimola of Emure-Ile	1	8.3
	High Chief Alale of Upemen	1	8.3
	High Chief Asamo (Oba Ile)	1	8.3
	High Chief Madegun of Ijebu Owo	1	8.3
	High Chief Aralepo of Upemen	1	8.3
	High Chief Asamo of Ijebu Owo	1	8.3
	High Chief Owadara "Upemen Owo"	1	8.3
	Osolo of Oba Ile	1	8.3
	High Chief Obanigba (Ojomo Oluda of Ijebu Owo)	1	8.3

	Prince Wale Adebunmi (Ijebu Owo)	1	8.3
	Total Traditional Rulers	12	100.0

Source; field study, 2024

Table 4.1 shows the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, the frequency distribution of the respondents across the two selected local government areas and the traditional rulers interviewed for the qualitative aspect of the study. The respondents are distributed based on the local government areas and it was observed that 98 respondents (56.65%) were drawn from Owo local government area, 75 respondents (43.35%) were drawn from Akure north local government area. It means that the percentage of respondents in Owo LA was marginally higher than Akure North. In terms of gender, there were 100 males (57.8%) and 73 females (42.2%). This implies that the sample is male dominated and there was high level of male involvement in the issues of traditional governance and local government administration. It is noted that age distribution shows the majority of the respondents aged between 41 and 60 that is 91 (52.5%). Respondents aged 20–40 years accounted for 44 (25.5%), while those aged 61 years and above were 38 (22.0%). This suggests that the majority of respondents were adults and older who had a good level of knowledge and experience of the traditional and local government systems in their communities. As far as education is concerned, respondents had different levels of education.

The highest number (35) had as their highest education qualification secondary education while 27 (15.6%) and 25 (14.5%) had as their highest qualification Bachelor's degree and Higher National Diploma respectively. The primary education, NCE and OND category each had 21 respondents (12.1%) each, while the Master's and Doctoral education each had 6.4% and 5.2% of the respondents, respectively. Other qualifications had 1.7% of the respondents. This distribution shows that respondents were fairly educated and they could thus offer informed views on the subject under research. As far as marital status, most of the respondents were married which is 112 (64.7%). The numbers of unmarried respondents, divorced respondents, widowed respondents, separated respondents and other marital status respondents were 22 (12.7 %), 9 (5.2 %), 5 (2.9 %), and 3 (1.7 %), respectively. Most respondents were adults with social and community roles rather than adolescents, as evidenced by the majority of married respondents. A purposive sampling method was used in selecting twelve traditional rulers in the two local government areas for the qualitative part of the study.

Three (3) traditional rulers were selected from Akure North Local Government Area, which includes the following; the Olisa of Aiyede Ogbese, the High Chief Asamo (Oba-Ile) and the Osolo of Oba-Ile. the other nine (9) were selected from Owo Local Government Area which are the High Chief Orilodun of Emure-Ile, High Chief Olujimola of Emure-Ile, High Chief Alale of Upenmen, High Chief Aralepo of Upenmen, High Chief Asamo of Ijebu Owo and Osolo Wale Adebunmi of Ijebu Owo respectively. Their inclusion contributed to the qualitative information and insights of the findings which complemented the quantitative findings to aid understanding of the effect of the traditional governance on the local government administration in the study areas.

Table 2; The Political Responsibilities

Items	Responses	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean
The traditional institutions are agent of political mobilization	F	63	70	29	10	173	3.99
	%	36.5	40.7	16.8	6.0	100.0	

Local government enables the traditional leaders to educate the community members about political processes, civic responsibilities and voting rights	F	57	78	30	9	173	3.90
	%	32.7	44.8	17.5	5.0	100.0	
Traditional rulers impact political education on their community members	F	53	83	31	6	173	3.93
	%	30.7	47.8	17.7	3.8	100.0	
Traditional governance meet the changing needs of the community	F	50	87	33	2	173	3.89
	%	29.0	50.5	19.2	1.3	100.0	
Traditional leaders effectively represent the interests and concerns of their communities to local government authorities	F	61	79	26	7	173	4.14
	%	35.5	45.7	15.0	3.8	100.0	
Traditional leaders do contribute to the formulation and implementation of local policies that affect their communities	F	59	77	32	5	173	4.03
	%	34.0	44.5	18.8	2.7	100.0	
Traditional leaders are accountable to their communities in their interactions and engagements with local government officials	F	64	74	30	5	173	4.13
	%	36.8	43.0	17.2	3.0	100.0	
Averaged Total	F	58	78	31	6	173	—
	%	33.5	45.2	17.5	3.8	100.0	
Friedman's Chi-Square	$\chi^2 = 8.221$, df = 6, p > .05						

Source; field study, 2024

Findings reveal that traditional institutions play a vital role in political mobilization, education, and representation. A majority of respondents agreed that leaders effectively represent community interests (81.2%) and contribute to local policy formulation (78.5%). Accountability to communities was also

strongly acknowledged (79.8%). Overall mean rankings above 3.8 indicate strong positive perceptions. However, Friedman's Chi-Square ($\chi^2 = 8.221$, $p > .05$) suggests no significant variation across items, reflecting consistent views on traditional leaders' political influence. These mean that traditional rulers seen as agents of political development, articulation, aggregation as well as being seen as true representation of the local government areas.

Table 3; The Economic Responsibilities

Items	R	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean
Traditional leaders advocate for and facilitate the development of social amenities and public services	F	48	87	32	7	173	2.42
	%	27.5	50.2	18.3	4.0	100.0	
Traditional institutions do lobby for government and non-governmental projects that bring social amenities to the community	F	49	89	29	5	173	2.52
	%	28.7	51.5	16.8	3.0	100.0	
Traditional institutions perform effectively in promoting economic development within local communities	F	45	94	26	9	173	2.42
	%	25.8	54.2	14.8	5.2	100.0	
Traditional rulers do facilitate local trade and commerce through market organization and trade regulation	F	64	79	26	4	173	2.65
	%	36.8	45.5	15.0	2.7	100.0	
Averaged Total	F	52	87	28	6	173	—
	%	29.8	50.2	16.2	3.8	100.0	
Friedman's Chi-Square	$\chi^2 = 14.581$, $df = 3$,						

	p < .05						
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Source; 2024

The results indicate that traditional leaders significantly contribute to community development, with most respondents agreeing they facilitate social amenities (77.7%) and lobby for projects (80.2%). Their role in promoting economic development (80%) and trade facilitation (82.3%) was also affirmed. Mean rankings between 2.42 and 2.65 reflect moderate agreement. Friedman's Chi-Square ($\chi^2 = 14.581$, $p < .05$) shows significant variation across items, suggesting differing perceptions of traditional leaders' developmental roles. Thus, they occupy vital position in helping the local government to fulfill; its mandate as stated in the fourth schedule of the Nigerian Constitution.

Table 4; Their Influence on Decision Making

Items	Responses	SA	A	D	SD	Total
Traditional governance structures have influence on local government decisions as regards local elections	F	67	84	19	2	173
	%	38.8	48.8	11.2	1.2	100.0
Traditional governance structures have influence on local economic development strategies and priorities set by local governments	F	48	80	35	10	173
	%	27.5	46.2	20.5	5.8	100.0
Traditional governance structures have influence on local government's decisions regarding investment in infrastructure and public services	F	61	81	26	5	173
	%	35.0	47.0	15.2	2.8	100.0
Traditional governance structures have influence on the formulation and implementation of local government policies related to social welfare and community health	F	54	83	31	5	173
	%	31.2	47.8	17.8	3.2	100.0
Traditional governance structures always influence local government strategies on youth engagement and empowerment	F	47	86	32	8	173
	%	27.2	49.8	18.5	4.5	100.0
Traditional governance structures have influence on local government policies aimed at preserving and promoting	F	49	77	39	8	173

cultural heritage						
	%	28.5	44.5	22.5	4.5	100.0
Traditional festivals, rituals, and ceremonies have influence on the timing and nature of local government policy implementation	F	50	84	31	8	173
	%	29.0	48.3	18.0	4.8	100.0
Traditional governance structures have influence on local government responses to development challenges such as climate change and natural disasters	F	57	81	27	7	173
	%	33.2	47.0	15.8	4.0	100.0
Traditional leaders act as intermediaries between local communities and government officials to influence policy decisions	F	55	86	27	5	173
	%	31.5	49.8	15.7	3.0	100.0
Traditional governance structures are integrated into formal local government systems to enhance representative democracy	F	47	92	29	5	173
	%	27.0	53.0	17.0	3.0	100.0
Traditional governance structures contribute to the accountability and transparency of local government decision-making	F	45	93	29	5	173
	%	26.2	53.8	17.0	3.0	100.0
Traditional governance structures influence local government policies on conflict resolution and community safety	F	55	87	23	8	173
	%	31.5	50.2	13.5	4.8	100.0
Traditional methods/medium have influence on local government policies on conflict management	F	44	91	33	5	173
	%	25.2	52.3	19.2	3.3	100.0
Averaged Total	F	52	85	29	7	173

	%	30.2	49.0	17.0	3.8	100.0
Chi-Square	$\chi^2 = 179.060$, df = 3, p < .05					

Source; 2024

The findings reveal that traditional governance structures strongly influence various aspects of local governance. Majority of respondents agreed on their impact on elections (87.6%), economic strategies (73.7%), and infrastructure, development decisions (82%) contributory. Their influence was also evident in welfare, youth engagement, cultural preservation, and conflict resolution, with agreement levels mostly above 75%. The averaged responses show consistent support (79.2%). Chi-Square ($\chi^2 = 179.060$, p < .05) indicates significant variation, reflecting diverse perceptions across governance domains.

However, findings from the interview revealed that challenges such as overlaps in authority, occasional tensions with elected officials, and accountability concerns still remain evident within the traditional governance system.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study reveals that traditional governance structures remain highly relevant in shaping political, economic, and administrative processes and outcomes within the study area. The demographic profile indicates a predominantly mature and educated population, with most respondents between 41–60 years and possessing secondary or tertiary education. This suggests that perceptions expressed in the study are informed by experience and civic awareness. Findings on political responsibilities showed strong agreements that traditional institutions are active agents of political mobilization, civic education, and community representation. Respondents emphasized the roles of traditional rulers in influencing political participation and contributing to local policy formulation, with mean scores above 3.8 indicating positive perceptions. The lack of significant variation across these items suggests a shared recognition of traditional leaders' political relevance.

Economically, traditional leaders were seen as instrumental in facilitating development projects, lobbying for social amenities, and promoting trade. Although mean ratings were moderate, significant variation across responses indicates differing expectations regarding their developmental influence. Regarding decision-making influence, traditional governance structures were perceived as impactful across multiple domains, including elections, economic planning, social welfare, cultural preservation, and conflict management. High agreement levels affirm their continued role as intermediaries between communities and government. Significant Chi-square results reflect diverse but generally positive perceptions of their influence.

CONCLUSION

The study finds that ad hoc governance is very influential and determining in the governance of Akure North and Owo Local Government Areas of Ondo State as it affects political participation, community involvement and local development. The traditional leaders are also good intermediaries between the people and the government, enjoying trust, contributing to political mobilization and maintaining cultural values which fortify the community identity. They have been robustly recognized as the essential actors for stability and inclusive governance, particularly in matters of conflict resolution, social cohesion and grassroots development. The interviews, however, showed that some difficulties like overlapping authority, tensions with the elected leaders and accountability issues still existed in the traditional governance structures in both Akure North and Owo Local Government Areas. The study draws significant attention to the need to improve the institutional framework, particularly in local government areas, to integrate traditional leadership in the formal governance mechanisms of LGA's without compromising the democratic

mechanisms. There is need to strengthen partnership between traditional rulers and local governments to increase community participation, better policy implementation and sustainable development. Conclusively, the findings reveal that there is potential to develop harmonized traditional and formal governance systems in Akure North and Owo Local Government Areas that could result in culturally specific and developmentally focused governance systems that could support good governance at the grassroots level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that a joint agreement is set up between the Local Government Areas of Akure North and Owo Local Government Areas, the Federal Government and Ondo State Government to make it clear the constitutional and administrative roles of the traditional leaders in local governance.
- All traditional rulers in the two Local Government Areas, Akure North and Owo should actively participate in the policy formulation process and policy consultation to boost community participation, policy implementation and nurture the development of the communities.
- The institutions for accountability, coordination and communication between traditional and elected governments should be institutionalized in the local governments of Akure North and Owo to facilitate transparency, respect and effective cooperation between traditional and elected governments.

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