**TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS INVOLVEMENT GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP: A PENACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA. AN ANALYSIS OF RIVERS STATE FROM 2015 – APRIL 2023**

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**Abstract**

The development and underdevelopment of any society ~~is~~ anchored on the capability and credibility of leaders in that society, coupled with availability of both natural and human resources. Leadership/ administrative role both in modern and traditional setting cannot be undermined because it is pivotal in development or underdevelopment of any society. The political structure and other structures must be carried along and work harmoniously for the betterment of ~~the~~ society. The role of traditional institutions in governance cannot be overemphasized in African political system if properly harnessed and articulated. This study ex-rayed the political development and administration in Rivers state, the role of traditional rulers in the political development and African culture. The study collected data through secondary sources and adopted the dependency theory as its theoretical framework. It was discovered that that traditional rulers were highly respected sequel to the attainment of political independence and ~~loses~~ their respect as ~~event progresses~~. The rationale behind ~~sch~~ ugly development, ~~were~~ also enumerated. The study discovered that the more progressive ~~African~~s culture and traditional institutions are devalued or destroyed the more the society is plough and prone to more serious atrocities; characterized ~~with pathetic~~ excruciating nature of unemployment and underdevelopment. The relegation and denigration of positive African culture and theology are dent to the wheel of progress, peaceful coexistence and sustainable development in ~~African~~. The denigration of African culture to western imperialism has increased suffering, ~~lead~~ to corruption, insecurity, lawlessness, and underdevelopment. Consequently the paper made recommendations on how peace, progress and sustainable development can be achieved through cross fertilization between modern and traditional institutions. Africans, sciences, theology, typology, culture, and values should be employed positively in solving our myriads of challenges. Reorientation and reinvigoration of core progressive African cultures and values to mention but few are suggested as a panacea for peace, development and progress in African nations.

Keywords: African, traditional institution, sustainable development.

Introduction

African nations had a standard system of government that met the need of the people, guaranteed peace, stability and development of the society. The geographical entity called African continent was formally inhibited by some empires, kingdoms, tribes, ethnic groups, caliphates. These administrative ~~unites~~ were subdivided into other ~~component~~ parts for proper delegation, decentralization and administrative convenience before the advent of colonialism.

Africans were surreptitiously and subtly subjugated by the whites to establish their imperial policy. Forcefully Africans were dethroned by the Whites; there were resistance by some Africans leaders at the initial time the use of sophisticated weapon by the whites gave them upper hands to defeat Africans and established their colonial policy. Africans nations were made to accept colonialism at all cost despite stick resistance. For instance Kosoko of Lagos, Jaja of Opobo, Oba of Benin and king Nana, resisted colonial rule but were later subdued.

It must also be mentioned that the same people that came with force ~~in one hand~~ had the Holy Bible ~~in~~ the other hand. The new religion brainwashed Africans and tagged African a black continent. Africans were indoctrinated to believe what they don’t understand, eat what they don’t produce and produce what they don’t eat. That marked the genesis of Africans problem of dependency ~~till~~ date.

Africans kingdom had a structured system of government headed by a leader with one unique name or the others, such as, Emir, Chiefs, Oba, Obi, Eze, Gbenemene, Oha, Amanyanabo, etc. They are saddled with legislative, executive and judicial power. The leader is seen as a representative of the gods standing between the living and the dead. He also performs some religious functions. They operated with an unwritten constitution. There was peace, stability and progress that ensure peace, unity, security and development as at then. There were some developed tribes, kingdoms in African such as Sudan Empire, Mali Empire, Gold Cost Empire, Oyo Empire, Benin Kingdom, Akute Kingdom, ~~Asantee~~ Kindgom, Egypt, ~~Ethopia~~, Opobo kingdom, to mention but few. The above named places were speedily developing before interception from the colonial masters with their imperial policy. ~~African~~ had myriad of cultures that met the dear need of the people and the continent.

Colonialism came not only to dethrone African kingdoms it also destroyed most of her cultural heritages that met the need of the people and ushered in new religion that encouraged stupendous, dogmatic belief and total submission of oneself including the persons possessions. The educational system was ill conceived as there was no emphasis on science and technology rather grammar and rectories, foreign languages formed the educational curriculum devoid of African inputs and interest.

The introduction of new system of administration, culture, religion, language, belief and behavioral pattern completely left Africans in the middle of the ocean not knowing what to do either to follow the new culture or to go ahead with his own rich African cultural heritages. Leading to cultural dilemma, cultural imperialism, religious dethronement, economic slavery, social servitude, educational stagnation, and cultural imbroglio, Chinnah (2022). What a dilemma to an African child.

From pre- colonial to post- colonial era traditional institutions had a very significant role to play in the ~~day to day~~ administration and governance system in the nation till the local government reform of 1976 that relegated, denigrated and reduced the power of traditional rulers and institutions in the country nationwide. The Local Government reform of 1976 diametrically reduced the power of traditional rulers in Nigeria. Most of them were seen as mere paper tigers and puppet with their traditional title without ~~role~~ and defined ~~duty~~.

African continent is endowed with numerous material and human resources that ~~is~~ capable and able of transforming African nations to be among the best developed nations in the community of nations globally. African countries has adopted so many development policies, initiatives and programs over the years but no tangible result is on ground as the continent still wallows on abject poverty, excruciating hunger, pathetic low investment, high level of insecurity, unfathomable rate of unemployment, and other features of underdevelopment as ostensibly seen in Africa nations. Development has been a problem to developing and developed nations of the world. All attempt made to developed Nigeria has remained fruitless as Nigeria is tagged headquarters of poverty in 2019.

Nigeria as a nation in Africa continent is not exempted from the development quagmire that has gripped African continent. Rivers State as a state not excluded. The issue of sustainable development has remained a serious concern to both developed and developing nations, international organizations and ~~Non Governmental~~ Organizations. There are series of attempt made to develop African nations, Nigeria inclusive and Rivers state in particular. The dramatic irony is that the more policies, program and initiatives for development are implemented the poorer the nation gets underdeveloped everyday ~~despites~~ resources put in place.

Politics in African determines and dictate every other structure and system which is also replicated in Nigeria. It is seen as the super structure that drives every other structure in the nation. The nation has over the year embarked on so many developmental initiatives since independence with little or no result. These were done with the total exclusion of traditional institutions in pursuance of development in the nation since the local reform government of 1976.

 African traditional institution played very significance role in the development of the nation during the colonial and post colonial era till 1976. Over the years precisely from the fourth republic, Nigeria has initiated some policies, programs for development without consideration of Africa traditional institutions, the environment and culture. The study will examine the role of traditional institution, why traditional institution were relegated in the political administrative in the country, reasons for poor implementation of sustainable development plans and why development has remained a mirage in African despite her human and financial resources. The study will draw the nexus between traditional institution and sustainable development. Finally, the study recommended ~~for~~ the integration of progressive African cultural practices in governance as a panacea for sustainable development in Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Conceptual Explication**

**Traditional Institutions:** The term traditional institution refers to indigenous and natural native cultural ways of doing things traditionally according to the culture and traditions of the people. The above definition etymologically captured the meaning of traditional institutions. Traditional institutions are administrative organizations in the pre colonial, colonial and post colonial era, headed by a traditional ruler; these institutions are rooted in the history, cultures and traditions of the people, Isaac (2018).

The stereotyped mantra peddled by some Whites and their black cohorts, that anything bad comes from African and every good thing is from the western nation is without verifications and proved and should be disregarded as we have uncounted good things from African from pre-colonial era till date. Not to go into details about this, because this paper is not fused on such historical account on Africa. Achebe (2017) the institution of traditional rulers is an enduring part of our cultural heritage, it plays a critical role as the custodian of culture and traditions.

Orji & Olali (2010) averred that traditional institutions refer to the native political provisions whereby leaders with confirmed track records are chosen and turban in line with the necessary requirements of their traditional customs and laws. Traditional institutions are the indigenous political arrangement whereby leaders with proven track records are appointed and installed in line with the provision of their native laws and customs, some divinely chosen and ordained by the gods and godess of the land. Traditional institutions are responsible for the day to day administration of the community, which also implies the preservations of the people customs and traditions. Nweke (2012) posited that traditional institutions are the custodians of the people’s norms, cultures and practices. Furthermore Orji & Olani (2010) posited that traditional institutions are symbols of indigenous peoples’ rights, privileges, laws, customs, and traditions which include but not limited to paramount rulers and their councils.

Traditional institutions in Nigeria context are inclusive of the chiefs-in –council, elders- in – council, title holders who may be appointed based on their contribution to the growth and development of their communities with little or no executive, legislative or judicial powers, Orji & Oladi (2010). The mode of selection or election of traditional rulers in Nigeria differs from one clan, ethnic group, or community. Some are hereditary, chosen by the gods and goddess of the people, while some are elected based on basic requirement set by the community.

Traditional institutions as headed by traditional rulers are respected and reverend to a great extent, some of them mediated between human and gods as they performed legislative, executive, judicial and religious role in the community. This was much more prominent sequel to the advent of the white man. Colonialism and imperialism reduced the power of traditional rulers and distorted most of our traditional rich cultural heritages on the guise of civilization. The Local government reform of 1979 gave traditional rulers and institution a technical knock on its role and powers in Nigeria.

**Governance:** What is good Governance? UNDP (2005) defined good governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a county’s affairs at all levels. This includes mechanism, processes and institution through which citizens and group articulate their interest, exercise their legal right, meet their obligations and mediate their differences in pursuit of the collective good. Asian Development Bank (ADB 2009) Defined good governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s social and economic resources as for development. It is referred to as the quality of the institution to make, implement, and enforce sound policies in an efficient effective and inclusive manner. World Bank (2004) defined good governance to mean promoting fairness, transparency and accountability. This simply means the ability of all the institutions in the polity saddled with various responsibilities to deliver optimally and meet up aims and objectives of that particular society.

Institute of Governance (IOG 2000) viewed good governance to mean an interaction among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power and responsibilities are exercised ,how decision are taken and citizens or other stake holders have their say. It is basically about how power relationships and accountability, who has influence, who decides and how decision – makers are held accountable. Boeninger (1992) Posited that good governance has to do with the capabilities of a political system to exercise authority, will legitimacy, adjudicate conflict as well as carry out effective program implementation. Kukah (1998) said good governance is government that responsible, accountable, and transparent in policy formulation and implementation. NEDA (2006) Postulated that the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a nation affairs at all level, which comprises of mechanism, processes and institution.

From the above definitions of good governance one can infer without equivocation that good governance has been a serious problem in African nations, Nigeria as a nation and Rivers state in particular, considering the level of natural and human resources in the State, revenue from the federation account and internally generated fund in the state yet nothing to show for it in terms of development, citizens welfare and unfathomable level of underdevelopment, Chinnah (2020).

 Governance in Rivers state is purely centered on the interest of the few ruling elite since 1960. The fourth republic became the worst only the few in power, their cronies and children have dominated the political arena.

Kofi Annah (UN) posited that good governance is ensuring respect for human right and the rule of law, strengthening democracy, promoting transparency and capacity in public administration. United Nation enumerated the following, listed eight principles of good governance.

1. Participation; This principle states that people free to express their view, opinion through legitimate organization or representation.
2. Rule of law. Legal framework should be enforced impartially mostly on human right.
3. Consensus- oriented; this means mediating different interest to meet the broad consensus on the best interest of the community.
4. Equity and Inclusiveness; people should opportunities to improve or maintain their well –being.
5. Effectiveness and Efficiency: Processes and institutions should be able to produce a result that meets the needs of their community while making the best of use their resources.
6. Accountability: Governmental institutions, private sectors and civil organization should be held accountable to the public and institutions stakeholders.
7. Transparency: Information should be accessible to the public and should be understandable and monitored.
8. Irresponsibleness: Institutions and processes should serve all stakeholders.

From what is visibly seen in Rivers state good governance has been elusive since the creation of the state as it got worst from the fourth republic and the period under review. There is no accountability, transparency; people are not carried along in the scheme of things, no empowerment and employment to mention but few. There is high rate of unemployment, environmental challenges like bunkering, shoot and flood. All these has stagnated and limited development in the State despite all the natural resources the nation is endowed with. Traditional institution was not also carried along hence no result was achieved.

**Sustainable Development:** There are many definitions on what the concept development according to scholars view on it. For instance Pearson (1992) averred that development involves an improvement qualitative, quantitative or both in the use of available resources. He went further to say that development does not only refer to one particular perspective on social order, political and economic betterment, rather a hybrid of term for myriads of strategies adopted for ~~socio, economic~~ and environment transformation from current states to desired ones. Development is a process of having better use of human resources to create a desired improvement in making life useful and meaningful for humanity.

Development is the process that creates growth, progress, positive change or the additional of physical, economic, environmental, social, and demographic components. The purpose of development is a rise in the level and quality of life of the population and creation or expansion of local regional income and employment opportunities without damaging the resources of the environment, (Sidi-israel.org 2021). Amartya (1997) defines development as a tool enabling people to reach the highest level of their ability through granting freedom of action, that is freedom of economic, social, and family actions etc. United Nation Development Program UNDP (1990) stated the measurement index for the concept of development through what is called Human Development Index. The concept of development is ostensibly visible and imperatively useful to humanity and the environment including future generation and can be measured and assess.

Naomi (1995) posited that development involves economic growth notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective. Chrisman (1984) viewed development to be a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well being of people are generated through strong partnership between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society.

Umezunke (2005) advanced that development connotes transformation of the nature and living condition of man as a consequent of his earlier confrontation of the constraints posed by his environment (political, economic, socio-cultural, etc). Rodney (1972) Nnolin (1981) agreed that development shares the following things in common.

(1) Human-centered rather than artifact-centre

(2) Dynamic process rather that static

(3) Involves a complex interactive relationship between individual and the society.

(4) Predicated essentially on production rather than consumption.

Rodney (1972) said that development in human society is many sided process that occurs at three levels namely the individual, social group and the society. At individual level it has to do with increase in skill and capacity greater freedom creativity, self discipline, responsibility and material well being. Nnolin (1982) posited that development is a dialectical phenomenon in which the individual and society interact with the physical biological and inter human environment transforming then for their own betterment and that of humanity at large and being transformed in the process. The lesson and experience gained in the process are passed on to future generation enabling them to improve their capabilities to make further valuable changes in their inter human relations and their ability to transform nature oriented.

Tadaro (1985) viewed development to be multi-dimensional nature focusing on re-organization and re-orientation of the entire economic and social system. Oghator & Kobo (2000) posited that development goes beyond the increase I per capita income or economic growth , but also includes sustainable improvement in the living standard of the people which is guaranteed through the provision gainful employment coupled with the presence and availability of social; and economic infrastructure.

Ahmed (2007) posited development to mean the general uplifting the material, social and psychological condition of a given society. Ajagun (2003) opined that development is state of advancement which makes life more meaningful in its various aspects, which includes the economic, administrative, political, social, and religious aspect, that development is encompassing and multi dimensional. Onah (2010) averred that development is not static, but a continuous improvement in the capacity of the individual and the society to control and manipulate the forces of nature for the enhancement of the living standard of the people in a society, it deals with human beings.

Rivers state despite all her numerous human and material resources is yet to have a glimpse of what development is as all characteristics of underdevelopment are on multiple dimensions in the state. Then we asked ourselves and our leaders what have they been using our huge numerous resources for? Is Rivers State allergic to development?. It is a naked truth that the state is still wallowing with poverty and other agonizing torturous condition of underdevelopment despite all her richly endowed and exploited natural resources, namely, oil and gas, arable land and others too numerous to mention. No good road, no good pipe-born water , no employment, low per capita income , high infant mortality, no hospital no infrastructural facilities and social amenities, the worst is that the natural environment is been destroyed daily, Chinnah (2021).

The point raised above has degenerated to insecurity, frictions and crises, calls for secession, formation of ethnic militia, and the society engulfed with social vices and other anti-social practices been perpetrated on daily bases as a result of failure from the existing federal structure and system to produced desired dividend of federalism which is equity, justice, and sustainable development, Chinnah (2020).

African traditional institutions were denigrated and dislodged as a result of crisis for equity, development and better life for citizens of the nation leading to development stagnation.

**Sustainability**

Jeffery Sacks (2018) in his work that promote sustainable development as that which believes in growth and development in order to raise the standard of living for citizens of the world today through relating to the needs of environmental resources and the coming generation of the citizens of the world.

Stoddart (2021) viewed sustainability as the efficient and equitable distribution of resources intra–generationally and inter–generationally within the operation of socio-economic activities within the confines of fitness ecosystem. Thomas (2015) posited sustainability brings into focus human activities and their ability to ~~satisfied~~ human needs and wants without depleting or exhausting the productive resources at their disposal.

Tjarre & Zenite (2016) averred that sustainability is a concept relating, connoting, improving and sustaining a healthy economic, ecological and social system for human development. Bein-Eli (2015) sees sustainability as a dynamic equilibrium in the process of interaction between the population and the caring capacity of its environment such that the population develops to express its full potential without producing irreversible adverse effect on the caring capacity of the environment upon which it depends.

Furthermore, DESA-UN (2018) stated that the ultimate objectives of the concept of sustainability in essence is to ensure appropriate alignment and equilibrium among society, economy, and the environment in terms of the regenerated capacity of the planet’s life-supporting ecosystem.

To understand the duo concepts sustainable development was best conceptualized by UNO (1987) their definition is the most comprehensive and widely accepted by the World Commission on Environment and Development (UNO) in 1984 under the chairmanship Gro Harlem Brundtland, in October 1987 submitted a report which contained the definition of sustainable development. In that report, it defined Sustainable Development “as the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs”.

This definition is measurable and focuses on two main points, namely the environment and human beings. In qualifying and quantifying growth and development, the two must be taken into consideration in terms of developmental projects, programmes or policies aimed at improving the life of the people and have a better natural environment for the present with the future generation not put in jeopardy Chinnah (2021).

Sustainable development has been a mirage in African nation’s right from the pre-colonial era till date. African nations are tagged developing nation or ~~third world~~ countries by the western developed nations of the world with little or no resources but they parasitically depends on African nation for survival. What is really wrong with African mentality and their leaders?.

**Methodology**

The research made use of secondary data, from textbooks, peer review journals, periodic publications, newspapers, and other relevant documented literature, both soft and hard copies; while content analysis was used to analyzed data objectively.

**Theoretical Framework**

Dependency theory of development was adopted as the theoretical framework for this survey. The importance of theoretical framework cannot be undermined in a study like this as it is seen as a road map for which the study is anchored; it gives credence to the paper. According to Nweke & Nyewesira (2009) dependency theory was developed by scholars from third world countries and put together in the sixties by eminent writers like, Luxemung (1964) Frank (1969), Santos (1970),Rodney (1972) Ake, (1981) etc.

The theory is an offshoot of colonialism and imperialism. This Marxist theory averred that Global Capitalist System started as far as in the 16th century via colonialism and imperialism whereby the rich nations of the world tied the economy of other less developed nations of Africans, Latin American and Asia countries in a relationship of exploitation and dependency directly and indirectly for the survival of the wealth developed nations. The erstwhile colonial masters exploited and are still exploiting her colonies through neo-colonialism. This theory states that for the so long as this dependency relationship exist African nations cannot be developed , that for development to take place there is an imperative needs for that relationship to be broken or isolated and join free market ~~in order~~ for them to develop.

Dependency theory of development attributes lack of African development to adverse effect of continuous endemic exploitation of exploration by powerful nations of the world even after independence. This relationship is a systematic process, whereby western developed nations (core) accumulate wealth by extracting resources from the peripheral developing nations for their own economic and social development. This unbalance relationship accounts for African underdevelopment as African nations are left with pandemic excruciating features of pathetic underdevelopment.

Matunhu, (2011:69) …. To succeed in the improvement operation, the metropolis destroyed the traditional pre-capitalist structure of Africa in order to pave the way for super exploitation and appropriation of surplus value.

The powerful nations of the world used their sophisticated weapon to subtle and subjugate African nations established their dominance and imperil policy based on economic exploitation. The centre nations saw the periphery countries as prey for their survival hence they sources for raw materials both human and material from them are exploited to them.

Colonialism changed many things in African nations, altered the development system of African, distorted the organized political system, changed mode of dressing, feeding, farming, consumption, production, religion, culture and social activities. For instance African was to produce what we don’t eat and eat what we don’t produce. Local Government reform of 1976, the appointment of warrant chief created problems in African traditional institutions. The new system of administration altered many things from the policy of indirect rule to direct rule down to the attainment of political independence not economic independence kept Africans in dilemma not knowing much about African culture and that of what culture. This has quagmire development in African nations.

This dependency theory was inherited and transferred to African leaders by their colonial masters. This unbalance relationship is a dent to the wheel and progress of development in Nigeria. Imagine we produced oil in abundance here in Nigeria but we don’t have a functional refinery. The Ajokuta Rolling Meal is a clear point to buttress this point. The new system of administration in African nations created conflict and frictions in African nations. Rodney (1972) argued that political independence of African from colonialism did not alter the dependency arrangement rather it deepened it, the end of colonialism has not deterred the imperialist from African domination.

Akani (2010:124) averred that it is plausible for one to argue that the intractable problems in Africa of late are precipitate of the merciless, looting, imposition of assumed complex and disorientation of the continent. African traditional institution destroyed and disorientated.

The relevance of this study to this survey is that the same dependent scenarios was inherited from our colonial masters and are still maintained till date. Exploitation has been the order of the day as big nations dictate the pace of progress in African nations.

**The Role Of Traditional Institutions In Governance**

 For stability, peace and equity in any society there are leaders, rulers saddled with the responsibility to legislate, execute and adjudicate in the society with other institutions through decentralization and delegations of authority. These leaders / leaders are headed by traditional rulers in African nations with one nomenclature or the other for instance, Emeir in North, Obas in the West, Obi in the East, Chiefs in the East, to mention but few. The head of the traditional rulers’ rules with his cabinet and laws and order were maintained and development achieved. Traditional ruler is an individual occupying communal political, leadership position and enjoying the legitimacy of those particular communities to direct their affairs, Egwarabe (2018). In a similar vein, Gambari (2021) stated that traditional rules is not honored and honorary chiefs, he is a traditional head of an ethnic community whose stool conferred the highest traditional authority on the incumbent. Traditional institutions are piloted by traditional rulers that rules according to the culture and custom of the community. The traditional rulers does not rule alone he has his cabinets and delegated powers and authority when necessary for effective leadership to maintain peace, stability and harmony.

Traditional rulers were highly respected; their stool was a great symbol of power, authority and leadership. According to Sunnews online (2016) Traditional rulers were not just monarch but theocrats as in Nigeria. To speak ill of them was regarded as a taboo. The chief’s authority is sanction in religion and it is a sacrilege to flout it, except in extreme cases of tyranny and oppression. They had excess power within their domain and were able to lead with easy.

Sequel to the advent of colonialism, traditional rulers had much respect and honor, saddled with greater responsibilities than we have in this current era. Traditional rulers are by implication traditionally the head of their ethnic group, clan, or community. They hold the highest executive authority in such communities and has been appointed to the position in accordance with the people’s culture, custom and tradition, Igunbu,(2020).

In Nigeria the local government reform of 1976 saddled traditional rulers (institutions) with the following function. As stated already traditional rulers powers were reduced drastically by the advent of imperialism and colonialism which was transferred to the era of neo- colonialism.

Traditional rulers were no longer involved in the direct local government administration. They performed ceremonial functions by being present when important personality will visit the local government, for example the governor or a minister, etc.

He advises the local government officials on matters that concern the customs and traditional of the people. The mobilize people in their community to participate in government at various levels. As a custodian of the people’s customs and tradition he helps to preserve the customs and tradition of the people. The help to maintain law and order in their communities; they try and punish law offenders and settle disputes etc. They mobilize their people to engage in community development projects.

Traditional Rulers are link between their community and the government by explaining government policies, programs to the people, and their problems to the government. Local Government Reform of (1976)

Traditional institutions (rulers) are element of divinity, cultural custodian and embodiments of collective identity ascribed to traditional institutions are keys to promotion and preservation of traditional institutions in Nigeria and beyond, Salihu & Yakubu, 2020). Traditional institutions preserve, conserve, protect and promote culture and traditions of the people fro going into extinction because of globalization.

Aafigbo, 1972 cited in Osakde etal (2015) posited that long before the advent of British of British colonial rule, government in diverse parts of present day Nigeria was tantamount with traditional institutions and their rulers. Pre-existing administrative structure were derived primarily from traditional rulers who were considered as the fountain and custodian of culture, parliamentary, executive, and judicial functions thereby considering the basis of governance.

Cookey (2010) stated that traditional rulers are perceived as assisting the government in maintaining law and order in the communities as well as promoting peaceful coexistence of people of different religion; ethnicity, and social background; traditional rulers treat people without discrimination he added.

Traditional institutions, its authority is mostly unquestionable accepted, adhered to and its principles practiced with reverence. Its practice reflects continuity with the past for which its continuity is usually understood to link generations. Osakede etal (2015) opined that pre-colonial Africa posse’s visible established and well defined hierarchy of administration where acts of legislations were implemented and conflict and inter – tribal classes were resolved.

From the above narrated functions of traditional institutions via traditional rulers in the pre-colonial, post colonial and neo-colonial. It is evident that the society will degenerate to a state of nature as posited by Hobbes without traditional rulers. The functions of traditional rulers cannot be circumvented by either western civilization or effect of globalization, any attempt or group of attempt will end up in friction, anarchy and underdevelopment of the community.

**Challenges Of Traditional ~~Institututions~~ (Rulers) In Governance In Nigeria**

African organized traditional institutions that met the need and development of Africans nations, tribes and ethnic groups at that material point in time met stick opposition and challenged as a result of imperial colonial power of the western nation domination anchored on economic interest.

The appointment of African chiefs, via the used of direct and indirect rule system was purely to maximized profit by the imperialist power with no intention to develop African and Nigeria in particular, which was also inherited by Nigerian leaders after the attainment of independence

The advent of western domination to a great extent demystified and reduced diametrically the power of traditional institutions in African society. This scenario was much more pronounced after the local government reform of 1976 that transferred traditional ruler’s functions and role to the head of local government area. This effected their relevance and functions in their domain they had the following challenges that limited their authority and operations.

Elias, (2016) stated that native authority was beset by such challenges as poor funding, control, checks and no clear cut functions. Traditional institutions were tied to local government area, no sources of revenue; the local government areas were either underfunding traditional rulers or nit funding at all. Money is needed for day to day administration of any organization. The absence of funds makes it impossible for any administration to achieve its goals. Traditional rulers had serious and excessive check from local government areas chairman, governors and other political office holders in their areas.

The local government reform of 1976 transferred the roles and functions of traditional rulers to local government area. This did not only limited traditional rulers powers and authority but made then puppet and errand boys for politicians. They were left with little or no function. in fact they were allowed to perform ceremonial functions.

Traditional institutions (rulers) have no constitutional provision and backing in the nation constitution. This to great extent hindered and limited their operations in terms of legislation, execution and adjudication of justice. Adeniyi (2016) opined that despite the fact that traditional institutions remains the oldest surviving cultural political institution, which has always serve as the pivot for social security, national cohesion and meaningful socio-cultural development , the operative constitution has failed to make any provision for the existence of the institution. Ibrahim (2018) averred that traditional rulers cannot help the government on security issues without legal backing and so stressed the need to defined constitutional responsibilities for traditional rulers in the constitution.

Another challenge facing traditional institutions (rulers) is the use of modern government institutions, mechanism and machineries in governance, like the use courts, police, army, security agencies in administration of justice. Nwani (2011) noted that the emergence of public court destroyed the use of our traditional conflict resolution mechanism because it encouraged people to bypass traditional court to go to regular court. Abdulqadir (2016) averred that the instruments of coercion, the police, courts, prison, were removed from its control. There is no constitutional provision for the enforcement of the resolutions reached in arbitration. Alagoa (2001) stated that the traditional institutions no longer have full reign of operation, since they have to operate in a context where their authority is limited, without the means to enforce resolutions reached in arbitration, the parties may refuse to abide by the terms reach.

The negative influence of western culture and education of our people is a major challenge. The western culture mostly education and religion were seen as an eye opener. As a result some educated civilized African challenged some obnoxious, draconian policies and programs of traditional rulers in churches, shrines; juju and court they won this reduced the power and authority of traditional institution.

Another challenge facing traditional rulers is the issue of corruption and struggle for political leadership and affiliation. Many traditional rulers have left their divine role and functions as demanded by human and gods to their selfish aim and desire for material resources. They collect bribes to pervert justice, and embezzle community money for development this has led to crises in many communities mostly those communities endowed with natural resources like oil, gas and companies. Adesoji (2010) Olali (2010) and Onaja(2010) the mentioned authors in their respective findings concluded that traditional institutions in modern Nigeria are confronted with several matters such as struggle for headship among traditional leaders in the association of traditional rulers, participation in biased politics for individual gains and given support for the reigning government are problem militating against traditional rulers.

Akani (2010) African traditional rulers have also contributed to destroying the African traditional institution as a result of their unending attitude in joining party politics. It must be mentioned that creations of states, local government and the emergences of autonomous communities in the already nation has weakened the powers and authority of traditional rulers in their domain. This balkanization had a lot of negative influence and impact on traditional institutions; some of their subjects were either removed or added to them which created room for lack of respect and disobedience on both sides.

Another challenges faced by traditional rulers is their involvement in politics. In Nigeria politics is seen as the best and quickest means to make money and to remain relevance in the scheme of things in the nation. Many traditional rulers abandoned their customary role to dance to the wins and caprices of political leaders’ actors and gladiators for the sack of money. Ganiyu etal (2016) traditional rulers have become pencil in the hands of elected political office holders who determine for them what to do and what not to do ….. As a result of this many traditional rulers lost their authority and influence both physical and spiritual in their domain.

**Traditional Institutions And Sustainable Development In Rivers State**

Political administrative structure has swallowed some of the powers, respect, authority and duty of some traditional institutions in Rivers state as a result of the 1976 local government reform nationwide in Nigeria. River state was within the eastern region during first republic before the creation of state in 1967. The creation of Rivers state in 1967 marked the birth of new administrative system in the created state. Rivers state population as at 2006 census is 5,185,400 the sixth populous state in the country. In 1996 Bayelsa state was created out from rivers state.

There has been a traditional ruler’s council in existence before the creation of Rivers state. In 1953 Council of Rivers Chiefs was formed renamed in 1954 as Rivers Chiefs and People Congress and in 1956 changed to Rivers People Conference. The organization was made up of traditional rulers from all the ethnic communities, clan, and groups in Rivers state.

Africans had a well systematic incumbent dynamic system of administration before the advent of the imperialist. Boege (2006) averred that traditional African societies, indeed had well organized and well established system of administration where public orders was provided and maintained, where laws were made and implemented, where inter – communal and intra –tribal conflicts were settled. This was before the coming of the colonialist and they saw that it was good that was why the retained most of it and destroyed those culture that were against their imperial policy and religion.

Rivers state can be described as a loose federation with many other ethnic groups, both major and minor, different languages, culture and religion. The state is heterogeneous and pluralistic in nature under one umbrella. In Rivers state we have the following ethnic groups Ikweerr, Ogoni, Ekpeye, Ogba, wakirika, Etche, Kalagbari, Okirika, Igbani, to mention but few. There are traditional rulers in all the ethnic extractions with their unique nomenclatures as name. For instance in Ikwerre traditional rulers are called Nye-we ali, and Eze, Ekpeye is Eze, Ogba is Oba, Ogoni is Mene, Kalagbari is Amanyanagbor. The role of traditional rulers has already been explained in previous page. They performed their role with other people that formed the cabinet, and also delegate authority to other organs of administration under their jurisdiction.

The government of River State recognized traditional rulers; there are first class, second class third class and what I refer to as the village class or family class. The first class traditional rulers have an association called Rivers State Council of Traditional Rulers, under the headship of His Majesty King Jaja, King Dr. Dandeson Douglas Jaja…… traditional rulers.

In Rivers state, we have the legislature, executive, judiciary and the traditional rulers. The traditional rulers are just like advisory body with no specified legitimated authority to their powers. They exist to whims and caprices of the governor of the state. There are cases were some traditional rulers were deposed because party politics some were not recognized and some derecognized. The upgrading of these traditional rulers are politically done based on party loyalty.

 Rivers state has embarked on so many projects and development initiatives sad to note that the state is highly underdeveloped compared to the human and material resources available in the state. Rivers state is only one city state apart from Port Harcourt no other city is developed, the state have the highest number of unemployment in the country NBS (2021) Federal projects not exempted.

Federal allocations to the state, local government and internally generated revenue if well utilized is more than enough to put the state top most in the community of developed states in the world. Resources are siphoned by political actors and gladiators through corruption and bribery. Contracts are awarded nobody cares for its implementation and completions, monies are shared in bags, stores for future political electioneering processes, stomach infrastructure with nothing to show. Traditional rulers are bought and as pulpets they cannot do more than a hanging shirt. Marginalization and deprivation, denial of employment, empowerment, social amenities and other infrastructural facilities and amenities that make life enjoyable led to confrontations, conflicts, frictions and public disorder.

Lack of empowerment and employments has made led to increase in the level of criminality in the state, illegal refining of crude oil, and other ugly development in the state. The high level of lawlessness has been on the increase in early 2015 to 2019 the state witness high level of criminalities, lawlessness and kidnapping. The security agencies were doing nothing to combat the activities of these miscreants. Hence palpable fear was created everywhere in the state.

The state government called on traditional institutions (rulers) for help restore normalcy in the rivers state. The first of its kind was initiated first in Omoku a town in Ogba Egbema Ndoni Local government area of the state. ONELGA came up with the ONELGA Security Peace and Advisory Council (OSPAC) set up in 2016 when there was war, total disorder and anarchy in ONELGA because of the activities of some cult groups that overthrow both the traditional rulers and the modern political system under the leadership of Don Wani. The local civilian militia group was able to contained subjugate totally the activities of the hoodlums, cultist, and miscreants through African science and protection from gun shots and anything metal. What the security agencies couldn’t do was perfectly done by the traditional intuitions in Omoku and its environs. There were cases when OSPAC from Omoku came to Ahoada to sanitize the area using Africa science.

The successful operations and achievement of peace in Omoku as a result of OSPAC made other local government areas and communities to do similar thing namely Emohua, Ikwerre, Etche , Omuma, and many others. The introduction of OSPAC in Rundele, Rumuji, and Elele made East West Road passable at any point in time both night and day, which government security agencies couldn’t do for years. From all indications and assessments based on realities on ground it is apparently clear that Traditional Institutions has help to maintained peace, that government and her security agencies couldn’t do.

The relative peace now in ONELGA has attracted speedy development in the area. Those banks that left Omoku are planning to go back, with new one planning to open branches there. Peace is a requisite for development either immediate or sustainable.

The fact that traditional rulers were not carried along properly in developmental policies and initiatives has led to misplacement of the community priority in terms of developmental projects and policies for the people,

**The Nexus Between Traditional Institutions (Rulers) And Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development has attracted serious attention at global scenario both in developed and developing nations. The pathetic excruciating features of underdevelopment in Africa and Nigeria in particular is on alarming rate despite the myriad of human and natural resources the nation is endowed with. It is laughably lugubriously lugubrious. One might asked what are the factors that negate development in African nations? I have explicitly explained that in one of my papers.

There is a great correlation between traditional institutions and sustainable development. In the first place development can only be initiated in an atmosphere of peace and stability. Traditional rulers are imperatively needed to help maintain peace and stability in their domain. There are numerous examples of inter –communal and intra –communal crises it was traditional institutions mechanism that were used to settle those disputes and conflicts.

Traditional rulers have direct link with the people and understand the environment within their domain, they knows what their people want, the needs and desire of his people. Government at all level should integrate, interact and sought the inputs of traditional rulers when they want to make policies and program that relates to that particular community. We have seen and read where development projects in some communities led to frictions, confrontations and demonstrations because the people were not consulted. This is misplacement of priority of the community people which will not be tolerated by the community of any development projects, policies or initiatives. The success of any sustainable development policies, project and programs depends on the traditional ruler’s ability to galvanized, sensitize and educated their people.

The recent clarion call of all traditional rulers by the governor of the state to ensure that peace and stability are maintained in their domain and to stop all illegal refining activities in their locality is a clear indication that traditional institutions are instrumental for peace and sustainable development.

In corroboration with the work of Mbouua, (2014;67) he state emphatically that African culture have assists for development, for progress, solidarity, hospitality ,co responsibility and environmental protection to name but few. I add capacity for sustainable development and stability in the polity. On that note then to exclude Africa traditional institution from governance is invitation of confrontation, frictions an crisis as we have in Nigeria today, which if not addressed will, lead to total anarchy and collapsed of the system .

**Conclusion**

The paper examined the role of traditional institutions in government, why there powers were denigrated and relegated by politicians as a result of the local government reforms that made them mere advisory body with no legal backing. The challenges faced by traditional institutions were explained. The nexus draw between traditional institutions and sustainable development. Traditional institutions with legitimate authority to act will guarantee peace, stability and sustainable development. African traditional institutions are panacea for sustainable development as it provides the enabling environment for development to take place. The enabling environment for sustainable development to be initiated and implemented area created by traditional institution.

Traditional (rulers) institutions must educate, sensitize and mobilized his subjects for any development projects. To report to the appropriate authority weather the developmental projects are carried out or not , in any community, the traditional rulers reports to the government, nongovernmental organization or corporate bodies.

The following recommendations were made on how traditional institutions can effectively help to achieve sustainable development in Rivers state.

1. Traditional institutions should have legal backing in the constitution stating their fundamental roles with authority not as advisory body.

2. The government as a matter of urgency should create traditional rulers commission and their salaries fixed in a consolidated fund as we have judges.

3. Traditional rulers should eschew corruption and faced their traditional roles as a leader not to involve in active politics but focused on maintenance of peace, stability and development in their domain.

4. There should be pollination of cultures between the western culture and the traditional system picking the best that meets the need of the current realities.

5. For accountability this paper advocate for the use of African system of oath taken, using one shrine, juju as all those that looted our resources are either Muslims or Christians. They take oath of office and still steal our resources. This not to denigrate any religion but the duo has failed us when it comes to corruption and siphoning of public fund.

6. The restoration of African values, customs, culture and tradition that meets the need of current realities should be done. Africans are gifted with good cultural heritages. Ancestral African science and metaphysics should be positively encouraged as it will help us to restore the lost African values in our society. The combination of African epistemology and western education can strike a good balance.

7. Political office holders should respect traditional institutions and the laws of the land. Traditional rulers should be apolitical rather be dedicated and committed to their categorical fundamental functions of peace, security and welfarism of their subjects.

All developmental agencies both local and international including United nation and other nongovernmental organization should work with traditional institution closely if they must succeed in any developmental policies, programs or initiatives..

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