Assessment of the Traditional Leaderships' Activities in Community Development in Omuma Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assessed traditional leaderships' activities in community development in Omuma Local Government Area of River State. A descriptive survey design was used to carry out the study, with the study's population of 328 respondents across three clans that make up the study area. The clans are: Ofeh, Eberi, and Ogba/Ajuloke clans. The sample of the study consists of one hundred and ten (110) respondents drawn from 11 out of 46 towns/villages in the study area, through a purposive sampling technique. A questionnaire was used for the data collection for the study. The face and content validity of the instrument were carried out and the instrument tested for reliability, with a reliability index of TLACDQ = 0.74 was determined through Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Frequency counts, percentage and mean statistics were the descriptive statistics used to answer the research questions; while the hypotheses were tested using independent t-test and analysis of variance at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study showed that personal characteristics of the traditional leaders in the study area were linked to community development. The activities of the traditional leaders were shown to influence community development, while the tested hypothesis indicated that that there is significant difference between the activities of traditional rulers and leaders in community development in the study area, amongst others. Based on the findings of the study, the study concluded that efforts of concerned members of Omuma communities coupled with the efforts of the traditional leadership and non-governmental organization; communities will enhance the development of communities in both human and infrastructural activities. it was recommended, amongst others, that community members should consider the personal characteristics of the traditional rulers and leaders before selecting and empowering an individual to take the authority as a traditional leader in any community, and the people who mandate their traditional rulers and leaders to function in a different capacity in carrying out various developmental activities should follow up on the activities of traditional leaders to ensure that they do what is right, and when it is necessary.

Keywords: *Assessment, Traditional Leadership, Activities, Community Development.*

INTRODUCTION

Traditional leadership is one of the oldest institutions of administration in Nigeria. The leaders are rooted in the beliefs, history and customs of the ethnic and cultural backgrounds they represent. In realistic terms, leaders through the years have contributed to administering governance in pre-colonial times, the colonial duration, and the submit-independence epoch. Traditional leadership is noted the indigenous political arrangements wherein leaders with proven facts of feat are appointed and installed consistent with the provisions of their native laws and customs (Orji, & Olali, 2010). The essence of the leader is to preserve the customs and traditions of the people and to manage conflicts arising among or between members of

the community by the instrumentality of local laws and customs for the people as well as engender development.

There has been a change within the role of traditional leadership in Nigeria because it applies to network improvement since the creation of nearby authorities reforms of 1976. In the said reforms, leadership roles were simply expressed, which states that it is not always the aim of the authorities to break the natural cohesion of the conventional chief. The traditional emirate and chiefdom will remain, despite the fact that their capabilities might be modified in keeping with the present-day occasions. Traditional leaders are the collection of persons who by community customs and practices (or traditions) occupy positions (stools) through which they exercise governance over a rather homogeneous people within a culturally defined territory Such persons are generally referred to as kings and chiefs, or in a more generic term, traditional rulers, irrespective of the particular titles of the stool they occupy (Wilhelmina, 2002).

Traditional leaders in Nigeria remain for a variety of reasons, important to the design and implementation of development projects within their area of jurisdiction. Their core functions include the mobilization of their communities for developmental purposes. This consists of the supply of infrastructure for a more desirable preferred of residing in the community. Sometimes, traditional leaders initiate development initiatives and relaxed the support of both inner and external development agents for the execution of those tasks (Wilhelmina, 2002). Traditional leaders work alongside their projects and consequently deliver the entire network alongside to perform development tasks to be able to be of advantage to the whole community.

According to Wilhelmina, (2002), some of the roles of traditional leaders include:
  i. Custody of ancestral and community land, culture, customary laws, tradition and history;
  ii. Initiation and championing of development activities; and
  iii. Maintenance of law and order, including presiding over and setting noncriminal, civil disputes.

Jeffrey (2004) was more specific; as he mentioned that some of the roles of the traditional leaders include:
  1. Lunching education fund,
  2. Canvassing for investment,
  3. Initiation of poverty reduction strategies,
  4. Awareness campaign on HIV/AIDS, and
  5. Exemplary ambassadorship.

Based on the foregoing, it is obvious that there are diverse perceptions of the roles of traditional leadership in development. It would be difficult to canvass just one common and generally acceptable perspective. More difficult is the task of distinguishing such roles into those for advocacy, grass-roots mobilization, poverty alleviation, and rural development. It would not be inappropriate to assert that the roles are interwoven.

According to Rubin and Rubin (201l), community development is regarded as a continuous procedure aimed toward enhancing the quality of life of community members. It is all approximately persistent development via the human beings themselves to result in change of their lives that is generally pushed by means of its strength shape. The main intention of community development is to develop individuals' abilities and capacity to affect their wellness and quality of life through most resources utilization to advance their social and economic course (Chukwuone, Agwu & Ozor 2006). This may be done through effective management of community improvement programmes as well as having highly devoted and enthusiastic leadership.

Considering the role of traditional leader as the closest leaders of government closest to the people, it can be argued that they are the baseline to every successful community development project and they play a key role in initiating, approving, monitoring and executing stages of every developmental programme in their locality.

Consequently, achieving a successful or sustainable community development project in most communities in Omuma has been on discourse for many years, but due to the several challenges faced, its maximum goals are yet to be fully actualized. Fundamental to the challenges of community development is the hassle of powerful management on the nearby level, which is believed to pose a threat to a success network development, residents' participation, mobilization and involvement in selection making in community development tasks (Chukwuone, Agwu & Ozor 2006).

Community development occurs whilst humans toughen the bonds within their neighbourhoods, build social networks, and form their agencies to provide a protracted-term capacity for hassle-solving (Rubin & Rubin, 200l). Community contributors who can do something to enhance their best of lifestyles are portrayed as having the capability to suppose, determine and take movement is figuring out their lives. It is regularly argued that in any network development programme each financial and character boom ought to accept the same interest to ensure that the method of network development achieves its due stability, continuity and sustainability via its strength structure (traditional leadership) (Chukwuone, Agwu & Ozor, 2006).

Some other challenges facing traditional leadership in Omuma and its neighbouring communities include; (1) the respect that surrounds the traditional leader/rulers are fading out day by day. They now run errands for political office holders and can be called upon at any time to attend one function or another either relevant or not. (2) They feature prominently in political rallies and become politicians themselves, to find favour from their political godfathers, (3) there is a lack of constitutional role supporting them to carry out any meaningful development programme, (4) there is a poor working environment for some traditional leaders; especially those in the rural area, and (5) high expectation from the populace, with little or no resources allocated to the Traditional leadership. Given the foregoing, this study sought answers to the following questions: What are the personal characteristics of traditional rulers and leaders in the study area? What are the activities of traditional leaders in community development? And what are the stages of participation of traditional leaders in successful community development projects in the study area? Consequently, the study is concerned with the assessment of the activities of traditional leadership in community development in Omuma Local Government Area of River State.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Omuma Local Government Area (OMULGA) of Rivers State, with headquarters at Eberi town. It has an area of 170 km2. The LGA is bounded on the north by Imo State, on the South by Obio-Akpo LGA, on the east by Abia State and to the west by Ikwere LGA. Omuma LGA is one of the LGAs that make up the 23 LGAs of Rivers State, Omuma comprises six communities namely Owaza, Eberi, Umuechem, Afam, Egbelu and Umuebele are located in the North southern part of the state. These communities are known for agricultural practices. The LGA has large massive land that is good for the cultivation of arable crops. The traditional occupation of the people of Omuma is farming; they produce arable crops such as cassava, maize, yam, cocoyam, fluted pumpkin, okra, etc.

The study adopted a descriptive survey to assess the activities of traditional leadership in community development. A descriptive survey offered the chance of gathering data from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time to make inferences and generalizations from the study sample.

The population of the study consisted of all traditional leaders in Omuma Local Government Area of Rivers State. The population of the study consisted of 371 respondents, with a sample size of 99 respondents was drawn from the three clans used for the study; Ofeh (40), Eberi (30), and Ogba/Ajuloke (30) using a stratified random sampling technique. The Data used for the study was collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire titled; Traditional Leaders Activities and Community Development Questionnaire (TLACDQ). The items of the questionnaire were scaled as Yes or No response option, structure-objective response, and Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2; and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 response with the mean criterion of 2.5. The collected data were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts, percentage and mean statistics were used to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and using independent t-test at the 0.05 significance level.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Table 1: Personal characteristics of traditional rulers and leaders in the study area

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
	Male	90	90.00
Gender	Female	10	10.00
	Total	**100**	**100.00**
	Single	15	15.00
Marital Status	Married	56	56.00
	Divorced	23	23.00
	Widowed	6	6.00
	Total	**100**	**100.00**
	Diploma/Degree	46	46.00
Educational Level	Master's Degree	15	15.00
	PhD.	2	2.00
	None	37	37.00
	Total	**100**	**100.00**
	Government workers	44	44.00
Occupational Category	Private	16	16.00
	Self-employed	17	17.00
	Pensioner	23	23.00
	Total	**100**	**100.00**
	15-25 Years	6	6.00
	26-35 Years	21	21.00
Age Profile	36-45 Years	31	31.00
	46 years and above	42	42.00
	Total	**100**	**100.00**
	Traditional Ruler	11	11.00
	Elder-in-council	23	23.00
Category of Leaders	Family Heads	33	33.00
	Women Leaders	11	11.00
	Youth Leaders	11	11.00
	CDC Leaders	11	11.00
	Total	**100**	**100.00**

Source: Field Survey 2020

The result in table 1 showed the personal characteristic of the traditional leaders in the study area. However, the gender distribution of the male represents (90.0%) while the female

represents (10.0%) of the sample of the study. Also, the marital status distribution of the respondents indicated that the majority (56.0%) of the respondents were married, followed by divorced with (23.0%), single with (15.0%), and widowed (6.0%). The education level of the respondents revealed that the majority of the respondents had attained a Diploma/Degree (46.0%), followed by respondents with none (37.0%), Masters Degree (15.0%) and lastly PhD (2.0%). Also, the occupational category of the respondents indicated that the majority (44.0%) of the respondents are Government workers, followed by Pensioners (23.0%), Self-employed (17.0%), and Private (16.0%) ventures. Furthermore, the age profile of the respondents indicated that the majority of the respondent (42.0%) is 46 and years and above, followed by 36-45 years (31.0%), 26-35 years (21.0%), and 15-25 years (6.0%). The category of leaders distribution; indicated that the majority (33%), of the respondents, are Family heads, flowed by Elder-in-council (23.0%) followed by Traditional rulers (11.0%), Women leaders (11.0%), Youth leader (11.0%), and Community Development Committee (11.0%). These findings are corroborated by Shiyanbade and Ajuwon (2017), who had revealed the role of traditional leader in community development ranged from providing good leadership as custodian and repository of the community, to mobilize physical, human and financial resources for the local development at large.

Activities of traditional rulers and leaders in community development
Table 2: Distribution of the activities of the traditional leaders in community development

Activities of Traditional Leaders	Yes Freq/%	No Freq/%
Advise the traditional ruler as it concerns proposed developmental plans	84 (84.0%)	16(16.0%)
Assist the traditional ruler to sensitize the people to pay tax	13(13.0%)	87(87.0%)
Organize small group discussion on the plans of the traditional ruler on how the community can attract investments	90 (90.0%)	10(10.0%)
Devise means of raising human and material resources so that the community can be developed independently	74(74.0%)	26(26.0%)
Enlighten community members on the cultural heritage of the people	88(88.0%)	12(12.0%)
Collaborate with security agents to ensure that the community is safe and secured	85(85.0%)	15(15.0%)
Serve as agents of peace amongst the people	92(92.0%)	8(8.0%)
Advise traditional rulers on the need to improve on key areas of the community assets like; schools, health care centre, community halls etc.	98(98.0%)	2(2.0%)
Advise traditional rulers on the need to provide access to social grants for farmers	46(46.0%)	54(54.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 3: Summary of Independent t-test on the difference between the activities of traditional rulers and leaders in community development in the study area

Respondents	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	Sig.	Remark
Rulers	11	22.00	2.05	98	13.71	1.96	0.00	Significant
Leaders	89	16.43	1.17					

Source: SPSS Output, 2020

The result in table 3 indicates the activities of traditional leaders in community development. The result indicated that the majority (84.0%) of the respondents indicated "Yes" to advising the traditional ruler as it concerns proposed developmental plans, while 16.0% indicated "No." Also, the majority (87.0%) of the respondents indicated "No" to assisting the traditional ruler to sensitize the people to pay tax, while 13.0% indicated "Yes." The majority (90.0%) of the respondents indicated "Yes" to organizing small group discussion on the plans of the traditional ruler on how the community can attract investments, while 10.0% indicated "Yes." Furthermore, the majority (74.0%) of the respondents indicated "Yes" to devising means of raising human and material resources so that the community can be developed independently, while 26.0% indicated "No." majority (88.0%) of the respondents indicated "Yes" enlightening community members on the cultural heritage of the people, while 12.0% indicated "No." The majority (85.0%) of the respondents indicated "Yes" to collaborating with security agents to ensure that the community is safe and secured, while 15.0% indicated "No."

Also, the majority (92.0%) of the respondents indicated "Yes" to serving as agents of peace amongst the people, and ensuring that the community is safe and secured, while 8.0% indicated "No." The majority (98.0%) of the respondents indicated "Yes" to advising traditional rulers on the need to improve on key areas of the community assets like; schools, health care centre, community halls etc, while 2.0% indicated "No." Finally, the majority (54.0%) of the respondents indicated "No" to advising traditional rulers on the need to provide access to social grants for farmers, while 46.0% indicated "Yes."

The result from table 4 indicates that t_{cal} = 13.71, df = 98, and t_{tab} = 1.96. Therefore, since $t_{cal} > t_{tab}$ and $P < 0.05$, then there is a significant difference between the activities of traditional rulers and leaders in community development in the study area. Hence, null hypothesis one is rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. These findings are corroborated by Osakede and Ijimakinwa (2015), who had revealed traditional rulers play a very significant role in informally managing conflict and peacemaking meetings when matters get out of hand, they also serve an advisory role to the local council.

The stages of participation of traditional rulers and leaders in successful community development projects in the study area

Table 4: Distribution on the stage of participation of traditional leaders in successful community development projects in the study area

Stages of participation of traditional leaders	Participatory	Mobilization of human resources	Communication to stakeholders	Monitoring	Supervisory
Provision of boreholes	85 (85.0%)	57 (57.0%)	85 (85.0%)	49 (49.0%)	98 (98.0%)
Construction of culverts and roads	75 (75.0%)	34 (34.0%)	93 (93.0%)	69 (69.0%)	45 (45.0%)
Formation of cooperative societies	34 (34.0%)	33 (33.0%)	34 (34.0%)	12 (12.0%)	-
Setting up of markets	56 (56.0%)	25 (25.0%)	85 (85.0%)	70 (70.0%)	99 (99.0%)
Mobilizing people for health programmes	45 (45.0%)	99 (99.0%)	85 (85.0%)	82 (82.0%)	93 (93.0%)
Providing security and resolving disputes within their domains	95 (95.0%)	48 (48.0%)	74 (74.0%)	49 (49.0%)	99 (99.0%)

Enlightenment campaigns on HIV, Lassa fever, breast feeding etc.	74 (74.0%)	83 (83.0%)	81 (81.0%)	84 (84.0%)	82 (82.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 5: Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the difference between traditional rulers and leaders' stages of participation in community development based on their clans

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1714.26	2	857.13	52.14	0.00
Within Groups	1759.02	97	16.44		
Total	3473.27	99			

Source: SPSS Output, 2020

The result in table 4 indicates the stages of participation of traditional leaders in successful community development projects in the study area. In the provision of boreholes; the traditional leaders participate majorly in the role of supervisory (98.0%), followed by participatory (85.0%), communication to stakeholders (85.0%), mobilization of human resources (57.0%) and monitoring (49.0%). In the construction of culverts and roads; traditional leaders participate majorly in the role of communication to stakeholders (93.0%), followed by participatory (75.0%), monitoring (69.0%), supervisory (45.0%), and mobilization of human resources (34.0%). In the formation of cooperative societies; traditional leaders participate majorly jointly in the role of participatory (34.0%), and communication to stakeholders (36.0%), followed by mobilization of human resources (33.0%), and monitoring (12.0%).

Furthermore, in the setting up of markets; traditional leaders participate majorly in the role of supervisory (99.0%), followed by communication to stakeholders (85.0%), monitoring (70.0%), participatory (56.0%), and mobilization of human resources (25.0%). In the mobilization of people for health programme; traditional leaders participate majorly in the role of mobilization of resources (99.0%), followed by supervision (93.0%), communication to stakeholders (85.0%), monitoring (82.0%), and participatory (45.0%). In providing security and resolving disputes within their domains; traditional leaders participate majorly in the role of supervision (99.0%), followed by participatory (95.0%), communication to stakeholders (74.0%), monitoring (49.0%), and mobilization of resources (48.0%). Lastly, in the enlightenment campaigns on HIV, Lassa fever, breastfeeding etc; traditional leaders participate majorly in the role of monitoring (84.0%), followed by mobilization of resources (83.0%), supervision (82.0%), communication to stakeholders (81.0%), and participatory (74.0%).

The result from table 5 shows that there is a significant difference between traditional rulers and leaders' stages of participation in community development based on their clans ($F_{2, 97}$ = 52.14, p=0.00). Hence, null hypothesis two was rejected at the 0.05 significant levels. These findings are consistent with the finding of Bassey (2002), who found that the promotion of better living conditions through projects that the local people support through their initiative and or their full involvement in the implementation process.

Conclusion

This study assessed traditional leaders' activities in community development in Omuma Local Government Area of River State. The findings have revealed that the personal characteristics of traditional leaders in the study area were linked to community development. It was deduced from this result that to ensure efficiency among traditional leaders whether at

the family level or the community the personal characteristics of the rulers and leaders should be upright to get the best out of their leadership prowess.

The activities of traditional rulers and leaders were shown to influence community development, while the tested hypothesis indicated that there is a significant difference between the activities of traditional rulers and leaders in community development in the study area. However, it was deduced that if traditional leaders engage in activities that may not attract development like; not advising the local government on the concerns of the local communities, not attracting investors to the community amongst others, there is little chance for such community to attract development.

The study also showed that the stages of participation of traditional rulers and leaders were successful in engendering community development projects, while the tested hypothesis showed that there is a significant difference between traditional rulers and leaders' stages of participation in community development based on their clans. However, it was deduced that community development is linked with the stages of participation of traditional rulers and leaders programmes like; the provision of boreholes, the construction of roads, formation of cooperative societies amongst others. Therefore, the study concludes the efforts of concerned members of Omuma communities coupled with the efforts of the traditional leadership and non-governmental organization; communities will enhance the development of communities in both human and infrastructural activities.

Recommendations
Based on the findings, the study recommended that:
1. Community members should consider the personal characteristics of the traditional rulers and leaders before selecting and empowering an individual to take the authority as a traditional leader in any community.
2. The people who mandate their traditional rulers and leaders to function in a different capacity in carrying out various developmental activities should follow up on the activities of traditional leaders to ensure that they do what is right, and when it is necessary.
3. Credible persons should be positioned as leaders so they can participate successfully at each stage of the community development programme

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