

Article

Harnessing traditional institutions for sustainable leadership and good governance in Nigeria

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Abstract: The subject of traditional institutions cannot be undermined in the project of sustainable leadership and good governance in Nigeria given the locus and crucial role of the institution in the past and modern Nigeria. It is incontrovertible that traditional and aboriginal values are held highly with reverence and respect in virtually all parts of Nigeria. To discountenance their relevance will be too costly in any leadership-cum-governance discourse. Towns, villages and cities were duly recognized and protected as the harbingers of culture, mores, norms and values. The contemporary government structure in Nigeria duly recognizes the importance of traditional institutions by having a Commission for Local Government (LG) and Chieftaincy Affairs at all State levels. Moreover, 5% of allocations to LGs go statutorily to the tradition institution in the State. Hitherto, the recklessness and abuse of the native authority system of local government administration in the 1950s–60s had led to the moderation and reforms of the system, which has continued to affect traditional institutions to date. To this end, the paper argues that traditional institutions hold so much values and cohesive practices as well as socially integrative potentials for nation-building so much that the State can leverage on them for sustainable leadership and overall good governance. The methodology adopted for collecting data for this study is descriptive research method, which relies on primary direct observation (eye-witness) account and relevant secondary materials such as texts, journal articles, official documents and internet materials. The data collected were analyzed and presented using thematic analysis and tables. National and international data already analyzed were found essential to drive home the argument of this study. The outcome of the paper provides useful information on how traditional institutions serve as a veritable platform for sustainable leadership and good governance in Nigeria. The paper concluded that traditional institutions, with its rich culture, values and practices, possess sufficient merits to propel the country towards sustainable leadership that would concomitantly induce economic, technological and political growth in Nigeria.

Keywords: culture; good governance; sustainable leadership; traditional administration; traditional institutions

1. Introduction

Traditional institutions have been the bedrock of political administration in African societies before the colonial era. Many African societies had well-organized administrative systems for maintaining law and order and generating revenue for the smooth running of the administration of their societies. The influence of traditional institutions continued after independence to shape the history, culture of and traditions of the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria today. According to Gaventa and Valderrama (1999), the integration of traditional institutions into the national democratic process is rooted in the belief that community members are naturally inclined to participate in

the progress of their communities. This inclination, driven by the strong bonds of kinship and lineage, promotes a sense of unity and shared purpose among community members and the society in general. The need to reconcile the challenges and crisis of governance in African start with the dying resolve to finding a solution, drives the impetus to explore the positive potentials that traditional institutions can offer in times like these when ethnicism, croynism, patrimonialism, syndicalism, terrorism, insurgency and insecurity have plagued the African polity in extremely devastating manner (Emordi and Osiki, 2008; Omitola et al., 2021; Yagboyaju and Akinola, 2019).

Prior to the precolonial era, governance in different parts of Nigeria was synonymous with traditional institutions and their rulers. Administration of communities and township was centered on the traditional leader who was considered as the repository of political, economic, religious, legislative, executive and judicial functions. The Igbo traditional system presented a contrasting practice that was more open and democratic compared to their Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani counterpart. Majority of the traditional administration practiced in the precolonial era was the kingship system. Complex structure of the kingship can be seen in the old Oyo Empire and the Hausa Emirates. The Oba of Oyo (Alaafin) was a strong king at the helm of affairs. However, Oyomesi—the kingmaker had the power to remove the king by condemning him to death if he failed to win a war or if someone refused to carry out the Alaafin's order. The Oyomesi served as a check to the Oba like the legislative arm of government to the executives in modern democracy. There was other important administrative position that made the traditional institution a complex one such as the are-ona-kakanfo—the head of the army among others.

In the colonial era, the British colonial authorities faced challenges related to a shortage of personnel and financial resources for the effective governance of the colonies. To address these challenges, they adopted a strategy of gaining the support and loyalty of the local population by appointing traditional leaders as administrative heads responsible for the management of districts in British colonies. These traditional leaders played a central role in executing various functions of the British colonial administration, including the implementation of the indirect rule system and the facilitation of the colonial economy through tax collection (Asantehene and Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, 2004). The power and the significance of the traditional institutions were curtailed by the introduction of the 1922 Clifford constitution, which downgraded the status of the traditional rulers to local administrators.

The 1976 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria imposed restrictions on the involvement of traditional leaders in partisan politics, confining their roles primarily to advisory capacities concerning customary law, chieftaincy affairs, religious concerns, local law enforcement, and other matters determined by the government (Garba et al., 2018). The primary challenge currently confronting traditional institutions in their ability to assume specific roles or active involvement in the political governance of their communities stems from the absence of well-defined legal responsibilities within the constitutional framework (Chukwudi et al., 2024).

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria does not stipulate explicit roles for traditional leaders. Furthermore, traditional rulers lack a designated mandate for participating in the development of infrastructures within their respective communities (Osimen et al., 2024). This presents a significant hurdle, as these traditional

institutions were perceived as having influence in compelling the government to undertake infrastructure projects within their regions (Daudu et al., 2023). Traditional institutions are regarded as the most proximate form of governance to the populace, and community members frequently convey concerns regarding essential amenities, such as water supply, road networks, and access to electricity, among others, without necessarily being aware of the constraints faced by these traditional institutions and rulers.

Paper Objective: The study examines the potentials of traditional institutions and the modalities for integrating traditional institutions with the view to enhancing sustainable leadership and promoting good governance in Nigeria, with a focus on identifying key factors and challenges associated with this integration.

2. Literature review

There is no generally accepted definition for traditional institution as the concept varies with different African societies. However, Emordi and Osiki (2008) defined traditional institution as a Kingship system with a highly centralised system of government. African societies are characterized with the kingship system, this is a system whereby a person is selected as a king, queen or emperor of a community, society, or a state embedded with political power to govern their territory. The kingship system varies from one society, region or country to another. The process of selecting the ruler is hereditary in some places meaning that the political power is passed down within a royal family from one generation to the next. For example, only the first male child of the ruling king is eligible to become the next ruler in the Benin kingdom, Edo state.

There are instances of selective monarchies where the king or ruler is selected based on specific process such as confirmed track records and are coronated in line with the necessary requirements of their traditional customs and laws and in some societies, every male child of both the ruling king and past kings are eligible for being selected as a monarch (Osimen et al., 2023). For example, The Emir of Kano in Kano State is typically selected based on a well-established process that involves a council of kingmakers who consider the qualifications, integrity, and adherence to Islamic and traditional customs. According to Orji and Olali (2010) traditional institutions are characterized as the indigenous political structures through which individuals with established records of leadership competency are selected and officially inaugurated in adherence to the requisite criteria outlined within their respective traditional customs and legal frameworks. These traditional institutions serve as the guardians of their community's norms, cultural heritage, and customary practices (Olawale, 2018; Orji and Olali, 2010) contend that the scope of traditional institutions extends beyond monarchs and encompasses the entirety of the traditional leadership structure. This structure comprises individuals such as chief-in-council, elders-in-council, and traditional title holders. These individuals are bestowed with traditional chieftaincy titles in recognition of their substantial contributions to the advancement and progress of their respective communities, even though their roles may entail minimal or no executive, legislative, or judicial powers.

2.1. Good governance

Good governance is defined by many scholars from many points of view, some define it based on an economic point of view while others define it from a political standpoint. Saka-Olokungboye et al. (2023) and Olurankinse and Oloruntoba (2021) defined governance as how a society organizes its affairs and how it manages its resources for the welfare of its people. At its core, good governance involves the effective organization of a society's affairs and the responsible management of its resources for the betterment of its people.

From an economic point of view, good governance is associated with policies and practices that foster economic growth and development. It entails the formulation and implementation of well-conceived economic policies in a democratic and equitable manner, with the ultimate aim of benefiting the broader population (Olurankinse and Oloruntoba, 2021). On the other hand, from a political standpoint, good governance is closely linked to democratic values and principles. It aligns with global objectives for human development, emphasizing the prioritization of human well-being (Gideon et al., 2024). Within this context, good governance entails a carefully structured facilitation framework that promotes democratic decision-making and consensus-building among decision-makers. This approach leads to the development of well-informed perspectives within institutional or decision-making contexts (Abdulrahim, 2019).

As outlined by Abdulrahim (2019), the achievement of good governance is closely linked to the promotion of democratic values, aligning with global objectives for human development. This is primarily realized by implementing a carefully structured facilitation framework, emphasizing the prioritization of human development goals. Furthermore, Rahim suggests that it entails fostering economic growth through well-conceived policies and their democratic implementation, guided by equitable practices aimed at benefiting the general populace (Olu-Owolabi et al., 2020).

Likewise, according to Smith (2007), the concept of good governance serves as a fundamental policy framework that establishes a robust decision-making process. Within this framework, decision-makers engage in a consensus-building phase, ultimately leading to the formulation of well-informed perspectives within institutional or decision-making contexts. In essence, good governance encompasses a holistic approach to societal management, combining economic and political elements, all with the overarching goal of ensuring the welfare, development, and well-being of the society and its citizens (Emordi and Osiki, 2008).

In essence, these definitions emphasize the interconnectedness, interdependence, and collaborative functioning of different components within a society and the idea that, in a politically integrated society, individuals prioritize their national identity over their ethnic or group identities for the greater good of the nation's stability and development.

2.2. Traditional institutions in Nigeria

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country having over 300 ethnic groups and over 250 languages including diverse cultures and traditions. These ethnic groups have their own

unique traditional institution, they also have their unique culture and tradition which differ from each other (Osifo, 2017; Olawale, 2018). Traditional institutions played a crucial role in administration of people prior to the colonial era. In addition to their role as custodians of the oral traditions and historical narratives of their communities, traditional institutions also serve as instrumental agents in maintaining social stability and harmony within their specific domains. Their functions encompass the performance of significant spiritual and ceremonial duties, active contributions to the development and progress of their areas, and the informal resolution of conflicts and disputes (Baldwin and Holzinger, 2019).

The Yoruba who occupied the western part of Nigeria have a rich history of kingship, with each major town or city having its own monarch, known as an Oba. The Oba is considered the custodian of Yoruba culture and traditions. There are also smaller chiefs and local leaders under the Oba called Baale (village's head/chief) (Idowu et al., 2022). These smaller chiefs assist the king with the political administration of the town. The Yoruba kingship system was premised on checks and balances, the king does not possess absolute power as his excesses are checked by the council of senior chiefs. The old Oyo Empire which stretched out from the modern-day Oyo state, governed the entire western state including Benin Republic. The Alaafin of Oyo who was the king of the Oyo Empire wielded so much power and authority but was checked by the Oyomesi (senior chief council) to prevent the Alaafin from abusing it power or being dictatorial (Idowu et al., 2022).

The Oyomesi had the power to remove an erring king from his throne or force him to commit suicide in case of irreconcilable difference between him and the Oyomesi, or his subject. This was done with the collaboration with the Ogboni cult group acting under the authority of religion. The Oyomesi is headed by the Bashorun. The Bashorun was appointed based on the approval of the Ogboni cult and the Alaafin could use the Ogboni to check the excessive of the Bashorun who headed the Oyomesi. The Oyo Empire was based on a complex system of checks and balances. It was structured in layers of traditional rules and almost a layer of authority served as a check on the other (Saka-Olokungboye et al., 2023).

The traditional institution system practiced in the northern part of Nigeria particularly the Hausa/Fulani is similar to the kingship system practiced in the western part of Nigeria. The Hausa/Fulani traditional institution system operated much centralized kingship system headed by an emir who serves as the paramount traditional ruler of the emirate. The emir is typically a hereditary monarch and is often a descendant of a respected historical leader in the emirate who is not only the political head but also a spiritual leader (Osakede and Ijimakinwa, 2015).

Similar to the Oyo empire system, the emir has a number of people who advise him and assist in running the day-to-day administration of the emirate. Such as the Sarkin Fada who assumes the role of being the spokesperson and coordinator of palace workers, facilitating communication between the royal court and the emir, the Waziri, holding the esteemed title of prime minister, is responsible for overseeing the emirate's administrative affairs and acts as the chief advisor to the emir, the Galadima serves as the chief administrator of the capital city within the emirate, overseeing its management and development, the Madawaki, holds the position of Commander and Head of the Army, responsible for ensuring the security and defence of the emirate,

the Mogaji is the custodian of the emirate's treasury, overseeing financial matters and resource management, the Sarkin Dan Doka is entrusted with the duties of the Inspector General of the Police Force, responsible for maintaining law and order within the emirate, the Sarkin Ruwa assumes the position of the Minister in charge of Water Resources, overseeing water-related matters crucial to the emirate's sustenance and development and the Alkali Judges are primarily trained to serve as judges specializing in the administration of justice based on Islamic Sharia law, ensuring that legal matters are resolved in accordance with Islamic jurisprudence (Erero, 2005).

In the eastern region of Nigeria, specifically within the Igbo cultural context, the traditional institution predominantly followed a gerontocracy model of governance. This governance system was distinguished by the establishment of a council of elders, referred to as "Ofo", which consisted of individuals highly regarded for their wisdom and sagacity within the community. The council of elders played a central and influential role in the mediation of conflicts, the formulation of significant policy decisions, and the provision of valuable guidance to the leadership on matters of considerable significance.

Their elevated wisdom and esteemed status rendered them indispensable in the resolution of disputes and the formulation of critical determinations within the community. Pre-colonial Igbo society featured the establishment of traditional institutions, within which executive, legislative, judicial, and administrative decisions were founded upon the consensus of prevailing opinions. The 'Ohaneze,' constituted by family heads and titleholders, assumed a collective decision-making role for the entire community. Supported by the council of elders and various Age-grade associations, they undertook various overarching functions, including the preservation of legal and societal order, the construction and upkeep of road infrastructure, and the protection of the community from external threats (Osakede and Ijimakinwa, 2015).

2.3. Role of traditional institutions

Before Nigeria's independence, traditional institutions played essential roles despite being restructured by the British colonial administration to serve colonial interests. They were incorporated into the indirect rule system, where they took on legislative, executive, and judicial functions, including tax collection and recruitment efforts for the armed forces (Ali and Bukar, 2019). According to Emordi and Osiki (2008). These institutions also acted as intermediaries between the local population and British officials, even extending their power into areas where they previously had no authority. This sometimes resulted in tensions with the educated elite during that period (Osakede and Ijimakinwa, 2015; Tonwe and Osemwota, 2013).

The Richard Constitution of 1946 introduced House of Assemblies in the Western and Eastern regions and the House of Chiefs in the North, which reinstated the relevance of traditional rulers in governance (Osakede and Ijimakinwa, 2015). They were given unofficial majority positions in these legislative bodies, and they often supported the administrative efforts of the British colonial administration. Some even endorsed the nationalist movements pushing for independence from British colonial rule (Saka-Olokunboye et al., 2023).

However, with the advent of military rule in Nigeria following the January 15,

1966 military coup and the subsequent military constitutions of 1976 and 1983, traditional rulers were insulated from partisan politics, leading to a reduction in their power and influence (Chukwudi et al., 2024). The 1999 constitution did not assign specific roles to traditional institutions apart from providing them with advisory positions at the local government level. Unfortunately, these advisory roles are not binding on the elected local government officials, reversing many of the gains made by these institutions over the years (Chinwe, 2023).

2.4. Theoretical framework: Institutional theory

The institutional theory focuses on how organizations, in this case traditional institutions, establish and maintain certain structures and processes to achieve their goals and objectives. In the context of Nigeria, traditional institutions such as chieftaincy systems and councils can play a key role in promoting sustainable leadership and good governance through their established norms, values, and decision-making processes. By understanding and leveraging the institutional framework of traditional institutions, stakeholders can work towards building effective leadership and governance practices that are culturally and contextually relevant to the Nigerian society. The institutional theory was propounded by scholars such as John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan (Jepperson and Meyer, 2021).

Meyer and Rowan's institutional theory is a significant perspective in contemporary organizational research. They contested the prevailing belief that formal organizational structures were purely functional. According to Meyer and Rowan, organizations adopt specific forms due to institutional myths in their environment. These myths influence organizational practices, even if they are not necessarily linked to better outcomes (Akinyemi et al., 2024). Institutional theory has a significant impact on development. Their insights prompted a shift in focus from isomorphism (organizations becoming similar) to institutional change. Researchers are now investigating how new laws, regulations, products, services, and occupations emerge within institutions. Challenges persist, such as reconciling different decision-making models and understanding the interplay between socio-cultural forces and entrepreneurial agency. Summarily, Meyer and Rowan's work emphasizes the role of cultural norms and shared expectations in shaping organizational structures and practices.

The institutional theory provides a theoretical lens through which to explore how traditional institutions in Nigeria play integral roles in the sustainable leadership and promotion of good governance within the broader societal framework (Olu-Owolabi et al., 2020).

3. Methodology

To explore how traditional institutions can be harnessed for sustainable leadership and good governance in Nigeria, a mixed-methods approach was employed. The methodology encompassed both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to provide a comprehensive analysis and presentation of the subject. Qualitative data collection involved in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including traditional leaders, government officials, community members to gather insights into the role of

traditional institutions in governance, the challenges they face, and their potential contributions to sustainable leadership.

Interview

The in-depth and semi-structured interviews for this study were conducted between 1 October and 31 October 2023. In accessing the twelve (12) respondents earmarked for the interviews, physical face-to-face interviews, and recorded phone interview were utilized. A face-to-face interview is a formal interaction that takes place between an interviewer and an interviewee in person, typically at a physical location, while phone interview enabled the interviewer and the interviewee to communicate over the phone without seeing each other in person.

Sequel to the completed in-depth interviews of the twelve (12) key informants, transcription was done to convert the audio and video responses to texts, and analysis followed with the use of QSR Nvivo software 12. This was used to identify and describe both inherent and unequivocal ideas within the data which are denoted as themes and nodes. The adoption of the software did not make the analysis less time consuming but helped in the interpretation of textual component of the analysis systematically (Pope et al., 2000). Open coding was employed for the creation of code while reading the documents and thus allowed for new insight emergence. The thematic analysis focused on the intentions of the responses of the key informants the questions being asked as themes were deduced from the responses in order to gain access to their understanding and perspectives on integrating traditional institutions for sustainable leadership and good governance in Nigeria.

Using the Nvivo software for the thematic analysis, the identification, analyzing and reporting patterns within data was made from the in-depth interviews (audio and video transliterated into transcript) by finding themes and extracting meanings. Informants were hitherto given codes differentiating them from one another on the basis of their individuality and institutional affiliations and put in numerical order of how the interviews occurred. From the adoption of Emiko (2013) Nvivo thematic implantation, the study created the themes around the responses obtained from the Key Informants. In the process of coding, nodes noted were created in line with the responses and were implemented under the existing themes. However, some codes could not be purely identified into the child nodes and thus were placed with the parents' nodes, otherwise referred to as the themes. **Table 1** contains allocation of codes based on themes or categories such as: traditional leaders (A1, A2, b1 & B2) government officials (C1, C2, D1 & D2), and community members (E1, E2, F1 & F2). It is to be reiterated that 12 key interviewees from Osun and Kaduna States were interrogated. To ensure analytical clarity of this research five tables were drawn up to address pertinent separate issues on leadership and the use of traditional institutions. **Table 2**, gives the summary of themes and sub-themes extracted from the responses to the interview. **Table 3** details questions on the role of and impact of traditional institutions on governance in Nigeria. **Table 4** gives detailed analyses of responses of the respondents and lastly **Table 5**, highlights comments on the suggested framework for sustainable integration of traditional institutions for sustainable leadership and good governance in Nigeria.

The data for this study analysis involved a combination of thematic analysis for qualitative data and statistical analysis for quantitative data. The qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and categorized to identify recurring themes and patterns. The findings from both analyses were synthesized to develop a comprehensive understanding of how traditional institutions can be harnessed for sustainable leadership and good governance in Nigeria. A total of twelve (12) interviews were conducted across the relevant categories of persons such as traditional Leaders, Government Official, and Community members were selected for this research exercise.

The interview made use of multi-stage sampling technique. At the first stage, Osun and Kaduna states were purposively selected to reflect the opinions of different ethnic groups on the subject matter. At the second stage, respondents from different communities were randomly selected from Ile-Ife, Osun-State and Zaria, Kaduna state to reflect diverse opinions. At the third stage, traditional leaders, government officials, and community members were selected. Furthermore, two respondents were interviewed each from institutional affiliation.

Secondary data sources, such as historical records, policy documents, and academic literature, were reviewed to provide a suitable context to comprehend and validate the findings cum scientific outcome of the research report on traditional institutions over time.

Table 1. Profile of key informants.

Institutional Affiliation	Designation	Assigned	codes
Age Grade			
Traditional Leader	Ile-Ife, Osun State	A1	Adult
Traditional Leader	Ile-Ife, Osun State	A2	Adult
Traditional Leader	Zaria, Kaduna State	B1	Adult
Traditional Leader	Zaria, Kaduna State	B2	Adult
Government Officials	Ile-Ife, Osun State	C1	Adult
Government Officials	Ile-Ife, Osun State	C2	Adult
Government Officials	Zaria, Kaduna State	D1	Adult
Government Officials	Zaria, Kaduna State	D2	Adult
Community Members	Ile-Ife, Osun State	E1	Adult
Community Members	Ile-Ife, Osun State	E2	Adult
Community Members	Zaria, Kaduna State	F1	Adult
Community Members	Zaria, Kaduna State	F2	Adult
Total Number of Respondents			12

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2023.

4. Analysis

This section provides an overview of the findings obtained from the analysis of both primary and secondary data sources, including data collected through and in-depth interviews, as part of the research conducted for this study. The data obtained for the study are presented using tables with the aim of showing specific information

on the in-depth interviews conducted and retrieved from the key informants.

Results of the responses from key informants

The semi-structured interview was carried out using the thematic analysis with themes generated. The generated themes were raised in the course of the interview. The following are the themes raised during the interview and the results that were gathered from key informants (see **Table 2**).

Table 2. Summary of themes and sub-themes extracted from the responses

S/N	Themes
1	Analyzing Traditional Institutions' Impact on Governance
2	Challenges and opportunities associated with integrating traditional institutions into the modern governance framework of Nigeria
3	Proposing a Framework for Sustainable Integration

Source: Authors' formulation, 2023.

Theme 1: Analyzing Traditional Institutions' Impact on Governance in Nigeria

The respondents mostly demonstrated a broad understanding on the impact and role of traditional institution in Nigeria even though the views were somehow divergent sometimes depending on the perspectives from which each of the key informants were looking at the issue from (see **Table 3**).

Table 3. Information on interview questions on the role and impact of traditional institutions in Nigeria

A1	Vital for community harmony and identity.
A2	Used to solve disputes; trusted mediators
B1	Influence local policies, but less in cities.
B2	Maintain culture, but limited in urban areas
C1	Authority varies, often tied to traditions.
C2	Need recognition to impact urban policies
D1	Keep peace in our community; a stabilizer.
D2	Effective but challenged in urban settings.
E1	Community leaders, connecting us to government
E2	Deep-rooted, but need more governing support.
F1	Symbolic in some places, powerful in others.
F2	Balance tradition with modern governance.

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2023.

Theme 2: Challenges and opportunities associated with traditional institutions into the modern governance framework of Nigeria.

This second theme sums up the responses of the informants in regarding to their understanding of challenges and opportunities associated with traditional institutions into the modern governance framework of Nigeria (see **Table 4**).

Table 4. Informantions comments on the impact of traditional institutions in Nigeria.

-
- A1 Cultural sensitivity is key. Finding a way to blend tradition with modern governance is a complex but rewarding challenge.
 - A2 Empowering traditional leaders can boost community involvement and strengthen the connection between local issues and the government.
 - B1 Legal hurdles can be a roadblock, but they also highlight the need for legal reforms that recognize the roles of traditional institutions.
 - B2 Reviving our cultural heritage is a golden opportunity, especially for younger generations who may be losing touch with their roots.
 - C1 Balancing tradition with the rule of law is a delicate task, but it's possible with careful navigation and open dialogue.
 - C2 Strengthening grassroots voices is an opportunity we can not afford to miss; it brings governance closer to the people.
 - D1 Public awareness is crucial. People need to understand the potential benefits and challenges of this integration.
 - D2 Empowering traditional leaders could pave the way for locally driven development projects, tapping into indigenous knowledge.
 - E1 Political resistance is real and requires a pragmatic approach. Convincing policymakers is often an uphill battle.
 - E2 Preserving our cultural values while adapting is our duty. We should learn from successful integration models.
 - F1 More inclusive decision-making can lead to more well-rounded policies that consider the unique needs of various communities.
 - F2 Capacity-building is a must for local leaders. To be effective, they need the right skills and resources.
-

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2023

Theme 3: Proposing a Framework for Sustainable Integration

Under this section, respondents are interviewed on what framework they propose for integrating traditional institutions with the formal government for sustainable leadership and good governance in Nigeria (see **Table 5**).

Table 5. Information comments on proposing a framework for sustainable integration.

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- A1 Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for traditional institutions within the formal government structure to ensure they play an active role.
 - A2 Structured training programs for traditional leaders to equip them with the skills required for effective participation within the formal government.
 - B1 Effective communication channels and regular dialogues between traditional leaders and government officials for mutual understanding.
 - B2 Mechanisms to track and report on the activities of traditional institutions, promoting transparency and accountability.
 - C1 Gender-inclusive policies to encourage women's involvement in leadership positions within traditional institutions and the formal government.
 - C2 Conflict resolution frameworks to address disagreements that may arise during the integration process.
 - D1 Efforts to safeguard and promote indigenous knowledge and cultural values while integrating them into the formal government structure.
 - D2 Resource allocation for community development initiatives driven by traditional leaders, aligning with local development goals.
 - E1 Legal frameworks to protect the rights and cultural heritage of indigenous communities and traditional leaders during the integration.
 - E2 Regular evaluations and adaptations of the integration framework to address evolving circumstances and community needs.
 - F1 Active engagement with local communities, ensuring their concerns shape policies within the formal government, fostering inclusivity.
 - F2 Measures to balance the preservation of cultural integrity with the efficient functioning of traditional institutions within the formal government structure.
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Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2023

5. Discussion of findings

The study assessed how traditional institutions can be harnessed for sustainable leadership and good governance in Nigeria. This section discussed the findings gathered from the interviews analyzed above. These findings are critically discussed in relation to the views of other scholars and academia who have contributed to the subject matter. The researcher interviewed traditional leaders, government officials

and community members in Ile-Ife, Osun state and Zaria, Kaduna.

The first theme, which focused on analyzing the impact of traditional institutions in Nigeria, revealed that the respondents generally possessed a comprehensive understanding of the roles and significance of these institutions. Their views, however, sometimes varied depending on the perspectives from which they approached the topic. Key findings included the recognition of traditional institutions as vital for maintaining community harmony, preserving cultural identity, and serving as trusted mediators in dispute resolution.

These institutions were seen as having varying degrees of influence, with a more prominent role in rural areas compared to urban settings, where modern governance often takes precedence. The authority of traditional institutions was found to be closely tied to local traditions, and it was acknowledged that formal recognition and integration into the formal governance structure were necessary for greater impact in urban areas. Furthermore, traditional institutions were appreciated for their role in maintaining peace and stability, but they faced distinct challenges in urban settings, requiring support and adaptation to modern governance demands (Oladoyin et.al 2024). They were also viewed as connectors between local communities and the government, although a need for more governing support was identified. The findings highlighted the variability in the power and influence of traditional institutions across regions, with the overarching challenge being to effectively balance tradition with modern governance.

The second theme explored the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating traditional institutions into the modern governance framework of Nigeria. Respondents recognized that this integration presented a complex but ultimately rewarding challenge. They emphasized the need for cultural sensitivity, as finding a way to blend tradition with modern governance required a delicate approach. Empowering traditional leaders emerged as an opportunity to boost community involvement and strengthen the connection between local issues and the government, further enhancing governance. Legal hurdles were identified as a potential roadblock to integration, but they also highlighted the critical need for legal reforms that would formally recognize the roles of traditional institutions. Respondents also saw the integration process as an opportunity to revive cultural heritage, particularly for younger generations who may be losing touch with their roots.

Achieving a balance between tradition and the rule of law was considered a delicate yet achievable task, contingent on careful navigation and open dialogue. Strengthening grassroots voices was seen as an opportunity to bring governance closer to the people, making decision-making processes more inclusive. Public awareness was deemed crucial for successful integration, as people needed to understand the potential benefits and challenges associated with the process. Empowering traditional leaders held the potential to pave the way for locally driven development projects, tapping into indigenous knowledge to address local challenges effectively. Respondents recognized that political resistance was a real obstacle to integration and that a pragmatic approach was required to overcome it. Additionally, the importance of preserving cultural values while adapting to changing circumstances was acknowledged, and it was suggested that lessons could be drawn from successful integration models in other contexts. The need for more inclusive decision-making and

capacity-building for local leaders was emphasized as essential for effective integration into the formal governance structure.

The third theme provided insights into the framework proposed by respondents for the sustainable integration of traditional institutions into the formal government structure. Recommendations included defining clear roles and responsibilities for traditional institutions within the formal government structure to ensure their active participation, implementing structured training programs for traditional leaders to equip them with the necessary skills for effective engagement, establishing effective communication channels and regular dialogues between traditional leaders and government officials to promote mutual understanding, and setting up mechanisms to track and report on the activities of traditional institutions to ensure transparency and accountability. Gender-inclusive policies were recommended to encourage women's involvement in leadership positions within traditional institutions and the formal government. Respondents proposed conflict resolution frameworks to address potential disagreements that may arise during the integration process, along with efforts to safeguard and promote indigenous knowledge and cultural values while integrating them into the formal government structure. They suggested resource allocation for community development initiatives driven by traditional leaders, aligning with local development goals. Legal frameworks were proposed to protect the rights and cultural heritage of indigenous communities and traditional leaders during the integration. Regular evaluations and adaptations of the integration framework were recommended to address evolving circumstances and community needs. Active engagement with local communities was proposed to ensure that their concerns shaped policies within the formal government, fostering inclusivity. Lastly, measures to balance the preservation of cultural integrity with the efficient functioning of traditional institutions within the formal government structure were suggested.

In summary, the thematic analyses revealed a comprehensive understanding of the complexity and significance of integrating traditional institutions into modern governance in Nigeria. Respondents recognized that this integration process required legal reforms, empowerment, awareness-building, and a pragmatic approach to overcome its challenges. The proposed framework aimed to strike a balance between tradition and modernity while fostering community inclusivity and cultural preservation within the context of sustainable leadership and good governance. This is not to jettison and be oblivious all the recklessness and highhandedness of the native authority when traditional chiefs and elites have messed up the vestiges of political office.

6. Conclusion

The study establishes the critical nexus between traditional institutions and modern governance in Nigeria. Traditional institutions have historically served as the bedrock of governance, playing pivotal roles in maintaining community harmony, preserving cultural identities, and acting as trusted mediators. These institutions, however, have encountered transformations, varying in significance between rural and urban settings. It was argued that formal recognition and integration of traditional institutions into the modern governance structure is essential to augment their

influence, particularly in urban areas. The process of integrating traditional institutions into modern governance is fraught with both challenges inspite of the many opportunities that cannot be disputed. Respondents emphasized the importance of approaching this integration with cultural sensitivity, striving to find a balance between tradition and modern governance (Ikeanyibe et al., 2017). Empowering traditional leaders is identified as a key strategy that can enhance community involvement and bridge the gap between local issues and government policies. In essence, this study offers comprehensive insights into the potential for traditional institutions to promote sustainable leadership and good governance in Nigeria (Mengisteab and Hagg, 2017). While acknowledging the complexity of integration, it furnishes a practical roadmap for achieving it, underscored by the values of inclusivity, cultural preservation, and transparent governance that are pivotal for Nigeria's continued development and prosperity.

7. Recommendations

To fully leverage their potential, it is imperative to implement legal reforms that officially recognize traditional institutions and define their roles within the modern governance framework. To enhance the effectiveness of traditional leaders in their roles within the formal government structure, structured training programs should be implemented. These programs would equip traditional leaders with the necessary skills, knowledge, and tools for effective engagement in modern governance. Promoting gender diversity within traditional institutions and the formal government is essential. Implementing gender-inclusive policies will encourage the involvement of women in leadership positions within both traditional and formal governance structures.

In spite of the seeming advantages that traditional institutions may attract for good governance sustainable cities, it is imperative for upcoming researchers to investigate the maladies of traditional institutions and the obsession with splendor cum riches. The issues of good governance is not a given as soon as traditional institutions are inculcated into governance and calls for another level of critical analysis that another social researcher can take up.

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