



## AN OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

**Mustapha Alhaji Ali\***

Department of Political Science and Administration.  
Yobe State University, Damaturu.  
Nigeria

**Fatima Ahmed**

Department of Political Science  
University of Maiduguri  
Nigeria

\*Corresponding author's Email: [mustaphaalhaji2@gmail.com](mailto:mustaphaalhaji2@gmail.com)

### *Author's Biography*

*Mustapha Alhaji Ali, born in Yobe state Nigeria, a staff of Yobe State University. Currently pursuing Ph.D. Political Science in Universiti Utara Malaysia is the based eminent Management University. The University in the green forest.*

*Fatima Ahmed was born in Borno state Nigeria, working with the University of Maiduguri. Presently pursuing Ph.D. Political Development in the University of Maiduguri the famous University in the North-Eastern region.*

*Peer-review under the responsibility of 3<sup>rd</sup> Asia International Multidisciplinary Conference 2019 editorial board  
(<http://www.utm.my/asia/our-team/>)*

*© 2019 Published by Readers Insight Publisher,  
lat 306 Savoy Residencia, Block 3 F11/1,44000 Islamabad. Pakistan,  
[info@readersinsight.net](mailto:info@readersinsight.net)*

*This is an open-access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).*





## Research Highlights

The British officials in Nigeria mounted and imposed rules and laws through the traditional rulers who only served as mediators between the people and the British officials. Though, the cultures and traditions of the Nigerian citizens were cherished and reserved by the British government in order to accept and welcome them by the citizens of the country. However, this system worked out well because of the support of the traditional rulers who claimed that since their cultures and traditions were not interfered with, they have no problem with the British authorities (Teslim, 2019).

Before traditional rulers are attached with some important functions among which are contributing to development administration, linkage or "brokering" between grassroots and capital, extension of national identity through the conferral of traditional titles, low-level conflict resolution and judicial gate-keeping, ombudsmanship and institutional safety- valve for overloaded and sub-apportioned bureaucracies. In addition to the above roles, traditional rulers are meant to create educated chieftaincies meaningfully improves the success of traditional rulers (Miles, 1993). Furthermore, traditional rulers serve as another institute of conflict resolution in any nation where the state legal system is weakening to fully provide the judicial requirements of the country (Zelege, 2011).

A study by Isaac (2018) disclosed that in the olden days, traditional institutions are the administrative organizations in Nigeria. These establishments are entrenched in the history, cultures, and the traditions of several ethnic groups and cultural background. He further explained that traditional institutions plays an important role in the managerial process before, during, and after colonial rules, these institutions have contributed to the history of the nation. The role of traditional organizations was important and highly respected during these periods.

---

## Research Objectives

1. The paper examined the roles of traditional institutions toward steady democracy
2. To discover how efficient are these institutions in ensuring steady democracy

### Significance of the Study

This study is of great importance to the academia. This is because it would add to the body of existing knowledge, by guiding and assisting students conducting research in a similar field of study. This study helps in identifying the gap in the literature and it as well assists in filling the existing gap in the literature. However, this research work is very significant because it would help the traditional institution in understanding their weakness and how to improve where necessary.

## Methodology

This paper is qualitative in nature because it is based on organized review of related literature and a subtle examination of secondary data. In this case, data were recognised from various sources such as magazines, published and unpublished articles, books, journals, reports archives and newspaper articles (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell, 2009).

### Research Design

Under the research design the researcher adopted case study approach this is because it provides the researcher with an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon under inquiry, or it helps in providing an in-depth thoughtful of cases (Creswell, 2013; Othman, 2018).





## Theoretical Framework

There are many theories that can explain these study, but for the purpose of this paper the researcher used two theories, these are dependency and servant leadership theory, and reason for using these theories is based on their applicability and relationship with the topic under examination, these theories dwelled on abilities of leader and leadership independence in all the society. The postulations of these theories are that traditional rulers should be an independent body, truthful, honest, loyal, responsible, forecast, sensible and above all dedication to administrative responsibilities (White and Clark, 1990; Stone, & Patterson, 2005).

## Findings

Traditional rulers play an important role in the society by advising the elected leaders in different areas, these include; economic policy, security issues, equal sharing of goods and services, recommending aspirants for elections or appointment to serve the community, demand for good governance and general wellbeing of the people among others. Study by Lund (2006) and Osifo (2017) disclosed that before traditional institutions use religion power to settle disputes among the citizens as well as married couples in the society, it also uses religious sanctions in resolving issues related to land disputes among the people in their respective societies, and issues like robbery, and disputes between neighbors in the societies.

## Recommendations

The paper recommended that traditional rulers should be given full independence and should be well connected into Nigeria democratic process, this would encourage them to contribute in no small measure to the social and economic development.

The study further recommended that democratization of the states along traditional organization would help in enhancing economic development that would enhance the living standard of the citizens

## Conclusion

The study concluded that traditional institutions play important roles in the olden day. By settling disputes among the citizens. They in addition help in maintaining peace and order among the general populace.

## References

- Braun and Clarke. (2013). *Successful Qualitative Research a Practical Guide for Beginners*.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Creswell J.W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London SAGE Publication, Incorporated.
- Lund, C. (2006). Twilight institutions: public authority and local politics in Africa', *Development and Change*, 37(4), 685–705.
- Miles, V. Iliam F. S. (1993). Traditional Rulers and Development Administration: Chieftaincy in Niger, Nigeria, and Vanuatu. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 28(3), 31–32.
- Stone, A. G., & Patterson, K. (2005). The history of leadership focus.Servant leadership research roundtable proceedings.School of Leadership Studies, Regent University, Virginia Beach, US.
- Teslim, O. O. (2019). Indirect Rule in Nigeria.
- Victor O. (2017). 7 Roles of Traditional Rulers in Achieving Stable Democracy in Nigeria. *Information Guide in Nigeria*.





- White, L.G. & Clark, R. P. (1990). *Political Analysis: Technique and Practice*. California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
- Yemisi O. I. (2018). Role of Traditional Institution in Nigeria Democratic Space: Contending Perspectives, Issues, and Potentials.
- Zaleha O. (2018). *Important things about Qualitative Research*.
- Zelege, M. (2011). *Ye Shakoch Chilot* (the court of the sheikhs): A traditional institution of conflict resolution in Oromiya zone of Amhara regional state, Ethiopia. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 10(1), 63–84.

