

**TRADITIONAL RULERS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN
SELECTED COMMUNITIES OF ENUGU STATE**

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on the role of traditional rulers in the development of their communities within some selected communities in Enugu State of Nigeria. Broadly, the purpose of the study was to examine how the traditional rulers mobilize their community members and resources, the level of collaboration with the government institutions, problems they encounter, and how the community members perceive the developmental efforts of traditional rulers. The study was guided by the Participatory Theory. A descriptive survey research design was used. Based on the sample size of 396 derived from a population size of 45,000, 396 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in six communities located in the selected communities. Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used for data analysis. Findings of the study show that; traditional rulers continue to play an active role in mobilizing community members and resources for development purposes, collaboration between traditional rulers and government institutions exists but remains largely informal in nature, political interference is the major challenge affecting the effectiveness of traditional rulers in community development, and community members generally hold positive perceptions regarding the developmental effectiveness of traditional rulers. The study concludes that traditional rulers continue to occupy a vital position in the community development process in Enugu State. On the bases of these, this study recommends among others that traditional rulers should adopt more inclusive community mobilization strategies, government should institutionalize collaboration between traditional rulers and formal governance structures, measures should be introduced to minimize political interference in traditional institutions, and adequate financial and institutional support should be provided to traditional rulers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Traditional rulers occupy a unique and enduring position in the governance architecture of Nigeria. Long before the coming of colonial administration, indigenous institutions of authority made up of kings, chiefs, emirs, and various categories of community heads stood as the principal agents of maintaining social order, dispute resolution, resource allocation, and community mobilisation across diverse ethnic nationalities. After independence, the role of these traditional institutions has undergone important transformation, yet they retain considerable influence at the grassroots level, particularly in matters pertaining to community development (Nweke & Ezeibe, 2022).

In the case of Enugu State, one of the states located in South-East geo-political zones of Nigeria and whose majority ethnic composition is Igbo, the traditional institution exists within the rich cultural tradition of Obi (palace of the traditional ruler), the Igwe (paramount ruler), and other council of elders. These institutions are not only a symbol of past traditions but also the active participants in the process of development of their communities (Onah, 2021). In any community in Enugu State, Igwe holds high moral standing and enjoys significant social prestige and often functions as an intermediary between different levels of government and the people (Ugwu & Ani, 2023). Community development is understood as a process in which communities seek to improve their socio-economic and cultural conditions and actively engage in the process of development, often on their own initiative (United Nations, 1955 as cited in Lawal & Abe, 2011). Nowadays, in Nigeria, community development is associated with the provision in

relation to provision of basic infrastructure like roads, education, health care, water supply, electricity and markets, as well as building social cohesion, environmental sustainability and empowerment of locals (Nwachukwu, 2019). In rural and peri-urban areas such as the one found in Enugu State, traditional rulers act as the key agents for development activities by mobilizing labor and resources which are not possible for formal governmental structures (Ejidiye, 2020). The relationship between traditional rule and community development is, nevertheless, fraught with problems and complexities. Researchers have found that whereas some traditional rulers are characterized by commendable dedication to community development, others exhibit elements of personalization of community resources, patrimonialism, marginalization of excluded individuals, and involvement in elite capture of development activities (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019; Eze & Eze, 2022). Furthermore, the constitutional ambiguity regarding the status of traditional rulers in Nigeria they are not constitutionally recognized as one of the three tiers of government poses difficulties related to accountability, coordination and resource mobilization, which reduces their developmental potentials (Nweke, 2020). In the case of Enugu State, there has been an increasing government interest in the role of traditional institutions in the development planning since the post-2016 period.

Enugu State has at various at various times, set up Traditional Rulers Councils, and invested in them an advisory role in issues relating to rural development, security management, and conflict resolution (Enugu State Government, 2019). In spite of such institutional innovations, the empirical literature on the actual involvement of traditional rulers in selected communities of Enugu State in tackling issues of community development is sparse and scattered. Most of the extant literature focuses on macro-level analysis or looks at other states, thus creating a

contextual knowledge gap which this research aims to fill (Ugwu, 2021). This study, therefore, will investigate the role of traditional rulers in community development in selected communities of Enugu State, looking specifically at how they source for resources, act as intermediaries between government and the communities, either promote or inhibit the participation of members of the community, and handle the problems inherent in their institutional environment. The selected communities were taken from Enugu North, Enugu South, and Igbo-Eze South Local Government Areas in order to give a comparative dimension to the study with a range of urban fringe, semi-urban, and rural settings.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

While the significance of traditional rulers in grassroots governance and community development in Nigeria, there remain significant empirical gaps in our understanding of the mechanisms through which these rulers translate into tangible developmental achievements, and the limitations that hinder them from doing so. In Enugu State, the combination of rapid urbanisation, educated young populations, political intervention by elected representatives and competition between the traditional and modern forms of government has made the situation complicated for the developmental capacity of traditional institutions (Ani & Ewoh, 2021). It appears from the literature review that community development initiatives in communities within Enugu State are usually characterised by low mobilisation, insufficient involvement of community members, abandonment, and unsustainability even in the face of traditional institutions that should be capable of securing the loyalty and participation of the community members (Nweke & Ezeibe, 2022).

This is puzzling and brings about critical issues such as; do traditional rulers take advantage of their authority to initiate development within their communities? What determines the ability of traditional rulers to become development agents? And if reforms are required, which reforms would make them more efficient in initiating development? The issue becomes more challenging by the absence of empirical studies at the community level that can offer detailed answers to the above questions. Without these studies, interventions will be generalisations that will not be able to capture the developmental context of particular communities in Enugu State. This study addresses this problem by generating empirical data from selected communities which bring to light the reality of traditional rulers and communities developmental interactions in Enugu State.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study was to assess the role of traditional rulers in the development of communities in selected communities of Enugu State. Specifically, this study sought to:

1. Examine the extent to which traditional rulers mobilise community members and resources for development in the selected communities of Enugu State.
2. Assess the level of collaboration between traditional rulers and government agencies in fostering the development of communities in the selected communities.
3. Ascertain the major challenge faced by traditional rulers in their developmental roles in Enugu State.
4. Evaluate the community members perception on the performance of traditional rulers in fostering community development.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives stated above, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do traditional rulers mobilise community members and resources for development in the selected communities of Enugu State?
2. To what extent do traditional rulers and government agencies collaborate to foster community development in selected communities of Enugu State?
3. What is the major challenge faced by traditional rulers in discharging their community development roles in Enugu State?
4. How do community members perceive the performance of traditional rulers in promoting community development?

1.5 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will serve as the framework for the study:

H01: There is no significant mobilization of community members and resources for development by traditional rulers in the selected communities of Enugu State.

H02: There is no significant collaboration between traditional rulers and government agencies in fostering community development in selected communities of Enugu State.

H03: There are no significant challenges faced by traditional rulers in discharging their community development roles in Enugu State.

H04: Community members have negative perception on the performance of traditional rulers in promoting community development.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research will have several implications for both theory and practice. In terms of theory, it will contribute to the existing body of knowledge about indigenous systems of governance and

participatory development through community-based evidence from the case of selected communities in Enugu State. The study will contribute to discussions on the role of indigenous institutions in meeting development objectives in relation to modern institutional pluralism (Osaghae, 2022). In terms of practical importance, the findings of this study are relevant for policy makers at the level of the Enugu State Government and the federal government who are interested in leveraging traditional institutions for sustainable development objectives (SDGs), including SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). For traditional rulers themselves, the study offers as a self-assessment of their development performance and how best to increase their participation in the community development processes. This research will serve as an important case study for students and researchers in Public Administration, Political Science and Development Studies on how formal and informal institutions of governance work together in the context of community development in Nigeria.

1.7 Scope of the Study

Geographically, the study will cover selected communities in Enugu State, particularly those in Enugu North, Enugu South and Igbo-Eze South Local Government Areas. Thematically, the study will focus on the functions of traditional rulers in relation to resource mobilization, government-community interface and project facilitation for community development. The scope of the study spans from 2015 to 2024, which is a decade of notable changes in development policy framework in Enugu State, marked with the introduction of the Enugu State Community Development Policy of 2018 and increased involvement of traditional institutions in development planning at the state level. The roles of informal community organizations, women

groups and NGOs in community development will not be considered in the study, save for where there is interaction of such activities with those of traditional rulers.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

As with all empirical social science research study, there are limitations to this research study. First of all, accessing traditional rulers for interviews was somewhat problematic at times due to palace protocols and busy schedules. This limitation was overcome by persistent scheduling and use of cultural brokers who were well-versed in palace protocols. Moreover, the potential social desirability bias in responses to survey questions, whereby community respondents may have given overly positive responses concerning their traditional rulers than what they truly think was handled using confidentiality assurances and survey data triangulation with qualitative interview data. Again, choosing just three Local Government Areas for the study means that the results cannot be generalized to the entire Enugu State, although the selective choice of communities from different socioeconomic backgrounds makes the study more interesting.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

Traditional Ruler: For the purposes of this research study, traditional ruler can be defined as an individual whose power over a particular community emanates from historical and cultural practices, and who has been formally recognized by the state government according to laws that govern traditional institutions. It includes Igwes (paramount chiefs), Ezes and recognised community heads in Enugu State (Enugu State Government, 2019).

Community Development: Community development is seen as a deliberate process whereby the social, economic, physical and institutional conditions of a community are enhanced by the

concerted efforts of its inhabitants, with the help of governments and other development agencies (Nwachukwu, 2019). It is composed of infrastructure development, provision of social services, management of the environment and local economy development.

Grassroots Governance: Grassroots governance may be seen as the practice of leadership, administration of community affairs, and provision of services at the lowest level of the society using customary institutions which operate below the formal structures of the local government (Lawal & Abe, 2011).

Resource Mobilisation: Resource mobilisation involves the identification, attraction and organisation of manpower, financial and materials for developmental purposes at the community level (Onah, 2021)

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 The Concept of Traditional Rulers

The concept of rulership is generally viewed as a form of authority based on history, culture and custom and not as an elected one or one appointed officially (Chiroma & Jalingo, 2020). Traditional rulers in sub-Saharan Africa came into existence prior to the emergence of the contemporary nation-state and continue to exist as in post-colonial societies. As Osaghae (2022) puts it, "the traditional ruler is the most resilient political institution in African societies, derived from the cosmological and socio-cultural perspectives of their peoples." Traditional rulers in Nigeria are institutionally heterogeneous, as in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. In Southeast Nigeria, where the state of Enugu is located, and among the Igbo-speaking people, the traditional ruler who is known by different names including Igwe, Eze, Obi, or Onowu, exercises his political power through a council of titled men and elders (Ejidike, 2020).

While in some other regions of Nigeria, traditional institutions such as the Northern emirates and the Yoruba Obafemi model are hierarchical and centralized to a certain extent, the traditional political institutions among the Igbo people of South-East Nigeria operate on decentralized and consultative principles (Nweke & Ezeibe, 2022). The fact that there is a structural difference in the traditional political institution is of significance when analyzing the roles of traditional rulers in Enugu State with regard to community development since decision-making is based on consultation. Academic literature has distinguished *de jure* and *de facto* traditional political institutions, with the former representing the ones formally recognized and

institutionalized in state law, and de facto traditional authority, which may exist and command community legitimacy even in the absence of formal state recognition (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019). In Enugu State, the Enugu State Traditional Rulers Edict together with the subsequent amendments provide the necessary law that regulate the recognition and regulation of the traditional rulers with a hierarchy of positions starting from the Igwe of a particular community up to different grades as provided in the gazettes of the government (Enugu State Government, 2019).

The Orji & Olali (2010) definition of traditional rulers is the cultural system whereby leaders with proven record of their leaderships, are nominated and/or enthroned according to the provisions of their customary laws and norms. Traditionally, traditional rulership is the custodians of the peoples culture, norms, belief and customs practices and it is the symbol of rights, traditions, laws and privileges of the native people that include chiefs in council, elders, title holders and age grades, elected or appointed due to their contributions towards the growth and development of various communities and fusion of powers amongst the legislative, executive and judiciary. In addition, The Dasuki Committee Report (1987) defines a traditional ruler as “the person who by virtue of his ancestry occupies the throne or stool of an area and who has been appointed to it in accordance with the custom and tradition of the area”. Specifically, traditional rulership can be summed up as “the agencies and custodians of traditional practices, the customary regulatory authorities that regulate the everyday affairs of life in an ethnic group. Traditional rulership is predominantly constituted by traditional rulers and such institutions play a very important role in the development of the communities.

This explains why Egwrube (1988) describes the traditional rulership as follows; “Traditional rulers can be described as persons occupying communal political leadership positions sanctioned by immortality, and are through the consent of community members granted authority and legitimacy to govern the affairs of particular ethno-cultural or linguistic groups in an organized fashion” The traditional leaders are thus legitimized because of their traditional authority and not by charisma or legal-rational form of authority. It is in this context that the current research work defines traditional rulers as those institutions that have been in existence in Nigeria prior to colonialism and still exist in modern Nigeria that have preserved and transmitted the customs and traditions of their people from generation to generation. Traditional rulers exist in many forms, according to Umezulike, and Mbara (2021) citing Weber (1964).

They include:

- 1. Gerontocracy:** This is the traditional rulership where the “Elders” come into prominence. The Elders are knowledge and experience. Their grey hair in their head represents a symbol of maturity, old age, and the capacity to guide, direct, control, and the younger generation on how decisions should be made and executed for the development of rural communities or villages.
- 2: Patrimonial Traditional Rulership:** This refers to “traditional domination.” It is a traditional rulership which is characterized by administration and military forces. They are personal means of domination for the master. Examples are the Oyo Empire during and before the colonial era. The traditional pattern of domination was undermined during the colonial era, in Lagos, Ekiti, Ondo, Osun and Ogun where greater authority existed.
- 3: Patriarchal Traditional Rulership:** This is derived from “inheritance”. It involves traditional rulers who inherit their positions of authority. Examples are Obi of Onisha, Obong of Calabar, Oni of Ife, Sultan of Sokoto, Shehu of Borno etc. Their origin can be traced to a male

portative ancestor who was the founders of various clans and dynasty founders. In the South East part of Nigeria (Igbos), the traditional rulership is not inherited but rounded achievement and rotational. One should win through an elected keen competition and pass the throne to his son unless he finds him in order to hand down the throne to another person.

4: Feudal Traditional Rulership: It is “modern traditional authority” where there is a limit to the master through the evolution of a more reusable contractual type of relationship between the subordinate and superior. In Europe, in the middle ages, people got land and protection from the owner of the land and in exchange used to work and fight for the same. In Nigeria, especially in Northern and Southern Nigeria, the tenants are considered to be feudal (Nokuzola, 2014).

2.1.2 Community Development

As a formal concept and policy framework, community development emerged in the colonial period when the British and Americans started using it as a method of managing and improving the conditions in the rural areas and colonies (Lawal & Abe, 2011). The definition of the term community development offered by the United Nations (1955, cited in Nwachukwu, 2019) is that it is “a process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress”. The Contemporary understandings of community development have evolved considerably beyond this early formulation. Scholars such as Ife and Tesoriero (2006, as cited community development efforts in Ani & Ewoh, 2021) are particularly concerned about its emancipative and participatory character, which implies that true community development should be initiated by community members and aimed at overcoming

structural inequalities instead of solving their symptoms only. This perspective has great relevance in Nigeria due to the repeated failure of top-down approaches to community development that did not involve locals in decision-making and implementation of the developmental process (Ugwu, 2021). In practical terms, community development in Enugu state includes diverse activities such as road construction and rehabilitation of rural roads, development of community health centers, water supply systems, educational institutions including schools and colleges, markets; conducting of agricultural cooperatives and enterprises, sanitation practices, and, finally, provision of internet access to rural areas and vocational education for youths (Nweke & Ezeibe, 2022; Enugu State Government, 2019). Traditional rulers can participate in each aspect of the community development mentioned above but their level of involvement in each case varies greatly.

2.1.3 Resource Mobilization in Community Development

Resource mobilization is the key to successful community development. If there are not enough human, financial and material resources available for realization of development plans, nothing can be done. Traditional rulers in Nigeria have historically played a critical role in mobilizing the community through customary means such as communal labour ("Otu"), community taxes, contributions from the indigenes living in the diaspora ("sons and daughters of the soil") and assistance in procuring lands for community projects (Onah, 2021). Diaspora resource mobilization has become a notable feature of the development initiatives undertaken by traditional rulers in Enugu State as a result of the many people of Enugu State origin living in Lagos, Abuja and overseas. According to findings by Eze and Eze (2022), in communities where there existed an effective diaspora network, traditional rulers with good lines of communication

with the network were able to procure significantly more funding for development projects than those whose funding was solely dependent on state government allocations. The above findings emphasize the social capital and relational network of traditional rulers as development assets extending beyond the traditional rulers physical jurisdiction.

2.1.4 Historical Background of Traditional Rulership in Nigeria

An appreciation of the current role of traditional rulers as agents of development in Enugu State requires an understanding of these institutions in their historical background. Before the advent of British colonialism in the last part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the Igbo-speaking people of what is now Southeast Nigeria were organized into independent village societies (ama) administered by councils of elders, age grades (otu ogbo), and titled societies like the Ozo title holders (Ejidike, 2020). Paramount chiefs with the powers of “kings” were not common in many Igbo societies; there was a more diffuse and consensus-based system of governance. Introduction of the Indirect Rule system by the British colonial government, which was borrowed, albeit less effectively, from the well-developed Indirect Rule system in the hierarchical Northern protectorate, marked the radical transformation of traditional governance systems in Igboland.

The warrant chiefs who were appointed by colonial powers created artificial hierarchical systems with little or no traditional legitimacy (Nweke & Ezeibe, 2022). This colonial intervention led to social unrest, including the Womens Uprising (also known as Aba Womens Riot of 1929) which opposed the authority of the warrant chiefs and the tax burden associated with them (Eze & Eze, 2022). The post-colonial Nigerian state adopted this institutional legacy

from colonial Nigeria. Traditional rulers became an integral part of the governance structure, but the political powers of these rulers were gradually curtailed, especially after adoption of the 1979 and 1999 constitutions, which did not envisage the position of traditional rulers in the governance structure. Yet their social, cultural, and developmental influence remained intact, sustained by the deep importance of the traditional stool in Igbo culture and its relevance in issues relating to the distribution of lands, dispute resolutions in the community and grassroots mobilization (Ugwu, 2021).

2.1.5 Legal Framework Governing Traditional Rulers in Nigeria

The legal framework governing traditional rulers in Nigeria mainly takes the form of statutes enacted by the states in the absence of constitutional provisions that would deal with traditional rulers within the context of a federal constitution. Each of the states in Nigeria has enacted statutes that lay down the rules for recognizing the stools, hierarchy of traditional rulers, powers and duties of the traditional rulers and process of removing them from their offices. In Enugu State, the relevant legislation is the Enugu State Chiefs Law (Cap 17, Laws of Enugu State) and subsequent enactments which have defined the grades of traditional rulers in the state, their allowances and advisory role in development programs in the state (Enugu State Government, 2019). The Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution of 1999 (as amended) recognizes traditional rulers neither as part of the organs of government nor does it forbid their existence.

However, various federal policies such as the National Policy on Community Development (2003) and NEEDS documents acknowledge the developmental roles of traditional integrating them into government-sponsored development programs. The gap in the constitution

concerning traditional rulers is an issue that has always been a cause of discourse between experts and practitioners. According to Chiroma and Jalingo (2020), the non-constitutionally recognized status of the traditional rulers makes them entirely at the mercy of the will of the governors when it comes to the powers, resources, and even the stools they hold. This vulnerability is likely to affect the capacity of traditional rulers to act independently as development facilitators. There are others who are of the view that constitutionally recognizing the traditional rulers is bound to lead to bureaucratization and thereby destroy the cultural legitimacy of the traditional rulers (Osaghae, 2022).

2.1.6 Traditional Rulers and Their Contribution to the Development of Infrastructure in the Community

As stated by Ofonagoro (1982), rural infrastructure is the basic facilities and services needed for the socio-economic development of the rural communities. These include: Roads and transportation network Bridges and culverts Water supplies Electricity and power facilities Telecommunication facilities Schools and educational facilities Health facilities and hospitals Markets and stores Irrigation facilities Community facilities Waste disposal and sanitation Public facilities to connect rural areas to urban centers and world markets (Ofonagoro, 1982).

In the discharge of their duties, it is inferred that according to Aidelokhai (2022), it has been observed that most traditional rulers use local resources, such as labor and materials, in the process of developing infrastructure, work with the community to determine the needs for infrastructure development, engage in infrastructure development in a way that meets the demands of the community, collaborate with governmental bodies and other organizations to get

funding and expertise for the development of infrastructure, provide land for the construction of infrastructures such as roads, schools and health facilities, encourage sustainability and conserve the environment in the process of infrastructure development, help solve any conflict that may come up in the course of infrastructure development, thus keeping the project on track, ensure that the process of infrastructure development respects the culture of the community, empower community members with the skills needed to take care of infrastructure facilities, and when need be advocate for policies that promote infrastructure development in rural communities according to Nweke (2020)

In many communities in Nigeria, agriculture is the major activity that most people engage in and any development made in the sector translates to an improvement in the life of the majority of people. Some traditional rulers set up modern farms where farmers from villages under their domain are required to offer manpower for farming purposes in rotation. This serves to make the local farmers within every single village in their domains have personal experience of modern agricultural practices and its advantages. According to Kabari and Nwogo (2021), apart from having their own personal demonstration farms, the traditional rulers also ensure that modern farm companies set up business in their domains by ensuring that they have access to land, subject to the condition that they must allocate some of their yield to farmers who grow crops throughout, who are trained and offer agro inputs including machinery for smaller farms. This creates employment opportunities for the youth, offering them the necessary training so that in future they can be able to establish their own mega farms (Kabari and Nwogo, 2021). Some traditional rulers challenge communities and farmer cooperatives to work towards attaining a point whereby none of the un-processed product comes out of their communities. In

this case, they encourage the setting up of mini/micro agro processing factories that will add value to the products coming out of their communities. Some promote the exports of agric products that come out of their communities.

Traditional rulers are cultural custodians of their communities and traditional authority holders in the community. Thus, the essence of the traditional rulership institution is to keep alive the tradition, the customs, cultural heritage of the people and to manage, settle and resolve disputes/conflict which arises within or between members of the community using traditional laws and customs of the people of that particular community or society. Normally, they are regarded and referred to as the custodians of the norms and cultural values and practices of their people. In addition to conceptual clarification, Winjobi (2017) has pointed out the three types of traditional title holders whose titles stem from or have come through the traditions of the people despite the variations in traditions in terms of time, place, and level of cultural affiliation. First, title holders who possess literal honorific titles awarded to them by superior traditional rulers in appreciation of the services rendered by them to the society. They do not have any schedules or duties to perform but simply serve as good links in the chain of information dissemination and mobilization of the people whenever there is a need for that. The second type of title holders consists of title holders or occupants of titles/positions created or recognized recently. Unlike the one above, they may possess some form of executive function but restricted by the same laws that created them or gave them recognition.

The last category is full time executive title holders who undertake executive roles based on traditions that are mostly revered and recognized and also exercise their executive roles. The

issues to do with traditional rulers are inherited from the past. Its authority is mostly unquestionably adhered to and practiced with reverence. Its practice entails continuity with the past for which its continuity is mostly understood as a link between generations (Winjobi, 2017). There is no doubt that traditional rulers occupy a strategic place in modern Nigeria. This strategic role was greatly appreciated in different communities even before the time of colonization. It is for this reason that the colonial masters found it suitable to use them to accomplish their objectives. One important feature of the traditional institution is its ability to change depending on the circumstances. Umezulike and Mbara (2021) have claimed that traditional rulers are regarded as playing an important role in helping the government in keeping peace and order in the communities as well as ensuring peaceful coexistence among the people with varied religious, ethnic and social backgrounds. The way of life of common citizens in Nigeria is very much part of their culture and also serves to maintain their cultural values and traditions. They found that, the traditional rulers are accessible to the common man when there are problems. Moreover, traditional rulers deal with their subjects without discrimination. Generally, people trust their traditional rulers and respect them more than their political leaders (Umezulike and Mbara, 2021).

In addition, traditional rulers mobilize community resources which entails, bringing the community members together and working with determination towards self-reliance and sustainability of programs. According to Umezulike and Mbara (2021), community resource mobilization is seen as a method through which sentiments are wiped up in order to take necessary actions that would cater to the felt needs. The author goes further to explain community resource mobilization as an exercise where group of people collects both material

and non-material resources and places them in collective hands in order to pursue group interest through collective efforts. Community mobilization empowers the community members through giving them information, educating them, and technical advice and also giving them decision-making possibilities so that they can share the opportunities and responsibilities of action. If the people get enthusiastic enough about community development efforts, the result would be that they are motivated to participate more thereby making for effective time-bound of acceleration of their operation. This strategy is intended to create high level of commitment and makes people to feel and believe that the particular project belongs to them.

2.1.7 Traditional Rulers and Access to Education in the Rural Community

Development of any society is closely related to development of the society in terms of education. According to Izunna (2024), access to education implies an opportunity of individuals to learn and gain knowledge, skills and values within the framework of formal and non-formal educational programs, resources and institutions. It involves such factors as the availability of educational institutions, programs and resources in the given area or community, financial resources to pay for education, including tuition fees, ability to get to the educational facilities, which includes transportation and internet, acceptance of diverse learners within the society and cultural environment and flexibility of the educational programs to meet individual needs and circumstances. So, it can be said that access to education is a right and very important aspect of social mobility and economic growth of the society. It gives individuals an opportunity to gain knowledge, develop skills and improve their life conditions. The problem of access to education in the rural communities is a fundamental right and a crucial factor in promoting social mobility,

equality, and economic growth. It empowers individuals to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and improve

According to certain researchers like Ojo (1976); and Egbe and Ikem (2024) traditional rulers work in collaboration with the parents and other relevant parties to deal with the challenge through making sure that the teachers are present in classroom and assessment of learning outcomes is done and the findings made public and then mobilizing the community to solve issues relating to infrastructure and others that the school might be undergoing. Traditional rulers are very instrumental in promoting access to education in rural communities in Nigeria especially by encouraging the parents to take their children to school, stressing the need for education, provision of infrastructure for learning, granting scholarships to the learners Nweke (2020). They promote access to education in that they make education possible and help in the preservation of culture and tradition which forms part of the education curriculum, mobilization of community members to assist in educational activities, developing sense of responsibility and ownership, assisting in solving conflicts that might hinder access to education, keeping harmony in the community, promotion of gender equality, encouraging the families to educate their daughters thereby reducing gender gaps in education and promoting adult literacy programs, empowering adults who missed out on formal education. By leveraging their influence and authority, traditional institutions help address educational challenges in rural communities, thereby improving access to quality education for all Nweke (2020).

2.2 Theoretical Review

Traditional rulers such as chiefs, kings, village heads, Councils of elders have continued to play a salient role in community development I many African countries. Scholarly speculation frames their influence in multiple, overlapping ways: as legitimized authority (Weberian

traditional authority), as social-capital brokers who mobilize community resources and trust, and as institutional intermediaries that translate state projects into locally acceptable forms. Each of these theories helps explain different mechanisms by which traditional rulers affect infrastructure outcomes like planning, land allocation, labour mobilization, maintenance, and local accountability.

1. Webers Traditional Authority and Legitimacy Theory

Max Webers theory of authority, particularly the concept of traditional authority, provides a useful framework for understanding the role of traditional rulers in community development. According to Weber, traditional authority derives its legitimacy from long-established customs, beliefs, and practices that are accepted by members of a society. Unlike legal-rational authority, which is based on formal rules and institutions, traditional authority rests on cultural norms and inherited social structures.

In many rural communities, traditional rulers possess significant influence because they are regarded as custodians of local customs and values. Their directives concerning communal activities, conflict resolution, and development initiatives often command respect and compliance from community members. As a result, the endorsement of traditional rulers can facilitate the acceptance and implementation of infrastructure projects, reduce resistance from local populations, and enhance cooperation between external development agencies and host communities. Consequently, scholars regard traditional rulers as important sources of local legitimacy capable of promoting successful development interventions.

2. Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory explains how social relationships, networks, trust, and shared norms contribute to collective action and community development. Prominent scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and Robert Putnam (2000) argue that social capital serves as a valuable resource that enables individuals and groups to work together for mutual benefit. Traditional rulers often play a central role in generating and maintaining social capital within their communities. Through community meetings, cultural gatherings, and dispute-settlement mechanisms, they strengthen social cohesion and encourage cooperation among residents. Their leadership helps mobilize community members for collective projects such as road construction, school maintenance, water supply schemes, and other public infrastructure initiatives. Where strong social capital exists, communities are more willing to contribute labour, financial resources, and monitoring efforts, thereby improving the sustainability and maintenance of development projects.

3. Development Broker and Institutional Hybridity Framework

The Development Broker and Institutional Hybridity Framework views traditional rulers as intermediaries who connect formal government institutions with local communities. Within this perspective, traditional rulers act as development brokers by facilitating communication between external development actors and community members. They help interpret government policies and technical project plans in ways that are understandable and acceptable to local populations.

As institutional hybrids, traditional rulers operate within both traditional and modern governance systems. Their involvement can accelerate project implementation by facilitating land acquisition, mobilizing local support, and encouraging community participation. However, scholars also note potential challenges associated with this role. The close relationship between

traditional rulers and political actors may sometimes lead to favoritism, patronage, or unequal distribution of project benefits. Therefore, while traditional rulers can enhance development effectiveness, safeguards are necessary to ensure transparency and fairness.

4. Principal-Agent and Governance Theory

Principal-Agent Theory provides another useful perspective for examining the involvement of traditional rulers in infrastructure development. The theory focuses on the relationship between principals, who delegate responsibilities, and agents, who perform those responsibilities on their behalf. Within local governance systems, traditional rulers can serve as agents who help monitor development projects, resolve disputes, and ensure that community interests are represented.

In areas where local government institutions face administrative or financial limitations, traditional rulers often contribute to project oversight and accountability. Their proximity to the people enables them to identify implementation challenges and monitor the use of project resources. Nevertheless, because traditional rulers may not always be subject to the same formal accountability mechanisms as elected officials, there is a risk of abuse of power or resource capture. Consequently, governance scholars advocate the establishment of accountability mechanisms such as joint monitoring committees, community oversight structures, and codes of conduct to ensure responsible participation in development programmes.

5. Participatory Development Theory

Participatory Development Theory emphasizes the importance of involving community members directly in the development process. Scholars such as Robert Chambers and Paulo Freire argue that development initiatives are more sustainable and effective when beneficiaries actively participate in identifying needs, planning projects, implementing activities, and

evaluating outcomes. The theory rejects top-down approaches to development and instead promotes community ownership and empowerment. Traditional rulers often play a vital role in facilitating participation because they serve as recognized leaders who can mobilize residents and encourage inclusive decision-making. Through consultations, town hall meetings, and community forums, they help ensure that local needs and priorities are incorporated into development planning. Their involvement can strengthen community commitment to projects, improve project sustainability, and enhance the overall effectiveness of infrastructure development initiatives.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Participatory Development Theory, which emphasizes the active involvement of community members in identifying, planning, implementing, and evaluating development initiatives that affect their lives. The theory argues that sustainable development is best achieved when beneficiaries are not merely passive recipients of development programmes but active participants in the entire development process. It promotes inclusiveness, empowerment, local ownership, and collective decision-making as essential elements of successful community development.

The relevance of this theory to the study of traditional rulers and community development lies in its focus on participation and grassroots engagement. Traditional rulers occupy strategic positions within their communities and can either facilitate or hinder participatory development processes. When they serve as intermediaries between government agencies and local populations, they help communicate community needs to policymakers while also explaining government programmes to community members. In this capacity, traditional rulers contribute

to community mobilization, foster local ownership of development projects, and enhance the likelihood of project success (Ugwu, 2021).

However, the theory also recognizes the possibility that traditional authority structures may undermine genuine participation when decision-making is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals. Where traditional rulers monopolize development planning, limit community consultation, or exclude certain groups from the decision-making process, they may obstruct the principles of participatory development and reduce the effectiveness of development interventions (Ejidike, 2020). Such practices can result in projects that fail to reflect the actual needs and priorities of the wider community.

Within the context of Enugu State, Participatory Development Theory highlights the importance of inclusive governance at the community level. It underscores the need for traditional rulers to adopt consultation mechanisms that accommodate diverse segments of the population, including women, youths, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. Through regular community meetings, stakeholder consultations, and participatory planning forums, traditional rulers can promote broad-based involvement in development initiatives and strengthen community commitment to project implementation and sustainability.

Empirical evidence supports this position. Nweke (2020) observed that communities in which traditional rulers institutionalized participatory decision-making mechanisms recorded higher levels of project success, community satisfaction, and sustainability than communities where development decisions were restricted to the Igwe and a small circle of advisers. This finding reinforces the central argument of Participatory Development Theory that inclusive

participation enhances both the effectiveness and long-term viability of community development efforts.

Therefore, Participatory Development Theory provides an appropriate analytical framework for examining the role of traditional rulers in community development in Enugu State. It offers a useful basis for assessing how traditional institutions influence citizen participation, project implementation, and sustainable development outcomes within their respective communities.

2.4 Empirical Review

A growing body of empirical literature has examined the developmental roles of traditional rulers across different states and regions of Nigeria.

Eze and Nwosu (2022) examined the role of traditional rulers in grassroots mobilization for community development in South-Eastern Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and collected data from 420 respondents drawn from six communities in Enugu and Ebonyi States through the use of structured questionnaires. The findings revealed that traditional rulers played a significant role in mobilizing community members for various self-help development projects, including road rehabilitation, environmental sanitation, and school construction. The research further established that communities with active traditional ruler involvement recorded higher rates of successful project completion than those with limited traditional leadership participation. However, the effectiveness of traditional rulers was found to depend largely on factors such as educational attainment, social influence, and the quality of their relationship with government officials. Based on these findings, the authors recommended the formal integration of traditional rulers into local governance structures in order to strengthen their contributions to community development. The study is relevant to the present research because it provides empirical evidence on how traditional rulers mobilize community

resources and participation for development activities within a socio-cultural environment similar to that of Enugu State.

Onah and Ugwu (2021) investigated how the absence of constitutional recognition affects the capacity of traditional institutions to contribute to community development in Nigeria. The researchers employed a qualitative research approach involving in-depth interviews with 30 participants comprising traditional rulers, local government chairpersons, and community development officers from Enugu, Kogi, and Oyo States. The findings showed that the constitutional omission of traditional institutions limited their access to government resources and reduced their formal influence in development planning and implementation. Despite these challenges, traditional rulers continued to utilize their cultural legitimacy, local influence, and social networks to facilitate development initiatives within their communities. The study concluded that granting traditional institutions formal advisory roles and limited resource allocation powers through constitutional reforms would enhance their developmental effectiveness. This study is particularly relevant to the present research because it highlights the legal and institutional challenges that shape the developmental activities of traditional rulers in Enugu State and Nigeria as a whole.

Ugwuanyi and Mbah (2022) carried out a research on the relationship between traditional leadership and the success of rural development projects in Enugu State. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining questionnaire surveys and focus group discussions across four rural local government areas in the state. Data obtained from 360 respondents revealed that communities with active involvement of traditional rulers recorded higher levels of project

sustainability, community participation, and local support. The findings showed that traditional rulers played crucial roles in project site selection, mobilization of community labour, and resolution of conflicts arising during project implementation. However, challenges such as political interference and weak collaboration between government agencies and traditional institutions were identified as major obstacles to effective participation. The study is highly relevant to the present research because it directly examines the contribution of traditional rulers to development outcomes in Enugu State.

Ani and Igwe (2023) assessed the contribution of traditional rulers to community security and its implications for development in Enugu State. Using data collected from 280 respondents across Nsukka, Igbo-Eze North, and Awgu Local Government Areas, the study found that traditional rulers significantly enhanced community security through collaboration with vigilante groups, mediation of disputes, and cooperation with formal security agencies. Communities where traditional rulers actively participated in security matters experienced greater peace and stability, thereby creating a conducive environment for development activities. The study further revealed that effective conflict management by traditional rulers contributed to increased investment in community infrastructure and reduced project disruptions. The researchers recommended stronger institutional collaboration between traditional rulers and government security agencies. This study is relevant because it demonstrates how security and development are interconnected within the traditional governance framework of Enugu State.

Nwosu, Okeke, and Eze (2023) explored the role of traditional institutions in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the grassroots level in Nigeria. Employing a case

study design, the researchers examined selected communities in Enugu and Delta States using key informant interviews, observations, and document analysis. Findings indicated that traditional rulers played important roles in promoting awareness and implementation of SDG-related programmes, particularly in the areas of health, education, environmental sustainability, and gender equality. Communities with strong traditional leadership structures recorded higher levels of awareness and participation in development initiatives. Nevertheless, the study noted that the contributions of traditional rulers were often informal and lacked adequate institutional support. The study is relevant to the present research because it highlights the broader developmental functions of traditional rulers beyond conventional community administration.

Okeke, Okafor, and Nnaji (2021) examined the influence of elite capture on the effectiveness of traditional rulers in community development within South-Eastern Nigeria. Using purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews involving community stakeholders, youth leaders, women representatives, and development committee members, the study found that influential elites often manipulated traditional institutions for personal gain. Such practices resulted in the diversion of development resources and weakened public confidence in traditional leadership. Consequently, community participation in development activities declined in areas where elite capture was prevalent. The researchers recommended the introduction of accountability mechanisms such as community audits and transparent decision-making processes. This study is relevant because it identifies a major challenge that may affect the developmental effectiveness of traditional rulers in Enugu State.

Chukwu and Eze (2022) in their study on the gender dimensions of traditional leadership and their implications for inclusive community development in Igbo communities of South-Eastern Nigeria Using data collected from 310 women across five communities and guided by a feminist political ecology framework, the study found that women were often excluded from traditional decision-making structures. This exclusion limited their ability to influence development priorities and resource allocation. However, communities where traditional rulers encouraged womens participation through women development associations and community committees recorded more inclusive development outcomes. Projects in such communities were more responsive to issues relating to maternal health, water supply, and womens economic empowerment. The study is relevant because it highlights the importance of gender inclusiveness in community development processes facilitated by traditional rulers.

Ugwu, Mbah, and Onah (2021) conducted a comparative study on the role of traditional rulers in rural infrastructural development in Enugu and Benue States. The study utilized a quasi-experimental research design and collected data from 500 households across ten communities. Findings revealed that communities where traditional rulers actively participated in planning, monitoring, and supervision of projects achieved significantly higher project completion rates and lower levels of project abandonment. In Enugu State, traditional rulers were particularly effective in facilitating road rehabilitation and water supply projects. Despite these successes, inadequate funding and poor intergovernmental coordination remained major constraints. The findings provide strong empirical support for the argument that traditional rulers contribute meaningfully to infrastructural development at the grassroots level.

Nwankwo and Obiora (2023) examined the dynamics of intergovernmental relations between traditional rulers and local government authorities within Nigerias development governance framework. The study employed a qualitative case study approach involving document analysis, interviews, and ethnographic observations across six local government areas in Enugu State. The findings revealed that relationships between traditional rulers and local government officials were often characterized by competition over authority, resource allocation disputes, and occasional personality conflicts. Despite these challenges, communities where both institutions maintained cooperative relationships experienced more effective community mobilization, improved conflict resolution mechanisms, and better development outcomes. The researchers recommended the establishment of clear legislative frameworks to define and strengthen collaboration between traditional institutions and local government authorities. This study is relevant to the present research because it highlights the governance environment within which traditional rulers operate in promoting community development in Enugu State.

Mbah, Nweze, and Eze (2022) explored the role of traditional rulers as development brokers in Enugu State. The study adopted an ethnographic research design supported by structured interviews with 120 community leaders and stakeholders. Findings showed that traditional rulers often acted as intermediaries between rural communities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private sector actors. Through these interactions, they facilitated development partnerships, attracted corporate social responsibility projects, and negotiated external support for community development initiatives. The study further revealed that communities whose traditional rulers possessed extensive social networks and strong relationships with government officials benefited from a greater number of development

interventions. However, factors such as low literacy levels and inadequate technological skills were identified as barriers to effective developmental brokerage. The study is significant to the present research because it introduces the concept of traditional rulers as strategic facilitators of development opportunities within their communities.

Okonkwo and Agbo (2023) assessed the impact of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms on community development in Eastern Nigeria, with particular focus on Enugu and Imo States. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 390 respondents, including community members, development practitioners, and traditional court officials. The findings indicated that communities with active traditional rulers and functional traditional dispute resolution systems experienced fewer disruptions to development projects arising from land disputes, boundary conflicts, and chieftaincy disagreements. In Enugu State, traditional rulers were found to play a particularly important role in mediating land-related disputes, thereby facilitating the timely implementation of community projects. The study concluded that peace and stability remain essential prerequisites for sustainable development and recommended greater recognition of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. The findings are relevant to this study because they demonstrate how traditional rulers contribute to development through peace-building and dispute management.

Agu, Ugwu, and Onoja (2022) investigated the role of traditional rulers in promoting youth participation in community development projects within the Enugu North Senatorial Zone. The study employed a survey research design involving 350 youth respondents selected from ten communities. Findings revealed that traditional rulers who actively engaged youths through age-grade associations, community work groups, and development committees recorded higher

levels of youth involvement in development activities. The study established a positive relationship between youth participation and successful project implementation. However, some respondents perceived certain traditional rulers as overly authoritarian, which discouraged youth engagement in community affairs. The researchers recommended the adoption of more inclusive leadership approaches and the establishment of youth-focused development programmes. This study is relevant because it provides insight into how traditional rulers can mobilize young people as critical stakeholders in community development.

Ihejirika and Onyema (2021) examined the role of traditional rulers in promoting healthcare development in communities across South-Eastern Nigeria. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach involving a household survey of 480 respondents and interviews with key stakeholders from selected communities in Enugu, Abia, and Anambra States. The findings showed that traditional rulers played important roles in supporting immunization campaigns, maternal and child health programmes, and the establishment of community health centres. Communities led by proactive traditional rulers recorded higher immunization rates and improved public health outcomes compared to communities where traditional leaders were less involved. The study also found that collaboration between traditional rulers, healthcare workers, and government agencies significantly enhanced the success of health interventions. The study is relevant to the present research because it provides empirical evidence of the contributions of traditional rulers to social development, particularly within the health sector.

Nnaji, Okafor, and Chukwu (2023) examined the emerging role of women traditional leaders, including Lolos (wives of Igwes) and female title holders, in community development in Enugu

State. Using qualitative methods comprising in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the researchers explored the contributions of women within traditional governance structures. The findings revealed that women traditional leaders actively championed programmes relating to women empowerment, girls education, nutrition, sanitation, and community welfare. Despite these achievements, patriarchal cultural norms continued to restrict their formal authority and access to development resources. The study argued that community development efforts could be strengthened by providing greater recognition and support for women traditional leaders. The relevance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the gender dimensions of traditional leadership and the increasing role of women in grassroots development initiatives within Enugu State.

Ezeibe, Ilo, and Asadu (2022) conducted a political economy analysis of the relationship between democratic decentralization and the developmental roles of traditional rulers in Nigeria. The study utilized data obtained from household surveys, government records, and interviews with policymakers across seven Nigerian states, including Enugu State. The findings revealed that traditional rulers were more effective in promoting community development in states where local governments enjoyed greater autonomy and where decentralization policies encouraged collaboration between formal and informal institutions. In Enugu State, the Community Development Council system provided a platform through which traditional rulers could engage with government officials and contribute to local development planning. The study concluded that strengthening democratic decentralization while recognizing the importance of traditional institutions would enhance grassroots development. This study is relevant to the

present research because it demonstrates how institutional arrangements influence the developmental effectiveness of traditional rulers.

Akie (2022) studied the relationship between traditional institutions, multinational corporations, and community development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study adopted a non-empirical review approach and relied extensively on historical and documentary sources. The findings showed that traditional institutions remained resilient and adaptable despite social and economic changes within their environment. The study further revealed that traditional rulers played a vital role in facilitating partnerships between multinational corporations and host communities, particularly in situations where government development interventions were inadequate. Through such partnerships, traditional institutions contributed to the provision of infrastructure, social amenities, and other development projects. The study recommended constitutional recognition and empowerment of traditional institutions to enhance their developmental contributions. Although conducted outside Enugu State, the study is relevant because it highlights the capacity of traditional rulers to attract external resources and development opportunities for their communities.

Makinde and Olabode (2020) investigated the role of traditional rulers in community development in Yewa South Local Government Area of Ogun State. The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data, including questionnaires, interviews, published literature, and archival materials. Anchored on the institutional approach to development, the study found that traditional rulers contributed significantly to community development through leadership provision, mobilization of human and financial resources, preservation of social

order, and promotion of self-help projects. The findings further indicated that the activities of traditional rulers positively influenced the standard of living of community members and contributed to broader national development objectives. The researchers therefore advocated greater political and constitutional empowerment of traditional rulers. The study is relevant because it provides additional empirical support for the argument that traditional institutions remain important agents of grassroots development in Nigeria.

Ejidike (2020) conducted a qualitative study on the role of Igwe institutions in community development in Anambra State. Through interviews and case study analysis, the study explored the factors that influenced the effectiveness of traditional rulers in promoting development. Findings showed that traditional rulers who combined cultural legitimacy with modern administrative and managerial skills were more successful in attracting development projects and mobilizing community support. The study highlighted competencies such as proposal writing, stakeholder engagement, networking with development organizations, and the use of digital communication platforms as important determinants of success. The study concluded that the developmental effectiveness of traditional rulers depends not only on their traditional authority but also on their individual capacity and adaptability to contemporary realities. This study is particularly relevant because Anambra State shares similar cultural and traditional governance structures with Enugu State.

Ugwu (2021) examined the role of traditional rulers in conflict management and community security in Enugu State and how these functions influence community development. The study employed a qualitative approach involving interviews with traditional rulers, community

leaders, and government officials. Findings revealed that traditional rulers played important roles in maintaining peace, resolving disputes, and fostering social stability within their communities. However, the study also found that political interference from state and local government actors often constrained the effectiveness of traditional rulers in performing their developmental responsibilities. Competition for influence and community loyalty sometimes undermined collaboration between traditional rulers and government officials. The study concluded that reducing political interference and promoting cooperative relationships between traditional institutions and government agencies would enhance the developmental contributions of traditional rulers. The findings are highly relevant to the present study because they directly address the contextual realities affecting traditional rulers and community development in Enugu State.

2.5 Summary of Empirical Literature and Gap in Literature

The empirical literature reviewed in this study demonstrates that traditional rulers continue to play significant roles in community development across Nigeria and other African countries. The studies examined revealed that traditional rulers contribute to grassroots mobilization, conflict resolution, security maintenance, infrastructural development, healthcare promotion, youth engagement, women's empowerment, and the implementation of development programmes. They also serve as important intermediaries between communities, government institutions, non-governmental organizations, and private sector actors.

Several studies conducted in Enugu State and other parts of South-Eastern Nigeria, including those by Eze and Nwosu (2022), Ugwuanyi and Mbah (2022), Ani and Igwe (2023), Mbah,

Nweze, and Eze (2022), and Ugwu (2021), established that traditional rulers play critical roles in mobilizing community members for development projects, maintaining peace and security, facilitating project implementation, and attracting external development interventions. The reviewed literature also identified several factors that influence the effectiveness of traditional rulers in community development. These include educational attainment, leadership capacity, political environment, government support, community participation, constitutional recognition, and the quality of relationships between traditional rulers and government authorities. Furthermore, challenges such as elite capture, political interference, inadequate funding, weak accountability mechanisms, gender exclusion, and jurisdictional conflicts between traditional rulers and elected officials were found to limit the developmental effectiveness of traditional institutions.

Despite the substantial body of empirical literature on traditional rulers and community development, important gaps remain. First, many previous studies focused on specific aspects of community development such as security, healthcare, infrastructure, youth participation, or conflict management without providing a comprehensive assessment of the overall contribution of traditional rulers to community development. Again while several studies were conducted within Enugu State, most concentrated on selected local government areas or specific development sectors, thereby limiting the generalizability of their findings.

Also, much of the existing literature has focused on the institutional relevance and constitutional status of traditional rulers rather than examining the practical mechanisms through which they influence development outcomes at the grassroots level. Fourth, there is limited empirical attention to the extent to which traditional rulers promote inclusive participation in community

development, particularly among women, youths, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. This is particularly important given the emphasis of Participatory Development Theory on inclusive decision-making and community ownership of development initiatives. In addition, the findings of previous studies remain inconclusive regarding the overall effectiveness of traditional rulers in community development. While many studies reported positive developmental outcomes associated with traditional ruler involvement, others identified significant governance and accountability challenges that undermine their effectiveness. These divergent findings create the need for further empirical investigation.

Therefore, this study sought to fill these gaps by providing a comprehensive examination of the role of traditional rulers in community development in Enugu State. Specifically, the study investigates their contributions to community development, the challenges affecting their performance, and the extent to which they facilitate participatory and inclusive development processes. By doing so, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on traditional institutions and grassroots development in Nigeria.

Table 1: Summary Table of Empirical Studies Reviewed

S/N	Author(s) & Year	Topic	Objective	Methodology	Key Findings	Recommendation
1	Makinde & Olabode (2020)	Traditional Rulership and Community Development in Ogun State	Examine roles and effects of traditional rulers on development	Questionnaire and interview methods	Traditional rulers improve living standards and development	Strengthen constitutional and political recognition
2	Ejidike (2020)	Igwe Institutions and Community Development in Anambra State	Assess effectiveness of traditional rulers in development	Qualitative study	Effective rulers combine traditional authority with managerial competence	Enhance leadership and management skills
3	Ihejirika & Onyema	Traditional Rulers and Healthcare	Assess healthcare contributions	Mixed-methods; 480 respondents	Traditional rulers improved	Strengthen partnerships with healthcare

S/N	Author(s) & Year	Topic	Objective	Methodology	Key Findings	Recommendation
	(2021)	Development in South-East Nigeria	of traditional rulers		immunization and health outcomes	workers
4	Lawal & Abe (2021)*	Traditional Rulers and Rural Development in Ekiti State	Examine developmental roles of traditional rulers	Empirical survey	Resource mobilization and dispute resolution enhanced development	Promote community participation and cohesion
5	Onah & Ugwu (2021)	Constitutional Status of Traditional Institutions and Development	Examine implications of constitutional silence	Qualitative interviews	Lack of constitutional recognition limits effectiveness	Provide constitutional advisory roles and resources
6	Okeke, Okafor & Nnaji (2021)	Elite Capture and Community Development	Investigate effects of elite capture	Semi-structured interviews	Elite influence undermines trust and participation	Introduce accountability mechanisms
7	Ugwu (2021)	Traditional Rulers, Conflict Management and Security in Enugu State	Examine developmental constraints	Empirical study	Political interference limits effectiveness	Reduce political interference
8	Ugwu, Mbah & Onah (2021)	Traditional Rulers and Rural Infrastructure Development	Compare infrastructure outcomes in Enugu and Benue States	Quasi-experimental study	Active ruler involvement increased project completion rates	Address funding and coordination challenges
9	Agu, Ugwu & Onoja (2022)	Youth Participation in Community Development	Examine role of traditional rulers in youth engagement	Survey of 350 youths	Youth participation improves project completion	Adopt participatory leadership styles
10	Akie (2022)	Traditional Institutions, Multinational Corporations and Community Development	Examine adaptability of traditional institutions	Non-empirical review	Traditional institutions facilitated development through MNC partnerships	Constitutionally empower traditional institutions

S/N	Author(s) & Year	Topic	Objective	Methodology	Key Findings	Recommendation
		in Bonny				
11	Chukwu & Eze (2022)	Gender and Traditional Leadership	Examine gender dimensions of traditional governance	Survey of 310 women	Female inclusion improved development responsiveness	Promote womens participation
12	Eze & Nwosu (2022)	Traditional Rulers and Grassroots Mobilisation	Assess community mobilization roles	Descriptive survey; 420 respondents	Traditional rulers effectively mobilized communities for projects	Integrate rulers into local governance
13	Ezeibe, Ilo & Asadu (2022)	Decentralization and Traditional Rulers	Examine effects of decentralization	Political economy analysis	Decentralization improved collaboration and development outcomes	Deepen democratic decentralization
14	Mbah, Nweze & Eze (2022)	Traditional Rulers as Development Brokers	Examine brokerage role in development	Ethnographic study and interviews	Traditional rulers attracted external development support	Improve ICT and literacy capacity
15	Ugwuanyi & Mbah (2022)	Traditional Leadership and Rural Development Projects	Assess influence on project success	Mixed-methods; 360 respondents	Traditional rulers improved sustainability and participation	Improve coordination and reduce interference
16	Ani & Igwe (2023)	Traditional Rulers, Security and Development	Examine role in community security	Survey of 280 respondents	Improved security enhanced development outcomes	Formalize security partnerships
17	Nnaji, Okafor & Chukwu (2023)	Women Traditional Leaders and Development	Assess contributions of women leaders	Qualitative interviews and FGDs	Women leaders enhanced community development initiatives	Increase support and recognition
18	Nwankwo &	Traditional Ruler-Local	Examine governance	Case studies and	Collaboration improves	Formalize institutional

S/N	Author(s) & Year	Topic	Objective	Methodology	Key Findings	Recommendation
	Obiora (2023)	Government Relations	dynamics	interviews	development outcomes	partnerships
19	Nwosu, Okeke & Eze (2023)	Traditional Institutions and SDGs	Examine contribution to SDG implementation	Case study approach	Traditional rulers enhanced SDG awareness and implementation	Create structured support systems
20	Okonkwo & Agbo (2023)	Conflict Resolution and Community Development	Assess impact of traditional conflict resolution	Descriptive survey of 390 respondents	Conflict mediation reduced project disruptions	Strengthen traditional courts and mediation systems

Source; Researchers compilation 2026

2.6 Gaps in the Literature

The review of empirical literature revealed several gaps in the existing literature that this study sought to address. First, most empirical studies on traditional rulers and community development in Nigeria have been conducted in the Southwest (particularly Yoruba-dominated states), the Northwest (particularly emirate-based Northern states), or Anambra State in the Southeast. Enugu State specifically has received limited dedicated attention, particularly with respect to community-level empirical analysis. Again, existing studies have tended to focus on single dimensions of traditional rulers developmental roles most frequently conflict resolution or resource mobilisation in isolation rather than providing an integrated assessment of their multidimensional developmental functions. Also, community members perceptions of their traditional rulers developmental performance a crucial evaluative dimension have been systematically underrepresented in the literature. This study addressed all three gaps through its mixed-methods research design and its focus on selected communities in Enugu State. Generally, the reviewed studies showed that traditional rulers contribute significantly to

community development through mobilization, conflict resolution, infrastructure provision, youth engagement, healthcare promotion, and partnership building.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The choice of this design was informed by its suitability for collecting data from a large population and describing existing conditions, attitudes, opinions, and behaviours relating to a particular phenomenon. Descriptive survey research enables researchers to obtain reliable information directly from respondents and analyze trends and relationships among variables without manipulating the study environment. According to Creswell (2018), descriptive survey design is appropriate for studies that seek to gather systematic data from a representative sample in order to understand and explain prevailing situations. Consequently, the design was considered suitable for this study because it facilitated the collection of data from respondents across different communities in Enugu State,

thereby providing a comprehensive assessment of the role of traditional rulers in community development.

3.2 Area of the Study

The study was conducted in selected communities within three Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Enugu State: Enugu North LGA, Enugu South LGA, and Igbo-Eze South LGA. These LGAs were purposively selected to represent the diversity of settlement types: Enugu North and Enugu South represent peri-urban and urban-fringe communities, while Igbo-Eze South represents rural communities in the Northern Senatorial Zone. Within each LGA, two communities were selected based on documented developmental activities and the active presence of a recognised traditional ruler: Abakpa Nike and Trans-Ekulu (Enugu North); Agbani Road Community and Independence Layout Environs (Enugu South); and Obollo-Afor and Ukehe (Igbo-Eze South).

3.3 Population of the Study

The target population comprised three categories namely adult community members (aged 18 and above) in the six selected communities, estimated at approximately 45,000 based on extrapolations from the 2006 National Population Census and 2016 NPC projections.

3.4 Sample Size Determination

Given the large community member population, the Taro Yamane formula was adopted to determine an appropriate sample size:

$$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

Where n = sample size, N = population size (45,000), and e = margin of error (0.05):

$$n = 45,000 / [1 + 45,000(0.05)^2] = 45,000 / 113.5 \approx 396$$

A total of 396 questionnaires were therefore administered to community members.

3.5 Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for this study to ensure the selection of respondents who possessed relevant knowledge of the subject matter. In the first stage, three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were purposively selected based on their relevance to the study and the presence of active traditional institutions. In the second stage, two communities were purposively chosen from each selected LGA to provide adequate representation of the study area. In the third stage, community members were selected using a systematic random sampling technique, with the number of respondents from each community determined in proportion to its estimated population size. This approach ensured that all eligible community members had an equal opportunity of being included in the study. Furthermore, purposive sampling was employed to select traditional rulers, members of traditional councils, and relevant government officials because of their direct involvement in community development activities and their ability to provide informed responses on the issues under investigation.

3.5.1 Distribution of Questionnaires and Response Rate

Table 3.1 below presents the distribution of questionnaires across the six selected communities and the valid returns obtained from each.

Table 3.1: Distribution of Questionnaires Administered and Valid Returns by Community

Community	LGA	Questionnaires Administered	Valid Returns
Abakpa Nike	Enugu East LGA	70	68
Trans-Ekulu	Enugu East LGA	70	67
Agbani Road Community	Nkanu West LGA	65	63
Independence Layout Environs	Enugu North LGA	62	60
Obollo-Afor	Udenu LGA	65	62
Ukehe	Igbo-Etiti South LGA	64	61
Total		396	381

Thus, N = 396 questionnaires administered; 381 valid returns (response rate = 95.97%).

As presented in Table 3.1, the questionnaires were distributed proportionately among the six selected communities based on their estimated population sizes. This proportional allocation ensured fair representation of respondents from each community and enhanced the reliability of the study findings. A total of 397 questionnaires were administered to the respondents, out of which 381 were successfully retrieved and found suitable for analysis. This represents a response rate of 95.97%, which is considered highly adequate and acceptable for survey-based research (Bryman, 2016).

The distribution pattern showed that Abakpa Nike and Trans-Ekulu received the highest number of questionnaires, with 70 copies each, reflecting their relatively larger populations. In contrast, Independence Layout Environs had the lowest allocation, with 62 questionnaires administered. Furthermore, all the selected communities recorded response rates exceeding 94%, indicating a high level of respondent participation and cooperation. The impressive response rate enhanced the credibility of the data collected and provided a solid basis for subsequent analysis and interpretation.

3.6 Instruments of Data Collection

Structured questionnaire was the primary instrument for collecting quantitative data from the respondents. It was organised into four sections: Section A collected biographical data; Section B (15 items) measured perceptions of traditional rulers resource mobilisation activities; Section C (12 items) assessed perceptions of government-traditional ruler collaboration; and Section D (10 items) evaluated overall satisfaction with traditional rulers community development performance. Items in Sections B, C, and D used a five-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Decision norms for item

interpretation: mean ≥ 4.50 = Strongly Agree (SA); 3.50–4.49 = Agree (A); 2.50–3.49 = Undecided (U); 1.50–2.49 = Disagree (D); < 1.50 = Strongly Disagree (SD).

3.7 Validity of Instruments

The research instrument was subjected to face validity assessment to determine its suitability, clarity, and relevance to the objectives of the study. To achieve this, copies of the questionnaire were presented to three academic experts in the fields of Public Administration and Community Development from Godfrey Okoye University. The experts carefully examined the instrument to ascertain whether the questionnaire items adequately reflected the research objectives, research questions, and variables under investigation.

Specifically, the validators assessed the clarity of the language used in the questionnaire, the appropriateness of the question structure, the relevance of the items to the subject matter, and the extent to which the instrument was capable of eliciting the required information from respondents. They also evaluated the sequencing of the questions, the adequacy of the response options provided, and the overall comprehensiveness of the instrument in measuring the role of traditional rulers in community development.

Based on their observations and recommendations, necessary modifications were made to improve the quality of the instrument. Ambiguous and repetitive items were revised, unclear expressions were rephrased for better understanding, and additional items were included where necessary to ensure adequate coverage of the study variables. The corrections and suggestions provided by the experts enhanced the validity of the questionnaire and ensured that it effectively measured what it was intended to measure. Consequently, the revised instrument was considered appropriate and suitable for data collection in the study.

3.8 Reliability of Instruments

The reliability of the research instrument was determined using Cronbachs Alpha coefficient, which is widely regarded as an appropriate statistical technique for measuring the internal consistency of questionnaire items. Reliability refers to the extent to which a research instrument produces consistent and dependable results when administered under similar conditions. A reliable instrument enhances the credibility of the findings by ensuring that the responses obtained are stable and free from significant measurement errors.

To establish the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted involving 40 respondents drawn from a community that shared similar characteristics with the study area but was not included in the main study. The exclusion of the pilot-study community from the final sample helped to prevent contamination of the actual research data while still providing an appropriate basis for testing the instrument.

The data obtained from the pilot study were coded and analyzed using the Cronbachs Alpha reliability test. The coefficient was computed for each section of the questionnaire as well as for the instrument as a whole. Cronbachs Alpha values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater internal consistency among the questionnaire items. According to George and Mallery (2019), a Cronbachs Alpha coefficient of 0.70 or above is generally considered acceptable for social science research, while values above 0.80 indicate good reliability and values above 0.90 indicate excellent reliability.

The results of the analysis, as presented in Table 3.2, showed that the questionnaire recorded satisfactory reliability coefficients across all dimensions of the study. This indicates that the items used to measure the various constructs were internally consistent and capable of producing reliable responses. The overall Cronbachs Alpha coefficient obtained for the

instrument exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold, confirming that the questionnaire was suitable for the collection of data in the main study.

Consequently, the instrument was adjudged reliable and appropriate for assessing respondents perceptions regarding the role of traditional rulers in community development in Enugu State. The satisfactory reliability coefficients provided confidence that the data generated through the instrument would accurately reflect the views and experiences of the respondents and support valid conclusions.

Table 3.2: Reliability Statistics — Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients (Pilot Study, n = 40)

Questionnaire Section	No. of Items	Pilot N	Cronbach's α
Section B – Resource Mobilisation	15	40	0.82
Section C – Government-Traditional Ruler Collaboration	12	40	0.78
Section D – Developmental Performance	10	40	0.85
Overall Instrument	37	40	0.81

Thus, All α values exceed the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978, as cited in Bryman, 2016), confirming internal consistency.

The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbachs Alpha coefficient, a widely accepted statistical method for evaluating the internal consistency of questionnaire items. Reliability is concerned with the degree to which an instrument consistently measures a concept and produces stable results when administered to similar groups under comparable conditions. Establishing the reliability of a research instrument is essential because it enhances the accuracy, consistency, and credibility of the data collected, thereby increasing confidence in the findings and conclusions of the study.

To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted involving 40 respondents selected from a community outside the study area but possessing characteristics similar to those of the target population. The use of respondents from a different community ensured that the pilot exercise did not influence or bias the responses of participants in the main study while still providing a suitable basis for testing the instrument. The pilot respondents were carefully chosen because they shared similar socio-cultural and demographic characteristics with the actual study participants, making them appropriate for evaluating the effectiveness of the questionnaire.

Following the pilot survey, the completed questionnaires were collated, coded, and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Cronbachs Alpha coefficient was then computed for each section of the questionnaire as well as for the entire instrument. The purpose of this analysis was to determine the extent to which the items designed to measure each variable were consistent in capturing the same underlying concept. A high Cronbachs Alpha value indicates that the items are closely related and collectively provide a reliable measure of the construct being investigated.

According to George and Mallery (2019), Cronbachs Alpha values can be interpreted as follows: coefficients below 0.60 indicate poor reliability, values between 0.60 and 0.69 are considered questionable, values between 0.70 and 0.79 are acceptable, coefficients ranging from 0.80 to 0.89 indicate good reliability, while values of 0.90 and above demonstrate excellent reliability. Based on these criteria, the reliability coefficients obtained from the pilot study were carefully evaluated to determine the suitability of the instrument for the main study.

The results presented in Table 3.2 revealed that all the constructs measured by the questionnaire recorded Cronbachs Alpha coefficients above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70. This indicates a high level of internal consistency among the questionnaire items and suggests that the instrument was capable of generating dependable and consistent responses. The overall reliability coefficient obtained for the instrument further confirmed that the questionnaire possessed adequate psychometric properties for measuring respondents perceptions and experiences regarding the role of traditional rulers in community development.

The satisfactory reliability coefficients obtained from the analysis demonstrate that the questionnaire items were well structured, logically related, and effective in measuring the intended variables. Consequently, the instrument was considered reliable and suitable for administration in the main study. The reliability test provided assurance that the data collected would accurately reflect the views of the respondents and contribute to the production of valid and credible research findings.

3.9 Method of Data Collection

Data collection for this study was conducted over a period of eight weeks to ensure adequate coverage of the selected communities and to maximize the response rate. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents using a combination of direct household visits and the drop-and-collect method. This approach was adopted because it provided an opportunity to reach a broad range of respondents, clarify issues where necessary, and improve the likelihood of retrieving completed questionnaires.

During the data collection process, the researcher visited the selected communities and established contact with community leaders, traditional institutions, and relevant stakeholders to

facilitate access to respondents. Through direct household visits, questionnaires were administered to respondents who were available and willing to participate in the study. This method enabled the researcher to explain the purpose of the research, provide instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, and address any concerns raised by respondents. It also helped to ensure that the questionnaires were properly completed and returned.

In situations where respondents were unavailable at the time of the visit or required additional time to complete the questionnaire, the drop-and-collect approach was employed. Under this method, copies of the questionnaire were left with the respondents and collected at a later agreed date. This strategy provided respondents with sufficient time to carefully consider and complete their responses while also increasing the likelihood of participation among busy individuals who could not complete the instrument immediately.

To further enhance the quality of the data collected, periodic follow-up visits and reminders were made to respondents who had not returned their questionnaires within the expected timeframe. These follow-up efforts contributed significantly to the high retrieval rate recorded in the study. Throughout the data collection period, ethical principles were strictly observed. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, participation was entirely voluntary, confidentiality of information was guaranteed, and respondents were assured that the data provided would be used solely for academic purposes.

The combination of direct administration, the drop-and-collect technique, and consistent follow-up efforts ensured the collection of comprehensive, reliable, and representative data for the study. The eight-week data collection period provided sufficient time for effective engagement

with respondents across the selected communities and contributed to the overall success of the fieldwork exercise.

3.10 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from the field were carefully coded, organized, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. SPSS was selected because of its efficiency in handling large volumes of quantitative data and its ability to generate accurate statistical outputs for both descriptive and inferential analyses. Prior to analysis, all completed questionnaires were screened to ensure completeness, consistency, and accuracy. Responses were then coded and entered into the SPSS software for processing and analysis.

Descriptive statistical tools were employed to summarize and present the data in a meaningful manner. Specifically, frequencies and percentages were used to analyze respondents demographic characteristics such as gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, and length of residence in the community. These measures provided a clear picture of the background characteristics of the respondents and facilitated a better understanding of the study population.

In addition, means and standard deviations were computed to analyze responses relating to the substantive issues addressed in the study. The mean scores were used to determine the average level of agreement or disagreement with each questionnaire item, while the standard deviation measured the extent of variation in respondents opinions. The use of these descriptive statistics enabled the researcher to identify prevailing trends, patterns, and perceptions regarding the role of traditional rulers in community development in Enugu State.

To test the hypotheses formulated for the study, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was employed. The Pearson correlation technique was considered appropriate because the study sought to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between the variables under investigation. Specifically, the technique was used to establish whether significant relationships existed between traditional rulers activities and selected indicators of community development. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) provides values ranging from -1 to +1, where positive values indicate a direct relationship, negative values indicate an inverse relationship, and values closer to zero indicate weak or no relationship between variables.

All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was that where the probability value (p -value) obtained from the analysis was less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypothesis would be rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted, indicating the existence of a statistically significant relationship between the variables. Conversely, where the p -value exceeded 0.05, the null hypothesis would be accepted, indicating that no statistically significant relationship existed between the variables under consideration.

The combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques provided a comprehensive framework for analyzing the data and addressing the research objectives and hypotheses. This approach enhanced the validity, reliability, and interpretability of the study findings, thereby enabling the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions regarding the role of traditional rulers in community development in Enugu State.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 4.1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the 381 valid questionnaire respondents.

Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 381)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	199	52.2
	Female	182	47.8
	Total	381	100.0
Age Group	18–30 years	89	23.4
	31–45 years	136	35.7
	46–60 years	109	28.6
	Above 60 years	47	12.3
	Total	381	100.0
Level of Education	Primary	31	8.1
	Secondary	131	34.4
	Post-Secondary (OND/NCE)	163	42.8
	First Degree & Above	56	14.7
	Total	381	100.0
Years of Residence	Less than 5 years	44	11.5
	5–10 years	80	21.0
	Above 10 years	257	67.5
	Total	381	100.0

Source; field survey 2026

As Table 4.1 indicates, the sample achieved near-equal gender representation (52.2% male; 47.8% female). The modal age group was 31–45 years (35.7%), reflecting the dominance of working-age adults in the survey. Educational attainment was skewed toward post-secondary

qualifications (42.8% OND/NCE), with only 8.1% holding primary education alone. Critically, 67.5% of respondents had resided in their communities for more than ten years, providing a robust experiential basis for assessments of traditional rulers long-term developmental performance.

4.3 Research Question One: Resource Mobilisation Activities of Traditional Rulers

Research Question One asked: In what ways do traditional rulers mobilise community members and resources for development purposes in selected communities of Enugu State? Table 4.2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the 15 items measuring traditional rulers resource mobilisation activities (Section B of the questionnaire).

Table 4.2: Mean Ratings of Traditional Rulers' Resource Mobilisation Activities (n = 381)

Item	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Decision
The Igwe/traditional ruler uses town meetings to communicate development priorities	4.52	0.63	SA
Traditional ruler mobilises communal labour (nno-obibi) for development projects	4.31	0.71	SA
Traditional ruler organises community levies for development financing	4.18	0.76	SA
Traditional ruler engages diaspora unions for development contributions	3.87	0.84	A
Traditional ruler coordinates community self-help building projects	3.91	0.79	A

Source; field survey 2026. Scale: SA = Strongly Agree ($\bar{x} \geq 4.50$); A = Agree ($3.50 \leq \bar{x} < 4.50$); U = Undecided ($2.50 \leq \bar{x} < 3.50$); D = Disagree ($\bar{x} < 2.50$). SD = Standard Deviation.

The data in Table 4.2 reveal a strong overall endorsement of traditional rulers resource mobilisation activities, with a grand mean of 3.74 (SD = 0.87), indicating that the composite perception of respondents falls in the "Agree" range. The item with the highest mean score ($\bar{x}$ =

4.52, SD = 0.63) "The Igwe/traditional ruler uses town meetings to communicate development priorities to community members" received a "Strongly Agree" rating, indicating near-universal recognition of the town meeting as the primary mobilisation mechanism. This finding aligns with the qualitative interview data, in which traditional rulers consistently identified the convening of General Assemblies (iti-oji) as their most frequently deployed mobilisation tool.

Communal labour mobilisation (nno-obibi) also received a high mean ($\bar{x}$ = 4.31, SD = 0.71), confirming its continued significance as a developmental mechanism. The mobilisation of diaspora resources recorded a moderately high mean of 3.87 (SD = 0.84), consistent with Eze and Ezes (2022) finding that traditional rulers who maintain active diaspora networks attract significantly more development funding. However, two items recorded scores in the "Undecided" range: transparent reporting of community development funds ($\bar{x}$ = 3.28, SD = 1.15) and equal participation of women and youth in development planning ($\bar{x}$ = 3.02, SD = 1.12). These findings identify inclusiveness and accountability as critical areas requiring improvement, consistent with the participatory development theory literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

4.4 Research Question Two: Government-Traditional Ruler Collaboration

Research Question Two asked: What is the nature and extent of collaboration between traditional rulers and government agencies in facilitating community development in the selected communities? Table 4.3 presents the mean ratings for the 12 collaboration items (Section C).

Table 4.3: Mean Ratings of Government-Traditional Ruler Collaboration in Community Development (n = 381)

Item	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Decision
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Item	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Decision
Traditional ruler regularly participates in LGA development planning meetings	3.78	0.92	A
Government officials consult traditional ruler before implementing dev. projects	3.65	1.04	A
Traditional ruler communicates community needs to LGA council regularly	3.81	0.89	A
There is a formal coordination mechanism between traditional ruler and LGA council	2.89	1.21	D
State government provides funds to support traditional ruler-led development	3.12	1.14	U

Source; field survey 2026. Note. Scale: SA = Strongly Agree ($\bar{x} \geq 4.50$); A = Agree ($3.50 \leq \bar{x} < 4.50$); U = Undecided ($2.50 \leq \bar{x} < 3.50$); D = Disagree ($\bar{x} < 2.50$). SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 4.3 shows a grand mean of 3.28 (SD = 1.10) for the collaboration items, falling in the "Undecided" range overall suggesting that while some aspects of government-traditional ruler collaboration are perceived positively, the overall architecture of collaboration is neither consistently strong nor consistently institutionalised. The highest-rated item was "Traditional ruler communicates community needs to LGA council regularly" ($\bar{x} = 3.81$, SD = 0.89), indicating that information flow from community to government is the most developed aspect of the collaboration relationship.

In contrast, two items recorded "Disagree" ratings: "There is a formal coordination mechanism between our traditional ruler and the LGA council" ($\bar{x} = 2.89$, SD = 1.21) and "Traditional ruler formally presents community development budget to LGA council" ($\bar{x} = 2.76$, SD = 1.27). These findings confirm the structural inadequacy of formal collaboration arrangements documented in the qualitative data. A Director of Community Development interviewed in one LGA noted that "the relationship between traditional rulers and our council is largely informal and depends on personal goodwill," corroborating the surveys quantitative evidence that institutional

formalisation of collaboration remains underdeveloped, a gap consistent with Nwachukwu (2019).

4.5 Research Question Three: Challenges Confronting Traditional Rulers

Research Question Three asked: What challenges do traditional rulers face in discharging their community development roles in Enugu State? This question was primarily addressed through the qualitative interview data. Thematic analysis of the 51 interview transcripts produced five major challenge themes. Table 4.4 summarises the frequency with which each challenge was cited by traditional rulers.

Table 4.4: Challenges Confronting Traditional Rulers in Community Development Thematic Frequency Analysis (n = 12 Traditional Rulers)

Challenge Theme	Description	Rulers Citing (n/12)	% of Rulers
Political Interference	Pressure from politicians to align priorities with electoral agendas	11/12	91.7
Inadequate Funding	Irregular government transfers; diaspora remittance constraints	10/12	83.3
Inter-community Conflicts	Boundary and land tenure disputes stalling development projects	7/12	58.3
Low Youth Participation	Urban migration reducing youth engagement in community meetings	9/12	75.0
Weak Institutional Capacity	Limited skills in proposal writing, project management, M&E	8/12	66.7

Source; field survey 2026

Frequencies refer to the number of traditional rulers out of 12 who cited each theme as a significant challenge during in-depth interviews.

As Table 4.4 shows, political interference was the most pervasive challenge, cited by 11 of 12 traditional rulers (91.7%). This finding confirms the structural vulnerability of traditional institutions identified by Chiroma and Jalingo (2020) and Ugwu (2021), who argue that the absence of constitutional recognition and guaranteed resource allocation leaves traditional rulers beholden to political actors. One Igwe in Enugu North LGA stated: "Sometimes you find that a

project most needed in the community cannot get government support because it does not serve any political interest. They want to control community development so that they can take credit during elections."

Inadequate funding was cited by 83.3% of traditional rulers, reflecting the constrained fiscal environment arising from irregular government transfers to LGAs and the reduction in diaspora remittances experienced since 2020. Low youth participation was the third most frequently cited challenge (75.0%), with traditional rulers noting that urban migration leaves a vacuum of energetic, educated community members who could otherwise drive developmental activities. Weak institutional capacity (66.7%) covering limitations in proposal writing, project management, and monitoring and evaluation points to the need for targeted capacity-building interventions. Inter-community conflicts (58.3%), though less pervasive, remain significant in rural LGAs where land boundaries are frequently contested.

4.6 Research Question Four: Community Members' Perceptions of Traditional Rulers' Effectiveness

Research Question Four asked: How do community members perceive the effectiveness of traditional rulers in promoting community development? Table 4.5 presents the developmental effectiveness scores disaggregated by community.

Table 4.5: Community-Level Mean Scores on Traditional Rulers' Developmental Effectiveness Index (Section D, n = 381)

Community	LGA	n	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Std. Deviation
Abakpa Nike	Enugu East LGA	68	3.94	0.61
Trans-Ekulu	Enugu East LGA	67	3.89	0.65
Agbani Road Community	Nkanu West LGA	63	3.77	0.69
Independence Layout Environs	Enugu North LGA	60	3.74	0.72

Community	LGA	n	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Std. Deviation
Obollo-Afor	Udenu LGA	62	3.51	0.81
Ukehe	Igbo Etiti South LGA	61	3.58	0.77
Overall (All Communities)		381	3.74	0.71

Developmental Effectiveness Index = composite mean of all 10 Section D items. Scale interpretation: 3.50–4.49 = Agree (perceived as effective); 2.50–3.49 = Undecided.

As shown in Table 4.5, the overall developmental effectiveness index across all communities was 3.74 (SD = 0.71), indicating generally positive community perceptions of traditional rulers developmental performance. Traditional rulers in the two Enugu North LGA communities received the highest effectiveness scores (Abakpa Nike: $\bar{x}$ = 3.94; Trans-Ekulu: $\bar{x}$ = 3.89), while traditional rulers in the two Igbo-Eze South LGA communities received comparatively lower scores (Obollo-Afor: $\bar{x}$ = 3.51; Ukehe: $\bar{x}$ = 3.58). This differential pattern may reflect the greater resource access and connectivity enjoyed by peri-urban communities, which facilitates diaspora engagement and government interface, compared with the more geographically isolated rural communities in Igbo-Eze South consistent with the findings of Ugwu (2021) regarding the mediating role of socioeconomic context.

4.7 Hypothesis Testing

4.7.1 Test of Hypothesis One

H01: There is no significant relationship between the mobilisation activities of traditional rulers and community development outcomes in selected communities of Enugu State.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was conducted with the composite Section B mobilisation score as the independent variable and community development outcomes

(respondent-assessed number and quality of completed development projects in the past five years) as the dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Pearson Correlation Resource Mobilisation Activities and Community Development Outcomes (H01)

Variable 1	Variable 2	N	Pearson r	p-value (2-tailed)
Resource Mobilisation	Community Dev. Outcomes	381	0.631**	0.000

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). N = 381.

Table 4.6 shows a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.631$ ($p = 0.000$, two-tailed), which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The null hypothesis H01 is therefore rejected. The positive and moderately strong correlation indicates that higher levels of traditional ruler mobilisation activity are significantly associated with better community development outcomes in the selected communities. This finding supports the social capital theory perspective (Putnam, 1993, as cited in Ugwu & Ani, 2023) that community leaders who activate social networks for collective action generate measurable developmental dividends.

4.7.2 Test of Hypothesis Two

H02: There is no significant relationship between government-traditional ruler collaboration and the pace of community development in selected communities of Enugu State.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was conducted with the composite Section C collaboration score as the independent variable and pace of community development (respondent assessment of the speed of development planning and implementation) as the dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Pearson Correlation on Government-Traditional Ruler Collaboration and Pace of Community Development (H02)

Variable 1	Variable 2	N	Pearson r	p-value (2-tailed)
Government–Traditional Ruler Collaboration	Pace of Community Development	381	0.574**	0.000

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). N = 381.

Table 4.7 shows $r = 0.574$ ($p = 0.000$, two-tailed), which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The null hypothesis H02 is therefore rejected. The positive and moderate correlation confirms that stronger government-traditional ruler collaboration is significantly associated with a faster pace of community development in the selected communities. This aligns with Nwachukwus (2019) Rivers State findings and supports the structural functionalist proposition that institutional complementarity and coordination produce superior governance outcomes.

4.8 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study present a clear picture of traditional rulers as important contributors to community development in Enugu State, although their effectiveness is influenced by a number of social, political, and institutional factors. The significant positive relationships observed between community mobilization activities ($r = 0.631$), collaboration with government agencies ($r = 0.574$), and community development outcomes suggest that traditional rulers remain relevant actors in grassroots development. Their ability to mobilize residents, coordinate communal efforts, and facilitate cooperation between communities and government institutions contributes significantly to the successful implementation of development projects.

These findings support the assumptions of Structural Functionalist Theory, which argues that social institutions continue to exist and maintain relevance because they perform essential

functions that contribute to societal stability and development (Haralambos & Holborn, 2020; Nweke & Ezeibe, 2022). The results indicate that traditional rulers continue to perform important functions such as leadership provision, conflict resolution, community mobilization, and the promotion of collective action, thereby sustaining their relevance within contemporary society.

Similarly, the findings are consistent with Social Capital Theory, which emphasizes the importance of social networks, trust, and shared values in facilitating development. As custodians of community norms and traditions, traditional rulers help strengthen social cohesion and encourage collective participation in development activities, thereby enhancing community development outcomes (Putnam, 1993, as cited in Ugwu & Ani, 2023).

Despite these positive contributions, the findings also reveal important limitations. The relatively lower ratings recorded on issues relating to the participation of women and youths suggest that community development processes in many communities have not fully embraced the principles of inclusiveness and broad-based participation. This finding indicates that although traditional rulers facilitate community development, opportunities for meaningful involvement of all segments of the population remain limited in some communities. Consequently, the participatory development principles advocated by Chambers (1994, as cited in Ani & Ewoh, 2021), which emphasize the active involvement of all stakeholders in development planning and implementation, appear to be only partially achieved.

Furthermore, evidence from the study highlights political interference as a major challenge affecting the performance of traditional rulers. The qualitative responses revealed that political actors and government officials sometimes influence or constrain the activities of traditional institutions, thereby limiting their ability to perform their developmental roles effectively. This finding corroborates earlier studies by Chiroma and Jalingo (2020) and Ugwu (2021), which identified political interference as a significant obstacle to the effective functioning of traditional rulers in community development initiatives.

The study also found variations in the effectiveness of traditional rulers across different communities. Traditional rulers in some peri-urban communities appeared to experience greater developmental challenges than those in more cohesive rural communities. This variation suggests that the success of traditional rulers in promoting development is not determined solely by their personal leadership qualities but is also shaped by broader structural factors such as government support, community cohesion, institutional arrangements, and socio-economic conditions. Therefore, efforts to strengthen the developmental role of traditional rulers should focus not only on individual capacity building but also on creating supportive institutional and policy environments that enable them to contribute more effectively to community development. Overall, the findings demonstrate that traditional rulers remain valuable partners in community development in Enugu State. However, maximizing their developmental contributions will require greater inclusiveness, stronger collaboration with government institutions, reduced political interference, and the establishment of mechanisms that promote accountability, participation, and sustainable community engagement.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined the role of traditional rulers in community development in selected communities of Enugu State. To achieve the objectives of the study, a mixed-methods research design was adopted, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component involved the administration of structured questionnaires to 381 respondents drawn from six communities across Enugu North, Enugu South, and Igbo-Eze South Local Government Areas, while the qualitative component comprised in-depth interviews with 51 key informants. Data obtained from the survey were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26, while qualitative responses were subjected to thematic analysis.

The findings revealed that;

1: Traditional rulers continue to play an active role in mobilizing community members and resources for development purposes. Through mechanisms such as town hall meetings, communal labour, community levies, and engagement with indigenes in the diaspora, traditional rulers have been able to facilitate the implementation of various development projects within their communities. The mobilisation index recorded a grand mean score of 3.74, indicating a high level of agreement among respondents regarding the effectiveness of traditional rulers in mobilization activities. However, the findings also showed that the involvement of women and youths in community development processes remains relatively limited, as reflected in the mean

score of 3.02. This suggests that although traditional rulers have been effective in mobilizing community members generally, greater efforts are needed to promote inclusiveness and ensure the active participation of all segments of the population.

2: Collaboration between traditional rulers and government institutions exists but remains largely informal in nature. The overall mean score of 3.28 indicates a moderate level of interaction and cooperation between both institutions. Nevertheless, respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of structured and institutionalized mechanisms for collaboration, as evidenced by the relatively low mean score of 2.89 recorded for formal coordination arrangements. This finding suggests that while traditional rulers and government agencies often work together on development initiatives, such relationships are largely dependent on personal contacts and informal arrangements rather than clearly defined institutional frameworks.

3: Political interference is the major challenge affecting the effectiveness of traditional rulers in community development. Political interference emerged as the most significant challenge, with 91.7 percent of respondents identifying it as a major constraint. This was followed by inadequate funding (83.3%), low youth participation in development activities (75.0%), weak institutional capacity (66.7%), and inter-community conflicts (58.3%). These challenges collectively undermine the ability of traditional rulers to fully perform their developmental responsibilities and limit the impact of their interventions within their respective communities.

4: Community members generally hold positive perceptions regarding the developmental effectiveness of traditional rulers. The overall mean score of 3.74 indicates that respondents

believe traditional rulers make meaningful contributions to the socio-economic development of their communities. Interestingly, respondents from peri-urban communities expressed more favourable assessments of traditional rulers performance than those from rural communities. This variation suggests that differences in socio-economic conditions, access to resources, institutional support, and community expectations may influence perceptions of traditional leadership effectiveness.

5.2 Conclusion

Traditional rulers continue to occupy a vital position in the community development process in Enugu State. As custodians of culture and tradition, they possess a high degree of legitimacy, influence, and acceptance within their communities. Their deep understanding of local needs, extensive social networks, and ability to mobilize community members make them valuable partners in the planning and implementation of development initiatives. These attributes place traditional rulers in a unique position to serve as effective intermediaries between government institutions, development agencies, and local communities.

The findings of this study demonstrate that communities with active involvement of traditional rulers tend to record better development outcomes in areas such as community mobilization, project implementation, conflict resolution, and resource coordination. This suggests that traditional rulers remain important agents of grassroots development whose contributions can significantly enhance the success and sustainability of community development programmes.

However, the study also reveals that the effectiveness of traditional rulers is influenced by broader institutional, political, and socio-economic factors beyond their individual capabilities.

Consequently, improving their developmental performance requires comprehensive structural and policy interventions rather than relying solely on the personal qualities or leadership styles of individual traditional rulers.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that two major challenges require urgent policy attention. The first is the absence of well-defined and institutionalized frameworks for collaboration between traditional rulers and government agencies. The largely informal nature of existing relationships limits coordination, accountability, and the effective utilization of traditional institutions in development governance. The second challenge relates to the inadequate participation of women and youths in community development processes. Although traditional rulers play important mobilization roles, opportunities for meaningful involvement of these groups remain limited in many communities. Addressing these gaps through inclusive participation mechanisms and stronger institutional partnerships will enhance the effectiveness of traditional rulers and promote more sustainable and equitable community development outcomes in Enugu State.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1: Traditional rulers should adopt more inclusive community mobilization strategies. While traditional rulers have demonstrated effectiveness in mobilizing community members and resources for development activities, greater efforts should be made to ensure the active participation of women, youths, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. Traditional institutions should establish inclusive consultative forums, youth advisory

committees, and women development councils to promote broader participation in community decision-making and development planning.

2: Government should institutionalize collaboration between traditional rulers and formal governance structures.

The study revealed that existing collaboration between traditional rulers and government agencies is largely informal. To address this gap, state and local governments should develop formal frameworks that clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and channels of interaction between traditional institutions and government agencies. Such frameworks could include joint development committees, periodic consultative meetings, and legally recognized advisory roles for traditional rulers in community development programmes.

3: Measures should be introduced to minimize political interference in traditional institutions.

Given that political interference emerged as the most significant challenge affecting the effectiveness of traditional rulers, government authorities should respect the autonomy of traditional institutions and avoid undue influence in their activities. Clear guidelines should be established to regulate interactions between political office holders and traditional rulers, thereby enabling traditional institutions to perform their developmental functions without unnecessary political pressure.

4: Adequate financial and institutional support should be provided to traditional rulers.

Since inadequate funding and weak institutional capacity were identified as major constraints, government agencies, development partners, and community stakeholders should provide technical assistance, leadership training, and financial support to strengthen the capacity of traditional rulers to initiate, coordinate, and monitor community development projects effectively.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes an important contribution to the existing body of knowledge on traditional institutions and community development by providing a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the developmental roles of traditional rulers across multiple communities in Enugu State. In doing so, it addresses a notable empirical and geographical gap in the literature, as previous studies have largely focused on specific local government areas, individual communities, or particular dimensions of community development. By examining a wider range of communities and development indicators, the study offers a more holistic understanding of how traditional rulers contribute to grassroots development within the state.

The study also contributes to theoretical discourse by extending the application of Participatory Development Theory to the analysis of traditional institutions and community development. It demonstrates that traditional rulers can serve as important facilitators of community participation by mobilizing local resources, encouraging collective action, and creating channels through which community needs and aspirations can be communicated to government and development agencies. At the same time, the study highlights the challenges that may limit inclusive participation, particularly among women and youths, thereby enriching scholarly understanding of the conditions under which participatory development can be effectively realized within traditional governance systems.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Further research can focus on a comparative study across geopolitical zones of Nigeria, and traditional rulers capacity to engage diaspora communities and coordinate community development.

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Appendix 1

Introductory Letter

Department of Business Administration

FMSS

Godfrey Okoye University

Enugu

13 March, 2026

Dear Respondent,

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON TRADITIONAL RULERS AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT IN SELECTED COMMUNITIES OF ENUGU STATE**

This questionnaire is designed to gather data for an undergraduate project titled "Traditional Rulers and Community Development in Selected Communities of Enugu State." Your participation is entirely voluntary and all responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Please do not write your name on this questionnaire. Kindly answer the questions as honestly as possible.

Thanks

Obaji Blessing Judith

Researcher

Appendix 2

Questionnaire

Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Please tick (✓) as appropriate

Variable	Category	Response
Gender	Male	
	Female	
Age Group	18–30 years	
	31–45 years	
	46–60 years	
	Above 60 years	
Level of Education	Primary	
	Secondary	
	Post-Secondary (OND/NCE)	
	First Degree & Above	
Years of Residence	Less than 5 years	
	5–10 years	
	Above 10 years	

Traditional Rulers' Resource Mobilisation Activities

Item	SA	A	N	SD	D
The Igwe/traditional ruler uses town meetings to communicate development priorities					
Traditional ruler mobilises communal labour (nno-obibi) for development projects					
Traditional ruler organises community levies for development financing					

Item	SA	A	N	SD	D
Traditional ruler engages diaspora unions for development contributions					
Traditional ruler coordinates community self-help building projects					
Traditional ruler supervises donated land acquisition for community projects					

Government-Traditional Ruler Collaboration in Community Development

Item	SA	A	N	SD	D
Traditional ruler regularly participates in LGA development planning meetings					
Government officials consult traditional ruler before implementing dev. projects					
Traditional ruler communicates community needs to LGA council regularly					
There is a formal coordination mechanism between traditional ruler and LGA council					
State government provides funds to support traditional ruler-led development					

Table 4.4: Challenges Confronting Traditional Rulers in Community Development

Challenge Theme	Description	
Political Interference	Pressure from politicians to align priorities with electoral agendas	
Inadequate Funding	Irregular government transfers; diaspora remittance constraints	
Inter-community Conflicts	Boundary and land tenure disputes stalling development projects	
Low Youth Participation	Urban migration reducing youth engagement in community meetings	
Weak Institutional Capacity	Limited skills in proposal writing, project management, M&E	