Participatory Governance: Assessing the Facilitative Leadership Role of Traditional Rulers in the Implementation of a Decentralised Policy in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Traditional institutions offer a support system for self rule, democratic system, inclusion and collaborations for government. Established long before the modern bureaucracies, traditional leadership role has played a vital role as a facilitator of order to the overloaded and sub-apportioned bureaucracies. This study analysed how traditional rulers and their institutions play as community leaders to facilitate participation of the local people in the implementation of the National Cash Transfer Programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria at a local level of governance using a theoretical lens of participative governance theory. Data were sourced from three local government areas of Lagos State and analysed using qualitative methods. The study suggests that traditional rulers, in the modern day governance arrangement, are meant to complement government and also assist in drawing support and facilitate inclusion in government project, policy or programmes. This study found evidences that suggests that the traditional leaders' ability to position the people for involvement in government initiatives is not only a function of education but a host of other cognitive skills that the leader possesses which include his/her ability to inspire, motivate and to mobilise. Further, the outcome of this study provided an understanding that the involvement or non-involvement of the communities in government activities and policy implementation had no correlation with leaders' political affiliations. This study argues that empowering leaders is a framing activity that gives legitimacy to policy implementation practices and outcomes. Therefore, policymakers should adopt a synergistic strategy where the traditional rulers regardless of educational background and political affiliation, are co-opted members of an advisory committee for policy implementation in the spirit of participatory governance.

Keywords: Facilitative leadership, participatory governance, traditional ruler, policy, policy implementation

INTRODUCTION

Traditional rulers over the years from the pre-colonial society were the custodian of the people's culture and tradition. They were also involved in the western government as introduced then from colonial days. Records had it that some traditional rulers were members of the house of Chiefs in the Northern part of the country during the period of 1944 –1951. Traditional Rulers also legislated along side with the Regional Houses of Assembly. The situation gradually changed as independence approached. It was worsened after independence. It became confusing that many issues were raised after the enactment of the 1979, 1989 and the 1999 constitutions. Some of the envisaged problems facing the traditional institutions are revolves around the ambiguity that characterised the constitution regarding their institutional roles. Again, many traditional rulers and their institutions are being manipulated by their political boss for their selfish purposes. One primary role of traditional rulers is facilitating communication between the government and the community. They serve as intermediaries who can articulate community concerns to policymakers effectively. For instance, studies have shown that when traditional leaders are involved in discussions about health initiatives or educational reforms,

they can convey local perspectives that may otherwise be overlooked by bureaucratic processes (Akinwunmi et al., 2022; Sulistiyanto, 2018). Their established trust within communities allows them to gather feedback on policies and relay this information back to government officials. Traditional rulers ensure that government policies align with local customs and traditions. They provide insights into cultural practices that may affect policy acceptance and implementation. Traditional leaders can advise policymakers on culturally sensitive approaches that enhance program effectiveness. Moreover, traditional rulers empower community members by encouraging their participation in governance processes. They are to advocate for inclusive decision-making where community voices are heard alongside official narratives from the government.

Undoubtedly, traditional institutions in Nigeria, such as monarchies and chieftaincies, have played significant roles in maintaining social order, cultural heritage, and community cohesion for centuries. However, these institutions face numerous challenges that threaten their relevance and effectiveness in modern Nigeria. These challenges stem from several lingering issues. First, it is difficult to interpret some of the constitutional role of the traditional ruler because they were not explicitly clear, hence, they are always interpreted to suit specific motive. Second, modernization and urbanization (Afolayan, 2013) Rapid urbanization and modernization have eroded the influence of traditional institutions, especially among younger generations and undermines the legitimacy and credibility of the institutions (Ojo, 2015; Afolayan. 2013). Poor funding is a challenge that has made the traditional institution a stooge because they rely heavily on government funding, which is often inadequate or irregular (Owusu, 2017). Also, globalization and westernization have contributed to the erosion of Nigerian cultures. In the face of external influence of westernization and globalisation, traditional institutions are struggling to preserve cultural heritage (Nwolise, 2015). Another factor which Adebanwi (2017) pointed out is succession disputes. Disputes over succession and traditional titles have weakened traditional institutions and generate divisions and power struggles. Lastly. traditional rulers often lack formal education and training, hindering their effectiveness in modern governance (Ogunnubi, 2018). Significantly, these challenges have threatened the relevance and effectiveness of the traditional institutions in Nigeria. Hence, this study attempts to uncover the role of traditional rulers in facilitating participatory governance in government policy and programme at the grassroots. The study will analyse the impact being made by the traditional institutions in the implementation of the National Cash Transfer Programme also known as Household Uplifting Programme (HUP) an initiative of the Federal Government of Nigeria for implementation at the local level of governance.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Leadership is an instrumental factor in any human activity. Leadership mobilises resources and human beings for orderliness, coordination and resourcefulness. The activities of governance and democratisation revolve wholly around leadership. Hence, writers have inexhaustibly examined the strategic role that leaders play in facilitating collaboration in any governance framework (Behrens, 2014; Page, 2010). Together, these authors' perceptions were set on the facilitative role of public officials as leaders to develop the necessary competencies beyond their managerial functions. Tavares & Sobral (2017) described facilitative leaders as those who build trust and who facilitate dialogue and mutually beneficial relationships.

Traditional ruler's capabilities as facilitative leadership factor

Leadership is an instrumental factor in any human activity. Leadership mobilises resources and human beings for orderliness, coordination and resourcefulness. The activities of governance and democratisation revolve wholly around leadership. Hence, writers have inexhaustibly examined the strategic role that leaders play in facilitating collaboration in any governance framework (Bukalova, 2024); Behrens, 2014, Silvia, 2011; Page, 2010; Ansell & Gash, 2008). Academy to Initiative HR describe facilitative leadership as style of leadership that encourages collaboration, active participation, shared responsibility and dialogue among members. Together, these authors' perceptions were set on the facilitative role of public officials as leaders to develop the necessary competencies beyond their managerial functions. Tavares & Sobral (2017) described facilitative leaders as those who build trust and who facilitate dialogue and mutually beneficial relationships. To be able to discharge their duties effectively, the first systematic study on collaborative leadership was carried out by Morse in 2008, in the same year that collaborative governance theory was popularised by Ansell & Gash

(2008). While Ansel & Gash construct a model with a facilitative leader, Morse (2008) highlights the attributes that are required for a leader to facilitate collaborative governance through an empirical analysis. The highlights of the attributes are (1) a collaborative mindset (2) system thinking (3) openness (4) risk-taking (5) feelings of mutuality and connectedness and (6) humility. The leader is a facilitator and not a director (Ansell & Gash 2008). Majorly, for leaders to be effective in their facilitative leadership role, they require cooperative relationships, clarity of responsibilities, discussion of public issues and partnership influence.

Authors in Nigeria have pointed out that traditional leaders Traditional leaders in Nigeria have historically derived their power from established traditional institutions and customary practices, earning them significant influence and respect within their communities. These leaders, also regarded as community leaders, played a vital role in the pre- and post-colonial era, exercising administrative power and managerial expertise to govern their respective domains. (Alli, 2019; Williams, 2019; Adeleke, 2017). In his article, Alli (2019) draws our attention to the administrative power of traditional rulers in the past. He extols their managerial power and how they were used to run governance in the pre- and post-colonial period. The bulk of the administrative works of the colonialist rests on the traditional rulers. They ruled indirectly. During the colonial era, the colonial powers leveraged existing community-established institutions to exert their administrative authority. Consequently, local community heads played a pivotal role in shaping administrative governance, making significant contributions to its development. These community leaders performed various vital functions, including: conferment of traditional titles on notable personalities, mediating disputes at the local level and providing judicial oversight. They were also involved in offering support and leverage for the legal system and institutional safety Serving as sub-apportioned bureaucracies, bridging the gap between the colonial administration and local communities. (Famakinwa & Adisa, 2020; Williams, 2019; Alli, 2019, Martiskainen, 2017). The role of community leaders in Nigeria has significantly diminished over time, despite their substantial contributions in the pre- and post-colonial era. Traditional rulers, who once wielded considerable power and influence, are now struggling to remain relevant in modern governance. This decline is attributed to the erosion of their institutions and the failure of the government to integrate them into the new governance system.

Researchers have emphasized the need to re-integrate traditional rulers and their institutions, highlighting the importance of connecting policymakers with other stakeholders in the policy network (Phillip & Peter, 2013). Martiskainen (2017) and Williams (2019) suggest that embedding community leaders and traditional rulers in social networks could facilitate their meaningful contribution to socio-political transformation. Effective community leadership is crucial for promoting sustainable community development in Nigeria, and its significance cannot be overstated. This study built on the works of Munro *et al.,* (2008) and Dzordzormenyoh, (2022) to investigate the extent to which community leaders play the roles that were identified in the enrolment of beneficiaries of National Cash Transfer Policy.

The National Cash Transfer Programme (A Federal Government Initiatives For Implementation Across Tiers Of Government)

The Federal Government under the Social Protection Policy- an umbrella policy framework that incorporates related social agenda paradigms intended to reduce poverty and provide a life of dignity for all citizens. Social protection is a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach that contributes to poverty reduction, articulating policy priorities of government towards sustainable development. Therefore, it initiated the National Cash Transfer Programme also known as Household Uplifting Programme (HUP) is one of the social safety nets programmes anchored by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The programme commenced in September, 2016. It was conceived as part of the Federal Government of Nigeria's (FGN) larger growth and social inclusion strategies aimed at addressing key social concerns in the country.

Strategies for Enrolment

The promoters of the Cash Transfer Programme adopted a community-based targeting (CBT) strategy. The strategy was part of the planning process. Community leaders were meant to, firstly, undergo capacity building training to be acquainted with programme information and embracing programme to be able to render

necessary support during implementation. They are meant to understand poverty reduction strategies by promoting sustainable livelihoods and building resilience of benefitting households and communities to withstand economic shocks and risks.

The next stage is described as beneficiary orientation session. At this stage, how to select the beneficiaries shall go through basic orientation programme and how to seek redress should there be any anomaly. The beneficiaries are referred to as caregivers or alternate caregivers who can stand in for the caregiver if the primary care-giver is not available. The primary caregiver is responsible for receiving the training as well as the cash benefit. During the training programme, they are guided on how to choose caregivers and alternate caregiver without interference of the cash transfer facilitators.

The final stage of the process e-data capture of caregivers and their alternates using an enrolment mobile application which securely fetches poor and vulnerable household's information. Identity cards are therefore generated based on the data of beneficiaries captured by the enrolment mobile application in the local community. The Cash Transfer Failitators (CTFs) who will operate under the aegis of LG Desk Office as shown in the diagram will do the enrolment of beneficiaries under the supervision of the designated State Cash Transfer (SCT).

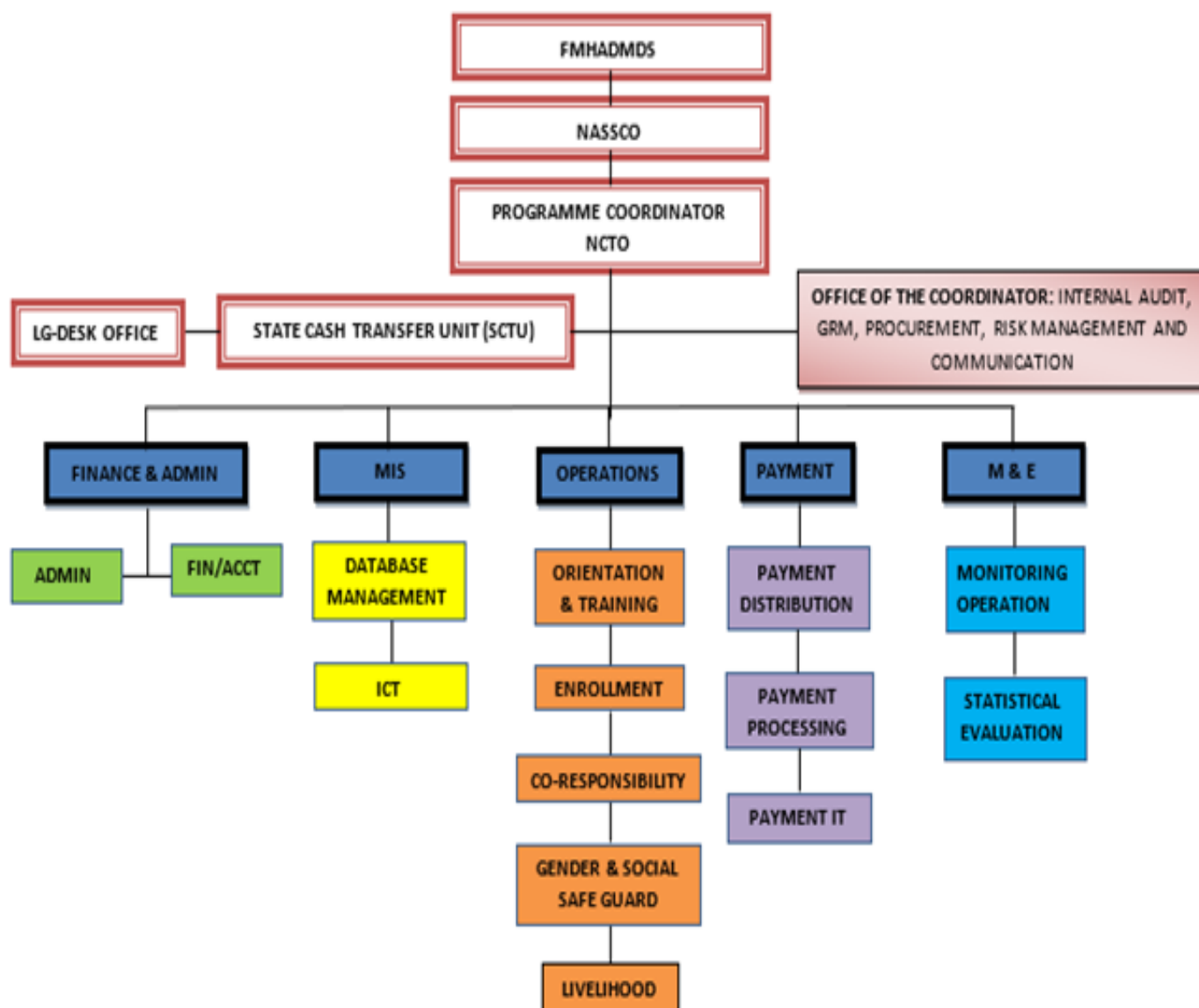**The programme organogram**

Figure 1: The programme organogram Source: National Cash Transfer Office (2021)

This programme is a component of National Social Safety Nets Project (NASSP) which is supported by the World Bank, to provide financial support to targeted poor and vulnerable Nigerian households.

The programme is focused on responding to deficiencies in capacity and lack of investment in human capital, especially amongst our poorest citizens. Beneficiaries of the programme are mined from the National Social Register (NSR), comprising State Social Registers (SR) of poor and vulnerable households. The SRs are being developed with the training, supervision and guidance from the National Social Safety Nets Coordinating Office in Abuja. The programme is designed to deliver timely and accessible cash transfers to beneficiary households and sets to support development objectives and priorities, to achieve specific outcomes as outlined below:

- Improve household consumption.

- Increase in utilization of health and nutrition services.

- Improve school enrolment and attendance.

- Improve environmental sanitation and management.

- Encourage household financial and asset acquisition.

- Engage beneficiaries in sustainable livelihood.

The programme has 3 components which are as follows:

- Base Cash Transfer

- Top-Up based on State selected conditions and

- Livelihood support

According to the policy document, the Management Responsibilities for NCTO include, among others, the stakeholder engagement. The programme also support capacity building of states and LGAs to deliver training and sensitization by developing training materials and training of trainers. There is need to provide technical and financial support to SCTUs and LGAs to carry out their responsibilities and make the local populace a participant in the entire process at the local level.

The NCTO's mandate is to deliver the targeted cash transfer across the country, the actual implementation happens at the state level through the State Cash Transfer Unit (SCTU). SCTU manages and coordinates the targeted cash transfer and livelihood intervention. Each local government area are expected to establish a cash transfer team to implement activities at the community level with engagement with other stakeholders within each of the 774 Local Government Areas in Nigeria. The extent to which the programme, meant to be inclusive, faired at the grassroots relates more to how involved are the people and the roles that the established grassroots institutions were allowed to play.

Theoretical Framework: Participatory Governance Theory

This article rests its theoretical proposition on the participatory governance theory. Participatory governance theory emphasizes the importance of involving citizens in government decision-making processes. The theory seems to have no single developer but rather it is a concept that has evolved over time from the writings of notable scholars like the empowered participatory governance (Fung and Wright, 2006), stakeholders engagement (kujala et al., 2022; Nguyen Long, Foster & Arnold, 2019) and participatory governance (Bua &

Bussu, 2021; Michel & De-Graaf, 2010). emphasizes the importance of traditional leaders in facilitating citizen participation in policy-making. Participatory governance seeks to deepen citizen participation in the governmental process by examining the assumptions and practices of the traditional view that generally hinders the realization of a genuine participatory democracy. In Nigeria, traditional leaders play a significant role in facilitating people's involvement in government programs and policies. They serve as intermediaries between the government and local communities, helping to ensure that policies are tailored to meet the needs of the people. The theory is guided by certain key principles which bothers on first, decentralisation which implies that power is distributed from central authorities to local communities, allowing for more inclusive decision-making. Second, participation which means that citizens are actively engaged in the policy-making process through various mechanisms, such as public hearings and town hall meetings); Finally, accountability which implies that governments are held accountable to the people, ensuring transparency and responsiveness. This theory has a lot of relevance to this study because it helps to discus how traditional leaders have been involved in facilitating participatory governance in government programme and policy in Nigeria. They serve as mobilizing factors of community members to participate in policy-making processes. Aside this, they act as advocates for community interests and also, facilitates communication between government officials and local communities through enhanced community engagement and participation (Ashade & Mutereko 2021).

More so, the basics that connected the study to the existing knowledge and gave justification for the study. Subsequently, attention was given to the analysis of certain concepts which bore a relation to the study. In the process of concept analysis, the researcher examined a considerable number of scholarly works and unified them to build consensus. For instance, Owusu (2018) explores the role of traditional leaders in promoting community development projects. Similarly, Ashade & Mutereko (2021) community leaders can facilitate community engagement and participation in government policies and programs.

Mfecane in a study that examined the role of traditional leaders in the health sector in South Africa recmarked that the traditional rulers have been instrumental in HIV/AIDS Prevention in South Africa (Mfecane, 2015). the study concluded that explore the potential of traditional leaders in promoting sustainable development. Similarly A study by Sulistiyanto in Indonesia analyzes the impact of traditional leaders on rural development initiatives. There are other studies that have empirically analysed the invaluable roles traditional rulers and their institutions in facilitation government role in different programmes like conflict resolution (Adebanwi, 2017); disaster management (Shaw & Takenchi, 2011); contributions in government budget i.e. promoting participatory budgeting (Souza, 2016).

Majorly, the common denominator in all the aforementioned studies is the promotion of traditional leaders as facilitators of community engagement and participation in government policies and programs.Traditional leaders possess social capital, trust, and legitimacy, enabling them to mobilize community resources.The authors also emphasized the effective collaboration between traditional leaders and government agencies enhances policy implementation. In line with the National Cash Transfer Policy which support capacity building of states and LGAs to deliver training and sensitization through their participation to ensure itch free capacity building and delivery. The authors see traditional leaders as custodian of cultural and linguistic barriers to policy implementation. They recommended, among others, that Capacity building and training for traditional leaders can enhance their effectiveness. However, analysis of these studies revealed that not much work were done by the authors to analyze the challenges faced by traditional leaders in facilitating people's involvement and also failed to investigate the relationship between traditional leaders and other stakeholders which is hall mark of governance. Therefore, a study that examines the role of traditional as facilitative leaders and how their functions are more or less relevant to the success of Cash Transfer Programme and analyse why they are so, as the case may be, is desirable.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A quantitative research method was employed in this study since qualitative methods produce detailed and non-quantitative accounts of small groups, wanting to interpret the meanings people make of their lives in natural settings, on the assumption that social interactions form an integrated set of relationships which can be understood best by inductive procedures.

Community leaders were drawn from selected communities across the three local government areas of Lagos State; Badagry, Ojo and Alimosho. Standard interviews were used to collect data in a systematic way (the survey component). The combination of the study designs gives a holistic perception about substance of the study and the subject of an investigation which had to do with getting the facts about the peoples' thoughts, preferences and perception with respect to community stake-holding regarding the implementation of the National Cash Transfer Policy across study locations. The study adopted a sampling technique which was based on subjective judgement. This is called a non-probabilistic sampling technique. The non-probabilistic technique used was purposive. This implies that the participants were selected on purpose based on certain criteria that made them holders of information required for the study.

A semi-structured, open-ended Interview method was employed using a pre-designed interview guide. This guides was designed to promote coherence and prevents deviations during interview sessions across the three locations. The researcher identified key informants in each of the communities that were enrolled in the Cash Transfer Programme. The people interviewed were selected on purpose base on the information gathered at the LG Headquarters.. Hermeneutics and thematic content analysis were used in transcribing, analysing and interpreting the raw information obtained. These approaches produced reliable data more effectively (Nieuwenhuis, 2014).

Hermeneutics and thematic content analysis were employed to transcribe and interpret the raw information obtained. Hermeneutics is a qualitative analytical process which involves deciphering hidden meaning enmeshed in the literal meaning. Hermeneutics confers on the researcher "the philosophical ground for interpreting and making deeper meaning from textual data. It involves unfolding the literal meaning of data in textually rich information." (Nieuwenhuis 2014: 101). The approach produced and presented data more effectively and it reflects the reality of data collection (Nieuwenhuis, 2014; Flick, 2011).

To manage the extensive qualitative data generated from interviews, a matrix framework was employed for data analysis and representation, as illustrated in Matrix I. A coding system was utilized to categorize interviewees across different divisions. Each participant was assigned a unique code based on their location, such as BADINTV01 for the first interviewee in Badagry, OJOINT01 for Ojo, and ALIINT01 for Alimosho Local Government. The matrix presents the data gathered, organized by themes related to facilitative leadership. The findings indicate that the values attributed to various themes varied across approaches and project locations, as revealed through the interviews. The diverse responses among interviewees suggest that traditional rulers, who comprised the majority of interviewees, responded to issues based on their level of involvement and available information. To streamline the data, responses were articulated, summarized, and synthesized into categorical themes and sub-themes, ultimately generating the matrix. The matrix captures the aggregated responses from community groups, providing a comprehensive overview of the findings.

Due to large textual information generated during interviews, a matrix framework for qualitative analysis was used for information representation as shown in Matrix I below. Based on the dictates of research, the researcher employed a coding system the interviewee across the divisions. Each interviewee was allotted codes based on the area: BADINTV01 represents the first person interviewed at Badagry. In a similar way, OJOINT01 and ALIINT01 represents participants' codes in Ojo and Alimosho Local Government respectively.

A cursory examination of the Matrix reveals a thematic presentation of data gathered on facilitative leadership (Creswell, 2018). Notably, the matrix highlights variations in theme values across different approaches and project locations, as elicited through interviews (Bryman, 2016). The disparate responses among interviewees, predominantly traditional rulers, indicate that their perspectives were shaped by their level of involvement and access to information (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Through a process of articulation, summarization, and synthesis, the data was distilled into categorical themes and sub-themes, yielding the matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This matrix encapsulates the aggregate responses from community groups, providing a comprehensive snapshot of the findings (Merriam, 2009).

Matrix 1. Analysis of qualitative data on community leadership role using categorised themes

Themes/Sub-themes	Facilitative leadership	Relevant Quotes /Field Sources
Leadership facilitative capabilities	To what extent do community leader's abilities determine the level to which the community is involved?	- Yes, we have a forum that brings us together to meet and discuss. We also develop our agenda for the project which I will not want to discuss with you now. (ALIINTERVIEWEE02) -Yes, we have a forum that brings us together to meet and discuss. We also develop our agenda for the programme which I will not want to discuss with you now. (OJOINT01) - I am the focal person for the entire communities, and I have to ensure that all interests are well protected. (BADINT03) - The leadership of the community said because the land is their heritage. His ancestors will not be happy if he should release the land for developmental projects because they have shrines and their family houses on it. (OJOINT02)
Leadership education/Capacity building	Does educational level have any significant impact on the people's interest and involvement in the National Cash Transfer Programme and what role are you playing?	- The best we can do is to explain the brain behind the project and to educate them about its relevance to the development of their communities and Lagos State at large (ALIINT001) - Education is very important. However, leadership at the level of the community is not only about education, it is tradition. Some leaders are educated yet they lack the wisdom to lead (BADINT001) - Government has not been doing enough at all. They are neither here nor there. Sometimes it is difficult to think that the Government prefers to do the will of the private investors than caring for its citizen (OJODINT001)
Leadership affiliation to political parties	Does community involvement have any relationship with the leader's political involvement? Community involvement in Cash Transfer Policy arrangement is determined by the community leaders' affiliation with the political class in power.	- A responsible government will not be sharing dividends of democracy by politics (ALLINT001) political affiliation has nothing to do with bringing development to the people - Well this does not have to do with the political affiliation of community leaders (BADDINT01) - So, I don't think it has anything to do with the party. Our government only needs to be more responsible and responsive. (OJODINT01) - Of course, that has always been there. Can anything be done in Nigeria without politicking (BADDFGD04)

Source: Field survey, 2023

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study reveals that community leadership and the capabilities of traditional rulers significantly impact the social and economic empowerment of communities, particularly in the administration of programs. While some responses suggested that leadership had minimal influence, the majority of community leaders emphasized that effective leadership abilities substantially enhance grassroots participation in government initiatives and policy. Notably, proactive leaders have initiated awareness campaigns, encouraging community members, especially youth, to acquire necessary knowledge and skills, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to project implementation. This exemplary display of facilitative leadership contrasts with other communities, where leaders advocate for involvement without adequately preparing community members for participatory processes.

The present study's findings align with previous research, which demonstrates that community leadership significantly impacts community development projects (Famakinwa & Adisa, 2020; Martiskainen, 2017). Consistent with Famakinwa and Adisa's (2020) study, the current research highlights the importance of community leaders' facilitative abilities, including emotional stability, dispute management, consistency, and communication skills. Similarly, Martiskainen (2017) emphasizes the role of community leadership in fostering grassroots innovations through knowledge sharing, networking, and talent identification.

However, this study diverges from previous research in its focus on collaborative projects between government and private investors in local communities (Llewellyn, 2019). Notably, Llewellyn's (2019) study in South Africa underscores the potential barriers posed by self-centered traditional leaders, who can hinder local community inclusion in developmental projects.

This study's findings resonate with the Participatory Governance Theory, which posits that public policy-making, implementation, and service delivery involve a complex web of relationships among government, business, and civil society actors (Silvia, 2011). Effective community leadership is crucial in this context, as leaders must possess networking skills to build relationships and shared visions within social networks (Behrens, 2014). The study's results align with previous research, highlighting the importance of leadership in collaborative governance (Opawole & Jagboro, 2017).

Notably, the findings suggest that community leaders with facilitative abilities can create opportunities for their communities by engaging in discussions on areas of collaboration within public-private partnerships (PPP) frameworks. This proactive approach is exemplified by community leaders in Badagry, who demonstrated good facilitative leadership skills.

The study's analysis reveals that traditional rulers and community leaders' abilities significantly influence the benefits derived by communities in terms of social and economic empowerment. Furthermore, the results indicate that community leaders' education level and activism are positively correlated with community involvement in government programs, whereas political affiliation is not a determining factor.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By and large, the study has established that the activities did not meet with a commensurate level of achievement in terms of positioning the communities in the real sense of the word. By implication, community leaders were not considered suitable to fit into a social network of policy implementation, the process was to be facilitated by the bureaucrats. Overall, the investigation on community leadership strengthens the idea that the abilities of the traditional rulers have a great influence on the benefits to be derived by the local populace in terms of involvement in government policy and programmes. The findings in this study have provided a new understanding that the involvement or non-involvement of the communities had no correlation with leaders' political affiliations. Moreover, it was evident that, beyond political affiliation and education, community leaders who displayed passion, good communication skills and persuasiveness in relation with other key stakeholders did well in positioning their communities for recognition and involvement in programmes and inclusive policy process. While this study has demonstrated that community leaders' education plays a very important role in facilitating community involvement, there is evidence which suggests that the community leader's ability to position the community for involvement is not only a function of education but of a host of other leadership cognitive skills which should include the ability to inspire, motivate and to mobilise.

Implications of the study

Prior to this study, the understanding of community leadership was largely theoretical and speculative. However, this research reveals that traditional leaders are often appointed through a system that disregards educational values, democratic principles, and gender equality. Despite this, the study's findings indicate that effective community leadership is not solely dependent on education, but rather a combination of various leadership skills. The findings emerging from this study suggest that community involvement is not necessarily determined by the technical ability or education of community leaders. Instead, leaders who mobilize community support through effective interaction with project stakeholders are more likely to facilitate successful community engagement . This study's findings emphasize the importance of education in facilitating

community involvement, but also highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of community leadership. This finding here relates more earlier findings (Northouse, 2021; Ospina & Foldy, 2017).

Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of facilitative community leadership, which goes beyond formal authorities, policies, and processes. Effective community leadership is about understanding and addressing community members' feelings, perceptions, and needs through information sharing and ongoing dialogue (Gittell & Douglas, 2019).This study reveals that community leadership plays a pivotal role in facilitating community involvement in government policies and programs. However, the findings suggest that community leaders' abilities to position their communities for recognition and involvement are not solely dependent on their education or political affiliations (Ospina & Foldy, 2017). Instead, effective community leaders demonstrate passion, good communication skills, and persuasiveness in their interactions with key stakeholders (Gittell & Douglas, 2019).

The study's results also highlight the importance of leadership cognitive skills, such as the ability to inspire, motivate, and mobilize community members (Boyatzis, 2018). These findings have practical implications for community development, suggesting that community leaders' education and technical abilities are not the sole determinants of community involvement (Eversole, 2018).

Furthermore, the study's results debunk the notion that government activities and community involvement are selective and based on political prejudices (Berner & Phillips, 2018). Instead, the findings suggest that community leaders' political affiliations have no significant impact on community involvement.

Recommendations for policy and practice

Policymakers: To ensure successful policy implementation, policymakers must acknowledge the significant influence of traditional rulers in their communities. As such, programs should be designed to incorporate these leaders into the implementation process.Effective policy implementation requires collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including community group leaders who wield considerable influence. Failing to engage these leaders can lead to implementation challenges.This paper asserts that empowering community leaders is essential for legitimate policy implementation. Policymakers should adopt a collaborative approach, incorporating traditional rulers – regardless of their educational background or political affiliation – into advisory committees for participatory governance.By doing so, policymakers can leverage the influence of traditional rulers to facilitate smooth policy implementation and foster positive outcomes for the community

For the local communities: Traditional leadership selection processes, based on deity consultation and patrilineal practices, should give way to merit-based selection, prioritizing charisma and capabilities. This ensures leaders are appointed based on their ability to effectively represent and protect their communities' interests.

Traditional leaders must also foster relationships with influential community group leaders, who possess strong facilitative skills. These leaders can mobilize community support and facilitate meaningful engagement.

This study recommends policymakers initiate capacity-building interventions for community leaders, enabling them to engage effectively in policy discussions. While community leaders demonstrate potential, they lack technical skills and experience, particularly in programs like cash transfer initiatives.

To address this, policymakers should establish programs to recruit, mentor, and develop future community leaders. A trust fund, similar to the UK's Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT), could be created to support community leadership capacity building and host community services. This fund could be generated through corporate profit taxes, supplemented by promoter and sponsor support.

In conclusion, maintain a focused and nuanced exploration of traditional rulers' influence on community development. However, future studies may build upon this research by incorporating a gender-focused analysis to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics of leadership at the community level.

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