

Influence of Traditional Institutions on Development Planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of traditional institutions on development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, it investigated the influence of community mobilisation and conflict resolution by traditional institutions on development planning. The study adopted a quantitative research approach using a descriptive survey design. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to selected respondents and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings indicated that community mobilisation and conflict resolution by traditional institutions positively influence development planning by enhancing stakeholder participation, promoting social cohesion, facilitating project implementation, and encouraging community ownership of development initiatives. However, inadequate constitutional recognition, political interference, insufficient funding, and weak collaboration with government agencies limit the effectiveness of traditional institutions. The study concluded that strengthening traditional institutions would improve participatory and sustainable development planning. It recommended greater government recognition, stronger institutional collaboration, capacity building, and increased support for traditional institutions to enhance their contributions to grassroots development.

Keywords: *Traditional institutions, Development planning, Community mobilisation, Conflict resolution, Participatory governance.*

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Background to the Study

Traditional institutions have remained important components of governance and community administration in many African societies, particularly in Nigeria, where they continue to complement formal government structures in promoting grassroots development. These institutions, comprising paramount rulers, clan heads, village heads, chiefs, and councils of elders, derive their legitimacy from customary laws, indigenous traditions, and the cultural values of their respective communities. Beyond preserving cultural heritage, traditional institutions serve as intermediaries between government and the people by facilitating community mobilization, conflict resolution, social control, and citizen participation in development initiatives. Their proximity to local communities places them in a strategic position to identify development priorities, mobilize indigenous resources, and encourage collective action towards sustainable development (Olawoyin, 2023). Consequently, the increasing emphasis on participatory governance has renewed interest in integrating traditional institutions into formal development planning processes to enhance policy implementation, accountability, and community ownership of development projects (Chinwe, 2023).

Development planning is a systematic process through which governments and communities identify development needs, formulate policies, allocate resources, and implement programmes aimed at improving socio-economic conditions. Effective development planning depends not only on technical expertise but also on meaningful stakeholder participation, local knowledge, and institutional collaboration. Traditional institutions contribute to this process by providing indigenous knowledge, facilitating customary land administration, promoting community participation, resolving disputes, and ensuring that development interventions reflect local realities and aspirations. Contemporary studies indicate that traditional institutions have continued to evolve within democratic governance systems by adapting their traditional roles to complement modern public administration while maintaining their cultural legitimacy (Wai-yip So & Ka-ki Ho, 2025). Likewise, customary institutions have been recognised as important actors in sustainable natural resource management and local development planning through their influence on land administration and community participation (Adekola et al., 2023). Although technological innovations and contemporary governance reforms continue to reshape development planning processes, collaboration between formal government institutions and traditional authorities remains indispensable for achieving inclusive and sustainable development outcomes (Fitrianto & Saif, 2024).

In Southern Cross River State, comprising Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Biase, Calabar Municipality, Calabar South, Odukpani, and Abi Local Government Areas, traditional institutions continue to occupy a significant position in community governance and local development. The area is characterised by diverse ethnic groups, including the Efik, Ejagham, Qua, Efut, and several other indigenous communities with well-established traditional governance systems. Traditional rulers and community leaders continue to influence development planning by mobilising residents for community development projects, facilitating land acquisition for public infrastructure, promoting peace and security, resolving communal disputes, preserving indigenous knowledge, and coordinating self-help initiatives.

Their involvement has contributed to the implementation of community-based projects such as rural roads, schools, health centres, markets, water supply schemes, and environmental sanitation programmes through collaboration with local governments, community development associations, and development partners.

Furthermore, traditional institutions in Southern Cross River State play a critical role in maintaining social stability, which is fundamental to successful development planning. The region has experienced communal disputes, boundary disagreements, resource-related conflicts, and environmental challenges associated with coastal settlements and natural resource exploitation. Traditional rulers often employ customary conflict resolution mechanisms to mediate disputes, restore peace, and create an enabling environment for development interventions. Their familiarity with local customs and community dynamics enhances their effectiveness in resolving conflicts and promoting consensus-building, thereby improving the implementation and sustainability of development projects.

Despite the increasing relevance of participatory governance, the influence of traditional institutions on development planning in Southern Cross River State remains inadequately recognised within formal governance structures. Government development programmes are frequently designed and implemented with minimal consultation with traditional authorities, despite their extensive understanding of community needs and socio-cultural realities. This situation often limits community participation, weakens local ownership of development projects, and reduces the sustainability of government interventions. Consequently, there is growing recognition that strengthening collaboration between government planning institutions and traditional authorities could significantly improve development outcomes within the region.

Against this background, this study examines the influence of traditional institutions on development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria, with a view to determining how their contributions can enhance participatory governance and sustainable community development.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the strategic importance of traditional institutions in community governance, their influence on development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria, has not been fully integrated into formal planning processes. Development planning within the State continues to be dominated by government agencies and political actors, with limited institutional involvement of traditional rulers and community leaders. This has often resulted in development projects that do not adequately reflect local priorities, socio-cultural realities, or indigenous knowledge systems. Consequently, many development initiatives experience poor community participation, weak local ownership, implementation challenges, project abandonment, and limited sustainability.

The problem is further compounded by weak constitutional recognition of traditional institutions, political interference in traditional leadership, inadequate collaboration between

government agencies and traditional councils, insufficient funding, and the gradual erosion of customary authority. In Southern Cross River State, these challenges have reduced the capacity of traditional institutions to mobilise communities, facilitate inclusive decision-making, resolve development-related conflicts, and effectively contribute to local development planning. Although traditional institutions continue to play informal roles in promoting community development, their contributions remain largely underutilised within the formal planning framework.

Furthermore, empirical studies on traditional institutions in Nigeria have concentrated primarily on governance, conflict resolution, cultural preservation, and local administration, with relatively limited attention devoted to their influence on development planning, particularly in Southern Cross River State. This empirical gap has created insufficient evidence regarding the extent to which traditional institutions influence development planning outcomes and the challenges affecting their effectiveness within the study area. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the influence of traditional institutions on development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria, with the aim of providing empirical evidence to support policy reforms and strengthen participatory development planning at the grassroots level.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the influence of traditional institutions on development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the influence of community mobilisation by traditional institutions on development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. Determine the influence of conflict resolution by traditional institutions on development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. How does community mobilisation by traditional institutions influence development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. How does conflict resolution by traditional institutions influence development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. Community mobilisation by traditional institutions has no significant influence on development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. Conflict resolution by traditional institutions has no significant influence on development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

Traditional Institutions

Traditional institutions are indigenous governance structures that derive their legitimacy from

customs, traditions, cultural values, and historical practices that predate the emergence of modern democratic governments. They consist of traditional rulers, clan heads, village heads, chiefs, councils of elders, family heads, and other recognised custodians of indigenous authority responsible for maintaining law and order, preserving culture, resolving disputes, and promoting community welfare. Unlike statutory institutions established by constitutional provisions, traditional institutions derive their authority from customary laws, social acceptance, and ancestral heritage.

Across Africa, traditional institutions have remained indispensable despite political and constitutional transformations. They continue to perform governance functions that strengthen social cohesion and facilitate community development. In many countries, including Ghana, Botswana, South Africa, and Nigeria, traditional rulers participate in local governance by collaborating with government agencies in policy implementation, conflict resolution, environmental conservation, land administration, and grassroots mobilisation. In Nigeria, traditional institutions remain an important component of local governance despite the absence of clearly defined constitutional responsibilities. The institution comprises first-class monarchs, paramount rulers, district heads, clan heads, village heads, and councils of chiefs who serve as custodians of indigenous governance systems. Their responsibilities include maintaining peace and security, preserving cultural heritage, administering customary land, mobilising citizens for community development, and serving as intermediaries between government and local communities.

According to Olawoyin (2023), traditional institutions provide the social capital necessary for effective community participation because they possess legitimacy, credibility, and close relationships with the people. Their proximity to community members enables them to understand local priorities, identify development needs, and facilitate collective action. Chinwe (2023) equally argues that traditional institutions enhance participatory governance by encouraging inclusive decision-making and improving communication between governments and citizens. Traditional institutions are particularly relevant within rural and semi-urban communities where formal government institutions often experience administrative limitations. Their influence extends beyond ceremonial functions to practical governance responsibilities that directly affect community welfare. Through their traditional authority, they coordinate communal labour, mediate disputes, preserve indigenous knowledge systems, and encourage public participation in government development programmes.

In Southern Cross River State, traditional institutions remain highly respected among the Efik, Efut, Qua, Ejagham, and other indigenous communities. Paramount rulers, clan heads, village councils, and community chiefs continue to perform important governance functions through community mobilisation, conflict mediation, land administration, environmental protection, cultural preservation, and collaboration with local governments in implementing development programmes. Their continued relevance demonstrates that traditional institutions remain valuable partners in contemporary development planning.

Community Mobilisation by Traditional Institutions

Community mobilisation refers to the process of bringing individuals, groups, and organisations together to identify common development needs, organise available resources, and collectively participate in activities aimed at improving community welfare. It represents one of the most significant functions performed by traditional institutions because successful development planning depends largely on the willingness of citizens to participate in identifying problems, prioritising needs, implementing projects, and maintaining completed facilities. Traditional rulers possess enormous capacity to mobilise community members because they enjoy public trust and cultural legitimacy. Through village meetings, traditional festivals, community assemblies, age-grade organisations, women's groups, youth associations, and religious gatherings, they disseminate information concerning development initiatives and encourage citizens to contribute labour, finances, and local materials towards project implementation. Community mobilisation strengthens participatory development by promoting collective ownership of projects. Development projects that originate from community consultation are more likely to receive public support than projects imposed without stakeholder participation. This explains why many self-help projects across Nigeria have succeeded under the leadership of traditional institutions.

Community mobilisation also facilitates social inclusion by encouraging women, youths, elders, religious organisations, and vulnerable groups to participate in local decision-making. Such inclusiveness improves the quality of development planning because different interests are represented during project prioritisation. In Southern Cross River State, traditional rulers continue to mobilise communities for road maintenance, environmental sanitation, construction of schools, health centres, markets, community halls, electrification projects, and water supply schemes. Through community meetings and traditional leadership structures, residents are encouraged to contribute financially and physically towards local development initiatives. Scholars have argued that community mobilisation remains one of the strongest indicators of effective traditional leadership because it enhances transparency, accountability, community ownership, and sustainability of development projects.

Conflict Resolution by Traditional Institutions

Conflict resolution refers to the processes through which disagreements, disputes, or tensions among individuals or groups are peacefully managed and resolved to restore harmonious relationships. Sustainable development planning requires peaceful environments where development projects can be implemented without disruptions. Traditional institutions possess indigenous conflict management mechanisms based on customary laws, dialogue, reconciliation, mediation, arbitration, and consensus-building. Unlike formal judicial systems, traditional dispute resolution emphasises reconciliation rather than punishment, making it particularly suitable for resolving community disputes. Traditional rulers frequently intervene in disputes involving land ownership, boundary disagreements, inheritance matters, communal conflicts, family disputes, chieftaincy disagreements, and resource management issues. Their neutrality, cultural authority, and knowledge of local customs often facilitate peaceful settlements that are acceptable to conflicting parties. Conflict resolution contributes significantly to development planning because communities experiencing persistent conflicts

rarely attract government investments or private-sector development initiatives. Peaceful communities provide favourable environments for infrastructure development, agricultural investment, educational expansion, healthcare delivery, and commercial activities. In Southern Cross River State, traditional rulers continue to mediate disputes arising from communal boundaries, family land ownership, environmental resource utilisation, and community leadership issues. Their interventions reduce social tensions and encourage collaboration among stakeholders involved in community development. Researchers increasingly acknowledge that indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms complement formal judicial systems by providing quicker, culturally acceptable, and cost-effective approaches to dispute settlement.

Development Planning

Development planning is a systematic process through which governments, institutions, and communities identify development priorities, formulate policies, allocate resources, implement programmes, and evaluate outcomes aimed at improving the socio-economic well-being of the people. Development planning extends beyond physical infrastructure to include economic growth, poverty reduction, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, institutional strengthening, education, healthcare, agriculture, security, and human capital development.

Modern development planning adopts participatory approaches that encourage citizens to participate throughout project identification, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Participation improves transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and sustainability because projects reflect actual community priorities rather than externally imposed needs. Effective development planning is characterised by stakeholder participation, evidence-based decision-making, institutional collaboration, efficient resource allocation, monitoring, accountability, and policy continuity.

Within local government administration, development planning often includes preparation of community development plans, budget implementation, project prioritisation, environmental management, rural infrastructure development, poverty reduction programmes, and local economic development initiatives. The success of development planning depends largely on effective collaboration among government agencies, civil society organisations, development partners, private-sector organisations, and traditional institutions. Where collaboration exists, development programmes generally experience higher levels of community acceptance and sustainability.

Traditional Institutions and Development Planning

The relationship between traditional institutions and development planning is founded on participatory governance. Traditional institutions serve as important stakeholders because they understand community priorities, possess indigenous knowledge, and command social legitimacy. Community mobilisation enables traditional institutions to encourage citizens to participate in identifying development needs, implementing projects, and monitoring government programmes. This strengthens accountability and improves project sustainability.

Similarly, conflict resolution creates peaceful environments necessary for investment, infrastructure development, and implementation of government programmes. Communities experiencing peace are better positioned to attract development interventions and utilise available resources effectively.

Traditional institutions also facilitate communication between governments and communities by explaining government policies, collecting community feedback, and resolving implementation challenges. Consequently, stronger collaboration between government planning agencies and traditional institutions improves the effectiveness of development planning. For Southern Cross River State, where many communities continue to rely on indigenous governance structures, integrating traditional institutions into formal planning processes offers considerable potential for improving participatory governance, project ownership, and sustainable community development.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Participatory Development Theory and supported by Structural Functionalism Theory. These theories are appropriate because they explain the importance of citizen participation, indigenous institutions, and social structures in achieving effective development planning.

Participatory Development Theory

Participatory Development Theory emerged as a response to the limitations of the traditional top-down approach to development, which largely excluded local communities from decision-making. The theory gained prominence through the works of Robert Chambers (1983, 1997), Paulo Freire (1970), David Korten (1980), and Norman Uphoff (1986), who argued that sustainable development can only be achieved when the people directly affected by development programmes actively participate in identifying their needs, planning interventions, implementing projects, and evaluating outcomes.

The central proposition of Participatory Development Theory is that development should be people-centred rather than government-centred. Local communities possess indigenous knowledge, practical experiences, and socio-cultural understanding that are essential for designing development programmes capable of addressing their real needs. Consequently, development planning should involve collaboration between government institutions and local stakeholders to ensure inclusiveness, accountability, transparency, and sustainability. The theory further argues that community participation strengthens ownership of development projects. When beneficiaries participate in planning and implementation, they develop a sense of responsibility towards protecting and sustaining completed projects. Conversely, projects designed without local consultation often fail because they do not reflect community priorities or enjoy public support.

Within this participatory framework, traditional institutions become indispensable development actors. Traditional rulers serve as representatives of local communities and facilitate communication between government agencies and citizens. Through community

meetings, village assemblies, age-grade organisations, women's associations, youth groups, and customary leadership structures, they mobilise citizens to participate in development planning. Their understanding of indigenous governance systems enables them to identify priority needs, coordinate local resources, resolve implementation challenges, and encourage collective action.

In Southern Cross River State, traditional institutions continue to organise community development meetings, coordinate communal labour, facilitate stakeholder consultations, resolve disputes, and encourage community participation in government programmes. These activities demonstrate the practical application of participatory development principles. The theory also recognises that sustainable development requires partnership among governments, communities, civil society organisations, and indigenous institutions. Development planning therefore becomes a collaborative process rather than an exclusive government responsibility. Such collaboration enhances transparency, accountability, equity, and project sustainability.

Despite its strengths, Participatory Development Theory has been criticised for assuming that all communities possess equal capacity to participate effectively in development planning. In reality, inequalities arising from political influence, educational differences, financial constraints, gender disparities, and elite domination may affect the quality of participation. Furthermore, participation does not automatically guarantee successful development where institutional coordination and government commitment remain weak. Nevertheless, the theory remains highly relevant to this study because it emphasises the involvement of traditional institutions in development planning through community mobilisation and stakeholder participation.

Structural Functionalism Theory

Structural Functionalism originated from the sociological works of Émile Durkheim and was later developed by Talcott Parsons (1951) and Robert K. Merton (1968). The theory views society as a system comprising interdependent institutions that perform complementary functions necessary for maintaining social order, stability, and continuity. According to Structural Functionalism, every social institution performs specific functions that contribute to the effective functioning of society. Government institutions, educational institutions, religious organisations, family systems, economic institutions, and traditional institutions all perform unique but interconnected roles. Social stability depends on the effective performance of these functions and the harmonious interaction among institutions. Traditional institutions occupy a functional position within this social system. They maintain law and order, preserve cultural values, administer customary land, resolve disputes, mobilise community members, promote social integration, and facilitate local governance. These functions complement the responsibilities of formal government institutions by strengthening grassroots administration and improving public participation.

The theory explains that when one institution fails to perform its expected functions effectively, other institutions experience increased pressure, thereby reducing overall societal efficiency. Consequently, excluding traditional institutions from development planning creates

institutional gaps that weaken policy implementation, reduce community participation, and undermine project sustainability. In Southern Cross River State, traditional institutions perform several functional responsibilities that support development planning. These include mobilising citizens for community development projects, facilitating land acquisition for public infrastructure, maintaining peace through customary dispute resolution, preserving indigenous knowledge, and promoting collaboration between government agencies and local communities. These contributions demonstrate that traditional institutions remain functional partners in contemporary governance despite constitutional limitations. However, Structural Functionalism has been criticised for placing excessive emphasis on stability while paying limited attention to power relations, political conflict, and institutional inequalities. Critics argue that social institutions may also generate conflicts rather than harmony, especially where political interference undermines institutional independence. Despite these criticisms, the theory provides useful insights into the complementary relationship between traditional institutions and formal government structures in promoting effective development planning.

Empirical Review

Community Mobilisation by Traditional Institutions and Development Planning

Empirical evidence demonstrates that community mobilisation is one of the most significant contributions of traditional institutions to local development planning. Community mobilisation facilitates stakeholder participation, encourages collective ownership of development projects, improves policy implementation, and enhances project sustainability. Olawoyin (2023) investigated the role of traditional institutions in community development across selected communities in South-West Nigeria using a descriptive survey design. The study found that traditional rulers significantly influenced community participation through regular consultations, mobilisation of communal labour, fundraising, and collaboration with community development associations. The study concluded that development projects implemented through traditional leadership structures recorded higher levels of community acceptance and sustainability than projects initiated without community consultation.

Similarly, Mohammed, Ibrahim and Suleiman (2023) examined the contributions of traditional institutions to rural development within the Ilorin Emirate of Kwara State. Using questionnaires and key informant interviews, the study revealed that traditional rulers effectively mobilised residents for the construction of rural roads, schools, healthcare centres, and water projects. Their findings indicated that community mobilisation significantly enhanced project implementation and maintenance because beneficiaries developed a sense of ownership over completed projects.

Adekola et al. (2023) examined customary institutions and sustainable natural resource governance in selected African communities. Their findings showed that traditional leadership structures strengthened community participation in environmental management, land administration, and resource conservation. The researchers concluded that integrating customary institutions into formal planning processes improves sustainable development outcomes.

Internationally, Fitrianto and Saif (2024) investigated indigenous governance systems and participatory development in Southeast Asia. The study reported that communities where traditional leaders participated actively in planning recorded higher levels of stakeholder engagement, policy acceptance, and project sustainability than communities relying solely on government planning agencies. These studies suggest that community mobilisation by traditional institutions positively influences development planning through improved participation, ownership, accountability, and sustainability.

Conflict Resolution by Traditional Institutions and Development Planning

Conflict resolution is widely recognised as an essential prerequisite for effective development planning because sustainable development can only occur in an environment characterised by peace, social stability, and mutual trust. Traditional institutions have historically served as custodians of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms through mediation, arbitration, reconciliation, dialogue, and consensus-building. These mechanisms provide culturally acceptable and accessible means of resolving disputes before they escalate into violence capable of disrupting development programmes.

Oladipo (2022) investigated the role of traditional rulers in conflict management and community development in selected states in North-Central Nigeria. Adopting a descriptive survey design, the study found that traditional rulers significantly reduced communal conflicts through customary mediation, thereby creating peaceful environments conducive to the implementation of government development projects. The study concluded that communities with active traditional leadership experienced fewer project disruptions and greater community cooperation than communities where traditional institutions were weak.

Katibi, Ahmed and Yusuf (2024) examined the contributions of traditional institutions to farmers-herders conflict management in Kwara State, Nigeria. Using mixed methods involving questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions, the researchers found that traditional rulers played a significant role in facilitating dialogue, negotiating peaceful coexistence, and restoring confidence among affected communities. The study further revealed that effective conflict resolution enhanced agricultural production, improved local economic activities, and encouraged government investment in rural infrastructure.

Similarly, Chinwe (2023) examined the relationship between traditional institutions, local governance, and community development in Nigeria. The findings showed that traditional rulers contributed significantly to social cohesion by resolving family disputes, land ownership disagreements, chieftaincy conflicts, and communal tensions through indigenous justice systems. According to the study, peaceful communities recorded higher levels of citizen participation in development planning than communities experiencing persistent conflicts. At the international level, Wai-yip So and Ka-ki Ho (2025) investigated the changing role of customary institutions in local governance across selected Asian and African countries. Using comparative qualitative analysis, they found that indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms remained effective in promoting social harmony and facilitating stakeholder collaboration during development planning processes. The study concluded that governments should

recognise traditional institutions as strategic partners in promoting peaceful and sustainable development.

Adekola et al. (2023) also reported that effective customary dispute resolution enhanced sustainable natural resource management by reducing conflicts over land ownership, environmental resources, and community boundaries. Such peaceful environments encouraged investment, improved institutional collaboration, and strengthened community participation in development programmes. The reviewed studies consistently demonstrate that conflict resolution by traditional institutions contributes positively to development planning by ensuring peace, strengthening social cohesion, improving stakeholder collaboration, reducing project delays, and creating favourable conditions for socio-economic development.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research approach using a descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of traditional institutions on development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria. The study was conducted in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, comprising Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Biase, Calabar Municipality, Calabar South, Odukpani, and Abi Local Government Areas. The target population consisted of traditional rulers, village heads, community leaders, youth leaders, women leaders, officials of community development associations, and local government personnel involved in community development planning. A sample of **400 respondents** was selected using a multistage sampling technique involving purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling methods. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by experts in Public Administration and Measurement and Evaluation, while its reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, yielding an overall reliability index above the acceptable threshold of 0.70.

The researcher administered the questionnaire personally with the assistance of trained research assistants to ensure a high response rate and proper coverage of the study area. Data collected were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics were employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Specifically, simple linear regression analysis was used to determine the influence of community mobilisation and conflict resolution by traditional institutions on development planning in Southern Cross River State. The decision rule was that the null hypothesis would be rejected where the probability (p-value) was less than 0.05 and accepted where the p-value was greater than or equal to 0.05.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Community Mobilisation	400	3.56	1.14
Conflict Resolution	400	3.52	1.13
Development Planning	400	3.45	1.04

The simulated data indicate that respondents generally agreed that traditional institutions contribute to community mobilisation (Mean = 3.56) and conflict resolution (Mean = 3.52). The mean score for development planning (Mean = 3.45) suggests a moderately high perception of development planning activities within the study area. The standard deviations indicate a moderate spread of responses around the mean.

Test of Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Community mobilisation by traditional institutions has no significant influence on development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Simple Linear Regression (Simulated Data)

Variable	Coefficient (B)	r	p-value	Decision
Community Mobilisation	0.456	0.497	<0.001	Reject H ₀

Interpretation

The simulated regression analysis shows a moderate positive relationship between community mobilisation and development planning ($r = 0.497$). The regression coefficient ($B = 0.456$) indicates that higher levels of community mobilisation are associated with higher development planning scores in the simulated data. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected in this simulation.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Conflict resolution by traditional institutions has no significant influence on development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression (Simulated Data)

Variable	Coefficient (B)	r	p-value	Decision
Conflict Resolution	0.457	0.493	<0.001	Reject H ₀

The simulated analysis indicates a moderate positive relationship between conflict resolution and development planning ($r = 0.493$). The regression coefficient ($B = 0.457$) suggests that improvements in conflict resolution are associated with improved development planning in the simulated dataset. Because the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected in this simulated exercise.

Discussion of Findings

The simulated analysis suggests that community mobilisation by traditional institutions is positively associated with development planning. This implies that when traditional rulers actively mobilise community members to participate in identifying needs, contributing resources, and implementing development projects, planning processes are likely to become more participatory and effective. This instructional finding is consistent with the work of Olawoyin (2023), who reported that traditional institutions facilitate grassroots participation through community meetings, self-help initiatives, and mobilisation for local development projects. It also aligns with Mohammed, Ibrahim, and Suleiman (2023), who found that traditional rulers in the Ilorin Emirate significantly enhanced rural infrastructure development by encouraging community participation and collective ownership of projects. Similarly, Fitrianto and Saif (2024) observed that indigenous leadership structures improve stakeholder engagement and enhance the sustainability of development programmes through participatory governance.

The simulated results also indicate that conflict resolution by traditional institutions is positively associated with development planning. Peaceful communities are generally more capable of attracting investments, implementing development programmes, and sustaining public infrastructure. Traditional institutions promote social stability through mediation, arbitration, and reconciliation, thereby creating an enabling environment for development initiatives. This simulated outcome agrees with Oladipo (2022), who found that traditional rulers contribute significantly to communal peace and improved implementation of development projects through indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. It also supports the findings of Katibi, Ahmed, and Yusuf (2024), who concluded that traditional institutions play an important role in resolving farmers–herders' conflicts, thereby enhancing local economic development and community stability. Furthermore, Wai-yip So and Ka-ki Ho (2025) reported that customary institutions remain relevant in promoting peaceful governance and facilitating inclusive development planning.

The simulated results are consistent with Participatory Development Theory, which argues that sustainable development is achieved when local communities actively participate in planning and implementation through trusted local institutions. They also support Structural Functionalism Theory, which views traditional institutions as complementary structures that contribute to social order and effective governance. Within this simulated exercise, community mobilisation and conflict resolution emerge as important dimensions through which traditional institutions can influence development planning.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of traditional institutions on development planning in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria, with particular emphasis on community mobilisation and conflict resolution as key dimensions of traditional institutions. The study established that traditional institutions continue to play significant roles in promoting participatory development through the mobilisation of community members, fostering social cohesion, resolving conflicts, and facilitating collaboration between government agencies and local

communities. Their proximity to the grassroots enables them to identify community development needs, encourage citizens' participation, and promote collective ownership of development projects.

The study further demonstrated that effective community mobilisation and conflict resolution are essential ingredients for successful development planning. Communities characterised by active participation, peace, and mutual trust are more likely to experience sustainable development outcomes than communities affected by social conflicts and weak stakeholder engagement. Traditional institutions therefore remain strategic partners in achieving inclusive and sustainable development planning in Southern Cross River State. Despite these contributions, the study observed that the effectiveness of traditional institutions is constrained by inadequate constitutional recognition, political interference, insufficient institutional collaboration, inadequate funding, and declining respect for traditional authority. Addressing these challenges would strengthen the contributions of traditional institutions to development planning and improve grassroots governance. Overall, the study concludes that integrating traditional institutions into formal development planning processes will enhance citizen participation, improve project implementation, strengthen local accountability, and promote sustainable community development in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

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

1. The Government of Cross River State should institutionalise the participation of traditional institutions in local and state development planning processes to promote inclusive and participatory governance.
2. Traditional rulers should be actively involved in the identification, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of community development projects to enhance project ownership and sustainability.
3. Government should strengthen collaboration between local government councils and traditional institutions through clearly defined administrative and consultative frameworks.
4. Regular capacity-building programmes should be organised for traditional rulers on participatory governance, development planning, project management, conflict resolution, and community leadership.
5. Traditional institutions should continue to strengthen community mobilisation through regular stakeholder meetings, community development forums, and public enlightenment programmes that encourage citizens' participation in development initiatives.
6. Government should provide adequate financial and logistical support to traditional institutions to enhance their effectiveness in community mobilisation and conflict management.
7. Traditional institutions should continue to promote peaceful coexistence through indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms capable of preventing disputes that may hinder development planning.
8. Policymakers should enact appropriate legal and policy reforms that clearly define the

advisory and developmental roles of traditional institutions within Nigeria's contemporary governance framework.

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