



Exploring the role of Igbo Traditional Rulers in Fostering Peace and Harmony within the Igbo Society and Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

There is no society without tradition; hence the role of Igbo traditional rulers in fostering peace and harmony in Igbo culture and the broader Nigerian environment cannot be undervalued. This research aims to shed light on the varied ways in which Igbo traditional rulers promote social cohesion, conflict resolution, and sustainable development and also provide valuable insights into the instrumental role of traditional leadership in promoting peace and stability. The research is geared towards observing significant instances of unrest that the Igbo society has experienced in the past and recently, to examine the factors contributing to this unrest. A qualitative research methodology was used in this study and secondary data is acquired from a range of sources. The study's findings show that to promote long-term peace and harmony in Igbo society, it is important to understand better the historical and cultural foundation of traditional leadership in Igbo society. This study is timely since it concentrates on finding a solution to a critical problem that could affect the Igbo race and economy if not dealt with as soon as possible. Therefore, traditional leadership and contemporary governance institutions must collaborate more closely to achieve future peacebuilding. This study provides suggestions in the hope that the appropriate authorities will consider it.

Keywords: Igbo traditional rulers, Igbo society, Peace and Harmony

INTRODUCTION

General background of study

The Igbo society is an important society that makes a significant contribution to the expansion and improvement of the Nigerian state. It is situated in the southern region of the nation and has a rich cultural heritage that includes a traditional form of government. The five states that make up the Igbo society are Enugu, Imo, Abia, Ebonyi, and Anambra. Traditional leadership, which is highly powerful, is present in all states and serves as their authority.

The Igbo civilization has historically experienced a wide range of violence, unrest, and crises on various fronts, including political, religious, and other fronts. This is clear despite the Igbo rulership system's well-known and admired rich cultural legacy and resources. This exhibits the 1929 Aba Women's Riots, as described by Evans (Evans, 2009).

This research attempts to investigate and address these challenges and provide workable and reliable solutions to address and restore long-lasting peace and harmony within various Igbo civilizations through the effective utilization of traditional rulership as a vital actor. The impact of Igbo traditional chiefs on tranquility and peace inside Igbo society and, consequently, in the

greater Nigerian context, must be carefully examined. This project effort has been put together, which is important, to achieve this peace in Igbo society and Nigeria generally.

Statement of the research problem:

Despite the presumptive rich cultural depository and heritage within the Igbo rulership system being accorded with high influence, regard, and respect in maintaining peace and harmony, the Igbo society has historically experienced various forms of violence, unrest, and crises, both in the past and recently, politically, religiously, and otherwise. To better understand the dynamics of peace-building in the Igbo community and the broader Nigerian context, the research thoroughly explores the role of the traditional rulers.

Aim and Objectives

The main aim and objectives are to explore the role of Igbo Traditional Rulers in Fostering Peace and Harmony within the Igbo Society and Nigeria. While the specific objectives are:

1. To study concepts and theories of the historical foundations that guide the Igbo traditional leadership structure
2. To analyze the specific roles, responsibilities, rights, and liabilities of Igbo traditional rulers in achieving peace and promoting harmony.
3. To recommend possible and viable suggestions that should help the traditional rulers maintain peace and harmony in the Igbo society and Nigeria at large.

Qualitative Research Hypothesis

This work aims to explore the following:

1. Examine the historical principles and theories of the Igbo traditional leadership structure.
2. Evaluate the unique contributions that Igbo traditional rulers have made to creating harmony and achieving peace.
3. Why Igbo traditional rulers, if given more consideration, might contribute to fostering permanent peace and harmony within Igbo society and the larger Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The majority of academics hold the belief that to be credible and pertinent, a valid disclosure must embrace a theory. So, for this study, the researcher used John Dewey's pragmatic theory.

The Pragmatic Theory of Truth's History

The history of classical American pragmatism is intertwined with the history of the pragmatic notion of truth. C.S. Peirce is credited with originally putting forth a pragmatic theory of truth, William James is credited with popularizing the pragmatic theory, and John Dewey is credited with later reframing truth in terms of warranted assertibility, according to Capps (2019). The notion that real beliefs are those that will stand up to scrutiny in the future is linked with Peirce; the notion that true beliefs are reliable and helpful is associated with James; and the notion that truth is a feature of thoroughly confirmed statements or "judgments" is related with Dewey (Burgess & Burgess, 2011, p.4)

Dewey's Pragmatic Theory of Truth

In light of his extensive publications on other subjects, John Dewey (1859–1952), the third representative of the golden age of classical American pragmatism, had surprisingly little to say about the idea of truth. Anecdotally, Dewey, (1938) only makes one reference to "truth" in his *Logic Theory of Inquiry*, and that reference is to a footnote that mentions Peirce. The audience is instructed to "Look at his warranted assertibility".

John Dewey believed that inquiry, whether scientific, technical, sociological, philosophical, or cultural, is self-corrective over time if openly submitted for testing by a community of inquirers to clarify, justify, refine, and/or refute proposed truths. He held that this belief is less widespread than William James' but much more broadly than Charles Peirce's. Dewey (1938) provided the following definition of inquiry in *The Theory of Inquiry*.

Investigation, also known as inquiry, is the controlled or guided transformation of an ambiguous situation into one that is distinct in its basic distinctions and relationships as to alter the elements of the initial situation into a coherent whole Dewey, (1938, p. 108).

The index of the same book has only one entry for "truth," which refers to the following footnote: From a logical standpoint, I think Peirce's definition of truth, which reads: 'The opinion which is fated to be ultimately accepted by all who investigate what we mean by truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real is the best one I'm aware of'.

Dewey expands on his definition of truth by using his preferred concept of warranted assertibility as the goal and outcome of research Dewey, (1938, p.14).

Exploring the role of Igbo traditional rulers in promoting peace and harmony inside and outside Igbo society in connection to the theory. It is important to remember that the Igbos' traditional seat of government is located in higher realms of truth. The scepter of authority is held in truth. In correlation looking at Dewey's account of the theory, emphasizes the connection between truth and rigorous scientific inquiry; like James, Dewey views truth as the verified result of past inquiry rather than as the anticipated result of inquiry proceeding into an indefinite future. This study imbibed exploring the role of Igbo traditional rulers in correlation to how they maintained peace within the region.

Literature Review:

Igbo traditional ruler

Rulership, the majority of researchers agree that three sources influenced the growth of Igbo kingship institutions. The first is the conventional and ancient priesthood, which in republics founded on villages sometimes combined the ecclesiastical and political duties of leaders Lorelle, (2012). Ezes were discovered in the most populous Igbo sub-group, Arochukwu, Awka, Nri-Igbo, Owere, Northern Nsukka, and Ngwa. Communities of Igbo-Eze can be found in Enugu-Ezike, Ovoko, and Iheakpu-Awka. Josiah Ndubuisi Wachuku was an Eze with royal ancestry. The King is referred to as either Eze or Ezedike, depending on lineage Falconer, (1944).

Second, by occupying specific regions of Nigeria, the neighboring Benin Empire imposed certain traditions. On the other hand, others claim that the Eze of Nri had a say in how the Benin Oba's status was determined. Divergent viewpoints are concentrated primarily on the Asaba, Onitsha, and Oguta populations. Igbo rulers of these locations can directly trace the historical roots of their investiture to the Oba of Benin, as claimed by some scholars who contest the so-called Afigbo and Omenka Thesis on Origin. They frequently go by the honorific title Obi, which is royal.

The third source of Igbo royalty is thought to be the British colonial authority in the 19th and 20th centuries. The colonial government established "warrant chiefs," choosing reputable



people to be administrators, rulers, judges, and tax collectors as part of an indirect rule policy Beverly, G. (1983). Warrant chiefs were typically chosen from among the individuals who worked best with the colonial government and were native to their areas. Igbo communities sometimes despised and occasionally outright rejected the power of warrant chiefs for this and several other reasons. The Igbo Women's War of 1929 serves as an illustration of this resistance.

October 1, 1960, several of those warrant chiefs tried to redefine their political duties to maintain their positions of power. Honorary titles with Eze-sounding names were purchased by those with political authority and newly acquired wealth. They struggled to be retained by the government of independent Nigeria's group of traditional leaders, as a woman who served as Colonial Nigeria's ruler Achebe & Marc, (2011).

Igbo society

The term "Igbo" as an ethnic identity emerged relatively recently, during the Nigerian Civil War and the decolonization process. The numerous Igbo-speaking groups have historically been divided and decentralized; according to Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, the Igbo identity should be positioned midway between a "tribe" and a "nation", The Igbo are sometimes referred to be a "stateless nation" since the fall of the Republic of Biafra in 1970 Achebe, (2000).

Peace

This is a state of harmony, peace, and tranquility. It is a place where there is no civic unrest. The phrase "state free of war" can also be used to describe it. A community is said to have gained peace when is free of all social vices. Furthermore, a community is considered to have acquired relative calm or peace when its crises are at a minimum. The absence of violence is only one aspect of peace, according to research by Christian Davenport et al., (2018, pp. 35–78). Other aspects of peace include issues with conflict resolution, justice and the law, equality and non-discrimination, political freedom and civil rights, socioeconomic opportunity, human rights, social integration, reconciliation, trust, harmonious relationships, and good standing. Therefore, the goal of this study project is to achieve this by examining the responsibilities of Igbo rulers and how they might be used to foster this long-lasting peace within the Igbo community.

Research Methodology:

Both primary and secondary data were used as the investigational method in this case. The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with a few notable chiefs who prefer to be anonymous and persons to gather primary data. Additionally, a survey was distributed using a random sample. The researcher focuses solely on Anambra State because he was unable to interview everyone involved in the case study. To represent the Igbo society, eight (8) questionnaires were distributed to each of the 21 Local Government Areas that make up Anambra State. The administration of the questionnaire involved a mix of eight (8) respondents from each Local Government Area. Additionally, the research calls for the use of percentages and tables, which will successfully break down the data gathered based on the information gathered. Journals, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, websites, published and unpublished works, magazines, and other related material are examples of secondary sources.

Data presentation and analysis

According to the research technique, this study's inquiry was conducted using both primary and secondary data. After the intended research approach was finished, a total of one hundred sixty-eight (168) respondents from each of the twenty-one Local Government Areas that make

up Anambra State were expected to answer the questionnaires. One hundred forty-seven (147) of the one hundred and sixty-eight surveys were discovered and had responses returned. Also, personal interview sessions were held with sixteen prominent persons both physically and on the phone to get their views on the capacity of the Igbo traditional rulers to foster peace and harmony.

Table 1: Showing distribution based on the gender of the respondent

S/N	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	79	53.7%
2	Female	68	46.3%
	Total	147	100%

Source: Fieldwork July 2023

The above table shows distribution according to gender in which 53.7% of the respondents were males and 46.3% were females.

Table 2: Distribution based on age of respondent

S/N	AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	19-29	33	22.45%
2	30-41	49	33.33%
3	42-53	40	27.21%
4	54 and above	25	17.01%
	total	147	100%

Source: Fieldwork July 2023

This table displays the distribution by age. It displays the various responses from various grade levels. It showed that the age group of 30-41 years contributed the most to the data collection for this study, with 33.33%, followed by the age group of 42-53 years with 27.21%. Additionally, it should be noted from this table that the 54+ age group donated the least, at 17.01%.

Table 3: Showing distribution based on the leadership/rulership position of the respondent

S/N	OCCUPATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Paramount Ruler	2	1.36%
2	Village head	23	15.65%
3	Community Chiefs	55	37.41%
4	Youth leaders	30	20.41%
5	others	37	25.17%
	TOTAL	147	100%

Source: fieldwork July 2023

The distribution of duties depending on leadership responsibilities is displayed in this table. It demonstrates that the biggest percentage of data citing (37.41%) came from the village chiefs' answer to the researchers' postulation. The table also demonstrates how all facets of Igbo society's leadership, including those charged with ruling were involved in the process and contributed to the study's result.

Table 4: Showing distribution based on the Education of respondent

S/N	OCCUPATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Paramount Ruler	2	1.36%
2	Village head	23	15.65%
3	Community Chiefs	55	37.41%
4	Youth leaders	30	20.41%
5	others	37	25.17%
	TOTAL	147	100%

Source: fieldwork July 2023

This table displays the distributions along the line of education. According to the table, the highest response rates (44.89% and 40.81%, respectively) were given by those who had completed secondary and tertiary education. This indicates that the opinions obtained from the field data should be reliable to rely on because of the degree of education at which they were obtained.

Table 5: Showing the disposition of the respondent to how the role of Igbo traditional rulers can foster peace and harmony in Igbo society

S/N	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Igbo traditional stool is a tool that can be harnessed to foster peace	80	54.42%
2	Igbo traditional stool of leadership has no connection to the unrest going on within the Igbo society	25	17.01%
3	Igbo Rulers if educated can improve their role in fostering peace	30	20.41%
4	With or without the Igbo traditional rulers, it cannot foster peace within the Igbo society.	5	3.40%
5	Others	7	4.76%
	Total	147	100%

Source: field work, July 2023

According to the chart above, it is conceivable that the Igbo traditional rulership can promote peace and harmony inside the Igbo community and throughout Nigeria in its capacity. This can be inferred from the 54.41% of respondents who filled the box that said that they believed the "Igbo traditional stool is a tool that can be harnessed to foster peace" was the highest. When the appropriate Igbo traditional ruler intervenes in any situation that causes disturbance within Igbo Society, peace and harmony are established, according to a particular chief who desired to remain unnamed who was questioned over the phone by Ebene in Aguata.

In the table, the second-highest percentage of respondents, or 20.41%, believe that Igbo Rulers can play a greater role in promoting peace if they receive education. We can also state that this is related to the idea that the Igbo community can achieve peace and harmony provided adequate respect is shown for traditional Igbo monarchs and rulers.

When asked in a one-on-one interview about how education affects traditional leaders' roles in promoting peace, Chief Mezie Mbadiwe of Ebenato still in Oguta, Anambra State, responded that some traditional leaders with educational backgrounds tend to perform better in their adjudication of duties than those without, as they may have weaknesses when it comes to relating to outsiders. The 17.01% of respondents who think there is no connection between the current disturbance in Igbo society and the traditional stool of leadership is another sign to support this claim.

When some well-known members of the Isioji community were asked to participate in an interview to determine the cause of the unrest in Igbo society, nearly all three respondents agreed that many other unidentified factors are more likely to be at play. They talked about things like inequality and poverty. The table also reveals a very small percentage of respondents -3.40 % and 4.76%—who indicated that it is impossible to promote peace inside Igbo society and among other groups, respectively, with or without the Igbo traditional rulers. This in no way undermines the significance of the role played by the Igbo traditional leaders in promoting peace and harmony.

Table 6: Showing distribution of the possible causes of unrest

S/N	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Government policies	30	20.41%
2	The traditional Rule	10	6.8%
3	The community youths	7	4.76%
4	Strangers	40	27.21%
5	Other factors	60	40.82%
	Total	147	100%

Source: field work, July 2023

From the field source mentioned above, we may infer that 40.82% of votes were cast as the root reasons for various discontent in the Igbo society, which can be attributed to a wide range of order issues. Two villagers in the Onono community, Ezianam, Anambra West, were interviewed to find out additional factors that include "other factors" as the primary reason for unrest; one of them connected it to the conflict between herders, and the other thought it was a result of the difficult economic situation that has bred resentment. The gods are unhappy with them, according to a different person interviewed in the nearby town of Onono, Umudora. In addition to other reasons, the figure shows that government policies account for 20.41% of all causes of instability in the Igbo community. It demonstrates how certain government policies, which are unpleasant to some, are a source of instability. 6.8% and 4.76% of respondents chose traditional rule as the cause of disturbance in the Igbo society, respectively, whereas 27.21 % of respondents answered that foreigners are a contributing factor.

Table 7: Showing personal interview session on the capacity of Igbo traditional rulership to foster peace and harmony within the Igbo society

S/N	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Igbo traditional rulers can foster peace within the Igbo society	10	62.5%
2	Igbo traditional rulers cannot foster peace within the Igbo society	2	12.5%
3	Others	4	25%



	Total	16	100
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Source: field work, July 2023

The above table indicates personal interviews with sixteen persons of Igbo extraction on the capacity of the Igbo traditional rulers to foster peace. The table shows that 62.5% voted the highest on the subject and that overrides the belief of 12.5% stating that the Igbo traditional rulers do not have such capacity. The table also shows others who are indifferent to the tune of 25%.

DISCUSSIONS: MAJOR FINDINGS AND VERIFICATION OF FINDINGS

Critical analysis of the data presented and analyzed above reveals that Anambra state, the region of Igbo society where the effects of unrest have been felt the most, is quite similar to most other states that make up the Igbo society in terms of traditions, culture, rulership characteristics, and activities. The promotion of peace and harmony within Igbo society and Nigeria by Igbo traditional rulers thus displays a variety of elements, primarily the items below.

- a. How the Igbo traditional stool can be used as a tool to promote harmony and peace within the Igbo society. This result supports the study's premise that investigating the function of Igbo traditional rulership can significantly promote peace and harmony within the Igbo society with the highest percentage of 54.42%.
- b. That education helps Igbo Rulers play a better leadership role, which is consistent with promoting peace. It will strengthen the function to promote peace and harmony if education is introduced as a new requirement for leadership jobs.
- c. There is no link between the upheaval taking place inside Igbo society and the traditional stool of leadership in the Igbo people. When interviewing some of the respondents and posing the question of whether the traditional stool would be somehow related to the unrest, the results were unfavorable because most people said there was no relationship between the traditional stool and the unrest, which is something that occurs in every civilization throughout the world. The majority of those surveyed agreed that when the proper individual occupies the position of traditional ruler, it promotes peace and harmony.
- d. That a variety of other elements, including outsiders like the herders, are the main causes of discontent in Igbo society. Additionally, a few undesirable government initiatives are implemented.

Conclusion

This paper aims to add to the body of knowledge on traditional leadership, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution by examining the role of Igbo traditional rulers in fostering peace and calm within the Igbo community and Nigeria generally. The results of this study will have an impact on the formulation of policies and the design of useful interventions aimed at promoting peace and stability in Nigeria. Applying at least some of the recommendations this report will provide will be crucial. Inductive reasoning was used to assess the pertinent data that was acquired. The role of traditional rulership in Igbo society in promoting peace and harmony was examined in



this study. It has been found that traditional rulers' education, one of the key factors, has a significant impact on how they contribute to fostering peace. The traditional leaders' pursuit of peace will be facilitated by their practical application of truth while performing their duties. You might recall that the pragmatic theory of truth, which is an example of the scepter of authority, served as the framework for the researcher's study.

Recommendations

The researcher is delighted to offer the following suggestions to enhance the traditional Igbo leaders' ability to promote peace and harmony within Igbo society and throughout Nigeria.

- a. A formal education requirement should be included as other traditional aspects as part of the requirements for assuming the seat of traditional rulership in the Igbo society, by the government of the Igbo society and its traditional institutions of the traditional rulership.
- b. To prevent conflict, the government should work together with the many tiers of authority within Igbo society when drafting policy.
- c. Laws that permit Igbo traditional leaders to manage indigenous securities while being held accountable to the government should be passed.
- d. A law should be passed that completely forbids any current government in the Igbo society from interfering with or having an interest in determining who becomes a traditional ruler after satisfying all requirements. Instead, the traditional forces and tenets should be allowed to direct the process. And whoever is chosen, the government is required by law to approve them and cooperate with them to further peace and harmony.
- e. To stop foreigners from causing trouble, the government and traditional leaders should form a committee to investigate what they are doing in the Igbo regions.

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