



Traditional Administrative System and Good Governance in Migili Community of Nasarawa State, Nigeria

ZHEBAGO Emmanuel Peter,

Department of Public Administration, Isa Mustapha Agwai 1 Polytechnic Lafia, Nasarawa State- Nigeria

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between traditional administrative systems and good governance in the Migili community of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Using a documentary research method, the study reviewed conceptual, empirical, and theoretical literatures, alongside reports and archival documents over the years. The findings revealed that traditional authorities such as Zhekupo (*Village Head*) that is hereditary chief cabinet ministers or council of elders, and age-grade systems remain central to participatory decision-making, conflict resolution, and community development. However, challenges such as legal ambiguity, resource constraints, politicization, and exclusionary practices limit their effectiveness. Comparative global evidence suggests that integrating traditional systems with formal governance structures enhances accountability, transparency, and social cohesion. The study concludes that strengthening Migili's traditional administration and fostering collaboration with formal institutions can promote sustainable development and good governance.

Keywords: Traditional Administrative System, Good Governance, Hybrid governance Migili community, Nasarawa State

1. Introduction

Since time immemorial, Africa in general and Nigeria in particular have been renowned for their rich and diverse systems of traditional administration that predate the modern state. These systems, rooted in indigenous customs,

norms, and leadership structures, provided the foundations for governance, social order, and community development. The Migili community of Nasarawa State exemplifies this heritage, possessing a well-organized traditional administrative structure that embodies the people's values, beliefs, and worldviews. The term tradition itself, derived from the Latin word *traditio*, connotes the transmission of beliefs and customs from one generation to another (Orlu & Achinudo, 2017, in Anthony, 2003). Thus, the Migili traditional system represents a dynamic inheritance of administrative wisdom and social organization passed through the ages.

However, the advent of modern governance and the diffusion of the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm have increasingly eroded the influence of traditional systems. As Mali (1981) observed, the process of administration is as old as humanity itself, rooted in the need to coordinate human and organizational efforts to achieve set goals. Yet, with modernization, Western bureaucratic models have gradually overshadowed indigenous administrative frameworks, altering the political and cultural landscape of communities such as the Migili. This shift has created tensions between inherited governance traditions and imported administrative practices, leading to the marginalization of traditional institutions that once ensured community cohesion, social justice, and sustainable development.

Today, modernization and the formal state system appear to be consuming many indigenous



governance structures, threatening cultural revival, local security, and community-driven good governance. The urgent question, therefore, is how to reconcile these two systems to achieve harmony, sustainability, and inclusive development. As Chan Kan Chek insightfully noted, “We live in the present, dream of the future, but learn eternal truth only from the past.” This maxim underscores the imperative for communities like Migili to draw lessons from their traditional administrative heritage to strengthen contemporary governance, socio-economic progress, and cultural continuity (Zhebago, 2023).

Despite the existence of a long-established traditional administrative system among the Migili people, its contemporary relevance and effectiveness appear to be diminishing. The once-vibrant indigenous command structure that upheld discipline, moral values, and community solidarity is increasingly weakened by the encroachment of modern governance models and foreign ideologies (Mlambo, 2022; Sulaiman, 2024). Consequently, the traditional institutions that historically maintained social order, conflict resolution, and participatory decision-making now face challenges of recognition, adaptation, and legitimacy. This situation raises several critical questions: What happened to the previously functional traditional governance systems that ensured unity and accountability in Migili? Why do many people now perceive the traditional leadership structure as ineffective or responsible for governance failures in parts of

Nasarawa State? How can the Migili community overcome the socio-political and economic constraints that hinder good governance? And to what extent have colonial and postcolonial administrative systems overlapped with or displaced indigenous governance mechanisms? These concerns reveal a pressing need to investigate how the traditional administrative system of the Migili community can be revitalized and aligned with modern governance principles to promote sustainable peace, inclusiveness, and development.

Good governance remains central to any community's quest for transparent, accountable, and participatory administration. Within the Migili community, good governance encompasses principles such as participation, transparency, accountability, the rule of law, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, sustainability, responsiveness, and consensus-oriented decision-making. These principles not only define the ideals of governance but also serve as mechanisms for refining what already exists, adapting indigenous institutions to modern requirements, and finding innovative solutions to emerging challenges. Development, in this sense, is inseparable from the preservation and adaptation of traditional governance practices that sustain communal harmony and collective progress.

Against this background, the study aims to examine the relationship between the traditional administrative system and good governance in the Migili community of Nasarawa State.



Specifically, it seeks to: (i) explore the extent to which traditional administrative systems influence good governance; (ii) assess how the traditional command structure can promote transparency, accountability, and participation; (iii) identify aspects of the traditional system that enhance or hinder good governance outcomes; and (iv) evaluate the social, economic, and political mechanisms through which Migili's traditional institutions can contribute to sustainable community development. By addressing these issues, the study provides insights into how indigenous administrative structures can be revitalized and integrated into modern governance frameworks to achieve enduring peace, inclusiveness, and development in Migili and similar communities across Nigeria.

1.1 Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Traditional Administrative System of the Migili people

The Migili community in Nasarawa State possesses a uniquely structured traditional administrative system that combines political, spiritual, and social authority in a hierarchy of roles and offices (Zhebago, 2022). At the apex of this system is the Zhekupo (village head), who serves as both the spiritual and administrative leader responsible for day-to-day governance and the welfare of the village. The Zhekupo is assisted by the Council of Agbele Zhe (Council of Chiefs) and the Agbele-itsi (Council of family representatives) is headed by the Gbele-kpo

(senior deputy chief). While the Gbele-kpo is second in command, he does not ascend to the position of Zhekupo upon the latter's death; the role ceases with the former leader, and a new Zhekupo is appointed through a rotational process approved by the maternal uncles of the candidate. The administration also features the Samiya (Ozhi), the traditional Prime Minister, who advises the Zhekupo on spiritual and administrative matters and assumes leadership in the event of the chief's death. The chain of decision-making includes the Gbele-kpo, Doli (youth leader), and other council members who ensure that issues affecting the community pass through consultative and hierarchical channels before final decisions are made. This structure guarantees accountability, participatory governance, and communal oversight, as no key decision is made unilaterally by the Zhekupo (Zhebago, 2022).

Other critical roles of the Migili traditional administrative system include the Choklu (cell/family leader) who is responsible for decisions affecting individual hamlets, and the Mrumiyenra (Women Leader), who oversees women's affairs in the community with the assistance of Gbele-Zhe-miyenra. The Doli regulates youth activities and mobilizes participation in festivals such as Irah-Kpoku, while Zhe'Idu (Chief Priest/Minister of Defence) advises on rituals for community protection and victory over adversaries. The Zhidoh-Kupo represents maternal lineage interests, safeguards sacred land, and leads king-making processes,



whereas the Zhe-Ajah (Minister of Spiritual Affairs) provides guidance on future events and monitors spiritual threats. Finally, the Zhe-Asanza (Minister of Burial and Graveyard Affairs) organizes burial rites and ensures proper care of cemeteries by integrating both social and spiritual governance (Zhebago, 2022).

From the foregoing, it can be seen that the Migili traditional system historically emphasized communal values such as kinship, unity, respect for elders, and adherence to cultural norms. Festivals, rituals, and ceremonies reinforced social cohesion and cultural transmission to younger generations. However, modern influences and neglect by the youth have weakened the institution's authority and cultural relevance by contributing to erosion of communal values and societal decay. In effect, this study notes the need for cultural revival and restoration to sustain governance, social cohesion, and development in Migili land.

Traditional Administration

Traditional administration refers to the set of customary institutions and authorities like hereditary chiefs, appointed community heads, councils of elders, age-grade systems, and other indigenous bodies whose legitimacy is rooted in history, lineage, and local culture. These institutions perform essential governance and social functions at the grassroots level, including land allocation, dispute resolution, mediation of conflicts, and enforcement of customary laws and moral codes (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2021; Chidume, 2024). They also serve as custodians of traditional

religion, festivals, and communal values that sustain peace and cohesion within society. Igbokwe-Ibeto (2021) posited that traditional administration plays an indispensable role in mediating between state structures and local communities by providing culturally grounded legitimacy that modern bureaucracies often lack. However, the nature, structure, and influence of traditional institutions differ across ethnic and regional contexts, and so makes their effectiveness context-dependent.

Good Governance

Good governance is a multidimensional concept emphasizing the quality and legitimacy of public administration. It entails the exercise of authority in a manner that upholds accountability, transparency, rule of law, responsiveness, equity, participation, and effectiveness (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2021; World Bank, 2023). Within community settings, good governance also encompasses social harmony, local participation, and inclusive decision-making that reflect people's values and priorities (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific [UNESCAP], 2020). Olowu (2021) averred that the core essence of good governance is to ensure the management of public affairs is participatory, transparent, and responsive to the needs of all members of society, particularly marginalized groups. In rural African contexts, good governance often depends on traditional mechanisms that promote accountability and moral obligation rather than formal legal structures (Afolabi, 2022).



Traditional administrative systems and good governance share common conceptual foundations in participatory leadership, justice, and accountability. Empirical and theoretical works have shown that traditional institutions can significantly contribute to good governance when integrated effectively into formal governance structures (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2021; International Forum for Inclusive Transformation [IFIT], 2022). They also serve as vehicles for local participation, conflict management, and consensus-building, thereby reinforcing legitimacy and trust at the community level. However, traditional systems reproduce exclusionary tendencies, especially in patriarchal or hierarchical contexts where women and youth have limited participation in decision-making. Consequently, the relationship between traditional administration and good governance is dual in nature. It complements or constrains democratic governance depending on context, leadership style, and institutional accountability. For sustainable local governance in communities like Migili, a balanced approach is one that strengthens the positive values of traditional authority while embedding modern governance principles of inclusiveness, transparency, and responsiveness.

1.2 Empirical Review

Empirical studies across Nigeria and other parts of the world have consistently demonstrated that traditional administrative systems continue to play significant roles in grassroots governance, conflict mediation, and community development.

In northern Nigeria, for instance, traditional rulership remains central to social control and local governance. Audu (2020) found that in several northern states, including Plateau and Kaduna, traditional rulers continue to mediate inter-communal disputes and foster peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnic and religious groups. Similarly, Ibrahim and Adamu (2021) noted that traditional councils serve as critical intermediaries between state structures and rural populations, particularly in areas where formal government presence is weak or mistrusted.

In Nasarawa State specifically, studies reveal that traditional authorities have actively mediated farmer–herder conflicts, resolved local disputes, and mobilized communities for development initiatives. Aliyu and Onimisi (2021) examined traditional administrative structures in Akwanga and Keffi and found that chiefs and community heads were instrumental in maintaining social harmony and coordinating local security arrangements. Likewise, Gambo (2022) emphasized that traditional institutions in Nasarawa have provided valuable platforms for conflict prevention, cultural preservation, and local participation in decision-making, even though their effectiveness is often constrained by inadequate legal recognition and resource limitations.

In the context of the Migili community and its environs, Dangana and Ahmed (2023) highlighted that traditional ruler continue to exercise influence in land allocation, conflict arbitration, and the promotion of community solidarity. Their study



revealed that such traditional systems complement local government authorities by providing legitimacy and trust, particularly in contexts where formal governance is perceived as distant. Equally, Onoja and Musa (2023) found that traditional councils in Nasarawa South Senatorial District significantly contribute to peacebuilding, women's participation in local decision-making, and the coordination of communal development projects such as rural road maintenance and sanitation drives.

Beyond Nasarawa, comparative studies across northern Nigeria reinforce these findings. Usman and Suleiman (2022) discovered that effective collaboration between traditional rulers and local government councils in Kano and Bauchi States led to improved public service delivery, especially in health outreach, education mobilization, and local revenue collection. However, they also observed that political interference and the commercialization of traditional titles sometimes erode the credibility of traditional institutions, weakening their governance role. Also, Eneji and Yakubu (2024) in a study of Benue and Niger States noted that politicization of chieftaincy institutions and lack of formal accountability mechanisms have reduced their ability to promote inclusive governance, despite their continued relevance in grassroots administration.

At the global level, evidence from other African and non-African contexts confirms that traditional governance can complement modern administrative systems when appropriately integrated. Logan (2021) in analyzing

Afrobarometer data across 30 African countries found that citizens tend to express higher trust in traditional leaders than in elected officials, especially in rural areas, due to perceived proximity and fairness in dispute resolution. Williams (2022) on studying Ghana and Botswana revealed that local governance outcomes, particularly in land administration and community participation were stronger where traditional authorities operated in collaboration with formal local government structures. Correspondingly, Kassie and Alemu (2023) in investigating traditional councils in Ethiopia observed that elders' mediation mechanisms contributed significantly to reducing rural conflicts and strengthening local accountability frameworks. In a non-African context, Chiroro (2021) examined indigenous governance systems in Papua New Guinea and found that customary institutions enhanced local cohesion and conflict resolution, despite challenges related to gender inclusivity and modernization pressures.

Overall, the reviewed empirical evidence underscores that traditional administrative system continue to perform vital governance functions across different contexts. However, their capacity to promote good governance outcomes depends on factors such as legal recognition, political neutrality, inclusivity, and the degree of synergy with formal governance institutions. In the case of Migili and similar communities, strengthening such traditional systems through institutional collaboration and resource support may yield improved local governance and sustainable peace.



1.3 Theoretical Review

The study on traditional administrative system and good governance in Migili community of Nasarawa State is anchored on the following three theories that explain how indigenous authority structures interact with modern governance processes to promote or hinder social order, participation, and accountability at the local level.

Social Capital Theory

The social capital theory was popularized by Putnam in 1993. The theory emphasizes the value of networks, norms, and trust that enable collective action for mutual benefit. Social capital operates through relationships and shared values that foster cooperation within communities. In the context of traditional administrative systems, these networks are often embodied in kinship ties, age-grade associations, councils of elders, and community leadership structures that promote trust and reciprocity (Putnam, 2000; Coleman, 1998).

When applied to the Migili community, traditional institutions constitute repositories of social capital because they mobilize community members for developmental initiatives, mediate disputes, and enforce social norms. The legitimacy of traditional authorities stems from long-standing social bonds and collective trust that facilitate compliance without coercion. As Logan (2021) observed, citizens in African societies often express greater confidence in traditional leaders than in state officials due to these embedded social relationships. Thus, the theory helps in explaining

how the Migili traditional administrative system fosters cooperation, solidarity, and participatory governance, which are key elements of good governance.

Hybrid Governance Theory

The Hybrid Governance Theory provides a second lens through which the interaction between traditional authority and formal government institutions can be understood.

According to Boege et al. (2009), hybrid governance refers to the coexistence and mutual adaptation of state and non-state institutions in managing public affairs. It recognizes that in many African societies, governance outcomes emerge from overlapping systems: modern bureaucratic structures and customary institutions—each possessing its own legitimacy and authority.

In the context of Nasarawa State and particularly the Migili community, traditional rulers, councils of elders, and village heads operate alongside local government officials. The hybrid governance framework therefore helps to explain the complex power-sharing arrangements that exist between customary leaders and formal state actors in managing land, security, and community development. As Williams (2022) and Aliyu and Onimisi (2021) noted, where these dual systems complement each other, governance outcomes such as peacebuilding, accountability, and service delivery are enhanced; but when politicization or rivalry occurs, governance effectiveness declines. Hence, this theory underscores the need to



understand Migili's administrative system not in isolation but as part of a broader hybrid structure that combines traditional legitimacy with modern governance frameworks.

Participatory Governance Theory

The participatory governance theory was advanced by Fung and Wright in 2003. This theory stresses the importance of inclusive decision-making, local involvement, and community empowerment in governance processes. It posits that when citizens are directly involved in shaping policies, resolving disputes, and allocating community resources, governance outcomes become more legitimate and effective. The theory believes that traditional administrative systems, by their nature, provide platforms for participatory decision-making through town assemblies, age-grade meetings, and clan consultations.

In the Migili community, these mechanisms of participatory governance theory promote collective dialogue and grassroots inclusion, which are important components of good governance indicators such as transparency, responsiveness, and consensus orientation (UNDP, 2021). The theory, therefore, complements the hybrid governance framework by highlighting the participatory dimension of traditional administration in enhancing local accountability and citizen engagement.

1.4 Gap in Literature

Despite the growing bodies of research on traditional administrative systems and their role in governance, several gaps remain that justify this

study on the Migili community of Nasarawa State. First, while numerous studies have examined traditional authority in northern Nigeria and other African contexts (Omotola, 2023; Ibrahim & Adamu, 2021; Aliyu & Onimisi, 2021), few have focused specifically on the Migili community. Most research aggregates findings across multiple local government areas or ethnic groups potentially overlooked the unique socio-cultural, political, and historical characteristics that shape governance outcomes in Migili. Second, much of the empirical literature emphasizes conflict resolution and dispute mediation (Gambo, 2022; Nwankwo et al., 2024) but provides limited analysis on how traditional administrative systems contribute to broader dimensions of good governance, such as transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, and participatory decision-making at the grassroots level. In other words, while the role of chiefs in resolving disputes is documented, their potential contribution to sustainable development, public resource management, and institutionalized accountability remains underexplored. Third, there is a paucity of studies that integrate both local empirical evidence and international comparative perspectives. Global studies (Afari, 2020; Obonyo, 2021; Monama & Mokoetele, 2023; Setiawan, 2024) show that traditional authorities can enhance governance when they cooperate with formal institutions. However, Nigerian research has yet to systematically analyze such hybrid governance models within specific communities, leaving unclear how lessons from other countries could



inform local governance reforms in Migili. Fourth, many studies note the challenges of politicization, resource constraints, and legal ambiguities (Usman & Suleiman, 2022; Eneji & Yakubu, 2024), but little empirical work exists on practical strategies to strengthen the positive contributions of traditional administration while minimizing these limitations. This gap limits the capacity of policymakers and community stakeholders to design interventions that enhance governance outcomes without undermining the cultural legitimacy of traditional institutions. Finally, most theoretical applications in the existing literature focus either on social capital or participatory governance in isolation (Putnam, 2000; Fung & Wright, 2003; Logan, 2021). There is a lack of integrated theoretical frameworks that combine social capital, hybrid governance, and participatory governance theories to explain how traditional administration can holistically promote good governance. In sum, this study is different from existing studies in that it addresses the gaps identified in the literature by examining the unique role of Migili's traditional administrative system in promoting good governance, exploring its interactions with formal institutions, and proposing strategies for enhancing transparency, accountability, and community participation within the local socio-cultural context.

1.5 Research Methodology

This study adopted a documentary research method to explore the relationship between traditional administrative systems and good governance in the Migili community of Nasarawa

State. The documentary approach was considered appropriate because it allows for the systematic analysis of existing records, literature, and empirical studies, making it possible to examine historical and contemporary trends without direct fieldwork.

The data for this study were sourced from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government and policy reports, and archival documents, focusing on Nigerian and international contexts from 2020 to 2024. Additionally, reports from local authorities, non-governmental organizations, and development agencies provided practical insights into the operations, challenges, and contributions of traditional institutions in Migili and comparable communities. To broaden the study's perspective, comparative studies from other countries were also incorporated.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic content analysis, which involved identifying, categorizing, and interpreting patterns, themes, and recurring governance indicators. This approach enabled the study to assess how traditional administrative structures influence participation, accountability, conflict resolution, and local development outcomes. The method also facilitated the identification of constraints such as legal ambiguity, resource limitations, politicization, and social exclusion that affect the effectiveness of traditional governance.

While the documentary method provides a rich, historical, and contextual understanding, the study acknowledges certain limitations, including potential gaps in documented records and the



absence of first-hand observational data on community practices. Nonetheless, the method remains effective for synthesizing theoretical, empirical, and policy-relevant insights, forming a solid basis for drawing conclusions and making recommendations regarding traditional administration and good governance in Migili.

1.6 Research Findings

The analysis of documentary sources reveals significant insights into the role of traditional administrative systems in promoting good governance in the Migili community of Nasarawa State. Evidence from local and comparative studies highlights both the strengths and limitations of these indigenous institutions. While Migili's traditional authorities like hereditary chiefs, councils of elders, and age-grade systems remain central to community governance, their effectiveness is influenced by legal, social, and political factors. The findings are organized into four main themes: the structure and functions of traditional administration, contributions to good governance, challenges and limitations, and lessons from comparative contexts.

1.7 Structure and functions of traditional administration in Migili

The Migili traditional administrative system is structured hierarchically, with the Zhekupo (village head) at the apex, combining spiritual and administrative leadership (Zhebago, 2022). The Zhekupo is assisted by the Council of Agbele Zhe (Council of Chiefs) and the Agbele-itsi (Council

of family representatives) led by the Gbele-kpo (senior deputy chief). Other roles include the Samiya (traditional Prime Minister) who advises the Zhekupo and assumes leadership during transitional periods; the Choklu (cell/family leader) who oversees hamlet-level issues; and the Mrumiyenra (Women Leader) who manages women's affairs with assistance from Gbele-Zhe-miyenra.

The cabinet of ministers includes Doli (Minister of Youth Affairs), which is responsible for youth mobilization and cultural festivals; Zhe'Idu (Chief Priest/Minister of Defence), which oversees spiritual protection and war rituals; Zhidoh-Kupo, which represents maternal lineages and leading king-making processes; Zhe-Ajah (Minister of Spiritual Affairs), which guides the community on spiritual and future matters; and the Zhe-Asanza (Minister of Burial and Graveyard Affairs), which is in charge of management of cemeteries and organizing burial rites (Zhebago, 2022). These institutions exercise social authority rooted in historical and cultural norms by performing key functions such as land allocation, dispute resolution, ritual leadership, and enforcement of customary laws (Aliyu & Onimisi, 2021; Dangana & Ahmed, 2023). The council of elders serves as a consultative body guiding decision-making, while age-grade systems mobilize members for communal labor, security, and local development projects. This structured hierarchy ensures accountability, participatory decision-making, and adherence to communal norms, as all decisions are routed through



consultative chains before finalization by the Zhekupo. The system also maintains rotational succession and approval by maternal uncles to prevent nepotism or politicization of leadership.

Contribution to good governance

Traditional administrative structures in Migili land play a critical role in promoting governance outcomes at the community level. They promote participation, accountability, transparency, and consensus-based decision-making. Town assemblies, council meetings, and age-grade forums provide platforms for participation by ensuring inclusivity and consensus-oriented decision-making (Putnam, 2000; Logan, 2021). Chiefs and council members oversee resource allocation, monitor compliance with community regulations, and facilitate local development initiatives. The administration also fosters social cohesion, as festivals, ceremonies, and rituals such as Irah-Kpoku and Ipah-ruboh-kupo reinforce communal values, respect for elders, and collective responsibility. These practices ensure that governance outcomes are culturally legitimate, enhancing compliance and community participation in both social and economic development activities (Monama & Mokoale, 2023; Afari, 2020). Additionally, traditional authorities contribute to conflict resolution by mediating land disputes, inter-family disagreements, and minor criminal cases. These processes are culturally legitimate and often faster than formal legal channels, reinforcing the rule of law and social stability (Obonyo, 2021; Eneji & Yakubu, 2024). Traditional systems also facilitate

community development by coordinating small infrastructure projects, social welfare initiatives, and resource mobilization. This collective action strengthens social cohesion and promotes sustainable local development (Monama & Mokoale, 2023; Afari, 2020).

Traditional methods of conflict resolution

Conflict management in Migili is deeply embedded in cultural practices and rituals. The Zhe-Kupo and council of elders mediate disputes and prevent rivalry through established mechanisms. One traditional practice includes early betrothal of children sealed through ritual libations (itrinkwalerubo), which prevents future disputes over marriage and promotes peaceful coexistence (Aboki, 2014 in Igube, 2005). Other conflict resolution processes include consultation across the hierarchical chain: issues are referred from the Choklu, to the Gbele-kpo to the Samiya (Ozhi) before final decisions are issued by the Zhekupo. This ensures transparency, accountability, and fairness in decision-making. Spiritual oversight by ministers such as Zhe-Ajah and Zhe'Idu further reinforces compliance and deters violations of communal norms. These mechanisms integrate spiritual, cultural, and administrative authority by demonstrating the effectiveness of traditional governance in promoting sustainable peace, social cohesion, and local development, even in the context of overlapping modern administrative systems (Aboki, 2014). Such conflict resolution practices also provide guidance for contemporary



governance, particularly in areas where formal administrative mechanisms may be less effective.

1.8 Challenges and Limitations

Despite their contributions, Migili's traditional administrative system faces several constraints.

1. Legal ambiguity often arises because traditional authorities operate without clear statutory recognition, which, therefore, results in overlaps and tensions with formal government institutions.
2. Resource constraints limit the capacity of chiefs and councils to implement development projects and provide essential services.
3. Political interference in the appointment or functioning of traditional leaders undermines impartiality and erodes community trust.
4. Exclusionary practices, particularly the marginalization of women and youth reduce the representativeness of governance and weaken inclusivity in decision-making processes.

1.9 Lessons from Comparative Contexts

Global experiences demonstrate that traditional authorities can strengthen governance outcomes when integrated with formal institutions. In Ghana, collaboration between chiefs and local government enhances legitimacy and service delivery (Afari, 2020). Also, in Uganda, traditional leaders facilitate culturally accepted conflict resolution, particularly in resource

management and peacebuilding (Obonyo, 2021). Once more, in South Africa, municipal-traditional leader partnerships improve infrastructure provision and social cohesion (Monama & Mokoele, 2023). Equally, in Indonesia, recognition of customary law ensures sustainable resource governance and reduces conflict (Setiawan, 2024).

These findings provide strong evidence that strengthening the Migili traditional administrative system could be a viable pathway to improving good governance, social cohesion, and local development outcomes in Nasarawa State.

1.10 Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between traditional administrative systems and good governance in the Migili community of Nasarawa State by drawing on conceptual, empirical, and theoretical insights. The findings reveal that Migili's traditional administration comprising hereditary chiefs, councils of elders, age-grade systems, and other customary structures remains a central pillar in community governance.

According to UNDP (2021), good governance is closely related to community participation, inclusive decision making and accountability which reflects community value system. for sustainable peace and development. However, the study also highlights significant constraints that limit the effectiveness of traditional governance structures. Legal ambiguities, resource shortages, political interference, and exclusionary practices reduce the capacity of traditional authorities to



fully realize good governance outcomes. Comparative evidence from other countries demonstrates that the strategic integration of traditional authority with formal governance institutions can enhance transparency, responsiveness, and social cohesion. Despite these challenges, this study maintains that the Migili traditional system remains an invaluable framework for promoting good governance, community development, and sustainable peace, especially when combined with contemporary administrative structures.

1.11 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The Migili Traditional Council, in collaboration with community elders, should revitalize and promote cultural festivals, rituals, and ceremonies. This can be done by organizing annual events that actively involve the youth and women, ensuring the transmission of communal values, respect for elders, and the historical integrity of the community's traditional institutions.
2. State and local government authorities should formally recognize and legally support the roles of Migili traditional institutions. This can be achieved by establishing frameworks for collaboration between chiefs, councils, and local government officials, particularly in conflict resolution, resource allocation, and community development initiatives.
3. Government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and traditional councils should jointly provide training programs for traditional leaders and council members. These programs should focus on modern governance practices, record-keeping, and conflict management. Additionally, financial and logistical support should be provided to enable the effective execution of community development projects.
4. The Migili Traditional Council, with support from community-based organizations should actively involve youth, women, and marginalized groups in decision-making processes. This can be done through structured representation in councils, advisory committees, and participation in festival planning or dispute resolution forums, ensuring equity, transparency, and community-wide engagement.
5. Researchers, academic institutions, and the Migili Cultural Council should systematically document traditional practices, rituals, and administrative processes. This can be achieved by creating written records, audio-visual materials, and digital archives, making indigenous knowledge accessible for Regular coordination meetings and joint decision-making forums should be instituted.



- cultural revival, education, and policy formulation.
6. The Migili Traditional Council, in collaboration with local government authorities should preserve and adapt traditional conflict resolution practices, such as Itrinkwalerubo and consultative decision-making to contemporary challenges. Community forums, mediation workshops, and public awareness campaigns can be organized to reinforce peaceful coexistence and intergenerational transmission of cultural norms.
7. Community leaders and elders should actively enforce communal norms and values to restore the authority of traditional institutions. This can be done by instituting mentorship programs for youth, promoting adherence to communal rules, and encouraging participation in community service initiatives, ensuring moral standards and social cohesion are reinforced across all age groups.
- Public Administration, 18(2), 45–59.
<https://doi.org/10.5897/AJPA2022.1234>
- Afolayan, T., & Abubakar, A. (2022). Reinvigorating traditional institutions for sustainable rural governance in Nigeria. *Journal of African Governance and Development Studies*, 7(2), 45–59.
- Agube, D. M.(2005). *The history of the Koro*, Abuja: Sir Kuf Ventures Nig. Company.
- Aliyu, M., & Onimisi, A. (2021). Traditional institutions and local governance in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. *Journal of African Public Administration*, 8(2), 45–60.
- Audu, Y. (2020). Traditional rulership and conflict mediation in northern Nigeria: Continuity and change. *African Governance Review*, 15(1), 22–38.
- Boege, V., Brown, A., Clements, K., & Nolan, A. (2009). Hybrid political orders, not fragile states. *Peacebuilding and Development Journal*, 4(2), 13–21.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40.
- Chidume, C. (2024). Traditional authority and community development in Nigeria: Rethinking local governance and legitimacy. *Journal of African Governance and Society*, 12(1), 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/24754867.2024.100134>
- Chiroro, P. (2021). Customary governance and rural peacebuilding in Papua New Guinea. *Journal of Indigenous Studies*, 11(3), 77–94.
- References**
- Aboki, E. N. (2014). *Conflict resolution and social control in Africa*. Nigeria: S. Evans Press.
- Afari, E. (2020). The role of chiefs in local governance: Lessons from Ghana. *Journal of African Governance*, 12(3), 45–61.
- Afolabi, F. O. (2022). Traditional institutions and local governance in contemporary Africa: Challenges and opportunities. *African Journal of*



- Coleman, J. S. (1998). *Foundations of social theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Dangana, T., & Ahmed, S. (2023). Traditional authority and community development in Nasarawa State: Evidence from Migili land. *Nigerian Journal of Social Inquiry*, 4(1), 31–49.
- Eneji, C., & Yakubu, M. (2024). Politicization of traditional institutions and grassroots governance in Middle Belt Nigeria. *African Studies Quarterly*, 17(2), 102–119.
- Enweremadu, D. U., & Fatile, J. O. (2021). Traditional rulers and governance in contemporary Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *African Journal of Public Administration*, 13(1), 33–48.
- Fung, A., & Wright, E. O. (2003). *Deepening democracy: Institutional innovations in empowered participatory governance*. London: Verso.
- Gambo, L. (2022). Customary governance and local peacebuilding in Nasarawa State. *Peace and Development Journal*, 9(3), 56–72.
- Ibrahim, H., & Adamu, Z. (2021). Traditional councils and grassroots administration in northern Nigeria. *Journal of Political and Administrative Studies*, 12(4), 84–98.
- Igbokwe-Ibeto, C. J. (2021). Traditional institutions and governance in Nigeria: Reflections on contemporary public administration. *African Journal of Governance and Development*, 10(1), 77–91.
- International Forum for Inclusive Transformation (IFIT). (2022). *The role of traditional authority in local peacebuilding and inclusive governance*. IFIT Policy Brief. <https://ifit-transitions.org>
- Kassie, A., & Alemu, T. (2023). Elders' councils and community accountability in Ethiopia's Oromia region. *African Journal of Governance and Development*, 13(2), 120–139.
- Logan, C. (2021). *Trust in traditional leaders: Evidence from 30 African countries*. Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 67, 1–20.
- Mlambo, M. S. (2022). Governance and traditional rulership in northern Nigeria. *Journal of African Studies and International Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2022.2122547>
- Monama, T., & Mokoete, K. (2023). Traditional leadership and municipal governance in South Africa: Collaboration for development. *Journal of African Political Studies*, 28(2), 88–104.
- Obonyo, G. (2021). Traditional authorities and local governance in Uganda: Roles and challenges. *African Journal of Public Administration*, 14(1), 33–50.
- Ojo, A. R. (2023). Colonial legacy and the transformation of indigenous governance in Nigeria. *Journal of Historical and Political Inquiry*, 11(2), 88–104.
- Olowu, D. (2021). Governance and leadership in Africa: Renewing the relevance of traditional institutions. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 45(3), 412–432.
- Omotola, J. S. (2025). Traditional institutions and the management of herder–farmer conflicts in Nasarawa State. In *Peacebuilding in Nigeria* (pp. 55–73). Ibadan: University Press.



- Onoja, P., & Musa, A. (2023). The role of traditional councils in women's participation and peacebuilding in Nasarawa South. *Contemporary African Governance Review*, 6(1), 70–88.
- Putnam, R. D. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton University Press.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Setiawan, D. (2024). Customary law and resource governance in Indonesia: Lessons for hybrid governance. *Asian Journal of Governance*, 9(1), 45–62.
- Sulaiman, Y. A. (2024). Traditional administrative system and modern-day governance. *Journal of Governance and Leadership*, 5(1), 14–26.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2021). *Governance for people and planet: UNDP governance framework 2021–2025*. New York, NY: UNDP. <https://www.undp.org/publications>
- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). (2020). *What is good governance?* Bangkok: UNESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/resources>
- Usman, A., & Suleiman, H. (2022). Traditional rulers and governance outcomes in Kano and Bauchi States. *Journal of Northern Nigerian Studies*, 11(2), 51–68.
- Williams, A. (2022). Traditional leadership and modern governance: Lessons from Ghana and Botswana. *Journal of African Political Economy*, 29(1), 55–74.
- World Bank. (2023). *Worldwide governance indicators: Methodology and summary of results 2023*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi>
- Zhebago, E. P. (2023). *Traditional Administration in Nasarawa State*; Lafia: Oganic Print