



**Research Paper**

**Traditional Institution And Challenges of Insecurity In Ogoni Land: A Study Of Gokana Local Government Area, Rivers State, 2011-2022**

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**ABSTRACT:**

*This study examines the role of traditional institutions in addressing the challenges of insecurity in Ogoni Land, with a focus on Gokana Local Government Area. Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study draws on primary and secondary data sources. The research is grounded in the Realist and Frustration-Aggression theories, which help explain the dynamics of conflict and insecurity. The primary objectives of the study are to: (1) explore how the General Assembly of Villages uses dialogue to address security challenges, (2) assess the role of Chieftaincy Institutions in using mediation to resolve conflicts, (3) investigate the extent to which the Council of Elders employs meetings as a strategy for conflict resolution, and (4) examine how chief priests utilize oath-taking in deities and shrines to resolve security issues in Gokana from 2011 to 2022. Based on the findings, the study recommends providing opportunities for personal and professional development for members of traditional institutions, with a focus on leadership training, human rights education, and conflict management. Such training is expected to improve their conflict resolution skills, build respect and confidence, and enhance their effectiveness in community governance. The study further suggests encouraging traditional institution members to develop the capacity to serve in the judicial arm of government and embrace their roles as community leaders and justice advocates.*

**Keywords: Traditional Institution, Insecurity, Challenges, Ogoni Land**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The security and wellbeing of the populace are expressly provided for in the Nigerian constitution. The Nigerian Constitution of 1999 explicitly specifies in Section 14 (2) (b) that "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of the government." This is due to the fact that Nigeria has a long history of insecurity issues. In Nigeria, there are many distinct types of insecurity, including armed robberies, kidnappings, the resurgence of Boko Haram, banditry by herdsmen, and others (Edukugho, 2012). The population are quickly realising that the government cannot adequately ensure the security of people's lives and property (Adegbami, 2013). The police, state security agencies, the military, immigration, and prison service, which are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring the security of life and property, have not carried out their tasks to the best of their abilities. According to Agomuo (2013), several gangs have held Nigeria to ransom at various points in the country, and the country's security authorities were powerless to deal with them or put an end to their unlawful

behaviour. The government must incorporate traditional rulers if the community is to be involved because security is everyone's concern (Okonkwo, Onuigbo, Eme, & Ekekwe, 2019).

There is little doubt that the Nigerian people had their own form of administration prior to the arrival of British colonial power in that country. The people were headed by the traditional rulers, which included chiefs, kings, and those in charge of traditional societies. They each had its own system for enforcing punishment, administering justice, and making decisions. In the post-colonial Nigeria, the traditional leaders once played a significant constitutional role. The Council of Chiefs was established for them under the 1960 and 1963 constitutions, and some of the traditional leaders even advanced to the position of regional governor.

Traditional leaders were represented in the National Council of State under the Constitution of 1979. However, the 1999 Constitution as revised virtually eliminated the position of traditional rulers, a sign of the traditional institutions' waning influence. Traditional leaders still enjoy great respect in many villages and states despite the fact that they do not hold official political positions. They also exert a sizable amount of economic and political influence throughout the nation. Traditional leaders have always been consulted and employed to resolve crises as they develop.

Furthermore, succeeding governments understood that working with traditional leaders was the best method to influence the public's opinions on pressing concerns of the day (Agu, 2018). From the foregoing, the researcher has concluded that it is impossible to overstate how much safer the nation is now than it was when the old rulers were recognised by the constitution. The Niger Delta region experienced decades of societal unrest as a result of traditional institutions of governance that had previously held more sway in the pre-militancy era suddenly losing out. Traditional institutions of governance that were meant to work with the Nigerian government and oil companies to avoid, manage, and resolve conflicts ended up becoming victims of the conflicts themselves. Many families were forced to flee their homes due to conflict in the Ogoni territory's Niger-Delta region, and they now reside in temporary dwellings with limited access to modern activities. People's troubles are exacerbated by their frequent movement, which makes peace impossible. As long as there is a disagreement, progress slows since attention is directed towards finding a solution. This study aims to examine the difficulties of insecurity in Ogoni land and traditional institutions in the Gokana Local Government Area.

## **II. Statement of the Problem**

Effective conflict resolution is essential for the smooth functioning of any society, and rural communities in Nigeria are particularly vulnerable to conflicts that hinder development. In these areas, internal disputes often disrupt community development efforts, contributing to stagnation, poverty, and underdevelopment. Despite the growing presence of mobile police and military forces in Nigeria, insecurity and violence continue to escalate, particularly in regions like Ogoni, Rivers State. Issues such as cult clashes, chieftaincy disputes, land conflicts, communal violence, and tensions between local communities and multinational corporations have become pervasive. In Ogoni, concerns about safety and survival have intensified, yet government efforts, including arrests and legal actions, have failed to resolve the crisis. This study seeks to address the effectiveness of traditional leadership institutions in conflict resolution and their role in restoring peace and security in Ogoni Land.

## **III. Aim and Objectives of the study**

The aim of the study is to examine traditional institutions and challenges of insecurity in Ogoni Land. A study of Gokana local Government Local Area, Rivers State 2022-2022.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine how the general assembly of villages use dialogue in solving security challenges in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State 2022-2022;
2. Ascertain how the chieftaincy institutions use mediation to tackle security challenges in Gokana Local Government Area, Rivers State 2022-2022;
3. Investigate the extent council of elders use meeting strategy on conflict resolution in Gokana Local Government Area, Rivers State 2022-2022; and,

4. Find-out how chief priests use oath taking in deities/shrines in resolving security challenges in Gokana Local Government Area 2011-2022.

#### IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

##### Theoretical framework

##### Realist theory

The highlight of the realist theory is that it traces the root of conflict to a flaw in the human nature which is seen as the selfishness and endless engagement in the pursuit of power. In sharing both the biological and theological doctrines bordering on the apparent weakness and individualism of human nature, the realist theory is believed to have originated from the classical political theory, which held the view that the starting point for the examination of conflicts is the individual level.

According to Deutsch (1973), realism sees conflict engagement by those especially interested in the pursuit of competitive and scarce interests as taking the form of competition between actors, also known as states. In exploring the various underlying Cases leading to a conflict, Koestler (1967) stated that the theory is seen as having three components: descriptive' realism which conceives the world as a conflict area explanatory realism which explains the tendency of human to behave negatively can be traced to genetic defects and that the inevitability of wars is simply because there is no mechanism stopping them from occurring; and prescriptive' realism which harmonizes both the arguments of the descriptive and explanatory realisms to state that actors (individual, state, groups or countries) have justification to defend their interests using any necessary means, thus ensuring self- preservation.

Morgenthau (1978) made the case that realism is a break from idealism while still viewing politics as the battle for control and peace. He went on to criticise the theory for holding that human nature is flexible and good, but praised idealism for its confidence in an abstract, rural, and rational political system. The usefulness of Morgenthau's theory in this work lies in his conviction that selfish forces inherent in human nature can be understood as the fundamental causes of the conflicts that plague the world. Self-centered and prone to conflict.

He argued that states would constantly want to advance their power-based national goals, which would inevitably clash with those of others and result in conflict. According to the notion, players should be ready to deal with the fallout from such inevitable situations (conflicts). Although the theory may be accused of raising power and the state to ideologic stature, it also fails to address how conflict in rural communities might be resolved, leaving a gap in our knowledge of these processes.

The **realistic conflict theory** posits that in an environment where people of equal skills and attributes are made to compete for the same resources, the intergroup conflict will directly relate to the resources' value and scarceness.

The **realistic group conflict theory** goes beyond the assumptions made by realistic conflict theory, including the perception of competition for resources between groups. At a certain threshold of similarity between groups, i.e., when people perceive comparable strengths and qualities between themselves and others, they will position the other as a threat based on their differences. These differences are used to differentiate between an in and out-group, where the in-group treats the out-group as a threat to their status quo, leading to prejudice and conflict between groups.

**Superordinate goals** are goals that can only be achieved through participation between a minimum of two groups. Therefore, superordinate goals can be utilized as a strategy to counteract conflict, harmful stereotypes, and discriminatory belief systems. (Venita Januarie 2023).

##### The Frustration- Aggression Theory

Best (2010) identifies the psychological theory of motivation and conduct, as well as the theories of frustration and violence, as the supporters of this idea. The "want-get-ratio" (Feierabend et al., 1967) and the gap between predicted and actual need satisfaction (Davis, 1962) are two examples of the differences that scientists have noted in an effort to explain violence. This implies that there is a propensity for people whose expectations are unmet to confront the person they believe to be to blame after they feel that their expectations have not been realized.

According to the relative deprivation thesis, "the greater the discrepancy, however marginal, between what it sought and what seems attainable, the greater will be the chances that anger and violence will result," this is the main issue it addressed.

This theory is useful in this study since it holds that aggression should never be considered a reflex or instinct, contrary to what realists had said. Instead, it should be viewed as the result of dissatisfaction that happens when the lawful means by which a person should be able to communicate his or her sentiments of disappointment is rejected. This situation pushes the frustrated person to resort to violence in a bid to express his/her anger. The Niger Delta situation is a good example of where this theory applies.

Aggression theory advises leaders to find out what the expectations of such a group are and seek ways of negotiating with them in situations where there is a widespread feeling of frustration among the population, usually expressed through protest and demonstrations against government policies; however, this theory fails to address and pinpoint the best strategies and mechanisms for such negotiation and consultation. It is also universal in concept and approach, but it lacks the necessary ingredients for dealing with unique conflict resolution tactics in rural communities.

### **Traditional Institutions**

Because the political and administrative components of traditional systems vary across Nigeria, it is impossible to provide a globally agreed description of a traditional institution or authority. Traditional Institutions is a body of an ethnic group or clan that holds the highest primary executive authority in an indigenous polity, or who has been appointed to the position in accordance with the customs and traditions of the area concerned by instrument or order of the state government, and whose title is recognized as a traditional institution title by the state government (Ola and Tonwe 2009). Despite this difficulties, traditional institutions can be characterized as the indigenous polity that existed before to the arrival of colonialists (Adewumi & Egwurube 1985; Tonwe and Osemwota 2013). According to Egwurube (1988), traditional institutions are a body of individuals or groups of individuals who hold communal political leadership positions through immorality and are granted authority and legitimacy to direct the affairs of specific ethno-cultural or linguistic groups in an orderly manner with the consent of community members. According to the Dasuki Committee report (1988), traditional institutions are a group of people who have been nominated to the throne or stool of a region based on their lineage and in conformity with local customs and traditions. So, we can define traditional institutions as indigenous political structures in which leaders with proven track records are appointed and installed in accordance with their native laws and practices.

Its essence is discernible from the functionalist view of society. According to Anele (1999) and Ibaba (2009), integration functions as a social system composed of subunits or interdependent pieces. These subunits rely on one another and are functionally connected. This suggests that every phenomena found in society serves a useful purpose for the survival of the overall system or civilization. It also implies that the subunits of society, also known as social institutions, such as the family, religion, politics, business, education, and technology, are interwoven and interdependent, and all play important roles in the survival and stability of the society. National integration is primarily defined as political integration, which is the result of a process in which political actors from various ethnic nations or groups in a country reject innate ethnic allegiance in favor of national identity (Hassi 1958). National integration can be defined as the recognition of a shared identity among citizens of a country. It means that, despite our differences in caste, religion, geography, and language, we all know that we are one. This type of integration is critical in the development of a strong and affluent country (Iyang 2012). In general, national integration can be defined as a process that seeks to eliminate the presence of micro-nationalities in favor of a sense of national identity. This is accomplished by breaking down ethnic barriers, eliminating ancestral ethnic loyalties, and cultivating a feeling of shared identity. It is obvious that individuals are the units of integration, and citizens of a nation are integrated because they have a similar identity. Thus, national integration is not limited to a single nation, but rather involves two or more.

Sustainable development, on the other hand, is an effort to improve the environment or natural resources in order to improve human life quality while ensuring that future generations' requirements are not threatened (Adebayo 2010). To this purpose, sustainable development is defined as the ability to preserve the state's existing resources for the collective use of citizens while making conscious efforts to save resources for future generations. Sustainable development encompasses a wide range of concepts; Mohammed (2013) defines it as a form of economic growth pattern in which resources are used to meet human needs while also saving the environment. Sustainable development means that resources are exploited.

Orji and Olali (2010) define traditional institutions as indigenous political and administrative arrangements in which people with leadership and proven track records are chosen and installed in positions of leadership in accordance with their native laws and customs. Traditional institutions are based on the preservation of people's customs and traditions, as well as the resolution of problems among and within community members using their [people's] laws and conventions.

Traditional institutions, including but not limited to paramount monarchs and their councils of chiefs, serve as custodians and symbols of indigenous peoples' rights, laws, privileges, traditions, and customs. Traditional institutions in Nigeria include traditional rulers and chieftaincy institutions, kingship and family institutions, the General Assembly, the Deities, shrine, and chief priest institution, and the council of elders, who may be appointed based on hereditary patronage or contribution to the growth and development of their communities.

Traditional rulers are referred to as chiefs or kings of autonomous groups or states. Although they lack formal political power, traditional monarchs wield significant influence and are respected by their people. Traditional monarchs' roles in their local communities and throughout the country have evolved over time. They went from being top executives of their areas to serving as consultants in today's local government system. This has strained the connection between traditional rulers and elected local government representatives.

Although some traditional rulers aided liberation battles across the continent, post-colonial governments considered them mostly as collaborators with colonial masters and hurdles to 1960s and 1970s modernization and nation-building projects (Okonkwo et al., 2019). The traditional authorities' roles were not outlined in the 1999 Constitution, despite their historical contributions to governance. However, it is clear that local governments now play a major role in the emerging order, as traditional rulers remain critical to achieving economic success and political stability at the local level. Egwurube (1985) observed that traditional authority' continued importance to the local government system in the modern era can be due to the following reasons. First, participatory political culture among the mass of individuals, particularly in rural regions, remains dormant. Second, traditional authority are still considered legitimate by many individuals. Third, attempts to institutionalize alternative local leadership systems in contemporary, stable, and elected local government institutions, with the goal of eventually gaining popular support, have mostly failed. As a result, institutions with a strong local presence must work together to provide effective local governance.

### **Traditional rulers and chieftaincy institutions**

Depending on the time and circumstances, different authors have varying perspectives on a traditional ruler or the chieftaincy system. Yadava and Gautam (Ngwu, 2019) define traditional institutions as traditional rulers, kinship, farmers' forums, age groupings, women's clubs, and religious/sacred organizations (church, temple, mosque) found in rural areas. Traditional rulers (Chiefs, Kings, Oba, Obi, Emirs, and so on) are the keepers of traditional beliefs. Tonwe and Osemwota (2013) define traditional rulers as the head of an ethnic group or clan who holds the highest primary executive authority in an indigenous polity, or who has been appointed to the position in accordance with the customs and traditions of the area concerned by instrument or order of the state government, and whose title is recognized as a traditional ruler title by the State Government.

Emirs of Northern Nigeria, for example, include the Emirs of Kano, Bauchi, Zaria, Ilorin, Adamawa, Gombe, the Shehu of Borno, and the Etsu of Nupe. The Alaafin of Oyo, Oba of Benin, and Oni of Ife are among those found in western Nigeria. Before colonial occupation, the Alaafin and Emirs had well-structured administrative structures based on small communities being led by a genuinely democratic process that was not always hereditary (Olisa et al; (1991:150). In every African traditional setting, including Rivers State communities, traditional rulers and chieftaincy institutions are charged with functions such as making laws, enforcing them, interpreting and applying fundamental laws, traditions, and customs for the smooth operation of their respective communities. In Rivers State, the paramount ruler is the highest traditional leader within the community. Examples of the paramount rulers within Rivers societies include: the Eze Gbaka Gbaka- Oha of Evo Kingdom, Amayanabo of Opobo, Onye-chi Etche, Gbenemene TuaTua Tai, Eze Ogba of Ogba Land, Oda-Abuan of Abua kingdom, Okan-Ama of Ngo, Awo of Ndoni, Amadado Ogoloma, and the Onye-chi Aguru, Omu of Omuma, Amayanabo of Kalabari Nye-Nue- Edi Isiokpo, etc.

People's customs and traditions are the ideals, morality, and shared behaviours that are thought to maintain unity in their society. He went on to say that the traditional rulers/chieftaincy institutions perform the following functions: The paramount ruler and the chieftaincy institution is the custodian of the peoples' cultures and traditions and therefore are charged with the duties of preserving the cultures and traditions of the people.



- i. They advise the government on problems concerning the peace and development of their own communities, and are frequently appointed to the government's Security Council due to the calm method in which this institution resolves disagreements among the subjects.
- ii. Because traditional rulers acquire the respect of their subjects according to cultural belief, their decisions remain final and binding. As they attempt to promote unity among their subjects and neighbours, the paramount rulers collaborate and coordinate actions within their regions of jurisdiction, in partnership with the council of chiefs in the local government area (among other title holders).
- iii. These institutions also perform the task of bestowing titles to deserving sons and daughters in various traditional titles as a mark of honour on them. These titles are not inherited; rather, they are bestowed upon deserving persons who are committed to peace and have displayed a high level of dedication, patriotism, and discipline.

The chieftaincy institution, on the other hand, is one of the traditional cultures' leadership positions that can be gained through heredity or by turn. This form of political leadership protects beliefs, conventions, norms, and values while also ensuring social order and stability among its members. Despite the fact that there is a growing conflict between the affluence and opposition to the chieftaincy institution, this is a symptom of cultural change dynamics (Orji and Olali, 2000).

For example, during Nigeria's long years of military governance, traditional rulers mainly maintained their position, with the exception of a dramatic change in 1967-78, when their powers over judicial problems were significantly reduced. However, with the advent of democracy in 1999 and the need to create a more long-term constitutional framework for peacekeeping, the importance of traditional rulers/chieftaincy institutions has been stressed once more.

However, as traditional rulership evolved and flourished, so did its opposition, particularly in Northern Nigeria, where a tendency for people to divide into sects has been observed since the 1970s, with the new groupings clearly challenging the older order of Emirs and brotherhood. Currently, every community made up of villages, wards, and/or clans elects their traditional monarch. In other cases, Igwe is also used. The Igwe, as is common in Igbo Land, the Eze, as is common in Ikwerre Land, and Gbenemene, as is typical in Ogoni Land, have this commitment and role for life, which includes bestowing titles to his people in appreciation of their achievements and character. This title system changes from community to community, although the ruling hierarchy remains consistent in most cases. The Nze title is the first in the title system. If the holder of such a title remains in the village, he becomes a member of the Igwe's cabinet when he reaches the elder age, but he is raised to the Ozo/Ichie Title when he becomes a senior elder, a title next to the Igwe. The Igwes-in-Council collaborate with the government as well, although only in an advising capacity. Brock-Ume (2001) elaborated on this by stating that in every village and community, there are other organisations and opinion leaders that support the Igwe-in-Court, thereby increasing the importance of the chieftaincy institution.

Traditional rulers are individuals or groups of people who hold communal political leadership roles by hereditary succession or nomination in accordance with the customs and traditions of a particular ethnic, cultural, or linguistic community (Eze & Ogbuagu, 2020). The approval of their community members grants them the authority and legitimacy to rule and administer their group's operations in an organised manner. Traditional rulers play a variety of tasks in their communities, including acting as mediators, resolving disputes and conflicts, and encouraging social cohesiveness and unity (Amodu 2019). They may also represent their community in relationships with other communities, government officials, or outside entities. Traditional rulers frequently have extensive knowledge of local traditions, cultural practices, and historical events, which they use to inform decision-making and provide guidance to their community members. It is crucial to note that traditional rulers' functions and authority vary depending on culture and geography. Traditional rulers' specific rights and obligations are determined by each community's own customs, traditions, and legal frameworks. Traditional rulers may have ceremonial or symbolic duties in certain circumstances, but they may also have more major political or administrative functions in others.

According to Amodu (2019), traditional kings are highly recognised and esteemed, giving them great power and authority. Traditional rulers are notable persons who embody and represent the subcultures, traditions, and customs of their communities. They have an important role in conserving and developing these cultural characteristics, as well as contributing to community growth and development through established

communication channels. By utilizing their knowledge and understanding of local customs, traditional rulers can effectively engage with the people and address their needs and concerns.

In Nigeria, the traditional ruler, also known as the conventional head of an ethnic group or clan, wields the most traditional authority within their realm. The national government normally designates a traditional ruler, recognising their position and power. This official acknowledgment strengthens the traditional ruler's power and credibility in handling the affairs of their people. Traditional rulers are primarily concerned with preserving their people's subcultures, customs, and cultural histories. They act as stewards and protectors of cultural traditions, guaranteeing their survival and relevance in the face of contemporary difficulties. Traditional rulers also play an important role in controlling and mediating conflicts within or between people and groups in their community by enforcing customary laws and practices. Their presence and authority contribute to social order, conflict resolution, and community harmony. They act as role models and leaders, urging community members to respect society ideals and encourage constructive behaviour. Their expertise, experience, and knowledge are valuable resources that help to build the community's social fabric and cohesion. In conclusion, traditional rulers in Nigeria wield substantial power and authority in political leadership due to their direct engagement with the grassroots level of society.

During the colonial era, the British established a centralised governance system that undermined traditional monarchs' authority (Eze and Ogbuagu, 2020). However, traditional rulers continued to play an important role in conflict resolution, particularly at the village level. They were recognised as government representatives who were in charge of maintaining law and order in their areas. Traditional rulers also took part in the administration of justice, and the colonial authority recognised their courts and legal systems. Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, the influence of traditional rulers in government was further reduced with the implementation of a Western-style democratic system (Amodu, 2019). Nonetheless, traditional rulers continued to play an important role in conflict resolution, particularly in rural areas where their authority was still respected. They were responsible for resolving disagreements between individuals, families, and communities, and their rulings were frequently recognised and enforced.

In recent years, there has been a revived acknowledgment of the role of traditional rulers in conflict resolution in Nigeria. The federal government recognises the role of traditional rulers in ensuring peace and security, particularly in areas threatened by insurgency and ethnic conflict. To encourage peace building and conflict resolution, the government formed a National Council of Traditional Rulers to advise on national matters (Oyedele, 2019). According to Ige and Adekola (2021), traditional rulers have played an important part in conflict resolution throughout Nigeria's history. Nigeria is a varied country with over 250 ethnic groups, and traditional rulers have played an important role in keeping peace and settling internal and intergroup conflicts.

The 1990s war between the Tiv and Jukun ethnic groups in Nigeria's middle belt region exemplifies traditional rulers' role in conflict resolution. Traditional rulers from both tribes played an important part in settling the dispute by initiating peace negotiations, acting as mediators, and creating a forum for conversation between the two groups. The traditional rulers used their power and authority to bring the warring sides to the negotiating table, resulting in a peace deal that ended the fighting. In addition to settling conflicts, Nigerian traditional rulers have taken preventative measures to manage violence. For example, Alhaji Shehu Idris, the Emir of Zazzau, has been praised with preventing a potential conflict between farmers and herders in his territory (Eze, 2018). He started a conversation between the two groups, promoted peaceful coexistence, and supported the use of modern farming technologies to reduce conflicts over grazing pastures. Traditional rulers in Nigeria have a rich history of conflict resolution, spanning from minor disputes to massive ethnic battles. Traditional rulers have used their power, influence, and understanding of their people to promote conversation, mediation, and reconciliation. Their efforts have significantly contributed to maintaining peace and stability in Nigeria.

### **The General Assembly Institution**

The General Assembly is one of the traditional organisations tasked with preserving the indigenous peoples' cultures and moral foundations in rural areas of a civilization. Orji and Olali (2010) define General Assembly as a group of individuals working in or within a specific ethnic territory or area with the aim of individually, collectively, and generally promoting societal transformation/development and achieving peaceful coexistence. These individuals share common ancestry, background, age, and status. In rural areas and within its ethnic boundaries, a General Assembly's organisation, structure, and activities vary. They reaffirmed that, depending on the nature of the conflict and crisis, the General Assembly acts as an organ of development, maintenance of

peace, law and order, and conflict and crisis resolution. The village, clans/ethnic groups, and general assemblies have long been valued in traditional and modern life alike in Rivers State.

Their involvement in the growth of their respective fields may not be unrelated to this. A number of general assemblies of men, including the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), an Ogoni socio-cultural organisation, the Khana, Gokana, Oyigbo, Tai and Eleme (KAGOTE), the Ogoni people's umbrella organisation, the Ogbahor Ikwerre convention, the Engeni Socio-cultural Organisation, etc. The General Assembly in Igbo Land is a type of age-based social and cultural organisation, similar to the age-grade institutions and social status within a number of such categories through which members of the society had to pass over the course of their lives in order to ensure that the society was properly managed in terms of its activities and the resolution of disputes. Similar to the age grade system, the General Assembly was governed by a council of leaders and lived in small, dispersed villages made up of groups of houses that had a common vision and ambitions.

Some of the General Assemblies in Rivers State, like Kagote and the Ogbakor Ikwerre Convention, are in charge of resolving conflicts.

### **Deities, Shrines, and Chief Priests in Conflict Resolution**

Deities and shrines play a central role in maintaining peace and social order in traditional societies. In Gokana and other rural areas, deities are revered for their protective and transformative powers, shaping the culture, traditions, and interactions within the community. Shrines, typically off-limits to women except on special occasions, serve as sacred spaces where conflicts are resolved through rituals and oaths, often overseen by chief priests. The chief priests, as custodians of the community's spiritual and cultural heritage, mediate disputes using traditional mechanisms like oaths and sacrifices to the gods. Akani (2010) notes that decisions made at these shrines are binding, as disputants swear to uphold the verdicts in front of the deities. Rituals, including animal sacrifices, libations, and the gathering of materials, are carefully coordinated to ensure the sanctity of the process. The ultimate goal is to restore peace and promote solidarity within the community. In the context of rural communities in Rivers State, these deities and shrines have been instrumental in addressing issues like cult violence and land disputes. Traditional dispute resolution at shrines is public, reinforcing community involvement and ensuring that future generations witness the process of conflict resolution.

These spiritual institutions were also historically used to resolve criminal cases, such as land disputes or fraud. In traditional Igbo society, revered deities like the "Ibinukpabi" oracle of Arochukwu served as the highest court of appeal, ensuring that justice was meted out in accordance with community values. Similarly, secret societies like the Ekpe and Iyamba played key roles in enforcing law and order, with members acting as both enforcers and deterrents against crime. The fear of these societies' supernatural power ensured social compliance and peace within the community. Thus, the institution of deities, shrines, and chief priests is crucial for maintaining order and resolving conflicts in rural communities, offering a culturally grounded and effective means of ensuring justice and social harmony.

### **Kinship/Family Institution**

Another significant traditional institution that was used to resolve intercommunity issues in the traditional society is the institution of kinship and family. The institution of kinship and family is at the heart of society's approach to child rearing and education (Chirawu, 2006). Marriage between members of the community results in reproduction and childbirth. Two odd families come together because of the merger of the two families. In some instances, /cases, the institution of kinship and family brings together families, tribes, and ethnic groupings that were either previously antagonistic or utterly foreign and unfamiliar through marriage, to the point where there will be a lot of camaraderie and cooperation.

This is comparable to elderly members of the community, such as the Luo women in Kenya, arranging marriages between clans, particularly feuding clans (Bob-Manuel, 2000). In other cases, the majority of elderly parents of both couples live with their children, where they will receive the majority of the support they require in terms of financial, medical, and social advantages. In this way, it is anticipated that familial ties will strengthen.

### **Council of Elders Institution**



According to Best (2010), the Council of Elders is a traditional institution that existed in traditional society before colonial governance and is still used today to resolve rural-based problems. The Council of Elders is a group of close friends or people of right standing in society of a certain age level, but sometimes the elderly, who have distinguished themselves in the act of maintaining peace, order, and harmonious coexistence among members of society and have safeguarded the culture, tradition, norms and values, and belief system and as such can preserve the custom and tradition of their domains.

According to Alagoa and Abi (2002), the name "Council of Elders" was drawn from African traditional culture, in which the village's oldest men met around a fire in the full moon every month to listen to household and societal situations, pass judgement, and provide answers if necessary. They also see the council of elders as traditional indigenous elders who have been chosen by their people to be custodians and protectors of their cultures' holy teachings, stories, and practises that have been passed down from generation to generation over the years. While members of the council of elders are widely believed to share deep spiritual connections with mother earth and her sacred places, and having much to teach the people about compassion, understanding and living in balanced harmony with each other, Alagoa and Abi (2002) stated that they offer tremendous spiritual insight and practical solutions to issues that affect the people in their domains.

Panden (2013) defines the Council of Elders as "a body of people elected or appointed to serve in an administrative, legislative, or advisory capacity to ensure the peaceful, orderly, and harmonious coexistence among members of any society." They also stated that the council of Elders serves as a mediator between the mother earth, the society's tradition and culture, and the people, and that it provides counsel and guidance for the unity of the community.

### **Concept of Insecurity**

To accurately define insecurity, it is necessary to first discuss what security is. The first duty of a government is to keep its citizens safe because, as Hobbes observed, only the state has the resources to guarantee security and save society from anarchy (and because government represents the state, the state should provide adequate security to justify its *raison d'être* (Gaskin, 1996). In this regard, Omede (2012) sees security as a dynamic condition involving a state's relative ability to counter threats to its fundamental values and interests. According to McGrew (1988), a nation's security is dependent on two key pillars: (1) the maintenance and protection of the socioeconomic order in the face of internal and external threats, and (2) the promotion of a preferred international order that minimises the threat to core values and interests, as well as the domestic order.

For Nwolise (2006), security is an all-encompassing condition which suggests that a territory must be secured by a network of armed forces; that the sovereignty of the state must be guaranteed by a democratic and patriotic government, which in turn must be protected by the military, police and the people themselves; that the people must not only be secured from external attacks but also from devastating consequences of internal upheavals such as unemployment, hunger, starvation, diseases, ignorance, homelessness, environmental degradation and pollution cum socio-economic injustices. Citing Rothschild, Nwagboso (2012) argues that throughout history, security has been about individuals, and that security makes no sense without reference to individual security (McSweeney 1999). Dike (2010) and Omede (2012) have taken this argument a step further, emphasizing that Nigeria's security should be founded on a comprehensive approach that sees residents as the primary beneficiaries of every security and developmental deliverable that the state can provide. Thus, Nigeria's security will involve efforts to strengthen the capacity of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in order to advance its interests and objectives to contain internal and external aggression, control crime, eliminate corruption, enhance genuine development, progress, and growth, and improve the welfare and quality of life. According to Omede (2012), national security should involve ensuring Nigerians' safety at home and abroad, as well as protecting the country's sovereignty.

According to Adeleke (2013), security entails freedom from threats or violence that could result in the loss of life and valued property. From this perspective, security is a condition in which one or more persons are free of all anxieties or threats to their precious life and hard-earned goods (properties). In other words, citizens are free to conduct their normal business in any region of the country without fear of harm to their lives or means of livelihood. However, the United Nations Development Programme (1994) defines security as protection from concealed and harmful disruptions in persons' day-to-day activities at home, work, or community.

Security here refers to a state of being secure and safe, protected from risks such as starvation and disease, among others. This definition emphasizes the government's critical role in ensuring proper security.

Governments around the world establish security architecture whose mission is to ensure that people are not threatened or disrupted in the course of their regular activities. Similarly, Ogunleye, Adewale, Alese, and Ogunde (2011) defined security as all procedures put in place to secure and safeguard citizens and resources of people, groups, businesses, and the government from sabotage or violence. Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpor-Robaro (2013, p. 80) gave what appears to capture the meaning of security. To them, security can be perceived as:

Stability and continuity of livelihood (stable and steady income) predictability of daily life (knowing what to expect), protection from crime (feeling safe), and freedom from psychological harm (safety or protection from emotional stress), which results from the assurance or knowing that one is wanted, accepted, loved and protected in one's community or neighborhood and by people around. It focuses on emotional and psychological sense of belonging to social group which can offer one protection.

The following definition highlights that security is the state of being protected or free from physical, economic, and psychological harm. The quest for security must encompass the aforementioned dimensions; failing to appropriately secure an individual from any of the stated components indicates that there is insufficient security of life and property. Over time, significant efforts have been made to shift security away from a state-centric perspective and toward a broader perspective that places a high value on individuals. Thus, individual security has been given a high priority because when people are free of perceived threats or violence capable of causing harm, death, or property loss, they are more likely to carry out legitimate activities that can contribute to national development. Based on the preceding study, we can conclude that security, whether viewed through the lens of the state or the individual, is critical to peace, national cohesiveness, and increased economic activity, all of which are essential to drive socioeconomic progress in any country. This is because peaceful environments promote development. In other words, individual potentials are fully tapped and exploited to power all sectors of the economy in a secure environment.

Insecurity, on the other hand, is the polar opposite of security and has been described using terms such as lack of safety, danger, hazard, uncertainty, lack of confidence, state of doubt, inadequately guarded or protected, instability, trouble, lack of protection, and being unsafe, among others (Achumba et al., 2013). According to Achumba et al., these commonly used adjectives imply a situation in which there is a risk of injury, loss of life, property, or livelihood. As a result, they describe insecurity as a state of uncertainty, a lack of control, and the inability to defend against factors that harm or imperil an individual or organization, or render them vulnerable.

It refers to a lack or insufficient freedom from danger. This definition reflects physical insecurity, which is the most obvious form of insecurity, and it feeds into many other types of insecurity, including economic and social security. In this paper, insecurity is defined as a scenario in which a state's human and national security are jeopardized by internal or external forces or interests, aggravated by the former's weak or bad economic, military, and/or human resource development conditions.

Beland (2015) defines insecurity as worry or anxiety caused by a perceived or actual lack of protection. It refers to a lack or insufficient freedom from danger. This suggests that insecurity means the absence of peace, order, and security. The United Nations Development Programme (2014) defines security as protection from concealed and harmful disruptions in daily activities, such as at home, work, or in communities. This indicates that security extends to guaranteeing the protection of people and property. Williams (2018), who views security from a socio-political perspective, believes that security entails the ability to pursue desired political and social goals. That is, security is socio-political in character, because without security, there can be no political stability, and so social activities will be disrupted.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2017), insecurity is a drag on Nigeria's development efforts. According to a 2016 study provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Abuja, Nigeria maintained its 2015 status with a calculation of 0.527, two points higher than the 2014 computation of 0.525. The Human Development Index (HDI), which combines statistics on life expectancy, education, and per capita income, is used to classify countries into four levels of human development. Nigeria's HDI value for 2016 ranks 152 out of 188 nations, placing the country on the Low Human Development (LHD) scale.

According to Mahmoud and Madori (2013), a high level of insecurity leads to a low life expectancy rate, low educational development, and low economic investment, all of which encourage sound economic growth and

development as a result of local and foreign investment. In order to reduce crime, the federal government criminalized terrorism by passing the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2011.

This resulted in increased fundamental surveillance as well as criminal investigations, an increase in physical security measures across the country aimed at deterring or disrupting potential attacks, the strengthening of security agencies through the provision of security facilities, and the development and broadcast of security tips in the media. Despite these measures, the country's degree of insecurity remains high. Furthermore, Nigeria has continuously placed low on the Global Peace Index (GPI, 2012), indicating that the country's security situation has deteriorated.

Insecurity and the experiences of young people in a changing society are important topics in social science research, yet security and insecurity are not simple scientific ideas. Different branches of science explore the issues. Psychology, social psychology, and psychiatry provided the first arguments and ideas regarding the need to develop these concepts. For example, Erich Fromm (2000) was a scholar who wrote about feelings of inadequacy. He highlighted security as a need to connect and avoid loneliness.

Mc Cormick (1954) stated that there was a lack of uniform definitions, theory building, and preliminary empirical testing of hypotheses. Cameron and Mc Cormick judged past security and insecurity research to be unclear and tendentious. They proposed conceptual development and empirical research. It was over two decades before the next examination of these topics arrived. One of the most insightful analysis came from Kaufmann (1970), who wrote a thorough study on security as a sociological and social-political issue. His study was unique in that it showed security not just as a system or societal notion, but also as a subjective experience or the relationship between subjective feelings and objective realities. According to Kaufmann, the primary issue with security was a broken relationship between inner experiences and exterior conditions.

The need for security revealed itself in efforts to defend and protect oneself against risks, in desires for order and continuity, and in ambitions for inner, mental balance (Kaufmann, 1970, 24-27). Kaufmann's idea of security encompassed both personal security for the "self" and orientation to the outside world. Theorizing on the concept of insecurity has resulted in a diverse set of insecurity dimensions. One fascinating question is about the kinetics of this event. How does insecurity affect people and their relationships in society? Berki (1986) gave a thorough and comprehensive examination of security and its establishment and maintenance in society.

He maintained that in its most fundamental form, the desire for security was an existential urge. Berki (1986, p. 39) stated: "By wanting security, therefore, in order ostensibly (and consciously) to protect and prolong our lives, we are really courting insecurity, nay actually engaging in the quest after insecurity". Berki (1986) believed that personal security was inextricably linked to society, personal, reciprocal connections, and strangers. The social paradox of security implies that people are vulnerable in their interactions, but in extreme cases, people may perceive each other as threats and foes.

Security challenges also raise moral concerns about how society is structured and how laws and regulations control security. Thus, security necessitates political decisions in order to reduce societal insecurity and ensure security. The quantity of legislation resulting from these needs can be enormous in several aspects of life, such as crime prevention and child protection.

Berki's approach is useful for examining young people's insecurity because it emphasizes the relationships and dynamics of security in groups and cultures. As previously said, young people may be perceived as threats or risks in a society, or as a protected group subject to insecurity, but they can also be considered as active citizens who form and develop personal ties. At the same time, young people are challenged to create personal security, trust their close relationships, and align their lives with the outside world. This outer world, or global world, does not necessarily get more sophisticated; the complexities of life and challenges emerge gradually (Lahikainen et al., 1995, 42). In Finland, Pauli Niemelä initiated a study project on insecurity, its origins, and coping strategies; he studied the notion and defined its various interpretations. Niemelä (2000) created a framework for insecurity research based on empirical data from a large-scale survey of the Finnish population. In his theoretical model, Niemelä distinguished six types of security: 1) existence and health, 2) social relationships and community, 3) social security at the level of social security systems, 4) cultural and humanistic issues, 5) traditional security (inner security in a country and national security), and 6) modern, ecological security related to natural and manufactured environments.

It appears that the concepts of security and insecurity are crucial indications of a person's relationship to his or her community and the world. They provide messages about a person's approach to society and the changing world. Experiences with security or insecurity are difficult to explain, although they can be linked to a number of situations. According to McDonald (2002), security is not simply ontological; it can vary substantially depending on the actor and the unique political and cultural conditions. This is consistent with Pauli Niemelä's theoretical notion of security. Many methods emphasize the importance of personal security in relation to

neighborhood, social, and global challenges. It's difficult to figure out how distant issues influence personal insecurity.

#### **Traditional Institution and the Fight against Insecurity in Nigeria:**

The prospects According to Ekeh (1975) and Sklar (1999), in attempts to abolish or control traditional institutions, most African countries have experienced a "mixed polity" or a duality of power systems since independence. According to Skalnik (2013), chieftaincies or kinship-based forms of government have never lost their importance, despite many attempts by nations to eliminate them. Security is everyone's responsibility; if the community must be included, the authority must include traditional authorities. Ezema (2020) correctly noted that he whose life and property is threatened is in the best position to intervene and be saddled with the responsibility of securing the same, and any attempt to deliberately or unintentionally ignore this central thesis in the quest for a long-term solution to the Nigerian polity's myriad security challenges will continue to be counterproductive.

For instance, as community leaders, they have records of all the people that come into the community, they will inform the security agencies whenever they see strange persons in their community. This approach will checkmate and reduce the rate of crime such as kidnappings and other vices in the community and in the country. More so, sometimes it takes a longer time for security agencies to act, the traditional leaders on the other hand do not have constitutional power to act. That is why in most of the community attacks, the perpetrators must have succeeded with their plans before the arriver of security agencies. Traditional monarchs frequently advise modern leaders on economic policies, security, culture and customs, and the overall well-being of citizens. Because of the dynasties' extensive expertise, monarchs and kings are frequently able to provide sensible advise on a variety of administrative issues. Any country's economic success must be based on order and peace. Local traditional leaders are relied on by the government to maintain order and peace in their areas. Traditional leaders frequently handle land disputes and minor conflicts, and they are more successful in these areas than many modern politicians. Their function is to prevent the conflict from escalating into animosity. In cases of land conflicts, monarchs strive to be peacekeepers and resolve disagreements peacefully. Furthermore, traditional leaders are regarded as role models and spiritual leaders in their communities. This allows them to play an important role in the development of good citizen communities (Agu, 2018).

The government tries to deny their existence, but when there is a crisis, whether religious, ethnic, communal, land-related, or political, people turn to them for assistance. Traditional institutions will undoubtedly remain in place for the foreseeable future. It is our link to the past. The public recognizes traditional authorities' role in conflict management and resolution, as well as their leadership skills and accessibility to ordinary people. Traditional institutions draw their authority from their cultures' norms and values (Ezema, 2020). Furthermore, with the establishment of a democratic regime in Nigeria, traditional rulers were employed by politicians to rally votes and defeat oppositions when needed. They also served as tax collectors in their respective districts. It lost authority of coercive instruments such as the police, courts, and prisons. The removal of traditional rulers from the local government council signaled the end of traditional rulers' formal role in politics and the administration of Nigeria's criminal justice system, including security.

In reality, the post-colonial Nigerian political elites (both civil and military) viewed traditional rulers as subordinates rather than allies in Nigeria's fight for peace and security of lives and property. In addition, there is evidence of unequal coordination between traditional rulers and law enforcement organizations in maintaining peace and security within their respective regions. It is important to stress that the unequal character of this collaboration renders the conclusion counterproductive. In line with the preceding, several researchers and even government officials have suggested that traditional rulers be granted constitutional obligations to combat crime and insecurity in the region and Nigeria as a whole (Ezema, 2020).

In fact, some state governors are already working hard to form a security committee that will include traditional rulers and other key stakeholders tasked with determining specific roles for traditional rulers in maintaining state peace and security (Daily Trust, 2016). This article consequently advises that the position of traditional rulers be cemented by legislation in Nigeria so that they can participate completely and actively in the battle against insecurity in Nigeria.

Because the political and administrative components of traditional systems vary across Nigeria, there is no uniform definition of traditional authority (Adewumi & Egwurube 1985). However, based on a review of State laws, 'traditional ruler' may be defined as 'the traditional head of an ethnic group or clan who is the holder of the highest primary executive authority in an indigenous polity, or who has been appointed to the positioning

accordance with the customs and tradition of the area concerned by instrument or order of the state government, and whose title is recognised as a traditional ruler title by the government of the state' (Ola & Tonwe).

Before the advent of colonial rule, traditional rulers were considered the repository of religious, legislative, executive and judicial functions. In fact, governance in different parts of present-day Nigeria was synonymous with traditional institutions and their rulers (Afigbo,1972). One striking fact is that the geographical spheres of authority of these traditional rulers were essentially localized and no traditional ruler ever had jurisdiction over the entire geographical area of modern Nigeria. In tracing the contours of the role of traditional rulers in the Nigeria government system, three distinct geographical regions are discernible, the north, the south-west and the south-east. In the North, the Emir could be referred to as a strong executive participator in local administration with few restraints on his executive powers. In the South-West, beside the Oba (or king), there were other power blocks or centers who acted as checks on the Oba's power, so the Oba can be regarded as a weak executive participator in local administration (Oguntomisin,1996). In the South-East, the indigenous political system reveals a great deal of popular participation and was highly decentralized and fragmented with authority being exercised at different levels. In all, the traditional rulers were embodiments of local administration (Ola & Tonwe,2009).In the advent of colonialism, the British colonial administrators recognised the strategic and influential position occupied by traditional rulers in the country and avoided attempting any drastic reforms of the indigenous local administration (Adesoji,2010). Instead, the British colonial administration took steps to put in place a system of indirect rule, as a convenient strategy to govern the people through their traditional institutions and rulers while ensuring close guidance by British Administrators. In this way, the allegiance of the people was secured via their traditional rulers (Ola,1983). In effect, there was a clear attempt by the colonial government to consolidate the role of traditional rulers as chief executives of their localities, and this was extended to areas where traditional rulers had not hitherto held this power. However, before Nigeria gained independence in 1960, the contention by a cross-section of nationalists that the institution of traditional ruler ship was in direct conflict with democratic ideals.

#### **IV. Research Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods approach combining both descriptive and historical research designs to explore the role of traditional institutions in addressing insecurity in Gokana Local Government Area, Rivers State. The study was conducted in Gokana Local Government Area, which is part of the Ogoni ethnic group in Rivers State, Nigeria. Gokana covers an area of 126 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of approximately 228,828 (2006 census) and consists of 17 towns, including Kpor, Bodo, and Giokoo. The target population included traditional institutions, such as chieftaincy, councils of elders, kinship groups, and shrines/deities across the 17 towns. A multistage sampling technique was used, incorporating both stratified random sampling and simple random sampling. A sample size of 200 respondents, comprising traditional leaders and knowledgeable community members, was selected for questionnaire distribution. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires were designed with both closed and open-ended questions, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative responses. Data were also supplemented with secondary sources, including books, journals, official documents, and relevant online resources. To ensure validity, the questionnaires were reviewed by three experts in research methodology and data analysis from Rivers State University, and corrections were made before final administration. For reliability, a test-retest method was used with 100 individuals outside the sample group. The reliability was confirmed using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The quantitative data were analyzed using percentages to address the research questions. For hypothesis testing, Chi-square was used to assess the relationships between traditional institutions and security outcomes in Gokana.

#### **V. Data Presentation and Analysis**

This section presents the data collected from 200 distributed questionnaires. Of these, 190 were correctly filled and returned, while 10 were either incomplete, lost, or irrelevant, as summarized in **Table 1**.

#### **Response Rate**

**Table 1:** Distribution of Questionnaires

<b>Description</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Correctly filled and returned	190	90.0



<b>Description</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Incorrectly filled	3	4.0
Lost	3	2.5
Blank returns	2	1.8
Indifferent responses	2	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Fieldwork, 2024.*

The study was based on the 190 valid responses. The following sections provide demographic details and insights into the respondents' backgrounds and their views on the role of traditional institutions in tackling insecurity.

### **Demographic Information**

**Table 2:** Gender Distribution of Respondents

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	100	52.6
Female	90	47.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Fieldwork, 2024.*

**Table 3:** Age Distribution of Respondents

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
15-24	5	2.6
25-34	60	31.6
35-44	70	36.8
45-54	45	23.7
55-64	10	5.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Fieldwork, 2024.*

**Table 4:** Educational Levels of Respondents

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
No Qualification	5	2.6
FSLC	5	2.6
GCE/WASSC	40	21.1
OND/NCE	50	26.3
HND/BSc	60	31.6
MSc/PhD	30	15.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

### Occupation of Respondents

**Table 5:** Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Student	40	21.1
Farming	20	10.5
Trading	20	10.5
Civil Servant	50	26.3
Artisan	10	5.3
Transporter	20	10.5
Other	30	15.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

**Table 6:** Residence in Gokana Local Government Area

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	175	92.1
No	15	7.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

### Role of Traditional Institutions in Security

**Table 7:** General Assembly's Use of Dialogue to Address Security Issues

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Community Discussions	70	36.8
Sharing Concerns	30	15.8
Proposing Solutions	40	21.1
Fostering Consensus	20	10.5
Neighborhood Watch Programs	30	15.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

**Table 8:** Chieftaincy Institution's Mediation in Security Challenges

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very High	70	36.8
High	75	39.5
Very Low	30	15.8
Low	15	7.9

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	190	100%

*Source: Fieldwork, 2024.*

**Table 9:** Council of Elders’ Use of Meetings for Conflict Resolution

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Very High	80	42.1
High	74	38.9
Very Low	20	10.5
Low	16	8.4
<b>Total</b>	190	100%

*Source: Fieldwork, 2024.*

**Table 10:** Chief Priests’ Use of Oath-Taking in Conflict Resolution

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Very High	87	45.8
High	79	41.6
Very Low	12	6.3
Low	10	5.3
<b>Total</b>	190	100%

*Source: Fieldwork, 2024.*

## **VI. Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study reveal that traditional institutions in Gokana Local Government Area, Rivers State, employ various strategies to address security challenges, including dialogue, mediation, and oath-taking. The General Assembly of Villages uses dialogue extensively in resolving security issues through community discussions, sharing concerns, proposing solutions, fostering consensus, and collaborating with local authorities to establish neighborhood watch programs. This approach helps build trust, enhance collective awareness, and foster a sense of shared responsibility for community safety.

The Chieftaincy Institution primarily utilizes mediation to resolve conflicts and security challenges within the community. Chiefs, as respected figures, mediate disputes, facilitate dialogues, and promote peaceful resolutions, thus contributing to community stability and security. Their influence is crucial in promoting reconciliation, addressing grievances, and fostering unity.

The Council of Elders also plays a significant role in conflict resolution, with a high reliance on meetings as a strategy. These regular gatherings allow elders to discuss community issues, mediate disputes, and involve the broader community in finding solutions. Traditional rituals may also be used to symbolize reconciliation, while elders draw on their wisdom and cultural norms to guide the community toward peaceful resolutions. The success of these strategies is contingent on the commitment of the elders, community participation, and the broader cultural context.

Additionally, the study highlights the role of chief priests in using oath-taking rituals at deities or shrines to resolve security challenges. Oath-taking is a solemn and binding practice believed to ensure truthfulness and accountability, and it can act as a deterrent against harmful behavior by invoking supernatural consequences. Chief priests use this ritual to restore community harmony and promote collective responsibility, though the

effectiveness of oath-taking varies depending on cultural beliefs and the willingness of individuals to adhere to its terms. The influence of modern legal systems also plays a role in shaping the acceptance and applicability of such traditional practices.

Overall, these traditional practices—dialogue, mediation, and oath-taking—continue to serve as important mechanisms for conflict resolution and security management in Gokana, with varying degrees of effectiveness depending on community dynamics and cultural acceptance.

## VII. Conclusion

The study explores the role of traditional institutions in addressing the challenges of insecurity in Ogoni land, Rivers State, from 2011 to 2022. It reveals a positive correlation between traditional institutions and security, underscoring the legitimacy and influence traditional rulers maintain despite the constitutional marginalization of their roles. Historically, traditional methods of conflict resolution, such as oath-taking, divination, and trial by ordeal, have been integral in maintaining peace within rural communities. These mechanisms continue to hold relevance in addressing security issues, though they face challenges due to the intrusion of modern legal systems. The findings suggest that traditional institutions have significant potential to complement formal governance structures in resolving security challenges, particularly in grassroots communities. However, for these institutions to play a more prominent role in contemporary conflict resolution, their integration into the legal and political frameworks of Nigeria is crucial.

## VIII. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following steps are recommended to enhance the role of traditional institutions in addressing insecurity in Ogoni land and beyond:

1. **Constitutional Recognition and Integration:** Traditional institutions should be recognized as long-term contributors to conflict resolution and community security within the Nigerian Constitution. This could involve creating provisions that allow community general assemblies to contribute actively to decision-making processes, problem-solving, and actions in rural communities. Their involvement should extend to advisory boards, committees, and collaborations with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
2. **Professional Development for Traditional Leaders:** Providing training opportunities for members of traditional institutions in areas such as conflict management, human rights, leadership, and legal frameworks will enhance their capacity for effective governance. Professional growth through mentorship programs with legal practitioners can foster more informed and inclusive decision-making.
3. **Capacity Building for Judicial Roles:** Members of traditional institutions should be encouraged to develop the skills and capacities necessary to serve in the judicial arm of government or as community leaders and justices of the peace. This could include outreach programs, collaborations with local schools and institutions, and formal recognition of their contributions to community governance and conflict resolution.
4. **Civic Education and Public Awareness:** Promoting awareness of the role of traditional institutions through adult education and curriculum integration in primary, secondary, and tertiary education can build local networks and encourage greater community involvement in conflict resolution. This approach will foster an understanding of the importance of traditional leadership in managing local disputes.
5. **Government Recognition and Support:** Traditional institutions should be formally recognized by all levels of government to improve their effectiveness in managing local security issues. This recognition should go beyond advisory roles to enable them to actively participate in governance and development processes in their communities.
6. **Strengthening Government-Traditional Institution Relations:** Improving the relationship between the government and traditional institutions is crucial for fostering peaceful co-existence and reducing conflicts over land, culture, and religion. This can be achieved through collaborative forums, dialogue, and mutual recognition of roles and responsibilities.
7. **Leadership by Example:** Traditional institutions themselves must acknowledge their critical role in society and provide leadership by example. This includes promoting accountability, integrity, and transparency in their activities, as well as ensuring that they engage in grassroots development initiatives.
8. **Further Research:** Ongoing research is essential to explore additional ways in which government and traditional institutions can collaborate effectively. Future studies should focus on developing frameworks

for greater integration and the sustainable development of rural communities through traditional governance structures.

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