



Research Article

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Traditional Authority and Power Sharing in Anambra State, Nigeria: Examining Role Conflict Between Traditional Rulers and Presidents' GeneralMark, Kingsley Chinonso PhD¹; Okechukwu, Michael Nweke²¹Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria²Institute of Peace, Security and Development Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria**Article History**

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Abstract: The operational relationship in the Anambra state traditional authorities has been a hotbed of contestation, primarily due to controversies for community power sharing and persistent role conflicts between the Traditional rulers and the Presidents-General (PG's). It is against this backdrop this research examined Traditional Authority and Power sharing in Anambra State: with specific focus on the role conflicts between traditional rulers and presidents-general in Anambra state. Guided by a combination of the Conflict theory and Structural Functionalism. The study relied on a mix method research design, using primary and secondary sources of data: Questionnaire and Key Informant Interview guide. Data collected were analyzed with descriptive method of data analysis using charts, mean and standard deviation. Hypotheses raised were tested with Chi-square test analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The population of the study consist of 3,452 persons, comprising Traditional Rulers, Presidents-General, Town Union Executives, Traditional Cabinets, Officials of Local Government Authority and staff of the office of the Anambra state local government and chieftaincy affairs. The sample size for this study comprised of 358 respondents, drawn from the 179 communities across Anambra state. The findings and results of the study revealed that multiple power structures coexist. That is hierarchical rotational power among villages, life inheritance, and power wielded by the oldest in the community are prevalent. In addition, there is a strong perception that the government influences who wields power in the community, often by recognizing or de-recognizing leaders, as supported by the quantitative results and interviewee responses. Based on these findings, the study recommends that, to enhance legitimacy and consistency in community power sharing, there should be a codification of customary leadership succession practices at the community level, developed collaboratively by traditional councils, town unions, and state authorities. Such codification should respect cultural heritage while establishing clear, community-approved procedures for leadership selection and rotation, thereby reducing disputes and ensuring equitable representation among others.

Keywords: Traditional Authority, Power Sharing, Anambra State, Nigeria, Role Conflict, Traditional Rulers, Presidents' General

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional authority in Africa and Nigeria in particular has a rich and diverse history that spans centuries, from the pre-colonial, through the colonial and even up till the post-colonial periods; and have not relented in their commitment to the democratic process (Malami, 2011). However, the relevance of traditional authorities in African contemporary politics has generated rancorous debates (Tonwe & Osemwota, 2013; Agbese, 2004; Vaughan, 1991). Traditional authorities have been a primordial and sacrosanct institution existing before the advent of colonialism in Africa. This indigenous structure appears in different forms as well as in their changing roles from pre-colonisation to the present date in Africa (Ihemeje, 2014; Tonwe & Osemwota, 2013). Traditional authorities are indispensable for political transformation in Africa, as they represent a major part of the continent's history, culture, and governance systems.

In reality, traditional authorities cannot be deserted in the quest for stability and community

development in Nigeria, their roles in assurance of security of lives and properties cannot be misjudged. Conversely, the muddling up of traditional rulership with modernity, and corruption has hi-cupped the structural legality of this indigenous institution which is considered as repulsive to global democratic political folklore (Ihemeje, 2014).

It was not until the British colonial officials began to realize that colonial success depended greatly on the recognition and involvement of the traditional authorities that they began to patronize and incorporate them into the Indirect Rule system. This realization was not unconnected with the fact that the Europeans discovered that Nigerians were so bound with their traditions and traditional authorities to the extent that whatever they ordered was what the people would do or not do as the case may be. This account for the saying that institutions of traditional authorities are enduring part of our heritage. They play critical role as the custodian of culture and traditions. Expectedly, traditional authorities are closely linked with the grassroots, and so understand the problems of the people

intimately. Therefore, their role relationships in the peace and smooth administrative functionality of the community become of interest to researchers and academics alike.

In view of the above, concerns have been made by both local and international agencies, policy makers and academics on the role relationship of these institutions, which some scholars and academics claimed as chequered (Obiakor & Okoreaffia, 2021). Communities and traditional authorities in Anambra state have been confronted with myriads of controversies over community power sharing and internal role conflicts between the traditional rulers and the Presidents-General, which have continuously endangered peace, harmony, and stability across the state.

The consequences of these conflicts and controversies have consistently been dire to the community, its members, and the state. These clashes of interest between villages, town unions, traditional rulers and the Presidents General often ensue when a village, town union, traditional ruler or President General perceived denial of their shared resources, allocations, entitlements and right to perpetual control of political and economic powers in the community (Ebegbulem, 2011) or attempt to adjust the predominant qualities, standards, convictions, and philosophy that have kept them in positions of influence and affluence by the other. As a matter of fact, Achebe (1983) argued that with their evolution, traditional rulers and town union phenomena became means of implementation of unpopular and non-community-oriented policies, programmes and projects, and competition for all kinds of social and political achievements within the local communities, evidenced in the 20-million-naira community choose your project initiative in Anambra state.

In the face of managing this recurring fraught relationship in the traditional authorities, the Anambra state government has, through the state legislature, made several provisions for traditional institutions. The state House of Assembly in 2007 enacted the 2007 NO. ANHA/LAW/2007/07 cited as Traditional Rulers Law, which came into force on the 10th September, 2007, amended in 2020 and 2024 respectively, and the Anambra State Homeland Security Law, 2025. (Survey, 2025).

Despite the existence of these laws, frictions persist, casting doubt on the possibility of peaceful co-existence and smooth administrative operations between the two institutions. Both traditional authorities are frequently entangled in role conflicts, as they are each tasked with facilitating community development, resolving disputes, and promoting unity. Moreover, both are recognized as members of the Anambra State Community-Based Agunchemba, as outlined in Section 11(7a-b) of the Anambra State Homeland Security Law, 2025, among other provisions."

Considering the strained relationships between these actors as discussed above, the study aim to examine Traditional Authority and power sharing in Anambra state, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the nature of community power sharing in the Anambra state traditional institutions and how the Anambra state traditional ruler's law has impacted on the role-conflict between Traditional rulers and Presidents-General in Anambra State. Relying on the mix method research design, using primary and secondary sources of data: Questionnaire and Key Informant Interview guide. Data collected were analyzed with descriptive method of data analysis using charts, mean and standard deviation. Hypotheses raised were tested with Chi-square test analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine Traditional Authority and Power Sharing in Anambra State; with specific focus on the Role Conflict between Traditional Rulers and Presidents' General.

Specifically, the study seeks to

- Examine the nature of community power sharing in the Anambra state traditional institutions.
- To investigate how the Anambra state traditional ruler's law has impacted on the role-conflict between the Traditional rulers and Presidents-General in Anambra State.

Research Questions

In line with the specific objectives, the following research questions guided the study.

- What is the nature of community power sharing in the traditional institutions in Anambra state
- How has the Anambra State traditional ruler's law impacted on the role-conflict between the Traditional rulers and Presidents General (PG's) in Anambra State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anambra State Community Based Leadership Sharing System

Communities across Anambra state and south east in general are currently, engrossed in protracted crises on account of disputes over Igweship election/selection, town union leadership, elections, ward councillorship election and other community based leadership positions (Akpulonu, 2023)

According to Akpulonu, (2023), reason for these crises revolves around lack of equity, inclusiveness and fairness, which are the veritable factors that engender peace and harmony in any community. And wherever these indices are absent, there's bound to crisis, distrust among the people. Therefore, to avoid witnessing these crises and put the communities on the path of peace and development, scholars advocate for the inclusion of these ingredients of peace in communities be enshrined in the

constitutions of communities and strictly adhered to, and uphold by the state government.

Akpulonu, (2023), further argued that rotation of community based leadership positions reduces agitation and give a sense of belonging to all sections of communities, there is no community, state, zone, or kindred that does not have competent hands that can efficiently man community based leadership positions at all levels. He added though, there are exceptions in monarchical community leadership system where leadership cannot be rotated and remains a life-time affair. He concluded that laws on rotational leadership in communities be encouraged, both at the community and at state levels respectively.

In agreement with the above argument, Oye (2019), added that rotational community based leadership positions boost inclusiveness, peace, harmony, love for one another and unity which are the essential ingredients for the development of communities, states, and nation. Moreso, apart from inclusiveness, as opined and argued above, rotational community based power sharing will enthrone equity, justice and give room for less of rancor and acrimony because people are assured of a sense of belonging and a sense of ownership of the community. Hence, no section will feel cheated, or marginalized by the dominant kindred. Oye (2019), adduced that rotation of community based leadership brings about respect for the rights of the minority.

Without rotation of community based leadership positions, some parts of the community may not produce the community leader, and that exposure and experience may not go well with such kindreds/section, hence not ideal for our unity even in our diversity. In the words of Oye (2019), "You don't beat a child and expect him not to cry" Hence, "this is why you see some of these agitations rising up daily".

Oye (2019) went on to call for the insertion of the law on rotation in the Nigerian Constitution to address the fear of domination of the minority by the majority groups. "Nigeria needs a law on rotation of positions in her constitution. This will address the fear of domination of the minority by the majority groups. Such law will even address the kind of marginalization and second-class citizenship the Igbo people have been subjected to in Nigeria (Oye, 2019).

According to Akpulonu, (2023), Eze Godwin Ogba the traditional ruler of Umuogudu Akpu autonomous community of Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, affirmed that there are evident of leadership crises among Igbo communities generally which he attributed to disobedience to existing traditional institutions/rules. He added that:

"There are many prominent men and women in some communities who see themselves as kings, or

kingmakers and who always gang up to allocate amenities of their communities when offered without prior knowledge of the traditional ruler in charge of the community.

"If the traditional ruler notices an error in his community and decides to speak against it or insists it has to be fairly done, owing to the fact that such amenities are owned by the people, those selfish individuals will oppose it thereby generating crisis."

He argued that "In the olden days, the ward councilors are answerable to their traditional rulers in which case they bring information and messages from government down to them and when that is done, the traditional ruler in conjunction with his cabinet, ward councilor and stakeholders, would call the attention of the community members to educate and possibly distribute the incentives or amenities to them. But these days, what obtains is the opposite and it has been causing a lot of conflicts in community leadership in Igbo land".

If leadership positions are rotated and built into the constitution as the way to go, it will reduce the struggle for supremacy which is currently noticed in our various communities; it will make leadership positions rotate from kindred to kindred. With that, peace will reign. Eze Godwin Ogba finally adduced that it will be a beautiful thing if Igbo communities make rotation of leadership positions a constitutional matter," (Akpulonu, 2023).

According to Eze Uchechukwu Izekwe, a former councillor of Umuogudu Akpu ward II, Orumba South LGA, Anambra state, noted that imposition of candidates is a serious factor that triggers conflicts in Igbo community leadership, owing to the lacuna created by lack of constitutional provisions. He further added, that in Igbo communities, there are cabals who call themselves godfathers and who are bent on imposing candidates of their choice on others rather than the choice of the masses owing to the fact that there are no existing constitutional provisions spelling out how positions should be assumed by stakeholders (Akpulonu, 2023).

He went further to admit that "once these decisions are not the wishes of the masses, such leadership does not yield positive fruits to the people but few individuals, who are the beneficiaries of the arrangements. This means that such administration is crises-ridden from day one and would not engender development,"

In this line of argument Ugwoke (2023) posits that more than half of the 179 communities in Anambra state have issues with their traditional rulership (Igweship and Presidents-General) because of the involvement of government and some well-placed persons in the communities who engage in circumventing the laid down means of selection/election.

Some persons who do not merit occupying the community's throne in the Igbo traditional consideration are now forcing themselves into the exalted position, using their acquired wealth to buy support in their communities.

In fact, it has become a regular occurrence for communities to march to the Government House in Awka to complain either for or against their traditional rulers, thereby creating tension in most communities. Sometimes, traditional rulers lock horns with their president-general, making it difficult for government projects to be executed peacefully and properly in those communities.

In 2024, Chief Tochukwu Mmodu, Umuoji community leader in Idemili North Local Government Area of the Anambra state led the people of the community on a protest to the Government House, where there protested on the refusal of the state government to issue certificate of recognition to the person selected by the community as its traditional ruler. In his words "although the community has selected Chief Anayo Okoye as the traditional ruler of the town, some individuals in the area have become stumbling blocks, thereby creating a leadership vacuum and stalemate in the town" (Ugwoke, 2023).

In Alor, Idemili South LGA, of Anambra state, the communities of the then Minister of Labor and Productivity, Senator Chris Ngige, there were two traditional rulers, one supported by the Minister and another who has the certificate of recognition from the state government. The Minister supported Igwe Collins Ebele Chukwumesili, while Igwe Mac Anthony Okonkwo was recognized by the state government. The Igweship tussle further affected the position of the President-General of Alor as two parallel groups emerged in the community.

Also, Nanka community in Orumba North Local Council Area, has been experiencing crisis as a result of the tussle for the throne of the town. There has not been total peace in the town since the coronation of Igwe Ezeilo following the death of the former traditional ruler of the community, Igwe Gilbert Oformata. Although Igwe Ezeilo has been on the throne for some years, a section of the community is still opposed to his kingship despite appeals by stakeholders in the town.

Amanuke, in Awka North Local Government Area, of Anambra state, two blood relations from Ezebuilo family struggle for crown to the consternation of the people, currently in court for the Igweship of the town.

In Awka, Chief Austin Ndigwe currently parades himself as the Eze Uzu Awka, even when the recognised traditional ruler, Obi Gibson Nwosu, who has been on the throne for over 30 years, is still alive.

Surprisingly, Chief Austin Ndigwe further has his council members, with loyalist across the town and some persons in the community are further urging him to carry on.

On the way forward out of community based rotational leadership issues and crisis, Ugwoke (2023) argued that the root of the problem of Igbo leadership crisis is on disobedience to constituted authorities and unwritten rule of law. He maintained that the principle of rule of law, equity and fairness should be upheld to resolve the challenges of leadership in Igbo communities. He regretted that lack of constitutionality of rotation process was the major defect which had fanned the embers of crises in the communities especially when it is time to choose leaders. He further advocated that rotation of power or leadership be made a constitutional matter in various towns to engender peace, unity and harmony and leadership structure or system should engender accountability and transparency to the masses. He advised that every other leader in the community should collaborate with their traditional rulers for better insight and direction.

Worthy to note that leadership is a call to service which requires the support of everyone at all levels. Leaders should try and carry their subjects along and ensure that equity and fairness are observed to the letter. With that, leadership crises and challenges in Igbo communities will be eliminated and the world will be a better place for us". Due to lack of these peace factors, the struggle for kingship and other leadership positions has turned many Igbo communities into battle grounds, with some involved in protracted court cases. In some communities, factions exist and the resultant effect is lack of the much needed unity to enable them embark on developmental projects for which Igbo people are known. Sometimes, the struggles for the Igwe position lead to death as diabolical means are often applied to advance the struggle (Ugwoke (2023).

In view of the aforementioned, community power sharing in Anambra state should involve arrangements and agreements by members of a given community within Anambra state, to distribute/share and rotate their traditional leadership structures from one village to another, as the case may be. Therefore, rotational power sharing in communities across Anambra state is a system where community leadership positions are rotated among different sections or kindred's to promote inclusiveness, equity, and fairness. This approach aims to reduce conflicts and agitations that often arise from disputes over traditional leadership positions.

Empirical Review

Traditional Rulers and Role Conflicts; Causes and Solutions

Alao, Mavalla, and Akinnusi (2019) see the contest for control of resources like land, mineral resources and water becoming some of the major factors responsible for role conflicts and confrontations that leads to deaths in some communities across Anambra state. In the same vein Adewuyi, Salami, and Dogara (2021) note that role conflict arises when two or more individuals, groups, communities, or nations pursue unharmonious goals. They equally hold that in most cases, the underlying factors that ignite role conflicts include; scarcity of resources, a clash of interests, incongruence of values, standards, and principles as well as a perception of being displaced by other groups in pursuit of desired goals. Of course, these authors' submissions on the causes of role conflicts are substantial because they truly represent the reasons for most role conflicts. They constitute potential areas that individuals, groups or communities can clash on. Onyebueke, Okwaraji, and Obiechina (2018, p. 174) noted that "conflict as a reality of social relations arises from different interests, desires, goals and value aspirants in the competition for resources to meeting some demands on social life within a defined socio-political environment".

Thus, various factors have been identified as causes of role conflicts between the Traditional rulers and President Generals in communities. These causes however, vary from one community to another. Krause (2020) on causes of role conflicts identifies local-level competition among the political elite, access to resources and land rights, and discrimination and marginalization of social groups as causes.

Yeche (2006) as cited in Alimba (2014, p. 186) avers that, "the causes of role conflicts are not static but rather dynamic and varied in nature depending on the socio-economic and geographical circumstances at the time". In like manner too, Idebe (2019) affirms that community conflicts in Nigeria usually present themselves in different circumstances; their causes are multi-facial and turn out to have dynamic consequences. It is a fact to accept because the causes of conflicts may only be known when it erupts. Thus, one can rightly say it is multi-facial and has its causes not static. Onwudiwe (2004) as cited in Alimba (2014) lists social conditions as population explosion, economic migration, and the anti-poor policies of the government as triggers of role conflicts in the society. This is a fact established because the struggle over land is increasing today because of the increase in population (Saidu, 2015). Relatedly, Oravee (2015) attributes role crises among the traditional leadership in Tiv land to the struggle for farmlands and the exploitation of land related resources, and therefore sees role conflicts linking to the mode of economic production and distribution practiced in the society.

According to Wolff, Deeka and Otiteas cited in Nwobi (2019), most of the role conflicts among traditional institutions in Nigeria are caused by the struggle for land space, resources competition, disputed jurisdiction of traditional rulers, creation and location of local government council headquarters, scarce political and economic resources, micro and macro social structures of Nigeria, population growth and disregard for cultural symbols. Nweze and Etamesor (2021, p. 40) remarked that "conflicts at any level arise from divergence of interests, desires, goals and values aspirations in the competition for resources to meet imposing demands on social life in a defined social-physical environment". They further affirm that it is safe to infer that the fundamental foundation of conflicts is the primal instinct to survive in a reality where the resources for survival are scarce.

A study carried out by Obiajulu, A.O and Biereenu-Nnabugwu in (2016), in Amansea, Isiagu and Nri on the Governance and social conflicts between Traditional Rulers and Presidents-General of Town Unions (Tu's) In Anambra State, Nigeria revealed that; In Isiagu, for instance, 75.6% of respondents saw finance a significant source of TU conflict ($\chi^2=52.8$; $p.001$). In Nri, 53.3% of respondents held a contrary view but this was not statistically significant ($\chi^2.53$; $p.5$). Also in Amansea, 98.4% did not see the release of fund as a source of their TU conflict ($\chi^2=39.5$; $p.001$). It can be inferred that State Government's financial releases to TUs is a source of conflict in Isiagu and to an extent Nri. Qualitative data from Nri upholds that: Financial releases to communities in the state through town unions don't reach the traditional rulers. The road network to our section of Nri town is not tarred. When government gives allocation for the renovation of roads, they simply trip litterate on some of our roads and leave it to be washed by the rains (KII, Secretary Ikenga Nri).

He added that the President-General and his loyalists thought governments' financial allocation to Nri town should be appropriated by the town union alone. When they discovered the palace is entitled to partake in its disbursement, they took an avoidance approach. For this reason *Eze Nri* is often compelled to go to the state government for the money (KII, community leader *Nri*).

In Nri therefore, the financial release is a source of conflict between the traditional ruler and President General and between members of Ikenga-Nri, the parallel TU. In Isiagu, a school block initiated by the caretaker committee, with two million naira released to them by the state, could not be completed. Both members of caretaker committees, and elected TU officials never explained to anybody, how they spent the finance released to the TU. "Leadership of our TU has been characterized by the leaders trying to intimidate and silence those who tried to probe into how the financial releases were utilized" (KII, ward leader Isiagu). In Amansea, the financial release was not seen as a source

of conflict by President-General of the TU. He contended that the traditional ruler does not get involved in the utilization of the fund. This is at variance with what we found at *Nri* and what a government official involved in the disbursement remarked. To exclude royal fathers in the disbursement of such monies is to put cracked palm kernels in a perforated sack (Obiajulu and Biereenu-Nnabugwu 2016).

In another study, Obiajulu, A.O and Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2016), on the creation of caretaker committee by the state as a source of TU conflict in Isiagu, 57% of the respondents saw the creation as an external source of TU conflict ($\chi^2=3.9$, $p > 0.5$). In *Nri*, 78.9% of respondents did not see such a creation as a source of TU conflict. This is not different from the responses got from Amansea where 79.9% did not see the creation of caretaker committee as a source of TU conflict. Thus but for Isiagu, where respondents were divided on this, the creation of caretaker committee was not seen as a source of TU conflict in communities without such a committee in Anambra State. The finding is not at variance with some of our respondents' view during the KII and IDI sessions. In Isiagu, (the only community that experienced the caretaker committee), the source of the conflict was inordinate ambition of the self-styled kingmaker to dictate how TU should be run. Caretaker was an aftermath of this quest.

In that same study, KII, carried out on Isiagu community leader, in 2008 revealed that "while town union election was in progress, a very rich man from Ebe (one of the factions to the conflict), stormed the venue of the election with a team of mobile policemen. He opposed a candidate nominated and presented by Umuzo (another party to the conflict), according to the constitution of our TU. They were asked to leave. They did. On hearing that the election had been held, the man used his connections with the state governments' ministry of local government and chieftaincy matters to nullify the election and impose a caretaker committee on us. We challenged the government by obtaining court injunction restraining the government from imposing the caretaker committee. Government ignored this court order (KII, Community leader, Isiagu).

Gap in Literature

From the plethora of literature reviewed above, the role relationships between the Traditional rulers and Town Unions in the smooth and swift running of the community and the stance of the Traditional rulers' law in coordination of the division of labor among them, as enshrined in the state traditional laws, are fundamental aspect of community engagements. Having gone through the literature review and previous work in the area, there is very little if any evidence-based research that considered the nature of community power sharing in the Anambra state traditional institutions; ways the traditional ruler's law has impacted on the role-conflict between the Traditional rulers and President Generals

(PG's) in Anambra State and the key impediment(s) to peace and harmony amongst traditional authorities in communities of Anambra state. Rather most studies like Obiajulu, A.O and Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2016), Deeka and Otiteas cited in Nwobi (2019), Nweze and Etamesor (2021), Yecho (2006) as cited in Alimba (2014, p. 186), Onwudiwe (2004) as cited in Alimba (2014), Saidu, (2015) and Oravee (2015), (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014) carried out to identify the causes of conflict between traditional rulers and the Town Unions headed by the President Generals; while some approached it from the perspective of state government release of funds to the TU's, some others approached it from the angle of imposition of caretaker committee, while others viewed it from the side of colonial states structures etc. As earlier identified, each of these studies reviewed, little or none considered the variable(s) for the present study. Methodologically, most of the studies were qualitative research, apart from Obiajulu, A.O and Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2016); Oye (2019) and Akpulonu, (2023) that adopted survey research design but based their area of study at Amansea, Isiagu, and *Nri*; Awka, Ekwulobia respectively. Hence the present study filled the gap of scope, design and methodology as identified above.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted and applied a combination of the Conflict and Structural Functional theory. The justification for the adoption of the two theories lies in their collaborative insight to the issues (conflict and the institutional role in addressing the conflict) as enshrined in the studies.

Conflict Theory

The conflict theory as primarily propounded by Karl Marx (1818-1883), a German philosopher and economist and later expanded by other sociologists like Georg Simmel (1858-1918) and Lewis Coser (1913-2003), emphasizes the role of power, inequality and competition in shaping social relationships and institutions. The theory posits that society is divided into classes with conflicting interests, with the ruling class exploiting the subordinate class.

Structural Functional Theory

Accordingly, Mbah (2006) observed that Structural Functional theory originated in the work of anthropologists such as Radcliffe Brown and B Malinowski in the early twentieth century. It was imported to Political science through its sister discipline sociology by Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton and Marion Levy.

Structural functional theory was popularized by Gabriel Almond and James S. Coleman (1960) as a framework of political analysis, which sees the society as consisting of a system of parts that function together for the overall effectiveness and efficiency of society. According to Igwe (2003), the theory views the society as "a system made up of a certain arrangement of parts

(structures), which perform in a coordinated and interdependent manner to achieve the objectives intended for them by the society.

Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2013), opined that Structural Functional Theory “hinges on order, interrelation and balance among parts as a means of maintaining the smooth functioning of the whole; and at the same time regards norms and values as the basis of society, while focusing on social order, which is based on tacit agreement between groups and organizations; structural functional analysis views social change as something that occurs slowly and in an orderly fashion”

In a nutshell, the Structural Functionalism holds the view that in a political system, there are institutions or structures that perform specific functions and that when such institutions fail to perform their functions, the political system will be drastically affected and dysfunctional leading to upheavals which sometimes creates feeling of insecurity in the country” Mark, (2019).

In view of the above, Mark (2019), further noted that “Structural-functionalist theory explains how political institutional failure has engendered role conflict in the traditional authorities in Anambra State.

Relating this theory to the problematic, reveals that the Legislature, Judiciary, and Executives are institutions or structures that perform designated function capable of sustaining cordial or conflicting roles in the Anambra state traditional institution. The implication of the above is that a smooth and cordial operational relationship between the traditional rulers and president generals or conflictual relationship is squarely a function of the designated institutions of government responsible for their operational mechanism. Cordial role-relationship between them signals that “the institutions emplaced for the running of the Local Government and Town Union matters have satisfactorily performed their statutory functions. On the contrary, a conflictual role relationship between them signals under-performance and most often, the activities of such designated institutions of government are outrightly perceived by selfish and corrupt practices with overwhelming emotional influence, most often engulfed in siding the authority of their interest, rather than merit.

Meanwhile, the primary function of government is to protect lives, respect fundamental human rights of the citizens, freedom of the press, and maintain law and order. The study contends that these functions are sometimes met and enforced by the Anambra State Government, and sometimes are hardly met and has been the reason for the controversies in the traditional authorities in communities of Anambra state. That is why communities continue to suffer from different kinds of conflicts ranging from role conflicts and leadership tussle among others. This shows that the

institutions or structures charged with the responsibility of spelling out the various roles and responsibilities among the traditional authorities and the communities may have not performed their functions as expected, as their errors and mistakes have marred adequate cordial relationship in the traditional authorities, resulting in role conflicts between the traditional authorities and the Traditional rulers and Presidents General in particular.

In applying the theories to the problematic, Conflict theory submits that Power is unequally distributed, with the dominant group using its power to maintain its position and exploits the subordinate group. Hence, Conflict theory suggests that social relations between the traditional institutions in Anambra state are perpetually confronted and characterized by competition and role conflicts especially as its regards to resources, power and status. Therefore, social change occurs through conflict and struggle between them, rather than through gradual, peaceful means.

In addition, the Structural Functional theory posits that it is within the ambit of the established institution of Government to swiftly burst into action to put to rest any sign and signal of conflictual relationship within the town unions and the traditional rulers. Hence, there may be system collapse.

The point here in essence is that, the management of role-conflict in the traditional institutions is squarely an institutional function of the state government, and maintenance of social, political, economic, and cultural stability within them from the structural-functionalist perspective. The structural-functionalist perspective is institutional efforts to move the entire society communities inclusive towards peace, tranquility and development. It is in the light of this that Ogwudile (2019), p. 91) submits thus, “...the state government as a structure within a given system has functions to perform. Thus, the state government as a structure, functions here as a conflict manager to bring about cohesion and harmony by managing role conflicts between the Traditional Rulers and President Generals in the communities within its sphere.

Research Design

The study adopted a Mix method research design. This research strategy was chosen for this study because it allowed the researcher to acquire direct information from the field and to integrate quantitative and qualitative techniques, allowing for mixed method. A study design that allows for triangulation according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000), has a higher likelihood of boosting the credibility and validity of research findings.

The population of the study comprised of 3,452 persons, encompassing all the Traditional rulers, all the Presidents-General, 10-man executives of the various town unions of the 179 communities in Anambra state, 10

principal officers of Local Government authority spread across the 21 Local Government Areas, 6 principal cabinet officers of the Traditional rulers of the 179 communities and 20 officers cum staff of the Anambra state Local government and chieftaincy office Awka (survey, 2025).

The sample size for this study comprised 358 respondents, determined by the use of Taro Yamani sample size determination Formula as shown below:

Formula:
$$n = \frac{N}{1+(Ne^2)}$$

Where, $n =$ sample size
 $N =$ population size
 $e =$ error in limit
 $1 =$ constant

Where also $n =$ sample size
 $N =$ 3452
 $e =$ 0.05

Substituting in the formula
$$= \frac{3452}{1+(3452 \times 0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{3452}{1+(3452 \times 0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{3452}{1+8.63}$$

$$= \frac{3452}{9.63}$$

$$= 358.36$$

$$\approx 358$$

First, two traditional rulers were randomly selected in each LGA, also 4 Presidents-General were conveniently selected in each LGA's Apart from 11 LGA, s Aguata, Anaocha, Ihiala, Ogbaru, Nnewi North and South, Idemili North and South, Oyi, Ekwusigo, Orumba North, that have large numerical strength got 5 respectively. Due to lack of sampling frame for Traditional cabinets and TU members' convenience sampling was deployed at this point of sampling. At this stage, 3 TU and 2 cabinet members were selected in each LGA, while Aguata, Anaocha, Ogbaru, Idemili North and Nnewi North got 6 respectively. In the same vein, 6 principal staff of the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy were also conveniently selected.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample Size

S/N	Variables	Frequency (n = 358)
1	Traditional Rulers	42
2	Presidents General	95
3	Town Unions and cabinet members	110
4	Staff of LG A ^s	105
5	Staff of LG & Chieftaincy	6
Total		358

Source: Field survey, 2025

A semi-structured questionnaire rated on a Likert scale mixed up with multiple response option, audio tape recorder and Key Informant Interview (KII) guide were used to collect data for the study. The semi-structured questionnaires was used to collect quantitative data from respondents, while the Key Informant Interview (KII) guide was used to collect qualitative data.

Direct method and use of technology like the mobile phone was adopted by the researcher and two research assistants in the administration of the KII and collection of the questionnaires. Descriptive and thematic analysis was employed in the study. Data collected were analyzed with percentages, mean, and standard deviation. Hypotheses raised were tested with a Chi-square test analysis at a 0.05 level of significance.

Descriptive statistics such as charts, frequency and percentages were used for quantitative data analysis. A Chi-square test was used to test for the relationship among variables at $P < 0.05$. All computations was carried out using Microsoft Excel, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22.0

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the nature of community power sharing in the Anambra State traditional institutions?

Results of Research Question one are presented in Table 2 below

Table 2: Nature of Power sharing in the Anambra State traditional institutions

S/N	Item statements	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Life Inheritance	2.81	0.96	A
2	Power sharing by voting among villages	2.41	1.11	D
3	Hierarchical rotation of power among villages	2.97	0.92	A
4	Government decides who wield power in the community	2.79	0.93	A
5	Power is wielded by the oldest in the community	2.77	0.86	A
6	Power by virtue of one's contact	1.86	0.91	D
7	Power by popular support by the members of the community	2.76	1.07	A
Grand Mean		2.62	0.97	A

Note: \bar{X} =Mean, SD=Standard Deviation, N= Number of Respondents=358, A= Agreed and D=Disagreed

The data presented in Table 2 above showed respondents' views on the nature of power sharing within Anambra State traditional institutions. Based on the decision rule ($\bar{X} > 2.50$), five out of seven items were agreed upon by the respondents as common practices of power sharing in their communities. Specifically, the respondents agreed that hierarchical rotation of power among villages, life inheritance, government influence in deciding who wields power, power wielded by the oldest in the community, and power by popular support from community members are all prevalent systems of power sharing in Anambra traditional institutions. This is consistent with the views expressed by both traditional rulers and president generals. Here are samples of interviewee responses from traditional rulers:

"As the traditional ruler, my position is one of life inheritance. My father was the Igwe, and his father before him. My power is sacred and rooted in our ancestry. The PG, however, is elected. This creates a mix of traditional and modern leadership."

"Leadership in my community is a balance. The Igwe position is inherited, but the leadership of the town union is handled through hierarchical rotation among villages. This ensures every village gets a turn at the helm, which helps maintain some form of equitable power sharing."

"The oldest person in our community, the Okpala, holds significant influence. Their wisdom and experience are respected. Their voice is very strong in decisions, and they often act as a tie-breaker. This is a common practice."

In similar vein, the president generals, shared their views as regards the nature of community power sharing in the Anambra State traditional institutions with some of these as their responses:

"I was elected into office through popular support from the community members. We have a town union constitution that guides my operations. This system, in my opinion, is more effective because it gives the people a direct say in who leads them. We have moved beyond just inheritance and old age."

"The government has a significant say in our community affairs. They recognize both the Igwe and the PG, and in some cases, they can influence who holds power by either recognizing or de-recognizing a leader. This is a big problem because it often leads to conflict."

"Power is not always shared by voting. It's more of an informal rotation and a respect for seniority. This doesn't always guarantee equitable power sharing because some villages are more influential than others."

However, the respondents disagreed with the statements that power is shared by voting among villages and that power is acquired by virtue of one's personal contacts ($\bar{X} < 2.50$). This suggests that these power-sharing formulas were not widely practiced or accepted as legitimate forms of power distribution in Anambra State. In summary, both the quantitative data and qualitative accounts point to a traditional, lineage-based and rotational power-sharing system, with significant influence from seniority and the government, but with limited use of democratic processes like voting in determining traditional leadership.

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Rotational power sharing is independent of traditional institutions in Anambra State

The Results of Hypothesis 1 is presented in Table 3

Table 3: A cross tabulation of the responses of the respondents on rotational power sharing across traditional institutions of Anambra State (n = 358)

S/N	Anambra State traditional institutions	Responses on rotational power sharing			p-value
		Agree	Disagree	Freq.	
1.	Traditional Rulers	42 (11.20)	0 (0.00)	42	0.00
	President Generals	24 (6.70)	71 (19.80)	95	
	Town Union and cabinet members	0 (0.00)	110 (30.70)	110	
	Local Government council and Chieftaincy office	0 (0.00)	113 (31.60)	111	

The data on Table 3 is a cross tabulation showing the association between rotational power sharing and traditional institutions in Anambra State. From the Table 3, it can be seen that all the Traditional Rulers representing 42 representatives, agreed that rotational power sharing exists within their institution. Among the President Generals (95 representatives), only 24 (25.3%) agreed that rotational power sharing still exist in the State, while 71 (74.7%) had

divergence opinion. For the Town Union, none agreed that rotational power sharing exists, while all 110 disagreed. Similarly, among the 111 respondents from State/Local Government and Chieftaincy affairs, none agreed that power sharing exist in the State, while all 113 disagreed. In summary, the analysis revealed that majority 294 (82.1%) respondents disagreed, indicating that rotational power sharing is largely not practiced or not recognized across most traditional

institutions. However, a probability value of 0.00 indicated that Chi-square test is significant. Therefore, rotational power sharing significantly depends on the type of traditional institution in Anambra State ($p < 0.05$).

Research Question 2: How has the Anambra State traditional ruler’s law impacted on the role-conflict

between traditional rulers and president general’s in Anambra State?

The results of Research Question two are presented on Tables 4, 5 & 6, respectively.

Awareness of the law and its coverage

Table 4: Awareness of the law and coverage

S/N	Variables	Frequency (n = 358)	Percentage %
1.	Do you know of the existence of Anambra state traditional Rulers Law?		
	Yes, Very well covered	185	51.7
	No, I do not	173	48.3
2.	Are Traditional rulers covered by the law?		
	Yes, Very well covered	210	58.7
	No	148	41.3
3.	Are Presidents General covered by the law?		
	Yes, very well covered	190	53.1
	No	168	46.9

Table 4 presents findings on the awareness of the Anambra State Traditional Rulers’ Law and perceptions of its coverage in the State. Out of the 358 respondents, 185 (51.7%) indicated that they were aware of the existence of the law, while 173 (48.3%) reported that they had no knowledge of the law. The result also showed that when respondents were asked whether traditional rulers are covered by the law, 210 respondents, representing 58.7%, affirmed that traditional rulers were very well covered, whereas 148 respondents (41.3%) believed otherwise. Regarding the coverage of Presidents General, responses were more evenly divided, with 190 respondents (53.1%) agreeing that Presidents General were very well covered by the law, and 168 (46.9%) stating that they are not. Overall, the results of the analysis, indicates that while there is a fair level of awareness and recognition that traditional rulers are covered by the law, there remains a significant proportion of the population who were either unaware of the law or uncertain about its scope particularly with respect to President Generals. The near-equal split in responses suggests possible ambiguity or lack of effective dissemination of the law’s provisions. This could contribute to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, or conflicts in the administration of traditional leadership structures in Anambra State. These

gaps were echoed in the views of interview respondents. Based on the quantitative results showing limited awareness of the law’s full scope and unclear coverage of PGs, here are reflections from traditional rulers:

"The Anambra State Traditional Rulers’ Law has helped define my role. I now have a legal basis for my authority. However, many people are not fully aware of the law's provisions, and it's not well-disseminated. This is why you still see confusion. I feel my role is well-spelt-out in the law, but for the PG, it's not as clear."

"Since the law was amended, I can say there has been some improvement in my relationship with the PG. We now have a clearer idea of our responsibilities. However, the law is not perfect. The role of the President General is not well defined, which still causes friction."

"Frankly, the law hasn't changed much. The PG still tries to override my authority on some matters, especially when it involves money or land. This is a two-way street, and the problem is that there is still a significant ambiguity in the law itself, which leads to conflict."

Role definition in the law

Table 5: Role definition in the law

S/N	Variables	Frequency (n = 358)	Percentage %
1.	Are the roles of the Presidents General spelt out in the law?		
	Yes, well spelt out	160	44.7
	Not at all	198	55.3
2.	Are the roles of the traditional rulers spelt out in the law?		
	Yes, well spelt out	190	53.1
	Not at all	168	46.9
3.	Are the town unions enshrined in the law?		
	Yes	225	62.8
	No	133	37.2
4.	Is there any provision for people with special needs?		
	Yes	90	25.1
	No	75	20.9
	I don't know	193	53.9

Table 5 presents results on the extent to which the roles of various actors and groups are defined within the Anambra State Traditional Rulers' Law. When respondents were asked whether the roles of Presidents General are clearly stated in the law, 160 (44.7%) respondents affirmed that the roles were well spelt out while 198 respondents (55.3%) disagreed, indicating that the majority believe the law does not clearly define the roles of Presidents General.

On the other hand, when asked about the clarity of role definitions for traditional rulers, the responses were slightly more positive, with 190 respondents (53.1%) acknowledging that the roles were well spelt out, compared to 168 respondents (46.9%) who indicated that they were not. This shows that while over half of the respondents believed that the law provided clear guidance on the roles of traditional rulers, there was still a considerable proportion that finds such provisions inadequate or unclear. From the interview data, similar concerns were raised by Presidents General:

"The law is a good step, but it hasn't completely solved the problem. The roles are still not clearly spelt out. The Traditional Ruler often feels he can override me on matters that are under the town union's jurisdiction, and vice-versa. This is why you see a near-equal perception of both of us overriding each other."

"We have seen some improvement in the relationship, but it's not a complete success. The law gives more power to the Traditional Ruler, but it doesn't adequately empower the President General. The lack of a clear legal framework for my office is a major challenge. The government needs to be clearer on what the PG can and cannot do."

"The law does not clearly define our roles. The government does not adequately provide these role relationships. This leads to conflict over superiority and who has the final say on community projects."

Furthermore, in relation to the legal recognition of town unions, majority, 225 (62.8%), of the

respondents agreed that town unions were enshrined in the law, while 133 (37.2%) of the respondents believed otherwise. This suggests that town unions are more clearly acknowledged in the legal framework compared to the roles of Presidents General.

Regarding the inclusivity of the law, especially as it relates to people with special needs, only 90 (25.1%) affirmed that there was provision for such individuals. In contrast, 75 respondents (20.9%) indicated that there was no such provision, while 193 (53.9%) respondents reported that they do not know whether the law includes provisions for people with special needs or not. This high level of uncertainty suggests either poor awareness, or an actual lack of inclusion in the legal document. These gaps may contribute to role confusion, exclusion, and tension in the governance and administration of traditional institutions across Anambra State. Key informants confirmed these gaps in clarity and dissemination:

"We have tried to provide a legal framework, but there is still an information gap. Many people, including the leaders themselves, are not fully aware of the law's content, especially concerning the Presidents General. This is why you see such a split in responses on whether the law covers them."

"The law has definitely had an impact. We have seen a decline in the number of formal complaints. However, the law itself is not a panacea. The roles of the Traditional Ruler and the PG are still not perfectly defined. This is why you see the high number of respondents saying both leaders can override each other, which suggests a widespread belief in mutual power struggles."

"We can't say the government has adequately provided role relationships. While we have the law, its implementation and dissemination have been a challenge. The fact that a large portion of the population is unaware of the law or feels it's unclear, especially for the PG, shows that there's more work to be done. The lack of specific roles for the PG is a major oversight."

Table 6: Role relationship and power dynamic

S/N	Variables	Frequency (n = 358)	Percentage %
1.	Do you know the condition of the role relationship of the Traditional ruler and the President General?		
	Yes	155	43.3
	No	203	56.7
2.	Does the Traditional Ruler override the President General?		
	Yes	348	97.2
	Am not sure	10	2.8
3.	Does the President General override the Traditional Ruler		
	Yes	333	93.0
	Am not sure	25	7.0
4.	Has there been improvement in the role relationship between the traditional rulers and the president general since the amendment of the Anambra State Traditional rulers' law?		
	Yes	205	57.3
	No	153	42.7

Table 6 presents results on the role relationship and power dynamics between Traditional Rulers and Presidents General in Anambra State. On the matter regarding the condition of the role relationship between Traditional Rulers and Presidents General, 155 (43.3%) respondents, indicated yes, while, 203 (56.7%) respondents indicated they did not. This suggests that more than half of the respondents lack awareness or clarity about roles between these two leadership structures.

On the issue of dominance or power hierarchy, the responses revealed an interesting pattern. When asked whether the Traditional Ruler overrides the President General, majority 348 (97.2%) of the respondents affirmed that the Traditional Ruler holds overriding authority, while only 10 (2.8%) of the respondents were unsure. Similarly, when the question was reversed asking if the President General overrides the Traditional Ruler 333 (93.0%) of the respondents still maintained that this was the case, while 25 (7.0%) expressed uncertainty. These responses indicate a widespread belief that both figures may exercise overriding authority depending on context or interpretation, potentially suggesting confusion or

overlap in roles, or a situation where power struggles are perceived to be mutual rather than one-sided.

Furthermore, respondents were asked whether there has been any improvement in the role relationship between Traditional Rulers and Presidents General since the amendment of the Anambra State Traditional Rulers' Law. Here, 205 (57.3%) indicated that there has been improvement, while 153 (42.7%) disagreed.

Overall, the findings from Table 6 reveal a mixed perception of role clarity and authority between Traditional Rulers and Presidents General. Despite some observed improvements since the law's amendment, the data suggests that clearer legal definitions and frameworks are still needed to foster harmony and effective collaboration between traditional authorities in Anambra State.

Hypothesis Two

H02: Anambra State traditional ruler's law has not significantly impacted role-conflict between traditional rulers and president generals in Anambra State

The Results of Hypothesis 2 is presented on Table 7

Table 7: A cross tabulation of the impact of Anambra State traditional ruler's law on role-conflict between traditional rulers and president generals in Anambra State (n = 358)

S/N	Anambra State traditional institutions	Responses on improvement in the role relationship between the traditional rulers and the president general since the amendment of the Anambra State Traditional rulers' law			P-value
		Yes	No	Freq.	
1.	Traditional Rulers	42 (11.20)	0 (0.00)	42	0.00
	President Generals	95 (26.50)	0 (0.00)	95	
	Town Union	70 (19.60)	40 (11.20)	110	
	State Local Government/Chieftaincy	0 (0.00)	113 (31.60)	111	

Table 7 presents a cross-tabulation of responses regarding whether there has been improvement in the role relationship between Traditional Rulers and Presidents General since the amendment of the Anambra

State Traditional Ruler's Law. According to the results on the Table, data, all the respondents from the Traditional Rulers category indicated that there has been improvement in the role relationship since the

amendment of the law. Similarly, all 95 representing 26.5% respondents from the President Generals group and 70 (19.6%) from the Town Union group equally agreed that improvement has occurred. However, among respondents from State/Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, none acknowledged any improvement. In fact, all 113 (31.6%) from this group disagreed, as did 40 respondents (11.2%) from the Town Union, resulting in a total of 153 respondents (42.7%) who believe there has been no improvement in the role relationship. In summary, the analysis indicates that majority (57.3 %) observed progress, while a significant minority still perceived continued tension and lack of change. This relationship was further supported by Chi-square test which revealed that the amendment of the Anambra State Traditional Ruler's Law has had a significant impact on the role-conflict between Traditional Rulers and President Generals ($p < 0.05$).

FINDINGS

The study found that the nature of community power sharing in Anambra State's traditional institutions is characterized by a blend of hierarchical, rotational, and hereditary practices, often influenced by the oldest members of the community and popular support. However, these traditional methods are also significantly impacted by the state government's influence in deciding who wields power.

Also, rotational power sharing is not consistently practiced across all institutions and its application depends significantly on the type of traditional institution.

Lastly, the study also revealed that the Anambra State Traditional Rulers' Law has had a significant impact on role-conflict. A majority of respondents reported an improvement in the relationship between traditional rulers and presidents-general since the law was amended. However, the study found a significant information gap, with a large proportion of the population either unaware of the law or uncertain about its provisions. Specifically, the law was not seen as having clearly defined the roles of Presidents-General, leading to continued ambiguity and role confusion.

The results showed a widespread perception that both the traditional ruler and the president-general could override each other, indicating a lingering power struggle.

The study concluded that the lack of specifically defined roles by the government was a significant contributor to the role-conflict.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the governance landscape in Anambra State's traditional institutions is shaped by a dynamic interplay of indigenous customs

and modern political realities. Community power sharing remains rooted in culturally significant structures such as hierarchical succession, rotational leadership, and gerontocracy, yet it is inconsistently applied across communities. While these systems sustain cultural heritage, their stability is undermined by state interference, politicization of leadership recognition, and limited adoption of democratic selection processes.

The Anambra State Traditional Rulers' Law, though intended to clarify the boundaries between traditional rulers and Presidents-General, has had a mixed impact. In some communities, it has improved administrative coordination, but in many others it has exacerbated role conflicts due to ambiguity, poor dissemination, and overlapping responsibilities. This structural dualism sustains rivalry over political recognition, administrative control, and financial resources. Peace and harmony among traditional authorities are further hindered by superiority contests, resource disputes, stalled development projects, and the absence of well-defined institutional roles. These factors contribute to persistent community divisions, weakened governance, and diminished public trust.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To enhance legitimacy and consistency in community power sharing, there should be a codification of customary leadership succession practices at the community level, developed collaboratively by traditional councils, town unions, and state authorities. Such codification should respect cultural heritage while establishing clear, community-approved procedures for leadership selection and rotation, thereby reducing disputes and ensuring equitable representation.
- The Anambra State government should review and amend the Traditional Rulers' Law to clearly define the functions, powers, and limits of both traditional rulers and Presidents-General. This review should be accompanied by widespread sensitization campaigns in local languages to ensure leaders and citizens understand the provisions, thereby reducing ambiguity and overlapping authority that fuel role conflicts.
- To address the structural and socio-economic barriers to peace, a state-supported Traditional Leadership Mediation and Accountability Framework should be established. This body would mediate disputes over authority, oversee transparent management of community funds, monitor land-related agreements, and ensure timely completion of community projects, thus building trust and sustaining harmony among traditional authorities

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