



Engaging The Traditional Rulers In Curbing Violence And Insecurity At The Grassroots Level In Enugu State, Nigeria

Dr. Ojel Clara Anidi¹

Department of Language Studies
Institute of Management and Technology (IMT) Enugu, Nigeria
ojelanidi@imt.edu.ng

Dr. Ugonne Onuoha²

Department of Social Sciences and Humanities
Institute of Management and Technology (IMT) Enugu, Nigeria
uokamkpa@imt.edu.ng

Date of Submission: 14-03-2024

Date of Acceptance: 28-03-2024

Abstract

The ubiquitous phenomena of unrest, conflicts, violence, and poverty in Nigeria have brought forth questions regarding the role of traditional rulers in spearheading communities that enjoy, greatly, freedom from fear and freedom from want. It is upon this backdrop that this pilot research is anchored, on engaging the traditional rulers, who are the closest authorities to these areas, in curbing violence and insecurity at the grassroots level. This paper aimed to ascertain the role of traditional rulers in curbing insecurity at the grassroots level is also aimed to identify the nature of violence and insecurity peculiar with grassroots communities in Enugu State and further aimed to improve the capacity of traditional rulers for sustainable peace and security at the grassroots level. The descriptive research design was used. Stratification sampling technique was respectively used to select the respondents. The target population for this study was 30 traditional rulers. Structured questionnaires were used for data collection. Ten traditional rulers were randomly selected from the three geo-political zones of the state. The number of the questionnaires was 30 which was administered and returned during a focus group discussion. All the 30 questionnaires were submitted. Simple percentages, tables, graphs and charts were adopted for data analysis. As a result of the findings from the questionnaire, a workshop on capacity building for traditional rulers on conflict management was conducted. The study findings indicate that traditional rulers play minimal role in addressing conflicts, violence and insecurities at the grassroots level. It revealed that there are common violence, conflicts and insecurities existing at the grassroots level in the

three geo political zones of Enugu State. It also revealed that the majority of the traditional rulers lack the capacity and knowledge of peace building and conflict management. Recommendations are made along these lines.

Keywords: Conflict, Violence, Insecurity, Grassroots-communities, Traditional rulers

I. Introduction:

Traditional rulers are those individuals who are customarily appointed, selected or elected to pilot the affairs of the customary people in a given society. They are sometimes called traditional chiefs, traditional chieftains, traditional leaders, kings and queens, etc., and in Nigeria, traditional rulers are classified into four categories, namely, paramount rulers, clan heads and village heads (Ojua and Isokon, 2017). Their major role is to enforce the rules, norms and values of their people (Ekpen and Uzor, 2013). Dominic and Tanko (2015) assert that traditional rulers represent the embodiment of a people's rich culture, as agents of development, as well as catalyst of change.

Traditional rulers are considered as repositories of local sociopolitical authority (Nlerum and Sachs, 2003). Afigbo (1972) posits that traditional rulers are people that perform religious, legislative, executive and judicial functions. Traditional chiefs are not only the custodian of culture and traditions, but also serve as the political power-base of the people at the grassroots, mobilizing them for community development (Jalong and Faji, 2011). Before the advent of British rule in Nigeria, traditional rulers were the sole authority that governs the different communities that



constitute the present-day Nigeria. Local administration was centered on traditional rulers who were revered and regarded by their subjects to possess supernatural powers (Mahmud, 2008).

In the present day Nigeria, traditional rulers formed the nucleus of governance at the grass root level. According to Mahmud (2008), the geographical spheres of authority of traditional rulers were essentially localised and no traditional ruler ever had jurisdiction over the entire geographical area of modern Nigeria. Also, traditional rulers play prominent roles in the contemporary local government administration. Apart from occupying the position of chief executives of their localities, they also serve as advisers to local government authorities (Egule and Bassey, 2010).

There is no gainsaying that the government of Nigeria is not addressing violence and insecurity which has bedeviled sustainable development in the polity. For obvious reasons, the government has severally summoned traditional rulers in addressing the menace caused by violence and insecurity. Some of these traditional rulers lack the capacity to address such issues. There is no constitutional provision for the office of traditional rulers, to this effect there is no codified qualification for the office of traditional rulers. This explains why there is need to improve the capacity of traditional rulers in addressing such issues as violence and insecurity. Their role in curbing insecurity and violence in their communities is inevitable.

Statement of Problem

Efforts in place to address issues bothering on violence and insecurity seem to be inadequate. This is because despite the efforts of the government of Nigeria to ensure protection of lives and property at different levels of government, violence and insecurity continue to be on the increase with hydra headed manifestations. All these violence and insecurity happenings are traced to indigenous communities, which threatens greatly the survival of the inhabitants of such communities and its environs. Even though governments are employing relevant strategies to address these issues, they are in most cases not too close to adequately nip it in the bud before escalation because they are not conversant with the terrain and culture of the grassroots communities. This is where the traditional authorities are of great importance to cover the gap which exists between the government and the grassroots communities especially in achieving sustainable peace and security. The role of the traditional rulers especially in the South East

has been relegated at the expense of politicians. This affects to great extent their involvement in community development and ultimately conflict management and peace building in their communities. Such passive dispositions of traditional rulers are worrisome and a negation to achieving sustainable peace and security in grassroots communities. The role of traditional rulers in conflict management and peace building is inevitable. They are the gatekeepers of the grassroots communities. In this regard also Axel (1998) asserts that traditional rulers try to make peace within the community and with neighbouring communities. Nwankwo (1992) identifies some relevant roles played by traditional rulers in Nigeria during precolonial, colonial and even modern times. He stated that traditional rulers perform amongst others the role of making or contributing to law making and judgement, adjudication in disputes in their communities. They also maintain peace, order and security at the grassroots level.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this work are as follows:

1. To ascertain the role of traditional rulers in curbing insecurity at the grassroots level.
2. To identify the nature of violence and insecurity peculiar with grassroots communities in Enugu state.
3. To improve the capacity of traditional rulers for sustainable peace and security at the grassroots level.

II. Method

Participants

The participants were randomly selected from the three geopolitical zones of Enugu state which include, Enugu East, Udi and Nsukka LGAs respectively. With the assistance of the Enugu state ministry of traditional and chieftaincy matters, 10 traditional rulers were invited from each selected LGA, for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), the total participants for this study were 30. The participants were basically males and adults. Our choice of these LGAs was basically for proximity reasons and to sample traditional rulers in Enugu State on the objectives of the study.

Procedure

From the Enugu State ministry of traditional and chieftaincy matters, three LGAs were selected to represent the three geopolitical zones in Enugu state (Enugu East, Enugu West and Enugu



North). We wrote to the Chairman of each selected traditional council to appoint 10 traditional rulers for the purposes of this study. A Focus Group Discussion was scheduled during which we had face to face interview with the participants. The questionnaires were equally administered and returned. The instrument was structured following the Likert scale as well as demographic items. As part of the study, a workshop was organized which was aimed at improving the capacity of the traditional rulers on conflict management and peace-building. The participants were the 30 selected traditional rulers from the selected LGAs and geo political zones. The study relied on all the 30 questionnaires which was administered and returned for data analysis. Situational analysis as well as use of tables, percentages, graphs and charts were all employed in the analysis of the data collected.

Measurement

The instrument was denoted as TRCVIGENS2023, which provided items bothering on the objectives of the study and demographic data such as age, marital status, etc. The instrument response format was based on Likert scale excluding the demographic items. It was structured in two parts A and B. Part A dealt with the demographic items which the part B consisted three sections denoted as A,B,C. with items bothering on the objectives of the question. The items in section A

were designed in, and scored in a five point response scale ranging from Strongly Agree = 1, Agree = 2, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 4 and Strongly Disagree = 5. The sections B and C consists of two point response of Yes = 1 and No = 0, as well as unstructured questions.

Reliability and Validity of the Instruments

Best and Kahn (2006) define validity as the quality of a data gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to measure what is supposed to measure. In justifying the validity of this study, number of steps was taken. First, the use of random sample and convenience sample provided the study with rich information that enabled the generalization of finding to wider populations. Second, the data collection methods through the use of questionnaire and interview ensured excellent results. Reliability on the other hand, is the degree of consistency that the instrument or procedure demonstrates (Best and Kahn 2006). In this study reliability was achieved by measuring consistent results from the respondents. Reliability of data was assured through information collected from relevant respondents with specific attention to key issues, related to the role of traditional rulers in curbing violence in their communities and also peculiar violence, insecurity and conflicts existing in their respective communities.

III. Results

Table 1 – Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	30	100
<u>Marital Status</u>		
Married	30	100
<u>Age group</u>		
41-60 years	7	23.3
61-80 years	18	60.0
81 years and above	5	16.7
Total	30	100.0
<u>Educational Status</u>		
Primary	3	10.0
Secondary	8	26.7
Tertiary	19	63.3
Total	30	100.0
<u>LGA</u>		
Udi	10	33.3



Udenu	10	33.3
Enugu-East	10	33.3
Total	30	100.0

Table 2 – Attitude and practice of traditional rulers on violence and insecurity

Question Domains	Strongly Agree n (%)	Agree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Strongly Disagree n (%)
TRs are stakeholders in curbing insecurity	2 (6.7)	-	-	3 (10)	25 (83.3)
TRs initiated projects for curbing insecurity	2 (6.7)	-	-	4 (13.3)	24 (80.0)
TRs support government on initiatives to curb insecurity	-	-	-	2 (6.7)	28 (93.3)
TRs sponsor projects to curb violence	1 (3.3)	-	-	11 (36.7)	18 (60.0)
TRs are actively involved in government sponsored projects to curb violence and insecurity	-	10 (33.3)	4 (13.3)	4 (13.3)	11 (36.7)

Key – TRs: Traditional Rulers

Table 3–Response attributes to violence and insecurity within the community

Headings	Frequency	Percent
<u>Cases of insecurity</u>		
Land dispute	4	9.3
Drug abuse	9	20.9
Kidnapping	16	37.2
Burglary	3	7.0
Fulani Herdsmen	7	16.3
Cultism	1	2.3
President-General Election Conflicts	2	4.7
Youth Restiveness	1	2.3
Total	43	100.0
<u>Community structures in charge of security</u>		
Neighbourhood Watch	21	42.0
Forest Guard	11	22.0
Vigilante	4	8.0
Community Progressive Union	3	6.0
Government	2	4.0
Council of Chiefs	2	4.0
Security Council	5	10.0
Police	2	4.0
Total	50	100.0
<u>Fund generation for security</u>		
Government	18	31.6
Community Levy	22	38.6
Individual Donations	17	29.8
Total	57	100.0
<u>Intervention strategies employed to curb violence</u>		
Stop Community-based Security Operatives	2	6.3
Support Community-based Security Operatives	13	40.6
Security Stakeholders Meetings	4	12.5
Create Small and Medium Scale Business	2	6.3



Oath-taking	5	15.6
CommunitySensitization	4	12.5
None	2	6.3
Total	32	100.0
<u>Strategies you think that will curb violence</u>		
Oath-taking	3	15.0
Strengthening security Operatives	7	35.0
Creating Employment	4	20.0
Government support	4	20.0
Involve traditional rulers in law drafting and removal of PG office	2	10.0
Total	20	100.0

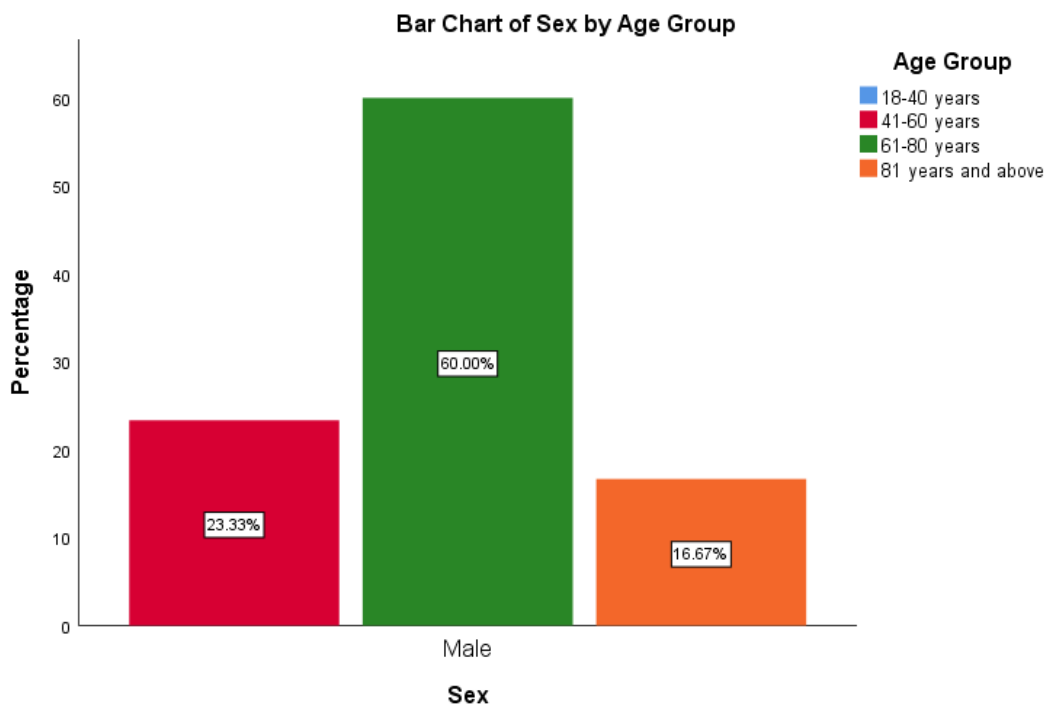


Figure 1 – Bar chart showing Gender by Age group

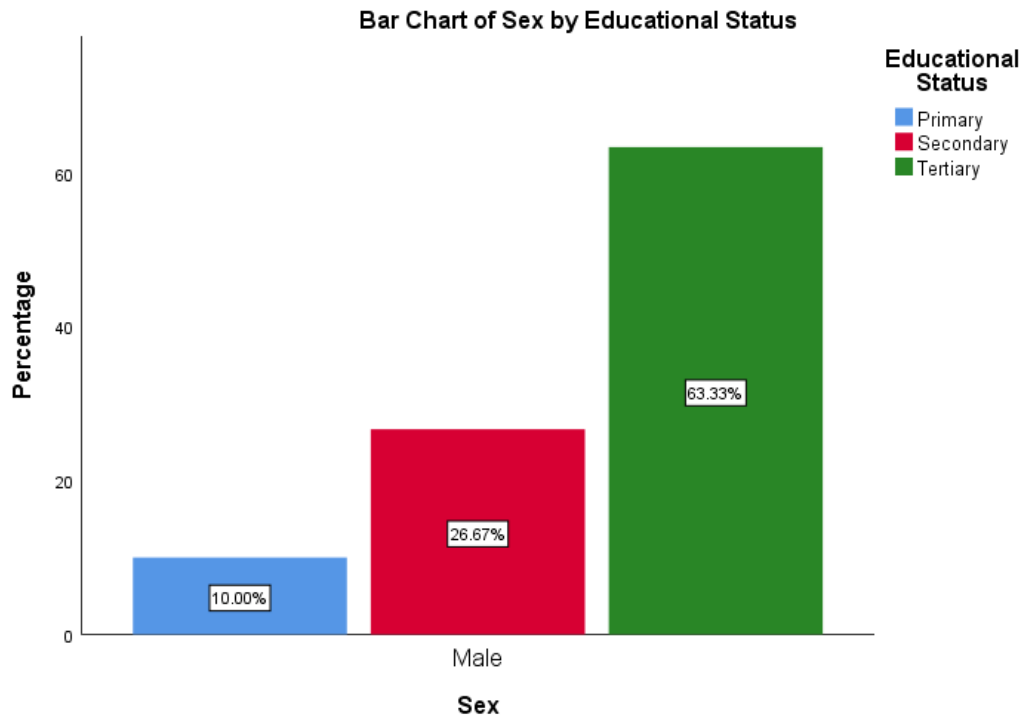


Figure 2 – Bar chart showing Gender by Educational Status

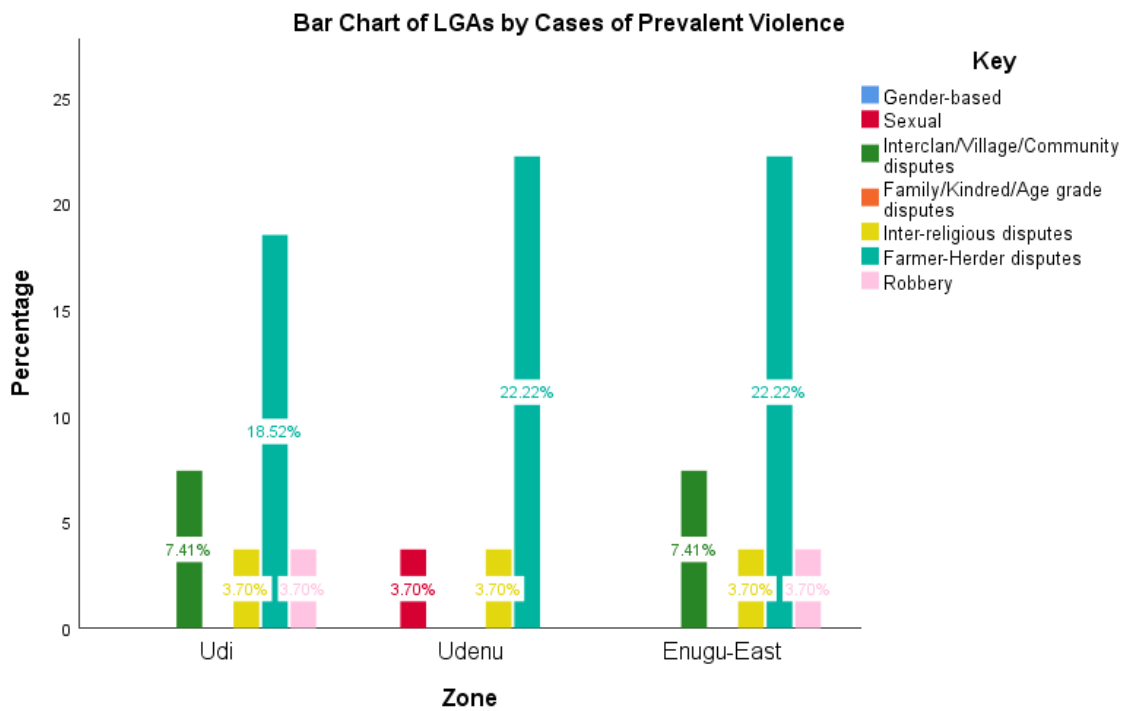


Figure 3 – Bar chart showing of Local Government Areas (LGAs) by specific prevalent cases of violence

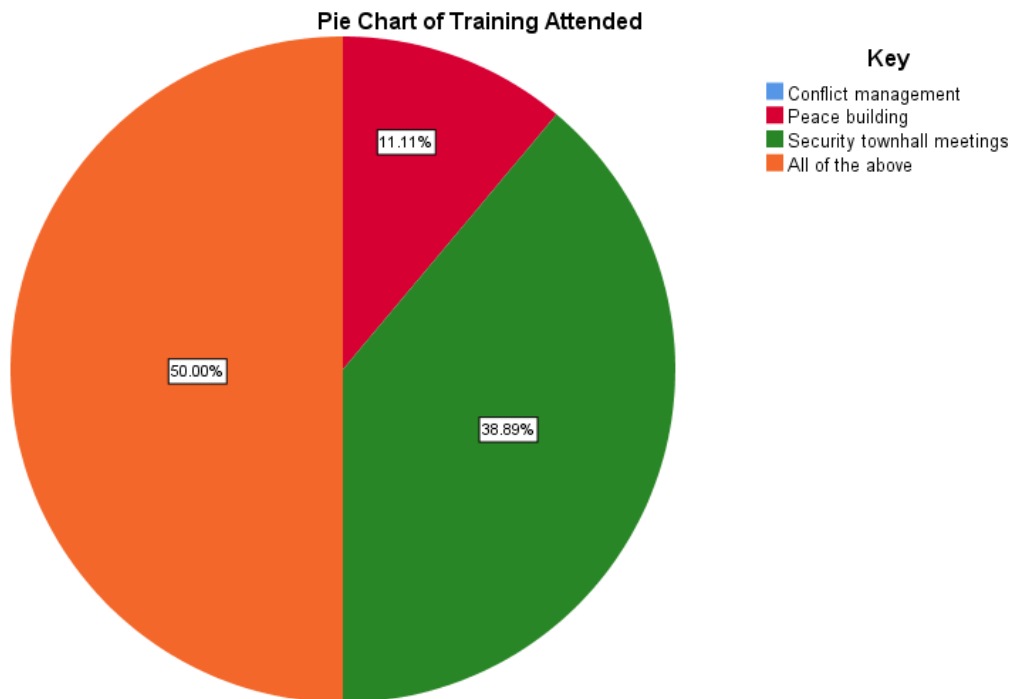


Figure 4 - Pie chart of workshops topics covered during the training

IV. Discussion of Findings

All the participants who are traditional rulers are males and married adults. They are all educated with the lowest education qualification being primary education. In analyzing the attitude and practice of traditional rulers on violence and insecurity, it revealed that traditional rulers are not adequately engaged by the government in curbing insecurity, but they support any initiative even when they are imposed, They strongly agreed that traditional rulers even sponsor projects to curb violence in their respective communities.

As to the nature of violence and insecurity within the communities, cases of kidnapping/abduction, drug abuse and Fulani herdsmen/farmers clashes are prevalent in all the communities. It appears that there are common nature of violence and insecurity at the grassroots level in Enugu state.

The community structures in charge of security shows that virtually every community in Enugu state has neighbourhood watch and forest guards. There are other security outfits which include vigilante, community progressive union, government and the council of chiefs. It was also revealed that funding of security are majorly generated from community levy followed by government support.

Based on the result bothering on intervention strategies to curb violence at he grassroots level, support for community based security operatives and oath taking should be explored. There should be community sensitization and regular meetings of security stakeholders. From the results, the following strategies should be employed to curb insecurity especially at the grassroots level of Enugu state, they include: creating employment, strengthening security operatives, oath taking, government support, active involvement of traditional rulers in law making and other relevant areas of governance, etc.

V. Conclusions

This study was aimed at ascertaining the significant relationship between the role of the traditional rulers and curbing of violence and insecurity at the grassroots level in Enugu state. The result revealed this relationship and the participants as well as respondents made strategic and constructive revelations on issues bothering on insecurity and violence at the grassroots level. Thus, the traditional rulers are key stakeholders in addressing insecurity and violence and therefore should be actively involved at all levels of government in mapping out strategic, attainable and realistic security goals and objectives.



VI. Recommendations

This study recommends that:

1. The government at all levels should proactively involve traditional rulers at the formulation stage, on issues and policies bothering on security and violence at the grassroots level.
2. The key stakeholders on security and violence should employ adequate strategies to address peculiar and common insecurity/violence cases in Enugu state which has identified as kidnapping/abduction, drug abuse and Fulani herders/farmers clashes.
3. The traditional rulers require adequate training on conflict management and peace building.

Acknowledgement

We hereby acknowledge that this research was funded by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) through the Directorate of Research, Institute of Management and Technology Enugu, Nigeria.

References

- [1]. Afigbo F (1972). Nigeria and the goal of human capacity building at the local government levels. Calabar: Andonai Press.
- [2]. Best, J.W. and Kahn, J .V (2006). Research In Education. Hong Kong: Pearson Education Inc.
- [3]. Dominic D.A and Tanko D.D (2015). Promoting socio-economic backwardness through traditional chieftaincy institutions and district assemblies: evidence from Sissala East District, Upper West Region of Ghana 12 (1&2):13-19
- [4]. Egule D.E and Bassey E.W (2010). Traditional chieftaincy institutions in Nigeria (eds.). London: Oxford University Press. pp. 100-103.
- [5]. Ekpen E and Uzor T (2013). The role of traditional rulers in rural development. MOFINEWS 8(7):231-496
- [6]. Jalong V.G and Faji J.N (2011). Indigenous governance and socio-economic backwardness in Nigeria. J. Sustain. Dev. Stud. 11(4):35-62.
- [7]. Mahmud T.G. (2008). Ensuring traditional rulers' efficiency toward community development. Kogi: Vining Publishers.
- [8]. Nlerum F.E and Sachs S.E (2003). Law and security in Nigeria. Research Fellow, NIALS.

Available: @wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn, Accessed 10/08/2020.

- [9]. Ojua T.A and Isokon B.E (2017). Chieftaincy tussles and socio-economic implications of communities in Yakurr Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Int. J. Res. Manage. Soc. Sci. 5(3):29-39.