UNIOFFA JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES (OJIS)
A Multidisciplinary Journal of Science, Management and Social Sciences
Website: www.unioffajis.com

VOTERS' BEHAVIOUR AND THE INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL RULERS ON THE 2023 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN KWARA STATE: ILORIN EMIRATE COUNCILS IN PERSPECTIVE

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Volume 1.1

Abstract

Traditional rulers play important roles in influencing their subjects in the choice and emergence of electoral candidates. The involvement in partisan politics of many of these traditional rulers has a lot of consequences not only on the traditional rulers themselves and their roles as custodians of the people's culture and tradition, fathers of all the people, maintainers of the public peace. This happens in various parts of Nigeria during state and local government elections and even the presidential elections where aspirants visit first-class traditional rulers as their first point of call in all 36 states of the country before kicking off their campaigns in those states and have now become a norm in Nigeria's contemporary politics today. The study examines *voting behaviour; the relationship between the traditional rulers and the voters as well as level of traditional rulers' influence on the electorates in Ilorin Emirate Council of Kwara State. To realise the central objectives, the research used mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) and data were generated from primary and secondary sources. The population size of this work covered the four local government namely, Ilorin-West, Ilorin-East, Ilorin-South and Asa respectively which approximated at 904,102. Findings of the study revealed that revealed that traditional rulers enjoy high level of respect and credibility among their subjects and have the ability to mobilize their subject to vote for a certain political candidate. The paper recommended that Community members should consider the personal characteristics of the traditional rulers and leaders before selecting and empowering an individual to take the authority as a traditional leader in any community.*

Keywords: *Voters' Behaviour, Traditional Rulers, Influence, General Elections*

Introduction

It is a proven reality in Nigeria that politicians always turn to traditional rulers for support when they feel inadequate to lead citizens in addressing important issues. The traditional institution has been referred to as the most effective method for the federal and state governments to communicate with residents of rural areas. Traditional rulers play important roles in influencing their subjects in the choice and emergence of electoral candidates. During electioneering processes, political candidates' group to palaces of traditional rulers to receive royal blessings and endorsements. The traditional rulers still command great respect among the people and account for their patronage by aspirants during electioneering processes. This happens in various parts of Nigeria during state and local government elections and even the presidential elections where aspirants visit first class traditional rulers as their first point of call in all 36 states of the country before kicking off their campaigns in those states and have now become a norm in Nigeria's contemporary politics today. This recognition of traditional rulers is of the fact that they are a major force in the legitimization of political regimes and has been acknowledged by both military and civilian regimes because it is the belief of the people that the traditional rulers play great roles in influencing the political decisions of their subjects

during elections. Owusu (1998) and Oamen (2000) stated that it is not difficult to find an example of constructive and destructive relationships between formal institutions that have recognized the mutual benefit that may accrue to both from cooperation.

From 1960 to 1966, when the military seized power, the democratization effort in Eastern and Western Regions had a significant adverse effect on the influence of traditional rulers in local decision-making. In most parts of the Northern Region, however, the Emirs were still in control of their Councils as the democratization effort appeared to be neutralized by their overwhelming influence. By January 15, 1966, when the military seized power, the extent of influence of traditional rulers was greatly influenced by which side of the political fence they faced (Orewa & Adewumi 1983). However, it is a truism that, to a great extent, traditional rulers in Nigeria still have control and influence over their domains today. The correlation between these traditional institutions and the people is still intact to some extent. The passage of time and contemporary governmental influences have not significantly waned or diminished the influence of traditional rulers over their subjects in their present respective domains. They remain highly respected and very influential.

The involvement in partisan politics of many of these traditional rulers has a lot of consequences not only on the traditional rulers themselves and their roles as custodians of the people's culture and tradition, fathers of all the people, maintainers of the public peace, etc., it also affects the continued existence of the entire traditional rulership institution. Before traditional rulers started engaging in partisan politics, precisely in the pre-colonial days, they were the pivots on which rested the administration of the people of Nigeria. They were seen in some areas as the companions of the gods and were a symbol of unity and peace and, the protectors of the social and political order. Because of their transparency, uprightness and representation of honesty and truth, they were respected and their wishes were usually carried out. The contention by a cross-section of nationalists that the institution of traditional rulership was in direct conflict with democratic ideals as the system was personalized and had gained considerable momentum. After independence, the political elites continued to try to reduce the influence of traditional rulers in local decision-making.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria has conducted elections under diverse circumstances and hopes to improve on past elections and the electioneering process. Despite the appreciable progress and improvement achieved over the years, elections remain generally fierce as foul means are still being employed by contestants in their bid to retain or gain power which has haunted the yearnings of the majority of citizens for the conduct of free and fair elections in Nigeria.

The above position has further raised the complex thought on the roles of stakeholders in the delivery of electioneering processes that will present the yearnings and aspirations of the people in terms of candidates that enjoy the support of the electorate. These stakeholders' responsibility has in the long run included the role of actors outside the core institutional framework of election conduct such as the traditional institutions and their custodians.

There have been a series of questions raised over the roles of traditional rulers in the electoral process in Nigeria. Traditional rulers who should be apolitical have overtime covertly and overtly mobilized or influenced voters in support of particular political parties or candidates and at times intimidated their subjects who are known or suspected to oppose their will. In the Ilorin emirate, most traditional rulers involve in partisan politics which is one of the rationales behind their institutional demotion which also at times reduces the dignity of the traditional rulers causing social malaise or moral decay, promoting a lack of respect for elders and constituted authority within their communities including traditional rulers.

As reported by Ihemeje (2014), traditional rulers directly or indirectly influence the choice of candidacy through advice received from the council of chiefs in the state which often at times makes politicians less accountable to citizens by serving as vote brokers that drum support via coercion and contingent exchanges (Lemarchand and Legg 1972). However, several factors are perceived to be the issues contributing to the gradual loss of relevance of traditional rulers in the governance of recent. Fatile (2010) posits that these factors are self-inflicted by the traditional institution itself while others are systematically engendered. First of the self-inflicted factors is the non-regard for due process in their appointment. Further to the above is also in-fighting and competition among traditional rulers over seniority in an attempt to secure assistance in their search for superiority over one another, traditional

rulers engage in partisan politics by backing candidates whom they believe can support their course, which is against their expected role of non-partisanship in the discharge of their royal functions. It should be noted that studies have emerged and are still emerging on the roles of traditional institutions in elections. On that premise, an attempt was made to provide answers to the following research questions:

i. What is the voting behaviour in Ilorin Emirate in the 2023 gubernatorial election in Kwara State?
ii. What is the relationship between the traditional rulers and the voters in the Ilorin Emirate Council of Kwara State?
iii. To what extent do traditional rulers influence electorates in the Ilorin Emirate Council of Kwara State?

Research Objectives

The general aims objectives of this research work is to examine the connectivity between the influence of traditional rulers and voters' behaviour. The specific objectives include:

i. To determine the voting behaviour in Ilorin Emirate in the 2023 gubernatorial election in Kwara State.
ii. elections of Kwara State
iii. To examine the relationship between the traditional rulers and the voters in Ilorin Emirate Council of Kwara State
iv. To determine the level of traditional rulers' influence on the electorates in Ilorin Emirate Council of Kwara State

Research Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was tested in this research work.

H_o: There is no significant influence of traditional rulers on the electorates in Ilorin Emirate

Council of Kwara State

5. Conceptual Discourse

Traditional Rulers

Traditional rulers are leaders of communities. The word "traditional" refers to the historic roots of leadership which legitimize the execution of power. There are many existing forms of traditional leadership, in Europe, the rule of kings and nobles was the dominant governing force for a long time until it was gradually replaced by democratic structures. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, traditional authorities are mostly referred to as chiefs and elders (Lutz & Linder. 2004). The National Conference of traditional ruler defines a traditional ruler as a person who by virtue of his ancestry occupies the throne or stool of an area and who has been appointed to it in accordance with the customs and traditions of the area and whose throne has been in existence before the advent of the British in Nigeria. The area over which he and his forefathers have ruled or reigned must have at least been created by Native Authority in 1910 or the date of the introduction of the native authority to the area concerned. In the case of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria for example, traditional stools are created according to the customs and traditions of the people and recognized by the government in those areas and the occupied date of this resolution will not by virtue of this definition be disqualified. Provided also that in respect of other parts of the Federation of Nigeria, traditional stools similarly established prior to the 1st of October 1979, will not by virtue of this definition be disqualified (Agbese, 2004).

Traditional rulers refer to a central authority control selected by people in the community, through the cultural processes and traditions and accepted by the people to control cultural and traditional afford not covered by Grover mental laws and regulations. That is an authority that pilots the people in a community along the lines of customs and traditions in the community (Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Edict, 1979). A 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 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 by the Government of the state" (Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Edict, 1979).

Elections

The Encyclopedia of social sciences defines Election as "the process of selecting the officers or representatives of an organization or group by the vote of its qualified members". What appears to be a more inclusive definition was provided by Bain as cited in Okolie, A.M. (2004) "the formal process by which electorates select official and determines the issues

submitted to it". It is therefore a procedure for choosing officers or making binding decisions concerning policy baby the vote of those formally qualified to participate. Akzin (1960) cited in Okolie (2004) distinguishes between technical and social significance of election. According to him, election in a technical sense is "the process by which an office is assigned to a person by an act of volition needing the simultaneous expression of opinion by many people". Furthermore, he emphasized that socially, election is "the process by which a person is linked to an office with due provision for the participation of the people meant to come under the officer's authority" (Akzin, 1960) cited in Okolie (2004). The social aspect of election suggests the idea of ruling a society with the consent of the ruled. This tantamount to democracy and differentiates election from appointment. According to Heywood (2004), Election is a device for filling an office or post through choices made by a designated body of people (electorate).

Elections are the means through which the people exercise their sovereign right to choose who governs them and what the political and other priorities of their government should be. Democratic elections are thus the opportunity for the people to express their sovereignty through the ballot to confer legitimacy to their government, renew its mandate if necessary or withdraw from it the authority to govern. This is the basis of accountable government. (INEC, 2011). For Gwinn and Nortan, (1992), the election is the formal process of selecting a person for public office or accepting or registering a political proposition by voting. They state further that an election is one of the means by which a society may organize itself and make specified formal decisions, adding that where voting is free, it acts simultaneously as a system for making certain decisions regarding the power relations in society, and as a method for seeking political obedience with a minimum of the sacrifice of the individual's freedom. The essence of a democratic election is freedom of choice.

In today's world, an election serves great purposes. Aniekwe and Kushie (2011, 8-9) list at least six important purposes of elections:

i. It serves as a means of transition from the bitter experience of war to civility in a war-torn state.
ii. It provides ample opportunity for freedom from oppression in a previously authoritarian regime.
iii. It gives a government an opportunity for legitimacy and validates negotiated political pacts.
iv. It also serves as a transitory process not only in an authoritarian regime but even in a stable government.
v. It provides a platform for debate, persuasion and common rules for choosing representatives of the people who can serve in executive, legislative and other institutions of government.
vi. Election in this sense can serve as a critical means of social conflict management through peaceful means.

Voting Behaviour

Voting behaviour is generally conceived as political behaviour because most political activities deal with voting. In a political approach to voting behaviour, Goldman (1966) in his work on political behaviour, believed that it determines the decision-making process, especially with public decision-makers, who are voted by the electorates. But in the work of Deiner (2000), voting behaviour is largely related to democratic principles and individualism. In this assertion, the behaviour of voters is determined by the level of individual freedom to vote in a society. Where such individual right is guaranteed, democracy will take place.

Scholars such as Healy, Malhota and Hyunjung (2010) are of the view that voters may use affect as a result of political sophistication and have political stimuli that may result in an emotional political bias. Some of the mechanisms of affect as it relates to voting behaviour may include surprise, anger, anxiety, fear and pride (Gomez, Hansfor and Krauss: 2007).

Researchers such as Miller (2011), Gomez, Hans and Krauss (2007) have emphasized affect as a determinant of voting behaviour, believing that, anger may not allow people to vote for, especially the government in power whose policies or actions could not make them happy and take them out of anger. Anxiety would determine voting behaviour in a manner making the voters vote for a candidate whose policy they "prefer" (miller, 2011), while people with fear, may require in-depth analysis and explanations before they vote for a party or candidate (Ladd and Lenz, 2011; Gomez, Hans and Kraus 2007).

From the above definitions, it portrays how intertwined the concepts of traditional rulers, elections and voters' behaviour are and shows how important or relevant traditional rulers are in elections and electioneering processes and how these rulers serve as

major instruments to influence the behaviour of voters in their respective domains.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of Structural functionalism is adopted for this research for a better understanding of the study. Structural functionalism theory describes how society is made up of different components which must harmonize interdependently to achieve desired results.

Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism theory is adopted to establish the traditional rulership institution as a functional organ in Nigerian society. This theory views society as interconnected objects designed to form a whole part. In the late 19th century, Frech sociologist Emile Durkheim laid the primary foundations of Structural functionalism. Durhkeim's theory was at least in part, a response to the evolutionary speculations of theorists such as E.B. Tylor. Durkheim originally wanted to explain social institutions as a shared way for individuals in society to meet their own biological needs. He wanted to understand the value of cultural and social traits by explaining them regarding their contribution to the operation of the overall system of society and life.

According to Yol, (2010). He argues that functionalism ensures that all societies share the same norms and values while these norms and values are embodied in the law: and that the social order comprises the internalization of these norms and values through the roles performed by traditional rulers in their communities.

Functionalists believe that one can compare society to a living organism, in that both are made up of interdependent working parts (organs and systems) that must function together in order for the greater body to perform optimally. According to Parsons (1961:41), "the social system is made up of the actions of individuals". His starting point was the interaction between two individuals (Parsons, 1961). Those individuals were faced with a variety of choices about how they might act. However, those choices were influenced and constrained by a number of physical and social factors (Craib, 1992:40). Parsons (1961) determined that each individual has expectations of the other's action and reaction to their own behaviour, and that these expectations are derived from the accepted norms and values of the society which they inhabit. He then developed the idea of roles into collectivises that complemented each other in fulfilling functions of society. Some of the roles are bound up in institutions and social structures such as economic, educational, legal, etc. (Parsons 1961:41).

The structural functionalism theoretical framework best explains the role of traditional institutions in influencing voters' behaviour. The theory is associated with Emile Durkheim and more recently with Talcott Parsons (Fisher, 2010:75). Susser (1992) states that functionalists tend to view social and political units in more holistic and organic terms. Social practices are said to have a functional role in sustaining the system as a whole. Functionalists equate structure to anatomy and functions to physiology of organisms.

The structural functionalism theoretical framework is relevant to this study from the perspective that traditional rulers have socially defined roles and responsibilities that they must render to their communities. From the point of structures and institutions, traditional rulers serve as a means to organize social parts. It is common knowledge that traditional values in the Nigerian context influence and constrain the action of its subjects. The Nigerian traditional setting, to a very large extent, accentuates laws, rules and regulations among its members. One of the responsibilities of traditional rulers is to ensure that there is developmental progress in their communities through government intervention, and to do this, most often than not requires them to input in partisan politics to boost development in their various domains. Traditional rulers therefore play important roles in elections through influencing voters' behaviour in such elections to achieve their desired goals.

Methodology

A descriptive survey approach was adopted by drawing data from both primary and secondary sources. The population size of this work covered the four local government namely, Ilorin-West, Ilorin-East, Ilorin-South and Asa respectively which approximated at 904102 (National Population Census, 2006). The study adopted the qualitative and frequency count to analyse the demographic data of the respondents, in selecting the sampling size for this work, the Taro Yamane formula adopted. The Yamane formula as expressed by Israel (1992) is expressed as:

$$n = \frac{N}{K + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = Sample size

N = Total population of Ilorin Emirate Councils (Ilorin-West, Ilorin-East, Ilorin-South, Asa and Moro Local Government)

k = 1

e = 0.05%

n = 240,127

$$n = \frac{904102}{1 + 904102\ (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{904102}{904103\ (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{904102}{2260.25}$$

n = **400**

Therefore, the sample size for the study is 400. A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to Ilorin-West, Ilorin-East, Ilorin-South and Asa Local Government area of Kwara state. Base on the above formulae, simple percentages were used to allotted questionnaire to each local government presented in the table below.

Number of allotted questionnaires for the selected districts

S/N	**Local Government**	**Total Population**	**Allotted Questionnaire**
1.	Ilorin-West	364,666	137
2.	Ilorin-East	204,310	77
3.	Ilorin-South	208,691	78
4.	Asa	126,435	47
5.	Moro	163,200	61
Total		**1,067,302**	**400**

Source: National Population Census, 2006

Respondents Rate

Items		**Number**	**%**
1	Number of samples	**400**	
2	Number of returned and duly filled	329	82.3%
3	Number of returned but wrongly filled	28	7%
4	Number of unreached respondents	43	10.7%
Total			**100%**

Source: fieldwork, 2025

A total number of four hundred questionnaires were administered in Ilorin-West; Ilorin-East; Ilorin-South and Asa Local Government area of Kwara state; a total number of forty-three (43) respondents could not be reached while three hundred and fifty-seven (357) were retrieved, out of the total numbers of four hundred (400) questionnaire but only three hundred and twenty-nine (329) questionnaires were duly filled without any errors.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Sex	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	205	62.3%
Female	124	37.7%
Total	**329**	**100%**
Ages	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Less than 21 years old	35	10.6%
22-25 years old	52	15.8%
26-35 years old	149	45.3%
36 and above	93	28.3%

Total	**329**	**100%**
Occupation	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Civil Servant	157	47.7%
Self Employed	58	17.6%
Artisan	91	27.7%
Others	23	6.9%
Total	**329**	**100%**
Marital Status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Single	91	27.7%
Married	183	55.6%
Divorcee	29	8.8%
Widow	16	4.9%
Widower	10	3.0%
Total	**329**	**100%**

Source: Survey data collected from fieldwork, 2025

The table above indicated that 205 respondents representing 62.3% were male while 124 respondents representing 37.7% were female. Therefore, the majority of the respondents were male. It is equally indicated in the table that 35 respondents representing 10.6% were less than 21years; 52 respondents representing 15.8% were within age 22-25years, while 149 respondents representing 45.3% were within age 26-35years; 93 respondents representing 28.3% were within age 36years and above. This implies that most of the respondents were between the age of 26-35 years.

Additionally, on occupation, the table above shows that 157 respondents representing 47.7% were civil servants; 58 respondents representing 17.6% were self-employed; 91 respondents representing 27.7% were artisans; 23 respondents representing 6.9% were not specific on their occupation. Therefore, most of the respondents were civil servants. On marital status, the data above shows that 91 respondents representing 27.7% were single; 183 respondents representing 55.6% married; 29 respondents representing 8.8% were divorced; 16 respondents representing 4.9% were widows while 10 respondents representing 3.0% were widowers. Therefore, the majority of the respondents are married.

Voting Behaviour in Ilorin Emirate in the 2023 gubernatorial Election in Kwara State

Regarding the voting behaviour of voters in Ilorin Emirate in the 2023 gubernatorial election in Kwara State; Four (4) questions were designed to capture respondents' opinions on voting behaviour.

Key: SA (Strongly Agreed), **A** (Agreed), **U** (Undecided), **D** (Disagreed), **SD** (Strongly Disagreed)

S/N	**Statements**	**SA 5**	**A 4**	**U 3**	**D 2**	**SD 1**	**Total**	**Aggregate Response**
1.	I am an indigene of Ilorin emirate of Kwara State	184 (55.9%)	108 (32.8%)	6 (1.8%)	21 (6.4%)	10 (3.1%)	329 100%	Strongly Agreed
2.	I have my permanent voter's card	209 (63.5%)	92 (27.9%)	8 (2.5%)	9 (2.7%)	11 (3.4%)	329 100%	Strongly Agreed
3.	I voted during the 2023 gubernatorial election	176 (53.5%)	98 (29.8%)	20 (6.1%)	10 (3.0%)	25 (7.6%)	329 100%	Strongly Agreed
4.	I am politically inclined	152 46.2%)	116 (35.2%)	18 (5.5%)	31 (9.4%)	12 (3.7%)	329 100%	Strongly Agreed

Source: Survey data collected from fieldwork, 2025

The table above represented the voting behaviour in Ilorin emirate council in the 2023 gubernatorial election in Kwara state. Data revealed that 184 respondents representing 55.9% strongly agreed that they were indigenes of Ilorin emirate of Kwara State; 108 respondents representing 32.8% agreed that they were indigene of Ilorin emirate council of Kwara State; 6 respondents representing 1.8 % were neutral; 21 respondents representing 6.4% percent disagreed that they were indigene of Ilorin emirate council of Kwara State while 10 respondents representing 3.1%

strongly disagreed that they were indigene of Ilorin emirate council of Kwara State. This implies that most of the respondents were indigene of Ilorin emirate council Local Government of Kwara State.

With respect to the ownership of permanent voters' card, 209 respondents representing 63.5% strongly agreed that they have permanent voters' card; 92 respondents representing 27.9% agreed that they have permanent voters' card; 8 respondents representing 2.5% were neutral; 9 respondents representing 2.7% disagreed that they have permanent voters' card while 11 respondents representing 3.4% strongly disagreed that they have permanent voters' card. This implies that most of the respondents have permanent voters' card.

Also, with respect to participation in the 2023 gubernatorial election in Kwara State, 176 respondents representing 53.5% strongly agreed that they voted during the 2023 gubernatorial election, 98 respondents representing 29.8% agreed that that they voted during the 2023 election; 20 respondents representing 6.1% were neutral; 10 respondents representing 3.0% disagreed that that they voted during the 2023 election while 25 respondents representing 7.6% strongly disagreed that that they voted during the 2023 election. This implies that most of the respondents voted during the 2023 gubernatorial election in Kwara State.

On whether respondents are politically inclined, 152 respondents representing 46.2% strongly agreed that they were politically inclined; 116 respondents representing 35.2% agreed that they were politically inclined; 18 respondents representing 5.5% were neutral; 31 respondents representing 3.7% disagreed that they were politically inclined while 12 respondents representing 3.7% strongly disagreed that they were politically inclined. This implies that most of the respondents were politically inclined

Analysis of the Relationship between Traditional Rulers and the Voters in Ilorin Emirate Council of Kwara State

Key: SA (Strongly Agreed), **A** (Agreed), **U** (Undecided), **D** (Disagreed), **SD** (Strongly Disagreed)

S/N	Statements	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Aggregate Response
1.	I have met some of the traditional rulers in Ilorin Emirate Council	156 (47.4%)	89 (27%)	35 (10.7%)	25 (7.6%)	24 (7.3%)	329 100%	Strongly Agreed
2.	There is a good relationship between the traditional rulers and residents Ilorin emirate council	251 (76.3%)	40 (12.2%)	13 (3.9%)	13 (3.9%)	12 (3.7%)	329 100%	Strongly Agreed
3.	I have respect for the traditional institution	139 (42.3%)	108 (32.8%)	34 (10.3%)	27 (8.2%)	21 (6.4%)	329 100%	Strongly Agreed
4.	I trust the traditional rulers in Ilorin emirate council	89 (27.1%)	112 (34.1%)	30 (9.1%)	58 (17.6%)	40 (12.1%)	329 100%	Agreed

Source: Survey data collected from fieldwork, 2025

The table above are concerned with the relationship between the traditional rulers and the voters in Ilorin emirate council of Kwara State. Information revealed that 156 respondents representing 47.4% strongly agreed that they have met some of the traditional rulers in Ilorin emirate council of Kwara State; 89 respondents representing 27% agreed that they have met some of the traditional rulers in Ilorin emirate, Kwara State; 35 respondents representing 107% were neutral; 25 respondents representing 7.6% disagreed that they have met some of the traditional rulers in Ilorin emirate, Kwara State while 24 respondents representing 7.3% strongly disagreed that they have met some of the traditional rulers in Ilorin emirate council of Kwara State. This implies that most of the respondents have met some of the traditional rulers in Ilorin emirate council of Kwara State.

Furthermore, on whether there is a good relationship between the traditional rulers and residents of Ilorin emirate of Kwara State; 251 respondents representing 76.3% strongly agreed that there is a good relationship between the traditional rulers and residents of Ilorin emirate; 40 respondents representing 12.2% agreed that there is a good relationship between the traditional rulers and residents of Ilorin emirate; 13 respondents representing 3.9% were neutral, 13 respondents representing 3.9% disagreed that there is a good relationship between the traditional rulers and residents of Ilorin emirate, Kwara State. while 12 respondents representing 3.7% strongly disagreed that there is a good relationship between the traditional rulers and residents of Ilorin emirate, Kwara State. This implies that there is a good relationship between the traditional rulers and residents of Ilorin emirate, Kwara State.

Also, on whether people of Ilorin emirate have respect for the traditional institution; 139 respondents representing 42.3% strongly agreed that they have respect for the traditional institution; 108 respondents representing 32.8% agreed that they have respect for the traditional institution; 34 respondents representing 10.3% were neutral, 27 respondents representing 8.2% disagreed that they have respect for the traditional institution while 21 respondents representing 6.4& strongly disagreed that they have respect for the traditional institution. This implies that most of the respondents have respect for the traditional institution.

On whether people trust the traditional rulers in Ilorin emirate; 89 respondents representing 27.1% strongly agreed that they trust the traditional rulers; 112 respondents representing 34.1% agreed that they trust the traditional rulers; 30 respondents representing 9.1% were neutral; 30 respondents representing 9.1% disagreed that they trust the traditional rulers while 40 respondents representing 12.1% strongly disagreed that they trust the traditional rulers. This implies that most of the respondents trust the traditional rulers.

The level of traditional rulers' influence on the electorates in the Ilorin Emirate, Kwara State

Key: SA (Strongly Agreed), **A** (Agreed), **U** (Undecided), **D** (Disagreed), **SD** (Strongly Disagreed)

S/N	Statements	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Aggregate Response
1.	I usually obey the rules of the traditional rulers	87 (26.5%)	103 (31.3%)	51 (15.5%)	79 (24%)	9 (2.7%)	329 100%	Agreed
2.	The traditional rulers can influence my decision	81 (24.6%)	92 (27.9%)	41 (12.5%)	78 (23.7%)	37 (11.3%)	329 100%	Agreed
3.	I trust the traditional rulers	84 (25.6%)	104 (31.6%)	39 (11.7%)	55 (16.7%)	47 (14.3%)	329 100%	Agreed

Source: Survey data collected from fieldwork, 2025

This table above explained the level of traditional ruler's influence on the residents of Ilorin emirate, Kwara State. Data revealed that 87 respondents representing 26.5% strongly agreed that they usually obey the rules of the traditional rulers; 103 respondents representing 31.3% agreed that they usually obey the rules of the traditional rulers; 51 respondents representing 15.5% were neutral; 79 respondents representing 24% disagreed that they usually obey the rules of the traditional rulers while 9 respondents representing 2.7% strongly disagreed that they usually obey the rules of the traditional rulers. This implies that most of the respondents usually obey the rules of the traditional rulers in Ilorin emirate council.

On whether the traditional rulers can influence people's decision, 81 respondents representing 24.6% strongly agreed that traditional rulers can influence their decision; 92 respondents representing 27.9% agreed that traditional rulers can influence their decision; 41 respondents representing 12.5% were neutral; 78 respondents representing 23.7% disagreed that traditional rulers can influence their decision while 37 respondents representing 11.3% strongly disagreed that traditional rulers can influence their decision. This implies that traditional rulers can still influence people's decision.

On whether people trust the traditional rulers, 84 respondents representing 84% strongly agreed that they trust the traditional rulers; 104 respondents representing 31.6% agreed that they trust the traditional rulers; 39 respondents representing 16.7% were neutral; 55 respondents representing 14.3% disagreed that they trust the traditional rulers while 47 respondents representing 14.3% strongly disagreed that they trust the traditional rulers. This implies that most of the respondents trust the traditional rulers.

Hypothesis: There is no significant influence of traditional rulers on the voters in Ilorin emirate council.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	717.106	1	717.106	16305.104	.000[b]
	Residual	16.976	386	.044		
	Total	734.082	387			

2	Regression	717.647	2	358.824	8405.632	.000[c]
	Residual	16.435	385	.043		
	Total	734.082	387			

a. Dependent Variable: Traditional Rulers
b. Predictors: (Constant), Trust Traditional Rulers
c. Predictors: (Constant), Trust Traditional Rulers, Obey Traditional Rulers

The F-ratio in the ANOVA table above shows whether the overall regression model is a fit for the data. The tables shows that the independent variables statistically significantly predict the dependent variable, at both F(1, 386) = 16305.104 and F(2, 385) = 8405.632, p < .0005. This result shows that the regression model is a good fit of the data.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstand Co.		Stand Co.			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	B	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.006	.020		.311	.756	-.033	.046
	Trust Traditional Rulers	1.001	.008	.988	127.691	.000	.985	1.016
2	(Constant)	-.016	.021		-.794	.427	-.057	.024
	Trust Traditional Rulers	.949	.016	.938	58.094	.000	.917	.982
	Obey Traditional Rulers	.088	.025	.057	3.561	.000	.039	.137

The unstandardized coefficients indicate how much the independent variable varies with an independent variable when all other independent variables are constant. In other words, considering the case of respondent who obeys traditional rulers during the general election of 2023 (Obey Traditional Rulers) which has the coefficient of 0.088 in Model 2. It means that if other independent variables are held constant, an increase in the number of respondents who obeys traditional rulers during the general election of 2015, there is an equivalent increase in the number of respondents that traditional rulers influence.

Decision rule: if p < .05, the conclusion is that the coefficients are statistically significantly different to 0. The t-value and corresponding p-value are located in the "t" and "Sig." columns respectively as shown in the coefficient table above. From the coefficient table above, we can conclude that the coefficient is statistically significant hence we reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of traditional rulers on the voters in Ilorin emirate council.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective of this study is to determine the place of voting behavior of electorate in Ilorin emirate council in the 2023 of Kwara State. The findings revealed that 83.3% of the respondents voted during the 2023 elections. This finding correlates with the findings of Adeolu (2014) when is noted that there is high level of participation in the Osun 2014 election by member of the public. Also, this position was supported by the Centre for Transparency Advocacy (CTA) (2018) that contrary to widespread fears that the massive deployment of security personnel will scare away voters from polling booths, the turnout was generally massive. A total of 405, 861 out of 913, 345 registered voters turned out to cast their votes. The outcome of this is not a departure of the effect of voter education in term of, sensitization and promotion by INEC, NGOs and Civil societies in line with procedures of election. The finding is also in line with Ucho & Osundina (2019) on the outcome of the Ekiti 2018 election which indicated a positive role played by voter education due to the attendance of voters and the ability of the people to vote out the incumbent governor Fayose and put Fayemi the APC candidate despite the challenges that prevailed the electioneering processes.

The second objective examined the relationship between the traditional rulers and the voters in Ilorin emirate, Kwara State. The findings of this study shows that 88.6% of the respondents confirm that they have good relationship with the traditional rulers. This finding is supported by the findings of Daniel &Osa (2013) which contended that, In Nigeria, traditional rulers still record a high degree of legitimacy in the eyes of the people. There remains the need integrate the institution into the country's contemporary local government system. Political and

economic development would be more successful when rooted in widely shared institutions and cultural values which traditional authorities represent. Traditional institutions constitute crucial resources that have the potential to promote grassroots governance and to facilitate access of rural communities to public services. The goal of modernization is to generate a rapid increase in social wealth and its driving force is economic development. Traditional rulers in Nigeria are in a privileged position to contribute to this goal, and as such should not be jettisoned.

The third objective is to determine the level of influence traditional rulers on the residents in Ilorin emirate. The findings of this study revealed that traditional rulers have great influence on their subjects. This tallies with findings of Abu (2018) that traditional rulers help the government, law enforcement agencies in maintaining peace, order and good governance in their rural areas. They mobilize the efforts of their people towards the implementation of government policies and programmes and also ensure that such policies and programmes are given optimum support by their people and this is done due to the implementation of recruiting educated people who have royal connections into the institution. Traditional institutions and traditional rulers' serve as veritable tools for reaching and connecting the people and getting them to accept, promote and appreciate government's policies and programmes.

It is important to note that human beings are political animals so also are the traditional rulers, but they however do not own or form political party. What they do essentially in electoral process is to engage in enlightenment programs for their subjects before elections such as those involving registrations, voting and peace-making. Ayuba (2013 as cited in Ihemeje, 2014) further expressed that they also organized meetings with security officials toward a hitch-free election exercise. In his statement, Ayuba opined that one may think a good traditional ruler should not be a politician rather he should have interest in political party and candidates by taking cognizance of their manifestoes. However, their main role is to galvanize and sensitize their subjects to participate in elections and ensuring that they are well-behaved during and after elections. This clearly indicates that their role cannot be overemphasized as far as the electoral process is concerned in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The main goal of this research is to ascertain the influence of traditional rulers on the voting behavior of voters in Ilorin emirate, Kwara State. The traditional rulers enjoy high level of respect and credibility among their subjects and have the ability to mobilize their subject to vote for a certain political candidate. The study concluded that the traditional rulers command great respect among the people and account for their patronage by aspirants during electioneering processes.

Recommendations

In view of the above, the following recommendations are proffered:

i. Community members should consider the personal characteristics of the traditional rulers and leaders before selecting and empowering an individual to take the authority as a traditional leader in any community.
ii. Government through the Ministry of local government, chieftaincy affairs and community development need to involve traditional leaders more in political processes as these are the custodians of the larger population in Kwara.
iii. Traditional rulers should create more awareness for their subjects on the need to partake more in elections and also for the Involvement of women in the political activities: Women have the potential to effectively ensure participation in society. However, they are treated unequal of men. Involvement of women would not only bring about gender equity but also promote active participation from fellow women in the community.
iv. The Independent National Electoral Commission should create room and provide for some electoral roles for traditional rulers limiting them to enlightenment programs, voter education among others rather than serving as tools for politicians to win elections

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