

**DYNAMICS OF**  
**LEADERSHIP**  
**IN**  
**CONTEMPORARY**  
**NIGERIAN**  
**COMMUNITIES**

Edited by

**I. Bola Udegbe**

# **Dynamics of Leadership in Contemporary Nigerian Communities**

*Edited by*

**I. BOLA UDEGBE**

DR. N. A. SHENGE  
SIGN \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**The Social Sciences and Reproductive Health Research Network  
(SSRHN)**

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## CHAPTER

# 2

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## Conception of Leadership Among Communities in Nigeria

I.B. UDEGBE, D.E. OKURAME & N.A. SHENGE

### Introduction

For a long time now, the study of leadership has received worldwide attention because of the salience of the concept in all communities. Although researchers and experts agree on certain leadership issues, they also differ significantly on others. With regard to the definition of leadership, for example, there exist as many definitions as there are leadership researchers. These definitions are not only culture and time specific, they are also based on other considerations such as institutional context, religion, political and philosophical ideologies.

Udegbe (1999) defines leadership as the process of creating the subordinates' identification with the group's mission and creating their desire to achieve the group's goal. Saal and Knight (1988) define leadership as social influence in an organizational setting, the effect of which are relevant to, or have an impact upon the achievement of organizational goals. In Szilagyi and Wallace's (1980) view, leadership is the relationship between two or more people in which one attempts to influence the other toward the accomplishment of some goal or goals. Leadership according to Wright and Taylor (1994), is the influence of the behaviour, beliefs and feelings of other group members in an intended direction. It could be noticed from the above definitions that convergent as well as divergent views of leadership exist. In talking about convergence, it is clear that attainment of group goals, the influence of the leader and the led, are common themes that characterize leadership definitions. With regard to the divergent perspectives, it could be seen that some authors emphasize the importance of leaders' positions more than that of the positions of subordinates. Differences also exist in the importance placed on such terms as shared objectives, action of others as well as leadership

process. The fact that differences exist in the importance attached to the term "shared objective", is corroborated by responses of participants in this study. Respondents clearly indicate that objectives of leaders and the led are not always the same. Even within leadership itself, objectives may vary across time, culture and situation. In the Nigerian context therefore, leadership objectives seem to have been influenced by the aforementioned factors. Mention has to be made of such important factors as desire to address issues of marginalization, tendency to partake in the sharing of the "national cake", and personal and group interests which tend to influence the leader's objectives. What this reflects is an appreciation for a "people-oriented" leader.

Ideally and in practice, leadership gives direction which aids carrying the led along. This perhaps explains why importance has been placed on the action of others by some definitions of leadership. In light of the above, the views of participants in this research points to the fact that the ability of leaders to chart a course of action for the led is an activity that cannot be compromised. Thus, the measure of leadership success depends, and rightly too, on the leaders' ability to carry their followers along. This assertion is not restricted to one particular type of leadership. It cuts across the various types of leadership mentioned in this research, namely, political, traditional, opinion/influential and religious leadership.

One important thing that came out of the diverse definitions of leadership needs to be added here. That is, the fact that the way and manner a leader goes about playing his leadership role matters a great deal. To many people, leadership and the leadership process is both an art and a science. As an art, leadership requires subjective evaluation of situations as well as intuition, while as a science it is systematic, objective and teachable. To other people too, leadership is conceived as an aggregation of the above-mentioned two, namely, leadership process being an art and a science.

The usual practice decades ago, was to pit one definition of leadership against another in an attempt to identify the correct approach. Recent findings have however revealed that all definitions have something to offer. To say that each definition is the right approach therefore, is to obscure another more important point in an alternate definition. In the traditional African context, conception of leadership seems to be influenced by the type of leadership, culture, and circumstance or situations, as leadership descriptions which will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter will buttress.

The chapter focuses on the conception of leadership among communities in Nigeria. The issues considered include diverse definitions of leadership, convergent and divergent views of leadership obtained from literature, and the African and Nigerian definitions of leadership. Others considered include community leadership nomenclature, perception of community leadership (hierarchy, relevance and



importance), ascendancy to community leadership, and leadership-follower interplay. Furthermore, emphasis was placed on how leadership is conceived among all the communities considered. Equally, similarities and differences across communities as well as between followers and leaders were considered in this chapter. Finally, proverbs and quotations on leadership are incorporated where appropriate.

## Community Leadership Nomenclature

Owing to the heterogeneity of communities in and outside Nigeria, leadership nomenclature expectedly appears to be diverse. These diversities have clearly been indicated in the responses to the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions in the study. Starting with a broad analysis of the participants' responses, four broad types of leaders were identified among Nigerian communities. These were traditional leaders, political leaders, opinion/influential leaders and religious leaders (see Table 2.1). It was observed, however, that traditional types of leadership were more frequently mentioned among communities that were studied. This is perhaps because respondents relate better and are more familiar with these group of leaders than others.

Table 2.1: Types of leaders in communities.

<p><b>Traditional titles and positions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Emirs</li> <li>◆ Hereditary and non hereditary chiefs like Meangwa, Waziri, Galadima and Garkuwa, who is the defence minister</li> <li>◆ Oba</li> <li>◆ Enogie</li> <li>◆ Odionwere</li> </ul> <p><b>Religious titles and positions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Pastors</li> <li>◆ Priests</li> <li>◆ Deacons</li> <li>◆ Chief Imams</li> <li>◆ Alfas</li> </ul> <p><b>Political titles and positions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Chairman</li> <li>◆ Councilors</li> <li>◆ Governors</li> <li>◆ Ward representatives</li> <li>◆ President</li> <li>◆ Opinion leaders/Influential leaders.</li> </ul>
---

Examples of traditional leadership titles in the communities include the *Oba*, *Baale*, *Enogie*, *Odionwere* (South-south and South-west zones) and the *Emir*, *Waziri* and *Meangwa*, in the northern zones. A greater proportion of South-East focus group discussion respondents mentioned titles of religious leaders such as priests, pastors and deacons. The range of political leadership titles includes governors, chairmen, councillors and ward heads.

For both the rural and urban communities considered, it was obvious that the traditional type of leadership was generally, more predominant. This fact was prominently mentioned by male and female participants in the study and it was an indication that typical Nigeria communities, especially rural ones, have traditional structures that have sustained the process of traditional leadership. The high respect accorded traditional leaders, and the near pathological crave for chieftaincy titles by Nigerians buttress this fact (Ikime, 2001).

### **Perception of Community Leadership**

Individuals obviously tend to define or perceive situations and problems in terms of certain preconceptions formed on the basis of past experiences. These past experiences eventually define or regulate their behaviour. The phenomenon of utilizing past experience evokes perceptual stereotyping and based on the little information, such as is obtained from past experience, individuals then organize human situations and problems (Fiske, 1993).

As in leadership nomenclature, perceptions of leadership are varied in Nigerian communities. This can be attributed to two factors. Firstly, social perceptions are very much in the eye of the beholder, thereby creating room for diversities. Second, Nigerian communities are heterogeneous in nature and this entails differences in values, norms, attitudes, insight and behaviour. Inherent in the responses of participants in this research is the fact that perception of traditional leadership is positive. Respondents generally perceive their traditional community leaders as very important, of utmost relevance, and the people to see when it comes to establishing development projects in their domain (see Table 2.2). An overwhelming majority of the respondents in rural and urban communities sampled reported that traditional leaders are the appropriate people from whom permission could be obtained before a development project is sited in their community. This view was generally held by male and female respondents. Consideration of other leaders such as political and opinion/influential leaders as people to be seen for siting of development projects was far less emphasized. The following excerpts from the respondents buttress the aforementioned, and clearly explain the degree of influence or authority associated with traditional leadership:



Because of the rules and regulations that guide the throne, if you are a visitor and you come to Benin, like when the white men came to Benin, they first went to the *oba's* palace to find out all things (*fgd, old, female, urban, Edo*).

The person you will first of all see is our chief. He is called our king. If he is not around, you will see members of the chief's council (*fgd, old, female, urban, Enugu*).

I think for your first time in Jos, the person you need to see is the *Meangwa*, that is, the head of the hamlet; from there you will be directed to where you want to go (*idi, male, opinion leader, urban, Jos*).

Traditional elders of the community are the people you will see. They are the people we listen to. They are our leaders (*idi, female, traditional leader, urban, Kaduna*).

When one is coming here newly, he must see our traditional leaders first because they are the custodians of our people. Here in Agwan Rogo, you first meet the *Zarki Mansamwu* who would in turn take you to the *Miangwa's* house (*idi, male, opinion leader, urban, Jos*).

Of course, you recall that Benin city is an ancient city. We have the *Oba* of Benin; he resides within the city center. He is the one to see whenever reason you want any assistance. He is in a better position even, because we see him as our father. Every Benin man regards him as his traditional father (*fgd, old, female, rural, Edo*).

Responses of both female and male participants in rural and urban communities indicate that there are important reasons why traditional, political/modern and opinion/influential leaders are the people to see with each having their relevance and importance (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2: Why are these the people to be seen?

#### **Traditional leaders**

- ◆ They are perceived as leaders of hamlets.
- ◆ They obtain and provide vital information.
- ◆ They control the socioeconomic life of the people.
- ◆ They give clearance and detailed information to their people.
- ◆ They have paramount authority.
- ◆ It is the tradition to see the traditional ruler of the community.
- ◆ They are the heads and we see them as our traditional fathers.

#### **Influential/opinion leaders**

- ◆ They are seen as role models and command respect.
- ◆ They are concerned about the people .
- ◆ They are prime movers.

- ◆ They are the overall head of the community.
- ◆ They are the community group leaders.

#### **Political leader**

- ◆ Because the traditional leader cannot go about with public visitors, the councillor becomes the first citizen to be seen.
- ◆ Because the chairman of the community association must be aware.
- ◆ They are the ward representatives.

A traditional leader is seen as a paramount leader who obtains and provides vital information, controls the socio-economic life of the people, and gives clearance on issues. He is seen as the traditional ruler of the community, a "head" and the traditional father figure. Below are excerpts of respondents' views:

He is the head of the chiefs in *Uzaman Union* and the community is under him. If there is anything that has to take place, we have to see him first. If he is not seen and anything is done, he would query us for not informing him (*idi, male, opinion leader, rural, Oyo*).

For whatever reason you want any assistance from the community, by the time you go to the place, people are there to render such assistance. The *Oba* of Benin is in a better position because we see him as our father; every Benin man regards the *Oba* as his traditional father (*idi, female, opinion leader, rural, Edo*).

They are the leaders and people in charge of the community. They are the ones to command the people and to tell them to join hands together (*idi, female, opinion leader, rural, Edo*).

Since traditional leaders are restricted in their movement (owing to the respect of their offices), political leaders are more versatile. They are seen more as community representatives. Influential leaders are seen as community leaders, prime movers, role models and people who command respect. These perhaps imply the seeming differences in the expectations of leadership in situations that consist of a conglomeration of different types of leaders, as is characteristic of Nigerian societies.

Decades ago, the traditional institution was a *numero uno*. One perhaps would have expected that the trend would deviate from traditional institutions in favour of modern ones. This was however not the case. The content and prevailing direction of responses to the question "who should be seen before a project can be sited in a community?" show that traditional leaders are still the appropriate people to see. It is clearly indicated therefore that Nigerian communities still have regard and hold traditional institutions in high esteem.

In community leadership relations, it is not uncommon, especially in



the African context, to say that to whom much is given, much is expected. The demands of the above statement holds very much true for traditional leadership in Nigeria, as such traditional leaders perform, and indeed are expected to perform, a number of functions as expressed by respondents. As indicated in the responses of participants, these functions range from ensuring security, peace and unity, through development, assistance, settling disputes, liaising with government, allocation of land, rewarding achievement by bestowing titles, appointing sub-leaders, advising, to revenue generation (see Table 2.3). Responses of participants give credence to this fact as follows:

Whenever there are troubles, maybe between communities and within communities, they are the people to be approached. They are the ones who know how to bring sanity in the issue (*idi, male, opinion leader, rural, Kaduna*).

His responsibility is to identify what his subjects want, what is their problem and to take the matter to where it can be solved or advise on what step to be taken (*idi, female, political leader, urban, Bauchi*).

Their function is to restore peace and provide welfare (*idi, male, Political leader, urban, Edo*).

Table 2.3: Functions of Leaders in communities.

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Represent the tribes in general</li> <li>◆ Protect their people's interest with the government.</li> <li>◆ Maintain peace and order.</li> <li>◆ Solve community problems by taking them to higher authorities when the need arises.</li> <li>◆ Settle disputes and unite the people.</li> <li>◆ Generate revenue for the community.</li> <li>◆ Assist community members with personal problems.</li> <li>◆ Bring development to the community.</li> <li>◆ Advise and give instructions.</li> </ul> |
|---|

No doubt, as observed from the responses of majority of the participants, the functions mentioned above are important to all communities. The distribution pattern shows that maintenance of peace, settling of disputes and community development are the most frequently mentioned by respondents, in that order. It appears that the traditional institution is perceived as a vital instrument for ensuring such peace and harmony within and among communities in Nigeria. Concerning settling disputes, there is need to add that the traditional institution is known to, and actually needs to put machineries in place that will ensure the prevention or settling of disputes involving members of their communities. The findings also reflect the role of traditional leaders in community development. Respondents, particu-



larly those in rural areas, believe that their communities' development depends, to some extent, on the traditional leadership. As people that command respect both from government and the governed, traditional leaders are placed in a good stead to influence and, in fact, actually bring to their domain, developmental projects and improved quality of life for their people.

### **Ascendancy to Community Leadership**

People the world over assume leadership positions through different means and leadership ascendancy or emergence, are influenced by culture, religion and situation, just to mention a few. Indeed, research is rife with findings of common personality traits such as intellectual ability, dominance, self-confidence and emotional stability that influences leadership emergence. Examples of such studies include the study of leadership anatomy by Jennings (1961), Ghiselli's (1963) study of management talent and Stogdill's (1974) research on leadership. It is pertinent to note that in all these studies, individuality and originality feature in the list of traits (Mullins, 1999). The conclusion is that leaders tend to be higher than average on these dimensions (Johns, 1996). Underlying the use of the trait theory of leadership is the tendency to see people and not situations, as the cause of leadership. Trait theories of leadership therefore are concerned with determining the basic traits that provide meaningful description of leaders. More current studies have found characteristics such as leadership motivation, drive and cognitive ability, as factors that contribute to successful leadership. Examples of such studies include Taffinder's (1995) study of leadership, and Parker's (1994) study of leaders to come.

Our research findings indicate that leaders of communities occupy leadership positions through several factors. These include heredity, age, contribution to community, wealth, personal education, influence, election, and by being the first person to build a house in a community (see Table 2.4).

Table 2.4: How community leaders come to occupy leadership positions.

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Heredity — it is rotated among family members or shifted from clan to clan.</li> <li>◆ Age and seniority — the oldest person is taken as the head.</li> <li>◆ By virtue of settling in the community for a long time.</li> <li>◆ Personal virtue and selfless service to community.</li> <li>◆ Through influence and wealth.</li> <li>◆ Ascension through election or by body of elders.</li> <li>◆ Elected by the people within that area or village.</li> </ul> |
|--|

\* *In decreasing order of importance*

Of all the means of ascendancy mentioned above, heredity was found to be most pronounced. There was no marked difference between male and female respondents on this issue especially in rural communities. The following excerpts explain what respondents mean by heredity.

He is the chief. It is hereditary. He inherited it. His father was the chief, so, after his father, it got to him because he was the first son. When this chief dies now, his son will be the next chief (*fgd, young, female, rural, Edo*).

It is from age-old tradition; he is a king through inheritance. After the death of his father, the *Oba* of Benin was crowned. As the *Oba*, he had to be honoured because he is from the royal family (*fgd, young, female urban, Edo*).

It is inherited. There are families that provide *Baale* and there are laid down rules on how the *Baale* emerges. It is rotated among families and family members. For instance, it was when the Adeaga family left the throne that the Adejuwom family came in. That is how the present *Baale* got to the position (*idi, male, political leader, rural, Oyo*).

One of the reasons that can make you attain this position is only if you inherit it or you are a son to the ward head. You could be grandson to the ward head. It may be the son of a village head (*idi, male, opinion leader, rural, Kaduna*).

As I earlier told you, these positions are normally inherited. If your father is a *Damaje* and he dies, his son automatically becomes the *Damaje*, or a member of their family (*idi, male, traditional leader, rural, Plateau*).

Heredity as a means of ascendancy is followed in that order; by age, personal virtue, election and education. In an attempt to examine the avenues open to an individual to explore the possibility of emerging as a leader in any community, responses indicate that contribution to community, good character and personal virtue, God's grace, political help, age, heredity, education, wealth, physical attribute and appointment by government, seem to be significant factors.

Importantly, however, both male and female respondents in all the geographical zones considered uniformly, emphasized the fact that personal virtue, contribution to community and heredity, respectively, are the most important factors that can enable a person attain leadership positions in a community (see Table 2.5).



Table 2.5: What can make a community member attain a leadership position?

- ◆ Personal virtue — sincerity, humility, good character, goodwill and trustworthiness.
- ◆ Contribution to community and achievement.
- ◆ Heredity.
- ◆ Age.
- ◆ Must not go against the law of the community.
- ◆ Education.
- ◆ Wealth and influence.
- ◆ God's grace.
- ◆ Political help.

\* *In order of importance*

The prevailing direction of responses shows that personal virtue and contribution to community, in that order, are the most important factors as can be inferred from this excerpt:

If you think because you're born to a royal family and for that reason, you will become a leader, if your ways are bad, you're wrong because your character must count. There are many things that must count before you get to that position. Your conduct with the public is one. Your relationship, your humanitarian services, how good you are when certain problems are brought to you. These are all criteria that you assess such people with before they can attain the leadership position (*idi, female, opinion leader, rural, Plateau*).

These obviously, have implications for leadership training and development. It therefore means that since all the mentioned attributes may not be possessed by one person all at once, leaders, be they traditional, political or influential/opinion, need to undergo constant training to keep them abreast of the demands of leadership in the Nigerian culture. The above is what seems to be lacking in Nigeria, hence, the need to revise the trend. The following are specific responses of participants that buttress the foregoing:

Self-discipline. Such a person should not be seen chasing women about. He should not be seen going about gossiping and talking about other people (*idi, male, opinion leader, urban, Kaduna*).

Good character and behaviour can make a person a leader (*fgd, old male, urban, Kaduna*).

One of the reasons that can make you attain this position is only if you inherit it (*idi, male, traditional leader, rural, Edo*).

Things that could make a person qualify as a leader include trustworthiness, high responsibility, respect for elders and courageousness (*idi, male, opinion leader, rural, Oyo*).



## Leadership-Followership Interplay

A community leader is expected to help the community provide high levels of service to its community members. The leader has to do this within the context of a complex social structure in which individuals relate with one another. Human relationship at work, particularly friendly leader or superior atmosphere therefore, can be said to be critical in the attainment of goals. In every community and for every type of leadership, leaders have different ways in which they relate with members of their community. The nature of followership is a major factor in this regard. Depending on whether the followers are able and willing to partake in the affairs of the community, the leader may adopt either of two options. First, the leader may engage in task behaviour by providing directions for the actions of followers, set goals for them, define their goals, and how they undertake them. This is similar to the Path-goal theory (House & Boetz, 1979). Secondly, the leader may engage in relationship behaviour that involves a two-way communication with followers, listen to them and provide support and encouragement (Mullins, 1999). Activities of followers that make up a community therefore, individually and collectively influence the nature and direction of the leader-followership relationship.

Having said this about the leader-followership relationship, what can we say of the dispensation in our communities? What is the leader-followership relationship interplay? Our research findings show that some leaders make use of intermediaries, some, personal contact; others, traditional or modern means of communication; and yet others a combination of two or more of the above stated methods (see Table 2.6).

Table 2.6: How community leaders relate with other community members.

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Through elders in the community.</li> <li>◆ The town-crier.</li> <li>◆ Through some people who act as their assistants.</li> <li>◆ Through a one-to-one contact.</li> <li>◆ Through community meetings and festivals.</li> </ul> |
|---|

The question of which of the means of communication is frequently used depends on the type of leadership involved. For example, traditional leaders have been said to have more time and dedication to make personal contact than political and other leaders. As for political leaders, narratives indicate that most of the personal contact they make are before or during the time of their electioneering campaigns. As such, it could be said that politicians, with the possible exception of

other leaders, favour the idea of using intermediaries to reach to their constituency or community. With regard to behavioural considerations, some leaders appear to be very cordial with members of their communities, while others do not enjoy such cordial relationship.

Each of the different means of relating with followers that have been mentioned, has significant influence on the likelihood of members of the community adhering to the directives of their leaders. Importantly, too, how a leader assumes power and how comfortable his community members are with his mode of coming to power, determine their level of obedience or disobedience. Additionally, the type and severity of punishment and sanctions that the leader can apply also plays a role in followers' tendency to be good followers.

Responses of participants indicate that leader-followership relationship in Nigeria has not been that smooth. This is especially with political leadership and people with electoral mandate who respondents accuse of exploiting their constituency, or scheming out people that voted them into power. The findings of this research reveal that the case of traditional leadership is particularly a better one as far as leader-followership relationship in Nigeria is concerned. Narratives of the study frequently refer to this, as captured in the following:

Well it has been the tradition, the traditional leaders used to come and listen to our complains. You know he belongs to us, and he knows some of these problems. But our councilors have never been to our ward ever since we elected them, not to talk of knowing the condition of his people (*fgd, old, male, rural, Kaduna*).

The political leaders only promise but they don't do any thing. They talk and don't fulfil it, unlike traditional leaders in the community (*idi, male, traditional leader, rural, Edo*).

I must be quick to add that the relationship between the community and the *Odionwere* (traditional leader) is more cordial because if you want to see him you can do that, unlike the councilors who ignore us (*fgd, old, male, urban, Edo*).

Traditional leadership in Nigerian communities, therefore, seems to be more accessible to the subjects, has more concern for their welfare and is more concerned about bringing to their domain, developmental projects. The perceived tendency and willingness of traditional leaders to liaise with government and other authorities that be, is one aspect of the roles that has endeared many of them to their subjects. The same cannot be said of political and other leaders, at least, with reference to the findings of this study.

It is interesting to note that leader-followership relationship can also be predicated on set goals and objectives. These set goals and objectives could in a way, be said to represent collective interest and aspirations of both the led and the leader. In some cases, they could represent the interest and aspirations of either. This assertion does not



imply, however, that there are no conflicts of interest between and among leaders and the led alike. If we base our argument on the fact that leadership involves communication (which ultimately implies feedback), it may not be out of context to say that leaders need to understand their followers just as followers also need to understand their leaders. In order for leader-follower relationship to be smooth and workable therefore, there has to be a synchronization in the perception of the goals and objectives of leaders and their followers. The absence of this synchronization in perception between and among leaders and their followers predisposes leaders and follower relationship to varying degrees of strain and conflict. The implication of the above is that conscious effort is needed to make the leader-follower relationship work. The act of maintaining the said workable leader-follower relationship could be acquired through training. And like some trait theories of leadership might want to argue, the art or skill could also be inborn for some individuals. No doubt, whether inborn or acquired, these qualities need to be sharpened through training.

The leader and the led can also view leader-follower relations from the perspective of how follower influences the emergence and duties of leaders as well as the perception of this relationship by the leader and the led. Leaders emerge in societies in different ways; some communities have the privilege of choosing or electing their leaders, some only get leaders who are appointed or imposed on them, while leadership positions in other communities are by virtue of birth or inheritance (see Table 2.7).

Table 2.7: How community members determine who becomes a leader.

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Select a specific number of families that will produce leaders.</li> <li>◆ By voting, especially where there is a lack of consensus.</li> <li>◆ Group or age grade nominates a candidate.</li> <li>◆ kingmakers selected from nominations.</li> <li>◆ The traditional head determines who becomes a leader.</li> </ul> |
|---|

Although tradition still holds sway in many Nigerian communities, modern ways of deciding who becomes a leader by communities, such as election, have not been restricted to political leadership, as traditional communities have accepted and implemented same. Another prevalent method that is more pronounced in the South-south and the South-east, is fasting and praying. This might not be unconnected with the level of religiosity in the said zones.

Just as people sometimes have a say in who becomes a leader, they also have a say in what a leader does. In various communities, checks and balances, which are aimed at regulating the conduct of leaders,



also exist. Among some of these checks and balances, results show that invocation of spiritual powers to check the excesses or influence the activities of a leader, was mentioned by some respondents. The implication is that in communities that still place emphasis on traditional religious practices, the fear of the consequences of violating leadership contract moderates the behaviour of leaders. Respondents indicated that another way of having a say in what leaders do is to directly or indirectly (i.e. through representation or delegation) ask, demand or tell leaders what members of the community want.

## Summary

From the foregoing report, it is clear that respondents' views of leadership were centred on the attainment of group goals, the influence of the leader, and the interaction of the leader and the led. In the Nigerian context, community leadership has been defined from other perspectives such as contribution to community, dispute settlement, giving advice to community members, rewarding achievement, ensuring peace and unity as well as paramount authority. The conception of leadership among communities in Nigeria is deeply rooted in culture and paramount authority, thus making males closer to leadership, compared to females. This is reflected in the existence of more male traditional leadership titles and positions. The implication of this is that communities value leaders who are in constant contact with them in their neighbourhood. On the whole however, the notion of leadership among communities in Nigeria is based on four broad categorizations. These are traditional, opinion/influential, political and religious leadership, in order of importance. Ascendancy to community leadership is centred on the individual and community-based criteria. In order of importance, heredity, age, personal virtue, election and education, were found to be factors needed or required for leadership.

Complex social structures also influence leader-follower interplay, as leadership and followership depend on each other. Similarly, leadership is predicated on set goals and objectives of both the leaders and the led. More often than not, the perception of leadership by the leaders and the led differs. These differences potentially pose dangers in the relationship of leaders and the led. This is because a lack of understanding of what the leaders and the led stand for is a strong enough reason for disharmony to exist between the two parties. Similarly, projects or issues which happen to be religiously pursued by one party, may not be so appreciated by the other. Although there might be conflicts in the goals/objectives among leaders and the led, importantly, however, mutual understanding is needed for their progress in leadership. This implies synchronization in the leader's and the led's perception. Owing to their expected co-existence, there is need to fashion out a workable modality in which

the different types of leadership (such as traditional, political, religious, and opinion/influential) will operate in the same community without much conflict.

The implication of all these is that in a changing society like Nigeria, leaders should be trained to appreciate what their roles are and the expectations of those who they lead. Consequently, they should initiate and execute programmes that are in line with the wishes and aspirations of their followers. In the same vein, leaders should be trained and empowered to reach out with appropriate cultural and social attitude in a contact-sensitive manner that is capable of earning overwhelming influence which will ensure the fulfilment of the aspirations of their followers.

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