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**ETHNICITY AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA: A
STUDY OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS IN NEUTRAL SETTING**



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Abstrak

Keetnikan merupakan salah satu faktor pemecah belah dalam pembangunan sosio-politik di Nigeria kerana kecenderungannya untuk memutarbelitkan dan mewujudkan ketegangan hubungan antara individu dan kumpulan/kelompok di dalam negara. Hal ini telah menyebabkan kemunculan semangat etnik yang menggalakkan kesedaran etnik serta pemisahan dan bukannya semangat identiti kebangsaan dan budaya. Secara asasnya, etnik dikatakan mempunyai kaitan dengan sejarah penjajahan di negara ini, penjajah mencipta jurang pekerjaan setiap etnik sebagai satu cara pecah dan perintah untuk mengukuhkan penguasaan mereka di Nigeria dengan mengurangkan pembinaan nilai kebangsaan. Oleh itu, tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk meneroka pengalaman pelajar Nigeria terhadap masalah sosio-politik negara yang berkaitan dengan etnik dan hubungan interaksi mereka dalam suasana neutral sebagai cara untuk memahami permasalahan etnik dari sudut pandangan pelajar. Dalam kajian ini, data telah dikumpulkan terutamanya menerusi kaedah pemerhatian peribadi dan temu duga secara mendalam terhadap empat puluh pelajar yang berasal dari etnik yang berbeza dari enam zon geopolitik. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan kerangka analisis kualitatif. Hasilnya, kajian ini mendapati bahawa agama, prejudis/prasangka, dan kemiskinan adalah pemboleh ubah penting yang telah digunakan oleh politik status quo sebagai alat untuk memupuk rasa tidak percaya dalam kalangan masyarakat. Kajian ini juga menguraikan peranan positif hubungan interpersonal/antara peribadi dalam memupuk perpaduan dan mengurangkan diskriminasi dan ketegangan etno-agama dalam kalangan pelajar Nigeria. Selain itu, usaha mendapatkan pendidikan dilihat sebagai mekanisme integrasi yang membantu penyatuan pelajar Nigeria dan memudahkan perubahan sikap dengan menerapkan nilai-nilai baru yang menggalakkan persaudaraan ketika di perantauan. Kajian ini turut mencadangkan pemekaan dan pengukuhan orientasi bagi menggalakkan semangat bertoleransi dan persefahaman dalam kalangan warga Nigeria. Juga, pembasmian kadar kemiskinan perlu dilakukan dengan mewujudkan peluang pekerjaan sebagai asas keadilan dan keadilan sosial. Pada dasarnya, amalan tadbir urus baik yang menggalakkan ketelusan dan kebertanggungjawapan akan membantu dalam mengurangkan konflik antara kumpulan.

Kata Kunci: Etnik, Hubungan Interpersonal, Suasana Neutral, prejudis.

Abstract

Ethnicity is a divisive force in Nigeria's socio-political development. It tends to distort and strain relations between individuals and groups in the country. It has resulted in the emergence of an ethnic psyche which promotes ethnic consciousness and separatism instead of national identity and ethos. The root of ethnicity is arguably linked to the country's colonial history, the colonial masters employed ethnic cleavages as a means of divide and rule thus strengthening their dominance of Nigerians at the expense of nation-building. The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of Nigerian students of the country's socio-political problems associated with ethnicity and their interactive relationships in a neutral setting as a way of understanding Nigeria's ethnic problematic from their perspective. In the course of the study data was collected principally through observations and in-depth interview with forty students of different ethnic origin from the country's six geopolitical zones. The data was analysed within the qualitative frame of analysis. The study found out that religion, prejudice, and poverty are critical variables that have been used as a tool by the political status quo to nurture mistrust among Nigerians. The study also unravelled the role of positive interpersonal relations in fostering unity of purpose and reducing ethno-religious discriminations and tensions among Nigerian students. Educational pursuit is seen as an integrative mechanism that helps bind Nigerian students and facilitate attitudinal changes by imbibing new values that promote brotherhood in a foreign land. The study recommends sensitisation and reorientation in order to promote tolerance and understanding among Nigerians. As well as alleviating poverty through employment creation as a basis of fairness and social justice. In essence, good governance practices that promote transparency and accountability will also help in dousing intergroup conflicts.

Key Words: Ethnicity, Interpersonal relations, Neutral setting, Prejudice.

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List of Abbreviations

AG	:	Action Group
NCNC	:	National Council of Nigerian Citizens
NPC	:	Northern People's Congress
NYSC	:	National Youth Service Corps



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Ethnicity or ethnic affiliation is becoming or has become to a certain degree an impediment for national integration in many parts of the world. While in some societies ethnicity has been relatively well managed so as to forestall its destructive consequences, ethnic tension and cleavages has become a global phenomenon, which is not restricted to developing societies of Africa, Asia, and Latin America alone. It is a well-known fact that as human beings interact with one another some form of misunderstanding may arise resulting in one form of conflict or another. Although there is a widespread belief that ethnic tension and conflict is a result of cultural diversity apparent inability to accept strange cultural practices and perceived domination of one group by another. But the actual basis of ethnicity may not be cultural differences and practices as such rather, it may be a result of constructed social inequalities that individuals experience over time which is masked by ethnicity or racism.

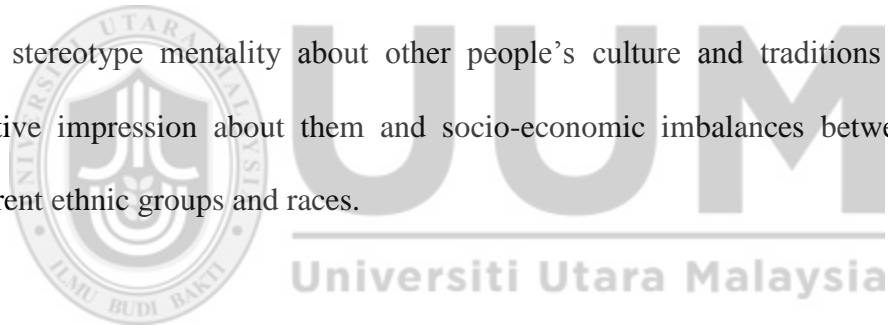
Ethnicity is posing a threat to national integration and nation-building in parts of Africa and Asia in particular. In Asia, the struggle of Kurds, a scattered people spreading around Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria is well known. The Kurds view themselves as oppressed ethnic minority facing considerable persecution and discrimination by all the countries in

which they live. Their major objective is to create a Kurdish state known as Kurdistan which is yet to be realised (Scurpin & Decorse, 2009). Many nations in Africa have experienced the bitter consequences of ethnic tensions and its resultant conflicts. The civil war in Nigeria witnessed in the late 1960s was to a large extent ignited by ethnicity. Ruthless ethnic competition gave rise to the Nigerian civil war of 1967 to 1970 (Anugwom, 2000). The aftermath of the 1966 military takeover led by ethnic Igbo officers heightened ethnic tension and virtually culminated in the counter coup that led to the Nigerian civil war (Ojo & Fagbohun, 2014).

The genocide in Rwanda is another pointer of how ethnicity can be capitalised on to elude national unity. The Hutu establishment in Rwanda mobilised fellow Hutu to massacre the minority ethnic Tutsi, it was ethnic cleansing undertaken by the Hutu (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2010). Ethnic minorities in Burma and Philippines are also experiencing forms of discrimination and marginalisation which do not give them a sense of belonging to these nations. The long standing conflict between the ethnic Moro and the Philippines state has been a struggle against political marginalisation by the minority Muslim population of Mindanao (Schou, 2012). Equally, ethnic conflicts have been a feature of Myanmar since independence in 1948 between the majority Burman and the Kachin Christian minority. The Kachin ethnic group have been aggrieved for quite some time citing discrimination, ethnic bias, and neglect by the authorities among others (Yun, 2014).

This situation, although very pervasive in Africa and Asia in particular yet it is not restricted to these societies it is a global phenomenon. In the United States for instance, African Americans, and several other racial and ethnic minorities groups have witnessed

the bitter distinction between the ‘American dream’ (Schaefer & Lamm, 1997: 176). This symbolised freedom, equality, and success and the attendant actual situation of misery, racial discrimination and prejudice (Schaefer & Lamm, 1997). As stated earlier, some nations have been able to manage ethnic relations relatively well thereby establishing stable and prosperous society, for example, the Malaysian experience of relative peace and prosperity existing between the dominant Malay and other ethnic minorities. Ethnic conflicts in the world to a large extent have been fuelled by feelings of exclusion by various ethnic groups. For instance, feelings of marginalisation by black South Africans have contributed to racial and ethnic tensions in post-apartheid South Africa. Apparently, the real obstacle to national integration has to do with ethnocentric behaviours resulting from stereotype mentality about other people’s culture and traditions thus forming negative impression about them and socio-economic imbalances between people of different ethnic groups and races.



Ethnic tensions and crisis in Nigeria are very pervasive and problematic to the unity and progress of the country. Violent conflicts bordering on ethnic, religious, and sectional differences resulting in the in the death of many people across the nation is indicative of the fact that presently Nigeria is a highly divided society (Ajayi & Owumi, 2013). Ethnic identity has become very prominent among Nigerians almost to the detriment of national ethos. In light of the divisive and disruptive impact of ethnicity in Nigeria’s socio-political development. This research was carried out with the principal aim of exploring and understanding Nigeria’s ethnic problematic from the perspective and experiences of Nigerian students studying in the Universiti Utara Malaysia. In line with the objectives of this study, this research employed qualitative ethnographic method in collecting data and

in the analysis of the data generated. Detailed discussion on the findings are presented in the final chapters of the thesis.

1.1 The Ethnic Question in Nigeria

Ethnicity as a problem in Nigeria has its roots in the colonial history of the country. Several studies have indicated that ethnic animosity and conflict in Nigeria was to a large extent reared and nourished by the colonialist in a bid to divide and rule their subjects. It was their plan to ensure that the ethnic nationalities that make up present day Nigeria were not united in order to continue exploiting them (Nnoli, 1980; Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). Therefore, with little or no awareness of that plot coupled with selfish interest of the elites the stage was now set for ethnic chauvinism and sectional separatism which still continue to bedevil the country. It is argued that ethnicity became a problem when ethnic groups who were somewhat not involved in direct conflict before with one another, begin to pronounce their cultural differences and ethnic solidarity against other ethnic nationalities in the socio-economic competition for scarce resources and political dominance (Nnoli, 1980). And this unhealthy 'ethnic' competition for socio-economic gains is associated with the colonial manipulation that socialised ethnic groups in Nigeria to mistrust and detest each other in the quest of colonial domination (Bah, 2004).

Prior to the advent of the colonialist, interethnic conflicts were very minimal. Intra ethnic conflict was more prevalent in pre-colonial Nigeria. In Yoruba land for example, it is recorded that various kingdoms were engaged in destructive interstate wars (Nnoli, 1980). That was the scenario in most parts of the country, with few cases of interethnic

conflicts. Trade by barter and other commercial activities was the main form of interethnic relations before colonialism. Hausa and Yoruba peoples were connected by long distant trade and their relationship was to a large extent cordial. The most important trade partners of the Hausa in the pre-colonial period were the Yoruba, the Asante, the Jukun and Nupe peoples (Tijani, 2008:254). It could be argued that ethnic rivalry and the resultant conflicts emerged as a result of the colonial experience. And this problem has been persistent in Nigeria ever since. Although ethnicity in Nigeria is rooted in the colonial experience yet its persistence has to do with political manipulation of the elites. The ruling class that took over from the colonial masters politicised ethnicity for a vested interest, thereby consolidating the foundation already laid by the British. According to Bah, 'In Nigeria, however, the colonial power that initially laid the foundation of the Nigerian state also worked against the formation of a common national identity' (2004:46). Given this situation, Nigerians have not been able to resolve the ethnic question which is a threat to the country's unity.

Nigeria is Africa's most ethnically diverse nation with over 300 ethnic groups (Otite cited in Mustapha, 2006). The major ethnic groups are the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo these ethnic groups are the most populous and influential in Nigeria. According to the 1963 census, these three ethnic groups were said to make up 58.7% of the nation's population, with substantial ethnic minorities including the Ijaw, Kanuri, Edo, Ibibio, Nupe and Tiv (Mustapha, 2006). The competition and struggle for the control of the Nigerian state has been most fierce between the three major ethnic groups since colonial days up to the contemporary times. This situation developed as a result of the tripod regional administrative arrangement of the British in the 1950s which led to the

emergence of these ethnic groups dominating the then Northern, Western, and Eastern regions respectively.

According to the 1952/1953 census, the Hausa/Fulani make up 50.6% of the former Northern region's population, in addition, to the fact that the said region had 54% of the nation's population at the same time. The Yoruba make up 70.8% of the Western region and the Igbo constituted 61% of the Eastern region (Mustapha, 2006). Therefore, the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo ethnic groups constitute the majority of the nation's population and the most influential in the socio-political landscape. The struggle for the control of the state has been an issue generating controversy as to which ethnic group has an upper hand, or marginalises the others. In terms of political leadership, Northerners have spent much time governing Nigeria, while the Southern Yoruba and Igbo ethnic groups dominate the federal bureaucracy and commercial activities to a large extent.

The numerical advantage of the North, gave them the leverage over their compatriots in the South in terms political control of the state. The North is more populous than the Western and Eastern regions put together. While the Western and Eastern regions had an early start in terms of western education which gave them an edge over Northerners in terms of qualified personnel to run the civil service especially in the early post-colonial era. Based on this situation, ethnic polarisation and accusations of marginalisation by the various ethnic groups has tended to take the form of a North and South divide. The North is predominantly Muslim with pockets of Christian minority ethnic groups whereas the South, consisting of the former Western and Eastern regions, is predominantly Christian with significant number of Muslims in the Yoruba speaking areas.

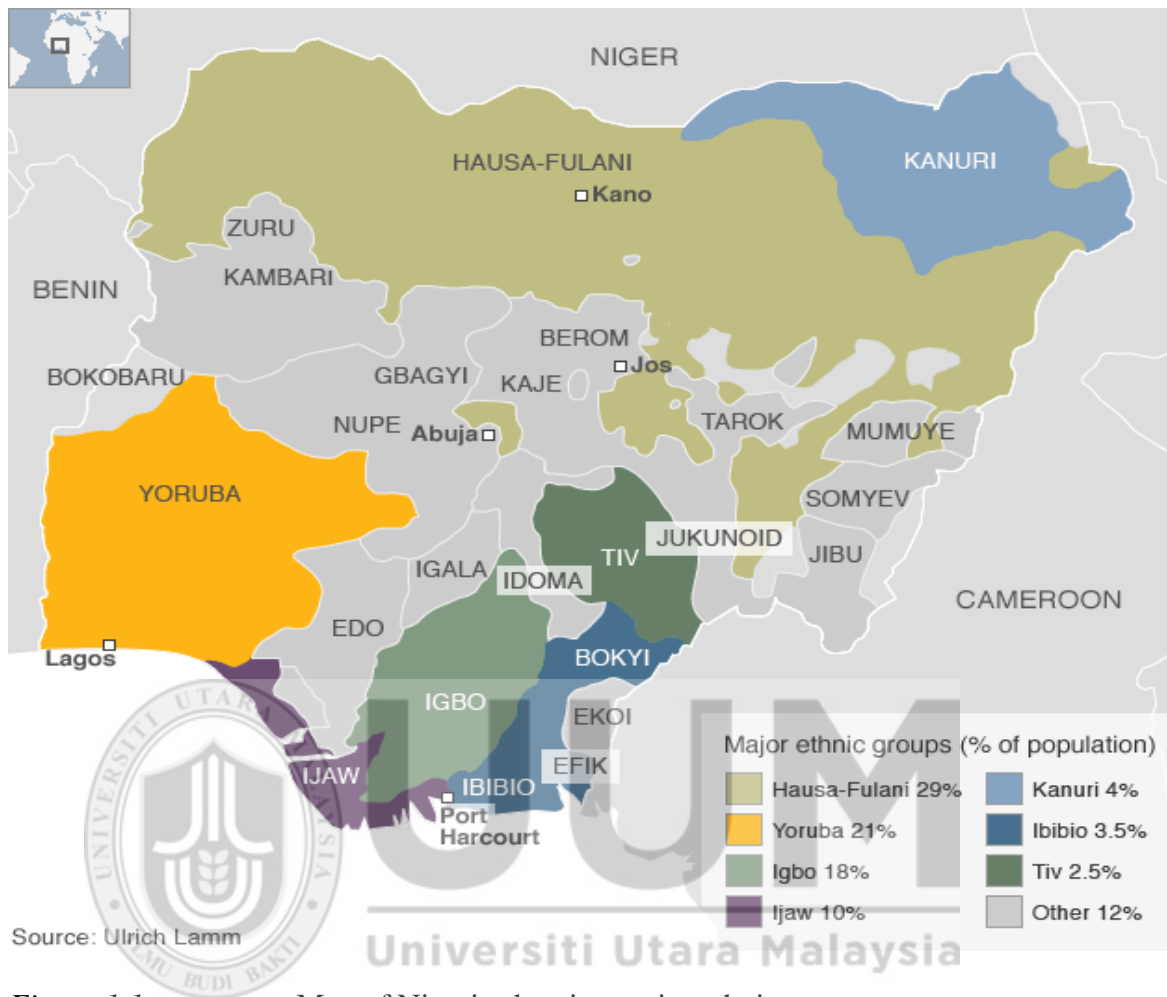


Figure 1.1 : Map of Nigeria showing major ethnic groups

Source: <https://www.google.com.my/encyclopedia> Britannica: accessed on 02/01/15.

Table 1.1

Nigeria Location of Ethnic Group

States by zones	Dominant ethnic groups	No. of minority ethnic groups
<i>Northwest</i>		<i>54</i>
Sokoto, Kebbi + Zamfara	Hausa	12
Katsina	Hausa	1
Kano + Jigawa	Hausa	9
Kaduna	Hausa	32
<i>Northeast</i>		<i>205</i>
Borno + Yobe	Kanuri	29
Adamawa + Taraba	Fulani, Hausa	112
Bauchi + Gombe	Hausa	64
<i>North-central</i>		<i>123</i>
Old Kwara (+ some parts of Kogi)	Yoruba, Ebira, Igala	20
Old Niger	Hausa, Gwari	19
Old Benue (+ some parts of Kogi)	Tiv, Idoma, Igala	12
Plateau + Nassarawa	Birum, Angas, Yergam, Hausa	72
<i>Southwest</i>		<i>4</i>
Oyo + Osun	Yoruba	-
Ekiti + Ondo	Yoruba	2
Ogun	Yoruba	-
Lagos	Yoruba	2
<i>Southeast</i>		<i>1</i>
Anambra, Enugu + Ebonyi	Igbo	1
Imo + Abia	Igbo	-
<i>South-south</i>		<i>59</i>
Edo + Delta	Bini, Urhobo, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Igbo	13
Rivers + Bayelsa	Ijaw, Ogoni, Andoni, Igbo	10
Akwa Ibom	Ibibio	7
Cross River	Efik	29

Source: Adapted from Mustapha (2006:11).

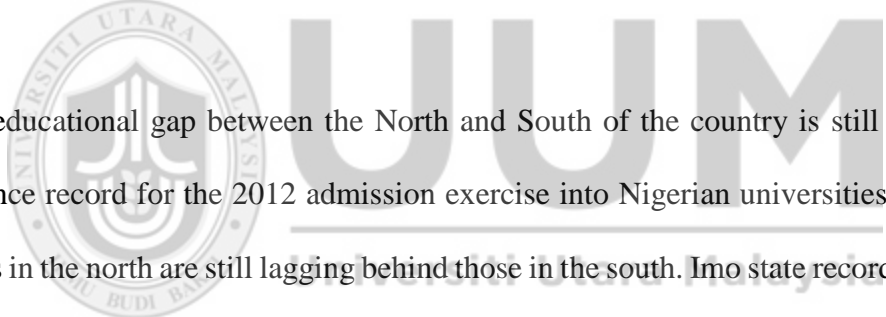
The North/South dichotomy has resulted in intense geo-ethnic competition between the two parts of the federation, sometimes resulting in ethno religious conflicts. The Yoruba and Igbo contend that they are marginalised by Northerners insinuating Hausa/Fulani domination of Nigeria's political arena since independence. While the Hausa/Fulani, are also mindful of the Igbo/Yoruba domination of the federal civil service and commercial activities of the nation. It is on record that in 1947 for instance, there were only 251 Northerners enrolled in secondary education which represented only 2% of the total pupils enrolled in secondary schools in Nigeria. By 1965, there was a marginal increase of

15,276 pupils in the Northern region, in comparison to 180,907 students in the South (Orji, 2008).

The educational imbalance between the North and Southern part of Nigeria was a deliberate colonial policy meant to stagnate the North with the pretext of ‘protecting the Islamic values’ of the North. The colonial government outlawed Christian missionary activities in northern Nigeria which involves the establishment of schools. Paradoxically, the colonialist subsidised three Muslims schools in Lagos in the southern part of the country (Mustapha, 2006). It was a plot to prevent the emergence of an educated elite that would spear head decolonisation agenda, as the educated elites in the South did. The British did everything that they can to prevent the surfacing of an educational system that will challenge their rule in Northern Nigeria (Mustapha, 2006). The educational imbalance persisted in the post-colonial era with the gap between Northern and Southern Nigeria still wide. In 1967/70 academic session there were only 19% of Northerners in Nigerian universities, while the Western states or the Yoruba speaking areas had 48% of the total number of students enrolled in universities. Similarly, in 1974/75 academic session 74% of students in universities were from Southern Nigeria while only 24% were from the north (Orji, 2008).

This trend of educational imbalance between the southern and northern states still persist, the core northern predominantly Muslim and Hausa/Fulani states have not been able to bridge the gap of elite formation and recruitment created by educational imbalance between the northern and southern states. In 2000/2001 out of the 36 states of the federation, majority of candidates seeking admission into universities were from six states

from the south having a total number of 218,475 candidates. At the same time, six states from the north had the lowest number of candidates of 6,729 only which represents 3.5%, these are the core Muslim dominated areas of north-west and north-eastern Nigeria. In other words, 80.1% of students in universities in the country were from the south, which had 46.8% of the nation's population based on the figures of the 1991 head count. What this implies is that the north which is more populous is lagging behind in terms of elite formation and recruitment which explains the virtual predominance of the nation's formal sector by southern elites. Thus, this type of imbalance has bred frosty interethnic relations in Nigeria resulting in counter accusations of marginalisation by the north/south divide (Mustapha, 2006).



The educational gap between the North and South of the country is still very wide for instance record for the 2012 admission exercise into Nigerian universities indicates that states in the north are still lagging behind those in the south. Imo state recorded the highest number of applicants that sat for the universities matriculation examination in the year 2012 with 123, 865 candidates or 8.24%; with Delta state having 88,865 or 5.91%; while Anambra state had 84,204 candidates or 5.60%; Osun state had 73, 935 or 4.92%; Oyo state had 71,272 candidates or 4.74%; with Ogun state having 71, 173 or 4.73%. While the core northern states such as Jigawa had 11, 529 candidates or 0.77%; Kebbi state had 7,364 candidates or 0.59%; Yobe state had 6,389 or 0.42%; Zamfara state had 5,713 candidates or 0.38%; with Sokoto state having 5, 664 or 0.38% (Nigerian muse, 2012).

The story is not very different in recent times as statistics shows that states located in the southern part of Nigeria still account for substantial candidates or applicants into Nigerian

universities. For instance, Imo state recorded the highest number of applicants in the 2015 unified tertiary matriculation examination conducted by the joint admission matriculation board with a total of 104,381 candidates. Followed by Delta state with 78,854 and Anambra state which has 77, 689 candidates. The states with the lowest number of applicants in the federation are the north-eastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe with 15,692, 15, 613 and 10, 044 candidates respectively (Premium Times, 2015). However, the continued educational imbalance between the north and south of the country is attributed to socio-cultural factors. Firstly, right from the start northern Muslims were not receptive to the activities of Christian missionaries that pioneered western education in Nigeria. In addition, the attempts by the federal government to universalise primary education was more successful in the southern parts of the country (Antoninis, 2014).

The northern elites in the post-colonial era has held on to power more than their southern compatriots, based on the numerical strength of the northern states. Out of the fourteen post-colonial leaders that have governed Nigeria so far, nine are from the north while four are from the south taking cognisance of the fact that Nigeria's fourth leader Olusegun Obasanjo, ruled the country twice between 1976-1979 as military head of state and 1999-2007 as an elected civilian president. The dominance of Northerners of the political leadership of the country has resulted in great controversy between northern and southern elites each making claims of marginalisation by the other. The north/south divide has in most times taken an ethno-religious dimension thus, threatening the fragile stability of the country. It is in most cases an elitist competition for power at the detriment of national integration. Because the critical issues of poverty reduction, employment generation, and other social services that are lacking do not seem to be the priority of the ruling elites.

Tijani (2012) argues that Nigeria's post-colonial elites that took over control from the British employed the colonial divide and rule tactics in their quest for power utilising ethnic, religious, and regional differences as tools of manipulation. Mbaogwu and Osinubi (2013) opines that it seems quite simple to attribute Nigeria's present socio-political problems to colonialism. But in reality a nation that has failed to produce patriotic democratic leadership coupled with massive bureaucratic corruption points to the fact that bad governance is the bane of the country's predicaments.

1.2 National Integration Mechanisms

The Nigerian state has devised mechanisms of integrating the nation so as to manage controversies arising from the different ethnic groups that constitute the country. The issue of marginalisation that tend to dominate the debate between the diverse ethno-religious groups in the country has forced the government to institutionalise certain mechanisms deemed necessary for national integration of the nation.

1.2.1 Regional Quota

Towards the dawn of independence in 1958, the British introduced a regional quota system for recruitment of junior ranks into the armed forces. The North was allocated fifty per cent of new recruits, while the west and east were given twenty five per cent each. So that by 1961, a similar quota was introduced for the officer corps. The introduction of the quota for the officer corps of the military was seen as deliberately subordinating merit to satisfy sectional interests. Given that the officer corps was dominated by southerners. In 1979 the quota system was consolidated with the introduction of the scheme in the

educational system and other sectors of the public service under the auspices of the federal character principle (Mustapha, 2006). The introduction of state quotas in the educational sector which favours educationally disadvantaged states of the north is viewed by southerners as a discriminatory policy which nurtures mediocrity because of the differential criteria used for admitting candidates from the educationally disadvantaged and the advantaged states (Joshua et al., 2014; Mustapha, 2006).

1.2.2 State Creation

State creation was initiated by the military in 1967 breaking up the four regions into twelve states six each from the north and southern parts of Nigeria. State creation was supposed to diffuse the geo-ethnic tension that was rising following the aftermath of the military takeover of 1966. The military governor of the former Eastern region was threatening to secede from the federation following the counter coup of July 1966. The creation of states out of the former regions tends to suppress the fears of domination of minority ethnic groups by the three major ethnic groups that dominated the former regions. Although, this exercise brought relief to some ethnic groups at the same time it resulted in the production of new minorities within the new states, former minorities became majority ethnic groups in the new states thus creating new majority-minority dichotomy in the states (Vande, 2012). Moreover, state creation in Nigeria has not been able to resolve ethnic discrimination and conflicts. In fact it has help in a way in compounding ethnic cleavages and separatism. The indigene and non-indigene dichotomy became pronounced with creation of states in Nigeria. In spite of the fact that the constitution of the country guarantees citizens equal rights in terms of residency, some

Nigerians are denied this right on the pretext that they are not indigenes of the state in which they are resident even if they or their parents were born, or have resided in that state for a very long time insofar as they cannot establish that they are indigenous of their place of residence, they are regarded as non-indigenes and denied equal rights with the so-called indigenes. This discriminatory practice is done in the name of 'statism'. Non indigenes are denied some rights which they are supposed to enjoy as citizens of Nigeria as payers of tax and other civic obligations (Egwu, 2009; Jinadu, 2002).

1.2.3 Impact of State Creation

These discriminations include minimal access to power and privileges, ownership of landed property, discriminatory admission policies into educational institutions and a host of other injustices. In 1994 tension rose up in Jos, the capital of Plateau state north-central Nigeria, following the appointment of a Muslim (non-indigene) to fill a position in a federal agency reserved for the state (Musa, 2010). An expatriate worker may enjoy better conditions of service in a state civil service than a Nigerian employee who is working on contract because he or she is a non-indigene. This dual citizenship that favours an indigene in a state at the expense of the non-indigene does not promote national unity and harmonious interethnic relations (Egwu, 2009; Jinaidu, 2002).

As earlier pointed out state creation in Nigeria further fuelled ethnic divisions, especially in states in which former minority ethnic groups suddenly became a majority group. The tendency to dominate the minorities in the state becomes almost automatic as is evidenced in the struggle between the three ethnic groups that constitute present day Kogi state in

North-central Nigeria. Kogi state was created in 1991, it is composed of three major ethnic groups the Igala, Ebira, and Okun Yoruba. The Igala ethnic group being the most populous in the state have dominated the political leadership of the state since its creation. There has been intense struggle between these ethnic groups for the control of state power and resources thus defeating the objective of state creation, which was meant to diffuse ethnic tension by bringing government closer to the people. The other ethnic groups in the state contend that the Igala domination of the state governorship has meant undue advantages for them at the expense of the Ebira and Okun Yoruba ethnic groups (Mustapha, 2006).

With the constant agitation for more states by the various ethnic groups in the country, it is pertinent to ask whether the creation of new unviable states has resulted in remarkable development and access to power for the masses (Vande, 2012). It is important to state that the creation of economically unviable states increases the cost of administration and development in Nigeria. Because many states cannot stand on their own in other words, they cannot generate revenue to sustain themselves without fiscal allocation from the federal government which negates the concept of federalism. Paradoxically, this is the condition of many states in the country (Emmanuel, 2013).

1.2.4 Federalism

Federal character principle was devised by the military in 1979 as an integrating mechanism in order to avoid the mistakes of the immediate post-independent era which resulted in the political crisis and resultant military takeover of January 1966. The military enshrined the federal character principle in the 1979 and 1999 constitutions in order to

safe guard the interest of all ethnic groups in the federation. In other words, the federal character principle is a provision that ensures that all states in the country are given equitable representation in the constitution of the government and its agencies, so as to reflect national representation and give all ethnic groups a sense of belonging. The principle of federal character is based on the equality of states and not equality of ethnic groups as such. Following the breakup of the old regions into states, therefore the unit of allocation of socio-political values are the 36 states of the federation. That is to say, the federal character principle seeks to guarantee equitable representation of each state in the nation (Adetiba & Rahim, 2013).

The constitution of Nigeria empowers the president to appoint at least one minister from among the indigenes of each state. This policy legally ensures equal representation of states in the federal bureaucracy and other agencies of government. The federal character principle was supposed to allay the fears of domination and marginalisation of minorities in the federation as was the case in the immediate post-colonial period, when the three major ethnic groups dominated the nation's polity (Orji, 2008; Mustapha, 2006).

Indeed the federal character principle has improved the national outlook of government in comparison to the past, in 1960 the North was said to have 60% of the positions in the federal cabinet, the Yoruba 20%, Igbo 13%, Southern minorities 6.7% and Northern minorities 0%. In 2004, there was an improvement with the North having 30%, Yoruba 18%, Igbo 15%, Southern minorities 18%, and Northern minorities 18% respectively. The principle has also improved the recruitment of Northerners into the federal civil service which is still dominated by Southerners (Orji, 2008). The federal character principle, have

become a political tool utilised by the elites in pursuit of ethno-regional interests. The political class a relatively small but powerful group of individual that constitute the national leadership have succeeded in manipulating the federal character principle promoting sectional interests and ethnicity for their selfish interest (Adetiba & Rahim, 2013).

Because of the head-start in education of the Southerners they have been able to dominate the federal civil service and governmental agencies. Still not satisfied with this situation, they are bitter about Northern domination of the leadership of the nation thus the contention for power shift to the south. At the same time northerner elites are interested in the enforcement of the federal character principle to the fullest in order to curtail southern domination of federal agencies which is somewhat resented by their southern colleagues. Who believe that merit and seniority should be the major criteria of filling vacant positions in the civil service so as maintain their advantage over their northern colleagues joining the federal civil service on transfer of service from state civil services, promotions are more rapid in the civil services of the northern states due to minimal competition over placement in comparison to what obtains in the southern states where competition is high for few vacancies. Therefore, civil servants joining the federal civil service from northern states had a big chance of higher placement over their southern colleagues already serving in the federal civil service, because they are transferred on a lateral basis to an equivalent grade level in the federal civil service thus moving ahead of their southern colleagues. This scenario is resented by Southerners calling for the overhaul of the federal character principle because they allege such transfers favours Northerners.

The federal character principle was supposed to integrate the nation but turns out to be a tool of disunity employed by the elite (Orji, 2008; Mustapha, 2006).

1.2.5 The National Youth Service Corps (N.Y.S.C.)

The national youth Service Corps (N.Y.S.C) scheme introduced in 1973 by the military was also supposed to be a programme of re-orienting the youths towards national consciousness. The N.Y.S.C. scheme is a one year mandatory programme for graduates of universities and polytechnics that have completed the higher national diploma, and below the age of thirty. The major objective of the scheme was to promote national unity in the minds of the youths through national service outside their home state, or traditional homeland which was seen as a way of reducing ethnic tensions. The participants in the scheme would have seen parts of the country, where they might have never visited before on their own volition and experience things by themselves thus reducing in-built stereotypes about other peoples' cultures and regions, and preparing them for future challenges as they leave the service (Marenin, 1979). But the N.Y.S.C. scheme has not been very successful in reducing ethnic tensions and prejudice. As observed by Marenin, (1979) the programme is more or less a temporary pool of white-collar labour, instead of a year of national service and socialising to be a true Nigerian which was the initial objective of the scheme. Moreover, the attempt usually to employ corps members in the state in which they have served yields little result is another short coming of this scheme.

1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

Ethnicity as a problem among Nigerians is quite pervasive so much so that nearly everything is viewed from an ethnic prism (Alubo, 2004). Previous studies have shown that ethnicity has been a divisive element used by sections of the elites in sowing seed of disunity and disharmony instead of forging a sense of unity among Nigerians (Odeyemi, 2014; Erhagbe, 2012; Osaghae & Suberu, 2005; Nnoli, 1980). Ethnicity has been a bane in Nigeria's socio-political development resulting in a general sense of lack of unity or a strong sense of collective belonging among Nigerians (Uduma, 2013; Halliru, 2012). Presently, studies on intergroup relations among Nigerians in a neutral setting has not been fully explored thus the need to undertake this study. Arguably, Nigerians tend to have more loyalty and commitment to their ethnic groups, clans, and other primary groups sharing the same values and beliefs. Hence, mutual mistrust and suspicion has been a factor that divide Nigerians along ethnic lines. It is reflected in their patterns of interactions and perceptions of one another.

The net result of such ethnic orientation has promoted prejudicial or biased mind-set among Nigerians, favouring ethnic relationships and turning a blind eye to national commitment. The implication of this situation is that Nigerians have and continue to experience ethnic discrimination which tend to reinforce mutual suspicion and distrust. Hence, majority of Nigerians are negatively affected by ethnic tensions and conflicts. Which tend to reflect the weak sense of collective belonging that is exhibited by citizens of the country. The pattern of interaction among Nigerian students to some extent reflects Nigeria's ethnic divide. Based on this situation, this study intend to focus on the

interactions and experiences of Nigerian students in a neutral setting as a way of exploring and understanding Nigeria's ethnic problematic from their perspective.

This study will therefore focus on: firstly, examining closely the interactive processes of Nigerian students under a neutral situation in order to provide non-ethnic and non-political situations of afflictions. Secondly, to observe and analyse conditions or situations that tend to promote integrative relationships among Nigerian students. The neutral situation through residence in a foreign country brought together a group of unrelated Nigerians, except for their common country of origin to provide them with the possibility of the emergence of a common identity, symbolic interactions and thus partial unity among themselves. In the Nigerian context, the neutral setting could be equated with federalism providing a framework for supra-ethnic interactions and afflictions. Federalism is supposed to foster unity and equity among Nigerians irrespective of primordial factors. This study intend to explore and understand the problem of ethnicity in national integration in Nigeria. It will also highlight and discuss how ethnic prejudice and discrimination is used in deluding national integration. An ethnographic design will be employed for the conduct of this study because it will give room for an in-depth understanding and analysis of the problem.

1.4 Research Questions

- i) What are the experiences of Nigerian students in Universiti Utara Malaysia of the country's socio-political problems associated with ethnicity?
- ii) How do ethnic affiliation experience generate interpersonal conflicts among Nigerian students in Universiti Utara Malaysia?
- iii) What conditions tends to generate ethnocentric and non-ethnocentric interactions among Nigerian students in Universiti Utara Malaysia?
- iv) How interaction in a neutral situation outside Nigeria helps in producing a form of mutual understanding and promote integration among Nigerian students?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to highlight how ethnicity affects Nigeria's integration. In line with this are the following objectives:

- i) To explore and understand student experiences of Nigeria's socio-political problems associated with ethnicity.
- ii) To highlight and discuss how ethnic affiliation generate interpersonal conflicts among Nigerian students.
- iii) To examine conditions promoting ethnocentric and non-ethnocentric interactions among Nigerian students.
- iv) To identify and discuss how interaction in a neutral setting can promote mutual understanding, trust and integration among Nigerian students and reduction of prejudice and rivalries.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study will be significant in the following ways;

1. Identifying various dimensions of ethnicity that contribute to challenge national integration initiatives.
2. Highlight and understand interpersonal relations traits that could be useful in building national integration in Nigerian context.
3. Extend intergroup contact theory toward solidifying national integration in Nigerian context.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is the experiences of Nigerians in a neutral setting of the country's ethnic problematic through interviewing and personal observations with particular reference to the Universiti Utara Malaysia (see appendix A). The Universiti Utara Malaysia is a neutral setting for this study away from the arching ethnic situation of Nigeria. The analysis will attempt at constructing a mood of supra-ethnic characteristics to achieve national integration.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study like all other researches has certain limitations firstly, given that it was carried out in a neutral ground or setting therefore it focused on the interactive relationships and experience of Nigerian students alone in trying to explore and understand the country's ethnic problematic from their perspective. Thus the level of generalisation that could be drawn from its findings is very limited but it will serve as a point of reference for future

studies. Nevertheless, the research provides an attractive possibility of constructing supra-ethnic interactive structures.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

This study is comprised of six chapters: Chapter one consist of the background of the study, problem statement, research questions, objectives and significance of the study, scope of the study, limitations of the study, operational definition and organisation of the study. Chapter two consist of literature review and theoretical framework. Chapter three consist of methodology, population, and instrumentation of the study. Chapter four consist data collection and analysis. Chapter five consist of discussion of findings and Chapter six consist of conclusion and recommendations.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter presents the problem of ethnicity in Nigeria and clarifies the problem statement. The chapter also consisted of the research questions, objectives of the study. It also includes significance of the study, scope and limitations of the study. Moreover, this chapter discusses the operational definitions and organisation of the study. The next chapter is the literature review and theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the introductory aspect of the study clarifying the research problem and the need to undertake this study. This chapter reviewed relevant literatures on the research problem and the theoretical framework.

2.1 The Persistence of Ethnicity in Nigeria

One of the major problems that have dominated the socio-political life of Nigeria is the ethnic question which continues to raise divisive tendencies in the polity. Ethnicity is a pervasive problem that tends to influence interpersonal relationships, and state affairs. Nearly every aspect of life in Nigeria is viewed from ethnic prism. Ethnicity is a reality at play in most aspects of national affairs in Nigeria from elections to political appointments and location of developmental projects some ethnic groups are favoured while others are marginalised (Alubo, 2004). This phenomenon is not unconnected with the historical antecedents of the country, which was conceived by the British colonialist. Having governed the different nationalities that constitute present day Nigeria separately prior to its amalgamation in 1914.

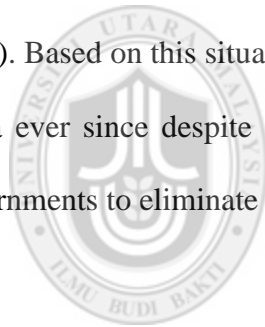
Ethnic segregation among Nigerians was engendered by the British in a bid to divide and rule the colonised. They emphasised the differences between Nigerians in order to sow the seed of disunity among them (Nnoli 2003; Osaghae & Suberu 2005; Bagaji 2008). For instance, they introduce the notion of ‘native foreigners’ in reference to Nigerians who were residing outside their traditional homeland in order to polarise the people along ethnic lines. They systematically restricted interaction between the peoples of Nigeria by encouraging separate settlements for the so-called ‘native foreigner’ residing outside their locality so as to hinder integration (Nnoli, 2003).

The implications of restricting interactions among the peoples of Nigeria by the colonial masters strengthened ethnic sentiments and rivalries among Nigerians. Furthermore, the ruling class that took charge after independence were already polarised along ethnic and regional lines (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). Therefore, the pervasiveness of ethnicity in present day Nigeria has to do with colonial state formation. Given this situation, ethnicity has been politicised to serve the vested interest of a few in the society thus:

Ethnicity is generally regarded as the most basic and politically salient identity in Nigeria. This claim is supported by the fact that both in competitive and non-competitive settings, Nigerians are more likely to define themselves in terms of their ethnic affinities than any other identity (Osaghae & Suberu 2005:8).

According to Imobighe (2003) ‘the colonial administration encouraged the uneven development of the constituent regions of Nigeria without fostering national unity’ (cited in Bagaji, 2008:6). Hence laying the foundation of mutual mistrust and suspicion among Nigerians, however, this does not mean that ethnicity, was not in existence in pre-colonial Nigeria.

From the late 1940s when decolonisation politics begin to take shape competition between the elites for political power and ascendancy became rife. And this political struggle by the elites for hegemony was given ethnic colouration. By 1951, the nationalist were divided along ethno-regional lines, with the three main political parties championing ethno-regional politics. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) in Northern Nigeria was dominated by the Hausa/Fulani, the Yoruba dominated the Action Group (AG) in the Western region, and the Igbo ethnic group dominated the National Council of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) in the Eastern region (Mustapha, 2006). These ethno-regional parties fail to find common ground of uniting the people instead they further polarise the polity in order to consolidate their dominance in their ethno-regional power base (Mustapha, 2006). Based on this situation, ethnic politics continue to dominate the Nigerian political arena ever since despite the many structural changes and policies devised by various governments to eliminate this menace.



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Ethnic sentiments have become a very powerful weapon used by the elites to secure power, due to the gullibility of the Nigerian masses. The colonialist frustrated the evolvement of a collective identity through the policy of 'divide and rule' in order to promote its control of the natives which resulted in a feeble sense of national commitment and at the same time weakened the development of a strong sense of national belonging that goes beyond ethnic leanings (Jinadu, 2002:8). Therefore, the colonial foundation of ethnicity in Nigeria is being strengthened by the political class while paying lip service to its resolution.

2.2 Ethnic Diversity and Conflicts

Nigeria is Africa's most populous and ethnically diverse country, with an estimated population of 177 million (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014). There is no exact number of the ethnic groups in Nigeria, Otite's, (1990) estimation of 374 ethnic groups is widely accepted (Mustapha, 2006:1). Nigeria's ethnic diversity has been a source of disunity and conflicts. In view of the fact that diversity, is assumed to be a source of strength in multicultural societies such as the United States. The United States had a history of ethnic diversity which has helped in making it a heterogeneous nation and due to this diversity ethnic conflicts do erupt sometimes. But intergroup relations in United States have not been very conflicting as projected by the media consensus and solidarity is an important aspect of interethnic relations (Marger, 2006).

Ethnic diversity as earlier stated is a source of unity in some nations this does not mean that animosity and tensions does not exist. The level of ethnic conflicts is relatively lower and less frequent in comparison to the Nigerian situation. Nigeria's diversity has being seen as a condition prompting conflicts. But this argument is faulty because it has been proven that nations with high diversity such as Switzerland, Belgium, Malaysia and Tanzania are more peaceful and stable than some of the least diverse nations of the world such as Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia and to some extent Sri Lanka (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005).

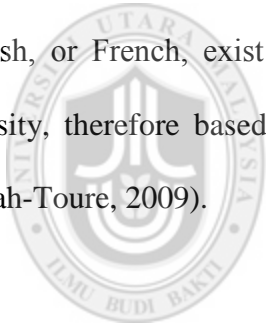
Political marginalisation and ethnic prejudice has been a source of conflicts in Nigeria. The Tiv and Jukun conflict in north central Nigeria is a pointer to this issue. The Tiv are said to have migrated into Jukun land prior to the colonial days, and they were living

peacefully with their host before the advent of partisan politics in the dawn of Nigeria's independence. The numerical strength of the Tiv in Jukun territory altered the harmonious relationship between the two ethnic groups since democratic participation is a game of number. Henceforth, the host community begin to view the Tiv as 'strangers' which resulted in tension between the two ethnic groups. Part of the punitive measures taken by the host community were to restrict the ownership of property particularly farmland by the Tiv and denial of political participation (Egwu, 2009). The politicisation of ethnicity in Nigeria has paved the way for the perennial conflicts in the country.

2.3 State Formation and Ethnic Cleavages

The fusion of the diverse ethnic and religious groups together under one central political system known as Nigeria was not undertaken with the consent of the colonised. It was a creation of the British which is seen as partly responsible for the socio-political problems that accompanied postcolonial Nigeria. The proponents of this view are of the opinion that having administered the two parts of the country separately prior to the amalgamation there was bound to be problems. Due to the ethnic and religious differences, that separates them. Moreover, after the amalgamation the two parts were still governed separately with minimal integration of the peoples of the two halves (Mustapha, 2006; Osaghae & Suberu, 2005; Nnoli, 1980). More differences emerged between the people of Nigeria after the introduction of the three region structure (North, East, West,) in 1946 (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005).

In each region minority ethnic nationalities emerged who were forced to align with the major ethnic group of their regions in the competition of power and economic resources. The Northern region was the largest and most populous and was predominantly Muslim. The Western and Eastern regions were predominantly Christian. Therefore, linguistic and religious differences were capitalised on by both the British and the nationalist to divide the people along ethno-religious lines for their vested interests. For instance, the then Premier of Northern Nigeria Ahmadu Bello is said to have described the 1914 amalgamation as a mistake, while the late Premier of the Western Region, Obafemi Awolowo referred to Nigeria as a mere geographical expression (Alubo, 2009). The major argument of Obafemi Awolowo, is that a Nigerian nation do not exist as Germans, English, or French, exist as a nation. Because of the country's ethnic and religious diversity, therefore based on this situation, a Nigerian nationality was inconceivable (Kazah-Toure, 2009).



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These statements by the founding fathers of Nigeria, is illustrative of the level of ethnic politics in post-colonial Nigeria. These were the centrifugal forces that led to the military takeover of 1966 and the subsequent civil war that accompanied the military incursion in Nigerian politics. The military coup that toppled the first civilian administration in the country, was a sectional action taken by military officers of Igbo extraction of the then Eastern Region, which resulted in the assassination of the Prime minister of the federation Tafawa Balewa, a Northerner and the Regional Premiers of the Northern and Western Regions. The head of the military junta Gen.Ironsi was an Igbo, although he was not part of the initiators of the coup being the most senior officer, in the military he took over from the civilians. But his failure to punish the officers that killed the Prime minister and the

regional Premiers in addition, to his intention of reforming the Nigerian state by abolishing the federation and replacing it with a unitary system.

This move was viewed as fortifying Igbo hegemony in Nigeria, resulting in another coup led by northern officers six months later, which led to the death of Gen. Ironsi. This second coup d'état, culminated in the civil war of 1966, when then Eastern Region military governor Gen. Ojukwu, an Igbo seceded from the federation based on his belief that the people of Eastern Nigeria cannot be protected by a government based outside the region (Bagaji, 2008). The Nigerian's civil war is a product of the contradictions that existed between the nationalist who took over from the colonialist. Before independence from Britain the fear of domination of the federation by southerners was rife among leaders of the Northern Region given that the region was lagging behind in terms education and other social infrastructures. The Western and Eastern Regions were far ahead of the Northern Region in education and qualified personnel to run the civil service after independence (Mustapha, 2006).

The disparity between the regions was a result of the fact that the peoples of the Eastern and Western regions were colonised earlier by the British and their acceptance of Christianity through Missionary activities gave them an edge in terms of education. In addition, the colonialist fostered uneven development in the educational system between the regions and within the North between the 'pagan tribes' of North central Nigeria and the Muslims of the 'core North' which breed mutual suspicion and lack of trust among the postcolonial leaders who were agitating for independence (Mustapha, 2006; Egwu, 2009). Furthermore, there was disagreement over the date for self-government with the

southern regions opting for an early transfer of government which was not convenient to the north (Mustapha, 2006). Given this situation, it could be argued that ethno-regional rivalry was top on the agenda instead of national unity.

2.4 Ethno-Religious Conflicts

From the mid 1980s Nigeria began to witness ethno-religious conflicts, particularly in the northern part of the country. The most notable ethno-religious conflict that began to fragment the relative peace and stability, after the Nigerian civil war was the sectarian conflict in Kafanchan, Kaduna state north-western Nigeria in 1987. The Kafanchan crisis undermined ethno-religious harmony particularly in the northern part of the country and set the ball rolling for future clashes. Ukiwo (2003) notes that there have been several ethno-religious crises in Nigeria since returning to democratic governance in 1999 which gives the impression that the civilians are not competent of handling the situation. Indeed, religious intolerance and resultant conflicts increased dramatically after the return to democratic leadership. So much so that (Nnekwu, 2010) opines that the involvement of religion in ethnic crisis and the incessant ethnic and religious confrontations demonstrates that religion has become a catalyst of crisis in Nigeria.

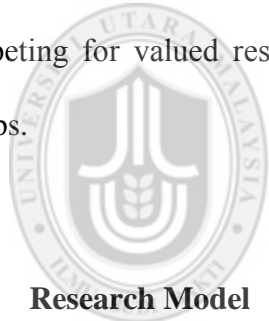
Several reasons have been advanced for the incessant ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. Ignorance among the adherents of the two major religions in Nigeria has been very instrumental in promoting ethno-religious conflicts (Agbiboa, 2012; Pate et al., 2014). In addition, the colonial policy that restricted Christian missionary activities in Muslim populated areas of northern Nigeria helped in breeding mutual suspicion and conflicts. Intolerance among ethno-religious groups, rising fanaticism and fundamentalism out of

sheer dogmatism and narrow-mindedness and religious leaders who encourage exclusionism among their followers for their own personal ambitions have been catalysts for ethno-religious conflicts (Mohammed et al., 2014). Poverty and unemployment also exacerbates the potential for ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria given the number of people with nothing doing and who can be easily induced into violence (Salawu, 2010; Mohammed et al., 2014). Hence, ethnic and religious differences have become means of instigating conflicts in Nigeria.

2.5 Socio-Economic Dimension

The impact of low standard of living that characterise majority of Nigerians which is attributed to widespread poverty and unemployment have also contributed to some of the ethnic conflicts in the country. The Urhobo-Ijaw-Itsekiri clashes in Warri, in Delta state, Aguleri-Umuleri conflicts among the Igbo ethnic group and Ife-Modakeke conflicts is a result of conflicting claims of land ownership to mention but a few. The Urhobo-Ijaw-Istekiri dispute is an interethnic struggle between the three ethnic groups competing for the municipality of Warri. The Aguleri-Umuleri, and the Ife-Modakeke conflicts are intra-ethnic competition over land ownership among Igbo and Yoruba communities respectively (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). Therefore, ethnic diversity in itself cannot be a plausible explanation of the perennial conflicts in Nigeria. Achimugu, Aba-Agboni and Aliyu (2013) argued that some conflicts in Nigeria have been over ownership and control of land prominent among such conflicts is the conflict involving the Tiv and Jukun in north central Nigeria. The greatest beneficiaries of ethnic chauvinism in Nigeria are the ruling class who benefit from its persistence.

Achimugu et al. (2013) opines that quite a number of people are not employed and industries are producing below capacity thus those having jobs are not fully utilised. There is an increasing number of workers facing possible retrenchment giving rise to the pool of unemployed in the country. As a result of this dismal situation many families could not exercise control over their children thereby setting the precondition of ethnic confrontations. This situation is worsened by ethnic prejudice and discrimination. Moreover, Nigerians have been systematically nurtured to think first and foremost of their ethnic groups and to view other ethnic groups as potential rivals in the struggle for socio-economic and political advantages. Therefore, ethnic prejudice has become a means of competing for valued resources thus escalating conflicts between the nation's ethnic groups.



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2.6 Research Model

The proposed research model was developed using variables that are likely to influence interactions among Nigerian students. The model depicts independent variables: ethnic factor, political factor, religious factor, economic factor. These variables influence the patterns of interactions and discrimination among Nigerian students. These variables were explored through verbalisations by the informants and observations during the data collection phase of this study. From the interviews conducted it became clear that ethnic consideration specifically language, religious belief, and political convictions were major variables that tend to promote discriminatory behaviours and attitudes among Nigerian students. Ethnic and religious consideration to a large extent determines the patterns of

interactions among Nigerian students. While philanthropic attitudes such as helping one another tend to be a factor that unite Nigerian students. But above all, educational pursuit was unravelled as a variable that promotes good interpersonal interactions among Nigerian students. From observations during one of the tutorial classes organised by Nigerian students on the 21st of June, 2014. Nigerian students of different ethnic and religious groups help each other with their academic problems. The facilitators of the tutorials are from different ethnic groups all coming together in pursuit of a common goal.

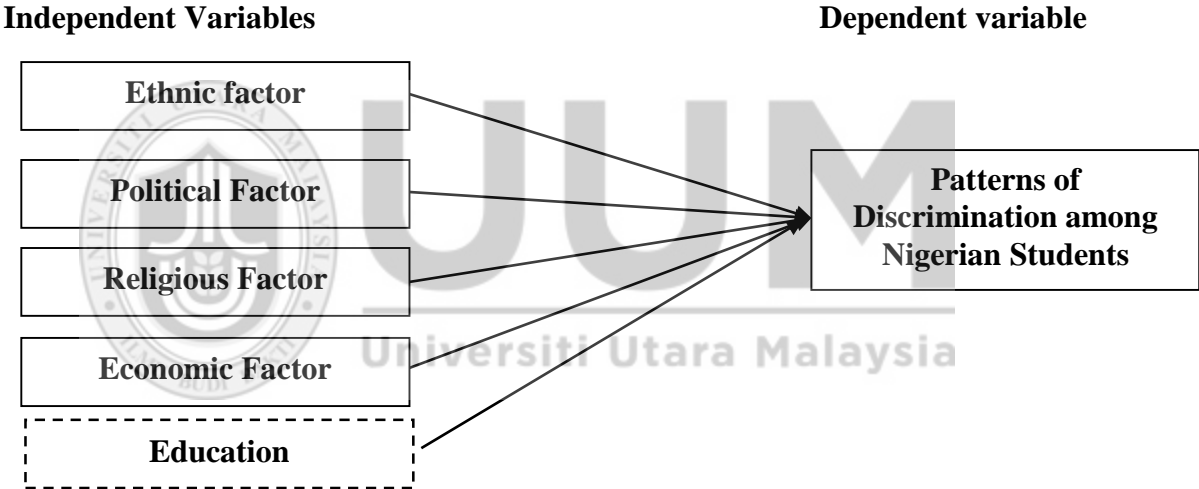


Figure 2.1 : Research Model

2.7 Theoretical Framework

This study employed the intergroup theory in discussing and understanding the perennial ethnic conflicts in Nigeria.

2.7.1 Intergroup Contact Theory

Social psychology has made tremendous efforts in studying and understanding intergroup relations. This theory has several dimensions with the ‘contact hypothesis’ of Allport (1954) (cited in Pettigrew et al, 2011) being the main basis of intergroup contact theory. The other dimensions are the Realistic group conflict theory of Sherif, and the Social identity theory of Tajfel. The ‘contact hypothesis’ was initiated by Allport (1954) trying to explain how intergroup contact can be a basis of promoting mutual understanding, reducing prejudice and discrimination between racial groups in the United States.

The theory gain impetus from the racial discrimination and conflicts that characterised the United States, especially the racial riots that occurred in Detroit in 1943. As the riots took place White and Blacks who were familiar with one another protected each other from the raging mobs. Based on the observations that individuals of different race. Who were acquainted with each other, refrained from racial violence and even protected one another, motivated researchers to study intergroup relations and the consequent development of the intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011).

The major arguments of Allport (1954) ‘contact hypothesis’ or what is now known as the intergroup contact theory is that intergroup contact is a way of reducing prejudice and animosity between groups. Intergroup contact theory posits that close social interaction between individuals of diverse cultures or race will lead to the development of positive social relationships, thus reducing the tendency for conflict. In other words, the ‘contact hypothesis’ is of the view that increased interracial or interethnic contact and mutual understanding could be forged through intergroup interactions. To quote Lawrence:

The contact theory follows that living in a more diverse neighbourhood, for example, increases the likelihood of face-to-face contact, communication and the formation of friendship ties between ethnic groups (and thus, in theory, prejudice reduction) (2013:3).

The origin of prejudice has been linked to social learning human beings come into the world without prejudices and stereotypes. Through the socialisation process mankind learn to be prejudiced and stereotypical about other groups (Sears, Peplau & Taylor, 1991). Prejudice and stereotype mentality which is seen as the basis of negative impressions and judgement of other cultures is reduced through intergroup relationships. The in-group, out-group bias is reduced, thus positive relationships tends to emerge. The conditions initially thought to be relevant for optimal contact by Allport (1954), equal status, common goal, no interpersonal competition, and authority sanction have been found not to be too relevant for optimal contact to exist (Pettigrew et al, 2011).

According to the Realistic group conflict theory intergroup conflict is a result of incompatibility of goals that has to do with scarce resources, in other words it is the struggle over material things that generate intergroup conflicts prejudice is not seen as a motivating factor. This theory is based on an experiment conducted by Sherif, Harvey, and White's (1961) a group of 25 boys age ranging between 11-12 years were studied under competing conditions, having interacted under non-competitive situation in the initial stage of the study. It was discovered that when the boys were pitted against one another by introducing incompatible goals the positive interpersonal relations that had developed between them gave way as a result of the competitive goal thus resulting in conflicts between the boys (cited in Liu, 2012).

Social identity theory elaborated on the views of the realistic group conflict theory, Sherif has argued that an incompatible goals is a precondition of intergroup conflicts. Tajfel, Bilig, Bundy, and Flament (1971) posited that an incompatible goals was not a necessary condition for intergroup conflicts. In their opinion social identity that makes a set of people who belong to a group feel different and harbour feelings of prejudice and discrimination towards an out-group is the basis of intergroup conflicts (cited in Liu, 2012). Intergroup contact theory is experimental or survey-based researches which do not tend to take into account historical facts in its conceptualisation (Liu, 2012).

According to social identity theory intergroup differences is a result of the need to create a unique and positive identity and that group members struggle to make their in-group different from other important outgroups. What this means is that threats to intergroup differences exacerbates the tendency to maintain a separate identity. In other words, the tendency of assessing the in-group is more favourably than other out-groups (Hindriks et al., 2014). Thus, it is argued that group identity is very crucial in the life of mankind. Because human beings live in a world characterised by ethnic, religious, race, gender and many other kinds of divisions and all of these divisions are defined by group membership standards and barriers which is inclusive of some groups and exclusive to others (Stephan & Mealy, 2011).

Despite the assumption that group boundary may not ultimately result into intergroup tensions but in reality group relations are more likely to be conflictual than harmonious. The argument of social identity theorist is that the major cause of conflictual intergroup relations is due to the psychological rewards that accrue to group members specifically

benefits linked with in-group membership. In essence, the psychological benefits associated with group membership guides and boost the self-esteem of its members and promote a sense of uniqueness which make them feel completely different from other groups (Stephan & Mealy, 2011). In other words, high in-group identification and categorisation provides the psychological basis of group unity.

2.7.2 Patterns of Intergroup Relations

According to Kornblum (2000) historically the end result of intergroup relations between diverse ethnic and racial groups has been conflict. He distinguished five patterns of intergroup relations with variation of tolerance. Genocide is the extreme pattern of intergroup relations which entails the deliberate decimation of a set of people by a more powerful group it may be an ethnic or racial group. Genocide is usually justified by the doctrine that those being executed are inferior or 'less than human'. Propaganda is a key element used in justifying the eradication of humanity during genocide (Kornblum, 2000: 407). The world has witnessed several forms of genocidal actions. Expulsion is another form intolerant pattern of intergroup relations resulting from prolonged conflict between ethnic or racial groups which ends up in the forceful expulsion of a population from a disputed territory. Expulsion was very common in the United States where the Native Americans were forcibly removed from their land and resettled in reservations. The displacement of native Indians was justified by European expansionism for gold and settlement on the West coast. Asians mainly Chinese and Japanese have also experienced forms of exclusion in America (Kornblum, 2000).

Slavery is another pattern of intergroup relations has to do with the ownership of humanity it may be determined by either ethnic, racial, or political consideration. It is an old institution that existed in Roman and Greek civilisations. Millions of Africans were enslaved in America and degraded. Slavery is an oppressive and very intolerant form of intergroup relations denigrating humanity. The only hope of slaves is the aspiration to be free. Segregation on the other hand, has to do with established procedures separating people along ethnic or racial lines. Segregation could be a voluntary action undertaken by a group in order to maintain their unique way of life. When it is not voluntary it is backed by formal laws that restrict interaction among different populations. Apartheid in South Africa before 1991 and in the United States before the 1960s segregation was legal. Assimilation is a pattern of intergroup relation in which the culture of the dominant group is absorbed by a minority group either by compulsion, or are encouraged to do so or it may be a voluntary action by the minority group. Assimilation is a more peaceful pattern of intergroup relations trying to promote the dominant culture of a society. In the United States assimilation has meant adoption of the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture in its totality. This is interpreted as the 'melting pot' whereby all ethnic and racial groups blend into the dominant English speaking culture. Cultural pluralism is a by-product of assimilation in America, it is the belief that ethnic groups can retain their cultural practices while being part of the dominant culture (Kornblum, 2000).

Assimilation has been seen as a popular way of reducing intergroup conflicts by encouraging competing groups to express their loyalty at the superordinate level which means that interactions will become interpersonal in nature so that the problematic intergroup boundaries or relationships will diminish. This approach to harmonious

intergroup relationship is a bit different from multiculturalism or cultural pluralism which believes that ethnic identities are essential therefore individuals will try to maintain their cultural identity. Multiculturalism aims at promoting intergroup harmony by preserving cultural diversity as a means of peaceful coexistence (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). The objective of assimilation is a world in which mankind is more integrated in terms of culture and language hence ethnic, religious and other primordial barriers become quite insignificant. By this viewpoint the world is seen as integrating into a global village with similarity of lifestyles. While multiculturalism opt to appreciate intergroup differences as means of fostering harmonious intergroup relations (Moghaddam, 2012). It could be argued that assimilation and multiculturalism have been successful in helping to unite diverse ethnic and religious groups in the United States and Canada thus to some extent reducing the divisiveness of racism and ethnicity. Hence, it could be argued that subordinating subgroup loyalty for the superordinate values helps in reducing or putting aside primordial tensions and conflicts.

Intergroup relations in Nigeria has been characterised by frequent conflicts among the diverse groups in the country. The nation started grappling with the quest of nationhood right after independence with the dominant ethnic groups fiercely competing for power with almost little or no regard for national unity. Political contestations in Nigeria have been a violent contest along the major fault lines of ethnicity, religion, and sectional divisions so much so that the country has been described as a ‘deeply divided state’ (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005:4). Nigeria as a multi-ethnic country consisting of hundreds of ethnic groups could best be described as a plural society. Nigeria’s pluralism has not

necessary produced the desired outcome associated with cultural pluralism which emphasise peaceful co-existence among diverse groups.

Ajayi and Owumi (2013) opines that contemporary Nigerian society is highly polarised along primordial and sectional cleavages with almost every ethnic group complaining of one form of marginalisation or the other. And that there have not been a consensus on how to solve the problem of what is referred to the national question in Nigerian parlance bordering on restructuring the country's federal structure in order to promote peaceful co-existence among the diverse ethnic groups by ensuring access to power and equitable allocation of resources. Given the pluralistic nature of Nigeria, federalism was adopted as a means of uniting the diverse ethnic and religious groups that make up the country. Federalism gives room for accommodating ethnic pluralism and promoting unity in diversity. In other words, federalism is a convenient constitutional mechanism of managing political problems associated with ethnic pluralism. However, federalism has not been very successful as means of national unity in Africa due to political manipulation of the system by politicians (Ojo, 2009).

Although, this study did not utilise conflict theory as a tool of analysis given that the purpose of this study is to explore the interactive processes and experiences of Nigerian students about the country's ethnic problematic with a view of highlighting how interaction in a neutral setting can lead to the reduction of prejudices and rivalries among them. However, it is pertinent to highlight the key arguments of the conflict theory. The major argument of the conflict theory is that conflict arises as a result of the way society is structured. Social inequality rooted in the structure of the society is seen as responsible

for conflict in human society. Structural conflict theory owes its root to the ideas of Karl Marx.

The central argument of Marx is that unequal access to resources generates conflict among the competing classes in society. According to Marx ethnic nationalism and religion are part and parcel of the superstructure invented by the ruling class. Religion and ethnicity are employed by the bourgeoisie to legitimise the status quo and to ensure the persistence of false consciousness and strengthen political inactivity among the masses. The ethnic group was glorified at the expense of the means of human livelihood. The process of transformation was supposed to result in the triumph of the masses which will inevitably do away with ethnic rivalries and other forms of class hegemony (Newman, 1991). In essence, the structural conflict theory attach great importance to economic factors as the motivation of conflicts in society. The central idea here is that society is polarised along class lines with the powerful class which controls the resources or source of livelihood taking advantage of the less privileged members of society thus encouraging sectarian and ethnic divisions in order to protect the existing status quo.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed relevant literature on ethnicity in Nigeria and the theoretical framework of the study. Ethnic dichotomy in Nigeria has manifested itself as a very divisive factor in the country's socio-political development. This has meant a lack of proper commitment to the nation by the citizenry who tend see and appreciate their ethnic

affiliation over and above the nation's interests, thus portraying the country as a highly divided nation.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used in this research. It also provides the justification of using a qualitative method for its conduct. It elaborates on the procedures of data collection, the population studied, summary of demographic data of the informants and the techniques of data analysis.

3.1 Justification of the Qualitative Method

This research employed the qualitative method of data collection because the objective of qualitative research is not to make generalisations as such but to fully explore and understand the research problem with a view of developing detailed meaning of the central phenomenon. In addition, qualitative method permit in-depth or detailed data to be generated from a few individuals and it is equally useful for researchers that are ready to spend considerable time in the field (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, as Creswell (2014) opined qualitative research permit the use of various sources of data such as interviews, participant observation and documents. In other words, it relies more on generating data through spoken words from few individuals in order to understand the opinions of the participants being studied. Thus the above discussion reflects the rationale of choosing a qualitative approach for this study.

Qualitative research is a non-statistical approach which involves documenting real events and recording what people say, their expressions, gestures, and tone. It enables the researcher to generate large and reliable data over time. It is usually based on a grounded or underpinning theory, in other words it is an inductive method meaning theory is developed from the data or embedded in it (Newman, 2007). Qualitative studies are empirical and flexible allowing the researcher to understand the meanings of patterns of social relationships (Clark, 2011).

3.2 Sources of Data

The primary sources of data of this study are participant observation (journal record) and one-one interview. Primary ethnographic or ethno methodological observations which involves studying individuals in a specific setting or research site over a period of time and records among Nigerian students, journal records was kept on observations of interactions among Nigerian students as indicative of their integration or segregations and the basis of their symbolic behaviours: culture, religion, language, politics, or state. Ethnographic design relies on observations and interviewing of informants in specific research sites, it tends to concentrate on people having a similar cultural values or parameter (Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, 2009). Observation is a method usually employed by researchers which enables them to change roles during data collection. It is a means of generating open-ended, direct data or first-hand information through systematic viewing of individuals while conducting research (Creswell, 2014).

Observation can take the form of participant observation in which the researcher participates in the activities of the group being studied, or the researcher may choose to observe the group from a distant without participating in the activities of the group being studied (Creswell, 2014). As Creswell (2014), points out it is preferable to switch roles while undertaking observation. Thus for the purpose of this study participant and non-participant observations was conducted for over seven months that is between March 2014 – December 2014. As already pointed out a journal was kept on the interactions of Nigerian students which has been recorded in the form of participant and non-participant observation field notes.

3.2.1 Interview

In the quest to get detailed and rich data the study conducted interview with informants which was recorded using a digital camera in order to keep record of what was being said by the informants. Interview was one of the primary sources of data collection employed by this study.

Interview is a qualitative technique used by researchers to generate data that permit in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. Interview permit qualitative researchers to ask open-ended questions and answers are recorded before transcription which is used for analysis. Open-ended questions allows participants to voice out their views and experiences freely (Creswell, 2014).

3.2.2 One-on-One Interview

One-on-one interview was carried out in the course of data collection process each informant was interviewed and their responses recorded one at a time. In addition notes were taken to compliment the information being recorded. One-on-one interview was undertaken because as suggested by Creswell (2014) it is useful when dealing with participants who are articulate and willing to speak and who wish to exchange ideas freely. Semi-structured interviewing technique was used which facilitated the use of probes in seeking clarification or in-depth data from the informants. As the interview was going on attention was paid to how informants spoke, their gestures and body language all in a bid to validate what they were saying. Moreover, notes were taken to complement what was been recorded. Transcribing the interview gave room for understanding issues that were emanating from the data.

3.2.3 Interview Protocol

The interview guide used for this study (see appendix 1) the interview questions were rephrased for the understanding of the informants. In order to conduct a good interview, this study in line with McNamara's (2009), cited in Turner III (2010), interview protocol followed the following steps:

1. The researcher should first and foremost find a place with less noise and other forms of distractions in order to have a good sound quality of the recording for subsequent transcription of the data. In the case of this study interviews were conducted with informants in quite locations. Most of the interviews were conducted in residential rooms of the students while in some cases it was conducted in the reading rooms in

the hostels and faculties when these facilities were virtually abandoned by other students that is during odd hours when most students are not using such facilities.

2. The purpose of the study was explained to the informants pointing out that it was purely for academic purposes which make them relax and were motivated to contribute to the study.
3. The informants were assured that any information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality their identity will be protected.
4. The format of the interview that is the structure of the interview and the questions that will be raised were also highlighted before the interview. Some informants were given the interview questions to see and have a feel of it before the interview was conducted. While others even when asked to examine the interview questions declined preferring to answer the questions and getting on with their other schedules.
5. The duration of the interview was also discussed with the informants and the interviews lasted between 20-30 minutes in most cases. Some informants spoke at length sometimes repeating themselves several times, while a few were a bit brief and straight to the point emphasising time factor as they had other engagements.
6. The informants were also informed of how to make contact with the researcher in case of any further clarifications if they so wish to do so, telephone numbers were exchanged.
7. Before the commencement of each interview the informants were introduced by the researcher and given chance to ask questions or seek clarifications if they so wish.
8. The interviews were recorded using a digital camera and notes were taken to complement the recordings for further clarification if necessary.

3.3 Population

The population of the proposed study is the Nigerian community of the Universti Utara Malaysia, made up of 278 people (UUM Nig Com, 2014) as at March, 2014. As Kumar (2012) points out qualitative designs involves choosing informants or respondents from whom data is sought through an open frame of investigation. Creswell, (2014) opines that qualitative research is suited for the study of small groups or few cases, enabling the researcher to offer an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. Qualitative studies usually study small groups or few cases (Newman, 2007; Clark, 2011). Forty informants were interviewed in the course of data collection from the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. Eight of the informants are from the north-west, seven from the north-east, and eight from the north-central zone. In addition, nine informants are from the south-west, three from the south-east and five from the south-south geo-political zone.

The process of recruiting informants was based on their ethnic origin in other words the informants were purposely recruited in order to be able to answer the research questions. Some of the informants were recruited through snowballing that is having interviewed an informant from a specific ethnic group from a particular geo-political zone information was sought on how to reach out to another member from that zone. Majority of the informants were postgraduate students in their second or fourth semester that were interviewed, with only two undergraduate students participating in the study. The duration of interviewing of the informants was nearly two months it started in September 2014 with the last informant interviewed in November 2014. The length of each interview lasted between twenty to thirty minutes, during the interview the questions were refined and rephrased to suit the understanding of each informant. Equally, questions were

followed with probes which gave room for more detail. The data generated was recorded using a digital camera recorder and transcribed verbatim. As Creswell (2014) points out qualitative research is suited for the study of few individuals from whom detailed data could be generated.

Table 3.1

Demographic Data of Informants

Age	Marital Status	Geo-Political Zone	Ethnic group
21-25	2 Married	35 North-West	8 Affamai 1
26-30	1 Single	5 North-East	7 Bini 2
31-35	7 Gender	North-Central	8 Hausa/Fulani 14
36-40	9 Male	36 South-West	9 Ibibio 1
41-45	8 Female	4 South-East	3 Igala 2
46-50	10 Occupation	South-South	5 Igbo 3
51-55	3 Teaching	31	Ijaw 1
Programme	F/time Student	9	Margi 1
PhD	35		Nupe 2
MSc	3		Tiv 2
BSc	2		Yoruba 11

3.4 Techniques of Data Analysis

Qualitative studies synthesise data into categories based on the themes, concepts, or familiar features. The researcher develops new concepts, innovate new conceptual definitions, and assess the relationships between them. Qualitative researcher conceptualise concepts as they examine field notes, and secondary sources of data (Newman, 2007). As James Dabbs (1982) and Bruce Berg (1989) points out ‘the notion of qualitative refers to the essential nature of things and the notion of quantitative refers to their amounts’ (cited in Clark, 2007). This study employed NVIVO software as a means of analysis. Having transcribed and formatted the interview data on word document. The interview transcripts was imported into the NVIVO software for further analysis. Miles,

Huberman and Saldana (2014) opined that qualitative software aid in organising data and provides good data display in form of graphs, charts, etc. which provides a robust data presentation.

Data analysis in qualitative studies begins with large pool of information which has to be sorted inductively and categorised into a few set of abstract themes (Miles, et al. 2014). Creswell (2014) identified six steps of qualitative data analysis. Firstly, the data should be organised by the researcher which involves typing of field notes and transcription of interviews and deciding on whether to manually analyse the data or using a computer software. In the case of this study interviews were transcribed by the researcher and the field notes were refined and typed up. Secondly, reading through the data to make sense of it constitute the beginning of data analysis in qualitative research. Equally, coding of the data forms a major part of the analytic process. Coding involves reducing large chunks of data into manageable descriptive themes. This also involves scrutinising the database line by line and asking questions and allocating code tags or labels to portions of texts or images.

The third step is using of codes to build descriptions and themes. This process entails using codes to describe the phenomenon being studied. It also involves developing themes that reflect a broader abstraction than codes. The themes may be arranged to convey a story or they may interrelate to reflect the complexity phenomenon. For this study the data was transcribed read several times then initial codes and themes were developed which were subsequently refined to suit the research questions. Fourthly, qualitative findings are

represented in visual forms which may include diagrams, figures, tables, etc. And the findings are reported in various forms of narratives. For this study figures, charts and tables were used to present the findings. The fifth step is interpreting the findings, qualitative researchers interpret their findings by projecting their views, or comparing their findings with what is established in the literature and pointing out limitations as well as advocating future research. The final stage has to do with validation and accuracy of the findings. This involves member checking, triangulation and auditing as mechanisms of data validation. This study employed member checking and triangulation in validating the data.

3.5 Validity of Data

The data was validated through multiple sources that is relating the findings of the study to existing literature that is through triangulation and member checking. Some of the informants were asked to read the transcripts of the interviews and listen to the recorded tapes to ensure that their views are reflected in the report in order to ensure credibility of the study. This is in line with the standard practice of qualitative studies (Creswell, 2014).

3.6 Operational Definition

3.6.1 Ethnic Group

Ethnic group is a group of individuals who share a common identity through common language, traditions, customs, and a mythological belief of a common origin.

3.6.2 Ethnicity

Ethnicity may be defined as the competitive solidarity of members of an ethnic group in relation to others in the quest of dominance and advantage.

3.6.3 Integration

Integration involves the unity or cohesiveness of diverse ethnic or religious groups within a unified context into a unified society ensuring communication, identity and sense of belongingness with equal opportunity for all members of society.

3.6.4 Neutral setting

Neutral setting may be described as a neutral ground or diaspora away from the arching ethnic situation. This setting can be matched by supra-ethnic and supra-state experiences or federal setting.

3.6.5 Ethnic conflict

Ethnic conflict can be defined as confrontations or clashes that occur between ethnic groups as a result of incompatible or competing interests for power and position and resources.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the research methodology employed by this study to answer the research questions and objectives of the study. The next chapter presents the analysis of data and themes gleaned from the data.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data generated from the study, the data was obtained from interviewing of informants and field notes from participant observation. The interview data was transcribed that is it was transformed from audio to text. The field notes were also typed and coded for easy analysis. This is in line with Miles, et al.'s (2014) suggestion that qualitative data such as interviews and field notes, needs to be typed up and refined before analysis can take place.

4.1 Thematic Analysis of Data

This study adopted Braun and Clarke (2006) doing thematic analysis a step-by-step guide. Thematic analysis is a way of identifying, interpreting and coming up with themes within a data corpus or data set. Thematic analysis endeavour to describe patterns or theme within qualitative data. It has to do with understanding the reality of everyday experiences of people in great detail in other words it is a rich narrative of the data set. Thematic analysis is a method of generating rich complex data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis starts when the researcher begin to look for themes or points of interest in the data set. Chunks of data which is of interest to the researcher are coded into meaningful patterns for the purpose of analysis meant to come up with a

rich and detailed description of qualitative data. Therefore, analysis begins by getting familiar with the data set or data corpus which involves transcription of the data set. The data is read several times for accurate interpretation and the initial ideas are jotted down. Then the data is coded in a systematic manner by bringing together relevant data for each code. Subsequently, codes are brought together under relevant themes or potential themes and after which the data in each theme is reassessed to see whether it fits well in the theme developed. The next step involves clear definition and naming of each theme indicating the direction of the analysis. Having done that a thematic map emerges displaying the themes and sub-themes, each theme is examined to see its workability and the themes are named. Finally a report is produced from the data extracts.

Table 4.1
Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing the data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking in the themes work relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2) generating a thematic map of analysis.

5. Defining and naming themes:

Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

6. Producing the report:

The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Source: Braun & Clarke (P. 35).

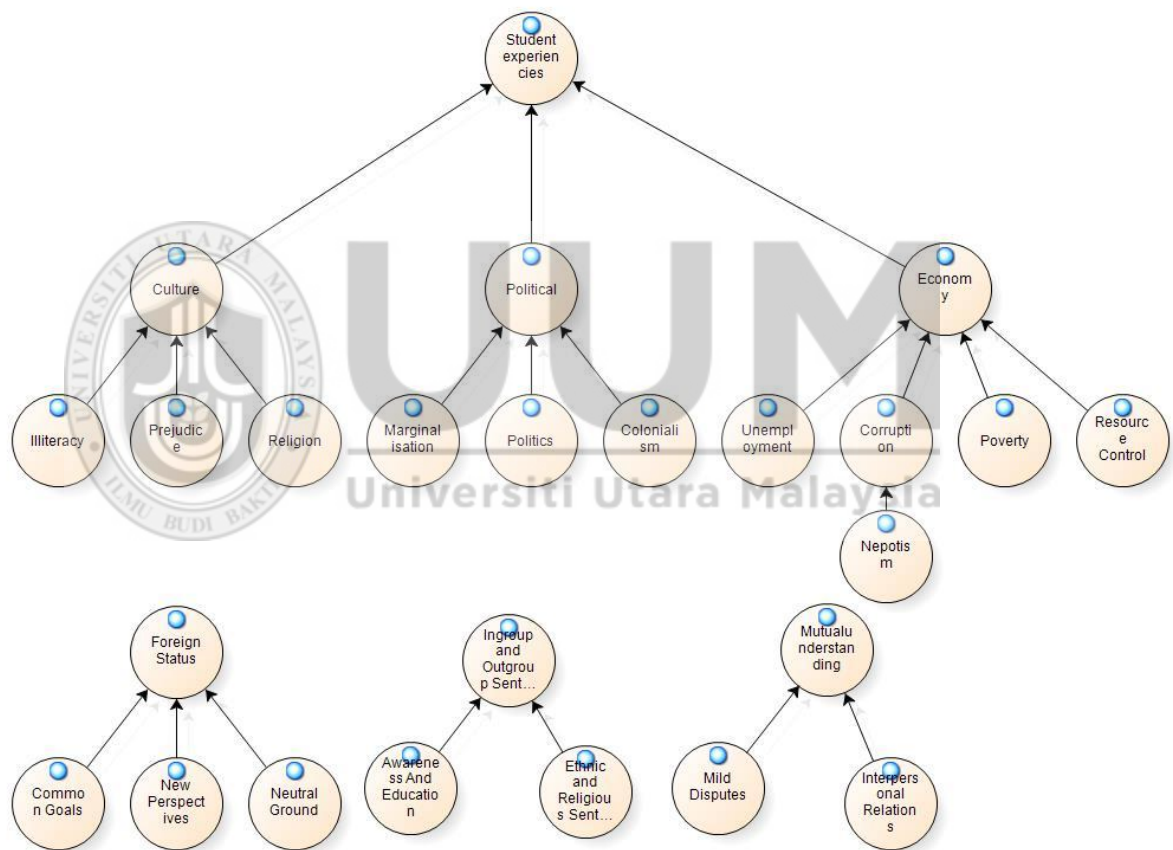


Figure 4.1 : Overall Model

Table 4.2

Themes and Sub-themes that Emerged from the Data Set

S/No	Theme / Sub-themes	Code
RQ 1	<p>STUDENT EXPERIENCES</p> <p>CULTURE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religion - Prejudice - Illiteracy <p>POLITICAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colonialism - Marginalisation - Politics <p>ECONOMY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corruption - Nepotism - Resource Control - Unemployment - Poverty 	<p>The letter i was used as the code for informant thus (i1) referring to informant 1, (i2) informant 2 as the case may be.</p>
RQ 2	<p>MUTUAL- UNDERSTANDING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpersonal Relations - Mild Disputes 	
RQ 3	<p>IN-GROUP AND OUTGROUP SENTIMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethnic and Religious Sentiments - Awareness and Education 	
RQ 4	<p>FOREIGN STATUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neutral Ground - Common Goals - New Perspectives 	



Table 4.2 above represents a general picture of the themes and sub-themes generated from the data set. Majority of the informants feel that religion plays the most important role in the cultural context of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. This is followed by the culture of prejudice and poverty which enhances the problem of interethnic disharmony in the country. In addition, ethnic politics and the colonial experience that led to the formation of the Nigerian state is also seen by some of the informants as significant factors that has contributed to the lack of national unity in the country. Similarly, some of the informants feel that the struggle for the control of resources also play a significant role in interethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. A number of informants feel that the culture of illiteracy has provided the political status quo with the opportunity of using less privilege illiterate people in ethnic contestations. Corruption in the form of embezzlement or ethnic nepotism is also seen by some of the informants as playing a crucial role in ethnic tensions in Nigeria. Some of the informants feel that political marginalisation and unemployment exacerbates ethnic disharmony in Nigeria. Furthermore, majority of the informants are of the opinion that good interpersonal relations among Nigerian students in UUM has become a means of promoting mutual understanding and harmonious interethnic relationships thus reducing interpersonal conflicts. Majority of the informants believe that language and religious belief are important factors that determines close social relationships among Nigerian students in UUM. In addition, educational pursuit and awareness or exposure bridges cultural differences. Equally, being in a foreign land coupled with the common objective of educational advancement and with the new experiences acquired in the host country helps in forging partial unity of purpose among Nigerian students in UUM.

4.2 Student Experiences

The main theme student experiences is the parent node that addressed the first research question bordering on the experiences of students of the socio-political problems of Nigeria associated with ethnicity. It is arranged in three themes with eleven sub-themes as indicated in Figure 4.2. The first theme is culture with three sub-themes: religion, prejudice and illiteracy. The second theme is economy with five sub-themes: poverty, resource control, corruption, nepotism and unemployment. The third theme is political with three sub-themes: colonialism, politics and marginalisation. Figure 4.2 clearly shows that religion is the most significant in terms of ethnic conflict experiences with the highest number of responses followed by prejudice, poverty and politics.

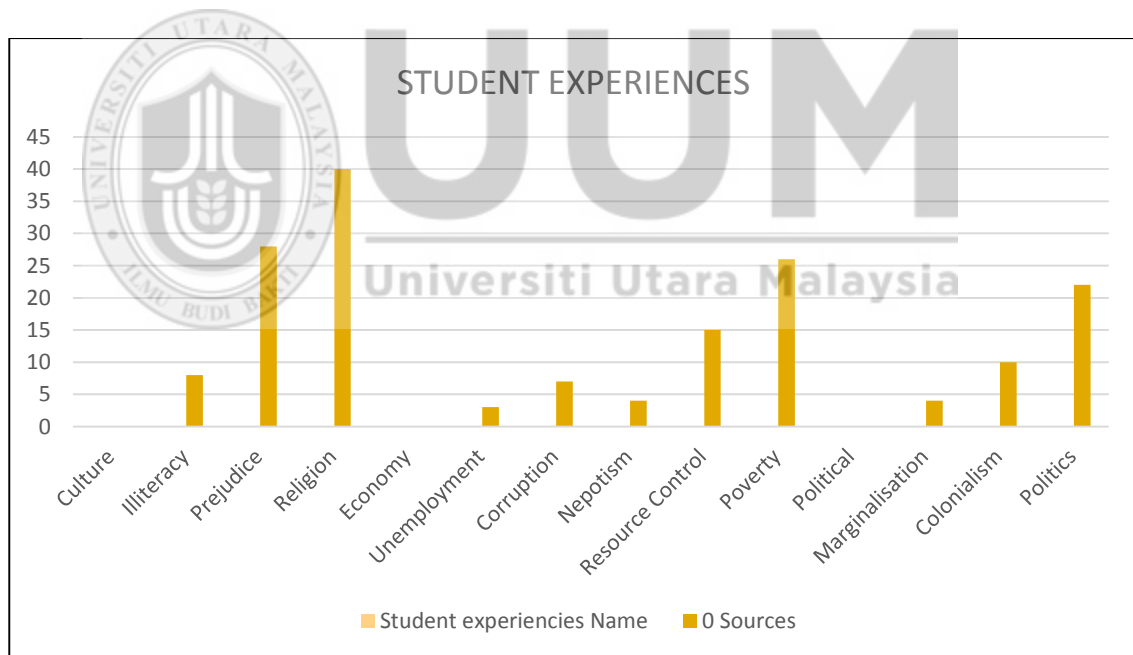


Figure 4.2 : Student experiences

4.2.1 Culture

The theme culture deals with cultural differences in terms of language, tradition, customs, beliefs and a host of others that tend to promote misunderstanding among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Ordinarily, Nigerians are peace loving people cherishing peaceful and mutual-coexistence. This theme has three sub-themes which are religion, prejudice, and illiteracy. Figure 4.3 below indicates that religion is seen as playing a significant role in the cultural context of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. All of the forty informants interviewed which translates to 100% spoke on how religion is used as tool to achieve certain ends in Nigeria. Prejudice is second 70% of the informants spoke on how it is being manipulated to promote ethnic disharmony by the political status quo. While illiteracy is third with 20% of the informants that express their views on how this variable has become a tool of political manipulation by the elite. Judging by the opinions of the informants it could be argued that elitist manipulation has resulted in the emphasis of religious and ethnic differences in Nigeria.

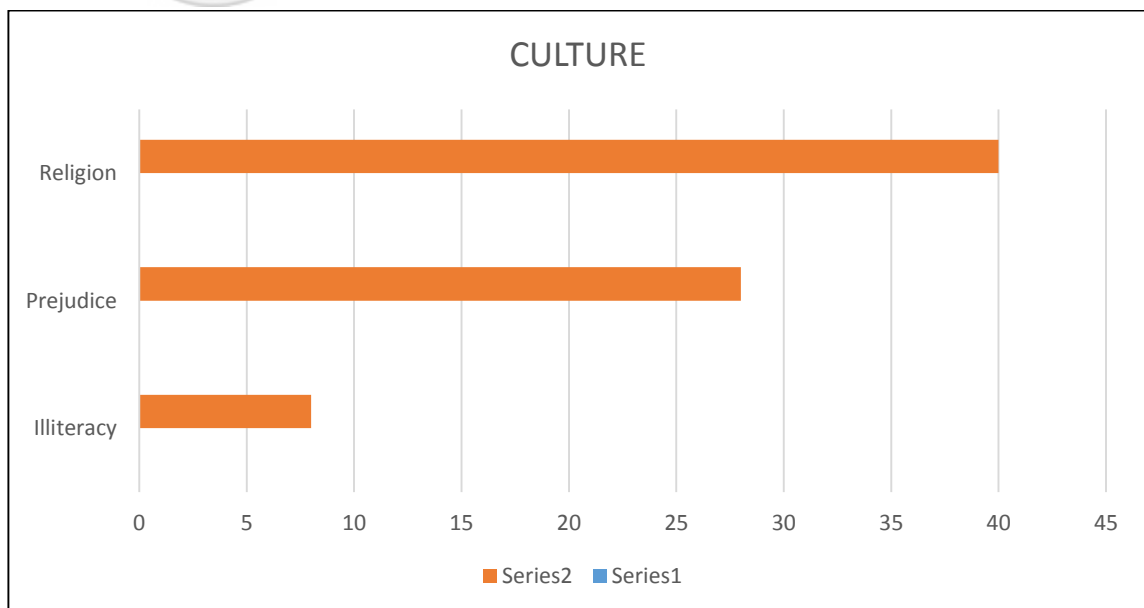


Figure 4.3 : Culture

4.2.1.1 Religion

One element of culture that is being used to manipulate ethnicity in Nigeria is religion. Due to ignorance on the part of religious followers it has become relatively easy to use religion as a tool of manipulation. Thus, it has become a very sensitive and divisive issue in Nigeria's socio-political development, sometimes resulting in massive loss of lives and properties. Religion has been politicised and used as a platform of capturing power as well as deliberately being interwoven with ethnic relations. As one of the informant interviewed point out:-

We had cases where religious issues have incited violence, especially in the middle belt region where you have a lot of Christians and Muslims. Christianity and Islam are the two major religions in Nigeria. I think we had such issues in our history we had ethnic or religious conflicts (i1).

In addition, a number of the informants interviewed opined that:-

Since some ethnic groups are predominantly Muslims or Christians therefore any other individual from that ethnic group is automatically presumed to be a Christian or Muslim which in reality may not be the case, so if there is any misunderstanding between members of these ethnic groups such individuals may become victims of circumstances (i10).

“Ethnicity and religion go hand-in-hand because you realise that some ethnic groups are targeted during crisis situation due to their religious belief because it is assumed that they are all Christians or Muslims as the case may be” (i17). “Yes because Nigeria is structured along ethnicity and religion, you discover that majority of the people living in the north are Muslims while in the south-west we have a balance of Muslims and Christians” (i28). “Ethnic and religious issues are mixed up by people so much so that they look inseparable although they are connected but it seems that they are deliberately mixed up in order to foment trouble” (i31). “the religious divide is being elongated by ethnicity some groups feel their religion is superior” (i33).

Ignorance and lack of proper understanding of the actual teachings of religion is seen as responsible for the countless religious conflicts in Nigeria as one of the informant interviewed said:-

Ignorance on the part of the followers of the two dominant religions in the country has ensured that some selfish individuals can use religion to preach hate and further divide the people along religious line which tend to result in violent clashes, in spite of the fact that religion do not preach violence and hate(i13).

Similarly, some of the informants opined that: “Lack of proper understanding of the actual teachings of religion by the adherents of the two major religions in Nigeria has been an important reason for the frequent ethno-religious crisis in the country” (i3). “There seems to be serious divisions and misunderstanding between Muslims and Christians in the country” (i5). “some people are ideologically brainwashed in terms of religion so that they become blind and are ready to cause trouble” (i6). “some religious leaders preach hate and manipulate their followers due to their ignorance of the actual teachings of religion” (i9). “we were told negative things about other religions when we were young and later in life even as we became educated we didn’t bother to find out the truth we just continue with such misconceptions” (i8).

In the same line of argument some informants observed that: “Hatred for a people and their religion out of envy is a source of some of the conflicts between religious groups” (i11). “People have become dogged to their religious beliefs without a clear understanding of its teachings” (i12). “Because of misunderstanding of what religion teaches sometimes people do not know whether they are fighting for their religion or their ethnic group” (i19). “Ignorance play a vital role in the ethnic problem in Nigeria some

people do not really understand the teachings of religion so they engage in violence” (i20). “Religion preach love and frown against discrimination but those with little knowledge of religion are likely to be instigated into violence” (i37).

Contrary to the responses above religious intolerance and distrust is also seen as a factor precipitating ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria some of the informants expressed their feelings: “Distrust and intolerance among religious followers is the cause of the clashes we are experiencing in the country” (i4). “Definitely, definitely religion is one of the factors that is one of the variables that leads to one bigotry number two sectarianism you know” (i22). “Even the ‘*Boko Haram*’ crisis is being seen as Muslims waging war against Christians and causing more mistrust in Nigeria” (i25). “some religions are not accommodative of other tenets so intolerance is a sources of the clashes” (i34).

Also majority of the informants interviewed do believe that the politicisation of religion by a section of the Nigerian society contributes immensely to the present state of religious disharmony being experienced in the country. A cross section of them opined that: “as far I am concerned religion is used by the government to divide the people because if people of different faith can intermarry I believe that the government is using religion to divide the masses” (i7). “Politicians use religion for their selfish reasons causing problem in the country” (i14). “People use religion to trigger a lot of things when some people are interested in certain positions in the country they use religion to achieve their objective” (i15). “I believe religion is one source of pronounced crisis in Nigeria because politicians have deliberately merged religion and politics” (i16). “In Nigeria we tend to

politicise religious issues because the constitution guarantees everybody the freedom of religion but some people will try to make political capital out of religious issues” (i18).

In line with the responses above some of the informants said that: “Religion has been politicised because people use it as a platform to compete for power” (i21) “Religion play a significant role in conflicts in Nigeria because during crisis situations even security personnel become partisan taking sides” (i23). “on the surface religion could be seen as a source of ethnic crisis but in reality the political class use anything at their disposal religion inclusive to achieve their goal without bothering about the consequences” (i26). “Nowadays some people use religion to spearhead their political agenda” (i27). “Politicians manipulate the people using religion causing confusion because people look up to them” (i29).

Concurring on the same issue some informants opined that: “leaders take advantage of the people by inciting religious crisis for political ends” (i30). “I observed that there have been an increase in religious crisis since the return to democratic governance because of political influence it is like the government is encouraging it” (i35). “sincerely speaking religion plays no role in sectarian conflicts in Nigeria however those in positions of power use it to divide the people” (i36). “Since the return to democracy religious disharmony have increased it seems some individuals are hiding behind religion to play politics” (i38). “I believe that most of the problems attributed to religion in Nigeria are politically motivated even the ‘*Boko Haram*’ saga is political” (i39). “Most things in Nigeria are influenced by religion take politics Christians will vote for a Christian and Muslims will do the same” (i40).

Two of the informants are of the opinion that religion is not a very serious precipitator of conflict rather ethnic differences is more likely to generate conflict as they said:-

Yeah religion play a very insignificant role in conflicts, in tribal conflicts, ethnicity conflicts in Nigeria. More especially in north-east that is my own region, for instance in “*Taraba*” state where we have people from the same tribe professing different religion. They will hardly fight themselves, there are hardly confrontations based on religious differences among them like the “*Jukun*” tribe you will find Muslims and Christians from the same family. But they will hardly fight because of that. Religious differences is very insignificant to them the real issue is tribal differences that is more serious (i24).

“Religion is part of the problem but ethnicity seems to over shadow it because sometimes people of the same faith fight each other due to ethnic differences” (i32). In a lone voice one of the informants believed that economic factor is responsible for religious crisis in Nigeria. He said that: “religion is the one of the reasons of constant conflicts in Nigeria usually prompted by economic factors” (i2).

Obviously, religion as such is not the cause of interethnic conflict it is the deliberate and conscious manipulation of religion for political ends that moved people of various ethnic grouping to conflicting situations.

4.2.1.2 Prejudice

Another element of culture that is being used to manipulate ethnic relations in Nigeria is prejudice. Ethnic discrimination resulting from the manipulative tendencies of some elements in the society has promoted ethnocentrism among Nigerians. From the interviews conducted some of the informants are of the opinion that parental influence or

the socialisation process is partly responsible for prejudicial feelings among Nigerians.

As one of the informants interviewed opined that:-

In my community we have such prejudice against a neighbouring village we are told by our parents that they migrated from another place and were given land to settle on by our community. Because of some disagreements between my community and that village we have this prejudice against them to the extent that we don't intermarry with them in fact we don't regard them as natives in our land although we interact but there is a social distance (i38).

In the same vein, another informant said that:-

Our parents have imbibed in us prejudicial attitudes for long but you can't blame them entirely it could be due to past experience I will give you an example, is so sad to know that our parents will swear not to allow us have any relationship with the "Igbo" people sadly out of hatred. But I feel that in a basket of one hundred spoil eggs at least there should be one or two good eggs (i39).

Likewise, two other informants observed that: "is just that we have fail to get first- hand information about other tribes we rely on the negative things that we been have told by our parents and so we build upon it" (i18). "People tend to acquire biases early in life and it continue to influence their behaviour so prejudice is a factor in ethnic crisis in Nigeria" (i20).

Other informants interviewed opined that ignorance is a factor that is responsible for the prejudicial treatment of each other thus polarising ethnic relations. One of the informants points out that:-

It will be difficult to make people understand how to judge others based on their character and behaviour and not on their preconceived ideas you cannot say out rightly one tribe is made up of good people and another is entirely bad (i3).

Similarly, a cross section of the informants opined that: "every society has its own form of segregation so prejudice exists among us and it is reinforced by parochial sentiments

(i6). ‘‘I think it is part of it lack of understanding and respect for other peoples’ beliefs and ways of life is a cause of the problems’’ (i11). ‘‘Having preconceived ideas about other people maybe because one had a bad or good experience of some people then one have a stereotype mentality about others which may not be correct so I concur is part of the problem’’ (i12). ‘‘It has to do with what cause dislike between people it might be religious background that may prompt hate or bias among ethnic groups’’ (i13). Likewise, some informants said that: ‘‘Prejudice is relative in that everybody will like to favour or be biased towards his ethnic group’’ (i17). ‘‘It is a factor there is a lot discrimination based on bias views of members of other ethnic or religious groups in Nigeria especially where I come from’’ (i19). ‘‘Being biased against others breed this kind of feeling among people’’ (i23). ‘‘Prejudice is everywhere and it is born out of ignorance so people are biased due to ignorance’’ (i26). ‘‘prejudice is master minded it is bred by some bad experiences people have had with some people’’ (i37).

A number of the informants interviewed believed that intolerance and mistrust for one another exacerbates prejudice they opined that: ‘‘Prejudice may be one of the factors that breed mistrust among Nigerians because we are intolerant towards each other we should learn to appreciate one another’’ (i4). ‘‘There is lack of love between us so much so that our post-colonial leaders were divided along ethnic lines which lead to catastrophic consequences’’ (i10). ‘‘People who have been aggrieved for a long time keep such things in their minds and show their hatred when they have the opportunity that is what is happening in Nigeria’’ (i14). ‘‘we should stop being biased against ourselves this problem is rampant among Nigerians even here in Malaysia we demonstrate bias in our relationships’’ (i25). ‘‘Prejudice makes people to be bias and that causes ethnicity in

Nigeria” (i27). “Yes because of the ethnic mistrust in Nigeria every tribe think of the other as a potential enemy that is why ethnic militias are springing up everywhere” (i28). “Prejudice is responsible for tribalism in Nigeria because we are very biased” (i32). “Prejudice contributes to ethnicity in Nigeria but it has been pronounced through sectarianism” (i33). “Prejudice is a factor because people of the same tribe seems to be united than those from different background” (i40).

Political influence has also been identified as another source of prejudice among Nigerians as some of the informants point out: “I think that prejudice is manifesting itself nowadays the present government is treating some ethnic groups with some kind of bias which was not the case in the past” (i5). “It could be because right from the word go we don’t like each other our leaders emphasised ethnic and regional separatism which I think triggered the civil war” (i9). “actually in politics prejudice counts because people seem to think in terms of me and my tribe and so being biased towards others” (i22). “prejudice is engineered by our leaders because they try by all means to divide the people” (i29). “In Nigeria prejudice is becoming strong you can sense it everywhere and it seems the government is part of the problem” (i35).

It could be concluded that Nigerians have to a large extent become prejudicial to one another due to factors ranging from the socialisation process, past experiences and ignorance. Political influence also contributes to the manipulation of prejudice thus souring interethnic relations for a vested reason. It is significant to observe that the construction of prejudices and its various manifestations is fundamentally regarded as being manipulated for certain ends.

4.2.1.3 Illiteracy

Illiteracy is another social component of culture which is used negatively by the elites to incite and nurture frosty ethnic relations in Nigeria. Education is part and parcel of the socialisation process. Individuals acquire the culture of their society through the educational institution as part of the socialisation process. When individuals are well cultured or properly socialised it tends to reduce ignorance associated with lack of literacy. Therefore with a large pool of people who are illiterates and who lack basic necessities they are likely to be manipulated by some privileged members of the society due to their gullibility to cause crisis in the country. The manipulation of illiterate members of society also contributes to national disunity because they are easily deceived by the political elite to engage in conflicts.

One of the informant opined that deprivation propel illiterate people to engage in conflicts: “there are a lot of people who are not educated and have nothing doing, they engage in drug abuse and are ready to cause trouble” (i2). On the contrary other informants are of the view that ignorance due to lack of education plays a very important role in inducing illiterate people into violence: “lack of education at the grassroots allows people to be used by others for their own selfish interests” (i7). “Even the ‘*Boko Haram*’ problem being experienced in Nigeria presently has to do with illiteracy since majority of the fighters are uneducated so they are easily manipulated (i10)”. “Illiteracy is a problem is a big disease because when you don’t know about something you are in the dark” (i11). “because people are not educated they are easily misled into doing the wrong things” (i14). “Illiteracy is part of the factors responsible for the ethnic mistrust in Nigeria

because an illiterate may misunderstand or misinterpret certain issues concerning different ethnic groups” (i20). Concurring on the issue one of the informant lamented that:-

The mistake our previous generation made was that instead of providing a solid foundation for educating the masses, education serve as a yardstick in breaking all these kind of ethnic sentiments once you provide education for people, they will be more socialised (i6).

In lone voice one of the informant opined that political instigation is responsible for inducing the illiterates into violence: ‘‘Illiterate people harbour ethnic sentiments so they are easily deceived by politicians’’ (i18).

So it be concluded that lack of education on the part of the illiterate population in Nigeria couple with lack of employment opportunities have made them very easy to be manipulated and induced into joining groups organised for conflicting purposes. The informants opined that lack of education provide the most significant basis for manipulation and deception by political operators, leading to conflicting conditions.

4.2.2 Political

This theme hinges on political factors such as the fusion of the people of present day Nigeria by the British colonial masters and the politicisation of ethnic affiliation that have contributed to the present state of ethnic disharmony in Nigeria as the data indicates. Politics has been interwoven with ethnicity in Nigeria which has fostered ethnic voting pattern even when there is a ban on the formation and operation of ethnic based political parties in the country. However, ethnic consciousness is more prominent among many

Nigerians which tend to influence their actions and views and this situation has facilitated political manipulation of ethnicity in the country.

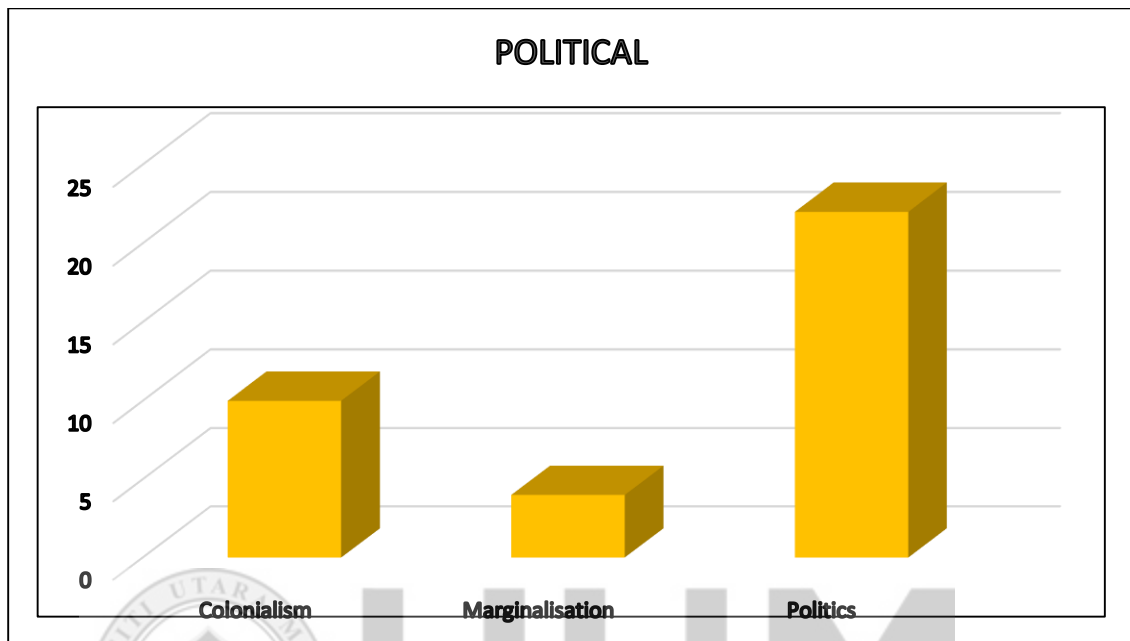


Figure 4.4 : Political

From figure 4.4 above majority of the informants interviewed which translates to 55% spoke on the sub-theme politics. They opined that the politicisation of ethnicity in Nigeria has contributed to ethnic divisions and bad governance. While 25% of the informants talked about the consequences of the colonial formation of Nigeria. They opined that colonialism contributed greatly to the present state of ethnic disunity in the country. Only 10% of the informants talked about political marginalisation or neglect as a cause of ethnic tensions in Nigeria. The informants opined that some ethnic groups have been marginalised thus heightening dissatisfaction and tensions among Nigerians.

4.2.2.1 Colonialism

Colonialism has been described as one of the many reasons that have contributed to the divisive ethnic sentiments in Nigeria. Some of the informants interviewed sees colonialism as a mechanism of administrative convenience which did not take the interest of the Nigerian people into consideration in forming the country. Given this situation, historical political experience seems to contribute towards contemporary problems in Nigeria.

One of the informant interviewed opined that:-

Well to start with I want to approach such question from an historical perspective in that Nigerian people or the so-called Nigerian entity as it is today is made up of 280 some are saying is now 300 ethnic groups who have been existing independently before colonialism. The colonial masters found it convenient to merge the various ethnic groups together not on a round table where they agreed that they want to be together, so that's why some people are still having the belief that Nigeria is a mere geographical expression in other words it is yet to emerge as a nation-state. So people are still more loyal and attached to their primordial ethnic groups (i12).

Taking cognisance of the opinion expressed by the informant above what it means is that the colonialist simply created a heterogeneous state without making efforts of uniting the diverse peoples which resulted to the present state of distrust that characterise ethnic relations in Nigeria. Similarly, four other informants concurred that: "the colonial creation of Nigeria itself is a problem because the aim for state creation was weak we were simply fused together in the interest of the colonial masters" (i6). "The Nigerian state was built on a faulty foundation the British did not take the interest of the various ethnic groups into consideration in creating present day Nigeria therefore it is not surprising that ethnic disharmony prevailed after independence" (i10). "the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates by the British in 1914 was a

mistake because of the big differences between the regions they should have left these regions to be on their own” (i15). “the 1914 amalgamation has both positive and negative effects on us because if the northern and southern protectorates were not amalgamated maybe some of the problems we are now facing wouldn’t have arisen” (i17).

Divide and rule tactics of the colonialist is seen as another reason that promoted interethnic tensions in Nigeria right from the colonial period. A number of the informants interviewed shared this view: “the colonial masters used divide and rule tactics they favoured some ethnic groups over others so that brought about the problem” (i14). “the colonialist pitted one ethnic group against another and by so doing sowed the seed of disunity” (i16). “the colonialist were able to divide us and that create a lot of disunity among us” (i27). “the genesis of the problem could be traced to the pre-independence era because the British and the political leaders sowed the seed of discord” (i30).

Commenting on the same issue one informant said that:-

So the British government you know, somehow contributed to the ethnic problem that we have in the country. Because instead of developing policies that will you know bring together the various ethnic groups, they didn’t do anything in that direction to solve the ethnic problem. I think I can say it can be traced to the colonial period (i31).

The colonial merging of a very diverse ethnic population and traditional states into a modern federation laid the foundation for political and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. The colonial experience is to a large extent the fundamental cause of frosty interethnic relations in the country. In contemporary times reference is frequently made to the colonial policies that favoured one ethnic group over the other and that perception has not changed significantly up till today.

4.2.2.2 Politics

Ethnic loyalty has made it relatively easy for politicians to manipulate the masses in their quest for power. So much so that ethnic voting has become the order of the day and bad governance is condoned all in the spirit of ethnic solidarity. One of the informants that spoke on this issue said that:-

Actually if you look at what is presently happening in Nigeria, there are so many factors responsible for the causes of ethnicity in our country Nigeria today. One of the factors is politics if am a politician if I visit my tribe I will try to convince my tribesmen to vote for me simply because we belong to the same tribe. So these are some of the issues, politics is one of the major factor, is one of the core causes of ethnicity is just like divide and rule (i24).

Likewise, another informant that spoke on the same issue expressed similar view “The problem of ethnicity in Nigeria is associated with our past leaders who place much emphasis on their region and tribal groups instead of the nation at large which I think triggered the civil war” (i9). The politicisation of ethnicity has also promoted ethnic pattern of voting in Nigeria which a number of the informants interviewed aptly pointed out:-

I have voted before for someone who is not a member of my ethnic group, what we need is a leader who can deliver and do things right. That is the problem we have in Nigeria ethnic and religious bias people are made to believe that only one of their own will serve them well, according to a “Hausa” saying “*Naka nakane*” meaning “yours is yours” but the truth of the matter what we need is good leadership (i7).

Personally I don't think its relevant is not relevant can he deliver? Where ever he comes from, you know some of us here we talk about zoning. I say in a sane society there should not be anything like zoning let the best person be in charge. Look! in 1984 “*Idiagbon*” and “*Buhari*” were in power, “*Buhari*” and “*Idiagbon*” were both Muslims and they were from the north and Nigeria was moving forward. You see let's say it's a complex situation our psyche has been turn upside down (i30).

The issue of ethnic voting in Nigeria is a canker worm in every Nigerian. It is a very serious problem because of mistrust people vote for members of their

ethnic group to a large extent in national elections, which is not very good for the nation (i19).

When seeking a political office if the other candidate is more credible and from a different tribe politicians will now use the ethnic platform to seek votes for their own vested interests not in service of even their tribesmen that is the problem in Nigeria (i37).

“because we attach ethnic sentiments to elections that is why we are suffering in Nigeria people believe that only a member of their ethnic group can protect their interest” (i4).

“Due to ethnic orientation people now have a biased mind against other ethnic groups so they will only vote for members of their tribe” (i35). “If we are thinking of the general good of Nigeria why will we vote somebody just because he is a member of our ethnic group but that is what we do in Nigeria because of selfishness” (i38). “Leadership in Nigeria has helped in fostering ethnic politics because when it comes to election the political class weep tribal sentiments and this has become a problem in the country” (i34).

Similarly, several other informants agreed on the politicisation of ethnicity: “in my opinion I think politics might be another cogent reason why ethnic issues or violence occur among ethnic groups in Nigeria” (i1). “we are in the era of politics the politicians are using the masses to fight for power they encourage segregation in the name of politics” (i6).

I think the politicians are responsible for all this differences we are experiencing now because I could remember when we were growing up such differences were not there no one cared whether you are southerner or a Christian we lived happily then (i11).

One problem we have in Nigeria is that if a member of one’s ethnic group is in position of power and is not performing well there is the tendency of turning a blind eye to his flaws pretending all is well just because he is a member of your ethnic group (i18).

It is politics because the politicians want to use whatever factor they believe can assist them to attain their political aspiration, they will weep up sentiments based on primordial sentiments based on either ethnicity or religion or whatever, it is simply politics, politically motivated, nothing more than that (i26).

Likewise, other informants concurred on the politicisation of ethnicity: “ethnicity in Nigeria has been politicised because even after ethnic crisis when lives and properties have been destroyed because of political influence the culprits are not punished” (i21). “The political status quo has to do with ethnicity in Nigeria because who occupies a political post is largely determined by ethnic origin and things like that so ethnicity is quite pervasive” (i22). “the major ethnic groups in Nigeria crave for power so they try to out-smart one another so it’s politics” (i39).

The politicisation of ethnicity has contributed to bad leadership in Nigeria. A number of the informants interviewed opined that bad leadership also contributes to acrimonious intergroup relations. Some of the informants said that: “Bad leadership by the politicians is responsible for this problem because if the country is properly governed ethnic differences wouldn’t have been a problem” (i2). “Political instability has also contributed to the ethnic problem in Nigeria because if there was stability competition for political office might not have taken an ethnic dimension” (i3). “poor leadership in Nigeria contributes to the ethnic problem in the country because people feel that they will only benefit from government through their ethnic groups” (i20). “Leaders in Nigeria have contributed to the ethnic problem by deliberating exhibiting ethnocentric tendencies in governance” (i32).

It could be argued that in Nigeria politics has been intertwined with ethnic solidarity so much so that it has become very convenient for politicians to use ethnic loyalty in mobilising support for their selfish interests and ensuring that the ordinary people are divided along ethnic lines. Political fragmentation along ethnic line has polarised the state and fractured the nation.

4.2.2.3 Marginalisation

Grievances arising from feelings of being side-lined by government breed interethnic tensions because some ethnic groups feel that they are not properly represented in government neither are given a fair deal in the scheme of things. Arguably, the Nigerian civil war is believed to have been prompted by such feelings.

Some of the informants support this view: “some ethnic groups feel that they are not well represented in the political system therefore they feel marginalised and will struggle through other means to get what they want” (i7). “Government unfair treatment of some ethnic groups contributes to ethnic differences and conflicts because some ethnic groups feel neglected by government, and out this feeling of marginalisation they become agitated and their behaviour change and this promotes ethnicity” (i28). “Even our last civil war was as result of marginalisation, because some people feel they are relegated” (i33). Another informant said that:-

In my opinion I think what is responsible is the perceived domination of certain ethnic groups by others. Although, we have some major and minor ethnic groups in Nigeria, the minor ethnic groups perceived that they are being over dominated by the major ones. And so they tend to be ‘(pause)’ err they tend to a kind of agitate for they feel ‘(pause)’ and their position in the country if actually everybody is a Nigerian (i40).

Accusation of marginalisation in Nigeria is a common phenomenon and this situation has brought about negative perceptions among the country's ethnic groups fuelling intergroup rivalry and tensions.

4.2.3 Economy

This theme deals with how economic factors affects interethnic relations in Nigeria. It is arranged in five sub-themes: resource control, unemployment, poverty, corruption and nepotism. From figure 4.5 below majority of the informants or 65% believe that poverty is a very important variable in understanding interethnic tensions in Nigeria. Contestations bordering on resource control is next with 37.5% of the informants opined that struggle over control of resources has also contributed to ethnic disharmony in Nigeria. Corruption is the third with 17.5% of the informants that talked about the role of corruption in promoting ethnic conflicts. Nepotism is another aspect of corruption is ranked fourth with 10% of the informants highlighting the problem of ethnic nepotism. Unemployment is talked about by 7.5% of the informants who opined that joblessness has meant some individuals have become victims of political manipulation by the political status quo thus contributing to ethnic conflicts in the nation.

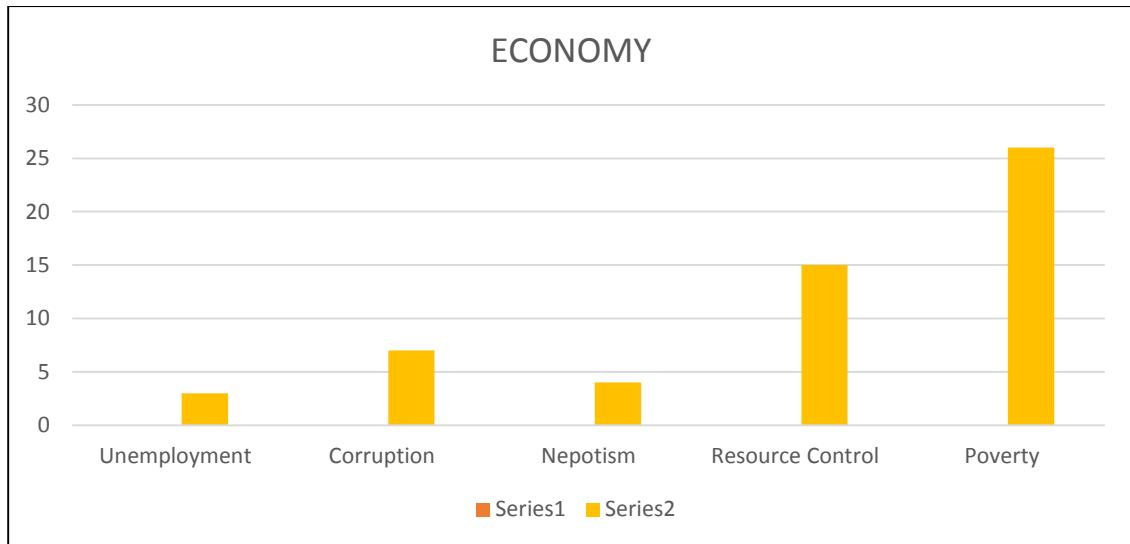


Figure 4.5 : Economy

4.2.3.1 Resource Control

Political incitement by the elite, greed and selfishness has been very instrumental for the clashes experienced over resource control in Nigeria. Clashes for control of the nation's resources have resulted in intra and interethnic conflicts. One of the informant interviewed said that:-

My candid opinion is that the problem or the issue is more to do with having a chunk of the national cake. People from all the tribes are trying to control the country's wealth so the three major ethnic groups the "Igbo", "Hausa" and "Yoruba" begin to fight themselves because they want to be in control. And for them to be in control they brought other ethnic groups into the conflict. And this conflict of interests has now permeated all the ethnic groups in Nigeria this is my candid opinion (i36).

From the interviews conducted some of the informants concur with the view expressed above that greed and rivalries is one of the motives of the frequent inter and intra-ethnic conflicts bordering on resource control. One informant said that: "It is greediness some people are greedy they want all the resources to belong to certain group instead of the nation that I think is the cause of ethnicity in Nigeria" (i11).

Similarly, another informant opined that:-

Most of the inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts in the south-south oil rich region of Nigeria is prompted by the struggle to control royalty paid by the oil companies to the host communities. Each community in the region will always like to claim full ownership of the areas where the oil fields are located and try to deprive neighbouring communities from benefiting from royalties paid by the oil companies or other socio-economic benefits. This situation has led to violent confrontations among the host communities in the Niger-Delta region (i13).

Primordial territorial rivalry is seen as another factor that triggers struggles over resource control in Nigeria especially land disputes as some of the informants opined: "The problem currently between the "Igala" in "Kogi" state and the "Igbo" of "Anambra" state is over a piece of land in their boundary where crude oil was discovered both communities are claiming ownership of that land" (i31). "the problem between my people the "Tiv" people and "Jukun" people is a fight over land a mere piece of land! Sadly it caused a lot of destruction of lives and properties" (i39). "My ethnic group the "Igala" had a problem with the "Bini" ethnic group over our land boundary, each group claiming ownership of it and a lot of people were killed before it was resolved" (i40). "in the "Taraba" area the motive behind the conflict between the "Tiv" and the "Jukun" people is land disputes" (i17).

Disputes over land is seen as the cause of some the interethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. Some of the informants opined that: "the reason for the clash between the "Seyawa" people and "Fulani" of "Tafawa Balewa" local government area in "Bauchi" state in 1991 was as a result of land dispute " (i7). "what led to the violence between the "Ifes" and "Modakeke" in "Yoruba" land was over the issue of land" (i14). "the cause of the conflict is more or less the issue of land between the "Jukun"

and the “*Tiv*” and also the problem of grazing land between the “*Jukun*” and the “*Fulani*” in my area” (i24). “In my state “*Cross River*” we have a lot of ethnic clashes especially during the farming season which has to do with land disputes” (i38). “ I don’t know who own the land apart from God but some people will claim to own the land calling others settlers, there are so many conflicts over land in Nigeria” (i16). “ the crisis between the “*Ife*” people and the “*Modakeke*” people in “*Osun*” state is a historical conflict over the land the “*Modakeke*” are presently occupying originally that land belonged to the “*Ife*” people and they still regard it as theirs” (i18).

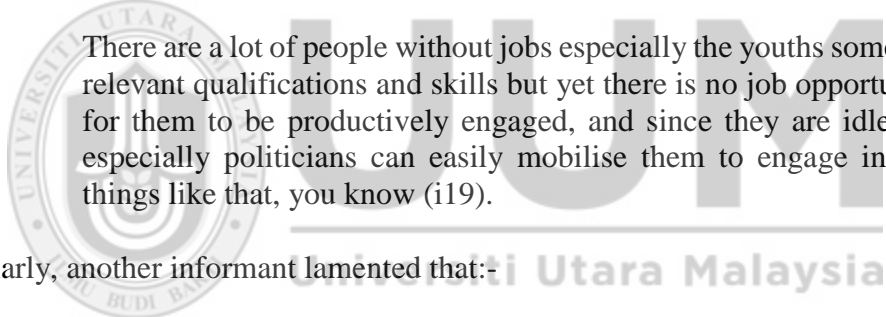
In contrast, two of the informants believed that political influence instigates conflict over natural resources. They opined that: “ the people of “*Modakeke*” want to be politically independent of “*Ife*” they want to control the land which “*Ife*” people believed belonged to them” (i15). “Nobody fight over a barren land. It is when politicians know that there are some resources there, they incite the people to fight over it “ (i30).

Conflicts arising over the control of natural resources such as land has had very devastating consequences on ordinary Nigerians. Political influence has contributed to the problem of resource control in Nigeria. Claims and counter claims of ownership of land between various groups have resulted in intra and interethnic conflicts. The informants opined that greed, ethnic territorial rivalries and political instigation have been very instrumental in exacerbating interethnic tensions.

4.2.3.2 Unemployment

Intergroup conflicts in Nigeria have been facilitated by the availability of individuals that are not employed and lacked a reasonable means of sustenance that could be easily manipulated into violence. Moreover, tension arising from frustration of having nothing doing even when some of the unemployed possess the requisite skills and qualifications to be employed further worsen the already tense situation in the country.

According to the informants interviewed unemployment especially among the youths has become a means of instigating conflicts in Nigeria as one of the informant interviewed puts it:-



There are a lot of people without jobs especially the youths some of them have relevant qualifications and skills but yet there is no job opportunity available for them to be productively engaged, and since they are idle some people especially politicians can easily mobilise them to engage in violence and things like that, you know (i19).

Similarly, another informant lamented that:-

In Nigeria nowadays you will see able body young people with nothing to do some of them are graduates, degree holders, and what have you, but have nothing to do. Such people can easily be manipulated into these crisis that we have been experiencing in the country. They are supposed to be gainfully employed but there are no jobs for them (i30).

In the same vein, another informant said that: “there are a lot of people with no work to do this include young graduates who are very aggrieved” (i2).

Unemployment in Nigeria if left unchecked is capable of worsening the already deplorable situation in the country as there are large number of people who are ready to work but there are no jobs available for them.

4.2.3.3 Poverty

Frustrations resulting from deprivation and mismanagement of the country's resources by those in positions of power have created the potential for conflict in the country. Especially, among the ordinary citizens who suffer most from the scourge poverty that characterise the country. From the interviews conducted a section of the informants argued that due to mismanagement of the country's resources or bad governance has resulted in poverty that contributes to interethnic disharmony as of as one of the informants puts it:-

They say a hungry man is an angry man so from the frustration of politicians by not using the resources meant for community development wisely youths become restive and when somebody is hungry, restive and angry, any little thing can create more ethnic problems, just a little thing can spark more problems, violence and things like that so to an extent I will say yes poverty is the middle factor something else is how I will put it is promoting the poverty, that is promoting you know the restiveness of youths (i38).

In line with the response above another informant opined that:-

Yeah to some extent because an individual in economics we use to say an individual is rational always prefer the best for himself, so if I always see you having the best and we live in the same community maybe we are of the same rank but you are more progressive sometimes I will ask questions why can't we not flow? Like here in Malaysia sometimes when I ride on the road that is the subject of my study when I drive on the road I found out that even in local communities they enjoy government service why not in Nigeria so this kind of thing will brew these things that we are talking about (i33).

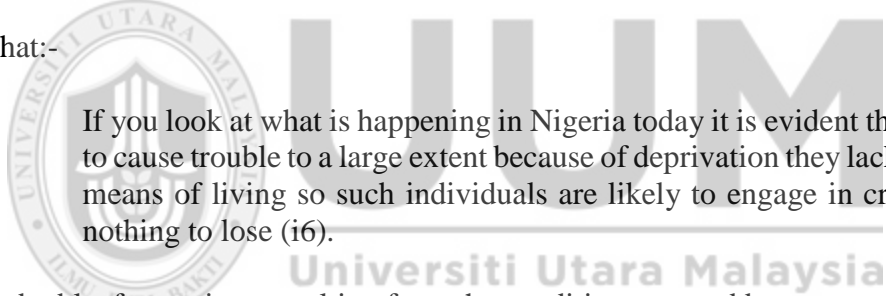
In line with the above responses a number of the informants interviewed opined that:

‘Poverty is a cause of ethnic clashes in Nigeria because some ethnic groups believe that others are dominating the country's wealth giving rise to tension’ (i3). ‘the poverty situation in our country is caused by poor leadership which is not responsive to the needs of the people because the country is not poor’ (i5). ‘Poverty in the midst of plenty is self-created by the unpatriotic leaders who are not concerned about the development of

the nation they merely fuel crisis in the country by not improving the living standard of the people” (i10). “Poverty really contributes to ethnic mistrust in Nigeria because people clamour to get out of the poverty level and ethnicity is used as one of the ways of getting what they want” (i22). “as a result of bad leadership Nigerians are poor the country is rich but due to unpatriotic leaders people are hungry so they can easily become violent as a result of frustration” (i24). “I think poverty is part of the problem caused by our leaders because some people cannot withstand hardship they are likely to misbehave” (i29). “Poverty cut across the land but once it is time to really take advantage the leaders come on board to take advantage of the people” (i30). “Poverty in Nigeria is man made to ensure the people dance to the tune of the leaders” (i36).

In contrast to the responses above majority of the informants opined that deprivation tend to promote interethnic tensions: “Poverty is a major problem in Nigeria if government will provide jobs for the youths there will be peace” (i2). “The issue of poverty is making people doing things they are not supposed to do because they are denied access to jobs and other opportunities to make life bearable” (i7). “Poverty affects the masses therefore it is the downtrodden versus the rich this situation I believe have helped fuel the “*Boko Haram*” crisis because if there was economic justice it wouldn’t have reached this stage” (i12.). “Poverty is something that can lead to trouble a lot of people have been made poor because they don’t have any source to survive ” (i14). “poverty make people to take the wrong decisions for example some people are ready to sell their vote during elections” (i21). “Poverty is a key element in the ethnic crisis we are having in Nigeria so many people have nothing to do and can hardly provide for themselves and this has been contributing to conflicts in the country” (i19).

“Because of poverty some people are easily dragged into crisis” (i23). “Poverty has become a virus among Nigerians which affects the minds of people and make them behave in undesirable manner sometimes” (i25). “People that are neglected without job and social amenities easily take to violence and crime” (i28). “Poverty is the backbone of most of the conflicts we experience in Nigeria” (i32). “Poverty is one of the factors it really affect our orientation that’s why some people can engage in violence and so on” (i35). “Poverty is a reason for deprivation and moral bankruptcy in Nigeria” (i37). “Poverty in Nigeria is quite high and this has an effect on the behaviour of the people it is capable of causing crisis” (i40). Concurring with the responses above one informant said that:-



If you look at what is happening in Nigeria today it is evident that people tend to cause trouble to a large extent because of deprivation they lack a sustainable means of living so such individuals are likely to engage in crisis they have nothing to lose (i6).

Undoubtable, frustrations resulting from the conditions created by poverty in the country have meant that many Nigerians are likely to engage in violence either in the form of interethnic conflicts or other forms of social upheavals. Because many people have been rendered poor and helpless due to bad governance, they are highly susceptible to political manipulation to get involved in conflicts. The state has failed in its responsibility to provide functional social services to the populace thus giving political actors the chance to take advantage of the masses by inducing them into violence for a token fee.

4.2.3.4 Corruption

Corrupt leadership is seen as contributing to the crisis experienced in Nigeria the problem is twofold in that ordinary people are likely to make extraordinary demands from those in positions of power which they cannot fulfil with their legitimate earnings. To a large extent this situation tends to encourage corruption among public servants and in return their tribesmen will turn a blind eye to their corrupt practices. Given this situation, those in positions of power take advantage of this situation and manipulate the people along ethno-religious lines. From the interviews conducted some of the informants opined that corruption is being encouraged in Nigeria by members of society and that it is justified in the name of ethnicity, as one of the informants puts it:-

It is dishonesty on the part of our leaders that led us to the present situation that we find ourselves now, because you will find out some of these politicians when they were voted into office some of them didn't own much wealth or in fact they were just ordinary people like any other person in the society. But you will discover that they become quite rich overnight, where did they get such wealth? And the problem is that those around such individuals encourage them to misappropriate public funds because of the requests that they will be making which of course their salary or allowances cannot fulfil those demands therefore they are encouraged to corruptly enrich themselves and they are protected because he or she is a tribesman (i9).

Similarly, another informant interviewed said that:-

If Nigeria was a private company all of this crisis being experienced will not have existed it would have been better managed, but since everybody seems to see the country as something to loot and get away with it corruption has been legalised in the name of one's ethnic or religious group (i8).

In line with the responses above one informant lamented that: "in Nigeria no matter how corrupt a leader is his tribesmen will try to support him" (i21).

In contrast to the responses above some informants feel that it is a problem nurtured by bad leadership. They opined that: “leaders have not been sincere to the citizens they are involved in corruption thus contributing to ethnic tensions in the country” (i2). “Other countries are using their resources to develop their nation but our leaders are only concerned about selfish interests instead of national interests, they are only concerned about embezzling public funds and promoting ethnic differences among the poor people” (i10). “the leaders are corrupt so they divide the people along ethnic and religious lines to ensure that they continue with their corruption by so doing under developing the nation” (i24). “the country is underdeveloped because the politicians are mismanaging and embezzling the resources meant to develop communities” (i38).

Definitely, corruption has been very instrumental in under-developing the country. Moreover the culture of impunity that public servants have imbibed over the years and lack of political will on the part of the nation’s leadership to combat the menace has nurtured corrupt practices in the country.

4.2.3.4.1 Nepotism

Misuse of power or abuse of discretion which is an aspect of corruption by those in authority in the quest to favour members of their ethnic group has to a large extent contributed to ethnic tension in Nigeria. From the interviews conducted the informants are of the opinion that government’s attitude towards some ethnic groups and to a large extent the general attitude of favouritism encourages ethnic nepotism which tend to breed conflict.

Commenting on the issue one informant said that:-

I have heard of cases where applicants or job applicants from a particular ethnic group were favoured just because of or simply the reason being the interviewers or those offering the job are from the same ethnic group with the applicants. I have heard of such cases, so which I feel could lead to disunity or crisis among the ethnic groups (i1).

In the same vein five other informants aptly said that: ‘‘the leaders of Nigeria tend to favour members of their ethnic group instead of promoting good governance’’ (i9). ‘‘those in government tend to favour members of their ethnic group instead of treating everybody equally which tend to brew strain relations between ethnic groups’’ (i23). ‘‘we like to favour our brothers, members of the same tribe or locality before considering others which is bad’’ (i25). ‘‘Nepotism and favouritism contributes to the constant ethnic tensions in Nigeria’’ (i5). ‘‘If some tribes are relegated and there is nepotism other people preferring elevating their tribes above others this are things that brings conflict’’ (i33).

Political corruption in the form of ethnic nepotism is a dominant feature in Nigeria so much so that undue promotion of a kinsman into high placed political office is not uncommon in the country. And such action fosters mistrust and sometimes accelerates, interethnic conflicts.

4.3 Mutual-Understanding

The theme mutual understanding addresses the second research question dealing with how ethnic affiliation experience generates interpersonal conflicts among Nigerian students in UUM. It is arranged into two sub-themes: interpersonal relations and Mild Disputes. Figure 4.6 below indicates that all of the forty informants feel that good interpersonal

relations plays a vital role in promoting mutual-understanding and cordiality among Nigerian students. Only 37.5% of the informants acknowledged the occurrence of mild interpersonal disputes sometimes motivated by ethnic sentiments. Positive interpersonal relations among Nigerians students tend to reduce the occurrence of interpersonal conflicts.

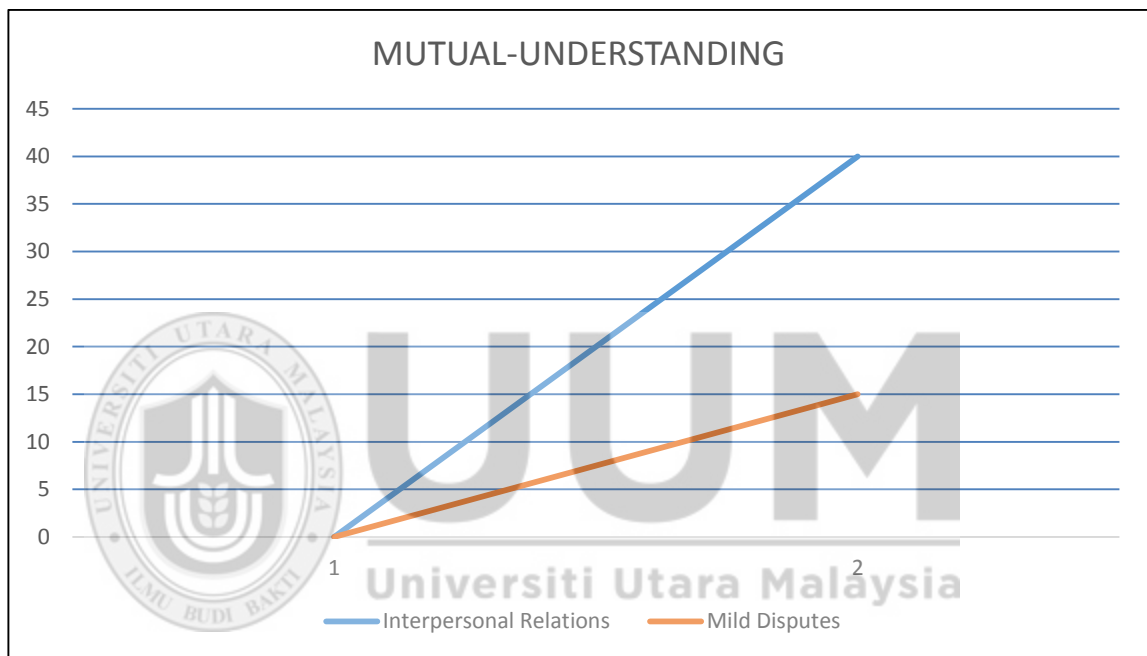


Figure 4.6 : Mutual Understanding

4.3.1 Interpersonal Relations

Cordiality or good interpersonal relations is seen as one of the ways of improving intergroup relations and enhancing understanding of each other's ways of life thus promoting peaceful co-existence. To some extent the multicultural experiences acquired in the research setting further attests to this fact. Majority of the informants interviewed stressed the importance of good interpersonal relations as a mechanism of mutual-understanding and respect among Nigerian students in UUM which has been described as

a way of solidifying unity of purpose among them in the research setting and by extension in the Nigerian context. As one of the informant puts it-

I say look we are here now discussing together socialising you know, once we get back home won't we still go back to our psyche of segregation not wanting to see each other again? Even though we are friends here, but once we get back home will we continue discriminating again you know? (i30).

Experiential learning to be nationalistic through interpersonal relations is seen as one of the mechanisms that promote mutual understanding and unity among Nigerian students in UUM as one of the informant opined: "In fact before I came to UUM have not interacted with people from the north or northern Nigeria a lot, and coming here have met many people from northern Nigeria and I think they are wonderful" (i1). Likewise, some of the informants observed that: "our relationship is fairly better than what exists at home good interpersonal relations can really help in bringing unity" (i3). "In UUM I find out that we get along very well unlike what I know in Nigeria, everyone is sociable" (i4).

I do not only relate well with fellow Nigerians here, in fact my best friend is from Thailand she has learn to eat Nigerian cuisines and I have also learn to eat Thai food we are very close as a testimony of good interpersonal relations (i5).

In line with the above responses another informant opined that:-

Good interpersonal relations between individuals can help promote unity we have several cases in Nigeria during crisis situations that friends of different ethnic groups opposing each other protect one another from mob actions and so on so it is a good factor for unity (i6).

In the same vein, several informants expressed similar feelings: "the type of relationship we are having here is an integrative factor that binds us and it can even continue in Nigeria" (i18). "we relate better here you see when you are outside your home country naturally you unite" (i26). "we have to interact peacefully here because we have left our country so our relationship is fine" (i27). "there is cordiality here we are better off than

at home I think that we should realise that only unity can make us progress” (i33). “I don’t relate with any Nigerian on the basis of ethnic affiliation in fact I just recognise one thing that is we are all Nigerians” (i34). “we interact here in an atmosphere that is different from what obtain at home there are no obvious differences” (i37).

Interactive understanding through interpersonal relationships is seen as another mechanism of reducing interpersonal conflicts among Nigerian students. Some of the informants opined that: “I observed that students here are very cooperative, they assist each other despite religious and ethnic differences” (i7). “I interact with every Nigerian not on ethnic or religious basis because if I know that you are biased I simply withdraw from you” (i8). “we are all educated so I interact with each Nigerian here” (i9). “we have good understanding here unlike in Nigeria” (i10). “Because of my background right from Nigeria I have been interacting with people from different parts of the country, my interaction here is just normal good interpersonal relations can do away with mistrust” (i15). “we interact here in UUM favourably with no consideration of the ethnic group that one belongs to we are really having good understanding” (i19). “there is good relationship among us here and that has improved our understanding of each other” (i20). “definitely I have cordial relationship with all of the Nigerians I know here” (i22). “There is good understanding amongst us here in UUM the relationship is okay” (i23).

Cordiality and mutual respect through interpersonal relationships is emphasised as a means of reducing interpersonal conflicts by some of the informants: “with good interpersonal relationships we learn to love one another” (i16). “the relationship here is cordial we care for and respect each other” (i17). “the level of bias or discrimination here

is very insignificant we relate in a cordial manner” (i24). “the relationship is so cordial with mutual understanding it even baffle me that we can be so cordial” (i32). “you see here we don’t look at things from ethnic perspective we interact in a cordial manner” (i35). “sincerely we are united in UUM because of the way we care for each other” (i36). “since we are here to gain more exposure it is expected that our relationship will not be the same as in Nigeria it is a bit better here” (i39). “Well our relationship here is okay we interact in a manner that shows that we are together” (i40).

However, some of the informants interviewed expressed lingering scepticism about the relationship among Nigerian students in UUM. They opined that there are traces of ethnic and religious mistrust which create a kind of social distance in their relationships. One informant said that: “Well we Nigerians here interact positively but I observed that there are some ethnic and religious sentiments we have back home in our interactions here” (i2). In addition, some other informants expressed similar opinion: “we manage to interact with one another but it is unusual to see a northern Muslim and a Christian from the south being too close” (i11). “I have good personal relationships with other Nigerians here although it may not be intimate but we manage to get along” (i12). “at face value we tend to interact well but underneath there are some tensions” (i13).

Similarly, some of the informants expressed disguised reluctance about the interpersonal relationships among Nigerian students they opined that: “I interact with all Nigerians here equally but I think that there are some barriers in our relationship” (i14). “we interact relatively peacefully here there might be problems but we understand each other” (i21). “I interact with Nigerians of different ethnic origin here but I believe we should try to

improve on our relationship because it is not very good” (i25). “the relationship here is more cordial though we may not be too close as may be expected” (i28). “our relationship here is fair although there is need for improvement but it is better than what we know in Nigeria” (i29). “the relationship here is simply causal and nothing serious because anything built on interpersonal basis between us will be affected by religious differences in the long run” (i31). “I think our relationship here is not too encouraging there are still differences although not to the magnitude of what happens at home” (i38).

From observation on the 28th of March, 2014 at the Maybank student residential halls have shown that Nigerians students exhibit cordiality in their relationships generally whenever they are in contact with one another they exchange greetings to a large extent in other words they recognise the presence of each other. There is the feeling of belonging and pursuing the same objective. This is also exhibited by the cooperative attitude of students living with their spouses in UUM, providing lunch and other forms of entertainment to fellow students on Fridays at no cost. Even though it is largely students of northern Nigerian origin that patronise or benefit from such philanthropic attitudes. However, some students of the Yoruba ethnic group although a few of them also attend the lunch session manifesting a good sense of interpersonal relations that helps in forging unity among Nigerian students in UUM.

Going by the opinions of the informants it could be concluded that cordiality through positive interpersonal relationships has helped in binding Nigerian students in UUM giving them a sense of belonging. It has also helped in doing away with some erroneous perceptions thus promoting unity of purpose and tranquillity among them.

4.3.2 Mild Disputes

The interpersonal conflicts experienced among Nigerians students are mild disputes sometimes resulting from grievances associated with lingering doubts and mistrust. From the interviews conducted lingering doubts and mistrust tend to a large extent generate interpersonal conflicts among Nigerian students especially when discussing socio-political issues pertaining Nigeria. On the issue of interpersonal conflicts that are ethnically motivated which to a large extent is based on lingering doubts and mistrust one of the informant interviewed said that:-

To be candid during the election of the present UUM Nigeria community leadership I witness disagreement between Nigerian students which was ethnically motivated and it was a dispute about who are to occupy some of the posts of the executive committee. Some people believed that they were discriminated against and show their disagreement openly, this is my fifth semester in UUM I really experience it (i2).

Concurring on the same issue another informant observed that:-

There are some form of interpersonal conflicts that are ethnically motivated sometimes but it is manageable as of now, because UUM is not a place that one can behave as a rascal otherwise you would have seen a lot of crisis that I know (i8).

Similarly, commenting on the same issue one informant said that:-

I was told by somebody of a fight between two Nigerian students near the library, one was a ‘‘Yoruba’’ and the other an ‘‘Igbo’’ although I was told that they fought over the passport of the ‘‘Yoruba’’ guy so it look like an ethnic issue (i14).

Likewise, another informant opined that:-

I witnessed an incident where some of our colleagues were arguing on an issue which I cannot remember now, but I can vividly remember that in the course of the argument tempers rose and ethnic sentiments set in I am not the only witness to that incidence, but I don’t want to mention names (i18).

In same vein, one informant stated that:-

I was a witness to an incident where Nigerians students were divided along ethnic lines over the election of new executive officers for the UUM Nigeria community last year. With the “*Hausa*” and “*Yoruba*” trying to get one of their own to fill important positions. I personally have to withdraw from the contest because of the tension that was developing between them. I am from “*Edo*” state and from a minority ethnic group (i21).

In addition, another informant said that:-

I could remember what happened during the election of executive members of the UUM Nigeria community that was last year, one individual clamoured that he must occupy the position of the secretary general and that brought about heated argument and ethnic sentiments among those present at that meeting that is one example of it (i22).

Lingering doubts and mistrust as a precipitator of interpersonal conflicts is supported by several other informants they opined that: “When we discuss issues pertaining to Nigeria you will find out that there is a lot of tension some individuals are very sentimental about such issues” (i13). Although I have not seen or heard of any open confrontation but I notice that there is what I can call “hidden or cold conflict” among Nigerian students in UUM due to ethnic differences (i19). “Some Nigerians here do not see themselves as part of the UUM Nigerian community, they isolate themselves from it because they see the association as a body which is partial so they don’t interact fully with us” (i24). “I have not witnessed any conflict or dispute based on ethnic reasons but sometimes we do argue there are little arguments in support of either the geo-political zones you know, but the interpretation matters” (i6).

Likewise, five other informants interviewed opined that: “the only dispute that I have witnessed is neither academic nor entirely ethnocentric just something personal between two students from different ethnic groups but it all depends on how you look at it” (i7).

“the conflicts we experience here is very little of what is happening at home and ethnic differences may not be the sole reason” (i11). “ Some of the disputes here may not be purely ethnically motivated as such, but sometimes I randomly hear of such disputes but I don’t make any response to it I just keep quiet” (i33). “Conflict is inevitable sometimes such things happen among us here in UUM but it is not severe” (i34). “the only case that I know of is a conflict based on religious difference and not ethnic as such but since those involved are not from the same ethnic group it could be interpreted differently” (i35).

The views expressed by some of the informants about ethnic motivated dispute over the election of executive members of UUM Nigeria community in a previous election, played out again during the dissolution and election of new officials on the 7th of December, 2014. I observed that the Hausa and Yoruba nearly engage in a fight over disagreement on how the association is administered. The outgoing president and the executive members of the association were accused of ‘ineffective leadership’ by a student of Yoruba origin. This situation, generated heated debate between the Hausa and Yoruba being that the outgoing president and majority of the executive members are Hausa. Before the election could take place the situation became very chaotic. There was a clear dispute motivated by ethnic rivalry between the Hausa and Yoruba shouting insults at each other. The voting pattern was also along ethnic line with each group nominating and voting for members of their ethnic group. The Hausa wins the majority of the positions of the association due to their numerical advantage.

It could be concluded that there are few open or direct ethnic motivated disputes among Nigerian students in UUM. Apparently, differences of opinion on political issues

pertaining Nigeria and the quest to control the executive committee of the UUM Nigeria community tend to give rise to most of the ethnically motivated disputes among Nigerian students. Taking cognisance of the opinions of the informants it could be argued that apparent mistrust and lingering doubts about each other tend to propel interethnic disputes.

4.4 In-Group and Outgroup Sentiments

The theme in-group and outgroup sentiments addresses the third research question hinging on conditions that generate ethnocentric and non-ethnocentric interactions among Nigerian students in UUM. It is arranged into two sub-themes: ethnic and religious sentiments and awareness and education. Ethnic and religious sentiments tend to give rise to ethnocentric interactions among Nigerian students. Figure 4.7 below indicates that 60% of the informants, feel that ethnic and religious sentiments tend to promote ethnocentric interactions among Nigerian students. Equally, awareness and education tend to bridge the gap created by ethnic and religious biases which tend to promote non-ethnocentric interactions. 70% of the informants opined that education plays a positive role in encouraging non ethnocentric interactions.

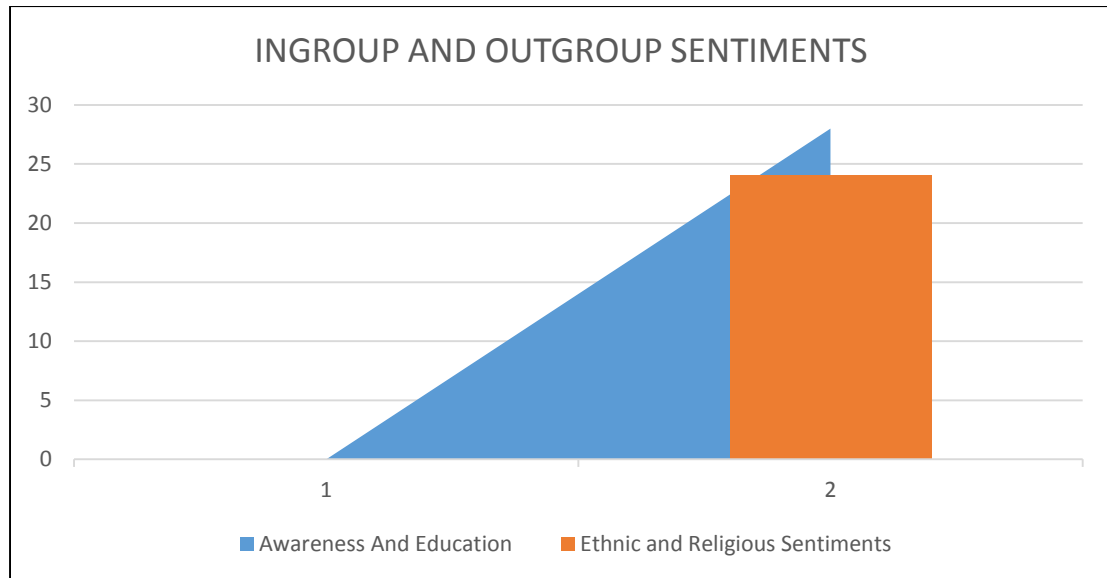


Figure 4.7 : In-Group and Outgroup Sentiments

4.4.1 Ethnic / Religious Sentiments

Ethnic and religious biases or sentiments tend to be the reason of some the ethnocentric behaviours that influence interactions among Nigerian students. Most Nigerian students tend to interact more or closely with members of their linguistic or religious group. Cultural factors such as language, faith tend to promote close-knit interactions and feelings of belonging among Nigerian students of the same ethnic or religious group. This type of interactions tend to create ill feelings and suspicion among Nigerian students as one of the informants puts it:-

Ethnic bias exist among us here in UUM! I could remember that I first experienced it during the first Ramadan that I observed in UUM, somebody was gossiping me in his native tongue he didn't know that I can understand his language. Because if he knew he wouldn't have said negative things against me openly. And up till today I don't interact with him closely because of that incident and there are many cases like mine. Moreover when new students arrive the first thing they do is seek members of their ethnic group and they stay here for some time without interacting with members of other ethnic groups (i8).

Commenting on the same issue another informant opined that:-

Yes have experienced ethnic bias but I don't want to mention names I encountered it in a group discussion with members of another ethnic group. I was trying to explain a point to a senior colleague who is our tutor in the group discussion but he ignored me and concentrated on his tribesman that I think is ethnic bias (i3).

Similarly, another informant opined that:-

I cannot say that I have not experienced ethnic bias here because one thing that is in my mind is that there is one individual who I believe have been biased against me. Because whenever he needs help or assistance from me I do help him. But if I need something from him he does not reciprocate even if I call him he will ignore my call. So I concluded that because we are not of the same tribe or religion he is ethnocentric (i9).

Likewise, another informant said that:-

I will say in mild way that the "Hausa" are too conscious of their language so much so that even if they are discussing with someone who is not "Hausa" if another "Hausa" person should come around while you are talking they may just switch to "Hausa" not bothering that you don't understand what they are saying. I find that offensive and sometimes some of them assumes that every Nigerian can speak "Hausa" so in retaliation in such occasions I deliberately speak my own language to some of them (i12).

Concurring with responses above one of the informant opined that:-

If we are to be candid to ourselves ethnic bias exist in our relationships in UUM one example, is that in a gathering of Nigerian Muslims the proper medium or language that is supposed to be used in such gathering is English but you will realise that since the "Hausa" are in the majority here they will simply speak in their language as if other ethnic groups are not present in such gathering, this I regard as ethnic bias (i17).

Speaking in the same vein one informant lamented that:-

Ethnic bias in UUM to some extent I will say yes, I will give you an example whenever I am discussing with a fellow "Yoruba" from "Kwara" and in the course of the discussion if a northerner should come he will quickly switch to "Hausa" not bothering about me that do not understand "Hausa". So I use to say why not speak in English you know that I don't understand "Hausa" and you are a "Yoruba" like myself so you see (i30).

In addition, one informant opined that:-

In UUM definitely there is ethnic bias especially when discussing issues relating to Nigeria, there is this incidence I was involved in a discussion with a colleague about the “*Boko Haram*” issue and I was trying to be as objective as possible. But the person that I was discussing with was offended being a “*Hausa*” insinuating that I am against the “*Hausa*” people and things like that so such ethnic sentiments sometimes put us apart in terms of our interactions (i22).

Similarly, another informant said that:-

There are many issues responsible for such attitude for example, there is this expensive joke that some of my “*Yoruba*” friends make of me that I am from “*Benue*” state the middle belt that if a war broke out in Nigeria where will I go? I think is offensive it is biased so that’s one of my experience in UUM (i39).

Corroborating the responses above several of the informants said that: “I think we still have some of those ethnic and religious sentiments that we came with from home. Because you notice that Christians tend to be closer in terms of interactions and so do the Muslims” (i2). “It is something you cannot avoid you can hardly separate individuals from tribal sentiments actually it is common” (i6). “Most of the Nigerian students interact more or closely with members of their ethnic or religious groups. I think that we have imported what is happening in Nigeria here but is less severe” (i11). “From my observation I realise that most Nigerian students interact closely with members of either their ethnic or religious group this problem has become inborn in us” (i20).

Likewise, some of the informants concurred with the responses above: “we are divided even in the UUM Nigeria community there are a lot of divisions we do not see ourselves as one look at the ethnic divisions between the “*Hausa*” and “*Yoruba*” here” (i21).

“You see this is the problem we have here we don’t sit down together to understand

ourselves we simply hear a rumour and act on it and this put us apart” (i23). “I believe we Nigerians here don’t like ourselves we always try to promote the interest of our ethnic groups instead of promoting our collective interests” (i25). “Well as a Nigerian whether you like it or not there is ethnic bias here in UUM but it is minimal and sometimes I hear people talk about the ethnic divide” (i33) “the “*Hausa*” are too biased against every other person who they feel is not a member of their religion or tribe. I have friends among them but they are too biased” (i38). “our interaction is an extension of what happens back home although it is less pronounced but we interact more along ethnic and religious line” (i40).

Similarly, some of the informants opined that ethnic sentiments tend to influence interaction among Nigerian students to a large extent even among individuals of the same faith. As one of the informant lamented that:-

I think that there is a barrier in our interactions because even we the Muslims “*Yoruba*” and “*Hausa*” do not sit down under one umbrella to discuss issues relating to our religion even in the mosque, you see the “*Yoruba*” in a different corner and the “*Hausa*” in another corner which is not supposed to be case, I think is because of ethnic differences (i14).

“I experience ethnic bias psychologically because I realise that we interact on ethnic line because if you observe we Nigerians here you will find out that we associate along ethnic line” (i28). “Nigerians here interact more on the basis of their ethnic groups you will see the “*Hausa*” or the “*Yoruba*” moving together what brings them together is their language (i31).

For some of the informants it is normative for individuals of the same ethnic group to relate closely because they share certain attributes that naturally unite them. As one of the

informants interviewed put it: ‘‘you tend to see individuals from the same geo-political zone clustering together you can’t blame them because they share the same culture, affiliation, and upbringing that cannot be regarded as segregation’’ (i16). Similarly, two informants opined that: ‘‘what people may regard as bias to me is just something normal people with the same language, culture, and religion are more likely to flock together that is what is obtainable here’’ (i26). I cannot shy away from the fact that a ‘‘*Hausa*’’ man is more disposed to a fellow ‘‘*Hausa*’’ and a ‘‘*Yoruba*’’ relates more with a ‘‘*Yoruba*’’ person but on the whole we interact together’’ (i36).

Observations have shown that interactions among Nigerian students are to a large extent aligned along ethnic and religious line. Even in the mosque after Friday congregation prayer on the 28th March, 2014 the Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba ethnic groups held meetings separately apparently discussing religious issues. It seems that ethnic differences tend to keep them apart even though they profess the same faith. They have not been able to come together under one umbrella to discuss issues of mutual benefit transcending beyond their ethnic commitment. Generally, there are very few and exceptional cases of very close interethnic friendships among Nigerian students in UUM. The dominant pattern of interaction seems to revolve around ethnic and religious membership. Stereotype mentality tends to play a role in the interactions among Nigerian students.

It could be concluded that language and religious belief tend to play a key role in the pattern of interaction among Nigerian students. To a large extent individuals of the same ethnic origin tend to interact more intimately. As one of the informant opined that

ethnicity seems to supersede religious fraternity implying a lack of religious mental intellectual framework.

4.4.2 Awareness/Education

Awareness and education is a mechanism that tend to promote non-ethnocentric interaction among Nigerian students. Exposure and education play a very important role in broadening and refining the minds of individuals. Some of the informants emphasised the positive role of education as a means of promoting non-ethnocentric interactions.

As one of the informants said:-

In my opinion the level of education plays a major role in enhancing or changing the mind-set of the individual we have all come here to study and I think you judge an individual by his actions. And it's been fine since I came I don't think there has been any reason to have issue with anybody. My relationship with every other Nigerian has been very fine (i1).

Similarly, some informants said that: "Most of the students here are matured and are in postgraduate programmes so with that level of education it really help in reducing such attitudes" (i6). "we are all educated so I interact with every other Nigerian here" (i9). "as an enlightened person I interact with all Nigerians irrespective of religion or tribe" (i17). "the bias among us here is insignificant so I interact with everybody especially when it involves academic issues and things like that" (i24). "I think maybe because of the level of education here we don't have an ethnic mentality we don't look at it things from an ethnic angle" (i35). "with our level of education I think we interact well without thinking of ethnic or religious differences" (i39).

Intercultural exposure or awareness is seen by some of the informants as another mechanism that helps in promoting non-ethnocentric interactions among Nigerian

students. One of the informants said that: ‘‘I have friends from different countries including the ‘‘*Malays*’’ and I associate with Nigerians from different parts of the country’’ (i5). In the same vein other informants opined that: ‘‘I think we have to remove ethnic and religious sentiments in our relationships. In fact my closest colleague here is a ‘‘*Tiv*’’ and you know the level of conflict between the ‘‘*Tiv*’’ and the ‘‘*Fulani*’’ back home’’ (i7). ‘‘I think that because of my background right from Nigeria I have been interacting with people of different ethnic origin and I have travelled wide in the country before coming here, I interact comfortably with all Nigerians here’’ (i15). ‘‘I did my first degree in the south-east of Nigeria which is an ‘‘*Igbo*’’ dominated area so I don’t have problem interacting with any Nigerian here’’ (i20). ‘‘I have an open mind I judge people according to their actions and not their tribal or religious affiliation so we socialise amicably’’ (i23). ‘‘we may not be flocking together as one but due to the exposure we have gained our relationship here is better than what it will be at home’’ (i28). ‘‘In fact, most of my friends in UUM are from other ethnic groups I got to know them right from the day I came here, right now my closest friend is a ‘‘*Yoruba*’’ man’’ (i36).

Fair unity through positive relationship and educational pursuit is believed to be another mechanism encouraging non-ethnocentric interactions. Some of the informants opined that: ‘‘Well Nigerians here in UUM are united you can hardly know their ethnic origin we are just one here and I think we should take this unity back home’’ (i10). ‘‘I came to realise that some people whom I thought were not friendly when I was in Nigeria turn out to be quite friendly in my interaction with them here’’(i18). ‘‘actually we have come to realise that what is happening in Nigeria is not acceptable and with this experience I relate well with every Nigerian here ’’ (i19). ‘‘as we are in Malaysia today as students we have

good understanding of ourselves by the time we get back home we are likely to make better contribution to the unity of our country” (i26). “the unity we have here as Nigerians if we can have it at home it would have been better” (i27).

Likewise, another informant said that:-

I think we are united to a certain extent here. The differences here actually is not too much I can ask any Nigerian for assistance and that person will gladly come and assist me and I will be ready to render similar help to a fellow Nigerian irrespective of tribe or religion (i11).

Similarly, one of the informants interviewed said that:-

You see to the best of my knowledge members of my ethnic group here in UUM are very few so I see any other Nigerian as my brother or sister so I interact with them freely, my good friend is a “*Hausa*” we think alike we only separate when he is going to pray (i13).

In line with responses above, some informants opined that: “Recently, I met some new students from Nigeria of northern origin. I introduced myself and ask of their names and impressed on them that we are one here, they should feel free with any other Nigerian” (i29). “our interaction here apparently is what is supposed to be and I hope we take this spirit back home” (i30). “It is quite surprising to me to see Nigerians integrating in another country knowing how we behave at home” (i32). “we are fairly united in my three years in this place have not seen any of the things that brings lack of unity” (i33). “I think we are learning and becoming use to relate with one another as one people” (i34). “the state of unity here is excellent as far as am concerned is very good because I don’t see anybody being discriminated against because of his tribe or religion we just relate as one” (i37). “ I think awareness is partly responsible for it, we do interact well especially when we meet in sporting events and meetings of the UUM Nigeria community” (i40).

From observations on 31st March, 2014 indeed educational pursuit and the environment that Nigerian students find themselves tend to change their attitude towards one another as far as the ethnic problem in Nigeria is concerned. And they lay the blame on the government back home and elitist manipulation. My interactions with some Nigerian students of different ethnic origin and from different parts of the country that I met for the first time in UUM have shown their displeasure over the ethnic disharmony in Nigeria making reference to the Malaysian situation of relative peace and stability. Indeed, educational pursuit has created an awareness that help promote non-ethnocentric interactions among Nigerian students.

Thus, it could be concluded that exposure or awareness and education plays a very strong role in promoting non-ethnocentric interactions among Nigerian students. The research setting itself also contributes in harmonising interactions among Nigerian students. In contrast to the primordial sentiments that promotes ethnocentric interactions and mistrust among Nigerian students. Education and intercultural awareness helps in fostering positive relationships among them. Indeed, education has become a bridge that nurtures partial unity among Nigerian students in UUM.

4.5 Foreign Status

The theme foreign status addresses the fourth research question dealing with how interaction in a neutral situation outside Nigeria help in producing a form of mutual understanding and promote integration among Nigerian students. It is arranged into three

sub-themes: neutral ground, common goals and new perspectives. Figure 4.8 below indicates that the sub-theme new perspectives is seen as playing the most significant role in promoting unity among Nigerian students. 52.5% of the informants feel that new visions acquired in the research setting serves as an integrating factor. It is followed by neutral ground with 42.5% and common goals had 25% of the responses of the informants. As foreign students in Malaysia Nigerian students find themselves in a neutral ground which tends to give them a sense of unity because of the common academic and financial problems that they face as a group. In addition, they also find a unity of purpose in their common goal of educational pursuit and due to the multicultural and racial interactions that they engage in with other students from the host country and other international students, the experiences of this interactions tend to produce a new worldview which help to erode parochial sentiments and beliefs previously ingrained in them.

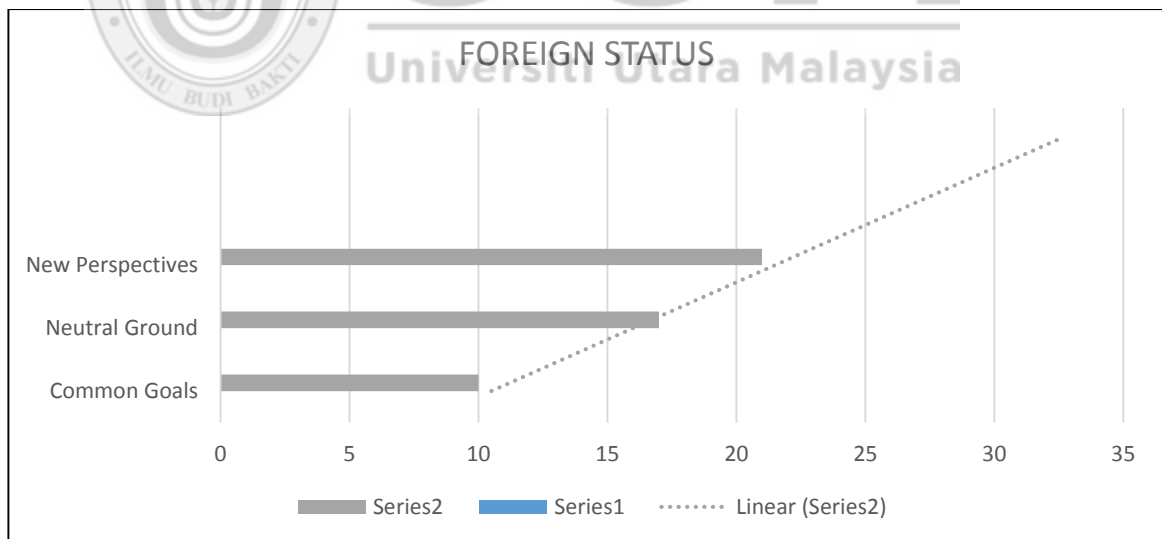
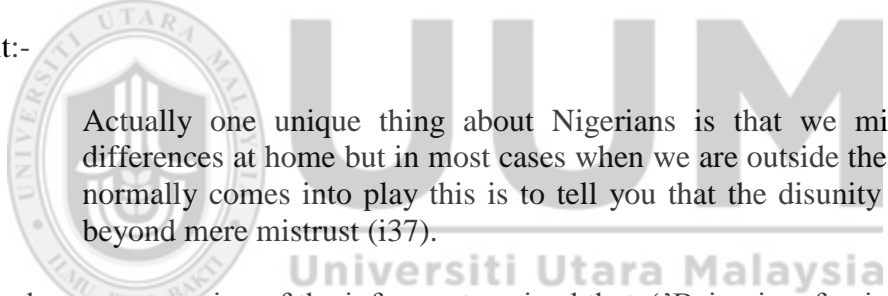


Figure 4.8 : Foreign status

4.5.1 Neutral Ground

Interaction in a neutral setting could be a way of producing mutual understanding, trust and prejudice reduction among Nigerian students. Being in a neutral setting away from the arching ethnic problematic which is a dominant feature of Nigeria's socio-political scene and preoccupied with educational pursuit tend to neutralise ethnic consciousness and passion which gives room for national unity. Moreover, mutual cooperation evolves which help bind their relationship as a result of the common problems they encounter.

Majority of the informants opined that being in a neutral ground produces a neutralising effect that enhances unity of purpose among Nigerian students. As one of the informants puts it:-



Actually one unique thing about Nigerians is that we might have our differences at home but in most cases when we are outside the country unity normally comes into play this is to tell you that the disunity at home goes beyond mere mistrust (i37).

Similarly, a cross section of the informants opined that: 'Being in a foreign land and we realise that we are all matured and enlightened so we interact with each other without hostility'' (i1).

Likewise, one informant opined that:-

I believe that we Nigerians are more united when out of the country in fact we have a sense of unity we call our association a community Nigerian community in US, Nigerian community in Malaysia because we feel that we are one (i4).

Similarly, another informant interviewed said that:-

Definitely when you are out of your country the next Nigerian that you see is your brother. Because you don't have any other person apart from him if something should happen he will come to your rescue, so to me as long as you are a Nigerian we are one here (i11).

Concurring with the responses above several informants opined that: “The reality is that when you are outside your homeland there is a tendency to integrate it is when you get back home that you are likely to notice some differences” (i26). “we are united because we are in the diaspora we have to love ourselves and accept our differences” (i27). “our relationship here is very cordial we are united maybe because we are outside Nigeria” (i28). “we are more united here than in Nigeria because we do not look at our differences” (i29). “Here we are all Nigerians when we get back home let us continue to see ourselves as Nigerians just as we do here” (i30). “I cannot imagine that Nigerians can be so united here considering of our behaviour back home” (i32). “we don’t allow ethnic differences to influence our interactions here we are very cordial towards one another since we know we are from the same country” (i35). “Malaysia is a peaceful country and being foreigners we cannot come and create problem here they will not tolerate it” (i36). “Here we are Nigerians first before thinking of any other affiliations what matters is that we are from the same country” (i40). Malaysia

Common problems encountered in a foreign land are seen as a basis of unity among Nigerian students. Some of the informants opined that: “I think what unite us is because we are away from home we find out that we have similar problems” (i2). “Not only being in the Diaspora but education play a key role in uniting us here and generosity is another factor because when a fellow Nigerian come with a request you will try to help him” (i6). “Because of the common problem we face in a foreign land our differences is cemented by it so we leave the scar of ethnicity behind once we cross the shores of Nigeria” (i16). Concurring one informant said that:-

The fair unity that we have is because we are in a neutral ground, we feel we are brothers that's why we try to unite in order to solve our common problems so we over look our ethnic and religious differences'' (i3).

Observation during a welcoming event organised for new students on the 14th April, 2014 provided a forum for Nigerian students to know each other for the first time and from the discussions held during this ceremony the need for unity and good behaviour among Nigerians generally was emphasised. In addition, the ethnic problem was also dwelled upon speaker after speaker noted that this problem is deliberately created in the country. Such nationalistic interaction in a neutral setting and taking cognisance of the common problems that Nigerians face outside their homeland tend to bind them together.

It could be concluded that interaction in a neutral setting help in fostering peaceful coexistence among Nigerian students given the fact that they face similar challenges in the host community therefore intergroup tensions tend to reduce and interpersonal relationships is more important.

4.5.2 Common Goals

Pursuing common goals is seen as a mechanism that integrates Nigerian students in UUM and fosters unity of purpose among them. In this direction, educational pursuit has served as a rallying point for Nigerian students providing an opportunity of forging ahead as a cohesive group. Indeed, education has helped in breaking down ethnic and religious barriers among Nigerian students as they work together in pursuit of their common goal.

Mutuality of fate symbolised by a common goal tend to bind Nigerian students together as one of the informants interviewed said:-

We have all come here to study so the common goal is to improve our educational qualification that is what guide and bind us as Nigerians in UUM and it has been fine since I came I don't think that there has been any reason to have any conflict with anybody (i1).

Concurring with response above majority of the informants interviewed opined that: 'Nigerian students here are very cooperative we assist each other academically despite ethnic and religious differences' (i7). 'We assist each other in the tutorial classes organised by fellow Nigerians. Students from different parts of Nigeria attend these classes, I think that we should try to continue with such things when we get back home' (i15). 'considering what brought us here I think that we should treat each other fairly irrespective of tribe because we are all here to study' (i17). 'We learn from one another what you do not understand you try to get more information about it from a fellow Nigerian without considering his ethnic origin or religious background. So we assist each other academically and otherwise' (i19). 'we are all from the same country from the same continent, we are having the same objectives we are pursuing the same goals' (i24). 'we came here to study so that brings us together more than anything else' (i31). 'we are from different ethnic and religious groups but we are from the same country with a common objective which is to acquire education and go back to our country to help in developing the nation' (i36). 'we are here principally to study so it helps in uniting us more than any other thing' (i40). Another informant said that:-

I think we have a common goal to achieve so our thinking is focussed on that goal therefore we have a tendency of reasoning in the same direction and the forces that instigate conflict among us at home are not present here (i37).

On the 31st of March, 2014 I observed that as part of the struggle to succeed in their study in UUM it became imperative for Nigerian students to cooperate with one another in order to achieve their collective goal thus this common goals tend to bring about non-ethnocentric attitudes. Moreover, interactions with other foreign students of different races also contribute in shaping the behaviour and attitudes of Nigerian students towards one another. And bringing about a sense of belonging through a common focus for which they are all here.

From the views of the informants it is clear that the common goal of educational pursuit is indeed a binding force that unites Nigerian students in the Universiti Utara Malaysia. It is a common objective that helps promote positive interpersonal relationships among them and help to reduce prejudices.

4.5.3 New Perspectives

Interaction in a neutral setting could be an element that helps to change the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian students about the country's ethnic problem and promote mutual understanding among them. As a result of this new experience that Nigerian students are exposed to in the host country it aid them in acquiring new values and worldviews and to be able assess issues more objectively. Many of the informants interviewed envisaged a new vision emphasising the need for peace and tolerance among Nigerians.

A new reality envisioned as a basis of unity among Nigerians is emphasised by some of the informants. As one of the informants interviewed puts it:-

Being here has changed my perception of the entire situation in Nigeria, I have seen the world from a different perspective rather than what I use to know in my country. I believe if a society like Malaysia can live in peace and harmony then why shouldn't we even with the diversity live in peace? (i3).

Similarly, another informant said that:-

There are countries that are more diverse than Nigeria but they have been able to manage their problems take Malaysia for instance they have their own type of diversity but it is manageable, if other countries can manage themselves peacefully this is where one need to ask questions (i6).

In the same vein one informant lamented that: "in my stay here I have not seen a citizen of this country molesting a fellow citizen so that is one thing we should emulate. (i9).

Experiential extension of the Malaysian example is emphasised by majority of the informants. One of the informant interviewed said that:-

I see all Nigerians here as one and we should make sure that when we return home we should show example to other Nigerians so we can unite and see Nigeria as one where the interest of the country will be the top priority and not ethnic interests which divide the nation then we develop this idea of one Nigeria just as it is the practiced here in Malaysia "Satu Malaysia" (i10).

Concurring with the response above several of the informants opined that: "with what we have learn here academically and taking consideration of our cordial relationship we can really make a difference when we return home so that we can contribute to the development of our country" (i13). "what I have learnt being in Malaysia is simplicity I find out that they live a simple life and that they are united I think we should take what we have learnt here back home" (i14). "the exposure we gain here is enormous I only hope that we transmit what we learn here back home" (i16). "the way I see things here

in Malaysia has changed my views because even with the different ethnic groups in the country they see themselves as one how I wish we can do the same in Nigeria” (i20). “I am very impressed with the way the ‘*Malay*’, ‘*Chinese*’ and ‘*Indians*’ are living peacefully I think we should try to do the same back home” (i24). “I have been thinking over it that Malaysians are united living in peace so this gives me the zeal that we can come together as one people” (i32). “My experience in Malaysia has led me to believe that we can also be united in Nigeria looking at how Malaysians are united despite their differences” (34). “Definitely right now that we are here in Malaysia and we are interacting peacefully and our perception of the world has changed we now know that what is happening in our country is undesirable and need to change ” (i36).

Likewise, several other informants interviewed envisioned deepening understanding through interpersonal relationships which they opined will be beneficial to Nigerians. One of the informant opined that: “When I interact with people from other cultures I try to learn something good from them which I will take back home” (i5). In the same vein another informant observed that:-

Well, being in here is a lesson to all of us and hopefully when we get back home we should be able to continue behaving the way we are conducting ourselves. Because when you are here you see so many things and the host country is treating you as one, they do not differentiate between us so why should we differentiate between ourselves (i11).

Similarly, another informant said that:-

Coming to Malaysia changed my views about other ethnic groups from Nigeria especially the views I had about people from the north when I was in Nigeria. I thought that northerners were not interested in education and they are unfriendly. But on getting here I discovered it was not the case. I then begin to think that why can't, we be united in Nigeria if we can understand ourselves better here I also came to realise that some of the attitudes of my ethnic group the “*Yoruba*” are completely antisocial (i18).

Two of the informants echoed a new belief they opined that: ‘‘ethnicity is a global issue but here in Malaysia we don’t sense it because of good governance so if the situation in Nigeria improves I think it will be resolved’’ (i21). ‘‘I realise here that our perception of each other back home is negative it is not what is supposed to be’’ (i30). While some of the informants highlighted ‘‘the Malaysian effect’’ as a contributing factor of their new outlook. One of the informants opined that:-

Being here has really influenced me a lot because the way I use to think of some ethnic groups not being interested in education changed when I got to Malaysia, I discovered that they are in the majority in UUM and two other universities that I have visited that really changed my views about them (i35).

Likewise another informant said that:-

Here we are able to discuss issues peculiar to our country and correct the wrong impressions we have at home which is usually difficult to do back home due to external forces that prevent people from thinking properly so we have good understanding here (i37).

In line with the response above two of the informants opined that: ‘‘the way Malaysians accommodate each other is something we can learn from’’ (i33). ‘‘I have gain more exposure and enlightenment here to be able to understand and accept other people’s flaws in order to forge ahead’’ (i39).

Observations on the 4th April, 2014 have shown that interactions in a foreign land among themselves and with other foreign nationals provide an opportunity for reassessing erroneous opinions about each other and to be able acquire new worldview about the situation in Nigeria. Nigerian students talk about the way Somali students interact and they are also impressed with the way their host the Malaysians interact with one another

which provide a new world outlook. Which tend to promote mutual-understanding and tolerance among them and the possibility of enhancing intergroup unity back home.

From the views of the informants above it is clear that Nigerian students have acquired new vision about the issue of national unity taking cue from the Malaysian experience of relative peace and harmony among the different ethnic groups in the country. It is pertinent to note that most of the informants envisaged a national identity that is based on mutual respect, religious tolerance, and equal treatment of all Nigerians irrespective of primordial origin.

Table 4.3

Summary Table

	Sources
Foreign Status	0
Name	Sources
Common Goals	10
Neutral Ground	17
New Perspectives	21
In-group and Outgroup Sentiments	0
Name	Sources
Awareness And Education	28
Ethnic and Religious Sentiments	24
Mutual understanding	0
Name	Sources
Interpersonal Relations	40
Mild Disputes	15
Student experiences	0
Name	Sources
Culture	0
Name	Sources
Illiteracy	8
Prejudice	28
Religion	40
Name	Sources
Economy	0
Name	Sources

Unemployment	3
Corruption	7
Name	Sources
Nepotism	4
Name	Sources
Resource Control	15
Poverty	26
Name	Sources
Political	0
Name	Sources
Marginalisation	4
Colonialism	10
Politics	22



UUM
 Universiti Utara Malaysia

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the analysed data with the themes glean from the data which answered the research questions and objectives of the study. The next chapter is the discussion of findings .Table 4.2 above presents the summary of responses or sources of each theme and sub-themes generated from the data through use of the Nvivo software. It is clear that religion and interpersonal relations are the most talked about issues which suggests the need for further research.



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the collection and analysis of the data of this study. This chapter will attempt to shed light on the findings of the study in light of the theoretical framework established by this research. The findings of this research are analysed in light of the assumptions of intergroup contact theory.

5.1 Discussion

This aspect of this thesis endeavours to discuss the findings of the study in light of the objectives and theoretical orientation of this research. In line with the theoretical assumptions of this study it is worthy to briefly discuss the impact of the various forms of interethnic interactions that have occurred in the Nigerian context. Extreme and mild forms of intergroup relations such as slavery, segregation and assimilation have occurred in Nigeria's history. In precolonial era slavery was common in some Nigerian societies. Mustapha (2003) point out that largely in the 19th century, ethnic minorities of the southern part of the emirate of Zaria in north western Nigeria was an enclave of slave raiding by the Sokoto Caliphate for both domestic use and commercial trade on the trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic slave markets. Nnoli (2003) opined that the colonial policy that encouraged separate settlements for the so-called 'native foreigners' residing outside

their native homeland was segregationist. Because it systematically restricted interaction between Nigerians. In the prologue of a book titled: *The Citizenship Question in Nigeria* Muazzam (2009) (ed) observed that there have been cultural or ethnic assimilation among Nigerians prior to colonialism. He opines that it is evident that some individuals migrated from their ancestral homeland and lived elsewhere and became part and parcel of the host communities.

It is pertinent to note that prejudice and discrimination have impacted negatively on intergroup relations in Nigeria giving rise to frequent interethnic conflicts in the country. Ethnic prejudice and discriminatory tendencies has been responsible for the apparent disunity that have become a dominant feature of the country. Nigeria being a multi-ethnic or plural society have not been able to effectively manage its plurality in terms of promoting harmonious inter-group relations. Plurality in Nigeria have not necessarily solved the scourge of negative prejudices and discriminations that pose a challenge to national identity and nationhood. Plurality in the Nigerian context has been more of a means of promoting and defending ethnic nationalism in the quest for dominance and hegemony of the Nigerian state.

5.1.1 Socio-Political Problems Associated With Ethnicity

The objective of the study was achieved through the research questions in the setting of the study. The first research question bordering on students experiences of Nigeria's socio-political problems associated with ethnicity. The study realised that Nigerian students in Universiti Utara Malaysia share clear experiences of how ethnic and religious

biases has become a tool used by the political class in Nigeria to polarise the people along ethno-religious line. The data indicates that due to ignorance among the adherents of the two major religions in the country that is Islam and Christianity and coupled with the hardships created by poverty in the country. Given this situation, religion has been politicised and misinterpreted by a section of the society thereby fuelling mistrust and religious intolerance. Religion has become a tool used by the political status quo to divide Nigerians. Majority of the informants interviewed believed that the politicisation of religion facilitated by widespread ignorance and poverty has meant that it is being used as a means of achieving an end by the political class (pp. 62-66). However, religion by itself do not really preach prejudice and disunity among people of different adherence.

The implication of the politicisation of religion is that a religious divide has been created polarising Nigerians along ethno-religious line which tend to influence intergroup relations in the country. Mistrust and intolerance has also become a dominant feature of interfaith relations in Nigeria due to the negative impressions that each religious group harbour about the other. Among the many reasons that cause sectarian conflicts in Nigeria ignorance and lack of proper understanding of the teachings of religion is a paramount catalyst (Pate et al. 2014:112). Mutual suspicion and acute rivalry between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria has ensured a culture of violence between them (Sampson, 2012:106). In addition, due to the sensitive nature of religion in the country's polity questions on religious affiliation was avoided as part of the demographic data during the last census in 2006 (Okpanachi, 2009:5). But in reality religious differences is not the cause of the divisions and crisis that have become a feature of Nigeria's socio-political

development rather it is the manipulative tendencies of the political class that have made religion an issue.

From the data the informants are of the opinion that the socialisation process, ignorance, bias, past experiences and the political status quo and political spatial separation as by product of colonialism all contributes to the acquisition of prejudicial judgement and values that is used as a tool by the elites to promote frosty intergroup relations in Nigeria (pp. 66-69). What this means is that Nigerians are being prejudicial to one another out of ignorance and bias which is reinforced by the negative actions of those in positions of power for their own selfish interests. It could be argued that the distrust and apparent lack of affection that characterise interethnic relations in the country is strengthened by stereotypical notions that Nigerians have acquired about each other which to a large extent is erroneous built on ignorance and political manipulation.

The data also shows that illiterate individuals could be easily induced into destructive conflicts in Nigeria. A number of the informants are of the opinion that illiterate people are more susceptible to manipulation by the elites because they could be easily misled due to ethnic sentiments (pp 70-71). Lack of education makes individuals to be stark illiterates who are likely to be misled by politicians to engage in conflicts, sometimes out of poverty and joblessness. Analysing the role of illiteracy on violent conflicts in Nigeria Sulaiman and Ojo (2014:24) opined that lack of proper education which is rampant among the youths tend to be an incentive for them to be involved in violence. Based on the fact that majority of the youths are either illiterates or were not able to complete their formal education. The few who can read and write lack the relevant qualification and expertise

necessary for employment coupled with social decay in the educational sector in addition, to economic problems illiterate youths are manipulated into conflicts. What this means is that illiterates are more likely to be employed or used in causing havoc in times of intergroup crisis because of the wrong preconceived ideas that they harbour against other ethnic groups in the country.

Political factors such as the colonial formation of Nigeria by the British is also seen as one of the factors which give birth to the present ethnic contestations in Nigeria. Data from the interview indicates that the fusion of the various ethnic groups that constitute Nigeria was not achieved through negotiation or some form of agreement rather it was a forced marriage which best served the interests of the colonialist. Colonial divide and rule tactics is seen as responsible for the ethnic contentions that accompanied independence. It was not the intention of the colonialist to create a united country (pp73-74). Salawu and Hassan (2010:31) argued that the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates by the British in 1914 was not done with the will of creating a united heterogeneous state rather it was a matter of administrative convenience. In other words, the British capitalised on ethnic differences of the colonised to sow the seed of hatred and disunity in order to ensure that their rule was not challenged by Nigerians. So instead of the colonised seeing the colonialist as a common enemy they ended up despising and fighting each other.

Politicisation of ethnic identity in Nigeria is another sub-theme gleaned from the data. Politicians have find ethnic politics a very useful means of actualising their ambitions at the detriment of peaceful coexistence. Ethnic affiliation is manipulated by the political class giving the masses wrong impressions about other ethnic groups all with the view of

strengthening their vested interests (pp 75-78). The political class in Nigeria use ethnic politics to their advantage by capitalising on the ignorance of the masses making them believe that they are competing for power on their behalf. Instilling fear in one ethnic group on the possible threats they would face for allowing other ethnic groups to gain political power (Odeyemi, 2014:10). Thereby nurturing mistrust and increasing the potential of intergroup conflicts.

The study also uncovered grievances associated with feelings of political marginalisation by some ethnic groups in Nigeria. The data shows that grievances associated with feeling of being politically marginalised by some ethnic groups in the country is heightened by the political elites which is used to exacerbate ethnic tensions experienced in Nigeria. In fact, the civil war that took place after independence is attributed to such grievances (pp 78-79). In Nigeria accusations of marginalisation is very prevalent so much so that nearly every ethnic group has its own allegation about ethnic marginalisation. The most notable allegation of ethnic marginalisation in Nigeria is the majority/minority divide and the North/South dichotomy. According to Achimugu et al. (2013:50) accusations of marginalisation in Nigeria is rife nearly all the ethnic groups in the country complain of one kind of marginalisation or the other. In the past the Hausa/Fulani were blamed of dominating power, in return the Hausa/Fulani accuse the Yoruba of controlling the economy and bureaucracy. While the Igbo point accusing fingers at both the Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba for allegedly dominating power, the federal civil service and the economy. At the same time minority ethnic groups also indict the three major ethnic groups of political and social marginalisation.

Greed, selfishness and political incitement has been instrumental in the quest for the control of resources in Nigeria and as a result exacerbating inter and intra-ethnic clashes as the data indicates (pp 80-82). The fight over resource control has been fuelled by greed and selfishness in addition to incitement by politicians who mobilise the people to fight over resources for a vested interest. Ogonnaya, Omuju, and Udefuna (2012:689) opined that intra-ethnic warfare between the Ife/Modakeke in the South-West and the Aguleri/Umuleri in the South-East of Nigeria has been quite horrifying and seemingly becoming the order of the day. In the same vein, it is argued that since the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta region in the fifties a new source of conflict emerged in the region bordering on the rights of ownership which is associated with attractive benefits in form of employment opportunities and social development supposed to be provided by the oil firms. The funds provided by the multinational companies to host communities have fuelled conflicts in the region instead of resolving it (Okolo et al., 2014:153; Tonye et al., 2012:38).

The study also found out that the unemployed especially the youths can be a very easy source of mobilisation for violent conflicts in Nigeria by the political class (p.83). With a teeming population of able body youths with no job to do and the pressing issue of poverty artificially created by the political class through corrupt practices the likelihood of them being manipulated into violent intergroup conflicts is very high. Lack of gainful employment has made the unemployed potential tools of conflict in the hands of the Nigerian elites. The youths have been very active in causing mayhem whenever crisis erupts in the nation. It is argued that rising unemployment in the country has attracted young able body men who could not be gainfully employed into the ranks of ethnic

militias in the country, thus contributing to the obstruction of peace and stability (Achimugu et al, 2013:52; Okafor, 2011:359).

The study also unravelled the impact of poverty on intergroup relations in Nigeria. The data shows that frustrations resulting from deprivation caused by mismanagement of the nation's resources by politicians has contributed to the tensions and conflicts experienced in the country (pp 84-86). The poverty situation in Nigeria is alarming given that the country is blessed with human and natural resources. But surprisingly, it is ranked among the poorest countries of the world with citizens living below the poverty line. Nigeria's economic fortunes have been undermined by a number of factors including political violence, militancy, terrorism, and endemic bureaucratic corruption. The net result of this situation is that the nation has missed the opportunity of positive economic transformation (Ukpong & Ibrahim, 2014:6).

Corruption is also seen as playing a prominent role in the conflictual intergroup relations in Nigeria. Politicians and bureaucrats in Nigeria use ethnic and religious sentiments to disguise their corrupt practices (pp 87-88). Agbiboa (2012a:334) observed that ethnic solidarity is stronger than loyalty to the nation thus the commitment to an ethnic group induce holders of public office to disregard established norms against corruption. Indeed corruption is a very critical factor that tends to derail development efforts in the country. Funds meant for development projects are mismanaged by those in positions of power. Ribadu cited in (Ukpong & Ibrahim, 2014:7) argued that the political leaders in Nigeria have corruptly misappropriated development assistance funds worth billions of dollars over the years. Fagbadebo (2007:33) argued that corruption in Nigeria is manifested by

irresponsible governance whereby government is not able to perform its statutory duties of provision of functional social services such as good roads, safe drinking water, and other social infrastructures. He further opined that corruption has increased the restiveness of youths especially in the Niger Delta region because of the frustrations resulting from the poverty stricken situation that the region that produce the oil revenue of the country find itself. This is a direct result of institutionalised corruption by the political class.

Corruption encompasses issues of favouritism in terms of appointments into public office which do not necessarily adhere to due process or the established norms. The data indicates that favouritism tend to contribute to ethnic disharmony in Nigeria (pp 88-89). Favouritism has meant that some ethnic groups enjoy undue advantages at the expense of their compatriots, in other words politicians abuse the power of their office and this situation tend to contribute to tension and intergroup conflicts in Nigeria. Political corruption in the form of nepotism exacerbates ethnic tensions in Nigeria. Attoh and Soyombo (2011:40) point out that because of the competitive and conflictual nature of ethnicity in Nigeria merit is relegated to the background in favour of ethnic affiliation. The ruling class gave preference to the development of their ethnic group at the detriment of others.

5.1.2 Ethnic Affiliation Experience and Interpersonal Conflicts

The second research question dealing with how do ethnic affiliations experience generate interpersonal conflicts among Nigerian students in UUM? The research found out that good or cordial interpersonal relations can be a mechanism of promoting mutual

understanding among Nigerian students in the research setting (pp 90-94). Improved interpersonal relations devoid of primordial reference tend to give Nigerian students a sense of collective belonging. This is in line with Davies et al. (2011:332) that cross-group friendship resulting from interpersonal relations can help in building emotional bonds and trust among individuals of diverse backgrounds. Friendship is seen as a way through which individuals over time can form intimate relationships in situations that favour changed attitudes. Equally, the research found out that interpersonal conflicts motivated by ethnic consideration were quite mild and very few (pp 95-97). Evidence from the data revealed that lingering doubts and mistrust tend to be the precipitator of most of the interpersonal conflicts that occur among Nigerian students in the research setting.

Political issues to a large extent tend to ignite some of the interpersonal and sometimes intergroup disputes among Nigerian students. A good example is the quest to dominate the executive committee of the UUM Nigeria community which tend to ignite intergroup rivalries. Therefore, as pointed out by majority of the informants, improved interpersonal relationships can be a way of enhancing intergroup harmony in the Nigerian context through mutual understanding and respect of each other's beliefs and practices. This seems to be lacking in the Nigerian context characterised by frequent intergroup clashes sometimes over trivial issues. Falade and Falade (2013:59-60) opined that Nigerians do not demonstrate the value of tolerance which is important for peaceful coexistence especially in terms of political and religious differences. They opined that the country could only progress when the citizens learn to tolerate one another.

5.1.3 Ethnocentric and Non-ethnocentric Interactions

The third research question is bordering on conditions that generate ethnocentric and non-ethnocentric interactions among Nigerian students. From the data the study found out that generally interactions among Nigerian students is aligned along ethno-religious line with some allegations of ethnocentric behaviours and attitudes that encourages ethnocentric interactions. (pp 99-103). Some of the informants point out that individuals of the same religious belief tend to interact on the basis of their ethnic background instead of their common religious fraternity. This situation was corroborated during the fieldwork which is a clear indication of ethnocentric tendencies that encourages ethnocentric interactions. This is in line with (Uduma, 2013:33) who opines that the sentiments that make people to think of themselves first and foremost as members of an ethnic group before considering national identity has been a negative trait among Nigerians. In the same vein, Attoh and Soyombo (2011:40) argued that Nigerians were nurtured to discriminate on the basis of a common language by the colonialist who ensure that they were not fully integrated therefore language became a basis of interaction and competition. The research also uncovered the role of awareness and education in changing the attitudes of students and promoting non-ethnocentric interactions (pp104-107). Majority of the informants feel that intercultural exposure and the awareness gained from education help to a large extent in bridging the ethnic and religious divide among Nigerian students. Uchechukwu and Atiti (2011:49) opines that the educational system can serve as a basis of uniting students from diverse origin with equal status to interact and be able to dispel prejudices and stereotype behaviour which are the basis of discrimination.

5.1.4 Neutral Situation and Integration

The fourth research question bordering on how interaction in a neutral situation outside Nigeria helps in producing a form of mutual understanding and promote integration among Nigerian students. The data shows that interacting in a neutral setting has broaden the world outlook of Nigerian students due to the diverse cultural experiences acquired in the host country. In essence, interacting in a neutral ground facing similar educational and financial problems tend to douse intergroup tensions (pp 109-117). As pointed out by some of the informants being a Nigerian is more important than an individual's ethnic or religious group in the research setting. Although, reference to the ethnic or religious affiliation of an individual is something inescapable yet there is a strong sense of collective identity being foreigners in the research setting.

The common goals that Nigerian students share tend to foster symbolic unity in terms of educational pursuit cooperatively learning from one another. This is in line with the intergroup contact theory assumptions that equal status contact, cooperative interactions, common goals and authority sanction are conditions that promote harmonious intergroup relations. And also viewing other foreign students from different countries, interacting or mingling harmoniously further helps in solidifying their relationships and changing their perceptions about themselves in particular. The new world outlook acquired through multicultural and interracial interactions greatly helps in changing the mind set of Nigerian students.

Therefore, intergroup unity is enhanced among Nigerian students in a neutral ground due to the environment they find themselves largely devoid of the divisive factors that tend to influence their behaviour back home. This experience of neutral setting can be translated in the Nigerian setting if supra-ethnic values can be agreed upon among leaders at federal level where ethnic considerations should be lessened by a more universal formation of national ideologies, values and common national visions. While democracy uphold the feature of dominance and tyranny of the majority, yet the imbued value of fairness, moderation and justice could enable the minority to enjoy and feel a sense of fairness and decrease the feeling of relative deprivation that lead to injustice and mistrust. Federalism should promote justice and equality for all.

The major thrust of intergroup contact theory is the argument that positive contact among people of diverse cultures and races will result in prejudice reduction. This argument is informed by the assumptions of the intergroup contact theory pioneered by Allport (1954) cited in (Dovidio, Heller, & Hewstone, 2011). Allport believed that positive contact between diverse groups can result in prejudice reduction thus resulting in mutual understanding and promoting harmonious intergroup relations. It is assumed that equal status contact, cooperative interactions, common goals, and the support of relevant authorities as proposed by Allport are necessary conditions for peaceful or harmonious intergroup relations (Dovidio et al. 2011; Aberson, 2015).

This research realised that the frequent intergroup conflicts which is a dominant feature of the country's socio-political scene could be attributed to political manipulation by the elite which has nurtured intolerance and deep-rooted prejudices among Nigerians. The

manipulation of Prejudices has set Nigerians apart and encouraged mutual suspicion and distrust. Each ethnic group in the country has its own negative stereotypical conception of each other. Thus, it contributes for frosty and acrimonious relationships. In-group feelings of superiority and corresponding negative attitudes towards outgroups tend to promote lack of unity among Nigerians. Ethnic identity as opposed to national identity has become more relevant in national discourse in the country as a result of strong commitment to the in-group symbolised by ethnic affiliation.

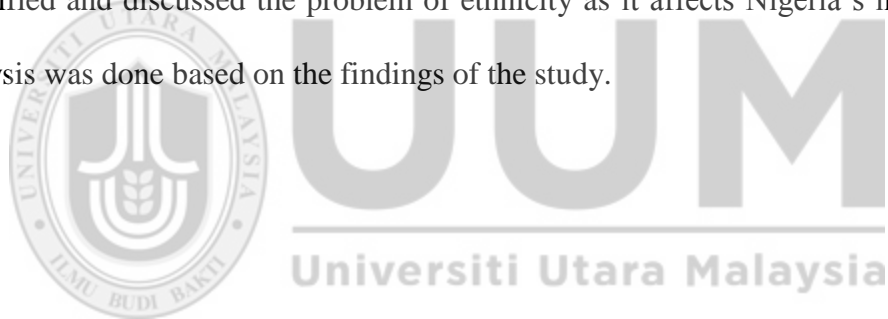
Therefore, lack of unity facilitated by ethnic solidarity has promoted ethnic tensions and conflicts since each ethnic group is more or less trying to protect its interests at the expense of other ethnic groups. Intergroup relations have been at best a competition between ethnic groups for supremacy and control of the state. The manipulative tendencies of the politicians has been very instrumental in shaping the thinking and actions of many Nigerians. So much so that everything is viewed with a cynical motive. Suspicion and distrust among Nigerians has ensured that prejudicial judgement is used in justifying or opposing the actions of one another based on parochial consideration.

It is argued that intergroup relations is characterised by mutual suspicion and lack of trust which tend to give rise to tension and confrontation. Groups are said to be more self-centred than individuals therefore direct interactions that is based on competitive relationships usually increases the tendency of being prejudicial and exhibition of discriminatory behaviour and conflicts. People tend to assess their group more favourably and has the propensity to issue out more benefits to members of their group than non-members. There is also the tendency to be more helpful to their members than to other

groups (Dovidio et al. 2011). However, the goal of the intergroup contact theory of prejudice reduction through interaction and cross-friendship under situation of equal status provides the basis of cordial relationships in the research setting. Intergroup tensions experienced in the Nigeria context is to a large extent weakened by positive interpersonal relationships which bind Nigerian students together.

5.2 Conclusion

This study tries to identify and discuss the problem of ethnicity in Nigeria from the perspective of Nigerian students studying in the Universiti Utara Malaysia. The study identified and discussed the problem of ethnicity as it affects Nigeria's integration and analysis was done based on the findings of the study.



CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

The study aims to explore and understand the problem of ethnicity in Nigeria from the perspective of Nigerian students studying in the Universiti Utara Malaysia with a view of highlighting how interpersonal relations can enhance intergroup unity in the research setting and in the Nigerian context. Nigeria is a deeply divided society along ethnic line which has resulted in a very fragile sense of unity among citizens of the country, thus resulting in frosty intergroup relations. In the course of the research it became apparently clear that Nigerians resident outside the country are very much concerned about the image of the country in light of the pervasive ethnic clashes and frequent misunderstanding that is mostly settled through violence and destruction of lives and properties. The study unravelled the role of elitist manipulation of religious belief, prejudices, and the multitude of illiterates in the country. In addition, the study also highlighted how corruption, poverty, unemployment, and the fight for resources often instigated by the elites contribute to ethnic strife in Nigeria. The political manipulation of ethnicity is a cogent reason that contributes to the current state of ethnic mistrust among Nigerians particularly the masses who are susceptible to manipulation by the political class.

The study is comprised of six chapters; chapter one consists of the background of the study discussing the problem of ethnicity from the global perspective and narrowed down to the Nigerian situation. The statement of the research problem was highlighted, research questions, objectives and significance of the study is also presented in this chapter. The main objective of this study is to highlight how ethnicity affects Nigeria's integration. In line with this are the following objectives: to explore and understand student experiences of Nigeria's socio-political problems associated with ethnicity; to highlight and discuss how ethnic affiliation generate interpersonal conflicts; to examine conditions that promote ethnocentric and non-ethnocentric interactions among Nigerian students and to identify and discuss how interaction in a neutral setting can promote mutual understanding, trust and integration among Nigerian students and reduction of prejudice and rivalries.

Chapter two reviewed relevant literatures; the persistence of ethnicity in Nigeria and the social forces that accelerate ethnic discrimination and conflicts in Nigeria was discussed. Issues of ethno-religious conflicts and how religion is politicised and manipulated for a vested interest by some individuals in Nigeria was also discussed equally, the issue of marginalisation, majority and minority divide, the politicisation of ethnicity and lack of integration among Nigerians was also discussed. The problem of a dwindling economy with the attendant problems of poverty and unemployment which also contributes to ethnic tensions and conflicts was equally highlighted. The intergroup contact theory was used as a tool of analysing interethnic relations among Nigerians.

Chapter three discussed the methodology employed by this research which is an ethnographic design involving participant observation over a period of time and

interviewing of informants in the research setting, the rationale of adopting this qualitative design is discussed in this chapter. Chapter four presented data collection and analysis codes and themes gleaned from the processed data through manual analysis of the raw data and subsequent data processing with the aid of the Nvivo software. Chapter five is devoted to discussion of the findings of the study.

Ethnic suspicion and mistrust is a dominant feature of Nigeria's socio-political system which has resulted in several interethnic clashes thus engendering strained relationships among Nigerians. The study found out that ethnic mistrust and suspicion is rooted in the colonial experiences of Nigerians. Colonialism encouraged and promoted ethnic separatism and mistrust among Nigerian with the sole aim of polarising the colonised into submission and ensuring the continued domination of Nigerians. Feelings of ethnic identity over and above national identity among Nigerians is a problem that tend to permeate the Nigerian psyche from the interviews conducted on the experiences of Nigerian students about the country's socio-political problems there is a unanimous consensus that ethnicity has indeed being used to divide and retard the progress of the country with the blame squarely laid on the ruling elites. One source of the many ethnic conflicts in the country has being the politicisation of ethnicity as a vehicle of acquiring power and wealth by the ruling elites. With rising poverty in the country which is to a large extent created through corrupt practices and other anti-patriotic attitudes by the Nigerian leadership the country has remained highly divided and volatile as each ethnic group is trying to secure apparently first for itself the desired social services needed for a bearable life. Therefore, the post-colonial leaders have failed to unite the country just like

their colonial predecessors. This research uncovered that improved interpersonal relations can be a way of promoting harmonious relationship and unity among Nigerians.

6.1 Contribution of the Study

6.1.1 Theoretical Contributions

The study goes beyond Allport's theory of contact as he observed that contact foster harmonious society as well as common goal pursuit therefore, the major contribution of this study is how educational pursuit foster harmonious intergroup relations among UUM Nigerian students. The study also contributes to the understanding of the impact of the persistent nature of ethnicity in Nigeria. Furthermore, this study also contributes to the role of interpersonal relationship in enhancing intergroup harmony.

6.1.2 Methodological Contributions

The study makes a methodological contribution to the intergroup contact theory as previous studies have largely used an experimental design employing quantitative methods but this study employed an ethnographic design in understanding the complexity of intergroup relations among Nigerian students in a neutral ground.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the impact of ethnicity in Nigeria discussed in this study and given the destructive consequences of ethnic manipulation in Nigeria this study offers the following recommendations as a means of promoting harmonious intergroup relations:

6.2.1 Sensitisation and Reorientation

Sensitisation and reorientation of Nigerians about the virtue of imbibing the culture of tolerance and mutual understanding of the diverse cultures of the country will go a long way in promoting intergroup harmony in the country. Taking cognisance of the diversity of Nigeria it is pertinent that Nigerians learn to respect and tolerate each other's beliefs and way of life so that peace and tranquillity will prevail which will facilitate overall development of the country. For sensitisation and reorientation to be effective as mechanism of peaceful co-existence communication in a common language should be encouraged and promoted in order to foster national unity. Equally, interaction of views or peaceful dialogues should also be promoted and the establishment of relationship of tolerance. This will enhance mutual understanding among the citizens. In other words, the values of cooperation and mutual respect should be emphasised as the building blocks of national unity. Semela (2012) points out that a nation of diverse ethnic and religious groups need to promote intercultural understanding in order to evolve a national identity which accommodates the beliefs, experiences and ideals of all citizens thus a multicultural society should be able to reduce mistrust and consequent intergroup conflict for it to be viable. Conflicts resulting from ethnic disputes in Nigeria are to a large extent ignited by intolerance and lack of respect for each other's way of life. Sensitisation should be directed towards provision of basic education to the citizens in order to reduce the negative consequences of illiteracy which has virtually facilitated the manipulation by the political status quo of the many illiterates in the society to become agents of intergroup conflicts.

6.2.2 Poverty Alleviation Measures and Employment Generation

Alleviating poverty among Nigerians is another measure that will help in reducing ethno-religious tensions and conflicts in Nigeria. The mere fact that majority of Nigerians live below the poverty line makes the country quite volatile so much so that a little misunderstanding that could be peacefully resolved tend to provide an avenue for devastating conflict. Ukpong and Ibrahim (2014) observed that poverty has been on the increase in Nigeria due to policies that have not been able to alleviate poverty in the country. They further argued that it is striking to think of widespread poverty in the country, given that the country is blessed with abundant human and material resources but Nigeria is among the poorest countries of the world. With more than 70 percent of the population living in poverty. The poverty situation in Nigeria is attributed to a number of factors but bad leadership and endemic corruption have been described as the prime reasons for poverty in the country (Ukpong & Ibrahim, 2014).

In the face of widespread poverty coupled with high unemployment among the youths there is a high tendency of youth involvement in violent intergroup conflicts. Okafor (2011) opines that having a large number of youths without employment opportunities in Nigeria could pose a challenge to peaceful democratic sustenance especially if they are engaged by the politicians for mischievous purposes. Azeez (2009) observed that the youths in Nigeria are wasting due to joblessness to the extent that some are forced into criminality to escape idleness and that the only way through which this menace could be resolved is for government to create job opportunities for those ready and willing to work. This study strongly advocates that government should ensure that the youths are gainfully employed in order to reduce their involvement in violent intergroup conflicts. Broadening

opportunities for job creation and fair distribution of wealth in Nigeria will go a long way to reduce violent interethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts bordering on resource control.

6.2.3 Good Governance

Generally this study is of the opinion that transparent leadership that will improve the quality of life of majority of the citizens in Nigeria will help considerably in dousing intergroup conflicts. It is evident that lack of functional social amenities brought about by massive corruption and lack of accountability on the part of the country's leadership is a catalyst for the many intergroup tensions and conflicts in Nigeria. According to Gilbert and Allen (2014) good governance simply entails an effective means of undertaking responsibility transparently and accountably. This is what seems to be very lacking in the Nigerian situation where governance is largely conducted in an unaccountable and transparent manner. In other words, the leadership in the country is not accountable to the governed therefore maladministration has become the order of the day.

Corruption has become a pervasive phenomenon in Nigeria thus funds meant for social and infrastructural development are squandered by politicians and bureaucrats entrusted with it thereby leaving the masses in poverty stricken situation. And out of the frustrations of the general poverty and lack of proper functional social services supposed to be provided by government coupled the effects of ignorance arising from lack of proper understanding between the various ethnic groups the potential for intergroup conflicts tend to be very rife. Corruption has become endemic in Nigeria's public life because the

leadership is heavily involved in corrupt practices thus they lack the will and commitment to put an end to it.

Agbibo (2014) chronicled several cases of corruption committed by the Nigerian leadership and highlighted how ineffective the anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria have become toothless bull dogs due to political interference in their activities. According to him, in a report submitted to the United States congress by the secretary of state in 2012 the immediate past Jonathan administration was blatantly indicted of massive corruption. In addition, the report also implicated the judiciary and security forces as being part and parcel of the corruption scam. Gilbert and Allen (2014) opined that many countries in Africa which claim democratic credentials Nigeria inclusive are indeed not democratic in terms of catering for the welfare of the citizens. The priority of the ruling class is acquire power for their own selfish interests in total disregard of the aspirations of the citizenry.

They further posited that corruption is high in these countries so is unemployment and underemployment, majority of the citizens are poor and social infrastructure such as roads, healthcare delivery systems, electricity, safe drinking water are either inadequate or non-existent. This situation highlighted especially in Nigeria becomes the bed rock for intergroup tension and conflicts. Therefore, this study strongly contends that good governance in terms of strengthening the mechanism and instrument of justice, fair distribution and equality of opportunity to majority of the citizenry in a transparent and accountable manner will go a long way in improving intergroup relations. Because when the standard of living of the majority is improved and government is seen as transparent and impartial in its conduct of state affairs contestations arising from deprivation will

diminish thus the ethnic group will be less relevant in the struggle for power or other socioeconomic potentials.

6.2.4 Recommendation for Further Study

This thesis has answered all the research questions but there is need for further research to understand the role of religion as a source of intergroup conflicts in Nigeria and the impact of improved interpersonal relation as a basis of promoting harmonious intergroup relations in the Nigerian context.



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