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



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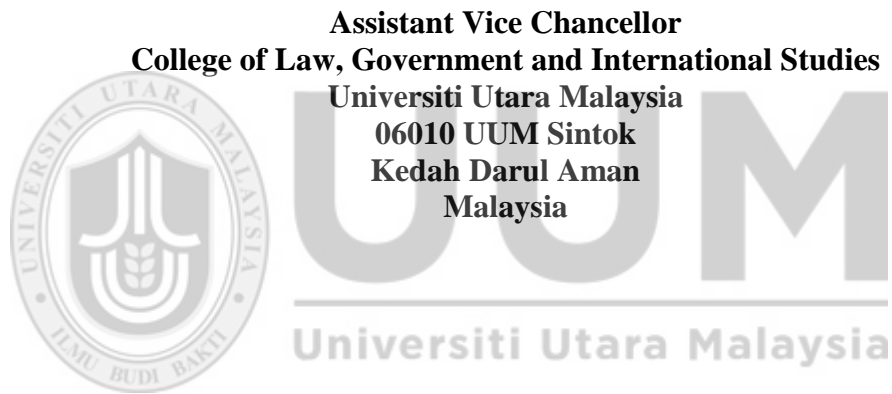
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Abstrak

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

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