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AN EXAMINATION OF ETHNICITY IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF NIGERIA: A STUDY OF PARTY FORMATION AND ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR (2019-2023)

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Universiti Utara Malaysia

MASTER OF ARTS (POLITICAL SCIENCE)
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA
2025

AN EXAMINATION OF ETHNICITY IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF NIGERIA: A STUDY OF PARTY FORMATION AND ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR (2019-2023)

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A thesis submitted to the Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of Government in fulfilment of the requirement for the Master of Arts (Political Science) Universiti Utara Malaysia.

Kolej Undang-Undang, Kerajaan dan Pengajian Antarabangsa
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Program Pengajian *(Programme of Study)*	:	**MASTER OF ARTS (POLITICAL SCIENCE)**		
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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meneroka pengaruh mendalam etnik terhadap sistem politik Nigeria, dengan memberi tumpuan kepada implikasinya terhadap pembentukan parti politik, tingkah laku mengundi, serta cabaran yang lebih luas dalam integrasi etnik. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menilai tanggapan terhadap peranan etnik dalam sistem politik Nigeria dari tahun 2019 hingga 2023. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kaedah kualitatif, dengan menggabungkan data primer daripada temu bual separa berstruktur bersama data sekunder daripada sumber akademik dan dalam talian. Temu bual telah dijalankan dengan kumpulan responden yang pelbagai, termasuk ahli politik dan kakitangan awam daripada enam zon geopolitik Nigeria, dengan memastikan keterwakilan melalui persampelan mudah seramai 12 peserta. Kerangka metodologi ini membolehkan analisis mendalam tentang bagaimana etnik membentuk penyelarasan politik dan kecenderungan pengundi, di mana corak mengundi berasaskan etnik menunjukkan kepelbagaian yang dipengaruhi oleh faktor sosiopolitik, dinamik wilayah, dan kepimpinan. Dapatan utama menekankan keperluan untuk langkah komprehensif bagi memupuk integrasi etnik, termasuk reformasi perlembagaan dan pilihan raya, pendidikan sivik yang dipertingkatkan, serta dialog antara etnik berstruktur untuk penyelesaian konflik. Kajian ini mencadangkan perubahan perlembagaan bagi menangani isu pengagihan sumber, pengagihan kuasa, dan hak minoriti, dengan membuat perbandingan dengan reformasi berjaya di negara-negara seperti Afrika Selatan dan Kenya. Reformasi pilihan raya dicadangkan bagi memastikan perwakilan yang adil dan mengurangkan diskriminasi pengundi, manakala pendidikan sivik bertujuan memupuk identiti nasional bersama. Selanjutnya, kajian ini mencadangkan hala tuju untuk penyelidikan masa depan, seperti analisis perbandingan dengan negara pelbagai etnik lain, penerokaan interseksionaliti identiti, penilaian keberkesanan dasar, serta peranan media dalam membentuk politik etnik. Cadangan-cadangan ini bertujuan memandu Nigeria ke arah sistem politik yang lebih inklusif, adil, dan bersepadu yang dapat mengurangkan kesan perpecahan identiti etnik.

Kata Kunci: Etnik dan Sistem Politik, Tingkah Laku Mengundi Berasaskan Etnik, Pembentukan Parti Politik, Reformasi Pilihan Raya dan Perlembagaan, Integrasi Etnik di Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the profound influence of ethnicity on the political system of Nigeria, focusing on its implications for political party formation, voting behavior, and the broader challenges of ethnic integration. This research aims to evaluate the notion of ethnicity on the political system in Nigeria from 2019 to 2023. The research employs a qualitative methods approach, using primary data from semi-structured interviews with secondary data from academic and online sources. Interviews were conducted with a diverse group of respondents, including politicians and civil servants from Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, ensuring representativeness through a convenience sampling of 12 participants. This methodological framework allows for an in-depth analysis of how ethnicity shapes political alignments and voter preferences, with ethnic voting patterns showing variability influenced by sociopolitical factors, regional dynamics, and leadership. Key findings underscore the necessity for comprehensive measures to foster ethnic integration, including constitutional and electoral reforms, enhanced civic education, and structured interethnic dialogue for conflict resolution. The study recommends constitutional changes to address issues of resource allocation, power distribution, and minority rights, drawing parallels with successful reforms in countries like South Africa and Kenya. Electoral reforms are suggested to ensure fair representation and reduce voter discrimination, while civic education aims to cultivate a shared national identity. Furthermore, the research proposes avenues for future studies, such as comparative analyses with other multi-ethnic nations, the exploration of identity intersectionality, policy effectiveness evaluations, and the role of media in shaping ethnic politics. These recommendations aim to guide Nigeria towards a more inclusive, equitable, and cohesive political system that mitigates the divisive impacts of ethnic identity.

Keywords: Ethnicity and Political System, Ethnic Voting Behavior, Political Party Formation, Electoral and Constitutional Reforms, Ethnic Integration in Nigeria.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly, I am grateful to God the all-powerful, who in his boundless kindness made it possible for me to finish my research paper. With God, everything is possible.

I sincerely appreciate my supervisor Prof. Madya Dr Mohamad Ainuddin Iskandar Lee B for his guidance, and assistance. His insightful feedback guided me in finishing this research.

I extend my gratitude to my friends and family; I appreciate your prayers and kind words. Your belief in me has been a source of strength and motivation throughout this journey. To everyone who has helped me out in any way, my lecturers, my course mates, I am so grateful. Your contributions were essential to making this feat possible.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

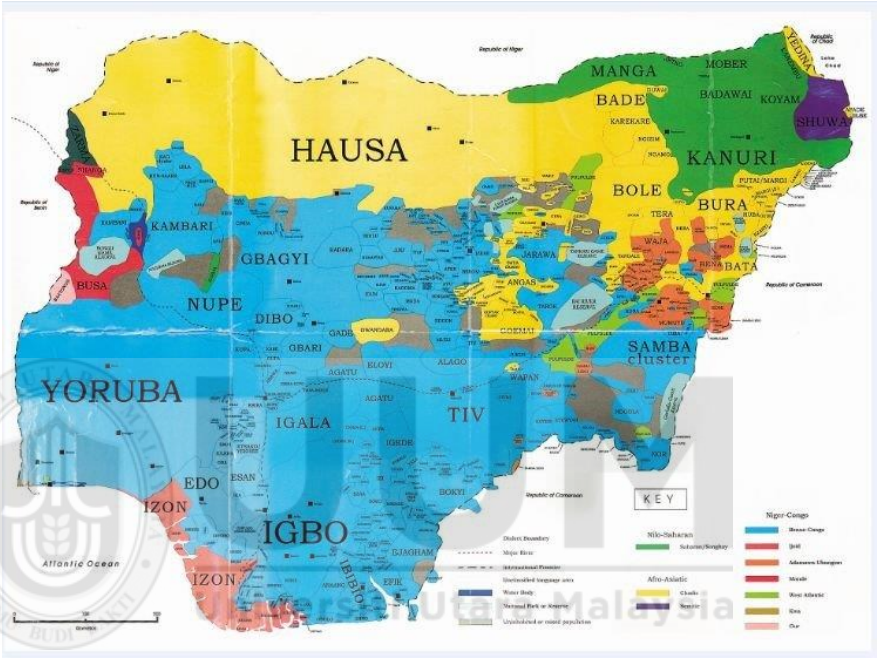
The political sphere of the nation has been clouded with constant tension ranging from tribal conflicts, religious intolerance, and militancy, which is engendering the sustainability of the political system in Nigeria. One of the prominent factors fuelling these political tensions stemmed from the intensity of ethnic loyalty over national loyalty. Ethnicity has exerted tremendous influence on the political system of Nigeria; where priority is placed on ethnic affiliations or ethnic superiority(Rika , 2023).

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Over 250 ethnic groups make up Nigeria, with the three major ethnic groups being Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba. Each of these groups has its own distinct way of life, culture, language, religion, customs, and ideology (Akinwumi & Vincent, 2022). These ethnic differences have resulted in cultural diversity and dissimilarities, and it is the root of most socio-political conflicts in Nigeria. In I914, the Northern and Southern proletariats amalgamated to form Nigeria.

This amalgamation brought together the various ethnic groups as one nation, and such an ethnopolitical setting has been in existence to date. However, after several years of this precarious unity of diverse ethnic groups, the socio-political environment of Nigeria remains an ethnic war zone(Okaiyeto et al., 2021)

Figure 1: Map of Nigeria based on Ethnicity



Worthy to note is the fact that in Nigeria, ethnicity and cultural differences have been fuelling political and ethnic tensions. Writing about the unstable character of the Nigerian system, which resulted from blending several cultures and ethnic groupings into one, (Odeyemi ,2014) opines that it is not the multiple nature of ethnic groups in Nigeria that breeds conflict, rather the inability of some of these ethnic groups to negotiate their way and mode of operation during the amalgamation. The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates brought together various independent ethnic groups without a proper blueprint of integration; hence each ethnic group started the struggle for survival which often led to conflict among the ethnic groups.

Writing to explicate the extent of the damage of ethnicity on the Nigeria political environment, (Comfort ,2019) argues that ethnicity has deeply influenced access to political positions in Nigeria;

> *Ethnicity has eaten so deep into the fabric of Nigeria so much that at every level ethnicity determines access to positions, rights, and responsibilities; from prefect selection in primary and secondary schools to the election of the political office holders, ethnic considerations are usually paramount and are mobilized.*

In other words, ethnicity has had a significant impact on Nigerian politics, although these influences have often been seen negatively. Ethnicity is seen as an instrument of political destabilization, a form of political marginalization of the minority, and a weapon of championing personal interest against national interest. (Brown ,2013) lamented the state of Nigeria's political setting and asserted that to ensure that each ethnic group is free from being governed by a single tribe, Nigeria should be reformed as a truly federal state if the amalgamation could not be undone. Nigeria is ineligible to be called a nation, much less a country.

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In Nigeria, political parties play a crucial role in shaping the country's governance, electoral processes, and representation (Omilusi & Adu, 2016). The voting patterns and representation within the political system are significantly influenced by various factors, including ethnicity, historical contexts, socioeconomic disparities, and regional dynamics (Weaver, 2012). Political parties have played a crucial role in shaping the country's political landscape, governance, and democratic processes.

Over the years, Nigeria's political party system has evolved, reflecting the country's complex sociocultural diversity, historical background, and aspirations for effective governance (Dickson & Ita, 2022). Following its 1960 independence from British colonial authority, Nigeria has experienced a number of political shifts, military incursions, and the emergence of many political factions. During the First Republic (1960–1966), the Action Group (AG), the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) ruled supreme. But ethnic conflicts and political unrest ultimately brought about the First Republic's downfall(Orhero & Okolie, 2023). Nigeria experienced military rule for a while before returning to civilian democratic government in 1999. This Fourth Republic, which is distinguished by a multi-party system, began.

On the other hand, the voting pattern in Nigeria have shown a combination of a number of factors such as regional interests, religious ties, ethnic affinities, and candidate attraction. Voters' voting behaviour is significantly influenced by their ethnicity, since many choose to support candidates who share their background or place of origin. It follows that the political environment in Nigeria is significantly influenced by ethnicity. The nation's experience with colonization, independence, and post-independence conflicts have all influenced the politicalization of ethnic identities.

Politicians frequently use ethnicity as a tactic to acquire political power and influence by mobilizing support along ethnic lines. Competition between different ethnic groups for representation and resources as a result of ethnic-based politics has led to both collaboration and violence amongst distinct regions. Tensions have occasionally been heightened by this relationship, particularly during elections or when seeking political

jobs. Voters have historically tended to favor candidates from their own ethnic group or geographic region, a phenomenon known as ethno-regional voting trends (Nyiayaana, 2019). Nigeria's wide ethnic composition there are over 250 ethnic groups, each with unique cultural identities and interests is the primary cause of this tendency.

Making reference to the issue of the political system adopted in Nigeria, during the pre-independence and post-independence eras, Nigeria has adopted several political systems partly depending on the nature of the government in power. However, in 1999, Nigeria adopted the democratic system of government against a long history of military rule. There was much anticipation of democracy to birth national building and integration of the multi-ethnic groups. Democracy is characterized by equality, justice, and fairness, and thus, suitable as the ideal political system for a multi-ethnic country (Abdulyakeen, 2023).

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However, the democratic political system in Nigeria has been punctuated by ethnocentric struggles for political power, resource control, and nepotism. Virtually every decision-making in Nigeria is beclouded by ethnic judgment ranging from the allocation of resources, formation of political parties, employment of government jobs, the appointment of political offices, funding of education, building infrastructures, etc. Notwithstanding the institution of political structure over the years, the country called Nigeria is still battling to integrate the various ethnic groups(Mauliddiyah, 2021). The adoption of democracy in Nigeria offered hope of restoration to the political system in Nigeria, as democracy is characterized by inclusion, equal access, fairness in the

distribution of resources, and credible elections. However, in the Nigerian context, adopting a democratic system is yet to offer the dividends of democracy to the citizens.

In Nigeria, ethnic politics pose a threat to social cohesiveness, national unity, and efficient government. Politics that are divisive along ethnic lines have the potential to exacerbate mistrust, marginalize particular communities, and impede the nation's progress toward inclusive growth. One of the predominant challenges facing Nigerian politics is ethnic-induced voting patterns. Voters have shown they express strong inclination toward candidates whom they are familiar with (Agbor, 2019). This phenomenon creates an environment in which ethnic affinities, rather than policy, national interests, or candidate competency, determine election outcomes. Because bigger ethnic groups frequently eclipse their views in the political sphere, minority ethnic groups may experience marginalization as a result. This marginalization can obstruct inclusive decision-making processes and contribute to differences in representation. Also, ethnic-based voting patterns reinforce the dominance of major ethnic groups in politics, perpetuating a cycle where certain ethnic groups hold more influence and access to political power than others. This imbalance in representation undermines the principles of democracy and equitable participation, hindering the creation of a truly inclusive political environment(Batri, 2021).

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Politicians' focus on ethnic mobilization diverts attention from pressing national issues, perpetuating a cycle of divisive politics that prioritizes ethnic interests over the collective welfare of the nation. Moreover, the exploitation of ethnic sentiments for political gain fosters a climate of distrust and polarization among different ethnic groups. This hampers efforts for consensus-building, collaboration, and the pursuit of

common national goals. It undermines the development of a cohesive national identity and inhibits the creation of policies that address the needs of all citizens regardless of their ethnic backgrounds(Singh, 2024).

In Nigeria's political landscape, certain political parties are often perceived as primarily representing specific ethnic groups or regions such as Action People Congress (APC) is the predominant party in Nigeria from 2019-2023(Babalola, 2024). This perception of ethnic dominance within parties can create several challenges, particularly in terms of inclusivity and representation: When a political party is perceived as predominantly representing a particular ethnic group or region, it may inadvertently create barriers for individuals from other ethnic backgrounds. This can result in feelings of exclusion, limiting the participation and representation of diverse voices within these parties. Consequently, the lack of inclusivity hampers the representation of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes.

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Ethnic dominance within parties may lead to an imbalance in representation, where the interests and concerns of certain ethnic groups receive more attention and influence compared to others. This imbalance undermines the principle of equitable representation and may perpetuate the marginalization of minority ethnic groups within the political sphere. The perception of ethnic dominance within political parties diminishes the parties' ability to foster inclusivity and promote a collective national agenda. It reinforces the notion that politics revolves around ethnic affiliations rather than shared national aspirations, hindering efforts toward building a cohesive and inclusive society(Dugan & Chenoweth, 2020).

Ethnic considerations sometimes overshadow meritocracy and competence in governmental appointments and policymaking processes. This phenomenon poses significant challenges to effective governance. When appointments and policymaking are influenced by ethnic considerations rather than merit or competence, it undermines the principles of good governance. The emphasis on ethnicity over qualifications can lead to the placement of less competent individuals in key positions, negatively impacting the quality of governance and service delivery. This practice erodes the effectiveness of government institutions and hampers the provision of essential services to citizens(Leite & Chipkin, 2024).

The prevalence of ethnic considerations in governance erodes public trust in government institutions. When appointments are perceived as driven by ethnicity rather than merit, it undermines the credibility of the government and weakens its effectiveness. The resulting lack of confidence in governance institutions impairs their ability to deliver public services efficiently and fosters a sense of disillusionment among citizens. Ethnic considerations may impede the formulation and implementation of coherent and effective policies. Decisions influenced by ethnic interests may not always align with broader national development goals, leading to fragmented policies that fail to address the diverse needs of the entire populace(Ojo, 2022).

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1.2 Problem Statement

The role of ethnicity in Nigeria's political landscape has been a persistent and defining factor in shaping governance, electoral behavior, and national stability. Nigeria, a multi-ethnic state with over 370 ethnic groups, has experienced significant challenges

in fostering national unity due to the dominance of ethnic considerations in political processes (Mbalisi & Okeke, 2021). The 1914 amalgamation laid the foundation for Nigeria's socio-political structure, creating an environment where ethnic identities became deeply embedded in political affiliations, governance, and resource distribution. Over the decades, ethnic-based political alignments have fueled tensions, reinforced socio-political divisions, and undermined the principles of democratic governance (Brigevich & Oritsejafor, 2024).

Ethnic politics in Nigeria manifests in several ways, including political party formations, candidate selection, electoral outcomes, and governance structures. Political parties are often formed along ethnic lines, and voting patterns are influenced by ethnic affiliations rather than ideological considerations (Dinesen et al., 2020). This has led to political polarization, where parties struggle to attain broad-based national support, ultimately weakening democratic institutions. In past elections, zoning arrangements, such as the North-South and South-East ticketing strategies, have attempted to balance power-sharing but have also reinforced ethnic divisions rather than fostering national integration (Adeyemi et al., 2021).

The failure to transcend ethnic allegiances has had direct consequences on policy-making, governance effectiveness, and public trust in democratic institutions. Furthermore, the entrenchment of ethnic loyalties over national interests has exacerbated political instability, social conflicts, and security challenges in Nigeria. Ethnic-based political competition has contributed to insurgencies, secessionist movements, and violent conflicts, such as the activities of Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen clashes, and the separatist agitations of the Indigenous People of Biafra

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(IPOB) (Obinna & Iheanacho, 2023). These crises, fueled by ethnic mistrust and political exclusion, pose a serious threat to national cohesion and democratic consolidation. The inadequate representation of ethnic minorities in governance further intensifies grievances, deepening divisions and marginalization (Ukase & Abraham, 2016).

Despite constitutional provisions aimed at mitigating ethnic influence, such as the "federal character" principle, ethnic-based political tensions persist. Political leaders have continued to exploit ethnic sentiments for electoral gains, leading to cycles of exclusion and favoritism in governance appointments (Onwumechili & Jenkins, 2021). The effectiveness of existing institutional frameworks in addressing ethnic-based political tensions remains questionable, necessitating a critical evaluation of their impact on national unity and stability.

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Given the entrenched role of ethnicity in Nigeria's political system, this study seeks to analyze its impact on political party formations, electoral behavior, governance, national unity, and security. It also aims to assess existing institutional mechanisms designed to mitigate ethnic-based political divisions while exploring strategies for fostering a more inclusive and equitable political landscape. Against this backdrop, the central research question emerges: How does ethnicity influence political behavior, party dynamics, and governance structures in Nigeria's democratic system, and what are its implications for democracy, social cohesion, and conflict resolution?

1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to evaluate the notion of ethnicity on the political system in Nigeria. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To Analyse the Impact of Ethnicity on Political Party Formation, Electoral Behavior, and Governance in Nigeria

2. To Evaluate the Role of Ethnic Politics in Shaping Nigeria's National Unity, Political Stability, and Security

3. To Assess Institutional and Policy Measures for Mitigating Ethnic Influence in Nigeria's Political System

1.4 Research Questions

1. How does ethnicity influence the formation and alignment of political parties, voter behaviour, and patterns of governance in Nigeria?

2. In what ways does ethnic politics affect national unity, political stability, and security dynamics in Nigeria?

3. What institutional frameworks and policy interventions have been implemented to mitigate ethnic influence in Nigeria's political system, and how effective have they been?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study examines the influence of ethnicity on Nigeria's democratic political system, focusing on the period from 2019 to 2023. The research is delimited to the democratic governance framework, which was reintroduced in Nigeria in 1999, and investigates how ethnic affiliations shape political party formations, electoral behavior, governance structures, and policy-making.

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The study specifically analyzes ethnic-induced factors such as voting patterns, candidate selection, political appointments, and the broader implications of ethnic politics on national unity, political stability, and security. It also evaluates the effectiveness of institutional measures like the "federal character" principle in mitigating ethnic influence and fostering an inclusive political landscape.

Geographically, the research covers Nigeria's six geo-political zones—North Central, North East, North West, South East, South West, and South-South—focusing on individuals who are knowledgeable about the intersection of ethnicity and political processes. The selected timeframe, 2019 to 2023, reflects a period of significant political transformations, marked by increased political awareness, voter participation, and ethnic mobilization in Nigeria's democratic landscape.

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1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is valuable because it explains how ethnicity interacts with Nigeria's political structure, among other things. Given the goal of comprehending the extent of the influence that ethnicity has had on the Nigerian political system, this study contributes to the academic community.

The issue of ethnicity is problematic in Nigeria as ethnicity has been at the root of some socio-cultural and religious conflicts in Nigeria. This study attempts to understand the factors that can ameliorate these challenges. The nature of ethnicity in Nigeria makes Nigeria a multi-cultural nation. In recent studies, democracy has been adjudged to be feasible in accommodating the challenges of multiculturalism as one of the tenets of democracy is inclusion. However, after several years of practising

democracy, Nigeria is yet to reap the benefits of democracy. Thus, it becomes important that the results of the research provides sufficient information on how the challenges of ethnicity can be ameliorated in the political system of Nigeria.

Given the fact that Nigeria is a diverse country with over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own cultural heritage and political goals, the study of ethnicity in the political system showcases how these various groups handle power dynamics, representation, and resource allocation within the framework of a democratic state. Ethnicity influences electoral outcomes, party formations, and governance institutions in Nigeria. Understanding how ethnicity effects voter behavior, party alliances, and political office allocation is critical for evaluating the country's democracy and governance. The outcome of this study might reveal patterns of ethnic inclusion or exclusion, identifying possibilities for reform and institutional strengthening in order to create better political plurality and representativeness.

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In recent time, Nigeria has seen recurring ethnic and religious wars, which are frequently fueled by rivalry for resources, political marginalization, and identity-based grievances. Thus, it becomes necessary to under the factors that causes these ethnic tensions and crises, which can help to shape conflict resolution strategies, peace building initiatives, and efforts to develop social cohesion by addressing the core causes of ethno-political conflict and supporting inclusive governance processes.

These findings of study can help to shape policy creation and implementation initiatives in Nigeria aimed at boosting inclusivity, reducing ethnic conflicts, and creating national unity. Government entities in charge of ethnic relations, electoral

reform, and conflict resolution can use the information obtained to create more effective policies and actions. Given Nigeria's history of ethnic strife, policymakers might use the research findings to develop strategies for addressing underlying grievances, encouraging dialogue across ethnic groups, and achieving consensus on political reforms.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

1.7.1 Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to the identification of individuals with a specific ethnic group based on shared elements such as history, culture, ancestry, traditions, language, and other factors that collectively establish their uniqueness compared to other groups (Fenton, 2010). Members of an ethnic group often see themselves as part of a distinct collective that prioritizes preserving their shared heritage and values. This shared identity fosters a sense of solidarity and unity among members, providing them with a meaningful framework for cultural and social interactions.

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The concept of ethnicity extends beyond the mere acknowledgment of common traits; it encapsulates a rich tapestry of cultural heritage, identity, lineage, language, rituals, and traditions that collectively shape the group's distinctiveness (Hamer et al., 2020). This distinctiveness is not merely static but serves as a dynamic and evolving construct, reflecting ongoing interactions with other groups and broader societal structures. These interactions may lead to cultural exchanges, conflicts, or efforts to preserve unique practices, which continuously reshape ethnic identities. Ethnicity can also be understood as a social construct that categorizes groups based on diverse factors, including cultural, historical, geographical, linguistic, religious, or even

perceived biological distinctions. This construct provides both individuals and groups with a sense of belonging, creating a shared consciousness that strengthens community bonds (Törő & Kende,2025). For instance, language and rituals often act as symbols of identity and cohesion within ethnic groups, reinforcing their collective identity and ensuring the transmission of their cultural heritage across generations.

The role of ethnicity in shaping individual and collective identities cannot be overstated. For individuals, ethnic identity provides a sense of self rooted in their cultural background, influencing their worldview, values, and interpersonal relationships. For groups, ethnicity serves as a mechanism for social cohesion, offering a shared platform for political, economic, and cultural mobilization (Bagang et al.,2025). However, ethnic groups do not exist in isolation; their interactions with other groups and the broader society can lead to assimilation, cultural adaptation, or even conflict, depending on the historical and sociopolitical context. These processes contribute to the fluidity and evolution of ethnic identities, highlighting the dynamic nature of ethnicity as a lived experience and social phenomenon.

By recognizing ethnicity as both a marker of identity and a framework for social interaction, it becomes clear that its influence permeates various facets of human life, from cultural preservation to intergroup dynamics. As such, understanding ethnicity requires a multidimensional approach that considers its historical roots, cultural expressions, and contemporary relevance within diverse societal settings. This perspective not only underscores the importance of ethnicity in shaping human interactions but also illuminates its complexities as a social construct subject to change and negotiation over time.

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1.7.2 Ethnic Identity

The term "ethnic identity" refers to an individual's conscious recognition and sense of belonging to a specific ethnic group (Burke & Harrod, 2021). This identification is not merely inherited but represents an active, subjective alignment with the values, characteristics, and traditions of the ethnic group. Ethnic identity significantly influences an individual's self-concept, beliefs, behaviors, and social interactions, as it involves perceiving oneself in relation to a broader cultural or ethnic community.

Central to ethnic identity is the sense of attachment and belongingness to an ethnic group, which often arises from shared cultural practices, language, traditions, historical experiences, and values. These shared elements form the foundation upon which individuals recognize and affirm their ethnic identity. This affiliation serves as a source of psychological connection, fostering group solidarity and a collective sense of purpose among members (Wang & Ye 2024).

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Individuals with a strong ethnic identity frequently engage in and prioritize the cultural customs, rituals, and practices associated with their group. Participation in traditional celebrations, religious observances, and the preservation of linguistic and cultural expressions are among the ways in which ethnic identity is actively expressed and sustained. For example, speaking the language of one's ethnic group, maintaining ties with ancestral homelands, or participating in community-based activities can reinforce this identity while preserving cultural heritage across generations (Hai et al.,2025).

Moreover, ethnic identity serves as a dynamic interplay between individual and group characteristics, shaped by both internal perceptions and external interactions. While it promotes cultural continuity within ethnic groups, it also facilitates the expression of distinctiveness in multicultural settings. Through such interactions, ethnic identity not only enhances personal self-understanding but also contributes to the broader social fabric by promoting diversity and cross-cultural exchange (Grilo et al.,2023).

In essence, ethnic identity encapsulates a multifaceted and evolving relationship between individuals and their cultural heritage. It reflects a deliberate and meaningful engagement with one's ethnic group, reinforcing a sense of community, continuity, and self-awareness that resonates across personal and collective experiences. Understanding ethnic identity in this nuanced way underscores its importance as both a psychological and sociocultural construct.

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1.7.3 Political System

A political system encompasses the formal institutions, structures, and mechanisms that provide the foundation for governance within a society. It defines how authority is organized, exercised, and regulated, forming the framework on which governments are established. Political systems are multifaceted and include a range of institutions such as the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, as well as political parties, electoral systems, bureaucracies, and other organizations that influence decision-making and policy formulation (Beckam, 2021).

The classification of political systems is often determined by the principles underpinning their governance. These classifications include democracy, authoritarianism, totalitarianism, monarchy, socialism, communism, and hybrid systems that combine elements of multiple ideologies. Among these, democracy stands out as a system where governance is characterized by active citizen participation, free and fair elections, the rule of law, and the protection of individual rights. According to Beckam (2021), political systems are often labelled democratic when the processes for electing legislatures and governments, as well as the extent of political rights granted to the populace, align with democratic principles.

Political systems are integral to the distribution and exercise of power within society. They establish the relationships among various branches of government and define the roles of the ruling elite, the rights of citizens, and the checks and balances designed to prevent the consolidation of power by any one entity. These systems influence how policies are formulated, debated, and implemented, and they determine the mechanisms for resolving disputes and allocating resources. For instance, democratic systems rely on elections, parliamentary debates, consensus-building, and public participation to guide decision-making, whereas authoritarian systems may centralize decision-making within a limited ruling elite (Touchton, 2023).

One critical aspect of political systems is the level of citizen engagement in governance. Democratic systems emphasize active involvement through mechanisms such as voting, public advocacy, civic activism, and participation in community or governmental processes. In contrast, other political systems may restrict citizen involvement, concentrating authority within a select group or institution and limiting public influence over policy and governance.

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Moreover, political systems are dynamic, evolving in response to societal changes, technological advancements, and shifts in public values. This dynamism ensures that political systems remain relevant and capable of addressing contemporary challenges. For instance, global trends such as digital democracy and increasing demands for transparency and accountability are reshaping how political systems function in various parts of the world (Lukman & Hakim 2024).

Understanding political systems is crucial for analysing how societies manage governance, resource allocation, and conflict resolution. By examining the structures, processes, and ideologies that define these systems, scholars and practitioners can gain insights into the strengths and limitations of different governance models, as well as the opportunities for fostering more inclusive, equitable, and effective political institutions.

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1.7.4 Democracy

Democracy is widely regarded as a government system rooted in the principles of inclusivity, fairness, equality, and people-oriented leadership. It is built on the foundational premise that power ultimately resides with the people, who can exercise it directly or through elected representatives (Agundu & Ukange, 2020). This form of governance is characterized by mechanisms that promote citizen participation, accountability, and adherence to the rule of law, making it one of the most valued systems for ensuring justice, equity, and human rights in modern societies.

The historical roots of democracy can be traced to ancient Greece, where the concept of "rule by the people" emerged as an alternative to autocratic and oligarchic systems of governance (Wiredu, 2021). This early formulation of democracy emphasized collective decision-making and the active involvement of citizens in shaping their society. Over centuries, the concept has evolved to accommodate diverse political, social, and cultural contexts, solidifying its status as a flexible and adaptable framework capable of meeting the needs of changing societies.

Central to democracy is the notion of equality. In a democratic system, every individual is afforded equal rights and opportunities to participate in the political process, regardless of their socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, gender, or other distinguishing characteristics. This commitment to inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging and ensures that no segment of the population is excluded from the decision-making process. The principle of equality is further reinforced by the rule of law, which mandates that laws apply uniformly to all citizens and that no individual, including those in positions of authority, is above the law. This framework upholds justice and safeguards against abuses of power (Webber 2024).

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Civil liberties and human rights are integral components of democracy, ensuring that citizens have the freedom to express their views, associate with others, and participate in societal development without fear of reprisal. In addition, democracy emphasizes the protection of minority rights, recognizing the importance of safeguarding the interests of smaller or less powerful groups within society. This balance between majority rule and minority protection is a hallmark of democratic systems, fostering a harmonious and equitable society (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2025).

Elections are a cornerstone of democracy, serving as a mechanism for citizens to select their representatives and hold them accountable. Free, fair, and transparent elections not only legitimize government authority but also enable peaceful transitions of power, which are essential for political stability. Elections provide a platform for citizens to voice their preferences, thereby ensuring that governance reflects the will of the people. Beyond elections, democracy encourages ongoing civic participation through advocacy, activism, and community engagement. These activities enhance citizens' influence over policymaking and reinforce their role as active stakeholders in governance.

A defining feature of democracy is its structural division of power among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. This separation of powers, supported by a system of checks and balances, prevents the concentration of authority in any single branch and promotes accountability and mutual oversight. By dispersing power, democracy creates a resilient governance framework that guards against authoritarian tendencies and fosters cooperation among institutions (Halim & Rokhman 2024).

Democracy also promotes mechanisms for resolving disputes and building consensus, such as parliamentary debates, public consultations, and referendums. These approaches encourage dialogue and ensure that diverse perspectives are considered in the formulation of policies. Furthermore, democratic systems are inherently dynamic, capable of adapting to societal changes and addressing emerging challenges such as technological advancements, economic inequality, and demands for greater transparency.

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In essence, democracy is not merely a system of governance but a dynamic and evolving process that embodies the values of fairness, freedom, and inclusion. It provides a framework for sustainable development, social cohesion, and political stability by upholding the rights of individuals and promoting active citizen engagement. Through its emphasis on equality, accountability, and collective decision-making, democracy continues to serve as a guiding principle for societies striving to achieve justice and equity (Papadopoulos 2023).

1.8 Summary of Chapter One

Chapter One offers an in-depth exploration of the multifaceted role ethnicity plays in shaping Nigeria's political landscape. It delves into how ethnic affiliations have historically influenced governance, voting patterns, and the allocation of resources. These dynamics have often led to intense competition among ethnic groups, breeding mistrust and conflict that have deepened societal divisions and weakened public trust in institutions. This divisive trend has also obstructed the development and implementation of cohesive national policies, further entrenching systemic inefficiencies and political instability.

The chapter sets the stage by examining the complex interplay between ethnicity and Nigeria's political system, shedding light on how ethnic identity has been both a unifying force and a source of discord. It highlights how ethnic considerations permeate political structures, shaping not only electoral outcomes but also the distribution of power and resources, often to the detriment of national unity. By contextualizing these issues, the chapter underscores the urgency of addressing the

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challenges posed by ethnic divisions to foster a more harmonious and effective political framework.

The overarching objective of this research is to critically evaluate the impact of ethnicity on Nigeria's political system. The study is significant because it provides a nuanced understanding of how ethnicity interacts with political structures, decision-making processes, and governance in Nigeria. Beyond merely diagnosing the problem, the research seeks to explore innovative strategies and mechanisms that can facilitate ethnic integration. By doing so, it aims to promote a political system that is more inclusive, stable, and responsive to the needs of all citizens, regardless of their ethnic affiliations.

Ultimately, Chapter One establishes the foundation for the study by highlighting the importance of addressing the entrenched ethnic challenges within Nigeria's political sphere. It calls for practical solutions to bridge ethnic divides and foster a sense of national identity, paving the way for sustainable development and stronger democratic governance. Through its exploration of ethnicity and politics, the chapter emphasizes the necessity of building a system where diversity is leveraged as a strength rather than a source of division.

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CHAPTER TWO

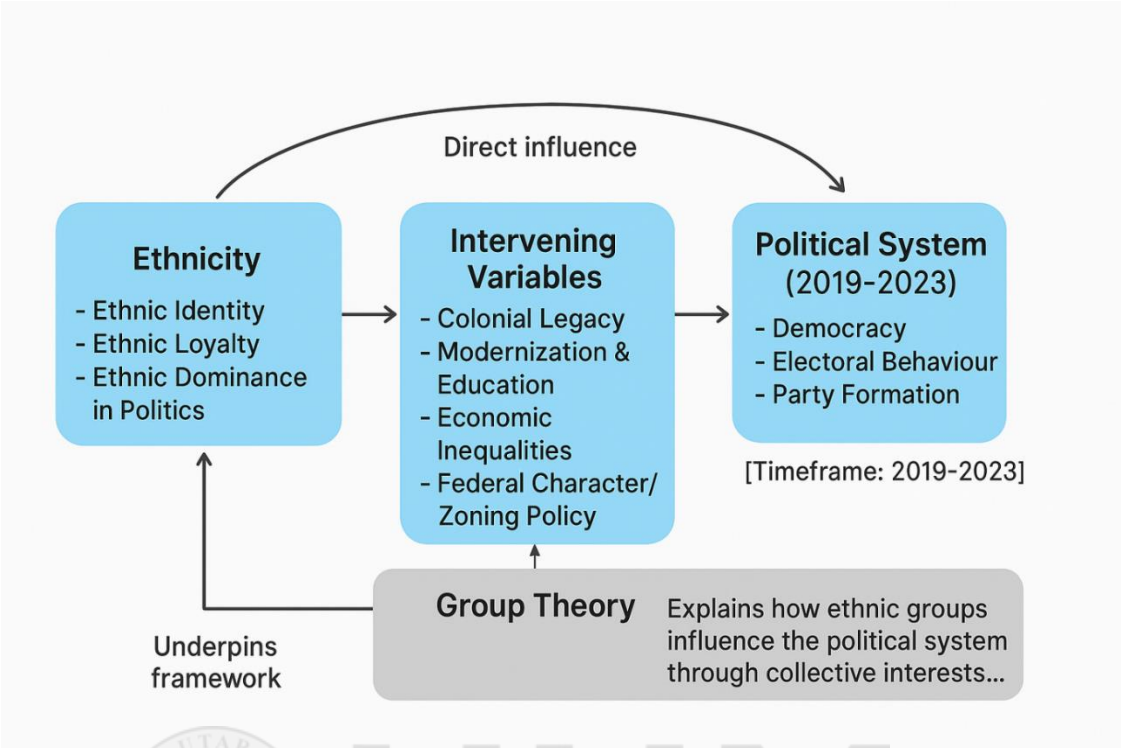
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the pertinent literature for the study's subject matter. It examines the opinions expressed by relevant experts and academics on the subject of ethnicity in Nigeria as well as the evolution of the country's political system. The relationship between the adoption of the political system used in Nigeria and the socio-political environment's ethnic disposition was explained using the Group theory.

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Figure 2: Research Framework



Source: Researcher, 2025

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2.2 Ethnicity

Ethnicity as a concept has been offered different definitions by scholars of various disciplines. Some understand ethnicity as people with shared attributes such as race, sex, and demographics, while others relate ethnicity to ancestry. On the one hand, there is an argument on the objectivity or subjectivity of the concept of ethnicity. Similarly, some have argued that membership to an ethnic group is natural; while others uphold the view that membership is determined by common interests. Amidst these diverse conceptions of ethnicity, it becomes paramount to offer a brief clarification on the concept before proceeding to the issue of ethnicity in Nigeria.

The concept of ethnicity is a collective for the word ‘ethnic.’ Etymologically, the concept of ethnicity is derived from the word ‘ethnic,’ which is rooted in the Greek word *ethnikos,* which means ‘a people or a nation’ (Cashmore, 2002). Thus, when referring to a group, the term "ethnicity" describes those who share a similar name, a shared myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more distinguishing characteristics of their common culture, a connection to a particular "homeland," and a sense of unity among sizable portions of the population (Zagefka, 2019).

The concept of ethnicity has received conflicting debates from various scholars, especially regarding the actual meaning of the concept(Norris, 2021). Some scholars have noted that ethnicity is fixed and remains unchangeable over time, while others have argued that ethnic affiliations are a social construct. However, the denominator in all the conceptions of ethnicity is the idea that ethnicity consists of the display of allegiance and support, in some cases with a bias to a group one belongs to. It involves the participation in a group with peculiar interests with an obvious expression of emotions in support and propagation of the group interest(Silva, 2023).

According to (Cornell & Hartmann 2006) "Ethnicity refers to shared cultural traits, such as language, religion, ancestry, dress, and food, that provide a sense of common identity among a group of people." Language is an important feature of ethnicity because it represents a common mode of communication among members of a specific group. Language not only promotes contact, but it also fosters a sense of belonging and common history. On the other hand, religious ideas and practices frequently play

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an important part in ethnic identity creation. Shared religious rites, values, and traditions reinforce ethnic relationships and set them apart from others.

Religion can be a source of solidarity and cohesiveness, as well as a symbol of cultural identity(Judijanto et al., 2024). Ancestry refers to common familial or genealogical relationships between members of an ethnic group. It includes lineage, kinship networks, and collective recollections of ancestral beginnings. Understanding common heritage is frequently used to foster social cohesiveness and cultural continuity. Also, cultural apparel and dress norms serve as symbols of ethnic identity and heritage. Traditional dress might represent cultural pride, social position, or adherence to certain cultural norms and beliefs. Dress is a visual symbol of ethnic identity, reinforcing a sense of belonging and shared ancestry.

Berdún, Guibernau, and Rex (2010) conceive ethnicity as "a social category that groups people together based on shared cultural or national backgrounds, often involving shared language, religion, customs, and traditions." It follows that ethnicity is a social concept that is formed and defined within certain social situations, rather than an inherent biological or individual attribute. It includes categorizing people based on perceived cultural similarities and variances. Ethnic groups are distinguished by the presence of shared cultural or national backgrounds among their members. This includes shared cultural practices, traditions, values, and beliefs passed down through generations within an ethnic group. Language is an important part of ethnic identity since it allows for communication and cultural expression within the community.

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Shared language characteristics, dialects, and linguistic practices foster a sense of kinship and cultural continuity among ethnic group members(Olateju et al., 2024). Religious affiliation and practices have a substantial impact on ethnic identity. Shared religious beliefs, rituals, and traditions help to foster a feeling of collective identity and cohesion among an ethnic community.

Ethnicity is defined by the presence of shared customs, traditions, and cultural practices that are specific to the group. Rituals, ceremonies, celebrations, and social standards all contribute to the ethnic community's cultural identity. Customs and traditions are significant indicators of ethnic identity, helping to preserve cultural continuity and heritage over time(Bleibleh & Awad, 2020).

Antweiler (2015, p. 27) asserts that “ethnicity is a socially grown collective identity, which assumes a common history and origin as well as shared traditions, and claims to define a culture as different from (all) others.” This emphasizes the idea that ethnicity is not inherent, but rather created through social processes. Ethnic identity emerges and evolves in certain social situations, influenced by group members' interactions, perceptions, and shared experiences. However, it is important to note that power dynamics, historical narratives, and political objectives may all impact the process of establishing ethnic identity, shaping how communities describe themselves and are viewed by others.

Ethnicity is frequently associated with a common sense of history and lineage among group members. This shared history narrative serves as the foundation for ethnic identity, instilling a sense of continuity and belonging through generations. However,

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it is critical to recognize that the development of historical narratives can be selective and subjective, resulting in varying interpretations of the past within and among ethnic groups.

Also, Antweiler (2015) notes that ethnic groups have the tendency to define themselves in opposition to others, highlighting their cultural diversity and uniqueness. This process of "othering" can help to build boundaries between ethnic groups, altering views of insider and outsider identities. However, it is vital to note that ethnic boundaries are frequently permeable and flexible, as individuals and groups may hold various ethnic identities and affiliations. From the foregoing conceptualizations of ethnicity, one common characteristic is the idea that ethnicity centres on a group and its identity, and this identity confers a sort of exclusiveness to this group. There are two diverse views on ethnicity to be considered in this research; the primordial view on ethnicity, the instrumental view on ethnicity, and the constructivist view of ethnicity(Saduakassova, 2024).

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2.2.1 The Primordial View on Ethnicity

The primordial view on ethnicity opines that ethnicity is an inherited value, something inherited from one's ancestors(Defreitas, 2024). In other words, in this view, ethnicity is a natural process where one belongs to a group having originated from a particular group or family setting. In the context of this study, one becomes an Igbo, because one's ancestors were from the Igbo race; one becomes a Hausa because one's ancestors were from the Hausa race; one becomes a Yoruba because one's ancestors were from the Yoruba race. This argument of this primordial view borders on the notion that

ethnicity is deeply rooted in one's ancestral bloodline, and hence one shares the same physical and cultural attributes with one's ancestors.

The account of ethnicity presented by the primordial school of thought implies that being a member of an ethnic group is immutable as membership is determined by a natural process. One becomes a member through birth, and can only cease to be a member through death. However, in some cultures that uphold transcendental existence, it becomes impossible to cease to be a member, because even at death, one becomes an ancestor of the ethnic group one belongs to while on an earthly sojourn. Thus, ethnic identity is rigid and exclusive. There is no room to migrate from one ethnic group to another and vice versa. Membership in an ethnic group is strictly based on common ancestry who share the same biological, historical, racial, and cultural origins(Tallman et al., 2021).

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It is the common ancestral ties ranging from common biological features, common historical origin, racial attributes, and cultural identity that sustain ethnicity, and motivate the members to pledge strong allegiance to their ethnicity. The bonds that exist in ethnicity with these types of shared values in most cases override the interest of nationhood(Asiva, 2015). In other words, in a situation of conflict, members would first become loyal to ethnic interests before considering national interests.

Writing to explain how deep-rooted individual affinity is to their ethnic group, Kataria (2018) cited Clifford Geertz (1973);

> *These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on have ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbor, one's fellow believer, ipso facto' as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself. The general strength of such primordial bonds, and the types of them that are important, differ from person, from society to society, and from time to time. But for virtually every person, in every society, at almost all times, some attachments seem to flow more from a sense of natural –some would day spiritual – affinity than from social interaction.*

It follows that individuals are more inclined to respond to their primordial natural attachment to an ethnic group, and are ready to offer everything required for the sustainability of ethnic purposes or agenda. One of the tenets of the primordial view on ethnicity is the idea that ethnicity is rooted in the cultural givens of the past, which some scholars have argued that in such light, ethnicity shares the same status a kinship.

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Primordial views on ethnicity assume that ethnic identity is deeply rooted in the history, culture and traditions of the community(Ejaz & Rehman, 2022). From this point of view, it has been suggested that ethnicity is an inherent and unchanging aspect of an individual's identity, often seen as primitive or has existed since the beginning of human society. From this point of view, ethnicity is not a social component, but a natural and essential feature of a human group that resembles kinship. This concept has an influence in understanding ethnic identity and the persistence and strength of conflict.

Primordial view on ethnicity believes that ethnic identity is innate and unchanging. According to this view, individuals are born into ethnic groups that provide a deep sense of belonging and identity that is not easily altered by external factors (Varshney, 2003). This perspective emphasizes the importance of kinship and blood relations in forming ethnic groups. Ethnic ties are often compared to family ties, suggesting a natural, almost biological connection between members of the same ethnic group (Fearon & Laitin, 2008). Primordial view on ethnicity emphasizes the continuity of culture and history in shaping ethnic identity. Ethnic groups are seen as enduring beings with a common history, language, religion and customs that persist over time (Chandra, 2006). Primordial view on ethnicity, there is a strong emotional attachment associated with ethnic identity. This emotional attachment often leads to loyalty and solidarity among group members, making ethnicity a powerful force in social and political life (Chandra, 2006).

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2.2.2 The Constructionist View on Ethnicity

The constructionist perspective on ethnicity offers a sharp contrast to the primordial view, fundamentally reshaping how ethnic identities are understood. According to the primordial view, ethnicity is a natural and inseparable aspect of human identity, rooted in biological or cultural essences that are immutable. In contrast, proponents of the constructionist view argue that ethnicity is not inherent but rather a product of social construction, shaped by human interactions, institutions, and historical processes (Farrell, 2022).

While the primordial perspective emphasizes the permanence of ethnic membership, the constructionist approach asserts that ethnic identities are flexible and contingent. Constructionists maintain that individuals actively participate in the creation and negotiation of their ethnic affiliations. Membership in an ethnic group, therefore, is not a fixed or lifelong condition. Instead, individuals can choose to engage in the activities and cultural practices of an ethnic group and can likewise decide to withdraw from such participation. This agency underscores the dynamic nature of ethnicity as a social construct rather than a biologically determined characteristic (Brubaker, 2004).

The constructionist view highlights the role of social, political, and economic factors in shaping ethnic identities. It acknowledges that ethnicity often arises as a response to specific contexts, such as colonial histories, migration, or state policies. For example, ethnic boundaries may be drawn or redrawn based on political alliances or economic opportunities, emphasizing the fluidity and situational nature of ethnic affiliation (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007).

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Moreover, this perspective challenges deterministic notions by recognizing the agency of individuals and groups in constructing their identities. Unlike the primordialist claim that ethnicity is an unchangeable inheritance, the constructionist view allows for multiple and overlapping identities. Individuals can negotiate their belonging based on personal, social, or strategic considerations, further reinforcing the idea that ethnicity is not an inherent trait but a relational and context-dependent phenomenon (Eriksen, 2010).

2.2.3 The Instrumentalist View on Ethnicity

The instrumental view on ethnicity offers a pragmatic perspective, framing ethnicity as a construct created with a specific purpose in mind. From this viewpoint, ethnicity is not inherently tied to natural or ancestral bonds but is deliberately fashioned by individuals or groups to mobilize people toward achieving shared objectives. These objectives are often rooted in socioeconomic or political ambitions, making ethnicity a strategic tool rather than an immutable identity. As Kumar (2006) aptly observed, ethnicity functions as an organizing mechanism to unite individuals in pursuit of collective goals, whether economic, social, or political.

Unlike perspectives that emphasize primordial ties, the instrumental view posits that belonging to an ethnic group is grounded in shared aspirations rather than innate characteristics. Ethnic identity, in this sense, is flexible and contingent, shaped by the shifting demands of social and political contexts. It underscores the utility of ethnicity as a means to facilitate cohesion, advocacy, and collective action within a competitive environment.

To further elucidate the characteristics of the instrumental perspective, Scupin (2005) highlights two critical insights presented by Fredrik Barth in his influential work, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries (1969): Barth argued that while ethnic groups may lose certain cultural traits over time and acquire new ones, their boundaries remain intact. This persistence of boundaries occurs despite the exchange of personnel, information, and cultural elements across them. The enduring nature of these boundaries reflects the strategic function of ethnicity in maintaining group cohesion, even amidst change.

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Barth's second key point emphasizes that ethnic groups cannot exist in isolation. Instead, they are defined in relation to other groups. Boundaries do not serve to separate "something from nothingness" but rather distinguish between two distinct entities. This relational aspect highlights that ethnic identity is not just about internal characteristics but also about how groups interact and position themselves within a broader social and political framework.

The instrumental view provides a lens to understand how ethnicity can be mobilized in diverse contexts. For instance, political leaders may invoke ethnic identities to galvanize support for campaigns or movements, while economic actors might leverage ethnic solidarity to build networks and access resources. This approach also sheds light on how ethnic boundaries are maintained or redefined to adapt to changing circumstances, reinforcing their utility in achieving collective aims (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007).

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However, the instrumental perspective is not without its critiques. Scholars argue that it may overemphasize the functional aspects of ethnicity, potentially overlooking the deep emotional and cultural ties that many individuals associate with their ethnic identities. Nevertheless, it remains a valuable framework for understanding the strategic use of ethnicity in shaping group dynamics and achieving shared goals.

2.2.4 The Modernization View on Ethnicity

The modernization perspective suggests that ethnicity, traditionally a marker of identity and belonging, diminishes in relevance and influence as societies transition toward modernization (Minkov et al., 2021). This theory hinges on the assumption that

societal changes such as urbanization, industrialization, widespread education, and technological innovation—encourage the emergence of broader and more inclusive forms of identity, such as national or global citizenship. These transformations are thought to erode the rigid boundaries of ethnic affiliation, fostering shared goals and values tied to economic and social progress.

Pioneering theorists like Karl Deutsch (1961) and Daniel Lerner (1958) have championed the modernization view, arguing that modernization diminishes cultural and social barriers associated with ethnicity. They contend that as societies modernize, ethnic identities are gradually replaced with affiliations centered on economic integration and collective aspirations for societal advancement. Urbanization, for instance, facilitates the migration of individuals into dynamic, heterogeneous environments where ethnic distinctions give way to roles defined by profession, social networks, and economic participation. In these urban contexts, diverse populations are interconnected, creating spaces where traditional loyalties may lose their significance.

Similarly, the spread of universal education plays a critical role in this transformation. Education is often seen as a unifying force that standardizes language, instills shared values, and fosters national narratives. These processes are thought to reduce the salience of ethnic divisions, aligning individuals with broader societal objectives. In parallel, economic progress and industrialization promote interdependence across ethnic lines (Van der Straaten et al .,2023). Industrialized work environments necessitate collaboration and mutual reliance, further diminishing the importance of ethnic boundaries in favor of cooperative economic goals. Consequently,

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modernization is perceived to foster identities linked to the nation-state or the global community, which are seen as more practical and beneficial in a modernized world.

Despite its theoretical appeal, the modernization view has faced substantial criticism. Historical and contemporary events have shown that ethnic identities are far more resilient than the theory initially suggested, even within highly modernized societies. Modernization has not universally led to the dissolution of ethnic identities; instead, it has often redefined and, in some cases, reinforced them (Hsu, 2024). Examples of this phenomenon can be observed in the resurgence of ethnic tensions, separatist movements, and ethnically driven political campaigns within industrialized nations. Ethnic identity serves profound psychological and social functions, fulfilling human needs for belonging, cultural continuity, and self-definition (Biswas, 2024). These roles cannot always be supplanted by abstract constructs of national or global identity.

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Moreover, modernization itself is not a uniform process and can exacerbate existing inequalities. Marginalized ethnic groups may cling to their identities as a source of resistance or solidarity in response to socioeconomic disparities. For instance, Scott (1998) highlights how disadvantaged communities utilize ethnic identity to mobilize against perceived oppression. Instead of homogenizing societies, modernization often creates intricate dynamics where ethnic affiliations coexist with, or even adapt to, national or global frameworks. This interplay suggests that ethnicity is neither entirely dissolved nor static; rather, it evolves alongside societal transformations.

In light of these complexities, alternative theories have emerged, emphasizing the intricate relationship between modernization and ethnicity (Kyianytsia ,2021). These frameworks reject the notion of a linear, unidirectional relationship, proposing instead that modernization and ethnicity influence each other in dynamic and multifaceted ways.

While the modernization perspective provides a useful framework for examining the potential evolution of ethnic identities, it has become increasingly evident that ethnicity remains a powerful and enduring force in human societies. Far from being supplanted by modernization, ethnic identities have shown remarkable adaptability, thriving in contexts once thought to undermine their relevance. A nuanced understanding of modernization must account for the persistent and evolving role of ethnicity, acknowledging its ability to coexist with and adapt to modern national and global identities.

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2.2.5 The Relational View on Ethnicity

The relational view on ethnicity offers a dynamic understanding of ethnic identities, challenging the notion that they are static, inherent, or purely essentialist. Instead, this perspective emphasizes that ethnicity is actively constructed and continuously reshaped through interactions between groups. These interactions encompass various forms, including conflict, competition, cooperation, and negotiation (Britt, 2021). In this framework, ethnicity is not viewed as a fixed attribute but as a situational phenomenon, adapting to the specific contexts in which intergroup relationships occur. This approach provides a nuanced lens to understand the fluidity and complexity of ethnic identities, especially in diverse and evolving societies.

One of the foremost proponents of this perspective is Fredrik Barth, whose seminal work in "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries" (1969) fundamentally reshaped the academic discourse on ethnicity. Barth's argument departed from traditional understandings that primarily focused on the internal cultural or biological traits of ethnic groups. Instead, he proposed that ethnic boundaries are not intrinsic but are actively formed and maintained through social interactions and shared understandings between groups. According to Barth, the emphasis should shift from examining static cultural markers to understanding how groups negotiate and sustain the boundaries that define their distinctiveness (Barth, 1969).

Barth's framework posits that the defining characteristic of an ethnic group lies in the maintenance of boundaries that differentiate it from others. These boundaries are not merely symbolic but are reinforced through social processes, such as exclusion, inclusion, or strategic alliances. For example, exclusionary practices may emerge during periods of conflict or competition, strengthening group solidarity and hardening boundaries. Conversely, inclusion and alliances may arise in cooperative contexts, leading to more porous and adaptable boundaries.

The relational view underscores that ethnic identities are shaped not in isolation but through the interplay of mutual perceptions and interactions. How one group defines itself is often contingent upon how it perceives and is perceived by others. This relational dynamic explains why ethnic identities are rarely static and instead remain responsive to the social, political, and economic contexts in which they operate (Eriksen, 2010).

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Ethnic identities' adaptability is central to the relational perspective. In contexts of conflict, such as ethnic tensions or political rivalry, group boundaries may become rigid, emphasizing distinctiveness and solidarity. On the other hand, in cooperative or integrative environments, such as multicultural societies or collaborative economic endeavors, these boundaries can become more fluid, allowing for a blending or renegotiation of identities. This adaptability highlights the situational nature of ethnicity and its dependence on specific relational contexts (Brubaker, 2004).

However, critics of the relational view argue that this framework may overly emphasize fluidity and neglect the enduring historical, cultural, and structural dimensions of ethnicity. Long-standing traditions, shared languages, religious practices, and ancestral ties play a significant role in shaping ethnic identities and may resist change despite shifting relational dynamics. These elements, deeply embedded in historical and cultural contexts, provide a sense of continuity and rootedness that the relational approach may underappreciate (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007).

While the relational view is valuable in understanding ethnicity's situational and dynamic aspects, it is not without limitations. Some scholars argue that ethnic boundaries, although flexible, are not infinitely malleable. Structural factors, such as entrenched social hierarchies, institutionalized discrimination, or historical conflicts, can impose constraints on the extent to which identities can shift in practice. For instance, ethnic divisions in highly homogeneous or isolated populations often remain rigid and deeply ingrained, making the relational framework less applicable in such contexts (Jenkins, 1997).

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Nevertheless, the relational perspective remains a powerful analytical tool, particularly in understanding the evolving nature of ethnic identities in the context of globalization, migration, and multiculturalism. In increasingly interconnected societies, where diverse groups frequently interact, this approach provides critical insights into how ethnic boundaries are negotiated, contested, and redefined over time. However, its application must be balanced with an appreciation for the historical and cultural dimensions that continue to influence ethnic identities across generations. Incorporating both relational and structural considerations allows for a more comprehensive understanding of ethnicity as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon.

2.2.6 The Essentialist View on Ethnicity

The essentialist perspective conceptualizes ethnicity as a stable, inherent attribute of individuals or groups, frequently linked to biological, ancestral, or deeply rooted cultural characteristics. This perspective holds that ethnic identity is intrinsic and immutable, embodying the fundamental essence of a group. In essentialism, ethnicity is often understood in terms of immutable characteristics that are transmitted through lineage or tradition, thus portraying it as a natural and enduring facet of human identity (Eriksen, 2010). This view posits that ethnicity is not merely an outcome of external or social forces but is rooted in fundamental, often biologically or historically predetermined, traits.

Although this perspective is not commonly associated with a single, specific scholarly proponent, it resonates with traditional narratives of identity that emphasize unchangeable and timeless qualities. Essentialism, by assuming a direct link between

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ethnicity and certain predetermined features, implies that ethnic affiliations form a core aspect of human self-understanding and social alignment. This viewpoint has historically contributed to rigid classifications of ethnic groups, implying that differences among them are natural and unalterable (Gilroy, 2000).

However, the essentialist approach has been widely critiqued within academic discourse for its oversimplification of ethnic identities. Critics argue that it fails to consider the complex, dynamic, and often constructed nature of ethnicity, which can shift and adapt in response to various socio-political, economic, and cultural factors. By portraying ethnicity as static and biologically determined, this perspective overlooks the ways in which ethnic identities are fluid, negotiated, and context-dependent (Barth, 1969; Jenkins, 2008). Moreover, it neglects the influences of historical context, migration, globalization, and inter-group relations that continually reshape how ethnic identities are understood and expressed.

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The essentialist view is also criticized for contributing to exclusionary practices and reinforcing stereotypes that restrict individuals' agency and opportunities to redefine their ethnic affiliations. Such a reductive perspective can reinforce divisions and hinder the potential for intercultural understanding and collaboration. In modern ethnographic and sociopolitical studies, scholars advocate for more nuanced and flexible frameworks that recognize the dynamic interplay between individual agency, cultural heritage, and socio-political contexts in the formation of ethnic identities (Brubaker, 2004).

2.2.7 The Conflict View on Ethnicity

The conflict perspective on ethnicity highlights its role as a significant source of division and contention in societies, particularly in contexts marked by competition for limited resources, political representation, or economic opportunities. This theoretical framework asserts that ethnicity often serves as a fault line for group conflicts, with divisions intensifying when groups perceive themselves as marginalized or disadvantaged in resource allocation or access to power structures (Milan, 2022). Such tensions are especially evident in multi-ethnic societies where inequalities and disparities in governance exacerbate ethnic rivalries.

The conflict view has been widely applied to understand ethnic tensions in various global contexts, including Nigeria, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia. In these cases, ethnic identity becomes intertwined with access to resources, creating deep-seated grievances that fuel political instability and, at times, violent confrontations.

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Despite its utility in explaining ethnic conflicts, the conflict perspective has been critiqued for its deterministic approach. Critics argue that not all ethnic differences lead to conflict, as many multi-ethnic societies demonstrate peaceful coexistence and effective collaboration. For instance, countries like Switzerland and Canada exhibit stable governance and social harmony despite significant ethnic diversity. Such examples challenge the assumption that ethnic divisions inherently result in conflict, suggesting that factors like inclusive governance, equitable resource distribution, and strong institutions play a critical role in mitigating tensions (Krampe et al.,2021).

Furthermore, the conflict view has been critiqued for its limited focus on negative outcomes, often neglecting the potential for ethnic diversity to contribute positively to societal development when managed effectively. Scholars argue for a more balanced perspective that considers both the challenges and opportunities posed by ethnic plurality in nation-building efforts.

The conflict view on ethnicity provides a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics of ethnic tensions, particularly in contexts where structural inequalities and political exclusion prevail. However, it also necessitates a nuanced approach that accounts for the diverse ways in which ethnic identities interact with socio-political and economic systems. Future research must explore the conditions under which ethnic diversity transitions from a source of division to a driver of innovation, collaboration, and social progress.

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2.2.8 The Postcolonial View on Ethnicity

The postcolonial view on ethnicity focuses on the profound influence of colonialism in shaping ethnic identities and divisions in colonized societies. This perspective draws attention to how colonial powers, through their policies and practices, deliberately constructed or emphasized ethnic differences to entrench control and maintain dominance. This artificial engineering of ethnicity often had lasting repercussions, continuing to affect postcolonial societies in significant ways.

Colonial administrations frequently employed the "divide and rule" strategy to consolidate their authority. This involved categorizing populations along ethnic lines, assigning identities that were either exaggerated versions of pre-existing ones or

entirely constructed for administrative convenience. For example, in Africa, colonial rulers often implemented indirect rule, empowering "traditional" leaders of select ethnic groups while marginalizing others. This practice institutionalized ethnic hierarchies, transforming fluid and overlapping identities into rigid and often antagonistic categories.

Key scholars like Mahmood Mamdani emphasize the legacy of these colonial interventions. In his work, Citizen and Subject (1996), Mamdani argues that colonial governance systems fostered the politicization of ethnicity by distinguishing between "citizens" (urban populations) and "subjects" (rural populations). These distinctions entrenched ethnic divisions, laying the groundwork for postcolonial ethnic tensions and conflicts. Similarly, Franz Fanon, in The Wretched of the Earth (1961), explores how colonial domination fractured indigenous societies, fostering divisions that served colonial interests but had devastating consequences for postcolonial unity and solidarity.

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Even after decolonization, the legacies of colonial ethnic engineering often persisted in postcolonial states. Many new nations inherited administrative structures that perpetuated ethnic categorization and competition, fueling ethnic violence and political instability. Examples include the Rwandan Genocide of 1994, where the colonial privileging of the Tutsi minority over the Hutu majority by Belgian rulers contributed to deep-seated grievances. Similarly, in India, the British colonial policy of favoring certain religious and ethnic groups deepened divisions, many of which remain contentious in contemporary politics.

Despite its significant contributions, the postcolonial perspective on ethnicity has faced criticism for its emphasis on colonialism as the primary driver of ethnic identity formation. Critics argue that this view may oversimplify complex social dynamics by neglecting pre-colonial ethnic relations and contemporary factors that contribute to ethnic tensions. For instance, many African societies had their own systems of ethnic hierarchies, rivalries, and alliances before colonial intervention. Scholars like Crawford Young suggest that while colonialism undoubtedly shaped modern ethnic identities, it is essential to recognize the interplay between pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial factors.

Additionally, critics highlight that attributing ethnic issues solely to colonialism risks absolving postcolonial leaders and societies of responsibility (Benyera ,2024). Modern political elites often manipulate ethnic identities for their gain, exacerbating divisions initially fostered by colonial rule. In postcolonial contexts, ethnicity can become a tool for political mobilization, economic favoritism, and even violence, independent of colonial legacies.

The postcolonial view on ethnicity provides a critical framework for understanding the enduring impact of colonialism on ethnic identities and divisions. By highlighting the role of colonial policies in shaping ethnic structures, this perspective sheds light on the historical roots of many contemporary ethnic conflicts. However, it is equally important to contextualize these insights within broader historical and socio-political frameworks that account for pre-colonial dynamics and postcolonial developments. Addressing ethnic issues in postcolonial societies requires a nuanced approach that recognizes both historical legacies and present realities.

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2.3 Ethnicity in Nigeria

Ethnicity has become a synonym for politics in Nigeria given the obvious synchronization of the two terms in conducting the affairs of the nation. It is right to note that in the political dispensation of Nigeria, ethnicity is politics, and politics is ethnicity. While such a stance ought not to be ideal, however, a critical reflection on the socio-political and economic realities of Nigeria reveals that such an assertion is in line with reality. Ethnicity is a crucial issue in the political dispensation of Nigeria, this is often reflected in the allocation of resources, economic and political opportunities, and other responsibilities of national interests. Language experts and historians rank Nigeria, which has more than 370 ethnic groups, as the third-most ethnically diverse country in the world (Imam et al., 2014).

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However, it is important to note that the origin of these over 370 ethnic groups in Nigeria can be traced to the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates of Nigeria by Lord Lugard in 1914(Abejide, 2022). The amalgamation was the beginning of diverse ethnicities in Nigeria, as different ethnic groups with distinct cultures, languages, religions, lifestyles, and histories were brought together as a nation to foster the interest of the British colonial masters.

In the Nigerian ethnic setting, ethnic groups are further divided into major and minor ethnic groups(Seyoum, 2020). The idea of majority and minority ethnic groups refers to the strength of an ethnic group in number and most importantly in wielding political power. The majority ethnic groups are those ethnic groups that control the affairs of government in Nigeria, politically, economically, and culturally. They are featured prominently in the allocation of resources, distribution of opportunities and forms the

larger part of governance. However, minority ethnic groups are also part of governance but in most cases, they are not well-pronounced and often play little or no active role in the control of power and resources. Thus, in reference to Nigeria, the major ethnic groups are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba; while the minority ethnic groups include but not limited to Tiv, Efik, Igala, Urhobo, Nupe, Jukun, Fulani, Ibibio, etc.

From the foregoing, the issue of ethnicity in Nigeria is neither holistically primordial nor instrumental, rather it is an integration of both primordial and instrumental conceptions of ethnicity. Primordially, the designation of different ethnic groups such as Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, and others, are derived from natural ties that exist within those ethnic groups. Before the amalgamation of 1914, these ethnic groups existed as independent entities with their internal shared history, culture, lifestyle, and religion(Inagbor & Oshomoh, 2021).

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However, with the advancement of British colonial masters to marry these separate ethnic groups together which gave rise to the over 370 ethnic groups in Nigeria, it becomes glaring that originally these ethnic groups in Nigeria do not stem from natural shared values but rather from a social construct by the British colonial masters and to champion the British economic and political interest in Nigeria(Ejiogu & Ubah, 2024). First and foremost, Nigeria's separation into three regions—the Northern area, which is dominated by Hausas, the Southern area, which is dominated by Yoruba, and the Eastern region, which is dominated by Igbos—reflects the country's social construct of ethnicity.

Later, the Western region gave rise to the Mid-Western region, which was another region. However, in the present socio-political dispensation, these ethnic lines are further decimated into six divisions referred to as the six geo-political zones; the North Central, the North West, North East, South West, South-South, and South East(Okpalike, 2024). North Central consists of the following states; Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau. North East comprises the following states; Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe. North West consists of the following states; Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara. South West comprises the following states; Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo. South-South comprises the following states; Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta and Edo State. South East consists of the following states; Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. Thus, (Archibong ,2018) observes that in general, Hausa-Fulani inhabitants dominate the Northwest and Northcentral zones, Kanuri in the Northeast, Yoruba in the Southwest, Igbo in the Southeast, and other designated 'minority' ethnic groups in the South-south.

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Ethnicity in Nigeria is a lived experience that is rooted in the shared cultural, ancestry, and historical identity of a group of persons, who are as well united to achieve a common socio-political ambition. In reference to Nigeria, the ethnicities are linked together based on common historical origins, demographics, and shared boundaries. However, there is a political undertone of the categorization of these ethnicities which is reflected in the classification of six geo-political zones in Nigeria, with each geo-political zone constructed to champion the socio-economic and political ambitions of one or more ethnic identities.

Nigeria is characterized as a multi-ethnic nation given the diverse ethnicities existing in the country, and this socio-political phenomenon is without its numerous challenges. It has been argued by scholars that the amalgamation of 1914 by the British Colonial masters led to the conglomeration of diverse ethnicities with sharp contrast in religious orientation, cultural history, and political affinity as one nation. Thus, the origin of the multi-ethnic nation in Nigeria can be traced to the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates. One of the prominent challenges facing Nigeria as a political entity to date stemmed from the forceful marriage of different ethnicities, religions, and cultural affinities into one political entity. This precarious unity has given rise to ethnic tensions and crises within Nigeria. According to Taiwo (2000);

> *the implication of the loose integration or amalgamation of 1914 was that the different cultures of Hausa Fulani ethnic group, Igbos and Yorubas saw themselves as rivals and competitors instead of one people and without faulty implementation of decisions of 1914, there would not have arisen such competition and rivalry which resulted to violent ethnic conflict in Nigeria.*

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Consequently, ethnicity in Nigeria is deeply founded on a precarious unity which is breeding negative outputs as against promoting positive coexistence of the diverse ethnic groups. It was in reference to this precarious unity that the Late Ahmadu Bello in 1944 referred to the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates as the mistake of 1914, and late Obafemi Awolowo reinforced the assertion of Bello noted that "Nigeria is a mere geographical expression". This points toward the negative impact ethnicity have exerted on the development of the socio-political and economic sphere of Nigeria as a nation. It might be argued that in line with the instrumental view

on ethnicity, ethnicity in Nigeria is an instrument of destruction adopted by the British Colonial masters to propagate their economic interests. This is argued extensively by Falola and Heaton (2008):

> *The system of indirect rule reinforced ethnic division and has made it difficult for the ethnic groups to come together as a true nation. The style and execution of indirect rule separated Northern and Southern Nigeria' therefore ethnic groups were separated from each other, and the power, authority, and privileges given to the Emirs and Chief were misused and abused by acquiring ill-gotten wealth, land, and establish patronage around them which promoted tribalism and nepotism.*

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Writing on the influence of ethnicity in the socio-political setting of Nigeria, Comfort Erima Ugbem (2019), asserts that

> *Ethnicity today has become a huge social movement across Nigeria. So strong is this movement that it is a preferred mode of loyalty to the Nigerian state. Individuals and groups within Nigeria are first loyal to the ethnic group and loyalty to the Nigerian state is usually secondary.*

In other words, ethnicity has formed the bane of loyalty in Nigeria. Eniemeh rightly buttressed this further in their assertion that

> *Notwithstanding the era of globalization, the level of ethnicity in Nigeria has unabatedly increased…. this is because of the lifestyle of various ethnic groups*

which revolves round their ethnic identity; hence, the difficulty in producing uniformly informed socio-political and economic policies.

In Nigeria, there is constant agitation for power and resource control by different ethnic groups, and this has led to the formation of some anti-government groups that further slow the pace of good governance in Nigeria. Most political and religious conflicts in Nigeria are grossly rooted in ethnic differences. Thus, in reference to the socio-political situation in Nigeria, (Eniemeh et al., 2019) further stated categorically that ethnicity is central to politics; in order to be politically relevant, one must either participate in mainstream ethnic politics or not. In other words, ethnicity has occupied the essence of socio-political development in Nigeria; people vote and are voted for in most cases based on political affiliations; resources are shared within the country with reference to ethnic affinity; political positions and job opportunities are secured on the grounds of ethnic identity. Inasmuch as Nigeria as a nation runs a federal system of government, however, the tenets of federalism are far from what is experienced in Nigeria.

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It has been a case of one ethnic group using their ethnicity as an instrument to propagate their ethnic ambitions to the detriment of the other ethnic groups. This is often reflected during the election period, where ethnic sentiment is well pronounced, and members of a particular ethnic group work assiduously to retain a political position notwithstanding how long their ethnic persons have occupied the positions, the aim is not to retain competency but to retain ethnicity as that will further give the ethnic group more power for resource control and control over the distribution of opportunities in the country.

Ethnicity has greatly undermined socio-political and economic advancement in Nigeria and is continually impeding nation-building and national integration. In a pluralistic country like Nigeria, the adoption of national integration should be at the heart of every government. However, in Nigeria, the quest for resource control and power coupled with ethnic differences have crippled the quest for national integration. Hence, individuals tend to ally with political leaders from their co-ethnic groups in the quest to control resources and power in the country. Inasmuch as there have been attempts to integrate the multiple ethnic groups in Nigeria to attain national integration, such policies have failed to achieve their aim. (Eniemeh et al., 2019) affirm that

> *Although various methods and strategies of national integration such as Federal Character, Quota system, Zoning Formula, Oil producing and Non-oil producing states dichotomy have been opted for; but for the complexity and politicization of ethnicity, the problem has remained unabated.*

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The ethnic-induced political dispensation of Nigeria has affected these national integration policies, thereby making it almost difficult to curb the excesses of ethnic division in Nigeria.

In the study conducted by UWAIFO (2016) in his essay "Ethnicity and Development of Political Parties in Nigeria," he explored the concept of ethnicity and the development of political parties in Nigeria and discovered that political parties which are meant to foster democracy without fear and favor are beclouded with ethnic lines and such party arrangement is at the root of stalled growth and full integration of all ethnic groups in Nigeria. He further stated that

> *Ethnicity impacts negatively on the Nigerian political system that it constitutes a major source of political violence and killings usually as a result of disagreement among and within these ethnic groups, which always is about their group and personal interests…. it brings social insecurity and political instability which in the long run terminate possible progress, development, and growth that may occur.*

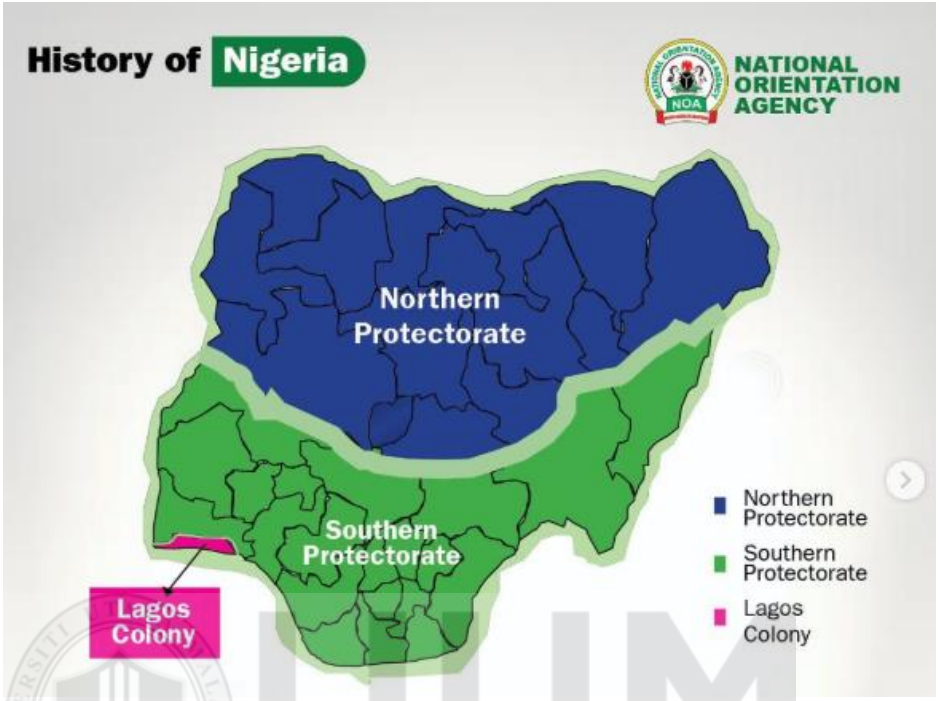
Martins Eniemeh and Sale Ibrahim in their study of Ethnic Politics and Nigerian Democracy; the way forward observe the influence of ethnicity on the voting pattern and strength in Nigeria's political setting,

> *In the current democratic dispensation, the introduction of a rotational arrangement of the presidency by the Peoples' Democratic Party has made the office of the presidency a north/south affair. This, however, has not taken away ethnic voting patterns/sentiments from Nigeria's political system.*

They went further to present an example of how Mohammed Buhari, a 2015 presidential aspirant won in almost all the states in Northern Nigeria. In other words, it has been a voting pattern in which voters from a particular ethnic group vote for a candidate from their co-ethnic group notwithstanding whether the candidate is competent or not. It becomes clear that ethnicity is at the root of the voting pattern of many electorates in Nigeria, and such voting patterns will continually exert a negative influence on the nature of leaders elected to political offices.

2.3.1 Historical Analysis of Ethnicity in Nigeria

Figure 3: Map of Nigeria before Colonization



Source: National Orientation Agency, 2024

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Before the advent of colonialism in Nigeria, the entity called Nigeria was occupied by different ethnic groups with diverse cultures, traditions, languages, and economic and political systems, who were living independently with little or no interaction among themselves. It must be noted that before colonization, these different ethnic groups were probably not aware of the existence of each ethnic group, and since there was little or no interaction among them, the possibility of developing ethnic sentiments against each other was slim.

According to (Ayatse and Akuva 2013):

> *... the Hausa, Yoruba and the Igbo's were far apart located that there was no need for chauvinistic feelings. It was the colonial masters who gradually gather these ethnic entities in provinces, protectorates, and regions and finally brought these different ethnicities together into one geopolitical entity to be governed by one person using a common treasury.*

Thus, colonialism is the origin of ethnicity in the country called Nigeria. With the fusion of different ethnicities as one country, the British colonial masters initiated the seed of ethnic differences as experienced in Nigeria today. According to (Chukwu , 2017),

> *Nigeria as a nation is a child of British Colonialism. Even its name came from Lady Lugard, the wife of Fredrick Lugard, the country's first governor-general. Nigeria, therefore, did not exist as a national entity before the British, who had administered the northern and southern provinces as separate and distinct territories, amalgamated them from 1914.*

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The study of Nnoli (1978) on Ethnic Politics in Nigeria serves as one of the earliest investigations into the concept of ethnicity in Nigeria. Nnoli was expressive in noting that ethnicity began with the emergence of colonialism in Nigeria;

> *The exploited Africans soon experienced the colonizers' racial prejudice and discrimination in the fields of jobs, remunerations, housing, sports, and even churches and burial grounds. Having been uprooted from the pre-colonial setting which had valid meaning for him, in which history had effectively and organically related him to his local environment and culture had produced salutary patterns of interactions with others, the African migrant found the*

door to the colonizer's glorified world securely barred to him. The resultant anomie and alienation affected his socio-economic and political activities. Even in interactions with his fellow Africans, he experienced tension, anxiety, and insecurity. Disoriented, subjugated, and humiliated by the colonizer he directed his aggressive impulses against other colonized 'natives' with whom he competed based on equality. Ethnic group membership was useful for this competition.

The argument of Nnoli dwells on the notion that the British colonial masters were deliberate at instigating ethnic differences among the different ethnic groups they brought together to actualize the British economic and political ambition in Nigeria. However, such deliberate efforts constituted the promotion of ethnicity in Nigeria, and (Ukiwo ,2005) rightly notes that

The outcomes of the divide and rule-oriented policies that led to the rise, spread and consolidation of ethnicity include socio-economic competition, regional inequalities, lack of economic unity, rivalry in the provision of amenities, low-class consciousness, intemperate utterances, and factional politics, among others.

In address of how the British colonial masters created the multi-ethnic nation called Nigeria, Nnoli (2011) rightly notes that;

the British colonialist introduced various policies that emasculated the revolutionary potential of the working class and the trade unions some of these policies were part of the working class and the trade unions some of these

policies were part of the overall colonial strategy and tactical of subjugating the colonized people. Others were designed specifically to counteract working-class consciousness. In the specific case of the working class in Nigeria, the imperialists used ethnicity to destroy working-class collective action…consequently, the working class could not provide political leadership to the more militant peasantry, its natural political ally.

Nnoli (2011) emphasizes the complex role of British colonial policy in shaping the multi-ethnic Nigerian state. Based on colonial policies, the British administration implemented policies aimed at weakening the revolutionary potential of the working class and trade unions. These policies were not only strategic elements of colonial rule, but also aimed at eroding working class consciousness. Central to this strategy was the manipulation of ethnicity to prevent collective action by the working class. By promoting ethnic divisions, the colonial rulers effectively prevented the emergence of a united and politically powerful working-class movement. This division weakened the ability of the working class to lead other socio-political groups, such as peasants, who could be natural allies in the struggle against colonial oppression.

The deliberate use of ethnic divisions as a tool of domination by the British colonizers., and by exploiting existing ethnic tensions, they prevented the emergence of a cohesive resistance movement, thereby perpetuating their domination and undermining the prospects for genuine self-determination and social and political empowerment of Nigeria's colonized people. In the context of Nigeria, a multi-ethnic country with a history of intergroup tension and violence, Lewis' approach sheds light on the difficult problem of reconciling historical enemies and building national cohesion.

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Efforts to bridge these divides require a detailed understanding of historical grievances and the development of tactics that go beyond standard approaches to conflict resolution. Thus, the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates bringing together people of different tribes, languages, and religions initiated the existence of ethnicity and ethnic sentiments in Nigeria. In situations of socio-political and economic conflicts, people tend to remain loyal to their ethnic group rather than protect the national interest.

In the study of History of Nigeria, Falola and Heaton (2008) observes the emptiness felt by various ethnic groups, as ethnic attachment was primary to the consciousness of the people rather national interest;

> *...the people within the borders of Nigeria were known to the world as "Nigerians," but in reality, this designation meant little to most people, whose lives continued to be primarily centered on local communities that have existed for hundreds and thousands of years. The regional and federal emphases of the constitutions of the 1950s further undermined the development of a unified national consciousness by determining that access to power at the national level was to be derived from holding power at the regional level.*

(Falola and Heaton 2008) provide insights into the historical forces shaping the collective consciousness of Nigerians, showing that ethnic identity trumped a sense of national belonging. Despite being labeled 'Nigerians' on the world stage, many individuals had deep roots in local communities where ethnic ties were of greater importance. They point out that government structures established in the 1950s that

emphasized regional and federal boundaries reinforced this ethnocentric attitude. By linking access to state power to regional authority, these constitutional institutions maintained the primacy of ethnic belonging over a unified national identity.

This highlights the challenges of state-building in Nigeria, where multiple ethnic groups with different historical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds coexist within the same borders. The persistence of local identities and the institutionalization of regionalism hinder the emergence of a coherent national consciousness and contribute to the persistence of tensions and conflicts arising from ethnic divisions.

In reference to the domination of ethnic groups by the majority ethnic groups, (Falalo et al.,2008) observes that:

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> *The largest ethnic groups in each region – the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo in the Northern, Western, and Eastern Regions respectively – therefore came to dominate their respective regions and contest for power at the federal level. Within each region, ethnic minorities often opposed the political dominations of the large ethnic groups, and as a result, they felt increasingly alienated from the political process, creating even further subdivisions of identity that detracted from the development of a single, encompassing Nigerian identity.*

In the study of (Okechukwu and Chukwu 2022) he contends that the activities of certain sectional groups are at the root of ethnic differences experienced in Nigeria. While such a view lays credence to the struggle of ethnicity in Nigeria, it must be noted that the sectional group is only childbirth of the deepening ethnic issues in Nigeria's political sphere. According to (Okechukwu and Chukwu 2022)

> *The activities of the Niger-Delta militants, militia groups like Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC), Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), EGBESU, and constant sectarian turmoil exemplified by the activities of Boko Haram all expressing deep ethnic sentiment put together is a major obstacle to achieving sustainable development.*

Obviously, these sectarian activities are an indication of the deep ethnic sentiments existing among the ethnic groups in Nigeria, and thus have implications on the socio-political setting of Nigeria(Anyabe et al., 2022). One thing that is observable in the sectarian activities is the fact that virtually all the majority ethnic groups have one or two sectarian groups agitating for emancipation. The Movement of Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) started in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. The aim of MASSOB is to segregate from Nigeria and own an independent nation called Biafra.

The agitation for Biafra started long ago in the History of Nigeria with one of the former governors of the Eastern region Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, it was the agitation for emancipation that led to the first civil war in Nigeria from 1967-1970, which is loosely referred to as the Biafran war. The Biafran began out of the persistent killings

of many Igbos in the North. According to (Falola and Heaton 2008), who narrated the killings that instigated the Biafran war, they observe that between 80,000 and 100,000 Easterners were killed in a series of massacres during this time, the deadliest of which was committed in September and was frequently carried out by northern soldiers. Falola et al further noted that:

> *such events led Ojukwu to question whether Igbos could ever live in harmony within a federal Nigeria. He urged all easterners outside the region to return home and suggested that all northerners in the east do likewise*.

The Biafran war was one of the first bold attempts by one of the ethnic groups in Nigeria to secede and form an independent state(Oketokun et al., 2021). The other attempt before the Biafran war was the Niger-Delta secession led by Issac Boro, who clamored for the independence of the Niger-Delta region in order to gain control over the resources in their region. Subsequently, other secessionist groups have been springing up like the Oduduwa People's Congress which agitates for the emancipation of the Yoruba ethnic group and the Arewa group agitating for the secession of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group. This entire clamor for secession is an obvious indicator of the precarious unity in the Nigerian political system and hence, how ethnicity has constantly been shaping the political advancement in Nigeria.

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2.4 Political System in Nigeria

Political system refers to the formal political institutions and structures that serve as a framework on which government is built. According to (Sklar, 1965) the Nigerian political system is characterized by three fundamental contradictions that have

significantly influenced its stability and development amongst others, The structure of government in Nigeria is predominantly regionalized, with significant political and administrative power concentrated within specific regions. However, political parties, which serve as vehicles for mass mobilization, tend to exhibit strong trans-regional and anti-regional tendencies. This tension creates a mismatch between the regional basis of governance and the national aspirations of political organizations, complicating the alignment of political objectives with the structural framework of governance.

There is a stark inconsistency between the constitutional allocation of power and the actual distribution of power within Nigerian society. Constitutionally, power is granted to the numerical majority, which, under existing demographic conditions, favors the northern region. However, the real distribution of power is heavily influenced by technological development, where the southern regions hold a clear advantage. This disparity undermines the functionality of the constitutional framework and exacerbates regional imbalances, leading to tension and mistrust among the regions.

These contradictions reflect deeper systemic challenges within Nigeria's political architecture, including the interplay of regionalism, class interests, and structural inequities. Addressing these issues requires a revaluation of the constitutional and governance frameworks to ensure they align more closely with the social, economic, and political realities of the nation.

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Previously, the regionalized governance structure in Nigeria had its roots in colonial administrative divisions, which created Northern, Western, and Eastern Regions. These regions were designed to operate semi-autonomously, fostering a sense of regional identity and control over local resources and policies. This system persisted post-independence, further entrenching regionalism in the governance framework.

While governance remained regionally focused, political parties, such as the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), Action Group (AG), and Northern People's Congress (NPC), sought to mobilize support across regional and ethnic lines to gain national relevance. For example, while the NPC was primarily a northern-based party, the NCNC had significant support in the East but also attempted to appeal across regions. This duality created a scenario where political parties were forced to navigate regional allegiances while maintaining national ambitions, often leading to political instability and fragmented alliances.

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For example, The First Republic (1960–1966) saw political parties attempting to balance their regional strongholds with broader national aspirations. This created tensions, as parties like the NCNC were accused of being overly aligned with their regional bases despite their national rhetoric.In recent times, parties like the All-Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) have struggled with balancing regional interests while claiming national representation. This often results in internal conflicts, as seen in disputes over zoning arrangements for presidential candidates.

Furthermore, the opposition in Nigeria has historically depended on alliances with regional power groups to challenge entrenched political dominance. This strategy dates back to the pre-independence era when coalitions were formed to counter colonial rule and continued into the post-independence era, where regional loyalties heavily influenced political alignments.

Relying on a section of the regional elite to oppose the system of regional power created a paradox. By supporting opposition movements, regional power groups risk eroding their own influence, effectively undermining their control. This internal contradiction led to significant political crises, most notably the Western Region Crisis of 1962, when internal power struggles within the Action Group escalated into violence and state intervention.Nigeria's constitutional frameworks have often been shaped by the need to balance regional representation with the principles of majority rule, maintaining a central government dominated by the numerical majority, primarily from the North. There are several political institutions; however, the study is limited to democracy as a political institution. According to (Beckam, 2021), political systems are sometimes referred to as democratic based on the manner in which legislatures are chosen, governments are chosen, and the degree to which the general populace is granted political rights.The President of Nigeria serves as both the head of state and the head of government in Nigeria's multi-party federal presidential representative democratic republic. The government is in charge of exercising executive power. The Senate and the House of Representatives, the two houses of the Nigerian National Assembly, both have legislative authority. The legislature and the executive branch have no influence over the judiciary.

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Nigeria operates a mixed economic system in which the government plays a significant role in directing economic activity through state-owned enterprises, but private enterprise also plays a significant role (Muktar et al., 2018). The economy is heavily dependent on the oil and natural gas sector, which accounts for about 95% of export earnings and about 65% of government revenue (Ebimobowei, 2022). The political system of Nigeria has been shaped by its history, which includes periods of colonial rule, military dictatorship, and democratic governance. The country gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1960 and adopted a federal system of government.

However, the country has experienced several military coups and periods of military rule since then, with the most recent transition to democratic governance taking place in 1999. The political system of Nigeria is characterized by a complex and diverse ethnic landscape, with over 250 ethnic groups, each with their own culture, language, and customs. This diversity has led to a complex political landscape where ethnic and regional interests often clash. Political parties and candidates often use ethnic and religious appeals to gain support from voters. This has led to a system where politicians are more likely to be elected based on their ethnic or religious background rather than their qualifications or policies.

2.4.1 Democracy in Nigeria

Democracy is a highly debatable concept in recent times. The meaning of the concept has become ambiguous in contemporary times such as there are different meanings attached to it. Etymologically, the concept of democracy is derived from two Greek words “demos” meaning “the people” and “kraitein” meaning power or governance

(Klimovski et al., 2010). Thus, democracy simply refers to the governance of the people. One of the prominent definitions of democracy was propounded by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, where he noted that "all men are equal" and asserted that the values of democracy can be understood as "the power of the people, by the people, and for the people" (Buccola, 2016). Here Lincoln was alluding to the power of people to participate in the decision-making or influence the decision of the government, either directly or indirectly.

Thus, the people become both the subject and object of governance. It follows that, democracy is a political system characterized by majority rule, participatory government, equality before the law, and justice and fairness. It follows that democracy involves the legitimate acquisition of power or authority from the people through a free and fair mechanism(Alpes, 2022). The members are pivotal in the decision-making of government in a democratic setting and therefore form the majority of decision-makers in the government. Collective decision-making for the common interest is an integral aspect of democracy which invariably fosters integration and equality among the members. Democracy is characterized by the equality of human persons notwithstanding race, culture, sex, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and political affiliation. The principle of equality in democracy presupposes that all humans are created equal without any special privileges.

In other words, a democratic system is inclusive in nature, as all persons are seen as equals. However, this equality comes with certain rights and responsibilities especially as the modern state keeps evolving. In the modern state, the individual offers their rights to the government, which in turn has the responsibility to protect and preserve

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the rights of the individuals. It is based on this development that the concept of representative democracy emerged; a situation whereby individuals elect those that would represent them in the government to ensure that their rights are adequately persevered.

In the study of Ajayi and Ojo (2014) titled "Democracy in Nigeria: Practice, Problems and Prospect" opines that at both the federal and state levels, Nigeria is run by democratically elected officials; nevertheless, despite more than a century of political existence, Nigeria has not yet institutionalized democracy. The adoption of a democratic system of government in Nigeria is becoming an insult to the principles of democracy given the continuous deviation and bastardization of democratic practice in Nigeria. In the description of Nigeria's variant of democracy, Ajayi and Ojo (2014) assert that;

> *Nigerian democracy is a brand of democracy that spends so much to accomplish so little. Second, it invests in the comfort of officials rather than in human and material resources… Third, Nigeria democracy is plagued by hydra-headed and pathological corruption that ensures that the impact of any seeming good policy is either extremely negligible or almost exactly nil*

It follows that the variant of democracy practiced in Nigeria is clouded with the elite's interest as against the interest of the masses which forms the bane of democracy. Representative democracy as practiced in Nigeria ought to accommodate different ethnic groups with the aim of integrating these ethnic groups for nation-building. However, the variant of democracy practiced in Nigeria has failed to implement the

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principles of democracy, especially with regard to uniting the different ethnic groups for the national interest.

2.5 Party Formation

Political party formation in Nigeria has deep historical roots, tracing back to the colonial era when nationalist movements began mobilizing against British rule. The earliest organized political group was the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), founded in 1923 by Herbert Macaulay, a prominent nationalist often referred to as the father of Nigerian nationalism (Falola & Heaton, 2008). The NNDP was primarily active in Lagos and focused on advocating for limited self-governance and political representation within the colonial framework. However, its influence was largely confined to the educated elite and urban centers, leaving rural areas and other regions underrepresented.

The 1940s and 1950s marked the emergence of modern party politics in Nigeria, characterized by the formation of ethnoregional parties that reflected the country's diverse sociopolitical structure. Three dominant parties emerged during this period: Northern People's Congress (NPC), Founded in 1949 by Sir Ahmadu Bello, the NPC was the dominant political force in Northern Nigeria. It represented the interests of the Hausa-Fulani aristocracy and Islamic traditional rulers, advocating for a conservative, gradual approach to independence (Coleman, 1958). The NPC's stronghold in the North gave it significant influence in national politics.

Action Group (AG) was established in 1951 by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the AG was the main political party in Western Nigeria, primarily representing the Yoruba ethnic group. Unlike the NPC, the AG promoted progressive policies, including free

education and regional development (Dudley, 1982). Its populist approach made it a formidable political force in the Southwest. On the other hand, National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) founded in 1944 by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the NCNC was the leading party in Eastern Nigeria, with strong support among the Igbo and other southeastern ethnic groups. The NCNC was more nationalist in outlook, advocating for rapid decolonization and a unified Nigeria (Sklar, 1963). These parties were deeply rooted in ethnic and regional identities, setting a precedent for Nigeria's political landscape, where ethnicity and religion often overshadow national unity.

Nigeria gained independence on October 1, 1960, adopting a Westminster-style parliamentary system with a multi-party structure. However, the First Republic was plagued by intense regionalism, political rivalries, and electoral malpractices. The NPC formed a coalition with the NCNC to dominate federal politics, while the AG became the main opposition (Diamond, 1988). The 1962–1963 political crisis, triggered by factional disputes within the AG, further destabilized the republic. The federal government, dominated by the NPC-NCNC alliance, declared a state of emergency in the Western Region and imprisoned key AG leaders, including Awolowo (Post & Vickers, 1973). These events deepened political tensions and contributed to the January 15, 1966 military coup, which ended the First Republic.

Following the coup, successive military regimes led by Major-General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi (1966) and later General Yakubu Gowon (1966–1975) banned political parties, replacing democratic governance with military rule. The Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) further entrenched military dominance, delaying the return to civilian politics. In 1979, Nigeria transitioned back to democracy under a presidential system,

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leading to the formation of new political parties. The most prominent were: National Party of Nigeria (NPN), a successor to the NPC, the NPN was a conservative, Northern-dominated party that won the presidency under Shehu Shagari (Joseph, 1987). Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) founded by Obafemi Awolowo, the UPN continued the AG's progressive policies, focusing on education and welfare (Oyovbaire, 1985). People's Redemption Party (PRP) led by Aminu Kano, the PRP was a radical leftist party advocating for socialist reforms (Feinstein, 1987). Despite hopes for stability, the Second Republic was marred by corruption, electoral fraud, and economic mismanagement, leading to another military coup in December 1983 under General Muhammadu Buhari.

For the next 16 years, Nigeria was under military dictatorships, first under Buhari (1983–1985), then General Ibrahim Babangida (1985–1993), and later General Sani Abacha (1993–1998). Political parties were banned, though Babangida experimented with a two-party system (Social Democratic Party, SDP, and National Republican Convention, NRC) in 1989, which was later annulled after the controversial June 12, 1993 election (Maier, 2000). Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 saw the rise of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which dominated politics for 16 years under Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007), Umaru Yar'Adua (2007–2010), and Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015). However, internal conflicts, corruption, and failing governance led to the PDP's decline. In 2015, a coalition of opposition parties formed the All Progressives Congress (APC), which defeated the PDP and brought Muhammadu Buhari to power. Since then, Nigeria has experienced a two-party dominance (PDP vs. APC), though smaller parties like the Labour Party (LP) have recently gained traction (Adebanwi, 2023).

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Political parties in Nigeria have historically functioned more as vehicles for personal and ethnic ambitions rather than as ideologically driven institutions representing distinct policy alternatives (Lewis, 2003). Unlike in established democracies where parties are structured around clear ideological divides such as conservatism versus progressivism, Nigerian parties are largely amorphous, with shifting alliances and little substantive differentiation in policy outlooks. Instead, they tend to be personality-driven, revolving around powerful political figures who command loyalty through patronage rather than shared political vision (Omotola, 2018). This phenomenon is exemplified by the dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) from 1999 to 2015, which, despite presenting itself as a national party, was essentially a coalition of regional power brokers with no coherent ideological framework. Similarly, the All Progressives Congress (APC), which emerged in 2015 as a merger of opposition forces, has struggled to define itself beyond being an anti-PDP movement, with internal factions often working at cross-purposes (Babawale, 2007). The ease with which politicians' defect from one party to another—sometimes multiple times within a single electoral cycle further underscores the absence of deep-rooted ideological commitments (INEC, 2023).

A defining feature of Nigerian party politics is its reliance on ethnic and religious mobilization, which often supersedes policy debates. Political parties frequently align along regional and sectarian lines, with the PDP historically strong in the Christian-majority South and the APC drawing substantial support from the Muslim-majority North (Mustapha, 2022). This ethno-religious calculus influences candidate selection, campaign strategies, and voter behavior, reinforcing divisions rather than fostering national cohesion. Additionally, clientelism where political support is exchanged for

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material benefits permeates the system, with parties functioning more as patronage networks than as platforms for governance (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). This has led to a situation where party loyalty is transactional rather than principled, weakening democratic accountability.

The role of money in Nigerian party politics cannot be overstated. Elections are among the most expensive in Africa, with candidates often required to pay exorbitant fees for party nomination forms, effectively excluding less wealthy contenders (Babawale, 2007). Wealthy business elites and "godfathers" bankroll parties and candidates in exchange for political favors, creating a system where governance is often subordinated to private interests (Ojo, 2020). This financial stranglehold has led to widespread corruption, as politicians recoup their investments through state resources once in office. Moreover, internal party democracy is frequently undermined, with party primaries often manipulated to favor pre-selected candidates, leading to bitter intra-party disputes and litigation (INEC, 2023). The proliferation of political parties over 90 were registered for the 2023 elections, has not translated into meaningful ideological diversity. Instead, many exist only on paper, serving as bargaining chips for politicians seeking leverage in major parties or as fronts for financial exploitation (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

Recent developments suggest a potential shift in Nigeria's party politics, driven by youth mobilization and digital activism. The 2023 elections saw the dramatic rise of the Labour Party (LP), led by Peter Obi, which harnessed social media to galvanize young voters disillusioned with the APC and PDP (Adebanwi, 2023). Obi's campaign, framed around anti-corruption and economic reform, resonated with urban youth,

signaling a growing appetite for alternative governance models. However, this momentum was constrained by structural barriers, including electoral violence, vote-buying, and institutional bias (Olorunnimbe, 2023). The post-election period was marred by legal battles, with opposition parties challenging the victory of Bola Tinubu (APC) over alleged irregularities, reflecting deep-seated mistrust in the electoral process (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

Despite these emerging trends, intra-party conflicts continue to destabilize Nigeria's political landscape. Both the APC and PDP remain plagued by factional rivalries, with competing blocs undermining party cohesion. For instance, the PDP's internal crisis over leadership succession and the APC's struggles to manage competing Northern and Southern interests highlight the fragility of party structures (Mustapha, 2022). Unless parties evolve beyond their current reliance on ethnicity, money politics, and personality cults, Nigeria's democratic consolidation will remain precarious.

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2.6 Electoral Behaviour

Electoral behaviour in Nigeria is shaped by a complex interplay of socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors that determine voter choices and participation. Unlike in consolidated democracies where party ideology and policy preferences heavily influence voting decisions, Nigerian elections are often characterized by ethnic loyalty, religious affiliation, clientelism, and material inducements (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). The country's multi-ethnic and multi-religious structure means that voters frequently align with candidates from their ethnic group or faith, reinforcing a politics of identity rather than issue-based competition (Lewis, 2003). For instance, the Northern regions predominantly vote for Muslim candidates, while the Christian-

majority South often supports politicians from their own religious and ethnic backgrounds (Mustapha, 2022). This ethno-religious voting pattern has been a persistent feature since independence, undermining the development of a truly national party system.

Another critical determinant of electoral behaviour in Nigeria is patronage politics, where voters expect direct material benefits in exchange for political support. This phenomenon, often referred to as "stomach infrastructure", manifests in vote-buying, gift-giving, and promises of employment or infrastructural development (Babawale, 2007). Studies have shown that impoverished electorates, particularly in rural areas, are more susceptible to financial inducements due to economic hardship and weak civic consciousness (Ojo, 2020). Political parties and candidates exploit this vulnerability by distributing money, food, and other goods during campaigns, thereby commodifying votes rather than engaging in policy debates. The 2023 elections, for example, witnessed widespread reports of vote-buying, with party agents openly offering cash to voters at polling units (Human Rights Watch, 2023). This transactional approach to voting undermines democratic accountability, as elected officials prioritize recouping campaign expenses over delivering public goods.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in electoral behaviour, particularly among urban and youth populations, who are increasingly rejecting ethno-religious politics in favor of issue-based voting. The 2023 general elections marked a significant turning point, with the Labour Party (LP) and its presidential candidate, Peter Obi, galvanizing young voters through social media campaigns and anti-establishment rhetoric (Adebanwi, 2023). The "Obidient Movement," driven by digital activism,

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appealed to Nigerians frustrated with the dominance of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP), signaling a growing demand for transparency and good governance (Olorunnimbe, 2023). However, this emerging trend was counterbalanced by structural constraints, including voter suppression, electoral violence, and institutional bias, which discouraged participation in some regions (INEC, 2023).

Traditional media, particularly radio and television, also play a crucial role in shaping electoral behaviour, especially in rural areas where internet penetration is low. Political parties invest heavily in media campaigns to influence perceptions, often using propaganda and hate speech to discredit opponents (Omotola, 2018). Conversely, fake news and misinformation on digital platforms have become major challenges, with fabricated stories and doctored videos circulating widely during elections, distorting voter judgment (Premium Times, 2023). Despite these challenges, increased voter education initiatives by civil society organizations have contributed to a gradual improvement in political awareness, particularly among educated urban dwellers. The persistently low voter turnout in Nigerian elections, averaging between 30% and 40% in recent electoral cycles (INEC, 2023), represents a profound crisis of democratic participation that demands urgent scholarly and policy attention. This electoral disengagement stems from multiple interrelated factors that have created a self-reinforcing cycle of political alienation and institutional distrust among the Nigerian electorate. At its core, this phenomenon reflects a fundamental breakdown in the social contract between citizens and the political establishment, where repeated failures of electoral integrity have bred widespread cynicism about the democratic process (Bratton, 2013).

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The roots of voter apathy can be traced to what scholars have termed the "credibility gap" in Nigeria's electoral system (Jega, 2020). Despite constitutional guarantees of free and fair elections, many citizens perceive the electoral process as fundamentally compromised by systemic malpractices including ballot box snatching, voter intimidation, and sophisticated forms of results manipulation (Human Rights Watch, 2023). This perception is reinforced by the frequent judicial overturning of electoral outcomes, as seen in several gubernatorial elections where courts rather than voters ultimately determined winners (Ojo, 2021). Such occurrences have led to what Omotola (2018) describes as the "judicialization of politics," where electoral outcomes are increasingly settled in courtrooms rather than at polling units, further eroding public confidence in the electoral system.

The psychological impact of repeated electoral disappointments has created what political psychologists' term "learned helplessness" among the electorate (Seligman, 1975). Many Nigerians, particularly in urban areas with higher political awareness, have internalized the belief that their votes cannot effect meaningful change, leading to rational disengagement from the political process (Adebanwi, 2023). This is compounded by the phenomenon of "elite recycling," where the same political class maintains power through different party platforms, creating the perception of an unbreakable political cartel (Babawale, 2007). The 2023 elections, despite showing some signs of renewed youth engagement, ultimately reinforced this perception as established political structures prevailed despite unprecedented grassroots mobilization (Premium Times, 2023).

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Security concerns present another significant barrier to electoral participation. In conflict-affected regions such as the Northeast, where Boko Haram insurgency persists, and the Southeast, marked by IPOB separatist agitation, fear of violence suppresses voter turnout dramatically (International Crisis Group, 2023). The 2023 elections witnessed over 100 incidents of election-related violence, including attacks on polling units and assassination of political candidates (CDD, 2023). This climate of insecurity creates what scholars term "geographies of disenfranchisement," where entire communities are effectively excluded from the democratic process due to safety concerns (Mustapha, 2022).

The trust deficit is further exacerbated by the failure of elected officials to fulfil campaign promises. Research shows that Nigerian legislators have one of the lowest constituency engagement rates globally, with many disappearing from their districts after elections (Punch, 2023). This "representation gap" reinforces the perception that politicians are only interested in power for personal gain rather than public service (Lewis, 2003). The resulting democratic disillusionment manifests in what Norris (2011) describes as "critical citizens" - individuals who believe in democratic ideals but are deeply sceptical of their actual implementation in Nigeria's political system. Emerging research suggests that this trust deficit follows generational lines, with younger Nigerians (who constitute over 60% of the population) showing particularly low levels of confidence in electoral institutions (NOIPolls, 2023). While the 2023 elections saw temporary resurgence in youth engagement through the "Obidient Movement," post-election developments suggest this may have been more of a protest vote than sustained political awakening (Adebanwi, 2023). The challenge for Nigeria's

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democracy is to convert this episodic engagement into enduring participation by addressing the structural factors driving voter apathy.

Addressing this crisis requires comprehensive electoral reforms that go beyond technical fixes to INEC's operations. As Jega (2020) argues, what is needed is a "holistic democracy enhancement program" that includes civic education, political party reform, and strengthening of accountability mechanisms. Without such fundamental changes, Nigeria risks descending into what Diamond (2008) warns as "democratic recession," where elections become mere rituals lacking substantive democratic content.

2.7 Gaps in the Literature

A critical evaluation of the existing literature reveals significant gaps in understanding the complex interplay between ethnicity and Nigeria's political system. The purpose of a literature review is to reassess scholarly works within a given field to identify areas where knowledge remains incomplete or where research questions have not been adequately addressed. This reassessment highlights opportunities to contribute novel insights and solutions to unresolved issues, ensuring that the research aligns with the broader academic discourse.

The reviewed literature indicates that while considerable attention has been given to the relationship between ethnicity and the Nigerian political landscape, certain gaps persist. One notable deficiency is the lack of qualitative research hat investigates the long-term effects of ethnicity on Nigeria's political system. Many studies tend to focus on specific historical events, political transitions, or isolated timeframes, failing to

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provide a comprehensive analysis that spans multiple decades. This limitation undermines efforts to understand the sustained impacts of ethnicity on governance, policy-making, and political dynamics in Nigeria.

Additionally, there is an evident lack of studies focusing on specific ethnic groups within Nigeria's diverse population. While much of the existing research provides a macro-level analysis of ethnicity's influence on the political system as a whole, it often neglects the unique experiences, perspectives, and contributions of individual ethnic groups. A deeper exploration of specific groups—such as the Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, or minority groups like the Tiv, Efik, or Ibibio—would enrich our understanding of how localized ethnic dynamics shape broader political outcomes.

Furthermore, there is insufficient research that examines the role of ethnic identities in shaping political parties and influencing the voting behaviour of the electorate. While ethnicity's influence on elections and governance is acknowledged, the mechanisms through which ethnic affiliations shape party formation and electoral choices remain underexplored. This gap presents an opportunity to investigate how political parties leverage ethnic identities to mobilize support and how these identities impact voter decision-making processes. By addressing these gaps, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of ethnicity's influence on Nigeria’s political system. It will explore the long-term effects of ethnicity on governance, offer an in-depth analysis of specific ethnic groups, and evaluate how ethnic identities shape political behaviors and institutions. Filling these gaps will contribute to the development of more inclusive and effective political frameworks in Nigeria, advancing both academic knowledge and practical solutions to ethnic-driven political challenges.

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2.8 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a well-organized collection of ideas, tenets, and theories that serve as a basis for comprehending and delving into a specific subject or research issue (Grant, & Osanloo, 2014). This research is anchored on Group theory.

2.8.1 Group Theory

Arthur F. Bentley, in his book "The Process of Government" (1908), and David Truman, in his book "Social Order and Disturbances," are the two main proponents of group theory. Group theory is credited to Arthur F. Bentley as its founder. In the group theory premise, Bentley (1908) claims that:

> *All phenomena of government are phenomena of groups pressing one another, forming one another, and pushing out new groups and group representatives to mediate the adjustments. It is only as we isolate these group activities, determine their representative values, and get the whole process stated in terms of them, that we approach to a satisfactory knowledge of government.*

Writing in support of the assertion of Bentley, Simmel (1955) notes that groups are diverse, overlapping and heavily context-dependent. In other words, groups can exist for diverse reasons and orientations, and can probably share members of different social classes without restricting membership to a particular social class. Also, the emergence of a group is largely dependent on the environment, which serves as a motivating factor for the emergence of the group.

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Additionally, according to Bentley (1908), all matters involving the government are decided by competing group pressures, and these group pressures determine the direction of government policy. People fight for their objectives collectively, through groups in which they have a shared interest, rather than individually. Simmel (1955) correctly noted that "an individual is just one nexus in a "network of group attachments"," and Gumplowicz argued that "groups, not individuals, are the primary causal force in society." These claims support Bentley's contention that since groups form the basis of all governments, they have the power to influence policy.

However, in the explication of groups, Bentley suggests a view that people's demographic features are not necessary in the classification of an individual in a group.

> *The biologically described man is, of course, part of our given fact; but he does not as such, that is without further interpretation, enter directly into our social studies. Where the whole interpretation can be made directly in terms of vital factors, we are still within the field of biology and do not get to anything we can call sociology, or a phase of sociology, at all. (Bentley, 1908)*

The proposition of Bentley implies that at the biological level, an individual who shares certain similarities such as color, demographics, sex, etc., cannot be sufficiently asserted to belong to a particular group because of these shared attributes. However, he proposes that while these attributes are important, they become more meaningful to a group when these shared attributes become factors in some activity. Thus, for Bentley, it is the activity of a group that determines the purpose of that group, it is the ability of a group to pursue an underlying interest that categorizes them as a group.

This study employs the theory of group theory as a tool to comprehend how the phenomenon of ethnicity in the socio-political setting of Nigeria influences the political system in Nigeria. Bentley claimed that government policies and institutions are influenced by group interests, and it is within these group interests that the common interest can be attained. It becomes necessary to utilize the tool to understand how ethnicity as a collective for people with the same common interests has exerted influence on the political system in Nigeria.

Nigerian political setting is inherently multi-ethnic with various ethnic interests and sentiments. Many political actors are engrossed in the mission to propagate their ethnic interests and project these interests to other ethnic groups. One of the results of these socio-political interests is a clash of interests which often results in conflict. However, the adoption of democracy as a political system in Nigeria has opened up opportunities for equality for the ethnic groups, such that ethnic interests are subsumed in national interests. This is in line with the postulations of Bentley and Truman that individual interests or group interests, notwithstanding the conflicting nature often led to effective government policies.

Group theory creates an opportunity to accommodate the dissimilarities in each ethnic group and promotes the integration of the interests of the ethnic group for nation-building. Worthy to note is the fact that group theory offers credence to the principles of democracy which involves participatory governance and inclusion. Inclusion of ethnic interests without marginalization of minority groups is essential to attaining an effective political system. According to Bentley's theory, groups are the basic unit of

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political behaviour and decision-making, and group dynamics play a crucial role in shaping political outcomes.

He argues that understanding the dynamics of groups is essential for understanding how political decisions are made and how problems are solved. In the context of Nigeria, this theory could be applied to the study of ethnic groups and their interactions, which eventual shape the political atmosphere of the country. It could be used to analyse how ethnic group dynamics shape political decision-making and problem-solving in the country. For example, it could be used to examine how ethnic group dynamics influence the distribution of resources and political power, and how they shape government policies and decisions.

Additionally, the theory could be used to study the interactions and relationships between different ethnic groups in Nigeria. It could be used to analyse how ethnic group dynamics influence cooperation and conflict between different groups, and how they shape the country's political landscape. Since, the study intends to understand how and why the formation of pollical parties in Nigeria has been created along ethnic lines, the Group theory offers an explanation of the dynamics of the interaction among the different ethnic groups and how these dynamics shape their perception and participation in Nigerian politics.

When applied to the topic of ethnicity's impact on Nigeria's political system, group theory provides insights into how ethnic groupings function as political actors, create alliances, and influence power dynamics and resource distribution. The relevance of collective identities and interests in affecting political conduct and outcomes is

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emphasized in group theory. According to group theory, ethnic groups mobilize collectively to pursue their interests. Ethnic communities in Nigeria frequently gather to push for policies that meet their cultural, economic, and social interests.

Support for certain political parties, politicians, or policy agendas that resonate with the group's identity might reflect this mobilization. Voting blocs, or groups of voters who support the same candidate or party, can be formed by ethnic groups. These blocs can wield substantial electoral power and may negotiate representation and resource allocation with political parties in exchange for votes. The dominance of ethnic voting blocs can shape election outcomes and impact political power allocation.

2.9 Summary of Chapter Two

Chapter Two provides an extensive examination of the concept of ethnicity, analyzing its various theoretical arguments—primordial, constructionist, and instrumentalist perspectives. These frameworks are explored to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics of ethnicity, particularly within the Nigerian context. Nigeria, recognized as the third most ethnically diverse nation globally, comprises over 370 distinct ethnic groups. Among these, the Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba are the three major ethnic groups, while minority groups such as the Tiv, Efik, Igala, Urhobo, Nupe, Jukun, Fulani, and Ibibio further enrich the nation’s cultural mosaic.

The chapter underscores the profound impact of Nigeria's ethnic diversity on its political and social structures. It delves into the historical partitioning of Nigeria into three main regions—the Northern region predominantly inhabited by the Hausa, the Southern region by the Yoruba, and the Eastern region by the Igbo. This regional

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delineation has been further fragmented into six geopolitical zones: North Central, North West, North East, South West, South-South, and South East. These zones reflect the intricate web of ethnic identities that define Nigeria's political landscape, influencing governance, resource distribution, and social cohesion.

The discussion highlights how the version of democracy practiced in Nigeria has struggled to uphold the core principles of democratic governance. Specifically, it has failed to unite the country's diverse ethnic groups around a shared national interest. Instead, ethnic divisions have often overshadowed collective goals, undermining efforts to build an inclusive political system that reflects the will and aspirations of all Nigerians.

The chapter also introduces group theory as the theoretical framework guiding the study. This theory posits that societal dynamics are shaped by the interactions and competition among various groups, making it particularly relevant to understanding the interplay of Nigeria's ethnic diversity within its political systems. Group Theory serves as a lens through which the study evaluates the challenges and opportunities associated with managing ethnic plurality in a way that fosters national unity and democratic governance.

In summary, Chapter Two provides a critical foundation for the research by linking theoretical perspectives on ethnicity to Nigeria's unique socio-political context. It emphasizes the need for a more effective implementation of democratic principles to bridge ethnic divides and promote a more unified and equitable nation.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter borders on the methods adopted in conducting this research. It comprises the research framework, hypotheses/propositions development, research design, research instrument, method of data collection, and method of data analysis. This chapter explores the importance of qualitative research in bridging this gap by examining the sustained effects of ethnicity on Nigeria's political system.

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3.2 Overview of Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research methods have become essential for uncovering profound insights and unravelling the intricacies of complex phenomena. This guide aims to simplify the qualitative research process by providing a comprehensive overview and practical strategies to navigate its multifaceted nature. While quantitative research excels in generating numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research focuses on the nuanced and contextual dimensions of human experiences, capturing the subtleties often overlooked in numerical approaches. Embracing qualitative research is more than a methodological preference; it represents a commitment to understanding the depth of social phenomena and forging meaningful connections with the subjective experiences of individuals (Lim, 2024).

3.3 Research Design

Exploring Ethnicity's Impact on Nigerian Politics: Qualitative research provides a lens to examine the intersection of ethnicity and politics in Nigeria. By prioritizing lived experiences, contextual factors, and emergent patterns, this method effectively navigates the sensitive terrain of ethnic dynamics in governance.

Ethnicity profoundly shapes political participation in Nigeria, influencing voting patterns, political alliances, and resource allocation. Studies highlight how ethnic affiliation often dictates access to power, with political parties leveraging ethnicity to consolidate their bases. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and oral histories, enable an in-depth understanding of how marginalized ethnic groups experience and respond to systemic inequities.

The diversity of Nigeria's ethnic groups over 250 distinct identities necessitates a localized approach. Research reveals how political outcomes vary significantly across regions, with some areas experiencing deep-seated ethnic exclusion in governance. Qualitative frameworks allow researchers to unpack these dynamics over time, revealing how historical and social contexts influence contemporary politics.

Qualitative analysis identifies recurring themes, such as the persistent marginalization of minority ethnic groups. For example, resource allocation often favors dominant ethnic coalitions, leading to political disenfranchisement for others. This approach sheds light on how ethnic inequalities shape voter behavior and policy-making processes.

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Ethnic marginalization in resource distribution has far-reaching implications for political engagement. Longitudinal qualitative studies can trace the effects of systemic inequities, demonstrating how they deter participation and foster disillusionment with governance. This research illuminates the broader patterns of inequality that quantitative studies might overlook. Qualitative research thus serves as an indispensable tool for exploring ethnicity's impact on Nigerian politics. By centering human experiences and socio-political contexts, it provides the depth and clarity needed to address these complex issues comprehensively.

Burns & Grove (2003) state that the method adopted by a researcher to solve the topic under study is referred to as research design. "in this process, various study components will be combined in a logical way to address the research question." It serves as a framework to help researchers gather and analyse data. It provides an overview of the way the study is organized to deliver solutions to the research challenges in the most practical and accurate way possible. Brain (2014) encapsulated this succinctly when he said that "the research design is the whole plan for linking the conceptual research problems." This study employs an explanatory research design to evaluate the relationship between ethnicity and the political system in Nigeria. Explanatory design is in two dimensions; it is either descriptive or experimental. It is descriptive when it involves measuring the data once, and experimental when it involves measuring the data before and after an experiment.

The major objective of this thesis is to evaluate the "effects of ethnicity in the political system of Nigeria," and decipher the variables influencing ethnicity in the Nigerian political system. This study employs qualitative research given the assumption of the

relationship between the independent variable and the political system in Nigeria. The purpose of qualitative research is to generate knowledge and create an understanding of the social world. (Allen, 2017). Thus, the influence of ethnicity on the Nigerian socio-economic, religious and political sphere is quite glaring, however, there is a need to understand and measure the strength of influence ethnicity exerts over the political system in Nigeria. It is the need to understand the depth of influence of ethnicity on the political system of Nigeria that informs this adoption of qualitative research to conduct this study.

The use of qualitative methods in studying ethnicity within Nigeria's political system from 2019-2023 offers numerous advantages. It allows for a deeper understanding of the intricate nuances of ethnicity, including cultural practices and historical contexts. Qualitative approaches enable researchers to explore diverse perspectives and uncover both dominant narratives and marginalized viewpoints, providing a holistic understanding. These methods offer flexibility in data collection, ensuring cultural sensitivity while capturing rich, detailed information often overlooked by quantitative approaches.

Furthermore, qualitative research aids in theory development and complements quantitative data, providing a comprehensive view of the role of ethnicity in Nigeria's political landscape during the specified period. Overall, qualitative methods provide a robust framework for studying this complex topic, offering insights into the multifaceted relationship between ethnicity and politics in Nigeria.

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3.4 Population and Sampling

Sampling in qualitative research is termed non- probability sampling. Unlike probability sampling used probability sampling in quantitative research, non-probability sampling does not involve randomisation. This means that members of a qualitative study population do not have an equal chance of being selected. Instead, they are often intentionally chosen by the researchers as possessing the best qualities related to the research topic and/or are the most readily available(Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020).

There are four main types of qualitative non-probability sampling most commonly used: convenience sampling which occurs when people are invited to participate in the study because they are conveniently (opportunistic sometimes called 'availability' sampling) available with regard to access, location, time and willingness, Convenience sampling is often described as a relatively fast and easy way to achieve the sample size needed for a study.

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Purposive sampling which is also commonly called "judgemental (sometimes authoritative") sampling, Participants are recruited according to pre-selected criteria relevant to the research aims/questions of a given study. Purposive sampling is designed to recruit those who have the required status, experience or knowledge of interest to the researcher.

Snowball sampling Also known as 'chain referral' or 'networking' sampling. snowball sampling occurs when the researcher begins gathering information from one or a small number of people and then requests, they put the researcher in touch with/identify

others who may be friends, relatives, colleagues or other significant contacts who have also experienced the investigated phenomena. This type of sampling is especially useful in recruiting 'hidden populations. This may be, for example, marginalised or stigmatised individuals who are not easily accessible to researchers.

Theoretical sampling which starts from a homogeneous (small) sample and moves to a heterogeneous (larger) sample (Flick 2018). Sampling occurs sequentially and alongside data analysis. Analysed data guide the areas to be explored further in the next round of data collection and the focus of the sample in order to achieve this. The initial participants are usually purposively chosen or conveniently available.

Talking about sampling size in qualitative research, there are no overall formal criteria for determining sample size and, there- fore, no rules to suggest when a sample size is small or large enough for the study. Essentially, the 'richness' of data collected is far more important than the number of participants. This said, the researcher still requires an insight to the size most likely to achieve the purpose of the study, represent the context of the research setting and provide the depth of data for analysis (Isaacs 2014).

Determining an appropriate sample size has long been a critical concern for researchers, especially in the context of qualitative research within the social sciences. Numerous scholars have explored the challenges associated with establishing adequate sample sizes in qualitative studies (Blaikie, 2018). Positivist researchers, in particular, have often critiqued qualitative research for its limited generalizability, largely due to its reliance on small sample sizes.

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Qualitative research in the social sciences aims to provide a deep and nuanced understanding of phenomena (Hong & Cross Francis, 2020), rather than achieving statistical representation of the study population (Korstjens, 2018). However, determining an adequate sample size remains a contentious issue, often posing challenges, particularly for novice researchers (Barkhuizen, 2014; Mason, 2010). As a result, ongoing discussions about what constitutes a "sufficient sample size in qualitative research" (Young & Casey, 2019) remain highly relevant, necessitating further systematic inquiry.

In qualitative research, the term "participants" or "informants" is typically used instead of "respondents" to describe the individuals involved in the study (Nakkeeran, 2016). Consequently, the discussion around sample size in qualitative research often shifts to determining the appropriate "number of participants" required for the study (Barkhuizen, 2014).

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Determining the appropriate number of participants is a well-recognized challenge in qualitative research. The complexity arises from the diversity of qualitative designs, including ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, narrative inquiry, phenomenology, and action research (Padgett, 2013). According to Padgett (2013), sampling requirements vary across these designs: narrative inquiry, phenomenology, and case studies typically rely on small samples, whereas ethnography and grounded theory accommodate relatively larger samples. At its core, qualitative research aims to build theories by embracing the inherent subjectivity of human interactions, acknowledging the dynamic relationship between researchers and participants (Crick,

2021). Its epistemological foundation lies in the co-construction of knowledge, achieved through in-depth exploration with a small number of participants.

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), the study population is the group of individuals, occasions, or things about which a researcher wishes to draw conclusions using a sample that has been derivate. The population of the proposed study is the members of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. In the political dispensation in Nigeria, ethnic divides are classified into geo-political zones; the North Central, the North East, North West, South West, South East, and South-South. These geo-political zones constitute the ethnic division of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. The North Central, North East, and North West are predominated by the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group; South West is predominated by the Yoruba ethnic group, South East is predominated by the Igbo ethnic group, while the South-South consists mostly of minority ethnic groups; Ijaw, Tiv. Urhobo, etc.

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It is not practicable to obtain data from the entire population since it takes too much time and is impractical, according to Sekaran & Bougies (2010), who suggest that sampling is the better method for gathering data. However, according to McMillan & Schumacher (2003), in order to guarantee that the results are accurate and accurate, the sample size must be substantial and wide enough to fully evaluate the characteristics of the population. This research employed a convenience sampling technique to engage 12 respondents in an interview (please find Appendix II for the list of informants). Two persons were selected from the six geographical zone comprising of a politician and civil servants as the information from them will provide

more data on the experience of people about ethnic politics in the Nigeria and the perception of the leaders on the same issue.

3.5 Research Framework

The independent variable for this research is ethnicity which consists of two dimensions: place of origin and ethnic identity, while the dependent variable is the political system comprising of the following dependent variables; access to power, formation of political party, and electoral participation. This study conceptualized that place of origin and ethnic identity are factors that significantly influence the political system in Nigeria, which is measured by the degree to which ethnic identities have access to power, resource control, and infrastructural development

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Ethnicity, as a socio-political construct, plays a profound role in shaping governance and political dynamics, particularly in multi-ethnic nations such as Nigeria. This research identifies ethnicity as the independent variable, dissected into two critical dimensions: place of origin and ethnic identity. These dimensions are not only culturally significant but also politically influential, as they form the basis for group affiliations, identity politics, and socio-political interactions within the country. On the other hand, the dependent variable is conceptualized as the political system, defined by three essential components: access to power, the formation of political parties, and electoral participation. Together, these variables create a framework for understanding the intricate relationship between ethnicity and political systems, especially in the context of a heterogeneous society like Nigeria.

Place of origin is the geographical or regional background of individuals or groups, which often correlates with specific ethnic groups in Nigeria. This dimension of ethnicity is significant because Nigeria's historical and contemporary political systems are heavily influenced by regionalism. Regions such as the North, East, and West have historically been centers of power struggles, with access to political and economic resources often mediated through regional affiliations. The second dimension, ethnic identity, reflects the shared cultural, linguistic, and historical characteristics that bind members of a particular ethnic group. Ethnic identity often transcends geographical boundaries and is a potent driver of political mobilization, shaping how individuals and groups perceive themselves and others in the political arena.

The political system, as the dependent variable in this study, is examined through the lens of three interrelated factors. The first is access to power, which involves the extent to which ethnic groups are represented in key political offices and decision-making processes. In Nigeria, access to power is often contested along ethnic lines, with some groups feeling marginalized while others dominate political structures. The second factor is the formation of political parties. Political parties in Nigeria have historically been formed along ethnic and regional lines, with party loyalty and support often reflecting ethnic affiliations rather than ideological alignment. Lastly, electoral participation is analyzed to understand the role of ethnicity in voter behavior, electoral outcomes, and the inclusivity of the democratic process. These three components collectively provide a comprehensive picture of how the political system functions and how it is influenced by ethnic variables.

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This study is grounded in the conceptual premise that ethnicity, particularly through place of origin and ethnic identity, significantly impacts Nigeria's political system. The hypothesis posits that ethnic identities influence not only the degree to which groups gain access to power but also their ability to control resources and drive infrastructural development. For example, the allocation of federal resources, such as oil revenue, is often perceived as being influenced by ethnic considerations, leading to perceptions of favoritism or marginalization. Similarly, infrastructural development, such as the construction of roads, schools, and healthcare facilities, is often distributed in ways that reflect ethnic and regional priorities, further entrenching the importance of ethnicity in governance.

Furthermore, the formation of political parties and their platforms often mirrors ethnic divisions, creating a landscape where politics is deeply intertwined with ethnic identity. This dynamic can result in both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, ethnic-based political mobilization can provide a platform for marginalized groups to voice their concerns and advocate for equitable representation. On the other hand, it can lead to polarization, undermining national unity and fostering a zero-sum competition for power and resources. Electoral participation is similarly shaped by ethnicity, as voting patterns in Nigeria frequently align with ethnic affiliations. This phenomenon underscores the role of ethnicity in shaping voter behavior and influencing electoral outcomes, with implications for the inclusivity and fairness of the democratic process.

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The Nigerian context is particularly instructive for studying the relationship between ethnicity and the political system because of its unique historical, cultural, and political background. With over 250 ethnic groups, Nigeria is one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world. This diversity has been both a strength and a challenge, enriching the nation's cultural tapestry while also creating fault lines in its political landscape. The colonial history of Nigeria, which involved the amalgamation of diverse ethnic groups into a single political entity, set the stage for ethnic tensions that continue to influence contemporary governance. Post-independence, efforts to build a unified national identity have often been complicated by ethnic rivalries and competition for resources.

By examining the interplay between place of origin, ethnic identity, and the political system, this research aims to shed light on the mechanisms through which ethnicity influences governance and development in Nigeria. The findings of this study have the potential to inform policy interventions aimed at fostering more inclusive political systems. For instance, strategies such as proportional representation, federal character principles, or ethnically sensitive electoral reforms could help mitigate the negative impacts of ethnic politics while promoting equitable resource distribution and political participation.

In conclusion, this study posits that ethnicity, through the dimensions of place of origin and ethnic identity, plays a central role in shaping Nigeria's political system. By analyzing access to power, political party formation, and electoral participation, this research provides a nuanced understanding of how ethnic dynamics influence governance and development. This exploration not only contributes to the academic

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discourse on ethnicity and politics but also offers practical insights for policymakers and stakeholders seeking to address the challenges and opportunities presented by Nigeria's diverse and vibrant socio-political landscape.

3.6 Measurement of Variables/Instrumentation

The primary instrument for data collection in this study is the semi-structured interview. This method is widely recognized as a valuable tool in research, especially within the domain of qualitative studies. Semi-structured interviews strike a balance between structured and unstructured formats, allowing for a guided conversation while providing flexibility to explore emerging themes or unexpected insights.

Interviews are particularly effective for gathering in-depth information and nuanced understanding about complex topics. By engaging directly with participants, researchers can delve into their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, thereby capturing rich, contextualized data that might otherwise remain inaccessible through other methods. This approach facilitates the exploration of subjective perspectives, enabling researchers to uncover patterns, motivations, and meanings underlying participant responses.

In this study, the semi-structured interview format is designed to address key dimensions of the variables under investigation. It includes a set of predetermined questions aligned with the research objectives, ensuring consistency across interviews, while allowing room for open-ended responses. This flexibility not only accommodates the diversity of participants' experiences but also enhances the depth and authenticity of the data collected.

The semi-structured interviews are tailored to examine the influence of ethnicity on the political system by exploring participants' perceptions of how place of origin and ethnic identity impact access to power, political party formation, and electoral participation. Questions are crafted to elicit detailed accounts and examples, providing insight into the ways ethnicity shapes political structures and behaviors in Nigeria.

The choice of semi-structured interviews as an instrument reflects the study's commitment to methodological rigor and depth. This approach ensures the collection of comprehensive and meaningful data, which is critical for addressing the research questions and achieving the study's objectives.

3.7 Data Collection

The data for this research are categorized into primary data and secondary data, each serving distinct but complementary purposes in achieving the study's objectives. According to Zikmund (2003), primary data are defined as "data assembled for the research purpose of existing situations whereby the events are happening." This refers to data generated directly from the research context—gathered from the people, places, or events relevant to the study. In contrast, secondary data consist of the opinions, views, and commentaries of scholars and authorities, derived from existing literature and documented resources. Given that this study adopts a descriptive survey research design, the methods of data collection typically associated with this approach include, but are not limited to, questionnaires, interviews, and other modes of communication such as mail, in-person interactions, or telephone calls. For this research, both primary and secondary sources of data collection are utilized to ensure a robust and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

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3.7.1 Primary Data Collection

The primary data for this research are obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted with relevant respondents. Interviews are a cornerstone of qualitative research techniques, offering a pathway to achieving an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. By engaging directly with participants, the study gathers firsthand insights into their experiences, perspectives, and interpretations. The semi-structured format allows for a flexible yet focused dialogue, ensuring that key aspects of the research questions are addressed while leaving room for participants to express themselves freely(Lim, 2024).

This method enables the researcher to generate accurate and relevant data from the focus group, capturing the lived realities of individuals as they relate to the influence of ethnicity on the political system. The interviews are tailored to explore how place of origin and ethnic identity impact access to power, political party formation, and electoral participation. By focusing on these dimensions, the primary data provide the foundational evidence necessary to answer the research questions and test the study's hypotheses.

3.7.2 Secondary Data Collection

The secondary data for this research involve a critical analysis of existing literature and resources. These include books, peer-reviewed journals, conference materials, and reputable internet resources. Secondary data serve as a vital complement to the primary data, offering theoretical frameworks, historical context, and comparative perspectives. This analytical approach helps to situate the findings of the study within the broader academic discourse on ethnicity and political systems (Subedi, 2021).The

integration of secondary data allows the researcher to cross-reference primary findings with established scholarship, ensuring a comprehensive and balanced analysis. For instance, previous studies on ethnicity and governance in Nigeria provide valuable insights into patterns of political behaviour, regional dynamics, and the role of ethnic identity in resource allocation. These sources also contribute to the study's methodological rigor, guiding the design of the interview framework and supporting the interpretation of results.

3.7.3 Rationale for Combined Data Sources

The dual reliance on primary and secondary data enhances the validity and reliability of this research. Primary data offer direct, context-specific insights into the research problem, capturing the voices and experiences of those directly affected by the phenomenon under investigation. Secondary data, on the other hand, provide a broader contextual and theoretical backdrop, ensuring that the findings are well-grounded in existing knowledge.

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By leveraging these two sources of data, the study achieves a holistic understanding of how ethnicity influences the political system in Nigeria. This comprehensive approach ensures that the research is not only rooted in empirical evidence but also informed by critical scholarly discourse, thereby contributing meaningful insights to the field of political and social studies.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

The primary data for this study will be collected through thematic analysis and the administration of semi-structured interviews, which serve as the primary research instrument. These interviews are carefully designed to elicit in-depth insights from respondents who possess adequate knowledge of the interplay between ethnicity and politics in Nigeria. The respondents are selected from across the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria to ensure a diverse and representative sample, reflecting the multifaceted nature of ethnicity and its impact on the political landscape.

The administration of the interviews will be conducted over a one-week period. In-person interviews are employed to create a conducive environment for open and honest dialogue. This format allows for the observation of non-verbal cues, which can further enrich the data collected. All interviews will be audio-recorded, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data. The recorded interviews will later be transcribed to facilitate detailed analysis and organization. To maintain confidentiality, data will be securely stored and accessible only to authorized personnel involved in the research.

3.8.1 Data Management and Analysis

Thematic analysis is used to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the interviews. This method involves identifying, organizing, and interpreting common themes and patterns that emerge from the respondents' narratives. Thematic analysis is particularly well-suited to this study as it allows the researcher to uncover nuanced insights into how ethnicity influences access to power, political party formation, and electoral participation in Nigeria. Key steps in the thematic analysis include:Familiarization: Transcribed data will be reviewed to gain a thorough understanding of the

content.Coding: Relevant segments of the text will be systematically labeled with codes that represent specific ideas or topics.Theme Development: Codes will be grouped into broader themes that capture the essence of the data.Review and Refinement: Themes will be evaluated and refined to ensure they accurately reflect the data. Interpretation: Final themes will be interpreted in the context of the research objectives, linking findings to the broader theoretical framework.

In addition to qualitative analysis, data measurement will involve quantifying specific aspects of the qualitative data, such as the frequency of recurring themes or sentiments expressed by respondents. This quantification allows for a comparative analysis, bridging qualitative findings with broader quantitative patterns observed in secondary data.

3.8.2 Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to established ethical guidelines throughout the research process. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants before interviews commence, ensuring they are fully aware of the purpose and scope of the study. Participants' confidentiality and privacy will be safeguarded through secure data storage and anonymization of responses in the final analysis and reporting.

By employing rigorous data collection and analysis methods, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and balanced understanding of the relationship between ethnicity and the political system in Nigeria. The integration of thematic analysis and quantitative measurement ensures that the findings are both nuanced and robust, contributing valuable insights to the field of political and social studies.

3.9 Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter outlined the research methodology adopted to investigate the influence of ethnicity on the political system in Nigeria. It detailed the categorization of data into primary and secondary sources, emphasizing their complementary roles in achieving a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Primary data are collected through semi-structured interviews administered to knowledgeable respondents across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, ensuring diversity and representativeness. Secondary data are derived from critical analyses of books, journals, conference proceedings, and credible online resources, providing a theoretical foundation for the study.

The semi-structured interview serves as the primary research instrument, offering flexibility to explore key dimensions such as access to power, political party formation, and electoral participation. The in-person administration of interviews fosters a conducive environment for eliciting candid and insightful responses, with audio recordings ensuring accuracy and reliability. Data management processes, including transcription and secure storage, maintain the integrity and confidentiality of the information gathered.

The analysis of the data employs thematic analysis, a qualitative technique that identifies common themes and patterns within the narratives of respondents. This method provides nuanced insights into how ethnicity shapes political dynamics in Nigeria, while data measurement integrates qualitative and quantitative elements to ensure a balanced interpretation. The study’s adherence to ethical guidelines, such as obtaining informed consent and maintaining participant anonymity, underscores its commitment to research integrity.

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This research employed a convenience sampling technique to engage 12 respondents in an interview. Two persons will be selected from the six geographical zone comprising of a politician and civil servants as the information from them will provide more data on the experience of people about ethnic politics in the Nigeria and the perception of the leaders on the same issue.

In conclusion, this chapter established the methodological foundation for the study, detailing the tools and processes for data collection, management, and analysis. With these elements in place, the research is well-positioned to present and interpret its findings. Chapter Four will now delve into the results and analysis, presenting the key insights derived from the data and linking them to the research objectives and hypotheses.

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CHAPTER FOUR:

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter dwells on the analysis of data. Interviews with informants and field notes taken during participant observation were used to gather the data. The interview data was turned into written text by transcription to make analysis easier. Similarly, the field notes were typed and coded to make it simpler to read and analyze the data they contained. Thematic analysis was conducted to assess the information generated from the interview data. A common qualitative research technique for locating patterns, themes, and meanings within a dataset is thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). It entails a systematic method for compiling and analyzing qualitative data, enabling researchers to comprehend the phenomenon they are studying more thoroughly. In order to identify important themes and insights, we will use thematic analysis in this chapter to examine the data obtained from informant interviews and field notes from participant observation.

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4.2 Political Party Formation in Nigeria

The creation of political parties in Nigeria has historically been heavily affected by ethnicity, among other considerations. Ethnically driven dynamics have played a critical role in defining the party structure, coalitions, and electoral outcomes (Höglund, Jarstad, & Kovacs, 2009). It is crucial to recognize that the Nigerian political environment has varied over time, with periods of military administration interspersed with civilian governments. Political parties first emerged in Nigeria in the early twentieth century (Falola, 2004).

During the colonial era, ethnic identities were strong, and this was reflected in the development of regional parties. Among them were the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), led by Nnamdi Azikiwe in the Eastern region, and the Action Group (AG), led by Obafemi Awolowo in the Western region (Sklar, 2015). These parties were generally organized along ethnic lines, with leaders mobilizing their ethnic constituencies for political support. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) also arose in the Northern region, particularly reflecting the interests of the Hausa-Fulani ethnic community.

According to one of the research participants, Dr. Mathiue Onyekachi, who is the assistance special adviser for the governor of Anambra state on media and publicity. Ethnic affiliations have been a defining factor for political parties in Nigeria, shaping alliances, support bases, and campaign promises. The APC and PDP have often aligned their strategies along ethnic lines, seeking to gain the favor of Nigeria's three major ethnic groups, while simultaneously attempting to appeal to minority ethnic groups. However, failures to secure balanced ethnic representation have led to the

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disintegration of some coalitions and weakened the support base of certain parties in ethnically diverse regions.

Nigeria underwent a period of competitive multi-party politics following its independence in 1960. However, ethnic tensions grew, and political parties became more connected with certain ethnic communities. The NPC and NCNC's supremacy in the First Republic demonstrated the importance of ethnicity in party formation. This ultimately contributed to the political issues that led to the First Republic's demise and the establishment of a military government. For much of this time, military administrations ruled Nigeria, restricting political activities and parties. Nonetheless, ethnic factors continued to influence political trends. Following the return to democracy in 1999, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) emerged as the major party, having a broad but frequently ethnically split support base. The All-Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) also arose, representing regional and ethnic differences.

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In the twenty-first century, ethnic issues have continued to impact Nigerian politics. The growth of more ethnically focused political parties representing varied interests has resulted from the proliferation of political parties. Political leaders have occasionally used the increase of ethno-religious tensions, notably in the Middle Belt and Southern regions, to consolidate their control.

As captured by another participant Babajide Aderogba, an Electoral Officer (EO) at INEC

Ethnicity has shaped Nigeria's presidential elections in ways that sometimes overshadow policy discussions. It is not uncommon for candidates to be seen as representatives of their ethnic groups, often leading to identity-based rather than issue-based voting. This trend reflects a longstanding mistrust among Nigeria's ethnic groups, where people feel their interests are best represented by one of their own. This perception reinforces the notion that political loyalty often hinges on ethnic identity more than ideological alignment.

4.3 Ethnic Identity and Mobilization:

This theme focuses on how ethnic identity plays a role in the mobilization of political parties in Nigeria. It explores how political parties use ethnicity as a tool for garnering support, the strategies employed to appeal to specific ethnic groups, and the role of ethnic leaders in party formation and mobilization. (Suberu, 2001) contends that Nigeria's federal structure, which allows extensive autonomy to its constituent states, has resulted in competition and conflict among diverse ethnic groups seeking control over state resources, political power, and representation. As observed by Babajide Aderogba in the interview:

Ethnic affiliations have shaped political party dynamics, as both the APC and PDP rely on ethnic support to secure their bases. The reliance on ethnic blocs has made it challenging for parties to appeal nationally, creating a tendency for parties to cater their messaging to regions rather than focusing on issues that cut across the country.

On the other hand, the primordial viewpoint posits that ethnic identities are profoundly founded in historical, cultural, and ancestral ties. This viewpoint would highlight the long-standing ethnic differences and identities that have persisted in Nigeria for

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generations. The Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo ethnic groups in Nigeria have different languages, customs, and traditions that contribute to their sense of identity. According to the primordial viewpoint, ethnic identities have a considerable influence on political conduct and decision-making.

This is consistent with the data generated from the interview conducted. The data reveals that opinions are divided among the 12 participants, with 6 participants believing that ethnic identity influences mobilization, while the remaining 6 participants do not see ethnicity as a significant factor in mobilization efforts. This suggests a balanced perspective among the participants on the relationship between ethnicity and political mobilization.

The responses according to one of the participants, Dr. Mathiue Onyekachi observes that:

Ethnicity has been a central element in shaping Nigeria's presidential elections, often dictating candidate selection, voter support, and campaign strategies. From 2015 onward, presidential candidates and their parties frequently sought to appeal to ethnic loyalties, particularly from the country's three dominant groups: Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo. Ethnic bloc voting has often intensified, with each group rallying behind a candidate they believe can represent their regional and cultural interests. This trend remains prominent in Nigerian politics, with ethnicity influencing both campaigns and voter behavior.

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An example to illustrate the fact is during elections, people may be more likely to support candidates from their own ethnic group because of a sense of kinship and familiarity. This can result in the establishment of ethnic-based political blocs and coalitions, in which parties or candidates rely on ethnic identity to mobilize voters. Historical contacts and conflicts between various ethnic groups also influence political dynamics, since past grievances and alliances can influence present-day political decisions.

On the other hand, Mohammed Babawo Supervisory Presiding Officer (SPO) at INEC notes that:

Ethnicity has consistently been a critical factor in Nigeria's elections. However, in recent years, there has been a shift, with some voters prioritizing competence and integrity over ethnicity, especially in urban areas. Yet, many rural voters still see ethnicity as a key consideration, and presidential candidates have continued to appeal to these sentiments, particularly in the north and southeast.

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4.4 Power and Resource Distribution:

This sub-theme delves into the distribution of power and resources within political parties along ethnic lines. It explores how ethnic considerations influence the allocation of key positions, resources, and benefits within party structures, and how this impacts the dynamics of political party formation and operation. Within Nigeria's political system, ethnicity has a considerable impact on power dynamics and resource distribution (Odeyemi, 2014). Political power and resource allocation are frequently entwined with ethnic identities and affiliations, resulting in competition and

negotiation among ethnic groups for influence, representation, and access to economic benefits.

According to Mohammed Babawo:

Buhari's rise to power was certainly helped by his northern background and his reputation among the Hausa-Fulani electorate. However, it's important to note that his platform also resonated with voters outside his ethnic group who were drawn to his promises of fighting corruption and his military background. The ethnic aspect was more prominent in securing the base, but his appeal extended beyond ethnicity, particularly in regions disillusioned with previous administrations.

This phenomenon has both historical roots and modern repercussions, impacting the political environment and policy decisions. Ethnic groups believed to be dominant or historically favored may have more access to political power and resources, which can worsen existing disparities. Furthermore, political elites may strategically influence ethnic identities in order to keep their power, employing resource allocation to gain ethnic support and loyalty.

According to the constructionist viewpoint, ethnic identities are formed via encounters, discourse, and political processes rather than being fixed, inherent, or natural. In the case of Nigeria, political elites frequently strategically manufacture and manipulate ethnic identities to further their own goals, notably in terms of power and resource distribution. Ethnicity can be used as a political mobilization tool, allowing elites to mobilize support, consolidate power, and get access to key resources.

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During elections or policy discussions, political elites may use ethnicity to mobilize support from specific ethnic groups. They can generate a sense of togetherness and common cause among members of the same ethnic group by stressing similar cultural qualities and historical grievances. This mobilization has the potential to expand political participation and influence, resulting in a greater voice in resource allocation. Babajide Aderogba notes that:

Ethnic considerations in policy decisions have often resulted in unequal resource distribution, with politically influential regions receiving more government attention. This imbalance has stoked resentment and has contributed to regional inequalities. There is a need for policies that allocate resources based on need rather than political loyalty, to foster more equitable development across the country.

Answering to show the nature of appointment in Nigeria, Ochie Samson a Civil Society Activist – South East highlights:

Ethnic considerations determine political appointments. The 'federal character' principle was introduced to ensure inclusivity, but in practice, it has led to tokenism rather than merit-based appointments, which negatively impacts governance efficiency. It causes marginalization of a group of ethnic groups or tribe. For example, appointment of ministers after the election the political party tries to balance the appointment or tries to balance their positions after victory. When ministers are being chosen, at least they will be pointing in order to balance their book they'll be appointing to people that are incapable or people that are not capable of doing works just to balance their, but for us to solve this problem, we have to do a politics of inclusion. Everybody will be included in politics, whether ethnicity or your tribal or

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your regional just have to include everyone after election. You just have to appoint people who are capable or who are competent that will work for you and do your very good work.

Also, Kanayo Uwabuoa a journalist – South East

The Buhari administration faced criticism for favoring appointments from the northern region. Many southerners felt excluded, and this perception of ethnic favoritism heightened political tensions during his tenure. Ethnic factors played a major role in the selection of political officeholders. Many appointments from 2015 to 2024 reflected ethnic balancing rather than a focus on qualifications or experience.

Ipaye Nasiru -Government Official – North Central

Believes the federal character principle, though well-intended, has not been fully effective. Instead of ensuring fair representation, it has been politicized, often benefiting elites rather than the ordinary citizens of different ethnic groups.

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The constructionist perspective emphasizes how political elites strategically employ resource distribution as a weapon to shape ethnic identities and preserve power. They may preferentially access government posts, contracts, and economic opportunities for their own ethnic group or allies. By doing so, they foster the impression that identifying with their leadership is critical for the ethnic group's economic well-being.

Dr. Mathiue Onyekachi further reaffirms:

Ethnic considerations had notable impacts on election outcomes, particularly in the 2015 and 2019 elections, where Muhammadu Buhari, a northern Muslim, enjoyed robust support across the northern states, driven largely by ethnic and religious

affiliation. Similarly, in 2023, the importance of ethnic identity was apparent, with candidates aiming to secure votes from their regions. Such ethnic affiliations have frequently led to voting patterns that reflect regional loyalties more than policy preferences.

Fidelis Dominic a Lieutenant colonel in Nigeria – South East

The role of institutions in mitigating ethnicity in politics should be strengthened. Electoral reforms should discourage ethnic-based mobilization and focus on political ideologies instead. He also believes that the persistent ethnic-based political crises have made Nigeria's internal security challenges worse. Groups that feel politically sidelined often resort to protests, militancy, or even violence. This is a major reason why security threats persist in the country. He concludes by saying the role of institutions in mitigating ethnicity in politics should be strengthened. Electoral reforms should discourage ethnic-based mobilization and focus on political ideologies instead.

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Sunday -Okire Eunice Chidinma Special Assistant to the Chairman Independent Electoral Commission believes that :

Ethnic-based political tensions have contributed to insecurity. Conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farming communities, as well as agitations from IPOB, have been worsened by ethnic divisions, making it harder for security agencies to maintain peace.

4.5 Influence of Ethnic Identity on Nigerian Voting Behavior

The issue of ethnic identification and its influence on voting behavior has received considerable attention in the study of political science, particularly in countries with complex and multi-ethnic communities such as Nigeria. Nigeria is frequently regarded as an ethnically diverse country, having over 250 unique ethnic groups and languages.

The intricate interplay between ethnic identities and voting behavior in Nigeria has been the focus of scholarly investigation, as it gives light on the dynamics of political involvement, electoral outcomes, and the larger implications for democratic governance.

As rightly pointed out by Olawande Olowoyeye, a youth leader of All Progressive Congress Party, one of the participants, he notes:

The role of ethnicity in voting and elections can significantly impart the democratic process in many countries. As we all know, ethnicity plays a crucial role in shaping voting pattern and influencing election outcomes. Ethnicity plays a crucial role in shaping voting. That is voting patterns and influencing election outcomes. Ethnic voting pattern can be influenced by various factors including cultural identity, historical experiences, and social economic interests.

The 2015, 2019, and 2023 elections all reflected strong ethnic considerations. Political parties deliberately selected running mates from different ethnic groups to balance their ticket, proving that ethnicity remains a decisive factor in Nigerian politics.Ethnic affiliations have been crucial to the success and failures of political parties. When a party fails to appeal to key ethnic groups, it loses elections, regardless of the competence of its candidates.

This is in line with the argument by Sule (2019), that a majority of Nigerian voters' vote based on their ethnicity. Similarly, Olukoshi (2003) observed that during elections, Nigerians frequently support politicians who share their ethnic identity (F. H. Ayatse & I. I. Akuva, 2013). However, the link between ethnic identification and voting behavior is not always clear. While ethnic identification does influence voting decisions, other factors such as candidate competency, issue-based appeals, and party

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affiliation also influence voter choices, according to Achanso, Benson, and Zuure (2021). This shows that Nigerian voters engage in a complex decision-making process including the consideration of various criteria.

Abimbola Amina Women's Rights Advocate – South West

Said women from different ethnic groups face double discrimination – first as women and second due to their ethnic background. Inclusive policies should not just focus on ethnic balance but also on gender representation.

4.6 Ethnic Voting Patterns:

This sub-theme focuses on examining the voting patterns observed during the presidential elections in Nigeria. It explores how ethnic identity influenced the voting behaviour of Nigerian citizens, including the extent to which voters aligned their choices based on ethnicity. The impact of ethnic identification on voting behavior in Nigeria is a complicated and substantial phenomenon that has impacted the country's political landscape for decades.

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The diversity in Nigeria has frequently been viewed as both a source of strength and a potential burden, particularly in political decision-making and election choices.

Olawande Olowoyeye also notes that:

Ethnic voting patterns can be influenced by various factors including cultural identity, historical experiences, and social economic interest. In some cases, ethnic group may vote along party lines or support candidates from their own ethnic background, leading to backlog, leading to block voting, which means this can result in a divided electorate with different ethnic groups supporting different parties or

candidates' impact on democratic process. You can put that one down. Impact on democratic process. Number one, representation and inclusivity. Representation and inclusivity. Under that representation and inclusivity, ethnic voting pattern can affect the representation of minority. That is minority group in government. Ethnic voting patterns can affect the representation of minority groups.

Because of historical events and societal dynamics, ethnic identity retains a deep place in the hearts and minds of Nigerians. The colonial heritage left an indelible mark on the country, as British rulers classified and identified different ethnic groups for administrative purposes. This categorization paved the way for ethnic consciousness and the establishment of separate ethnic identities, both of which have played important roles in influencing political affiliations and voting behaviors.

According to Success Dominion Retired Civil Servant – South-South

Institutions like INEC and civil society organizations must work to reduce ethnic influences in politics. Policies should focus on national integration rather than reinforcing ethnic divides through zoning arrangements. Ethnic militias and separatist movements like IPOB have significantly challenged Nigeria's political stability. These groups have gained traction because they claim their ethnic group has been politically sidelined for decades.

Dr. Mathiue Onyekachi who believes ethnic identity influences voting patterns respond:

The APC and PDP frequently utilize ethnic identities to rally support, especially when seeking votes in ethnic strongholds. Ethnic mobilization tactics have included selecting running mates from different regions to create a balanced ticket, though this

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has sometimes risked creating a purely ethnic basis for support rather than fostering national unity.

Nigerian politicians frequently exploit ethnic identification as a political mobilization weapon. They gain support by appealing to specific ethnic communities' shared history, culture, and interests. This entails boosting ethnic pride and portraying specific political parties or politicians as advocates of specific ethnic concerns. This type of mobilization has the potential to affect voters along ethnic lines, resulting in bloc voting. However, SP observes:

Ethnic mobilization has enabled the success of some regional parties, although it remains challenging for them to gain national influence. Newer parties, like the Labor Party, gained traction in 2023 due to dissatisfaction with the traditional parties rather than ethnic mobilization alone, suggesting that there is room for issue-driven appeal, though it remains difficult to break the hold of ethnically established parties.

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In Nigeria's varied and multi-ethnic culture, the interaction between political mobilization and ethnic appeals has a significant impact on determining voting patterns. Political mobilization refers to political parties, politicians, and other stakeholders' strategic efforts to engage and persuade voters to vote in elections. By presenting a compelling narrative and agenda, this approach tries to activate and drive voters' political choices. Political mobilization in Nigeria can take many different forms, including grassroots campaigns, rallies, door-to-door canvassing, and media engagement.

On the other hand, Ethnic appeals are the intentional exploitation of ethnic identity as a technique to gain support from specific ethnic groupings. This method capitalizes on individuals' emotional and psychological links to their ethnic backgrounds, with the goal of aligning political narratives with voters' cultural values and shared experiences. Campaign speeches, slogans, symbols, and pledges that resonate with certain ethnic communities are examples of ethnic appeals.

This dynamic relationship has major ramifications for electoral outcomes, party politics, and the operation of Nigeria's democratic system.

When candidates and parties use ethnic appeals effectively, they draw into the cultural unity of specific ethnic communities. Voters frequently support candidates who they believe reflect and safeguard their ethnic interests. Ethnic appeals promote a sense of solidarity among co-ethnics, resulting in coherent voting patterns. Voters feel a sense of oneness when political actors address topics that are important to their ethnic community. This homogeneity can lead to bloc voting, in which an entire ethnic group rallies behind a single candidate or party. This aligns the result generated from the interview.

In Nigeria, ethnic voting patterns are a complicated phenomenon influenced by a variety of factors that determine how different ethnic groups identify with political parties and candidates during elections. The country's diverse population, which includes over 250 ethnic groups, has resulted in a patchwork of voting practices influenced by historical, socioeconomic, and political considerations. This study dives into the differences in ethnic voting patterns among Nigerian areas, as well as the underlying factors that lead to these trends. Nigeria is divided into six geopolitical

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zones, each having its own cultural, linguistic, and historical background. In line with this, Babajide Aderogba opined:

Buhari's administration has faced scrutiny over ethnic composition, with many Nigerians feeling those appointments favored northern groups. Supporters argue this is due to Buhari's background and trust in individuals he knows well, while critics see it as an unfair advantage for the north.

It follows that identity politics has a substantial impact on ethnic voting trends. People frequently connect with the interests of their ethnic group and view these interests to be directly linked to specific political parties or politicians. As a result of this phenomena, voters prefer ethnic affiliations over policy reasons.

Dr, Gold Kafilah, Economist – North Central

"The Buhari administration faced criticism for favoring appointments from the northern region. Many southerners felt excluded, and this perception of ethnic favoritism heightened political tensions during his tenure.":

The impact, those are the things that affect the democratic process, the impact on democratic process. Number one, representation and inclusivity. That is ethnic voting. Ethnic voting patterns can affect the representation of minority groups in government, potentially leading to under representation or marginalization.

Mohammed Babawo believes leadership and political messaging influence ethnic voting respond:

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The ethnic makeup of Buhari's administration has been a controversial topic, with critics alleging that appointments favored the north. However, supporters argue that these appointments were based on loyalty and competence. The perception of ethnic bias has led to calls for more inclusive appointments to promote national unity, as many feel that better representation in government could enhance trust and cooperation across Nigeria's regions.

According to Prince Animasaun Yunus, Traditional Ruler – South West

Ethnic politics has weakened national unity. Many citizens feel marginalized due to the dominance of certain ethnic groups in governance. This has fueled separatist agitations and deepened divisions rather than fostering a national identity. Long-term ethnic-based political tensions will continue to undermine national unity. When people perceive that their ethnic group is politically marginalized, it breeds resentment and could lead to civil unrest or calls for secession.

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4.7 Measures for Ethnic Integration in Nigeria's Political System

Ethnic integration is a vital initiative in Nigeria's political system for fostering national unity, reducing contentious identity-based voting, and ensuring inclusive governance. Given the country's broad ethnic composition, executing ethnic integration policies is critical for long-term political stability and growth. In this section, we look at a variety of comprehensive methods that can be used to foster ethnic integration in Nigeria's political scene.

According to Dr Banjo Rukayat Bayero University and former INEC presiding officer: To ensure representation and inclusivity in Nigeria, the independent national Electoral Commission that is INEC, the INEC play a vital role in promoting fair elections. You understand the INEC play a vital role in promoting sphere Elections. Elections, okay. And I Next structure includes various officials such as the chairman, the national commissioners, resident electoral Commissioners, the National Electoral Commissioners. They are in the states and the resident electoral commissioner they supervise, they're the one in charge of the states and the electoral officers who work together to conduct and supervise elections.

Nigerian can mitigate this issue of governance by inclusion of governance, governance and got a policy that will help our independent national electoral commission in the national assemblies to put in policies that will work and help everyone for the society to promote inclusiveness of everyone and to let us know that wherever you come from and wherever you are being or wherever you are, what tribe you're coming from or what state you're coming from, are you allowed to compete, you are allowed to compete for the election. Constitutional reforms that enable different areas a degree of autonomy and control over their resources might alleviate sentiments of marginalization and foster collaboration among ethnic groups, so improving the general stability of Nigeria's political system. In Nigeria's heterogeneous political landscape, constitutional reform has been offered as a potential option for addressing ethnic tensions and promoting ethnic cohesion. Constitutional changes can have a significant impact on creating inclusivity and national cohesion by altering the structure of governance, power distribution, and representation.

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The incorporation of inclusive federalism concepts into the constitution can have a favorable impact on ethnic integration. The emphasis of inclusive federalism is on cooperation and shared decision-making among multiple levels of government. This approach recognizes ethnic diversity and includes them in policy creation and implementation. Suberu (2001) emphasizes the need for inclusive federalism in embracing Nigeria's ethnic communities' political and cultural diversity.

Constitutional change that protects minority rights can help to promote ethnic integration by protecting neglected ethnic groups. Explicit provisions safeguarding linguistic, cultural, and political rights help foster trust and inclusivity. According to Adebanwi (2014), recognizing and protecting minority rights in the constitution can alleviate sentiments of exclusion and foster national cohesion.

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4.8 Discussion of Findings

The research on the effect of ethnicity in the political system of Nigeria has revealed significant insights into the complex relationship between ethnic identity and various aspects of the country's political landscape. By analyzing participant responses and exploring sub-themes and major themes, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of ethnicity on Nigeria's political system.

Interview responses reveal that ethnic identity is a significant factor in political party formation and alignment, with participants highlighting the tendency of political parties to appeal to specific ethnic groups. Dr. Mathiue Onyekachi notes that ethnicity has become a central element in shaping Nigeria’s political alliances, strategies, and campaign promises, especially among the two dominant parties, APC and PDP. Dr.

Mathiue Onyekachi observation points to the notion that parties often form and operate along ethnic lines, seeking to consolidate support from Nigeria's three major ethnic groups: Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo.

This ethnically driven party structure reflects both historical and social contexts, where parties have emerged to represent specific ethnic constituencies rather than advocating for a unified national agenda. The reliance on ethnic bases aligns with the primordial viewpoint of ethnicity, suggesting that ethnic identity is deeply embedded in Nigerian politics and influences party structures. However, Mohammed Babawo response introduces a counter-narrative, suggesting that in recent years, especially in urban areas, there has been a growing trend among some voters to prioritize competence and integrity over ethnic affiliation. This shift could indicate an evolving political culture where urban voters are beginning to view ethnic affiliation as one of many factors, rather than the only determinant of political loyalty.

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Ethnicity's role in political mobilization was a recurring theme in participant responses. Interviewees Dr. Mathiue Onyekachi and Mohammed Babawo highlight the ways in which political parties leverage ethnic identity as a mobilizing tool. Mohammed Babawo explains that both the APC and PDP rely on ethnic support to secure their bases, suggesting that ethnic bloc voting remains a powerful force in Nigerian elections. According to Dr. Mathiue Onyekachi presidential candidates and their parties frequently appeal to ethnic loyalties, seeking support from dominant ethnic groups to increase their chances of success. These observations align with Suberu's (2001) analysis that Nigeria's federal structure has fostered intense competition among ethnic groups for political representation and resources.

However, while some participants like Dr. Mathiue Onyekachi assert that ethnicity is a predominant factor in mobilization, others offer a more balanced view. Mohammed Babawo suggests that a shift is occurring, especially in recent elections where some voters have prioritized issue-based factors like competence and integrity. Mohammed Babawo's perspective highlights a potential departure from ethnicity-dominated mobilization and hints at a growing appetite for performance-based politics. This view reflects an emerging generation of politically engaged Nigerians, particularly in urban centers, who may challenge traditional ethnic mobilization strategies.

Interviewees provided important insights into how ethnic considerations influence the allocation of power and resources within Nigeria's political system. According to Mohammed Babawo, Buhari's rise to power and his administration's approach to appointments were shaped by ethnic loyalties, particularly among his Hausa-Fulani base. Mohammed Babawo suggests that Buhari's ethnic background contributed to his initial appeal but notes that his promises to combat corruption and strengthen security also resonated with voters beyond his ethnic constituency. This complexity underscores the dual role of ethnic identity and broader issues in shaping political allegiance.

Babajide Aderogba's comments further illustrate the impact of ethnic favoritism on resource distribution, emphasizing that unequal access to resources and power can exacerbate tensions and contribute to regional disparities. Babajide Aderogba points out that politically influential regions, often aligned with certain ethnic groups, have historically received more government attention, reinforcing perceptions of marginalization among less influential groups. The interview data suggest that this

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pattern has created an environment where political elites capitalize on ethnic divisions to secure support, a finding consistent with the constructionist perspective. According to this viewpoint, ethnic identities are not fixed but are actively shaped by political elites who use resource allocation to maintain their hold on power.

Fidelis Dominic's response highlights how ethnic favoritism in appointments leads to perceived or actual incompetency in government roles, as positions are sometimes filled to satisfy ethnic quotas rather than on merit. Fidelis Dominic advocates for a "politics of inclusion" where appointments should be based on competency to foster unity and effective governance. This perspective resonates with the ongoing calls for political reforms aimed at reducing ethnic bias in appointments, which could strengthen public trust in governance and promote equitable development across Nigeria's regions.

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Ethnic identity's influence on voting behavior was a focal point of the interview responses, with participants offering varying perspectives. Olawande Olowoyeye asserts that ethnicity is a major determinant in voting decisions, describing how ethnic affiliations shape voting patterns and lead to bloc voting. This assertion aligns with the argument by Sule (2019) and other scholars that Nigerian voters often prioritize ethnic identity when selecting candidates, potentially at the expense of other considerations such as candidate qualifications or policy positions.

Babajide Aderogba and Dr. Mathiue Onyekachi elaborate on the nature of ethnic voting patterns, explaining how politicians strategically leverage ethnic identities to secure votes in their respective strongholds. For example, Dr. Mathiue Onyekachi

points out that the APC and PDP frequently utilize ethnic identities to gain support, often selecting running mates from different regions to create an ethnically balanced ticket. This practice is intended to appeal to Nigeria's major ethnic groups and create a perception of inclusivity, though it risks reinforcing ethnic divisions rather than fostering national unity.

Mohammed Babawo's observations reveal that while ethnic voting patterns remain prevalent, there is a shift toward a more performance-oriented voter base, particularly among younger, urban voters who may prioritize issues like integrity and competence over ethnic considerations. This trend suggests that while ethnic identity is still a powerful force in voting behavior, it may gradually give way to issue-based politics, especially as Nigeria's younger generations become more politically engaged and informed

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The interview responses suggest a strong consensus on the need for measures to promote ethnic integration in Nigeria's political system. Participants like Dr Banjo Rukayat a propose that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) could play a vital role in fostering fair elections and mitigating ethnic-based biases by ensuring an inclusive process, further suggests that constitutional reforms could help promote inclusivity by enabling greater participation of all ethnic groups in governance, thereby reducing ethnic tensions and promoting a sense of national unity. This emphasis on fair elections and inclusive policies resonates with theories of inclusive federalism, which advocate for a political system that accommodates ethnic diversity while fostering national unity. The document and interviews emphasize that addressing ethnic disparities in resource distribution, political appointments, and

policy-making is essential for building a cohesive society. By implementing policies that safeguard the rights and representation of all ethnic groups, Nigeria could mitigate ethnic-based grievances and work toward a more unified political landscape.

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CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

Research on the effect of ethnicity on the country's political system has looked at a range of issues and sub-themes in attempt to understand the dynamics and implications of ethnic identity in Nigeria's political environment. The participant responses analysis makes it abundantly evident that ethnicity plays a substantial role in the formation of political parties, voting behavior, and variance in ethnic voting patterns. The report also highlights the importance of ethnic integration measures in Nigeria's political system, including as electoral and constitutional reforms, civic education and awareness campaigns, interethnic dialogue, and conflict resolution.

The results show that the majority of participants believe that in Nigeria, ethnic identification has an impact on political party formation and voter behaviour. Ethnic voting blocs are shown to change, and sociopolitical variables, regional dynamics, and leadership all have a significant impact on how ethnic groups vote. The relevance of ethnic participation in political institutions and the demand for actions to encourage ethnic integration in Nigeria's political system are also acknowledged by participants.

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The research on the effect of ethnicity in the political system of Nigeria has shed light on the intricate relationship between ethnic identity and various aspects of the country's political landscape. Through the analysis of participant responses and the exploration of sub-themes and major themes, several key findings have emerged.

Firstly, the research indicates that ethnicity plays a significant role in political party formation in Nigeria. The historical context of Nigeria, marked by diverse ethnic groups and a colonial legacy, has shaped the formation of political parties along ethnic lines. The participants' responses highlight the influence of ethnic identity and mobilization in political party formation, emphasizing how historical factors and power dynamics have contributed to the proliferation of ethnic-based parties. Additionally, the study has examined how ethnic identification affects voting patterns in Nigeria, paying particular attention to ethnic voting patterns, political mobilization, socioeconomic determinants, and the perception of ethnic representation.

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The replies from the participants highlight the complexity of racial voting patterns, with the majority noting changes in racial voting blocs as well as the influence of socio-political variables and regional dynamics on these patterns. Participants view leadership and political messaging to be important variables in influencing voting decisions, demonstrating the importance of these factors on ethnic voting behavior. Further underlining the need for inclusive representation that reflects the diversity of Nigeria's ethnic groupings, the participant responses underscore the significance of ethnic representation in political institutions.

Building upon these findings, it becomes evident that measures for ethnic integration are crucial in Nigeria's political system. The research has explored various sub-themes, including constitutional reforms, electoral reforms, civic education and awareness, and interethnic dialogue and conflict resolution. The participants' responses underscore the importance of these measures in promoting ethnic integration and fostering a more inclusive political system.

In conclusion, the research on the effect of ethnicity in the political system of Nigeria has provided valuable insights into the complexities of ethnic identity and its impact on political party formation, voting behavior, and measures for ethnic integration. The analysis of participant responses has highlighted the need for constitutional reforms, electoral reforms, civic education and awareness, and interethnic dialogue and conflict resolution as key steps towards fostering a more inclusive and cohesive political system in Nigeria.

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5.2 Recommendations

Given these results, it is critical to take into account the following suggestions:

1. Constitutional Reforms: The study emphasizes the need for constitutional changes to address difficulties with resource allocation, power distribution, and minority rights. This statement is supported by academic research, which has highlighted the importance of constitutional reforms in managing ethnic diversity and promoting equal representation within political institutions (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2011). Constitutional changes are essential for controlling racial diversity and guaranteeing fair representation in political structures. According to Adebanwi and Obadare

(2011), constitutional changes can solve problems with resource distribution, power distribution, and minority rights.

2. These changes might entail reexamining the make-up of legislative bodies, enacting affirmative action laws, and putting in place safeguards for minority rights. For instance, to encourage ethnic inclusion, nations like South Africa and Kenya have enacted constitutional modifications. According to Adebanwi and Obadare (2011), the post-apartheid constitution of South Africa includes provisions for proportional representation and the recognition of cultural and linguistic rights. Similar to this, Kenya's 2010 constitution added devolution, establishing a framework that enables regional representation and fair resource distribution (Hope, 2014). Nigeria can ensure that all ethnic groups are fairly represented in the political system, diminishing the dominance of specific groups and fostering inclusivity, by enacting constitutional revisions.

3. Electoral Reforms: The study emphasizes how crucial electoral reforms are for achieving inclusive and fair elections. According to academic literature, election reforms are needed to improve representation, lessen voter discrimination, and provide all ethnic groups an equal chance at success (Muhammad, Egye, & Etim, 2023). Election changes are necessary to ensure inclusive and fair elections, which are fundamental for racial integration. According to (Muhammad et al., 2023), election changes can improve representation, lessen voter discrimination, and provide all ethnic groups an equal chance at success. Electoral boundary changes to ensure more equitable representation, the establishment of independent electoral

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commissions, and the promotion of transparent and accountable electoral procedures are a few examples of these reforms. Election reforms have been adopted in nations like Ghana to promote racial harmony. To promote fair and inclusive elections, Ghana implemented proportional representation, set aside seats for underrepresented groups, and formed an independent electoral commission (Osei-Hwedie & Agomor, 2018). Nigeria can level the playing field for all ethnic groups, lessen electoral inequities, and increase voter confidence in the political process by enacting electoral reforms.

4. Civic Education and Awareness: The study emphasizes the significance of initiatives to foster tolerance, understanding, and a sense of shared citizenship across Nigeria's numerous ethnic groups. Civic education can support a political system that is more inclusive and can strengthen a feeling of national identity (Banks, 2017).

5. Interethnic discussion and Conflict Resolution: The study emphasizes the value of interethnic discussion and conflict resolution in promoting mutual respect, trust, and collaboration between various ethnic groups. Forging understanding, trust, and collaboration among various ethnic groups requires interethnic discussion and conflict resolution initiatives. These activities may include the creation of forums for discussion, development of interethnic conversation, and promotion of peacebuilding programs. For instance, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was essential in fostering communication, racial harmony, and healing between various ethnic groups in post-apartheid South Africa (Clark, 2012). Nigeria may foster open and productive dialogue, resolve complaints, and try to create

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a more inclusive and cohesive society by fostering interethnic dialogue and conflict resolution.

5.2.1 Recommendation for Further Studies

Further studies on the effect of ethnicity in the political system of Nigeria can build upon the existing research and explore additional areas of inquiry. Here are some recommendations for future studies:

Comparative Analysis: Conduct comparative studies to examine the effect of ethnicity in the political systems of other countries or regions. By comparing Nigeria with other multi-ethnic societies, researchers can gain insights into different strategies and approaches to managing ethnic diversity in the political sphere. This could provide valuable lessons and best practices for Nigeria's political system.

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Intersectionality and Identity: Explore the intersectionality of ethnicity with other identity factors, such as religion, gender, and socioeconomic status, in shaping political behaviors and party formations. Investigate how these multiple identities interact and influence political attitudes, voting patterns, and party affiliations.

Policy Analysis: Undertake policy-focused studies to evaluate the effectiveness of measures aimed at promoting ethnic integration in Nigeria's political system. Analyze the impact of specific constitutional reforms, electoral reforms, civic education programs, and interethnic dialogue initiatives on enhancing inclusivity and reducing ethnic divisions. Assess the implementation challenges and identify potential areas for improvement.

Role of Media and Technology: Investigate the role of media, social media platforms, and technological advancements in shaping ethnic voting behaviors, political party formations, and the overall political landscape. Examine how media narratives, information dissemination, and online networks influence perceptions of ethnicity and political participation

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

1. How does ethnicity impact political party affiliations in Nigeria, and what are the implications for the country's political landscape?

2. What role does ethnicity play in voting patterns during Nigerian elections, and how does this impact the democratic process?

3. How does ethnicity influence political representation and appointments in Nigeria, and what are the consequences for governance?

4. What are the implications of ethnic politics on national unity and development in Nigeria, and how can these challenges be addressed?

5. How can Nigeria mitigate the influence of ethnicity in its political system, and what role can institutions, civil society, and individuals play in this process?

6. To what extent do political parties in Nigeria use ethnic appeals to mobilize support?

7. What role does ethnicity play in the appointment and representation of political officeholders in Nigeria?

8. How has the principle of "federal character" been used to balance ethnic representation in government positions?

9. What are the long-term effects of ethnic-based political tensions on Nigeria's national unity?

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10. How do ethnic militias and separatist movements, such as IPOB, challenge Nigeria's political cohesion?

11.In what ways did ethnic considerations influence the outcomes of the 2015, 2019, and 2023 general elections?

12.To what extent have ethnic affiliations impacted the success and failures of political parties during this period?

13.How has the ethnic composition of Buhari's administration influenced governance from 2015 to 2023?

14.What role did ethnicity play in the selection of major political officeholders (ministers, governors, National Assembly members) between 2015 and 2024?

15. How has ethnic-based political tension influenced Nigeria's internal security challenges, such as Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen conflict, and separatist movements like IPOB, during 2015-2024?

16. How has ethnic-based political tension influenced Nigeria's internal security challenges, such as Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen conflict, and separatist movements like IPOB, during 2015-2024?

Appendix 2: List of Informants

1. Dr. Mathiue Onyekachi,
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3. Baba Jide.
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4. Mohammed Babawo
Supervisory Presiding Officer (SPO) at INEC

5. Ochie Samson
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6. Sunday -Okire Eunice Chidinma
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