
Cultural and Ethnic Pluralism: Implications for National Integration in Nigeria

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Abstract

National integration is one of the un-accomplished desires in Nigeria. This paper examines cultural cum ethnic pluralism and national integration in Nigeria. The objective is to prove how cultural diversities and ethnic differences play negative roles against achieving national integration and cohesiveness in Nigeria. Basic concepts, such as: culture, ethnicity, ethnic pluralism, cultural pluralism, national integration and other related terms are clarified. The functions of culture as well as the cultural patterns of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria are discussed. This paper also, addresses the problems of cultural and ethnic pluralism in Nigeria to ensure unity within diversity for a strong, united, virile and democratic society in Nigeria. Among other suggestions, this paper recommends that massive cultural education should be embarked upon by relevant agencies, like the National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to take pride in the strength and plurality of Nigeria. It concludes that Nigerians see themselves first as members of one cultural or ethnic group or the other, and secondarily as Nigerians. This does not promote national integration and nationhood. Hence, it suggests the way forward that would enhance national integration, which is crucial for peace and the development of the Nigerian people.

Key words: Culture, ethnicity, cultural pluralism, ethnic pluralism, national integration

Introduction

The merging of the Southern and Northern Protectorates in 1914 (premature amalgamation) gave birth to the geographical entity called Nigeria. According to Ademoyega (1981) cited in Ngele (2008) Nigeria emerged as a nation in 1914 when Sir Frederick Lord Lugard brought together what was then the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria under a single administrative system. Prior to this date, the political entity called Nigeria today was administered in separate smaller units: the Northern Nigeria, the Colony of Lagos and the Southern Nigeria. Nigeria is a culturally heterogeneous and multi-ethnic country. Her cultural diversity is no doubt a factor of our linguistic disparity that equals to the number of ethnic groups. There are varied conceptions of culture. However, the popular usage of culture tends to equate it with refined ways of behavior. Hence, a man who is said to be “cultured” is taken as a man who “... speaks courteously, shows consideration for others, and has no vulgar, offensive habits ...”

(Dressier, 1969). One may also be considered as “cultured” when one is either educated or observes the rules of etiquette. Hence, when somebody is misbehaving, he may be colloquially referred to as “uncultured”, meaning that he has no culture. Though he has a culture like every other person, the assertion that he is not cultured implies that he has deviated from the generally accepted way of life. Some of these everyday usages of the word “culture” apparently constitute parts of culture but do not completely represent everything culture entails. Culture thus has two patterns – the ideal and the behavioral pattern. The ideal pattern is the normative or generally accepted way of life or the accepted and expected behavior. The behavioral pattern is the actual action of the given person. If there is a gap between the accepted way and the actual behavior, deviant

behavior ensures. It brings chaos and conflict. For example, a person stealing or walking naked in public is seen as a deviant.

National integration is the collective orientation of members of a society towards the nation and its society in such a way that micro- loyalties are not allowed to jeopardize the continued existence of the nation and its objectives, goals and ideals (Sanda, 1999) cited in (Falade & Falade, 2013). The purpose of national integration is to build a united and strong nation. Nigeria is made up of diverse communities each of which has its own peculiar cultural background and value system. National integration and unity require coordinated and concerted efforts towards unified value system that can promote oneness. Nigeria as a heterogeneous society with more than 250 ethnic groups is confronted with historical problems that have impeded national integration and unity (Falade & Falade, 2013).

The wave of ethnic chauvinism, religious fanaticism, tribal loyalty, political intolerance and insurgency in Nigeria has reached the extent that it is alarming - if not arrested it is capable of breaking- up the entire country into fragments. It is the desire to establish and build the Nigerian nation that led to the nationalist struggle. However, the various agitations and clamor for a just and equitable nation, the need to convene a sovereign national conference, the fear of marginalization, insecurity, right to self-determination, the never-ending Niger Delta crisis (especially hostage taking and kidnapping), the blood thirsty Boko-Haram in the North East of Nigeria, as well as recent Fulani herdsman crisis are all indications that something is definitely wrong with the Nigerian state.

Concept of National Integration

Generally, national integration is concerned with making a whole out of the components (different ethnic nationalities) that make up a nation state. The various ethnic nationalities have different cultures and resources (human resources, natural

resources: whether petroleum or solid mineral resources, agricultural resources etc). Duverger (1976) cited in Amali and Jekayinfa (2013) explained integration as, the process of uniting a society which tends to make it harmonious, where harmonious society is the elimination of the antagonism dividing it, and the struggle which threatens to tear it apart as an integrated community. Ernest cited in Atake and Dodo (2010) sees national integration as a process whereby political actors in several distinct nationalities are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new center.

The concept of national integration, according to Kyari (2005) cited in Arisi (2011), is a process of uniting groups with different backgrounds into one entity bound by common norms, values and interests. Contributing to the conceptualization of the concept of national integration, Arisi (2011) conceptualized national integration as a form of social nurturing, uniting various groups in the society through a common identity by putting aside major differences but at the same time not ignoring the original identity of each group. National integration as a concept can be regarded as a conscious process of creating an interlocking and vertical relationship between and among hitherto separate nations, after an understanding and reconciliation of the fundamental differences and an establishment of an acceptable consensus.

Concept of Culture

Culture is a universal phenomenon with multifarious meanings, interpretations and applications. In this chapter, culture is viewed from the social science perspective. To the social scientists culture is used to refer to the totality of a man's ways of life, including, behaviors, knowledge, beliefs, traditions, customs, religion, music, art and craft, dressing, food, and any other capabilities. Hornby, A.S. (2010) defined culture as the customs and beliefs, art, ways of life and social organization of a particular country or group. In simple terms, it is the totality

of a people's way of life. This includes history, religion, morality, economics, politics, social life (marriage, leisure, rites of passage, behavioral traits and patterns), literature, music, folklore and belief systems (Abara, 2011). Culture is generally defined as the way a people live. It embraces knowledge, ideas, behavior and objects that constitute the common heritage of a people. Culture is thus collectively owned, as it possesses general acceptability. A pioneer British anthropologist, Edward B. Tylor has provided a definition of culture that has continued to influence the perception of culture. According to him, culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor, 1871). In the same vein, Kroeber and Kluckhohn cited in Odor (2002) observe that culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts. The essential core of culture consists of traditional, that is, historically derived and selected ideas and especially their attached values.

The Cultural Policy of Nigeria (1988) defines culture as "the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in the attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political and economic aesthetic and religious norms and mode of organization thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours". Gbotokume (2002) cited in Egbule,

(2018) supports this definition by asserting that culture is a product of history, which reflects a people's way of life, their adaptation to their physical, social and ideological milieu. Culture covers everything made by man in his environment and embraces the things we believe in, and the things we value and appreciate. It is also a distinctive way of life of a people; their complete design for living.

A synthesis of the above definitions reveals that culture may be conceptualized as the totality of the way of life of a people which is socially learned, accepted and approved, and shared by members of a group or a society in the process of social interaction. Implicit in this definition, is the fact that it is not all the ways of life or behavior of a people that can be referred to as cultural. This is because some ways of life may be idiosyncratic to an individual or to a very small group of persons acting eccentrically, and do not want to respect the dominant culture. The ways of life of a people which are regarded as cultural are those limited to the socially approved behavior which a large segment of the society or group expects and accepts. Culture, in my opinion is simply the way a group of people chose to live or do their own things, which make them unique from other people.

Concepts of Ethnicity and Ethnic Pluralism

Ethnicity is generally described as the awareness on the part of a particular community of having a separate identity based on common history, race, language, religion, culture and territory; while an ethnic group is defined as a community of people who share cultural and linguistic characteristics

Including history, tradition, myth, and origin. According to Achebe (1983) ethnicity is discrimination against a citizen because of his place of birth. In Nigeria the word ethnicity and tribalism are used interchangeably.

Literarily, pluralism derives from the word “plural” meaning more than one. Hornby (2010) sees pluralism as the existence of many different groups of people one society, for example people different races or of different political or religious belief. Ethnic pluralism, therefore, is the heterogeneous nature of a society, which is characterized by diverse cultures, multi-lingualism and varying socio-political affinity; embodying various larger and smaller groups. Kalu (2000) threw more light on indices of a pluralistic society when he alluded to the fact

that pluralism has many dimensions viz: the sociological level, the cultural values, so that the consistent part of the nation-state may have competing visions about life and the good of the nation. The heterogeneous nature of Nigeria in terms of diverse religious, ethnic and political affinity had made her a veritable pluralistic society (Ngele, 2008).

Conceptualizing Cultural Pluralism and other Related Concepts

Some concepts are pivotal in this paper. For better comprehension, this paper will briefly conceptualize them. Some of them are clarified below:

Cultural Pluralism

Cultural pluralism or diversity is a term used to describe a situation when ethnic groups within a larger society maintain their distinct cultural identities, and their values and practices are only accepted by the wider culture provided they are

consistent with the laws and values of the wider society (Science Encyclopaedia, 2007). Cultural diversity was defined by the UNESCO's 33rd General Convention in Paris in October 2005 as "the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies." These expression are used by human beings to identify themselves in their localities. These identities could be manifested in food, dress, housing, language, occupation, cultural activities, goods, services, values and living. These diversities are nurtured and promoted by artists and other stakeholders in the creative industry. Some of these cultural expressions include; our different mode of dressing, linguistic differences, festivals, ceremonies, celebrations, shrines, artifacts (both antiquities and contemporary), monuments, architecture, food, etc (Abara, 2011).

Culture Evolution

This is a gradual and continuous process of change in which a trait or behavioral attitude loses some form but retain the essential things of the old culture. An old idea could be improved upon. Culture could change due to inter-cultural borrowing from another culture or when two cultures meet. Lack of transmission can also make an aspect of cultural lifestyle to become extinct. Modification of a people's way of life over a long period reflects in behavior, organizational structures and institutions.

Acculturation

This is a process whereby there is a continuous contact between two or more cultures, in which one group takes on the elements of the other. For example, the contact between European and Nigerian culture through British colonization has brought about a change in our mode of social organization, both economically and politically. In fact, some of the strengths of cultural contact in Nigeria include formal education, improved science and technology, abolition of some archaic and barbaric cultural practices like human sacrifice, maltreatment of widows (rites of widowhood), killing of twin babies, early marriage, marginalization of woman etc. On the contrary, the introduction of western culture has led to the extinction of our moral values; in fact, moral decay and loss of family values, in the present-day Nigeria, are traceable to cross-cultural influences. Various forms of homosexuality such as gayism, lesbianism, bi-gender, trans-gender, same-sex-marriage and other forms or similar abominations were alien to Nigerian culture.

Enculturation

This has to do with the condition or ability of an individual to adopt or accept the elements of his own culture, such as the norms, discipline, skills, social roles etc, and adjust into his culture fully through socialization process.

Culture Shock

This is the profound emotional reaction from a person at first contact with a different culture. It involves the inability to make sense of the behavior of person from a different culture, or predict the action of a person from a different culture area. Culture shock could exist when we first move out to settle within another ethnic group. For example, a southern Christian may be shocked at seeing Moslem woman in the north clad in black and black attires from head to toe, for the first time.

Cultural Diffusion

This is the process whereby there is inter- cultural influence or borrowing, that is, when two different cultures meet. It is a pitiable truism that our positive culture of being your brother's keeper (communal society) is no longer practicable due to our contact with western culture that promotes individualism.

Cultural Revival

Cultural revival is a form of re-birth or re- discovery of lost cultural heritage and spiritual tenets, which binds a people together. In other words, it means bringing back once esteemed cultural values that had disappeared or gone into extinction.

Cultural Sustainability

Sustainability as a concept is described as the ability of a thing, idea, principle or value to be sustained, supported, upheld or confirmed (Wikipedia, 2018). Cultural sustainability results in the preservation of knowledge, morals, and values handed down to the younger generations, which is of great significance for sustainable development. Globalization has significantly adulterated the traditional culture of the underdeveloped and the developing countries of the world, including Nigeria. Some aspects of culture that have been adulterated include dress codes, marriage and marital practices, moral values, mode of eating and food types etc. Cultural Extinction

This is the falling apart or disappearance of once esteemed cultural values. The forces of colonialism, cultural imperialism, Americanization and globalization had greatly influenced and are still influencing our cherished cultural values. The advent of modern technologies is another major factor that fosters cultural extinction. There is no gainsaying that Nigerian value system is on the threshold of extinction and the process of total decay. Hence, the need to invigorate them through the instrumentality of the mass media is imperative.

Culture Area

Culture Area is seen as the environment where a particular culture strives. According to Ahimatie and Iwegbu (2014), culture area is defined as a contiguous geographic area comprising a number of societies that possess the same or similar cultural traits or that share a dominant cultural orientation. Okumagba cited in Egbule (2018) defined culture area as “a geographical area occupied by people whose cultures exhibit a significant degree of similarities with each other as well as a significant degree of dissimilarities with the culture of others.

Cultural Patterns of the Major Ethnic Groups in Nigeria

All ethnic groups in Nigeria such as the Hausa, Fulanis, Igbo, Yoruba, Edo, Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, Ijaw, Gwari, Idoma etc have cultural commonalities which include marriage, language, weaning, funeral rites, postnatal care, music, dance, education, personal names, cooking and eating, residence and inheritance rules, penal sanction, Housing, incest taboos, religious rituals, law, games, kin groups, trade, visiting, joking. The factors accountable for cultural similarities include dynamics of group life, constitutional nature of man, similarities in human beings in their fundamental make up, the fulfillment of necessary requisites for social living i.e. reproduction and training of the young to be useful members of the society.

Nonetheless, even within these general cultural universals, there are variations in the cultural universals when it comes to examining specific similarities or the content of the similarities. For example, there are the family and kinship systems in all cultures. However, while some family systems are patrilineal like in most parts of Nigeria, some are matrilineal; some are patriarchal while some are matriarchal. Cultural divergences or variabilities result more from geographic isolation, cultural persistence, cultural insulation or lack of cultural contact, the availability or unavailability of natural resources with or without the skilled manpower to utilize the available natural resources for a culture's technological development, migration of people with technological know-how into one culture to the exclusion of others, richness of cultural heritage and language of a culture, the culture's prevailing ideologies, speed or action or slowness to adapt to new changes, cultural lag and a culture in communications (print media and electronic media) blackout than from ethnic differences or differences in climatic and geographic conditions. The cultural pattern of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, that is the Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo are discussed below: Dressing

Different dressing patterns abound nationwide. The Hausa/Fulani are identified with the wearing of a big gown called "baba riga" over "sokoto" a baggy trouser. White is the most common colour which comes in different textures of material, preferably of cotton or linen given the hot desert climate of Northern Nigeria. A cap to match (of the same material) is worn on the head. Some pieces of cloth may be tied round the cap with the end falling on the shoulders. Their women wear blouses over wrapper tied round the waist. They may in addition cover their head, shoulders and hand with cloth in accordance with Islamic injunction which frowns at undue exposures of a woman's body (hijab).

The Yoruba wear "agbada" long wide gown that extends to the knee and wrists. It may be intricately embroidered around the neck and in the chest region. This is worn over a pair of trousers

called “sokoto” which may be embroidered around the ankle. A short jumper called “buba” or “dansiki” may also be worn on top of the “sokoto”. At times, “agbada” may be worn on top of the buba and sokoto in a three-piece fashion. A cap of similar material is worn on the head to match. Native woven material called “aso-oke” is the traditional material. However, modern fabrics of different shade such as lace, linen and brocade could also be used.

Yoruba woman wear blouse called “buba” tucked into a wrapper called “iro”. A third piece may be hung on the shoulder called “iborun”. A head tie is woven in different styles around the head. It should be noted that Hausa and Yoruba dressig share similarities in style and design. This may point To cultural contact over the decades between the Oyo Empire and Usuman Dan Fodio’s Sokoto Empire before the advent of British colonialism. This acculturation process in dressing has continued and extended to other ethnic groups in Nigeria. The “agbada”, “sokoto” and “baba riga”, “kaftan” dressing culture has now become a national dressing habit.

The Igbo wear a jumper over a flowing wrapper. A native cap with a tail like ending is worn on the head. Titleholders are particularly identified with red coloured cap. The women put on a blouse over a wrapper usually of different materials but with agreeable colours.

Feeding

Among the Hausa, the popular food includes pounded rice called “tuwo”, fresh cow milk and other varieties of cereals and cow based food.

The Yoruba eat “amala” made from yam or plantain flour and “ewedu” soup. Other soups include “igbegiri” (beans soup). Snacks such as “agidi”, “akamu” made from corn flour and “akara” or bean cake are common diet. Eba or garri made from cassava is also a staple diet.

The Igbo staple foods are made from tubers and vegetables. Such tubers include cassava, cocoyam, yams etc. “Akpu” or “santana” is a common diet. Other foods like eba or garri, like the Yorubas, is taken with a variety of soup laced with vegetables.

Music and Dance

Virtually all Nigerian cultures have their own traditions of music and dance, which are central to the way Nigerians remember their past and

Celebrate their present. Songs and dances are played on drums, flutes, trumpets, stringed instruments, xylophones, and thumb pianos, and are often linked to specific places and events, such as the harvest. Although traditional songs and dance continue in modern Nigeria especially in rural areas and on ceremonial occasions, their central place in Nigerian life is threatened by the spread of radios, tape recorders, video cassette recorders (VCRs), and other mass-culture media, especially among the youths. Sometimes, however, modern media allow musicians using traditional instruments and forms to reach a mass audience. In Nigeria, music and dance are used for different occasions: during celebrations like marriage, birth, initiations and funeral ceremonies. They are also used during games, war and work.

Popular music in Nigeria began in the late 1940s with the arrival of highlife music from Ghana. Highlife blended Western sounds ranging from big bands and guitars with African beats and instruments. Among the leading early bands were those of Rex Jim Lawson and Victor Olaiya. During the 1960s and 1970s, King Sunny Ade and I. K. Dairo, among others, established a new style of music known as juju music. A rhythmic dance music style, juju blends Western instruments with elements of traditional African music. In the 1980s and 1990s, Fela Anikulapo Kuti commanded a large following, both in Nigeria and internationally, with a form of Afro-Beat inspired

by funk, jazz, and highlife and accompanied by provocative lyrics in Yoruba and pidgin. Popular music stars of recent years include Victor Uwaifo, Charlie (Boy) Oputa, Onyeka Onwenu, Christie Essien Igbokwe, Wasiu Ayinde Marshal, Femi Kuti (Fela's son) and Lagbaja. Most recently, music stars like P Square, Wizkid, Davido, Tuface Idibia, Nneka, Waje, P Square and D'Banj.

Arts and Cultural Festivals

People who belong to the same culture often have similar art forms. Generally, Africa has a rich tradition of arts and crafts. African arts and crafts find expression in a variety of wood carvings, brass and leather works. Africa arts and crafts also include cowry, sculpture, paintings, pottery, masks, ceremonies and religious headgears and dresses. A good example is the Bakongo Voodoo masks from the Kongo central region of the Democratic Republic of the Kongo. Art works may be used to associate a city or a state with greatness. In Nigeria, her diverse artistic works especially the Benin arts have raised the name and fame of Nigeria throughout the world. For example, in Edo State, we have the bronze carving of the Edo people and Royal Benin ivory mask, one of Nigeria's most recognized artifacts of the Benin Empire in the 16th century. In Plateau State, they have the famous carvings known as the Nok culture. In fact, Africans in general and Nigerians in particular are known for hard work, in fact, they are achievement driven people. They firmly believe in philosophy of the dignity of labour. Nigeria is a land rich with a variety of arts. Every corner of the country is blessed with one form of art or another.

Cultural festivals are to commemorate religious events and to honor deities. Nigerian cultural festivals are occasions to inculcate the culture of the people because each festival has special aims and activities for celebration. For instance, the new yam festival is an annual festival among the Igbo (eastern Nigeria) it is called “iri ji”. According to Okaneme (2010), “iri ji” is a festival of thanksgiving to God for the year's rich

agricultural harvest. We also have Osun and Eyo Festivals in the west as well as the Sharo/Shadi and Argungu Fishing Festivals in northern Nigeria.

Functions of Culture

Culture is a way of life evolved by a given people over the years. It is a life style that comes because of accumulated knowledge and experiences given the peculiar environment the people found themselves. It controls their ideas and philosophy of life. It is manifested in behavioral patterns and practical production of material objects with which the people interact with their environment. According to Egbule (2018), culture performs the following functions:

1. Culture is a tool for societal living. The knowledge of culture and its application help transform a person from mere biological being to a social being. It gives order and meaning to the mode of social organization a people have evolved over a period.
2. Culture plays the role of identity and heritage for a distinct people rather than being swallowed by other cultures. In other words, it distinguishes a people from their neighbours or other groups of people. The knowledge and past experiences inform the ideas on how to go about a given issue.
3. Culture is an agent of communication. As man interacts with his neighbours in the society, his culture informs his particular mode of communication or language. It is with this language he interacts and communicates ideas with, and to his fellow being. Man can equally communicate through music.
4. It emphasizes dignity of labour, promotes social and moral values. It informs man on how to grow his crops for food, how to enjoy his life through play, music or dance. In order to survive as he interacts with his environment, he builds a house

to live in, a chair to sit on, a cutlass for farming, and a means of movement all these forms the scope of culture.

5. Culture defines the specific roles of individuals both as members of a family and a given society. For instance, the roles of fathers, mothers and children differ in the family. In addition, age grade (peers) performs specific duties as stipulated by the people's culture.
6. Culture regulates human behavior and conduct. It provides roles that govern the members of a given society. For instance, most cultures do not approve people marrying their blood relatives or pre-marital sexual relationship. On attaining adulthood, culture shapes how one performs his marriage ceremonies. At death every ethnic group has a peculiar way of burying their dead.
7. Culture creates job opportunities (source of income) through creative arts and craft works. In addition, most people in Nigeria are farmers because farming as an occupation has been inherited from their fore fathers.
8. It promotes healthy competition, as well as national development, through cultural festivals/days. Culture establishes ways of meeting our biological needs. For example, marriage, reproduction, family life, how to raise one's children (child upbringing) and even social interaction are all within the confines of culture.
9. Culture promotes unity (oneness), love, loyalty among the people of the same culture area. In fact, people who share the same cultural traits such as common values or language, tend to be united by those traits or elements.

Does Cultural and Ethnic Pluralism Hinder National Integration in Nigeria?

Nigeria is a heterogeneous society with ethnic pluralism that is rooted in diverse cultures. Historically, Nigeria is a creation of the British, which became a geo-political entity in 1914, when the northern and southern protectorates were amalgamated. This pre-mature “wedlock” has been a major challenge to the Nigerian people. After independence, the desire to achieve genuine “nationhood” became a matter of concern, since unity is a sine-qua-non to peace, progress and development. However, majority of Nigerians are so conscious of their place of origin, birth and language. In fact, the ethnic factor has played a negative role on national integration and nation building in Nigeria. In agreement to the above assertion, Fadeyiye (2005), states that ethnicity has continued to colour the political climate in Nigeria since the amalgamation of 1914. It has therefore obstructed the building of a strong, dynamic and progressive nation. In view of this, it remains impractical to build a nation from nations, nor develop national unity in a country made up of many nations (cultural or ethnic groups) (Bassey, 2015). In Nigeria, ethnicity has adversely affected national consciousness, which is a major ingredient in nation building and national integration.

Ethno-politico-religious sentiments are widespread in Nigeria. These, at times, end up in the disruption of peace and order resulting to loss of innocent lives and destruction of properties. There have been incidences of such cases in Kano, Bauchi, Jos, Maiduguri, Aba, Zango-Kataf. The incessant incidents of mayhem and violence in Jos, Maiduguri, Kaduna and other parts of Nigeria have been linked to politico-ethnic problem. However, religions have been employed to ginger a national support to justify incidences leading to violence in Nigeria. It is in this respect that the archbishop of Abuja has condemned the violence in Jos, not as religious but as due to social, economic, tribal and cultural differences (The Nation, 2010). Most recently, the mayhem and violence caused by the controlled and unquestioned activities of the Fulani herdsmen, especially in

Benue state could be attributed to ethno-politico-religious differences in Nigeria.

Nigeria is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse countries in the world. This ethno-linguistic diversity has very significant implications in almost every area of the economy. It implies a major investment in educational and media resources to reach a diverse population. Diverse ethnic groups, with varied cultural patterns, have very different levels of social capital and thus differing capacities to enter into the process of proper change. The relative wealth of the country and the large size of some ethnic groups has allowed them to express their ethnicity in remarkable and sometimes problematic ways that are not mirrored in other similar countries. Dominance of particular ethnic groups in certain sectors of the economy has significant implications for equity. The pattern of dominant and excluded minorities is embedded in the administrative and economic subsystems and has important implications for access to justice and equitable resource sharing. Ethnic conflict has been a perennial feature of the Nigerian scene since pre-colonial times, but access to modern media and sophisticated weapons has increased the intensity of such conflicts to a degree that threatens the present fragile and “nascent” democracy.

The increased quest for ethnic exclusivity in recent times in Nigeria has continued to polarize the country with the attendant adverse consequences on development. Otite (2000) Adefolaju (2016) asserts that this enduring agitation is caused by the socio- economic imbalance in the country while Chief Gbenga Daniel believes that Nigeria’s heterogeneous status is problematic arising from the reality or perception that access to the commonwealth is unequal and far between (Guardian, Jan. 27, 2004). Consequently, Nigerian leaders have exploited the situation to further their ethnically structured social, economic and political objectives at the expense of national integration. That Nigeria is not a united country today is exemplified in the singsong slogan “the unity of the country is not negotiable” by

government/political leaders. This is evident in the appearance of many centrifugal tendencies, which are threatening or working for the dismemberment of the country such as the current Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, the activities of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the East and the militants in the Niger Delta. The consequences of these acts of mutual intolerance, inter-ethnic clashes and extreme ethnic nationalism are located within the prism of the country's level of socio-economic development. One hundred years since the amalgamation of the various ethnic nationalities and over fifty years since independence, the country is still under-developed (Adefolaju, 2016).

The avoidable and disastrous Nigerian civil war that claimed millions of lives was facilitated by ethnic chauvinism. For instance, the counter-coup of 1966, supported primarily by Northern military officers, facilitated the rise of Lt. Colonel Yakubu Gowon to Head of State. Tension rose between the North and South. Igbos in Northern cities suffered persecution and many fled to the Eastern Region. In May 1967, the Eastern Region declared independence as a state called the Republic of Biafra, under the leadership of Lt. Colonel Emeka Ojukwu. The Nigerian Civil War began as the official Nigerian government side (predominated by soldiers from the North and West) attacked Biafra (South-East) on 6 July 1967 at Garkem. The 30-month war, with a long siege of Biafra and its isolation from trade and supplies, ended in January 1970. Estimates of the number of dead in the former Eastern Region are between 1 and 3 million people, from warfare, disease, and starvation, during the 30-month civil war (Metz, 1991). In fact, the fundamental reason there was civil war and the June 12, 1993 crisis in Nigeria was due to selfish desires of a particular ethnic group to lord it over other groups, especially those who feel they are born to rule.

According to Adefolaju (2016) the space presently occupied by Nigeria had always been home to various ethnic nationalities

ever before colonial creation and occupation of it as a “Nigerian” nation. Thus, Nigeria has always been a multi-national, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society embodying various larger and smaller groups, angling for access and control of her scarce and valuable resources. Ifeanchio and Nwagwu (2009) observed that Nigeria’s efforts at achieving national integration have remained largely unrealized. The entire social matrix in Nigeria is characterized by inter-community and intra-community; inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic; inter-religious and intra-religious strife. Some of these conflicts are as old as the history of Nigeria as a nation.

According to Amali and Jekayinfa (2013) the efforts to build one indivisible nation from the several ethnic nationalities have constituted problems as well. Some of the problems that emerged are sometimes not anticipated. They challenge the context to which cultural pluralism is directed for national integration after independence. Most of the problems have disintegrative elements and still persist. Generally, culture is supposed to be a basic tool for development that is why education is sometimes defined as cultural transmission. However, the multi-cultural nature of the Nigerian society, which emphasises the cultures of female circumcision, betrothal, early marriage, inhuman

Treatment to widows as well as expensive burial and building houses for corpse are cultures that are retrogressive and can lead to underdevelopment (Utulu, 2010).

In a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria, national integration has remained a difficult process. In essence, it is difficult for any country that is multi-cultural and multi ethnic to achieve the goals of national integration and integrated national development. In practical terms, members of each ethnic group strive to actualize the interests of their groups, which are often conflicting because of group desire to exert hegemony over one another. Continuous ethno-cultural group struggles, weaken the center and tend to strengthen the group with resources and

strength to struggle (Bassey, 2015). For instance, the quest for power and domination among the various ethnic groups is a recurring issue in Nigeria's political scene. Of the many ethnic groups, three stand out and have been prominent in the quest to be at the center-stage of decision making in the country. These are the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. The big puzzle: Does cultural and ethnic pluralism hinder national integration in Nigeria? The simple answer is yes; as shown above.

Conclusion

In this paper, we examined the nexus between cultural cum ethnic diversities and national integration, with emphases on the negative implications of these diversities on national integration in Nigeria. In other words, it focused on the issue of ethnic and cultural relations in Nigeria and the consequences on national integration. Generally, Nigerians see themselves as members of one cultural or ethnic group or the other, and secondarily as Nigerians. The cultural divergences of the ethnic groups in Nigeria are manifest in all areas of their cultural life such as language, legends, occupation, oral literature, ways of marrying, thinking and solving problems, dances, the type of food they eat and way of cooking and eating it. The plurality of Nigeria rather than being an asset is a drawback to national integration. Strategies that would help address the problems of pan Nigeria values are suggested.

Recommendations

In view of the aforementioned impact of cultural and ethnic diversities on national integration in Nigeria, the writer recommends the following as the way forward:

- Massive cultural education should be embarked upon by relevant agencies (e.g. National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC)), the National

Orientation Agency (NOA) to take pride in the strength and plurality of Nigeria.

- The people and government of Nigeria must rise up to the challenges posed by the pluralism of the Nigeria Federation in order to accommodate groups (especially the minority) and guarantee access to power and equitable distribution of resources. The diversity in the nation should be used for strength and not for political polarization and ethno-religious conflict.
- The mass media should be highly responsible in their reportage, especially in their use of language. Responsible journalism should be the media practitioners watch word. Additionally, the movie industries today should project more of Nigerian culture, which has the potency of integration.
- The introduction of the National Youth Service Corps scheme (NYSC) is also a calculated attempt at nation building and national integration. However, more efforts should be put in place to see that the NYSC achieved its laudable objectives.
- Since a vital index of societal advancement and national development, is human development, to which education is key, Nigerian governments should strive to make available, within Nigeria: high quality education for all, schools with appropriate teaching and learning facilities and attractive conditions of service. In fact, education should be accessible and affordable with regenerative programs to discourage functional illiteracy over time.
- Organizing inter and intra cultural activities at local, state and federal levels to promote Nigerian cultural values; for example cultural festivals and carnivals across the country would enhance the process of national integration and nationhood. Additionally, cultural festivals and activities that have no positive

influences on Nigeria's cultural values and integration should be discouraged.

- Inter-ethnic marriages should be encouraged. This would strengthen relationships among diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria. Culture and value education should be entrenched into school curriculum, from basic to higher education levels – emphasis on unity, stability and internal cohesion in Nigeria
- Government should organize public enlightenment campaigns through the National Orientation Agency, NYSC orientation camps, seminars and workshops on the ways of promoting tolerance, especially among non-students.
- Cultural centers should be established in each community where cultural reorientation programs that are culture education based will be inculcated to the teeming population out of school citizens.
- We call on all stakeholders in the culture industry (ministry) to take advantage of the unique opportunities of the mass media in their quest for the promotion of patriotism and Nigerian cultural heritage.
- The media should be credible and free from any kind of influence from various pressure groups. In fact, they should keep a distance from any kind of political and commercial control-to avoid the menace of “paid news” phenomenon.

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