

Strategies For Combating Ethnicity - The Bane Of National Consciousness: A Survey Report

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Abstract

The continuous negation of a truly united society in Nigeria could not be devoid of the existence of her multiple ethnic nature. This study aimed at tracing the origin of ethnicity in Nigeria, revealing its negative tendencies and proffering and testing a few strategies to reduce the negative effects of ethnicity on national consciousness. Survey research design was adopted using a simple random sample of 200 respondents. Among the findings are effects of ethnic consciousness, loyalty and acceptance of suggested and tested strategies. The recommendations include the adoption of the tested strategies, effective regular census, development planning and mass enlightenment.

Key words: Ethnicity, National Consciousness, and Development

Introduction

Nigeria is a multi-lingual country composing ethnic or tribal groups whose population range between five thousand to five million for each group. The three main ethnic groups are the Hausas, the Igbos, and the Yorubas. Others include the Gwaris, the Ibibios, the Itsekiris, the Kanuris, the Tivs, the Urhobos, etc. It may be pertinent here to highlight briefly the characteristics of some of these ethnic groups of Nigeria. The Hausa/ Fulani, predominantly Muslims, is a large ethnic group in Nigeria. Their principal cities include: Kano, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto and Zaria. On the other hand, the Hausa-speaking group constitutes the largest group not only in the former northern region, but also in Nigeria as a whole. According to Nwabuisi (1983:85), it is established that almost 95% speak and understand Hausa language in the northern region. The Hausas are said to be ultra conservative in outlook and possess an intense cultural consciousness with profound pride in themselves. Before the contact with colonial political system, the Hausa political system was highly centralized. Unlike the Igbo political system, it had very elaborate structures and organs for the performance of societal roles. There was a central bureaucracy having linkage with several village communities with Hausa Emirates. There were also structures for law enforcement, tax collection, the articulation and processing of demands, and external defence. At the head of the Hausa political system was an Emir who was in many respects a political sovereign. He exercised substantial authority and influence throughout his domain. The position and prestige of the Emir were enhanced by the social and religious authorities at his disposal. He presided over an extensive patronage system.

The Igbos, on their part, occupy a large section of Eastern Nigeria. Unlike the Hausas and the Yorubas, the Igbos have had no indigenous overall political authority around which their loyalty was crystallized. The basic social unit among them is the family or the kindred composed of many families. The largest political unit has normally been the village group. Numerically, the Igbos are the second largest group in Nigeria.

The key characteristic feature of Igbo society, according to Dr. Lead, is the almost total absence of any higher political or social unit which customs and values are identical, and which in former times took common action against an external enemy, (Lead, 1983). Unlike the Hausas but very much like the Yorubas, the Igbos are readily adaptable to new and progressive ideas and innovations. The Igbos are temperamentally different from both the Hausas and the Yorubas: in that they possess a high competitive spirit. They have also been shown to place high regards on achieved status, rather than on ascribed position. Because the Igbos are crowded up on poor and insufficient land space, they have been forced to migrate to other parts of the country to seek, as it were, for places of greener pastures. Owing to their highly competitive nature, they can easily adapt to any given situations. The most prominent of Igbo areas are Onitsha, Enugu, Aba, Owerri, Arochukwu, Orlu, Abakaliki, Ohafia, Abiriba, Awka, Nsukka and Asaba.

The Yoruba ethnic group is the largest in Western Nigeria and might even claim to be one of the most advanced of the indigenous peoples of west Africa with a striking history of political unity and common tradition. Yoruba myths traced the origin of the people to Ile-Ife, a town in the centre of the Yoruba region where the Oni of Ife has always been the religious head of the ethnic group. The Yorubas are made up of several sub-cultural groups and clans; the most prominent of them are: Ife, Egba, Ijebu, Ilesha, Ekiti, Ondo and Oyo. The Yorubas have a myth of common descent from Oduduwa who was supposed to have descended from heaven. It was from the ancestral home of ile-ile that the children of Oduduwa went forth to become the founders of kingdoms and dynasties in all parts of Yoruba land and, according to Oparaji, Ile-Ife has since remained the important cultural centre for all the Yorubas, (Okparaji, 1982).

Before the penetration of the British into the Yoruba heartland, the various Yoruba kingdoms were often warring against each other, thus making their political communities vulnerable to outside attacks. It should be worthy of note that even though the Yorubas lacked common leadership and were divided into several pockets of political kingdoms, their traditional political system can be rightly classified as centralized chiefdoms with the Oba at the helm of affairs.

The rationale behind the effort to high-light the major characteristics of some ethnic groups of Nigeria is to show that Nigerians had no common political culture and value system. Perhaps, this fact might explain why Nigerians are more ethnically than nationally conscious and loyal. Similarly, this fact might also explain why Nigerian government cannot grapple with the problem of national unity and consciousness which are needed for any meaningful development in the country.

The Concept of Ethnic and National Consciousness

Ethnic group can be defined as “any social group with a cultural or social system, having a common religious, linguistic, ancestral or physical characteristics”.

Ethnic group can also be defined as “a group of people sharing a common cultural heritage”. From the foregoing, the members of most ethnic groups have a sense of group identity, and they recognize themselves as a distinct aggregation. An ethnic group can also be referred to as a linguistic group. Thus, ethnic consciousness becomes the awareness and understanding of a common bond which prompts the members to unite and be loyal to one another. On the other hand, national consciousness refers to the awareness of belonging to a particular nation or country. Such awareness prompts the citizens to unite and be loyal to the nation. For a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria, national consciousness is the growth of making a conscious and genuine effort to cooperate as members of one country for purposes of achieving unity and nation building.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, the structural conflict theory is applied in this study of ethnicity and national development of Nigeria. The theory has two main sub-orientations namely; the radical structuralism and the liberal structuralism. The radical is represented by Marxist dialectical school with supporters like Karl Marx, Engels, Lenin etc., while liberalism is represented by Ross Galtung 1990, Ross (1993), Scarborough (1998) etc. This theory acts as transformatory theory and addresses reactions of individuals, groups, cultures, institutions and societies to change. Further, it perceives incompatible interests as a result of competition for scarce resources especially the economic resources as explained by Marx thesis of “Historical Materialism” Thus, the structural conflict theory emphasizes that the problem of conflict in society is as a result of the particular ways the societies are structured and organized. So, all the societal problems like cultural, political, economic, injustice, poverty, diseases, exploitation, inequality etc. remain sources of disagreement, (Marx and Engels, in Faleti 2011) However, the structural theory emphasizes the necessity of what best strategies could transform the competing interests of groups directly into the common social, economic and political interests of society so as to facilitate the common goal of a society.

The structural theory is hereby applied to this study of ethnicity and national development of Nigeria through the study of various factors that caused ethnic consciousness, negative effects of ethnic consciousness on national development, proffered and tested some best strategies towards combating ethnic competing interests as bane of national consciousness in Nigeria.

Factors that gave rise to Ethnic Consciousness in Nigeria

According to Nnoli (1978), “the colonial urban setting constitutes the cradle of contemporary ethnicity in Nigeria”. This means that it was in the urban setting that what we refer to today as ethnic group first acquired a common consciousness. Similarly, it was only after colonization, according to Lloyd, that the term Yoruba land began to be used to refer to the domain of all rulers who claim descent from the mythical Oduduwa, instead of the Kingdom of Oyo to which it was previously united, (Cloud, 1967). Historical records also indicate that before the British came, these various kingdoms fought disastrous inter-state wars against one another. In the same vein, the Igbos were

organized into separate and autonomous political entities co-terminus with the village. Inter-village wars among these political entities occurred.

It was again discovered that, many a time, the various Igbo pre-colonial political entities did

not make any contact whatsoever with one another before colonization. The Igbos were even in certain cases oblivious of the existence of others. Hence, there was only a rudimentary common language among some of the pre-colonial linguistic groups in Nigeria. For example, the Yoruba traced descent from (Oduduwa), the Edo from the younger son of (Ogirisio) and the Hausa/Fulani from the myth of (Bayajidda). The Igbos have no records of their common myth of origin, but they have a common language. Thus, we observe that one of the factors which gave rise to ethnic consciousness is the contact among various ethnic groups at the urban centres set up by the colonial administration. After colonization, the colonial administration ruled through the Nigerians as village heads, messengers, cleaners, clerks and the like, especially in the urban centres. This made it possible for various ethnic groups to come into close contact with one another. Having come together, the various ethnic groups formed identities. This feeling, for instance, moved Nigerians to see themselves as first Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, Ijaw, Yoruba etc. before recognizing any other membership.

Another factor is the drift from rural to urban centres in search of education, job opportunities and other good things of life. This drift resulted in instance concentration of members of one ethnic group or the other at urban centres. The members of each ethnic group decided to form unions in order to protect their interests. Such unions were Igbo union, Yoruba union or Hausa union. Finally, it was through the unions that members of ethnic groups struggled for the scarce resources provided in the urban areas. Because of the limited resources, members of ethnic groups began to operate with ethnic cleavages and sentiments. The colonial administration capitalized on these feelings of the Nigerians and encouraged it, by recognizing particular ethnic groups for particular jobs.

Some Negative Effects of Ethnic Consciousness on National Development

Since the seed of ethnic consciousness had been sown and harvested, ethnicity became the sine-non-qua for employment and political appointments in Nigeria. It contributed immensely to the fall of the first and second Republic of Nigeria including the three years of civil war 1957-1970, because ethnic advantage became the criteria for the allocation or share of the “national cake”. Party patronage was considered along ethnic line. The advantaged ethnic group got the lion share of revenue allocation, citing of industries, construction and maintenance of federal roads, award of contracts and award of scholarships into higher institutions, rural development, disaster funds and a host of development projects were all considered along ethnic lines. All these accounted for the uneven development in the country, especially in the Eastern states of Nigeria, where any meaningful development project is undertaken by community self-help efforts.

Ethnic consideration has remained the key factor in the management of the affairs of the country, with military regimes. For instance, appointments to strategic political posts are given on the basis of ethnic considerations. Rather than employ Nigerians from

different ethnic groups, some states prefer to employ expatriates when many Nigerian graduates are currently unemployed. Nigeria is a country where some states enjoy free education from primary to university level to the detriment of other states that embark on fund-raising drive to employ and pay teachers, erect school buildings and equip them for the education of their children and wards.

Further, Nigeria is a country where contract costs are inflated to the surprise and chagrins of those to whom the contract is being awarded. She is a country flowing with much material and human resources and yet cannot feed her citizens; has no job opportunities for her teeming population ; her poor masses are left to suffer and die uncared for; her hospitals are but mere consultation or prescription clinics and social amenities are better orchestrated than practicalised. .This is Nigeria as a result of ethnic consciousness, ethnic chauvinism, ethnocentrism and mismanagement of Nigeria affairs. In view of the above situations in Nigeria, we can understand that no meaningful development projects, nation building or national social programmes can be initiated within a society where social strife, lack of peaceful co-existence, lack of national consciousness and lack of national unity reign supreme.

Strategies for Combating Ethnicity

Having identified the origin and the negative effects of ethnicity in Nigeria, we proffered and tested the following strategies considered appropriate for combating ethnicity:

- i. Effective mass enlightenment on the need for national consciousness;
- ii. Ethnic groups to be seen as sub-units of the nation for easy administration;
- iii. Co-operative efforts among ethnic groups for the common good of the nation in areas of general elections, census, allocation of resources, etc;
- iv. Recruitments, appointments and promotions to strategic posts to be based on competence rather than on ethnic quota system;
- v. Effective implementation of NYSC and inter-ethnic marriages to be encouraged by the government, individuals and groups

Research Design

Survey research design was adopted. In this survey a simple random sample of 200 respondents drawn from different ethnic groups of Nigeria, from different walks of life, and between the ages of 16 and above was employed.

Result of the Findings

1. Testing of the frequency and percentage of each strategy to combating

TABLE I : Frequency and Percentage of Each Strategy to Combating Ethnicity

	Frequency		Percentage		Total	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	F	%

Mass enlightenment	189	11	94.5	5.5	200	100
Ethnic groups as sub-units of the nation	180	20	90	10	200	100
Co-operative efforts among ethnic groups	180	20	90	10	200	100
Competence rather than ethnic quota system for strategic appointments and promotions	186	14	93	7	200	100
Encouragement of NYSC and inter-ethnic marriages	188	12	94	6	200	100

Source: Derived from the field survey by the author, (2012).

The above table reveals that each strategy has up to 90% acceptance. Mass enlightenment indicated the highest degree of acceptance – 94.5%. This was followed by encouragement of NYSC and inter-ethnic marriages with 94%. Similarly, competence as against quota system scored 93%. Ethnic groups as sub-units and co-operation among ethnic groups both scored 90% each.

Other interesting findings are the statistical significance of the difference in proportions of the respondents accepting all the 5 tested strategies and also the relationship/association of degree of accepting all the 5 strategies with sex, occupation, ethnic origin, marital status, age group or qualifications of the respondents. The following tables reveal these findings:

- Testing of the significance of the difference between the proportions in respect to the degree of accepting all the strategies towards the development of national consciousness and loyalty.

Table 2: Proportions of the Degree of Accepting All The Five Tested Strategies

	N	%		S		Calculated Z score
Agree to all strategies	133	66.5	100	x 33	P	0.97
Disagree to some strategies	67	33.5			.01	

Source: Derived from the field survey by the author, (2012).

Where n = Number of respondents

% = Percentage of respondents

X = Mean score

S = Standard deviation

P= Significance level

Deduction: Since the calculated Z score value 0.97 is greater than the tabulated Z score value, 0.2, we therefore reject the null hypothesis of no difference between the proportions of degree of acceptance. The proportion that accepted all the strategies is significant, since the difference between the proportions of the degree of acceptance is statistically significant.

3. Testing the strength of the association or relationship between sex and degree of accepting all the strategies.

TABLE 3: Sex and Degree of Accepting All the Five Tested Strategies

		Male	Female		Calculated Yule Q
Degree of acceptance	High	a 65	b 86	133	-.67
	Low	c. 35	d 32	67	
Total		100	100	200	

Source: Derived from the field survey by the author, (2012).

Deduction: The indication above is that there is a negative association between sex and degree of accepting all the strategies towards the development of national consciousness.

Tested through the use of upper and lower limits of the Yule Q for significance of the value, it was found that both have different signs, -.327 and .17. Therefore the conclusion is that the Yule Q is presumed not to be statistically significant at point P .05 (level of significance). The negative association between sex and degree of accepting all the strategies is only a mere chance, and as such not strong.

4. Testing the strength of association or relationship between occupation and degree of accepting all the strategies.

Table 4: Degree of Acceptance of all the five tested strategies and occupation of the respondents.

		Civil Servants	Non-civil servants		Calculated Lambda
Degree of acceptance	High	89 (a)	44 (b)	133	0.001
	Low	41 (c)	26 (d)	67	
Total		130	70	200	

Source: Derived from the field survey by the author, (2012).

Deduction: Since the value of 0.001 is very meager, and almost zero it then follows that the association between the two variables tested is of no statistical significance. So the degree of accepting all the strategies is not influenced or determined by the nature of

occupation of the respondents as such. The two variables, occupation and degree of acceptance were independent of each other.

5. Testing the significance of the association or relationship between ethnic origin of the respondents and their degrees of accepting all the strategies.

Table 5: Ethnic Groups and Degree of Accepting all the Five Tested Strategies

Ethnic Groups	High	Low	Total	Calculated χ^2	Df
Hausa	13 a	22b	35	16.2	8
Yoruba	30 c	11 d	41		
Igbo	30 e	10 f	40		
Ibibio	20 g	06 h	26		
Tiv	11 i	04 j	15		
Kanuri	05 k	02 i	07		
Urhobo	10 m	04 n	14		
Ijaw	04 o	02 p	06		
Fulani	10 q	06 r	16		
Total	133	67	200		

Source: Derived from the field survey by the author, (2012).

Where, df = degree of freedom

P = .05 (Significance level)

Deduction: Since the calculated χ^2 value 16.2 is greater than the tabulated of 15.5, the null hypothesis of no association between the ethnic origin and degree of accepting all the strategies is rejected. Therefore, there is a relationship between the two variables – ethnic origin and degree of acceptance. Hence the association of relationship between the two variables is statistically significant at point .05 significance level.

6. Testing the significance of the association or relationship between marital status and degree of accepting all the five tested strategies.

TABLE 6: Marital Status and Degree of accepting all the Five Tested Strategies

	High	Low	Total	Calculated χ^2 value	df
Single	39 a	20 b	59		

Married	44 c	28 d	72	2.09	3
Divorced	30 e	11 f	41		
Widowed	20 g	08 h	28		
Total	133	67	200		

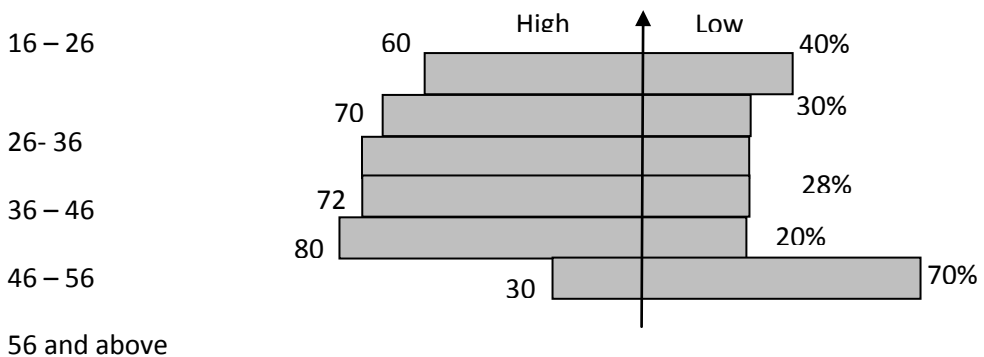
Source: Derived from the field survey by the author, (2012).

Where, P = .05 (significance level)

Df = degree of freedom

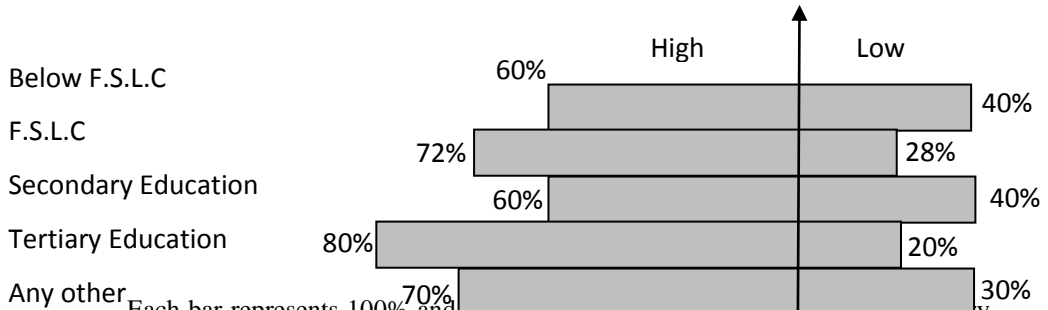
Conclusion: Since the tabulated χ^2 value, 7.815 is greater than the calculated χ^2 value, 2.09, we do not reject the null hypothesis of no association. Therefore, there is no association or relationship between marital status and degree of accepting all the strategies. The strength of association tested at point 0.5 significant level is not statistically significant. Hence the degree of acceptance by the respondents was not influenced or determined by their marital statuses.

Figure I: Age Groups in Relationship to Degree of Accepting all the five tested strategies



Each bar represents 100% and is cut into segments proportional to the category percentage. The displacement of each bar on either side of the vertical line is proportional to the percentage cases or degree of accepting all the strategies falling on each category. From this chart, it can be seen that the degree of acceptance of all the strategies among the respondents increases from 60% at 16 – 26 years up to 80% within the range of 46 – 56 years while it decreases to 30% within the range of 56 and above years.

Figure II: Comparison of educational qualification and the degree of accepting all the five tested strategies.



Each bar represents 100% and the displacement of each bar on either side of the vertical line is proportional to the percentage cases or degree of accepting all the strategies falling on each category. From this chart, it can be deduced that the degree of acceptance of all the strategies among the respondents increases from 60% at below F.S.L.C, rises to 72% at category, F.S.L.C and drops again to 60% at category, secondary education. The degree of acceptance of all strategies increases again to 80% at category tertiary education, and falls to 70% at category any other qualifications.

Conclusion

From the forgoing findings, one could safely deduce that most Nigerians accept the notion that ethnicity is the bane of national consciousness and as such could be combated through certain strategies. One could also deduce that accepting all the five tested strategies was not influenced or determined by age, sex, occupation or qualification but rather by ethnic origin.

In summary, we feel that as a result of statistical significance of the findings to the development of national consciousness, the tested strategies are worthy of implementation. In addition, there should be adequate census of the country's population, adequate development planning and mass enlightenment through the state, schools, voluntary organization, unions, village heads and the mass media. This should be done at all levels of government, starting from the grassroots to the central government.

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