

An Exigent Tool to Curb Intercultural Conflicts in Nigeria¹

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Abstract:

Communication is crucial to societal development and relationship building. In every developed country of the world, communication between the people is deemed a priority. However, effective communication in homogeneous states is easier compared to cultural diverse states. Nigeria is an African country famous for its fascinating cultural diversity, and has over 250 ethnic groups. However, this cultural diversity has led to unhealthy competition among the groups for superiority. The stereotypes created by the Nigerians about each other remains a major impediment to effective intercultural communication. The absence of mechanisms to control ethnocentrism reveals the low level of the Nigerian government's dedication towards nation building. Corruption and insecurity have fuelled over the past couple of years due to increase in intercultural conflicts. Communication should be substituted for violence in instances of rising tribal tensions. This study investigated the history of intercultural conflicts in Nigeria and its relationship with intercultural miscommunication. The research findings depict that Nigeria has a very weak foundation for inter-ethnic and interreligious co-existence. Nigeria must rebuild its foundation to ensure peaceful co-existence among the ethnic groups and religions in the country, and to facilitate development and security.

Keywords:

Intercultural communication; intertribal conflict; Nigeria; development; security.

¹ DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59569/jceas.2022.2.4.106>

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Introduction

Communication is an inevitable aspect of social relations. Communication is defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as “a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2022). Communication takes various forms, it can be expressive (verbal communication) or by conduct or implication (non-verbal and visual communication respectively). Communication defines relationships and interactions between humans. It enables humans co-exist and share a common goal. The primary purpose of communication is to express oneself and to gain knowledge. Communication is crucial for the effective development of the society. He further asserts that the absence of communication will lead to lack of understanding which can evolve to conflict and tensions. Where there is tension in communication, it can hinder peace and development. Dauda and Pate (2015) summarise the major causes of peacelessness into – poor understanding of individual and collective self-identities by the citizens, degeneration of individual and group values, poor/inadequate understanding and low respect for the human rights of citizens by individuals and the government *inter alia*. It can be deduced from his summary that communication is exigent in peace maintenance. This is so because there can be no understanding without communication. Communication is an important factor in conflict resolution, therefore, peaceful co-existence is not practicable in the absence of communication. It should be noted that intercultural communication cannot exist where there is ethnic tension or cultural discrimination.

In Africa generally, most countries that are or were categorized as underdeveloped are infested with ethnic and cultural conflicts. Excluding racial segregation which Africa faced during colonialism, another disaster has grown within Africa, and this disaster which is called “tribalism” has spread across Africa. Hoieb further states that tribalism is a major stumbling block that hinders development, and due to its abstract nature, it is cumbersome to address tribalism directly or dissolve it speedily. For instance, in Rwanda, the ethnic conflict between the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups escalated to a genocide that led to the death of over 800,000 persons (Britannica, 2020). Nevertheless, Rwanda has risen to be among the league of economically and politically stable countries in Africa, and it can be said that Rwanda’s new feat could have never been actualised if the people and the government did not make efforts to create stable and positive intercultural communications. In South Sudan, the Dinka and Nuer tribes are also at loggerheads which has led to the death of many from both tribes.

Nigeria is a home to hundreds of cultural groups and languages. As a matter of fact, Nigeria has been estimated to have over 250 ethnic groups. Intercultural communication which involves the communication of persons from different cultural groups is inevitable in Nigeria because the people of these multiple cultural groups have migrated to several areas in Nigeria and must communicate with the people in those areas. Prior to the coming of the colonial masters into Nigeria, the tribes and ethnic groups in Nigeria existed as different entities. Upon the arrival of the British colonial masters into Nigeria, the North and the South were

amalgamated to form one country called “Nigeria” – a name that was coined by Flora Shaw, the mistress of the then Colonial administrator of Nigeria; Sir Frederick Lugard.

Nigeria ceased to be a British colony on 1st October, 1960 and went further to become a Republic in 1963. However, upon independence, the flaws in the relationship between the cultures and tribes in Nigeria were brought to limelight. The tribal tensions and intolerance led to the abrupt end of the first republic. The first military revolution which was pioneered by three young soldiers named; Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Major Kaduna Nzeogwu and Major Adewale Ademoyega to bring an end to corruption in the government turned around to be the emergence of tribal conflict in Nigeria. The aftermath of the bloody coup still lingers in Nigeria and has left wounds that are almost impossible to heal.

Furthermore, the role of communication in conflict resolution and peace building cannot be undermined. As a matter of fact, in the forms of conflict resolution, communication is the centrepiece. In arbitration, negotiation and mediation, communication is used by both the aggrieved parties and the third party to reach a consensus

Intercultural Communication

The concept of intercultural communication is very broad. Literally, it simply entails communication between persons of different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication goes beyond mere language communication and extends to cultural origin and beliefs. Culture forms an integral part of a human and influences such person’s reactions and behavior. Intercultural communication is essential in societies of multi-cultural groups to help avoid conflict and misunderstandings. However, the greatest adversary of intercultural communication is “ethnocentrism”. Ethnocentrism entails glorifying one’s culture over another or judging other cultures through the scope of one’s culture. Ethnocentrism creates stereotypes that can destroy the image of other cultures. It involves the sentiment of superiority and inferiority. Once ethnocentrism creeps into a peaceful society, it is capable of bringing such society down to nothing. Nigeria is consistently facing ethnocentrism in religion, politics, and employment. Boris Bizumic (2018) avers that ethnocentrism is capable of causing genocide, ethnic cleansing, dehumanization, segregation, delegitimation, discrimination, ethnic wars and exclusion. Ethnocentrism has negative consequences when persons are highly ethnocentric. For instance, Adolph Hitler felt that the Jews were inferior to the Nazis and decided to wipe them off.

History of Intercultural Conflicts in Nigeria

As the world evolves, migration becomes inevitable. People from different cultural backgrounds move and settle in other places and must communicate. As migration from Nigeria becomes rampant, intercultural communication becomes fundamental to the



sustenance of these Nigerians abroad. In order to understand the exigence of intercultural communication in Nigeria, it is expedient to analyse the root of ethnic conflicts and cause of ethnic miscommunication in Nigeria.

Nigeria was seemingly a peaceful habitat where the people of different tribes and languages co-existed in harmony. However, in 1966, the peaceful co-existence came to an end. Prior to 1966, Nigeria was facing several political and ethnic crises, but they were basically intra-ethnic crises. For instance, the Western region election crisis of 1965 exposed the political rottenness and corruption in the Western Nigeria Region. Chief S.L. Akintola had a clash with the very famous Chief Sir Obafemi Awolowo in 1962, which led to the departure of the former from the Action Group political party. Akintola was appointed Premier by the Action Group leadership in 1959, and was reinstated by the then Prime Minister; Alhaji Sir Tafawa Balewa as the Premier of Western Region after the Declaration of State of Emergency. The 1965 election was due and Akintola desired to remain in power. Two radio stations; the National Broadcasting Corporation, which was controlled by the Federal Government and the Daily Sketch which was controlled by Akintola's party (NNDP) declared Akintola winner of the election, while the NCNC's West African Pilot and the UPGA-controlled radio station declared the UPGA winner. Finally, Akintola was generally declared winner and UPGA's Adegbenro was arrested alongside nine others and charged with 'illegally forming an executive council and false assumption of office' (Ojo, 2012).

Ethnic intolerance can be likened to a large stone surrounding Nigeria's neck, which makes it impossible for the nation to advance. Ethnic intolerance in Nigeria is impossible to eliminate without effective and deep communication between the people of the different ethnic groups. The daily struggle in Nigeria is either one ethnic group is trying to overshadow the others or one ethnic group has been purposely left out. This intolerance has been identified by the historical fathers of the nation. They have seen the incompatibility amongst the people. Chief Obafemi Awolowo lamented:

Nigeria is not a nation; it is a mere geographical expression. There are no 'Nigerians' in the same sense as there are 'English', 'welsh', or 'French'. The word 'Nigerian' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundary of Nigeria and those who do not (Nnamdi, 2020).

Writers and historians posit that Nigeria is ridden with conflict because it is a mistake *ab initio*. They claim that Nigeria should have not been amalgamated. It is easier to tackle cultural and ethnic differences only in the South and only in the North than to do so altogether. This is so because the people of Northern Nigeria are not entirely distinct from each other and share certain cultural values and even religion, while the people from the South are more alike. However, this does not imply that there is no tension in the South or North independently, it simply implies that the conflict in these regions are easier to handle than when they are merged. Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa who served as Nigeria's first Prime minister before his assassination in 1966, did not see Nigeria's existence as realistic. He

identified cultural and religious difference as the basic cause of disunity in the nation. According him:

Since 1914, the British has been trying to make into one country, but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their backgrounds, in their religion beliefs and customs and do not show any sign of willingness to unite...Nigeria's unity is only a British intention for the country (Nnamdi, 2020).

This ethnic distrust delayed Nigeria's independence. Upon independence, it was required that the colonial masters would hand over power and government to the indigeneous people. However, the minority tribes and cultural groups in Nigeria feared that power would be handed over to the major cultural groups and they would be left out. Their fear was based on the political system in Nigeria at that period. Prior to independence, there were three major political parties that were capable of winning the 1959 election – they were; Northern Peoples Congress which was dominated by Northerners (Hausa-Fulani), the Action Group, which was dominated by the Westerners (Yoruba) and the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens which was dominated by the Easterners (Igbo). This implied that they had no representation in politics and could be overlooked. The Northern minorities since the inception of Nigeria have protested against being domineered by the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group. Okorie (2003) explains the constant rift between the Northern minorities and popular cultural groups below:

The minorities in the North as a matter of truth want to be identified as a separate entity whose contribution to the Nigerian State should be applauded. They are tired of the Hausa-Fulani dominance and the gradual phasing out of their socio-cultural trademarks. They are ready for the Nigerian unity and marriage if they become major stakeholders in the policy formulation and resource sharing of this country (:23)

The South-South minorities on the other hand are aggrieved that although they produce the bulk of natural resources (crude oil) in Nigeria, their region is still the most underdeveloped area in the country. Their protests which began all the way from Ken Saro Wiwa's lifetime has not ceased. Ken Saro Wiwa was a human rights activist who fought for the rights of Southern minorities in Nigeria. However, he was convicted and sentenced to death during the General Sani Abacha military regime. His death led to an outcry from international organisations and Nigeria was penalized. The disregard of the Southern minorities by the federal government regardless of their great contribution to Nigeria's economy led to illegal oil mining. The Southern minorities were left devastated by the state of their land and water after oil mining. The villages and communities which were affected were rarely compensated. The cases brought before courts and international tribunals lingered for such a long time that even the aggrieved persons died. Even when the cases were judged, the victims were rarely awarded damages. All these factors led to a rise in insecurity in the South-South. The people were in constant battle with the military and soon formed rebel groups which caused tension in the entire as country as the South is a home to Nigeria's wealth. They were granted amnesty during President Musa Yar'Adua's government. However, this has not brought an end to the bickering of the Southern minorities as they are still neglected.



The major ethnic conflicts in Nigeria are between the three major ethnic groups; Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-Fulani. It is literally taken that the Hausa and Igbo cultural groups are at the different ends of a rope while the Yoruba people dwindle on the rope. The major outbreak of ethnic conflict can be traced to the January 15, 1966 coup. As earlier stated, these three major ethnic groups in Nigeria had their political parties that were the major political parties then. This therefore led to unhealthy competition to be the ruling party among the tribes. Jordan (1978) in Nnamdi (2020) asserts that initially, the NCNC which was formerly the National Council of Nigerians and the Cameroons was a nationalist party that comprised of over forty cultural and social organisations, tribal and trade unions. However, because of its popularity and dominance, the Action Group and the Northern Peoples' Congress were formed to oust the NCNC from dominating their regions. The AG and NPC both emerged from tribal/ethnic groups. Since the AG became a Yoruba party and the NPC, an Hausa-Fulani party, the NCNC had no choice but to claim its leader's (Nnamdi Azikiwe) ethnic group (Igbo). However, the NCNC accommodated other ethnic minorities from the East, but it was majorly funded by Igbo personalities.

The result of the 1962 census heightened tribal tensions. The regions headed the major political parties; Northern region (NPC), Western region (AG), and Eastern region (NCNC), therefore, crisis at that period were deemed "regional" rather than tribal. It is noteworthy however that Nigeria was categorized into two geographical regions – Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria, the latter of which the East and the West belong to. The 1962 census portrayed the Northern population to be twice the population of the South. The result was heavily criticized by Chief Obafemi Awolowo who argued that the South had more economic and social activities and could not be as scarcely populated as the census result had depicted. The Prime Minister; Alhaji Tafawa Balewa ordered for verification of the census result which was immediately verified. Nevertheless, the new result post-verification was not significantly different as the North was still far ahead of the South in population. The significance of the result was that the North would have half the seats in the Parliament and the South would be left with the other half. Southern and Northern regions blamed themselves for altering the census result and there were tensions between the public servants and political office holders of the both regions. Siollun (2009) elucidates that this rift between these two regions was as a result of fear. The South feared that the North would suppress and oppress them because of their large number, and the North feared that the South would submerge them because of their academic exposure. The central-point is that no region was willing to be subordinate to the other, and there was great inability to create a balance or equality amongst themselves.

Furthermore, these tensions lingered up till the 1965 general elections. As a matter of fact, the coalition the NCNC and NPC formed in 1959 was already torn apart. The NCNC then formed alliance with the AG to form the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) and the Nigerian National Democratic Party – NNDP (Nigeria's first political party formed by Herbert Macaulay) stayed with the NPC to form the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). The separate ethnic parties had dissolved and merged, but they were desperate to win at all costs. The election was

heavily rigged by the almost all the parties involved, but the NNDP's rigging was extremely outrageous. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who was the outgoing President-General of Nigeria was overwhelmed by the fragility of the Nigerian republic and stated thus: "...if they decided to destroy our national unity...it is better for us and our many admirers abroad that we should disintegrate in peace and not in pieces" (Siollun, 2009:18).

Realizing that the civilian government could not curb the national outrage, some soldiers of the Nigerian Army decided to intervene. This intervention brought an end to the First Republic in bloodshed. Prior to the military intervention, the political strife was not basically hinged on ethnicity, but the military intervention itself was perceived to be ethnically motivated. Falola et al (1991) however argues that the military intervention was also triggered by ethnic tensions. He further stated that:

The government in the first republic could not solve it (ethnic rivalries). Each region was governed by a political party which represented a majority ethnic group. Each region also sent representatives to the Parliament. There were problems with this. First, the political party governed each region as if it was an autonomous country. This threatened the idea of a single nation. Secondly, regionalism encouraged rivalry. There was competition for the control of Parliament and Executive (:109).

Kaduna Nzeogwu, a primary executor of the January 1966 coup explained in his first broadcast after his takeover that the coup was triggered by corruption, tribalists and nepotists. As a matter of fact, Alexander Madiebo, an Igbo military officer in the North at that period corroborates Nzeogwu's claim where he gives a personal account of his meeting with Nzeogwu immediately after the coup. He explains that when he met Nzeogwu, Nzeogwu was bandaged and was escorted by Northern soldiers. He claims that Nzeogwu confided in him and explained how much he regretted using forceful means to eradicate corrupt leaders in Nigeria. Nzeogwu further explained to Madiebo that such would not have been necessary if Nigeria was capable of a free and fair election. He specifically stated that the goal of the coup was "to get rid of the corrupt and incorrigible politicians and have them replaced with true nationalists." (Madiebo, 1980:19). The primary officers in the execution of the January 1966 coup were; Major Emmanuel Arinze Ifeajuna, Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, Major Adewale Ademoyega, Major Timothy Onwuatiegwu, Major Christian Anuforo, Major Donatus Okafor, Major Humphrey Iwuchukwu Chukwuka, and Captain Emmanuel Nwobosi. Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna was the initiator of the coup, and his plan was to make Chief Obafemi Awolowo President because he was the greatest opposition of the corrupt government. Ifeajuna made plans to fly from Lagos to Calabar to release him from prison in Calabar, but "if at the end he (Awolowo) refused, he was to be held and decrees were to be issued in his name" (Ezeani, 2013:28).

The heat of the coup was felt primarily in Ibadan (Western region), Lagos (Federal capital and Western region), and Kaduna (Northern region). Some of the soldiers (Northerners) involved were unaware of the plot until they got to the bush where Kaduna Nzeogwu relayed the details and gave them a chance to leave, but they stayed put. Nzeogwu headed to the

Sarduana of Sokoto's (Ahmadu Bello) residence – he instructed everyone in the house to come out and sit on the floor. Gidado Idris, the personal secretary to Ahmadu Bello explained in an interview he granted on his 80th birthday, that Nzeogwu had a hard time in recognizing Bello. A servant in the house indicated that he was Ahmadu Bello, but the soldiers refuted (Chima, 2017). They threatened to shoot everyone, but Bello stood up and identified himself as “the one they were looking for”. He was immediately shot dead by Kaduna Nzeogwu alongside his first wife who refused to leave his side. Other top political office holders like Remi Fani-Kayode and Sir Kashim Ibrahim were arrested.

In the Western Region, Captain Emmanuel Nwobosi killed S.L. Akintola who refused to surrender and began an open fire. Some accounts of the coup argue that Akintola would have survived had he surrendered. However, if the soldiers wanted him dead, they would not do so without torture. Major Ifeajuna who is deemed the most ruthless executed the coup in Lagos (the then Federal Capital). He headed for the Prime Minister's house where he was killed alongside Brigadier Maimalari. Festus Okotie-Eboh, the Finance Minister was violently arrested by the soldiers. In general, a coup was planned in all the regions but failed totally in the Eastern region, and no Igbo soldier nor political office holder was killed except one Igbo soldier (Lt-Colonel Arthur Unegbu) who held the key to the ammunition room. Months after the coup, ethnic tensions heightened and Nigeria became lawless and a home of bloodshed.

The Igbo tribe was accused of attempting to takeover Nigeria. The prominent Nigerians killed in the January 1966 coup include:

Alhaji Sir Tafawa Balewa	Prime Minister
Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello	Sarduana of Sokoto
Brigadier Samuel Ademulegun	Commander, 1 Brigade- Kaduna
Brigadier Zakariya Maimalari	Commander, 2 Brigade- Lagos
Colonel Ralph Shodeinde	Deputy-Commandant, Nigeria Defense Academy and Commandant, Nigerian Military Training College- Kaduna
Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh	Finance Minister
Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola	Premier of Western Region
Hafsatu Bello	A wife to Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello
Mrs. Latifat Ademulegu	Wife to Brigadier Ademulegun
Colonel Kur Mohammed	Chief of Staff, Army Headquarters
Lt-Colonel Abogo Largema	
Lt-Colonel Arthur Unegbu	

The Northerners analysed the list and were outraged that there was only one Igbo casualty and Azikiwe, alongside Michael Okpara, the Premier of Eastern Region who should have ordinarily been overthrown escaped the coup. Aguiyi-Ironsi, who was the General Officer Commanding in the East escaped assassination thrice,

The January 1966 coup was however followed by a counter-coup which was staged by both core Northern Nigerian soldiers and soldiers from the Middle-Belt. It was a retaliation for what

they deemed an “Igbo coup”. The July 1966 counter-coup resulted to the death of Aguiyi-Ironsi who was the Head of State, and other Igbo Military officers. However, the counter-coup extended beyond the Military zone and civilians were involved. Igbo civilians in the North were haunted and killed, and their shops, houses and churches were razed down. This led to a mass exodus of Igbo people from the North to the East. Yakubu Gowon was made Head of State and there was bitterness in the Army because Gowon was not the most senior Military officer. Odumegwu Ojukwu, an Igbo Military officer and Military Governor of the East, believed he was senior to Gowon and refused to submit to him. The Igbo people counted their loss and yearned for secession. Prior to the move for secession by the Easterners, Ojukwu and Gowon travelled to Aburi, Ghana to reach a peaceful consensus between the two tribes. The consensus which is known as the “Aburi Accord” was agreed by the both parties, and was believed to stabilize the tension between the Easterners and Northerners. However, Gowon failed in his own part of the accord, and Ojukwu gave in to the demand for secession. Gowon was not willing to watch Nigeria fall apart, so he began a battle with the secessionist Easterners called “Biafra” to reunite them with Nigeria. After a 30-month long war, Biafra surrendered and became a Nigerian territory yet again. Gowon initiated programmes to help the two tribes co-exist, but the hatred, distrust, anger and vengeance remains deep rooted within the tribes till date.

The period of 1965-1970 marked Nigeria’s landmark tribal tension moments which is unfortunately Nigeria’s post-independence foundation. There have been other inter-tribal feuds in Nigeria after the civil war, but not as pronounced and severe as the civil war. The tribal battle in Nigeria is beyond Hausa-Igbo feud, it extends to other tribes in all states in Nigeria.

Factors that Heighten Intercultural Conflicts in Nigeria

Intercultural feuds in Nigeria are triggered by several factors. Some of these factors are:

Farmer-herder struggle for land: Nigeria has a vast land mass of 923,770 km² (356,669 mi²). Nevertheless, there are hundreds of ethnic groups which share the land. Land struggle has led to both intra-ethnic conflict and inter-ethnic conflict. Land struggle usually happens along state boundaries and communal boundaries. However, the land struggle between the Fulani ethnic group and several regions in Nigeria has surpassed other land struggles in Nigeria. The Fulani ethnic group consists of herdsmen who are nomads. Their lifestyle birthed bloodshed in the Middle-Belt of Nigeria. However, in 2019, they began to advance downwards towards the South, East and West and it became a national crisis. Before their widespread popularity, their feuds in the Middle-Belt had already resulted to 10,000 casualties and over 100,000 displaced children (Borgen magazine, 2019). As stated by Borgen Magazine, the farmer-herder crisis in 2018 was reportedly six times deadlier than all of Boko Haram’s activity. The farmers are outraged that the herders allow their cattle consume their farm produce. However, the



herders are insistent on feeding their cattle. The tension is deadlier because the farmers in the Middle-Belt are majorly Christians, and the herders are Muslims.

Initially, the herders were only armed with machetes and cutlasses and were more violent in nature, nevertheless, when the farmers realized there was little help coming from the government, they formed vigilante groups which they armed with all manner of available weapons for their defence. Benue State was ravaged with this tension for several years. The Tiv and Fulani ethnic groups in Benue State are major parties in this feud. However, it extended to Taraba State, and they also adopted self-defence by creating some vigilante groups. The Police rarely intervenes in these conflicts, and when they do, the culprits are rarely prosecuted. The vigilante groups formed by the farmers have become the Police of the Middle-Belt. The farmers are unwilling to designate a part of their land to the Fulani freelance herders and upon the passing of anti-grazing laws, the violence has only exacerbated.

As a result of climate change, the Fulani herdsmen advanced southwards. Their former standpoint in the middle-Belt was declining, and the rainforest in the South became their destination. However, the strife for arable land in states like Benue, Plateau and Taraba among other has not ceased. In a 2018 attack in Plateau, farmers allegedly killed five herdsmen for trespassing on their farms and in retaliation, the herdsmen killed 86 and injured hundreds (World Report, 2019). Furthermore, the migration of Fulani herdsmen to the Southern part of Nigeria caused great enmity between the South and the herdsmen.

In Eastern Nigeria (Igboland), an outcry from Chief Emeka Diwe, the President of the Association of South East Town Unions (ASETU) enlightened the nation of the bloodshed committed by the Fulani herdsmen in the East. He explained that the feud had extended from a mere herder-farmer crisis to direct attacks on the community. He lamented that women were being raped and properties and houses were being destroyed. He complained of the reluctance of the government to come to the aid of the people. According to him:

Our people have died enough. We cried out when Ozuitem community in Bende area of Abia State was invaded and attacked by the herdsmen and nobody did anything. People were slaughtered and property destroyed. A month later, another community in the same Abia State, Ndi Okereke Abam in Arochukwu council, was equally attacked by the herdsmen. Nothing was done (Okoli et al, 2020).

In 2020, community chiefs also stated that they had received series of herdsmen complaints from the residents. The herdsmen freely savaged the crops of the farmers. In order to reach a consensus between the Igbo communities and the Fulani herdsmen, suggestions were made to create ranches in Local Governments, but such suggestion received heavy backlash. Land is the greatest treasure in Igboland, and since the ethnic group has a smaller land mass, such suggestion was not feasible. Furthermore, because of the dominating and aggressive nature of the Fulani herdsmen, the Igbo people feared that they would be overpowered. The clash between the Igbo farmers and herdsmen have extended to all the five states of the South Eastern region of Nigeria. As a matter of fact, in Awka North local

government of Anambra State, it was lamented by the people of ten communities that the destruction of their farmlands by the herdsmen has become a daily occurrence. In Ebonyi State, a committee was set up to ensure peace between the herdsmen and the farmers. A policy has been established in the State – if a farmer kills any cow belonging to a herder, such farmer would pay; and if a herder destroys the crops of any member of the committee, such herder would pay.

Yorubaland is not left out from this farmer-herder feud. As a matter of fact, there is hardly any region in Nigeria that is excluded from the farmer-herder crisis. The attack of a Catholic Church in Owo, Ondo State, by alleged herdsmen is another reminder that this crisis has infiltrated every nook and cranny of Nigeria. Lives have been lost, alongside properties, crops and houses, and the intercultural hatred has continued to grow exceedingly.

Religion: Nigeria has three major religions; Christianity, Islam and traditional religion – of the three religions, Christianity and Islam are the most popular. Nigeria identifies as a secular state which respects diverse religious beliefs, however, this is far from reality. Religion since independence has been a major facilitator of conflict in Nigeria. The North has a vast majority of Muslims while the South has a greater population of Christians. Therefore, the major religious/ethnic conflicts in Nigeria are between Christians and Muslims. Religious violence are always triggered by fear of domination. For instance, the Kano riots of 1953 was triggered by the disagreement between the Southern and Northern delegates in Lagos. Anthony Enahoro from Southern Nigeria proposed independence, but the Northern delegates declined because they feared that since the Southerners were more educated and exposed than they were, they would dominate them. The Northern delegates were jeered out of the House of Parliament in Lagos. When they returned to the North, the people of Kano retaliated with protests and rioting. They targeted Southerners in the North and destroyed houses and properties. It can be contended that this riot is an ethnic riot and is void of religious sentiments, but it is very impossible to detach ethnic issues from religious issues in the North since their culture is governed by their religion.

Another landmark religious conflict in Nigeria is the 1966 Araba riots in Northern Nigeria. The riot was a retaliation to the January 1966 assassination of Alhaji Sir Tafawa Balewa and Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello who were both prominent religious and political figures in the North. They believed it was a coup executed to oust Northerners and to enforce Igbo dominance, hence they retaliated by killing Igbo people in the North. This riot spread to other prominent cities in the North like Sokoto, Kano, Katsina, Kaduna and Zaria. The loss of lives and properties as a result of the riot so rampant that Madiebo (1980) argued that there was hardly any Igbo family in Nigeria who was not a victim or did not have a relative as a victim. As a matter of fact, the Araba riot till date remains the most outrageous ethnic/religion-triggered riot in Nigeria. The most vulnerable states to religious riots and tensions are states with equal or nearly equal population of both Christians and Muslims – states like Kaduna, Plateau, and Taraba among others.



Migration and Settlement: the Igbo ethnic group are the most mobile ethnic group in Nigeria. They are naturally business people and are in all states of Nigeria. The Igbo people have had major clashes with Northerners who believe that the Igbo people are in their land to dominate them. In an interview delivered by late Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello (the then Sardauna of Sokoto) in 1964, he pointed out the dominating personality of the Igbo people. Their dominance spread in politics, and the Military particularly. According to him:

Well, the Igbo are more or less the type of people whose desire is mainly to dominate everybody. If you put them in a labour camp as a labourer, they will try to emerge as headman of that camp and so on.

His statement has been deemed a hate speech against the Igbo tribe which instigated and triggered the 1966 riots and 1967 civil war. This statement was made almost six decades ago, but it still subsists. The Igbo people returned to their homeland in the East during the civil war, but after the war, they began migrating to several parts of the nation in search of greener pastures. The Igbo people travelled in numbers to Lagos where they settled and began expanding. The Yoruba people who claim to be owners of the land do not find it comfortable that they are being dominated by the Igbo people in the business sector, in their own land. This has caused series of tensions, riots and large scale conflicts which has led to death and loss of properties. There are still recent small scale riots in the North concerning Igbo dominance. The Igbo people have countered the claim that they intend to dominate other ethnic groups, but the Hausa and Yoruba people who are indigenes of the lands the Igbo people migrate to are adamant and want the Igbo people to be sent back to their own lands. This ethnic intolerance has subsisted even prior to Nigeria's independence. The Igbo people are fond of migrating to famous and populous cities where they settle and expand – as a matter of fact, Lagos has become the bus stop of over hundreds of thousands of Igbo people. Nevertheless, despite the market ownership crisis among the Igbo and Yoruba people in Lagos, Lagos remains more receptive than Northern cities. Migration by other tribes and is still rampant in Nigeria, but the Igbo tribe is more popular for migration and settlement.

Struggle for Political Position: There is deep distrust among the ethnic groups in Nigeria. There is unwillingness to be under any person from a different ethnic group. Nigeria, unlike in its first post-independence years, has shifted from ethnic-triggered political parties. There are different political parties in Nigeria, and a majority of them do not identify with tribal roots. The major concern of Nigerians during presidential elections is “which tribe will the next president be from?” This has caused Nigerians to focus more on tribal relations than personality. As a matter of fact, Nigeria's destitute state can be traced to the desperation to have a tribesman preside over Nigeria rather than a sound and dignified personality. Usually, during elections, candidates use tribal and religious connections as a strength or to attack other candidates. For instance, Peter Obi, the Labour Party's presidential candidate has been accused of links with the secessionist group in the South East to deprive him of Northern votes because Northerners are desperate for “One Nigeria”.

The reluctance to identify the flaws of a president because of his ethnic ties is a scourge in Nigeria. In an interview conducted by one Richard Chilee during President Goodluck Jonathan's regime, a Rivers State resident when asked about Jonathan's administration, confessed that he was not satisfied, but wouldn't complain. It can be deduced that his refusal to complain is hinged on the fact that he belonged to same ethnic/regional ties as Jonathan (Chilee, 2013). This is a present problem in Nigeria. The feeling of loyalty to one's tribesman supersedes the desire for national development. Therefore, where the people ought to come together to protest against a problem for the betterment of the nation, persons belonging to the same tribe as the president withdraw. When a man belonging to a particular tribe becomes president, his people believe that he will grant them juicy positions and will grant them all their requests. A nation with multi-cultural groups can only survive when the people see themselves first as a member of such nation before being a member of their cultural groups. When the loyalty of a Nigerian is first to his tribe, he can destroy the nation to enrich his tribe.

Miscommunication: The major problem with Nigeria is exaggeration of events and intertwining facts sentiments with. When issues occur in Nigeria, people swiftly ascribe it to religious or ethnic sentiments. The inability of Nigerians to hold conversations devoid of ethnic or religious sentiment is a lingering problem. To understand Nigeria's miscommunication problem, it is important to understand how average Nigerians communicate. Normally, Nigerians see themselves firstly through the scope of their ethnicity or religion before their nation. The sense of brotherhood which Nigeria yearns for, cannot be achieved when there is no common goal. The loyalty of every Nigerian should be firstly to his/her nation before any other factor. Unfortunately, it is otherwise in Nigeria. Nigerians communicate from through the scope of their cultural beliefs and norms regardless of who the listener or recipient of such information is. The unwillingness on the path of Nigerians to appreciate the differences in tribe and religion makes communication even more difficult. Where every Nigerian believes that his tribe or religion is better than the other, a supposed co-existence becomes a race for power. The goal is not to make a tribe superior to others, but to enable Nigerians appreciate and understand the tribal and cultural differences. In Singapore for instance, there are three major ethnic/cultural groups; Malays, Indians and Chinese. These three major groups alongside other minorities have been able to live peacefully because the Singaporean government ensures that tribal/religious education of these groups are taught to the people – this primarily enables Singaporean citizens to understand the cultural/religious relations of other tribes. Ethnic/religious tolerance in Nigeria will remain fictitious until the citizens of the country are educated on the principles, communication skills, and views of the different cultures in Nigeria. The basic question is – how do you tolerate what you don't understand? Tolerance is dependent on understanding and knowledge – knowing a fact and understanding its nature makes tolerance a reality. Where this foundation has been laid, good communication becomes feasible – persons from different tribes can understand why someone from another tribe acted the way he/she did, and would know the perfect way to react.



Effects of Intercultural Conflicts on Nigeria's Development

The consequences of inter-cultural/tribal feuds on Nigeria's development cannot be overemphasized. It has permeated the education sector, labour sector, religious sector, business sector and even leadership sector.

Unqualified personnels: as earlier stated in this work, there is a struggle to have one's tribesman in power in Nigeria. The purpose is to get appointments and political offers. However, the problem emanating from this act is deeper than it seems. When persons from a tribe team up to ensure their tribesman becomes president, his qualification, passion, zeal or experience may not be considered, only their selfish desires. Peradventure their tribesman wins, he appoints them into high and delicate positions which they might not have the expertise to run and where there is no initiative mind in these positions, the economy could be crippled. In the state government level, it is an obvious and common practice that state governors usually award their election supporters with juicy positions as an appreciation. The primary problem is not the purpose for appointment, rather, the personality and expertise of the person holding the position.

For effective public administration and national development, persons in offices like commissioners, ministers, directors, judicial offices and executive offices among others, must be qualified for the job. Where the most qualified person is overlooked for tribal reasons, it is a disservice to the nation. It is noteworthy that Nigeria does not revolve around one particular tribe or a ruling party – it is a nation that embodies hundreds of ethnic groups and must serve all equally to maintain peace.

Insecurity: Besides corruption, insecurity is the biggest problem Nigeria is currently facing. Undoubtedly, other factors like unemployment, have triggered insecurity in the last couple of years, but inter-ethnic/inter-religious conflicts takes a stronghold on it. In Kaduna, there is an unending tension between Southern Kaduna and Northern Kaduna, and it has caused severe insecurity in Kaduna State and its environs. Insecurity is basically born out of the use of violence in the face of conflict. Where negotiation is adopted instead of violence, peace can be actualized.

The role of Agents of Socialization in Fueling Intercultural Conflicts

Family: The family is believed to be the "porter" of the child. The parents, siblings and relatives of a child, depending on the closeness shape the thoughts, character and beliefs of a child. Where a family talks bad about a particular tribe, such child is ordinarily supposed to grow to hate that tribe. Nigerian families are fond of castigating other tribes in the presence of their children, and some strictly ensure their children are never surrounded by persons of different tribes or religions. Unfortunately, the child might never reach the point where he/she realizes that those values inculcated in him/her are false or biased.

Religion: Nigeria is officially a secular nation, but very religious. Nigerians are easily triggered by religious sentiments, most times, faster than tribal sentiments. Religious teachers are oftentimes revered over political leaders and their words and teachings are listened to and appreciated over national laws. Undoubtedly, there is freedom of religion in Nigeria, but restrictions should be passed where such religion or faith-group incites its followers to infringe on the rights of others. Where Nigerians are extremely loyal to their religion, the focus should be shifted to the religious leaders to ensure that in their teachings, they do not downgrade, intimidate or act or speak in such a manner that could create enmity between a person of their religion and one from another religion. Religious tolerance is feasible only when the teachers are mindful in their reference to persons from other tribes or religions. Emphasis is laid more on the teachers here because they teach the religion to their followers and are highly respected.

Media: The media is the major source of information in Nigeria. Even before social media, the media has been the primary source of information in Nigeria. As a market strategy, media companies often mix factual news with religious or tribal sentiments. However, since Nigeria Nigerians are regularly incited by religious/tribal sentiments, they spread such news faster.

On the other hand, false news has become a tool used by conflict instigators to incite hatred among Nigerians – the emergence and widespread use of social media makes it easier to spread fake news. The government need not restrict freedom of speech/thought/expression, which has been guaranteed by Chapter IV of the 1999 constitution – citizens may make personal suggestions of information they hear, but such information must have been fact-checked. Extra restrictions should be placed on software applications to ensure that before anyone puts out an information or comments on an information regarding persons from different tribes or religions, such information or comment must be factual in its entirety.

School: The principles taught in school is a very primary factor that determines the character of a child. Education is both a tool of civilization and destruction – what determines either outcome is the procedure. Where a child is taught on wrong values, he/she will grow to believe and act on such. If a child is taught in school that his tribe is superior to others, when he/she grows, he/she will be spiteful when someone from another tribe is ahead of him/her or his/her tribesman. The spite could grow into more disastrous result, and such child might become a hoodlum in the society. The school should teach acceptance and accommodation. Unfortunately, some of these schools are in places occupied by a particular tribe and controlled by a particular tribe, which makes it difficult for supervision. For instance, a school in a village in the West might teach against Hausa people and have no sanction because it is controlled by Yoruba people who might not be exposed.

Culture: Culture is simply a way of life. It is the foundation of a person's habit. Where a person's culture degrades persons from other cultural backgrounds, a child who is being taught in such culture would grow up to see others as his slaves. Cultural education is like



religious education – they stick to a child and can rarely be totally eradicated from a person’s mind.

Measures to Enhance Intercultural Communication

To ensure peaceful co-existence of the numerous ethnic groups in Nigeria, the government must take strict measures to make the people accountable for every action they take. Strict laws and policies must be put in place to sanction anyone who makes any derogatory statement against a person from a different tribe. Nigeria must take steps to emulate Singapore’s inter-tribal unity. Lawrence Wong, Singapore’s Deputy Prime Minister has explained measures Singapore employs to battle intercultural conflicts. He identifies “strengthening human relationship and interactions” as a basic tool in controlling intercultural conflicts. Where the people are reluctant, the government can exercise mild compulsion – it can set up mandatory programmes where persons from different tribes are forced to communicate. Communication helps reveal the minds of people, and if the minds of people can be revealed, then understanding and co-existence becomes easier. Lawrence Wong identifies stereotype as another destructive tool in the society. He asserts that the practice of viewing people from a specific perspective destroys the unique diversity of humans. Generalizing one’s behavior will be detrimental to another with a different behavior. Because few persons from a particular tribe or religion are despicable in character, does not imply that everyone belonging to that religion or culture has a despicable character. Making assumptions or conclusions about a person without direct experience can hinder effective communication. The need to play the victim or to be viewed as the most aggrieved is another issue hindering peaceful co-existence. In a turbulent society like Nigeria, every tribe has had their fair share of chaos and unrest, therefore, downplaying the pains of the Yoruba tribe to glorify the pains of the Igbo tribe will only increase enmity. Cooperation should be the goal of Nigerians, and not competition. Nigerians do not only have to cooperate when facing other nations or in diaspora, cooperation within yields better result than cooperation outside.

Lawrence Wong strongly posits that to ensure national progress, citizens should be given equal chances. The feeling that a person got something at the expense of another destroys relationships. South-South minorities strongly believe that their natural resource (crude oil) is used to enrich the political elites while they suffer in penury. A person with such mindset, regardless of the truth in it, will find it extremely difficult to work with a political elite for the betterment of the nation. Every Nigerian, regardless of status, sex, religion, and tribe, should be given equal opportunity to survive. Lawrence Wong provides a last and crucial measure in handling intercultural conflicts; “fair and accountable government”. The government wields a great measure of power that can be used to enhance intercultural relations. As a matter of fact, the government is the major determinant of the state of intercultural relations in a country. Where the government is one-sided, that is, favours a particular tribe over the other, the people will react to such favouritism with riots and tensions. However, where the

government ensures that it establishes policies and bodies to enhance intercultural relations, the people will as well respond to such positively. Where the government makes appointments across the multiple tribes and religions of the country, and builds same infrastructures in every region, the feeling of deprivation or exclusion can be curtailed. The government however, cannot ensure absolute compliance, but when it plays its part in enhancing intercultural relations, it can pass laws or engage in compulsion to enforce a certain degree of compliance. The fact is that both the government and the people of Nigeria have failed to play their roles in establishing stable intercultural relations. Nevertheless, the government plays a larger role since it is at the helms of affairs. There are consistent tensions, riots, protests and severe insecurity in Nigeria because the people of Nigeria feel excluded and ignored – the sense of deprivation of their right to enjoy natural resources among others, has led to uproar and conflict between those feeling deprived and those believed to be the deprivers. To ensure national cooperation, effective intercultural communication and development in Nigeria, Lawrence Wong's statement below must be carefully scrutinized and followed:

If we uphold this idea - that being Singaporean is a matter of conviction and choice, and that it takes priority over our other identities and affiliations - that would give all of us one important commonality around which to build understanding and trust, negotiate our differences and find common ground on difficult issues, and then we can continually look for ways to move forward together (Lai, 2021).

To achieve intercultural peace and stability, the Nigerian government must communicate with bona fide representatives from each religion and ethnic group to understand their protests and complaints. These representatives must also communicate among themselves to destroy whatever negative stereotype that has been established about their ethnic groups or religions. The government must also ensure that whatever law that exacerbates tension among the tribes be scrutinized and scraped off. Hate speech against one's religion or tribe must be adequately sanctioned to dissuade people from verbally degrading others. It is also exigent to study other countries that have managed to curb intercultural conflicts and their methods of resolving them. To establish effective intercultural communication in Nigeria, all stereotypes that have been established over the years must be destroyed and Nigerians must start on a new foundation.

Conclusion

The root cause of tribal tensions can be traced to the sense of deprivation. As a matter of fact, the separatists in South-Eastern Nigeria re-emerged in the 21st century because they felt ignored and excluded from the affairs of Nigeria. The government must dialogue with each ethnic group to understand their needs and pains, after which it must devise solutions to adequately and reasonably appease the people. To establish good relationships between the different tribes in Nigeria, effective communication is crucial. The Igbo man should state his



concern and anger to the Hausa man, alongside all conflicting tribes. Where knowledge of the situation is understood, resolving it becomes a less tedious matter. Negotiations should be the first step Nigerians take in the presence of intercultural conflict rather than violence. If tribalism fails to be addressed in Nigeria, then Nigeria's progress remains impracticable. Nigeria already has a weak foundation for ethnic/religious tolerance, and to avoid the reoccurrence of gruesome historical events like the civil war, the Nigerian government must begin to reeducate the younger generation to eradicate tribal stereotypes and ethnocentrism.

When the people of Nigeria understand themselves and see themselves as uniquely different and equal people, there will be peaceful co-existence. As stated in this work, the major problem faced in Nigeria is the belief of "ethnic superiority" – if that can be substituted for ethnic equality regardless of population and land mass, peace can be actualized. Intercultural communication does not only enhance peace, but security and development. With the communal spirit achieved through effective communication, Nigerians can then work together to achieve one goal and rebrand Nigeria in the global sphere.

Conflict of Interest

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

Notes on Contributor

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