



Cultural Identity-Induced Social Exclusion of an Ethnic Minority Group and Communal Conflicts in North-Central Nigeria

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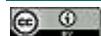
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Abstract

Qualitative research has suggested that minority groups suffer discrimination. Some had focused on the effects of discrimination and prejudicial treatments of groups that are referred to as socially-devalued. This has also provoked greater interest in theorizing on the relationship between explanatory causal factors of discrimination against these groups. This study contributes to this body of research findings by focusing on an ethnic minority group that has been subjected to various discriminatory treatments on the basis of ancestral/historical difference. It examines the relationship between some exclusionary ethno-cultural variables and their effect on conflict occurrence. Conflict is depicted here as the dependent variable while the ethno-cultural variables- exclusion, deprivations, identity formation, and migration are considered as independent variables. This study adopts the quantitative approach using the Chi-Square analysis to investigate the relationship between these variables based on the Mean of the responses from the administered questionnaires, while Regression analysis was used to examine the impact of the independent variables (cultural identity formation, social exclusion, migration history, deprivation, and segregation) on the dependent variable (communal conflict). The findings from the regression analysis show that a significant relationship exists between all the independent variables and the dependent variable, while from the Chi-square analysis, the findings reveal that except for deprivation, all other independent variables have a positive relationship with the dependent variable.

Keywords: Cultural identity; Communal conflict; Ethnic minority; Social exclusion; Prejudice.



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1. Introduction

A common characteristic of most societies is the existence of dominant and co-culture. The dominant culture in most cases usually belongs to the majority group while the co-culture to the minority. Minority ethnic group exhibit certain distinguishing characteristics which differ from the dominant group. These characteristics could be in terms of colour, race, religion, cultural practices and beliefs systems. The cultural setup of Kabba community in North-Central Nigeria is made up of two groups: 13 Kabba clans and the Omodo clan. The dominant 13 Kabba clans enjoy wide privileges, the story is different for the co-culture – the Omodo clan – with a history of exclusion. The 13 clans differ from the Omodo clan on the basis of ancestral and migratory historical factors. It is on the basis of these factors that the cultural identity of the two groups was established. While the dominant group lay claim to all available land and its appropriation, the co-culture is excluded. The minority group in this case study is subjected to various forms of discriminatory practices. Within the context of this research, social exclusion on the basis of cultural identity, the Omodo group suffers residential segregation and exclusion from the dominant cultural practices.

1.1. Cultural Identity Social Categorization and Social Exclusion: The Nexus

Categorizing of people into ingroup and outgroup is an integral component of every society and has remained indisputable (Stewart, 2005). However, theoretical debate exists among scholars who belonged to the instrumental, constructivist primordial schools on the degree to which conflict occurrence is influenced by ethnic identities itself. Primordialism lay emphasis on the salience of ethnicity as an important factor in conflict; it posits that it is the basis upon which differences and demarcation are done that ultimately determine who and who does not have access to command goods and service (Horowitz, 1993). Instrumentalism sees ethnicity as a dormant factor in the conflict that only become active and salient when social, political are economic factors are added. The third strand of argument emanates from the constructivists who argue that ethnicity becomes an important causal factor of conflict when it is examined in relation to certain social, political and environmental issues. It then becomes a basic factor for mobilization in ethnic conflicts (Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2000).

The Social Identity Theory provides an exposition on in-group and out-group belongingness. It posits that the group to which an individual belongs in society serves as a source of pride and as the basis of self-esteem. This has further been expanded by Tajfel and Turner (2001) to include three basic components: social categorization where individual members of the group see themselves as belonging to the group; social identification where members of the group advances from categorization to identifying more openly with the group by exhibiting the attitudes and

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character associated with such group; and social comparison when the members of the group begin to compare themselves with the other group members. The Social Categorization Theory retained the principles of the Social Identity Theory but laid greater emphasis on the cognitive aspects of social relations and the importance of categorization in the social identity processes. The Social Categorization Theory sees identity as a social process that transforms interpersonal to intergroup behavior (Tajfel and Turner, 2001). The process of categorization brings to the fore the similarities between the self or any stimuli and the differences between other stimuli that belongs to another category. This categorization leads to the social classification of in-group and out-group delineation which defines the social identity of self. This is done by accentuating the differences between intergroup and then underestimating the differences between the intragroup members. For a society that is fractionalized into clans and groups, the effect of feelings of belongingness or otherwise will definitely have a profound impact on the affected group. Whenever a group is excluded from benefitting from the distribution of political, economic, social and cultural values and gains in the society, it portends great consequence for the political and economic development of the society (Lawal *et al.*, 2019). In this case study, it has resulted in a series of communal conflicts as exclusion has affected the minority group social behavior, thus the contribution to peaceful coexistence within the society.

According to social identity theory, the behavior of members of a group is affected by the society, while the feelings of belongingness or not are being impacted by diffusion of beliefs within such group with particular reference to themselves. These beliefs are (1) that the criteria for categorization are such that makes it difficult if not completely impossible for any member of the minority group to exit from the original group and join the dominant group in the society (2) that there is an already existing sense in the minority; the sense of having to preserve the identity based on the belief that exiting the group is constrained by others in the dominant group as well as some individuals from within the minority group (3) that members of the minority group have the belief that they are entitled to the right to discard some or all the distinguishing differences between them and the majority group. The theory of social identity emphasizes the relevance of these two aspects: the cognitive and the emotional (Halldorson, 2009). There is a connection between the cognitive and emotional aspects. While the cognitive aspect is the basis of social categorization and comparison between groups, the emotional aspect shows the feelings of belongingness to such group. These feelings of belongingness manifest in the form of hate, love, enmity, and amity. These cognitive processes and especially cognitive prejudice form the basis of judgments and behaviors at the personal, interpersonal and intergroup levels. The application of this cognitive approach entails the estimation of situations in terms of personal and in-group consequences. This approach places emphasis on the process of prejudice and stereotyping when used in the study of the relationship between the minority and majority group (Korostelina, 2007). An individual identification with the ingroup to which such belongs is a sufficient condition for excluding the outgroup as well as the exhibition of discriminatory attitude towards members of the outgroup.

Cultural identity has been defined variously by scholars. It has been defined as “the attribution of a set of qualities to a given population” (Friedman, 1994); the individual image of the behaviors, beliefs, values, and norms (Ferdman, 1995); a combination of personal, sexual, national, social, and ethnic identities (Chen, 2006). A proper conceptualization of cultural identity according to Peter (2002) must of necessity encompass three interrelated levels of integration and analysis. To him, the psychobiological, psychosocial and the psycho-philosophical realities of the individual represented by various symbols and images knitted together by culture and seen in actual manifestation through taboos, totems, rewards, and myths should be integrated into the totality of the cultural identity of an individual.

It should be noted that the fact a group of people inhabits the same community does not mean they must of necessity hold similar beliefs nor indulge in the same cultural practices. Many factors can determine the cultural identity of an individual and ultimately the community (Turiel and Wainryb, 2000). Cross as cited in Ibrahim and Heuer (2016) builds on the role of identity in the formation of cultural identity, in his model on identity examined the development of identity by submitting that (a) it is possible for identity to evolve to higher levels of functioning in spite of challenging life experiences; (b) identity is influenced by positive or negative experiences in a social setting, especially for marginalized individuals, identity can get facilitated, or compromised; (c) the social construction of race, and the history of slavery, segregation, exclusion, and the negative socio-political history of a nation can negatively influence identity development with race-related trauma and stress over several generations.

On who defines the cultural identity of the society, Bochner cited in Peter (2002) is of the view that the majority group defines the cultural identity of a society.

Situating this within the context of this study, the thirteen clans in Kabba see themselves as having a common ancestry and shared history. This created the sense of ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ thereby translating into the cultural exclusion of the *Omodo* clan in Kabba.

The concept of social exclusion has also been subjected to various interrogation by scholars and social policy practitioners. Social exclusion according to Levitas *et al.* (2007) is a “complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or/and denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole”. The exclusion of a group from certain aspects of society is predicated on some factors. In the case of a cultural contest, the exclusionary basis is usually rooted in the history of the groups. Groups are categorized into ingroup and outgroup upon which rights and privileges are shared.

From the above major hypothesis, the followings hypotheses are to be tested

1. That there is a significant relationship between migration historical experiences and identity formation

2. That identity formation creates segmentation and differentiation
3. That there is a significant relationship between exclusion and deprivations
4. That there is a significant relationship between exclusion and conflict occurrence
5. That an increase in the degree of social exclusion decreases an individual's contribution to peaceful coexistence

2. Materials and Methods

This is a cross-sectional survey carried out in Kabba, Kogi State, Nigeria among the *Omodo* co-culture. The cross-sectional survey involves the collection of data from the sample population at a given time. It is used to establish the causal relationship between two or more variables as well as to determine the impact of one variable on the other. It is relevant here as it is deployed to investigate the social status of the *Omodo*, probing into their experiences and factor (s) that could be responsible for their present social-cultural state.

The *Omodo* clan is the population for this study. The *Omodo* constitutes the fourth group and the fourteenth clan in Kabba. Kabba is situated in Kabba/Bunu Local Government Area of Kogi State, North-Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Members of the *Omodo* clan are found in almost all the villages that make up Kabba as a town. They cohabit these villages and town in their varying numbers: Kabba, Iyah, Gbeleko, Oke Bata, Kakun, Obele. A total of 540 questionnaires were administered out of which 385 were filled and returned. The followings show the percentage of questionnaire administered and returned per location of the total questionnaires administered: Kabba 180 (33.3%) administered, 92 (70.5%) returned, Iyah 150 (27.7%) administered, 92 (60.6%) returned, Gbeleko 50 (9.2%) administered, 45 (90%) returned, Oke Bata 50 (9.2%) administered, 42 (84%) returned, Kakun 80 (14.8%) administered, 56 (70%) returned, Obele 30 (5.5%) administered, 23 (76.6%) returned. The distribution was done based on the population of the group in each location. The questionnaire contains biographical data of the respondents as well as other questions designed to provide information relevant to this research.

Statistical analysis: Data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0). The Mean of the responses obtained from the questionnaires were subjected to test using Chi-Square analysis in order to look at the score between or within groups. The mean allows the study to test hypotheses about the distribution of observations of different categories (Kothari, 2004).

3. Results

Two sets of results were generated from the analysis. First is the Chi-square result presented in Table 1, while the second is the regression analysis is presented in Table 2.

3.1. Table 1: Chi-Square Analysis

Hypothesis-1. Tests of the relationship between Migration history and identity

	Value df.	Asymp.	Sig.(2-sided)
Person Chi-Square	228.866 ²	85	.000
Likelihood Ratio	166.367	85	.000
Linear-by-linear Association	52.367	1	.000
N of Valid cases	385		

a. 86 cell (79.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected is .01.

Hypothesis-2. Tests of the relationship between formation and Segregation

	Value df.	Asymp.	Sig.(2-sided)
Person Chi-Square	264.568 ²	153	.000
Likelihood Ratio	187.000	153	.032
Linear-by-linear Association	2.310	1	.129
N of Valid cases	385		

a. 152 cells (84.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum Expected count is .00.

Hypothesis-3. Test of the relationship between exclusion and deprivations

	Value df.	Asymp.	Sig.(2-sided)
Person Chi-Square	506.213 ²	132	.000
Likelihood Ratio	166.598	132	.022
Linear-by-linear Association	58.253	1	.000
N of Valid cases	385		

a. 131 cells (84.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00.

Hypothesis-4. Test of the relationship between exclusion and Conflict Occurrence

	Value df.	Asymp.	Sig.(2-sided)
Person Chi-Square	253.785 ²	120	.000
Likelihood Ratio	174.740	120	.001
Linear-by-linear Association	12.553	1	.000
N of Valid cases	385		

a. 119 cells (83.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

Hypothesis-5. Tests of the relationship between social exclusion and individual contribution to peaceful coexistence

	Value df.	Asymp.	Sig.(2-sided)
Person Chi-Square	201.252 ²	168	.041
Likelihood Ratio	163.301	168	.588
Linear-by-linear Association	13.509	1	0.000
N of Valid cases	385		

a. 167 cells (85.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00.

3.1.1. Regression Analysis

The least squares estimation technique was used to examine the impact of the independent variables (cultural identity, social exclusion, migration history, deprivation, and segregation) on the dependent variable (communal conflict). The model is expressed implicitly as:

$$COMMF = f(CID, SOE, MIG, DEP, SEG) \tag{1}$$

In equation 1, COMMF, CID, SOE, MIG, DEP, and SEG represent communal conflict, cultural identity, social exclusion, migration history, deprivation, and segregation respectively. The model can be rewritten in explicit form as:

$$COMMF_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 CID_t + \alpha_2 SOE_t + \alpha_3 MIG_t + \alpha_4 DEP_t + \alpha_5 SEG_t + \mu_t \tag{2}$$

In equation 2, α_0 is the constant $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3, \alpha_4$ and α_5 are the coefficients for cultural identity, social exclusion, migration history, deprivation, and segregation respectively. The error term is represented by μ_t where 't' is the time period of observation. The result is presented in the table below after estimation.

The apriori expectation¹ for the parameters for this model is expressed as $\alpha_0 \geq 0; \alpha_1 \geq 0; \alpha_2 \geq 0; \alpha_3 \geq 0; \alpha_4 \geq 0$ and $\alpha_5 \geq 0$. Also, μ_t is assumed to be normally distributed with zero mean and constant variance.

Table-2. Result of Least Square Estimation

Dependent Variable: Communal Conflict				
Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	t-statistics	Probability Value
Constant	1.111***	0.219	5.068	0.000
Cultural identity	0.073*	0.038	1.922	0.055
Social Exclusion	0.188***	0.53	3.538	0.000
Migration history	0.040	0.063	0.638	0.524
Segregation	-0.010***	0.003	-3.794	0.000
Deprivation	0.125***	0.46	2.724	0.007
R-Square: 0.108 Adjusted R-Square: 0.096			F-statistics: 9.193 Probability Value: 0.0000	

*, ** and *** show significant at the levels of 10 percent, 5 percent, and 1 percent respectively

4. Discussion

Hypothesis 1 indicates a p-value of 0.000. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the two variables cannot be accepted. This implies that there is a significant relationship between the two variables at a 5% significance level. The results of the chi-square show that there is a significant relationship between migration historical experience and identity formation. The finding is in line with the findings of [Pettigrew et al. \(2008\)](#) and [Phinney et al. \(2001\)](#). The chi-square asymptotic value is less than 5% which indicates that a strong and positive association exists between migration and identity formation. This result further corroborates the analysis from the questionnaires on the reason for the negative categorization and discrimination against the *Omodo* clan to which the majority gave as historical. In addition, the result shows a strong linear relationship between the variables under consideration, suggesting that there is a direct proportionality between the variables. By implication, every change that occurs in migration history will always produce a corresponding change in identity.

¹ This relates to or denotes reasoning or knowledge which proceeds from theoretical deduction rather than from observation or experience. It forms our expectation or outcome from the model.

Hypothesis 2 indicates a p-value of 0.000. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the two variables is not accepted. This implies that there is a significant relationship between the two variables at a 5% significance level. There exists a positive and direct linkage between identity formation, segmentation, and differentiation. The implication of the result is that identity formation can significantly predict segmentation and differentiation. The identity formation is proportionally related to segmentation and differentiation. This is in line with the social identity-intergroup differentiation hypothesis. The hypothesis states that greater in-group identification is closely associated with greater in-group differentiation (Lalonde, 2002). As identity formation increases, so also segmentation and differentiation increase. This analysis further validates the opinion of the participants on been residentially segregated and the difficulty of accessing residential accommodation from members of the thirteen clans.

Hypothesis 3 indicates a p-value of 0.000. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the two variables is not accepted. This implies that there is a significant relationship between the two variables at a 5% significance level. In the same vein, social exclusion and deprivation have been shown by the chi-square result as having a significant relationship. The linear association is also significant like others. It implies that a person suffering from social exclusion is likely going to be experiencing deprivation. The two of them are strongly and linearly related. This also conforms to Baumeister *et al.* (2002) that exclusion or rejection interferes with emotional responses, thereby impairing the capacity for emphatic understanding of others, and as a result, any inclination to help or cooperate with them is undermined. There are further previous studies like (Pettigrew *et al.*, 2008) that had analyzed the relationships between ethnic prejudice and relative deprivation. While (Pettigrew *et al.*, 2008) employed the use of macro and micro data from three European surveys, this present work used data from a single case study-a single ethnic group with cultural differences. In Pettigrew *et al.* (2008) study, they focused on the relationship between Individual Deprivation and Group Deprivation and prejudice. In this study, we focus on Group Deprivation and cultural identity-based social exclusion.

Hypothesis 4 indicates a p-value of 0.000. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the two variables is not accepted. This implies that there is a significant relationship between the two variables at a 5% significance level. The finding is that exclusion has been shown to have a significant association with conflict occurrence. The implication is that conflict can occur when people feel alienated from certain societal activities in which they are not only interested but desired to participate. On the other hand, conflict occurrence can also be significantly traced to exclusion. It implies that a group of persons or persons experiencing any form of social exclusion can show forth actions that can promote conflict occurrence. Unlike the above result, there is a weak linear relationship between the variables under consideration.

Hypothesis 5 indicates a p-value of 0.000. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the two variables is not accepted. This implies that there is a significant relationship between the two variables at a 5% significance level. This hypothesis has been found to be significant going by the result of the Chi-Square. The implication is that a person suffering from social exclusion reduces his or her participation in peaceful activities. In other words, socially excluded group or persons are less inclined to peaceful coexistence. The result of this analysis is in tandem with the various opinions of the majority of participants on the existence of marginalization, exclusion, and segregation in Kabba, their lack of sense of belonging and acceptance and the percentage of the respondents in the questionnaires that showed that they react angrily to discrimination and exclusion. Following Tidwell (2001) and Sykes (2007), we can, therefore, infer that whenever an individual suffers multiple deprivations in specific areas of their lives which they deemed essential to their self-esteem, they become not only alienated, they also develop the tendency to manifest anti-social behavior like aggression and conflict. Research findings have established a close relationship between discrimination against a minority group, creation, and reinforcement of collective identity, development of a sense of alienation and mobilization on the basis of otherness (Piazza, 2012). Similarly, theoretical and empirical arguments have linked minority group marginalization and discrimination to otherness, grievance, and mobilization (Gurr, 1993); terrorist group formation and activity (Piazza, 2011).

The R-square and the adjusted R-square are the coefficients of determination, which measures the goodness of fit of the model. The higher the R-square, the greater the percentage of variation of the dependent variable that is explained by the regression plan while the closer the r-square to zero, the worse the fitness of the model. The R-square and the adjusted R-square values are 0.108 and 0.096 respectively, which are quite low; this is not surprising since other important variables that determine communal conflicts to large extent are not included in the model such as political factors, religious activities, and economic factors. These factors need to be isolated so that the objective of the study can be achieved.

The adjusted R-square is normally lower than the R-square because it takes into consideration the degree of freedom. The f-statistics explain the joint significance of the model. From the result, it can be depicted that the value of the f-statistics is 9.193 and the probability value is 0.0000. From the result, it can be concluded that the independent variables (cultural identity, social exclusion, migration history, deprivation, and segregation) jointly explained the dependent variable (communal conflict) since the probability value of the f-statistics is less than 0.05. This means that the independent variables have a degree of influence on the dependent variable.

The values of the coefficients with respective probability values are also presented in table 1 above. From the table, cultural identity is significant at the level of ten percent. Social exclusion, deprivation, segregation is significant at the level of one percent. Migration history is not significant at the level of five percent and not even at ten percent. This simply suggests that communal conflict may not have been associated with migration history but may become salient when the identity of groups become transformed. The people could leave in harmony without

needing to refer to or be rancorous because of their migration historical background. Thus, migration history alone does not cause communal conflict, rather the transmutation of identity as well as the contest over identity.

The interpretation of the result is as follows, for cultural identity: holding all other independent variables constant, a one-unit change on average in cultural identity will lead to about 7.3 percent increase in the dependent variable (communal conflict). This means that an increase in cultural identity may lead to an increase in communal conflict. The changes in cultural identity can be in many ways. Identity change can be an identity challenge. This challenge can come in many ways and could emanate from either the majority group or minority. It could be a challenge to the ascribed status of group identity, its values, beliefs, and norms; making of negative comments about a group by another and the implementation of radical acculturation strategies usually by the government. The challenge to the cultural identity or a feeling of insult or assault to cultural identity will trigger communal conflict. For social exclusion: holding all other variables constant, a one-unit change on average in social exclusion will lead to about 18.8 percent increase in the dependent variable. The implication of social exclusion is that its continued existence means communal conflict will continue to occur. Similarly, for segregation: holding all other variables constant, a unit change in the segregation on average will lead to about a 1 percent decrease in the dependent variable. Finally, holding other variables constant, a one-unit change in deprivation will lead to about 12.5 percent increase in communal conflict.

5. Conclusions

Findings from this study reveal that except for deprivation, other independent variables have a positive relationship with communal conflict. A unit change in these variables will worsen the communal conflict. There is a carryover or continuation of communal conflict among the present generations based on the historical context that established the concept of *Omodo* as servants. From the responses, it can be seen that there are conscious reactions and consequences of the long-established disparity of the clans which affects the present generation and might affect the future generation and the developmental potential of the people of Kabba such as in the establishment of industries, social amenities and also in terms of intermarriages. People who had suffered from the discriminatory practice may not favor their own native community, rather would prefer living and associate with other communities. The findings from the respondents point to the fact that the discriminatory practices are basically the same across generations but the response to these practices are quite different from what was obtainable in the earlier generations. In essence, similar treatment but different responses.

The regression analysis was conducted to test the predictive strength of impact of multiple independent variables (cultural identity, social exclusion, deprivation, segregation) on the dependent variable (communal conflict), the significant relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables as well as the effect of changes in the values of any of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The analysis shows that a relationship exists between the dependent variable and the independent variables. A change in any of the independent variable has a corresponding effect on communal conflict. Overall, despite that migration history is significant even at 10% in explaining variation in communal conflict, the model reveals that the variables jointly account for variation in communal conflict as evident from the F-statistic and its probability value. Similarly, our R^2 suggests a good fit for the model.

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