

The Indigeneity Clause and the Mismanagement of Ethnic Diversity in Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: Nigeria is characterized by ethnic diversity and the quest to achieve ‘unity in diversity’ led to its adoption of federalism as the basic structure and principle of governance. Over six decades after independence, the country remains sharply divided along ethnic lines, and national unity remains a mirage. While there is a burgeoning body of research on the causes, manifestations, and consequences of ethnic diversity mismanagement in Nigeria, few attempts have been made to analytically study the effects of constitutional provisions on the phenomenon. The study, thus, examined the effects of the indigeneity clause in the Nigerian constitution on ethnic diversity management in the country.

Research methodology: The study is based on a review of secondary data on Nigeria’s constitutional provisions and institutional processes.

Results: It identified that the indigeneity clause in the country’s constitutions has created different notions of citizenship and further exacerbated differences between ethnic groups in the country. The clause established two classes of Nigerians, indigenes, and settlers, and the ensuing ‘us against them’ culture lies at the root of ethnic tensions witnessed in the country.

Limitations: Other issues, apart from the indigeneity clause, may also lead to the mismanagement of ethnic diversity in the country.

Contribution: The findings and recommendations of the study provide a veritable template to help ensure good ethnic diversity management in Nigeria and other multi-ethnic states.

Keywords: *citizenship, ethnicity, indigenes, indigeneity clause, settlers*

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1. Introduction

Diversity management has become a major issue in both national and international politics given the realization that no state is strictly homogeneous in the real sense of the word. The notions of countries with populations having the same characteristics and features have become contentious due to widespread ethnic conflicts in what used to be considered nation-states. These conflicts have shown that these ‘nation-states’ are made up of ethnically diverse peoples ([Balzer, 2021](#); [Gutierrez, 2020](#); [Wicker, 2020](#)). However, while historical evidence shows that an ethnically diverse state is prone to conflicts, good management of ethnic diversity ensures that a plural state enjoys the benefits accruable from the pooling of diverse human and material resources ([Idike et al., 2019](#); [Oyeneye & Adenuga, 2014, 2015](#); [Smootha, 2018](#)). Many plural states, including Tanzania, Switzerland, Belgium, and the United States, have employed constitutional and institutional processes to achieve a high degree of national integration and unity ([Ojukwu & Onifade, 2010](#)). Countries such as Somalia, Rwanda, and Burundi which are not so diverse in terms of the cultural compositions of their citizens have either experienced genocidal civil wars or are still experiencing political instability. These examples further buttress the fact that diversity can be a source of strength for any state if it is properly managed, while its mismanagement may create a serious crisis for plural states ([Ahmadi, 2018](#); [Bazzi et al., 2019](#);

[Ezzati & Erdal, 2018](#); [Odubajo, 2011](#)). Nigeria, with over 250 ethnic groups, is one of the most diverse countries in Africa and in the world ([Chidozie & Orji, 2022](#); [Mbah et al., 2019](#); [Onyekachukwu & Oghogho, 2018](#)). Like most other African countries, Nigeria has not been able to effectively manage its ethnic diversity. Most of the crises in the country are traceable to perennial conflicts among the various ethnic groups over resource allocations and management ([Chidozie & Orji, 2022](#); [Edosa, 2014](#); [Mbah et al., 2019](#); [Onyekachukwu & Oghogho, 2018](#)).

The recognition of the diverse nature of the Nigerian state necessitated the adoption of federalism as the guiding structure and principle of government ([Babalola, 2015](#); [Babalola & Okafor, 2019](#); [Egwim, 2020](#); [Majekodunmi, 2015](#); [Odisu, 2015](#); [Okudolo & Onah, 2019](#)). Federalism is widely regarded as the best system of government for a state with a diverse population as it ensures national integration, nation building and national unity ([Abizadeh, 2021](#); [Babalola & Okafor, 2019](#); [Lee, 2022](#); [Majekodunmi, 2015](#)). It is also perceived as having the capacity to promote national unity while at the same time recognizing and preserving various identities of groups in the state. Despite the adoption of federalism, Nigeria has not been able to harmonize the diversity of its citizens to achieve the desired level of national unity ([Adedeji & Ezeabasili, 2018](#); [Ali & Ahmed, 2019](#); [Faluyi & Oni, 2018](#)). This arises from the inability to institutionalize practices needed for good diversity management ([Edewor et al., 2014](#); [Ukiwo, 2005](#)). The Nigerian constitution, especially with its indigeneity clause, creates an ambiguity in the concept of citizenship. The clause creates different interpretations and classes of citizens, predicated on ethnic premises, which portend grave implications for diversity management, and by extension, national unity in the Nigerian state. Serious research attention has been devoted to the causes, nature and consequences of ethnicity and ethnocentrism in Nigeria ([Adegami & Uche, 2015](#); [Afolabi, 2016](#); [Agbu et al., 2019](#); [Anthony, 2018](#); [Babalola, 2015](#); [Canci & Odukoya, 2016](#); [Chidozie & Orji, 2022](#); [Edewor et al., 2014](#); [Egwim, 2020](#); [Etefa, 2019](#); [Nnabuihe, 2020](#); [Ukiwo, 2005](#)). Many of these works tend to see colonialism, corruption, class interests and the nature of the post-colonial state as reasons for acrimonious ethnic relations in Nigeria. However, the current study departs from this trajectory by engaging an under-researched aspect of ethnocentrism in Nigeria: the indigeneity clause. To realize this aim, the study examines secondary data on ethnic relations in Nigeria. A central assumption is that constitutional and institutional provisions which classified Nigerians into different classes along ethnic lines, especially the indigeneity clause in succeeding constitutions, exacerbate negative ethnic relations in the country.

The study is arranged into six sections. The introductory section gives insights into the diversity mismanagement in Nigeria and sets the tone for the other sections of the study. The second section provides the conceptual and theoretical premises on which the study is founded. The third section traces the mismanagement of ethnic diversity in Africa to colonialism. It argues that colonialism heightened differences and conflicts between ethnic groups and it further shows that post-colonial Africa continues to reflect the nature of a colonial state. The fourth section examines constitutional provisions and institutional practices in Nigeria, with major emphasis on the indigeneity clause. The fifth section examines cases of ethnic conflicts occasioned by the indigenes/settlers divisions in the country. The sixth section concludes by making recommendations for better ethnic diversity management in the country.

2. Literature Review

Diversity and ethnicity: A conceptual and theoretical framework

There is no universally accepted definition of diversity. However, there are common agreements on what it connotes. It is seen as the representation of the multitude of individual differences and similarities that exist among people. These differences and similarities are reflected in different human characteristics including race, age, creed, origin, religion, ethnicity, and gender. [Green et al. \(2012\)](#) define diversity as the differences among people concerning age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, spiritual practice, and public assurance status. [The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa \(2013\)](#) refers to it as the plurality of identity groups that inhabit a country. [Banks et al. \(2005: p. 17\)](#) describe it as “the wide range of racial, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious variation that exists within and across groups that live in multi-cultural nation states”. For these authors, diversity is all about observable differences and similarities and it mainly manifests

in such issues as ethnic identity, racial group, social class, gender, religion, abilities, disabilities, and language.

On the other hand, ethnicity refers to groups of people who share cultural identities including myths of common ancestry, histories, traditions, languages, and religions, and who have sense of solidarity and communal belonging ([Ruane & Todd 2016](#); [Taras & Ganguly, 2015](#)). Ethnicity is as old as society itself. Abraham Maslow, theorizing on human motivation and personality, shows that a hierarchy of five levels of needs governs the behavior of people and groups ([Carducci, 2020](#); [Navy, 2020](#)). These include survival, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualization needs. A cursory study of these needs reveals that they are best ensured and assured in a group. Membership in a group heightens the possibilities of meeting the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing. It increases the feelings of safety and creates a sense of belonging. Most importantly, it provides individuals with identities necessary for esteem values and makes provisions for self-actualization. While these group functions are not intrinsically negative to the security of the society/state, the multiplicity of groups invariably leads to competition over the resources of the society/state, leading to conflicts. Ethnic conflicts tend to be more violent than other forms of conflicts as ethnic groups are more exclusive and non-migratory in terms of membership than other groups. While a member of a social group could migrate to another group easily depending on changes in socio-economic and political fortunes, membership of an ethnic group is often for a lifetime.

The foregoing suggests that the more diverse a state is in terms of ethnic groups, the more prone it is to destabilizing influences. There is a consensus in the literature that diversity management is central to nation-building and unity in any given state. A state that has achieved a high degree of national unity has good diversity management techniques but a low degree of national unity denotes the inability of the state to develop constitutional and institutional practices needed for the effective management of the diversity of its citizens. Thus, where the constitution is deficient in this regard, national unity becomes a difficult enterprise and state collapse becomes imminent.

Historicising the mismanagement of ethnic diversity in Africa

Prior to the epochal period of colonialism in Africa, there existed many sovereign states which were multi-ethnic in nature, yet the diversity inherent in these states was used to strengthen the bonds of fellowship among their citizens. Using the old Oyo Empire as a reference, [Oyeneye and Adenuga \(2014\)](#) argue that the policies of the leadership of precolonial African states were geared toward achieving common citizenships for all their peoples irrespective of their ethnic affiliations. They noted that what is today regarded as Yorubaland in Southwest Nigeria was initially inhabited by some indigenous peoples who, through socio-cultural assimilation, were integrated into the migrant Yoruba race. Northern Nigeria had a similar experience as the conquering minority Fulani ethnic group, through deliberate socio-religious, economic, and political policies, integrated themselves into the majority Hausa ethnic group. Though most precolonial African states were created through warfare, they were however sustained through the myths of common ancestry and shared socio-cultural values.

Colonialism disrupted the diversity balance which had characterized precolonial African states. In the first instance, the partitioning of the African continent among European states was conducted without any regard for the existing relationships within and between African states. For example, the Yoruba people found themselves divided between two colonizers, the British and the French, and this division was replicated all over the African continent with grave consequences for the socio-cultural, economic and political relationships among the various colonial African states ([Adenuga, 2018](#); [Asiwaju, 1984](#); [Egbe & Okoi, 2018](#)). The imperialistic nature of the colonial African state was also a major destabilizing factor in every part of the African continent. The European colonial forces were more interested in exploiting their African colonies than in creating and sustaining good relationships among and between the various diverse groups in the colonies ([Adenuga, 2018](#); [Kalu & Falola, 2018](#); [Mekoa, 2019](#); [Paine, 2019](#)). However, the gravest effect of colonialism on the management of diversity in Africa was the institutionalization of racial and cultural discrimination. The Europeans considered themselves to be racially and culturally superior to Africans and they also vigorously encouraged some African ethnic groups to consider themselves superior to others ([Adenuga, 2018](#);

[Kalu & Falola, 2018](#); [Mekoa, 2019](#); [Paine, 2019](#)). Invariably, in most colonial African states, there were different classes of citizenship based on ethnic attachments. As [Jinadu \(2002\)](#) poignantly puts it, the ‘divide and rule’ policy that characterized colonial rule in Africa sowed the seeds of postcolonial discords among various ethnic groups in Africa. The colonial rule also weakened national solidarity and undermined the consolidation of national unity across ethnic lines.

Besides the deliberate creation of different classes of citizens in the colonial African states, colonial policies also unconsciously led to the concept of two types of citizenship, civic public and primordial public citizenships. [Ekeh \(1975\)](#) avers that colonialism created the notion of the two ‘Publics’, the ‘Civic Public’ and the ‘Primordial Public’. Because of the elevation of ethnicity to a tool of statecraft and its use for socio-economic and political mobilization, strong primordial attachments were developed and an average African considered him/herself, first and foremost, a citizen of his/her ethnic group and to a lesser degree, a citizen of the state and when conflicts occurred between role expectations from the two publics, it was always to the disadvantage of the civic public. These orientations were transferred to the postcolonial African states, upon independence. The African leaders who assumed the headship of these states after independence continued the colonial policies of using ethnicity as the basis for allocating the resources of the states. Ethnicity, as a political tool for alienating some citizens from the commonwealth, became very handy to cover up for bad governance characterized by gross ineptitude, high level of corruption, and maladministration ([Adenuga, 2018](#)).

The dilemma of the indigeneity clause in Nigeria

The mismanagement of diversity has existed in Nigeria right from its creation as diverse ethnic groups were coerced into the Nigerian state without any appropriate mechanism for nation-building and national unity. The resultant effect is that the consciousness of belonging to different ethnic groups has always overshadowed the notion of common citizenship in the minds of Nigerians ([Ayor & Odey, 2018](#); [Edewor et al., 2014](#); [Mbah et al., 2019](#)). To address this anomaly, the 1954 Lyttleton constitution stipulated a federal system of government for the state in order to ensure national integration while also ensuring the preservation of cultural and ethnic identities ([Babalola & Okafor, 2019](#); [Egwim, 2020](#); [Okudolo & Onah, 2019](#)). Subsequent constitutions including 1960, 1963, 1979, and 1999 constitutions have kept faith with the ideology of federalism as the bedrock of governance in the state.

However, constitutional provisions and institutional practices have truncated the objective of ensuring national integration in the Nigerian state. For example, political parties in the first republic were essentially ethno-regionally based. The Action Group (AG), which held sway in the Western Region, was an offshoot of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a Pan-Yoruba socio-cultural group. The Northern Peoples’ Congress (NPC), as the name implies, was formed to represent the peoples of the Northern Region, especially the dominant Hausa-Fulani ethnic group. The National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), which started as a national party later became the dominant party in the Eastern Region and was largely a voice for the Igbo ethnic group ([Gberevbie & Oni, 2021](#); [Levan, 2015](#); [Ogunyemi, 2020](#); [Ojukwu & Onifade, 2010](#)). Each party jealously guarded its ‘home base’ and also made attempts, during periods of general elections, to widen its base through incursions into the regions controlled by the other political parties. Interestingly, these ‘opposition’ parties found allies in the minority ethnic groups who were being dominated by the larger ethnic groups, a development the ‘home-based’ parties deeply resented and resisted. In this wise, the politics of the first republic was characterized by bitter acrimony between the various ethnic groups in the country. To lesser degrees, the politics of the second, abortive third and fourth republics were also defined by intense ethnic competitions for the soul of the Nigerian state ([Levan, 2015](#); [Ogunyemi, 2020](#); [Omotola, 2021](#)).

Constitutional contradictions have also heightened the mismanagement of the ethnic diversity in Nigeria. The 1999 constitution, for example, in Chapter 3, Section 1, gives the criteria for citizenship to include being born in Nigeria before the date of independence to parents or grandparents who belong or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria; being born in Nigeria after the date of independence to whose parents or grandparents who are citizens of Nigeria; being born outside Nigeria to parents who are citizens of Nigeria. Provisions for naturalization and for foreigners to

apply for Nigerian citizenship are also provided for in the constitution. Section 42, (1), (2), (3) & (4) also dictate that:

- a) A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion, or political opinion shall not by reason only that he is such a person;
- b) Be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religion, or political opinions are not made subject;
- c) Be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of any law in Nigeria or any law such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religion, or political opinions;
- d) No citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely because of the circumstance of his birth.

The above constitutional provisions provide full and equal citizenship for all Nigerians irrespective of their differences. At the same time, they serve as safeguards to ensure that no Nigerian is discriminated against because of his/her ethnic affiliations. In essence, all Nigerians are expected to have the same sets of rights and responsibilities anywhere and everywhere in the Nigerian state. To emphasize this notion of full and equal citizenship, Section 15 (13) (b) advocates that “for the purpose of promoting national integration, it shall be the role of the State to secure full residence rights for every citizen in all parts of the Federation”. However, in Section 318 (1), the constitution dictates that only a person who has satisfied the conditions of indigeneity can qualify to become a citizen of a Local Government or State in Nigeria. [The International Crisis Group \(2012: p. 3\)](#), quoting the Native Authority Law of 1954, describes an indigene as “someone whose genealogy can be traced to a particular geo-ethnic space within a local council or state in which s/he is resident’ and a non-indigene as a “native who is not a member of the native community living in the area of its authority”. To further buttress the indigeneity clause stated in Section 318, the constitution, in Section 147 (3), states that “...the President shall appoint at least one minister from each state, who shall be an **indigene** (emphasis mine) of such state.”

The indigeneity clause implies that it creates two types of citizenship for the average Nigerian. He/she shares Nigerian citizenship with every other citizen in the country but shares that of his/her state/local government with “only fellow natives” ([Edosa, 2014](#)). Four classes of citizens are identifiable as a result of the inclusion of the indigeneity clause in the Nigerian constitutions ([Nwanegbo, et al., 2014](#)). The first class comprises citizens who are considered indigenes of their states of residence. The second class is made up of indigenes of other states considered settlers in their states of residence. Nigerian citizens who cannot trace their source to any indigenous group in the country are found in the third class. Nigerian women who marry outside their states of origin constitute the fourth class. While the first class of Nigerians enjoys all the benefits of citizenship in their states of residence, Nigerians in the second class can only expect crumbs of goodwill in their states of residence. To enjoy the full rights and benefits of a citizen, these settlers must return to their states of origin. The third class of Nigerians can only hope to live on the goodwill of the governments and the first class of citizens in their states of residence. Most pathetic is the lot of Nigerians in the fourth class as they are neither given recognition in their states of origin nor their husbands’ states.

By making autochthonous the basis for accessing the resources of the state, the indigeneity clause has bred a culture of ‘us’ (the indigenes) against ‘them’ (the non-indigenes) in almost every local government and state in Nigeria and has generated deep-seated acrimony between different ethnic groups residing in the same locality ([Angerbrandt, 2018; Bamidele, 2018; Lenshie & Yenda, 2017; Maiangwa, 2020; Mang & Erhardt, 2018](#)). More worrisome is the fact that these identities tend to be permanent as a non-indigene, often classified as a settler, may never be accorded the full benefits of a citizen in a local government or a state even if the person spends his/her entire life in that local government or state ([Bamidele, 2018; Ciboh, 2014; Lenshie & Yenda, 2017; Maiangwa, 2020; Mang & Erhardt, 2018](#)). The common forms of discrimination against settlers in Nigeria include denial of

access to employment opportunities. Indigenes are given first considerations over and above settlers in accessing employment opportunities but settlers are put in the frontline in the event of the need for retrenchment of workers ([Alubo, 2009](#); [Ejiofor, 2021](#)). For example, many states in Northern Nigeria only employ Southerners in their civil services on a non-pensionable basis and such cannot aspire to hold any position of eminence ([Edosa, 2014](#)). More worrisome is the fact that many states in Southern Nigeria also deny Nigerians from neighboring states employment opportunities ([Edosa, 2014](#)). These discriminatory acts started before independence as the Northern Region, under its 'Northernization Policy', dismissed over 2,000 southerners from its civil service between 1954 and 1958 ([Akanji, 2021](#); [Anthony, 2018](#); [Ojukwu & Onifade, 2010](#)).

It has also become the norm to first admit indigenes of a state into the state-owned tertiary institutions before considering non-indigenes. These non-indigenes are often made to pay higher fees than their counterparts who are considered to be indigenes, with some categories of scholarships only awarded to these indigenes ([Alubo, 2009](#); [Mang & Erhardt, 2018](#)). Distinctions are also made between indigenes and non-indigenes during election periods. While settlers have the full rights, just like the indigenes, to vote in elections, it is considered an absurdity for them to stand for elective positions as these positions are considered to be the exclusive preserves of the indigenes ([Alubo, 2009](#); [Angerbrandt, 2018](#); [Campbell & Page, 2018](#); [Fourchard, 2021](#)). Many of these acts have also been given official sanctions as most states and even the federal government demand certificates of origin before people are given employment or admission into tertiary institutions ([Fourchard, 2021](#); [Fourchard & Bardelli, 2021](#); [Mang & Erhardt, 2018](#); [Sayne, 2012](#)).

The indigenes-settlers divide has been the bane of national unity in Nigeria as it reinforces other identity-based divides in the country including language, religion, and culture ([Sayne, 2012](#)). In this wise, most religious conflicts in the country have their sources in the conflicts between indigenes and settlers. This reality explains the frequent religious conflicts between the many ethnic groups in the country's North Central geo-political zone and the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group. The Hausa/Fulani, the most dominant ethnic group in Northern Nigeria, is seen as settlers by the minority groups in the North Central. This divide is further reinforced by the fact that an average Hausa/Fulani identifies with the Islamic religion while most of the minority groups in the North Central are Christians ([Afolabi, 2016](#); [Nnabuihe, 2019, 2020](#); [Sayne, 2012](#)). Thus, most of the indigenous-settlers conflicts in the North Central are tinged with religious colorations. Generally in Nigeria, anyone who is not considered a member of the indigenous group is treated with suspicion and discriminated against. It is also pertinent to recall that Babatunde Fashola, who is presently the Minister for Works and Housing, generated a political furor in the nation in July 2013. Then, he, as Governor of Lagos State, arrested, remanded, and 'deported' some people belonging to the Igbo ethnic group from his state to Onitsha in Anambra state because they were constituting a nuisance to his state ([Iguh, 2016](#)). This is a clear case of indigeneity prevailing over the rights of Nigerians as expressed in Section 42 (1), (2) & (3) of the 1999 constitution.

Cases of crisis occasioned by the indigenes/ settlers divide

Some of the ethnic conflicts occasioned by the indigenes/settlers divide in Nigeria include conflicts between the Yoruba (indigenes) and the Hausa/Fulani residents (settlers) in Sagamu, Ogun State on July 22, 1999. This conflict, in which many lives were lost and property destroyed, had its immediate source over disagreements on cultural practices. The Yelwan-Shendam religious crisis of May 1, 2004, in Plateau State, which also saw thousands killed and maimed, had its source in contestations between indigenes and settlers. The indigenous Tarok, who are mainly Christians, were often accused of trying to prevent the Muslim Hausa settlers' access to political and economic rights. Incessant conflicts between Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani traders in the Mile 12 area of Lagos State have always been attended by loss of lives and the destruction of property running into millions of Naira. The conflicts are traceable to contestations between Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani traders on who should exercise greater control over the popular Mile 12 market. The fierce and incessant face-offs between Berom and Hausa/Fulani settlers in Jos, Plateau State, and the equally vicious conflicts between the Jukun and the Tiv in Taraba state have also caused needless insecurity in the country. While all these cases may differ in terms of locality and occurrence, they are all often caused by the quest of settlers

to be accorded the rights of a full Nigerian citizen in their areas of residence and the efforts of the indigenes to limit the rights of these settlers.

The Jukun/Tiv and the Berom/Hausa Fulani ethnic conflicts provide interesting studies. A major cause of the frequent clashes between the Jukun and the Tiv in Wukari, Taraba State borders on the fact that the Jukun consider themselves to be the true indigenes of the locality while the Tiv are considered to be strangers in the area. In this wise, the Jukun always tries to prevent the Tiv from occupying positions of political and economic importance in the area. However, the Tiv argues that they cannot be treated as strangers as they have been inhabiting the area even before the colonial era and, thus, that they should have the same access as the Jukun to the opportunities in the area. These two diametrical positions have always led to bitter conflicts between the two ethnic groups involving the deaths of many Nigerians ([Agbu et al., 2019](#); [Ciboh, 2014](#)).

The frequent clashes between the Berom and the Hausa/Fulani in Jos, Plateau state also bear strong witness to the ‘us against them’ mentality occasioned by the indigene/settler divide in the country. The Berom consider themselves indigenes and thus lay claims to the socio-economic and political opportunities in the city. The Hausa/Fulani, by virtue of being the most populous settlers’ ethnic group in the city and having settled there well before independence also seek to enjoy their rights as citizens. The rivalries between these groups have over the decades resulted in much bloodshed ([Afolabi, 2016](#); [Nnabuihe, 2019, 2020](#)). For example, the two ethnic groups went on the warpath in 1994 because of the appointment of a Hausa as the Chairman of the Jos North Local Government by the then Military Administrator of Plateau State. The Berom group protested against the appointment. The escalation of violent confrontations between the two ethnic groups led to the deaths of many residents. Violence also erupted between the two ethnic groups in June 2001 when a member of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group was appointed as the Chairman of the Local Government Monitoring Committee of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) for the Jos North Local Government. The Berom resented this intrusion into what they see to be their special privilege as indigenes and violence ensued between the two groups. The conflicts also take religious dimensions as the Berom are predominantly Christians while the Hausa/Fulani are mainly Muslims ([Afolabi, 2016](#); [Nnabuihe, 2019, 2020](#)).

3. Research Methodology

The study is basically qualitative. It reviewed secondary sources of data on Nigeria’s constitutional provisions and institutional processes guiding ethnic relations to explain how ethnic diversity is managed in the country.

4. Conclusion

This study has shown that the diversity of ethnic groups, in itself, is not a problem; it is the mismanagement of ethnic diversity, especially in the allocation of resources of the state that has culminated in the spate of ethnoreligious conflicts in Nigeria. More invidious is the ambiguous and contradictory provisions for citizenship in the 1999 constitution, as well as the inclusion of the indigeneity clause, which has further heightened the mismanagement of ethnic diversity. This reality has invigorated the incessant and vicious ‘indigenes’ versus ‘settlers’ narratives that continue to manifest in the socio-political engagements in Nigeria. A critical intervention in resolving the debacle is the amendment of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria. This will help to resolve the destabilizing issue of dual and even multiple interpretations of citizenship occasioned by its ambiguities and contradictions. To this end, the indigeneity clause, identified as a great stumbling block in the quest for national integration, nation building, and national unity, should be removed from the constitution. Nigerians, irrespective of their local governments and states of origin, should be accorded full citizenship status in their places of residence.

Bad governance is also at the core of the diversity problem. Leaders often resort to ethnicity as a tool of economic and political manipulations to cover up for their ineptitude and gain legitimacy with members of their ethnic groups. However, where good governance exists, there would be no need for

leaders to play the divisive and destructive politics of ethnicity and there would be no need for the citizens to seek repose in their ethnic associations. Thus, the Nigerian government must endeavor to be responsible and accountable to the Nigerian masses. When the government wins the trust and loyalty of the citizens, the fears of marginalization in accessing the commonwealth of the state would become resolved, ethnic lines would become blurred and national integration, nation building and national unity would become achievable goals.

Limitations and study forward

The study mainly focused on the indigeneity clause as the cause of ethnic diversity mismanagement in Nigeria. Further research should be carried out on other constitutional provisions and institutional practices impacting negatively on the management of ethnic diversity in the country.

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