

Abstract

Nigeria, a nation characterized by its rich cultural diversity and ethnic plurality, comprises over 250 ethnic groups, with three major tribes the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo dominating the political landscape. This dissertation explores the pervasive role of tribal relations in Nigeria's public administration system, critically examining how tribal affiliations shape governance, policymaking, public service delivery, and national integration. The study analyzes the intersection of tribalism and public administration in Nigeria, investigating its historical roots, contemporary manifestations, and potential implications for effective governance.

Background of Study

Tribalism, while often viewed as a cultural marker, has profound implications for Nigeria's political and administrative systems. Since the colonial era, when British policies leveraged ethnic divisions for administrative convenience, tribalism has been embedded into the fabric of Nigeria's governance structures. Despite the country's formal commitment to national unity and federalism, tribal relations continue to influence the distribution of resources, political appointments, and the functioning of public institutions.

This dissertation is motivated by the need to understand how Nigeria's tribal relations contribute to the challenges of public sector inefficiency, corruption, and uneven development. It interrogates the extent to which tribal allegiances conflict with the principles of meritocracy and inclusiveness, raising critical questions about the sustainability of such a system in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria.

Objectives of the Research

The primary aim of this study is to critically assess the role of tribal relations in shaping the functioning and outcomes of Nigeria's public administration. Specifically, the dissertation seeks to:

1. Examine the historical evolution of tribalism in Nigeria's governance structures, particularly during the colonial and post-colonial periods.
2. Analyze the influence of tribal relations on recruitment, promotions, and decision-making processes as well as resources distribution within Nigeria's public sector.
3. Investigate how tribalism affects the distribution of public resources, including education, healthcare, and infrastructure.
4. Explore the implications of tribalism for national integration, peace building, and political stability in Nigeria.
5. Propose strategies for mitigating the negative impacts of tribal relations on public administration to enhance governance and development outcomes.

Object and Subject of the Study

The Object of the study is: Public Administration System of Nigeria

The Subject of the study is: Role of Tribal Relation

The Variables and Feature in the whole study should consist of:

Tribe: Here means the Nigerian smaller Tribes and Ethnic Groups (Hence Nigeria has both)

Public Administration here means: National Government, Human Resources, Tribal Institutions or Institutions that relate to tribal composition, The state Parliament. Federal and State and Local Government. Federal Character, Public and Policy Institutions Political Parties and Public Service Delivery.

Tribal Relations here means: Tribal Relations regarding, Economic, Resource Distribution, perception of fairness, Inter-tribal institutions and policies, Colonial History through tribal relation, Tribal Representation in Policy Decision-Making, Perception of Fairness and Equity, Socio-economic Impacts of Tribal Relations, Case studies of specific Nigerian election to highlight variations in tribal influence. Institutional Framework and Anti-Discrimination Policies. Study of existing policies aimed at reducing tribal bias. Inter-Tribal Relations and Conflict Management. Analysis of inter-tribal conflicts and their impact on public administration.

Method and Methodology

This dissertation employs a **mixed-methods approach**, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role of tribal relations in Nigerian public administration. The study draws from **primary and secondary sources**, including government documents, policy reports, existing literature, and published materials on Nigerian public administration and tribalism. This multi-source approach ensures a well-rounded understanding of how tribal affiliations influence governance, policy implementation, and bureaucratic efficiency.

A **case study method** is adopted to provide an in-depth examination of the interaction between tribal dynamics and public administration within Nigeria. The case study approach allows for a detailed analysis of specific instances of tribal influence in governmental institutions, shedding light on patterns of favoritism, nepotism, and administrative inefficiencies that may arise due to ethnic affiliations. Case studies of selected the Nigeria's 2023 presidential election, findings illustrate broader trends affecting governance in Nigeria, especially in relation to tribal affiliation.

Furthermore, **ethnographic methods** were incorporated through direct observation to capture the lived experiences of individuals within Nigeria's tribal relation. Specifically by participating in the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in Nigeria (2024). By immersing in the multi tribal environment and observing interactions among civil servants and civilians from different ethnic backgrounds, the study provides nuanced insights into how tribal affiliations shape administrative decisions, workplace dynamics, and inter-group relations. Ethnographic data enriches qualitative analysis by uncovering informal structures, cultural practices, and implicit biases that may not be readily apparent in official records.

To complement the qualitative research, a **survey** was conducted among Nigerian citizens representing both **major and minor tribes**. The survey quantitatively assesses public perceptions of tribalism in Nigeria's public administration, its effects on a plural society, and its implications for public service efficiency and fairness. By analyzing statistical trends and correlating them with

qualitative findings, the study ensures a general holistic evaluation of how ethnic diversity impacts governance outcomes.

Through this combined methodological framework incorporating case study analysis, ethnographic observation, and quantitative survey research this dissertation seeks to offer a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of how tribal affiliations influence Nigeria's public administration and governance structures.

Precise Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in the theoretical framework of (Plural Society), which posits that formal political institutions in many African countries, including Nigeria, coexist with informal systems of patron-client relations and "*Prebendalism*" theory, which was known to be present in Nigeran system of public administration and the theory of political economy. Tribalism, in this context, becomes a mechanism through which elites maintain power by distributing state resources to their ethnic groups in exchange for political loyalty. Additionally, the dissertation draws on theories of public administration ethics to explore the tension between tribalism and meritocratic principles in governance. *Theories will be implied based on the following theories.*

Plural Society & Multi-ethnic Society

Inter-Ethnic Relation

System of Public Administration in Multi-ethnic society

Prebendalism

Consociationalism

Key Findings

Preliminary findings suggest that tribal relations have a pervasive and largely negative influence on Nigeria's public administration. Ethnic loyalty often overrides merit in the appointment and promotion of civil servants, leading to inefficiencies and reinforcing corruption. The politicization of tribal affiliations has also created deep-rooted grievances among marginalized groups, fostering regional inequalities and undermining social cohesion. However, tribalism remains a resilient social structure, offering individuals a sense of identity and belonging in an often-fragmented nation-state.

Implications for Public Policy and Governance

The dissertation highlights the need for reforms aimed at reducing the influence of tribalism in Nigeria's public administration system. This includes the promotion of merit-based recruitment and promotion processes, as well as the enforcement of policies aimed at fostering national unity, such as the Federal Character Principle. However, the study cautions that such reforms must be implemented with sensitivity to the complexities of Nigeria's ethnic landscape, as blanket policies may inadvertently exacerbate tribal tensions if not carefully managed.

Tribalism remains a double-edged sword in Nigeria's public administration system on one hand, it reflects the country's rich cultural diversity; on the other, it hinders the development of a meritocratic

and efficient governance structure. The findings of this dissertation underscore the urgency of addressing the structural and cultural factors that perpetuate tribalism in Nigeria's public sector. By doing so, the country can move toward a more inclusive and effective public administration system, capable of meeting the needs of all its citizens, irrespective of tribal affiliation.

Contribution of the study to the field of knowledge

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on governance in multi-ethnic societies and offers practical policy recommendations for Nigeria's ongoing quest for national unity and administrative efficiency. Ultimately, it calls for a balanced approach that respects cultural identities while promoting the ideals of fairness, meritocracy, and national integration in Nigeria's public administration.

Study Hypotheses

This dissertation posits that tribal relations significantly influence the structure, processes, and outcomes of public administration in Nigeria. Specifically, it hypothesizes that:

H1: Recruitment fairness positively influences trust in public administration.

H2: Influence of tribal affiliation negatively affects trust in public administration.

H3: Federal character impact positively influences trust in public administration.

H4: Service delivery efficiency positively influences trust in public administration.

The research aims to test these hypotheses through qualitative and quantitative analysis, evaluating how tribalism interacts with public administration systems and identifying potential pathways for reform as the general expected outcome of the study.

Assumptions and Summary of Results and Findings: This study on Nigeria's system of public administration is based on the following key assumptions:

- 1) *Ethnic Diversity and Political Fragmentation:* Nigeria's multi-ethnic composition has historically contributed to political fragmentation and competition, necessitating the application of consociationalism to manage ethnic tensions effectively [12].
- 2) *Federalism as a Conflict Management Tool:* The federal structure of Nigeria, including state creation and the Federal Character Principle, is assumed to be a deliberate mechanism for reducing ethnic friction and promoting national integration by ensuring equitable representation of diverse ethnic groups.
- 3) *Prebendalism and Elite Dominance:* The political system is heavily influenced by prebendalism, which fosters an elitist and hierarchical structure where political positions are often seen as opportunities for personal and group enrichment rather than public service (Joseph, 1987).
- 4) *Consociationalism as an Applied Theory:* The principles of consociational democracy such as power-sharing, proportional representation, and mutual vetoes are assumed to be essential in

sustaining Nigeria's heterogeneous public administration and ensuring a balance of power among ethnic groups.

- 5) *State Creation as a Means of Ethnic Balance*: The continuous creation of states in Nigeria is assumed to be an effective strategy for mitigating ethnic dominance, ensuring political inclusion, and addressing historical grievances of marginalized groups.
- 6) *The Role of Federal Character Commission (FCC)*: The FCC is assumed to be a critical institutional framework designed to prevent ethnic monopolization of government positions and ensure fair distribution of resources.
- 7) *Weak Institutional Structures and Corruption*: It is assumed that despite formal frameworks like federalism and consociationalism, weak institutions and corruption undermine equitable governance and prevent the effective implementation of inclusive policies.

The study concludes that while federalism, state creation, and the Federal Character principle have provided a structural framework for ethnic inclusion in Nigeria's public administration, they have not fully eliminated elite dominance, corruption, and ethnic rivalry. A more robust implementation of these frameworks, alongside political and electoral reforms, is necessary to foster a truly inclusive and merit-based governmental system.

Approbation of the Dissertation study result: The main provisions of the study are published in nine articles in total, two of them in journals indexed on SCOPUS database (both Q1) with 88 and 91 percentiles respectively. Four of the articles in journals recommended by the Committee for Quality Assurance in the Science and Higher Education Ministry of Kazakhstan and others as report in local and international conferences.

The study is structured in the following format: Chapter one: Nigerian Public Administration System and Tribal History. The second Chapter: Nigerian System Of Public Administration and case study, and the third Chapter: The Role Of Tribal Relations in Public Administration System Of Nigeria. The last chapter studies the main topic of the study, which includes methodology and the result of the research. The last part consists of a summary of the study, recommendations and references.