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# **NEWSPAPER FRAMING OF CONFLICTS: PERCEPTIONS OF ETHNIC GROUP LEADERS ON CONFLICT BEHAVIOURS IN A MULTIETHNIC SOCIETY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Multiple forces contribute to and influence the course of ethnic conflict in developing and multi ethnic societies. In Nigeria, media reporting and ethnic group leaders play very important roles in determining the course and severity of ethnic conflict. However, little research has been done examining both the roles played by ethnic group leaders and newspaper framing in influencing interethnic conflict in Nigeria, despite the growth of conflict studies. Within the community of conflict researchers, little work has been done to understand ethnic group conflict behaviors and media reporting as mutually influencing factors in ethnic conflict. This study aims to address this gap. Through in-depth interviews with 26 ethnic group leaders, this study explores how they view media and leaders' roles in influencing violent interethnic conflict in Nigeria. Interview data were analyzed thematically using NVivo 8 software. Study findings suggest that ethnic group leaders tend to blame the press, the government and ethnic group attitudes. Specifically, the leaders fault the press for inflammatory reporting, name calling, double standards and for heavy ownership influence and ethnic interest. They hold government, both past and present, responsible for their failure to unify Nigerians. Interviewees agreed that although media reports have influenced their decision and actions at one time or the other, individual impunity among ethnic group leaders is also a serious cause of conflict. political system of this region.

**Keywords:** *Ethnic conflict, conflict behavior, conflict, ethnic group leader, newspaper framing*

## INTRODUCTION

Ethnic conflict has been at the core of Nigeria's development problems (Bienen, 2013; Irobi, 2005). Concern over interethnic conflict in several regions in Nigeria has stimulated interest in ethnic conflict research (Onwusuruibgo, 2010). A number of studies have identified media and ethnic leaders as major factors influencing conflict in multiethnic societies (McBeath, 1978; Straus, 2007; Wiegenstein, 2014). However, there is inadequate research to understand the interplay between these two influences (Hutchison, 2013). What is surprising is the relative paucity of studies on the interplay between ethnic group leaders actions and media reporting as mutually influencing factors in ethnic conflict. This is curious in view of the consistent interest of scholars across the globe on conflicts studies generally. In view of this therefore, some of the critical gaps which this study addresses are what Hutchison (2013) describes as inadequate research attention that is devoted to ascertaining factors influencing individual attitudes and behavior that eventually lead to conflict.

Nigeria has experienced a very high propensity for ethno-political conflict in the past three decades (Ojo, 2010). Recent years have seen a dramatic surge in expressions of intolerance, the hardening of ethno-political positions and proliferation of ethnic militias that have unleashed varying degrees of violence and terror on the people (Egwu, 2001). In spite of concerted efforts to curtail ethnic conflict, the problem has escalated, paradoxically, especially since the return of democracy in May 1999. Halirru (2012) notes that in all parts of Nigeria, ethno-political conflicts have escalated to alarming levels. Confirming this, The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, IDMC (2006) reported that ethno-political and religious conflicts have claimed at least 14,000 lives and displaced hundreds of thousands since the return to democracy and the end of military rule. Consequently, Minority Rights Group International ranked Nigeria as the eighth country in which people live under threat of genocide and mass killing (Ojo, 2010). In another recent study on conflicts in Africa between 1990 and 2010, out of over 7,200 recorded conflicts, 977 occurred in Nigeria, the highest out of all African nations (Salehyan, Hendrix, Hamner, Case, Linebarger, Stull, & Williams, 2012).

### **Ethno-political Conflicts in Nigeria: The issue**

In every conflict, there are multiple intertwining factors that contribute to conflict, with many of these factors being conflict-inducing actions and behaviors of key players. A case in point was the conflict behaviors that pave the way for the 1994 Rwanda genocide that was obviously wrapped in ethnic animosity but was ignored by Rwandan people and its neighbors as well as the international community until it claimed over 800,000 lives (Eytan, Munyandamutsa, Nkubamugisha, & Gex-Fabry, 2014; Serneels, & Verpoorten, 2013). Similar insolences and consequences were experienced in Ethiopia, Bosnia from 1992 - 1995 and recently in the Central African Republic and Darfur since 2003 and now in Southern Sudan (even with secession in 2011) to the peril of all citizens and neighbouring countries. It has been cases of old conflicts worsening, and new ones surfacing (Arbour, 2014). This is why the main objective of this study goes beyond understanding the immediate motives for conflicts actions in Nigeria but to explore the mainsprings of ethnic conflict, with the hopes it may shed light on a long lasting solution.

Though, in the past, the subject of political and religious conflict has received the attention

of several Nigeria scholars (Adisa & Abdulraheem, 2012; Bagaji, 2010; Ebegbulem, 2011; Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Olubomehin, 2012; Onwuzuruigbo, 2010; Ukiwo, 2003), but hardly do we have attention focused on the media involvement alongside ethnic group leaders' conflict behaviours. Therefore, this study focuses in ascertaining factors responsible for changes in individual attitudes and behavior that eventually lead to conflict. In determining those forces which shape and direct the course of ethnic conflicts in developing societies like Nigeria, media (Straus, 2007) and ethnic group leaders (McBeath, 1978; Wiegenstein, 2014) which play important role will be examined.

Since conflict prevention has not taken sufficient root in Nigeria according to Utsaha, Ugbah and Evuleocha (2007) ethnic conflicts have now become pervasive. Isa (2001) also notes that ethnic conflicts have reached a state of ongoing prevalence, it has turned communities in Nigeria into battlefields and killing grounds. Similarly, Otiye (1990) notes that the ethnic "virus" has been one of the most important causes of armed conflict and political instability in Nigeria. However, Osaghae and Suberu (2005) ascribe this to the fact that ethnicity is generally regarded as the most basic and politically salient means of identification in Nigeria. However, what is the driving force behind volatile relations among ethnic groups in Nigeria? To what extent media framing of ethnic issues influence ethnic leaders into developing behavior that bring about this conflicts? After all in some countries, ethnic groups compete openly through ethnic-based political parties for power and control, and yet coexist peacefully without armed conflict. This then brings about the questions raised by others (Caselli & Coleman, 2013; Sambanis & Shayo, 2013) regarding why some countries experience ethnic conflict while others do not? Why does ethnic conflict wax and wane over time in the same country? Sambanis and Shayo (2013) conclude that the connection between social identification and ethnic conflict is multifaceted and complex and sometimes historically contingent.

Meanwhile, problematizing the complexity regarding ethnic conflicts Sambanis and Shayo (2013) note that countries like Angola, Burundi, Sudan, Chad, Burma and Indonesia have spent half or more of their histories as independent countries combating armed ethnic conflict, at times even civil war, whereas Benin, Gambia, Guinea, Eritrea, Niger, Zambia, and Malaysia have succeeded in avoiding the ethnic conflict despite evident ethnic tensions. The fact that all these countries have a comparatively high ethnic polarization index (Sambanis & Shayo, 2013), and still able to manage it indicates that ethnic divisions and cleavages do not necessarily increase the threat of violent political conflict. There must be other factors at play.

### **Theoretical focus: Framing**

The concept of framing has been one of the most abundant areas in recent research in communication, politics and sociology because framing can clarify and interpret the extent the media affect publics' understanding of politics (Lecheler & De Vreese, 2012).

Earlier, framing theory has its origins in politics and psychology, but was later applied in the study of how journalists shape and control news by scholars like Todd Gitlin and Gaye Tuchman in the late 1970s (Karnes, 2008). Ever since that time several researchers on the impact of news coverage have come up with many overview of framing. Scholars (de Vreese, Boomgaarden, & Semetko, 2011; de Vreese, 2005; Kostadinova & Dimitrova, 2012) have declared that the concept of framing has become one of the most used concepts in the communication disciplines, giving direction to both inquiries of media content and examination of the connection between media and public opinion. Similarly, Bryant and Miron (2004) admit that presently framing concept has moved beyond agenda-setting and cultivation

theory as the most frequently applied research approach in the field of communication science.

Previous studies of framing have concentrated much on political framing of candidates mostly in the western world during elections however, this research sifts attention to both newspaper framing of conflicts and ethnic group leaders behaviours in Nigeria, the largest country in Africa continent. In relation to this de Vreese (2005) reassures that framing is a foremost guidance to research on media contents and the studies of connection between media and public opinion. Therefore, Reese (2001) concludes that framing studies probing news media can provide understanding on how a certain society or culture is potentially shaped.

Tharkore (2004) also notes that there is no persistent tradition of academic research in the area of how media frames influence conflicts, even when the importance of the media in depictions of ethnic violence has been registered. In a similar vein, Price, Tewksbury and Powers' (1997) study shows compelling evidence that the frames in the news influence the topical focus of respondents' thoughts. According to Onwusuruigbo (2010) this low level of attention informed the reason why many researchers have evaluated and analysed inaccurately, the causes of ethnic conflicts thus offer ineffective methods to manage them. Reese (2001) also notes that most of the studies on framing were conducted in the context of Western society therefore, the outcome of such studies were difficult to apply to other societies like Africa. However, Jeong (2008) hints that handling and stopping conflict as well as understanding the basis of conflict and related behaviour begins with understanding the sources of social struggles. Also, according to Munteanu (2011) the relation between conflict prevention and the media is still an unexplored issue.

Seriki (1993) confirmed that the 1991 Katshina riot in Nigeria was connected with a newspaper report. Also, part of the blame for the unprecedented conflict behaviours among Hausa/Beron ethnic groups in the yet to be abated violent conflict in Jos have been blamed on the press, (Daily Independent, 2010; The Vanguard of 2010). Establishing this fact further Nnaemeka (1976) notes that newspapers' and other media's reports of conflict are contributory to the legitimating of conflict. The view was shared by Ibrahim, Pawanteh, Peng Kee, Basri, Hassan and Mahmud (2011) that for a long time news media have been participants in the spectacle of war and conflicts.

This powerful and preventable action of the press has been blamed greatly for inciting the eventual 1994 genocide in Rwanda that claimed over 800,000 lives (Kalyango & Vultee, 2012; Mitchell, 2007). Similarly in several studies, mass media (and other forms of communication) were implicated in the escalation of conflicts and later on in the potential de-escalation (Erni, 2009; Leung, 2009; Spencer, 2005).

This incidents confirm the framing postulation that how an issue is described in news story can sway how it is understood by audiences (Van Gorp, 2007). Clarifying the uniqueness of framing further, Entman (1993) maintains that framing has four core functions which are: describing problems, identifying causes, making proper judgments, and then proposing remedies.

Framing theory offers the basis for understanding how conflict is reported in newspapers (Carpenter, 2007) because according to de Vreese (2005), de Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko (2011), a frame is an emphasis in salience of various aspects of an issue such as conflict. Also, according to Zhou (2008) scholars use the concept of framing as an instrument to appreciate news as a social construction and social resource. To Shoemaker and Reese

(1991) during the framing stages journalists have swaying power because they can focus their stories more on a particular issue while they tone down alternative viewpoints.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted qualitative method with in-depth interview approach to probe into the ethnic group leaders' catalyst for conflict behaviour on ethno-political conflict in Nigeria. The sampling design was based on snowballing method due to sensitivity of the issue and difficulty of locating the participants (Creswell, 2012; Keyton, 2015). Series of in-depth interviews on 26 ethnic group leaders were conducted and data were analyzed thematically using NVIVO 8 software. Resulting from the interviews was the generation of coding frames which consisted of conceptualizing elements that explained the perspectives and lived experiences of the ethnic group leaders on ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. Then, subcategories were further developed in order to deepen the probing for rigorous and reliable findings.

## RESULTS

In view of our main research objective which is to understand the role of newspaper and other factors responsible for the ethnic group leaders' conflict actions in Nigeria, the perspectives of the ethnic group leaders are presented and discussed in the theme that emerged from clusters of sub-themes.

Ethnic group leaders' conflict behaviors are the concealed or visible constructive or destructive activities that cultivate and instigate ethnic groups into ethno-political conflicts (Best, 2011). Conflict behaviours, which are the mainsprings of most ethnic conflicts, according to Musa and Ferguson (2013), Adisa, (2012) are built up in ethnic group leaders through many contributory factors. Based on this, Halirru (2012) calls for investigation to identify the causative factors accountable for development of conflict behaviours of the protagonists of conflict in Nigeria. The same reason informed Otomer and Wehr (2002) statement that once the possible causes of conflict behaviours are identified, it will be possible to explain why a particular conflict exist and it would be easy to prevent it.

### Catalysts for ethnic group leaders' conflict actions

Though there are numerous possibilities causing and influencing ethnic conflicts however, the analysis of the interviews suggest that that the main catalysts for ethnic group leaders' conflict actions are Nigeria government failure, newspaper framing, Attitudes of ethnic groups, domination of some ethnic groups and political and electioneering activities. Figure 1.1 below visualizes the theme and sub-themes of the contributory influences on ethnic group leaders' conflict behaviours.

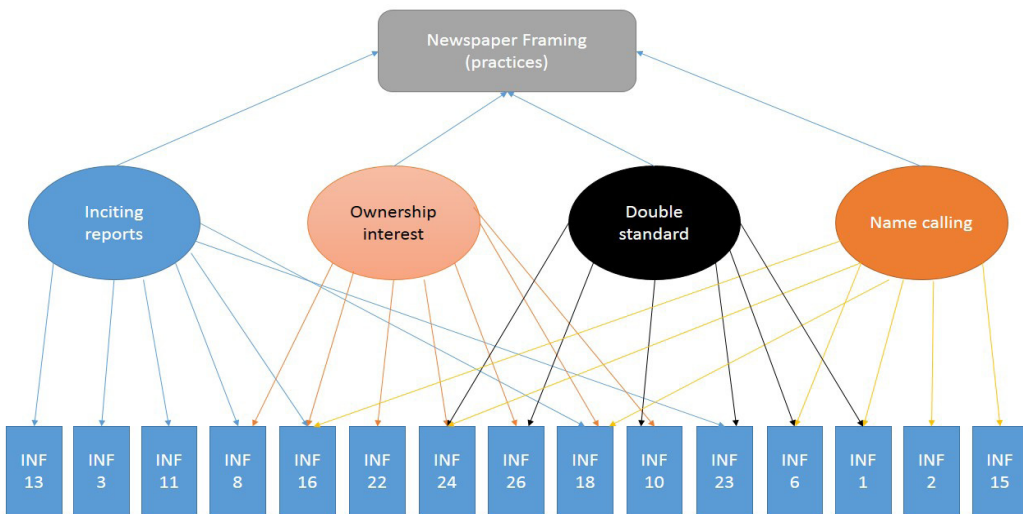
Figure 1: Theme and sub-themes in ethnic group leaders' conflict behaviours



**Newspaper framing (practices) role in conflict behavior**

Though some literature have identified the media as playing a role in promoting hatred (Kurspahic, 2003) and in the emergence and escalation of conflicts (Kalyango & Vultee, 2012; Reuben, 2009), but most studies did not clearly explain how this happens. According to Lecheler and de Vreese (2013) and Onwuzuruigbo (2013) the extent and scope that newspapers framing influence conflict behaviours in ethnic leaders who rheostat the hearts and minds of ethnic group members are still underexplored. Meanwhile, findings from this study's interviews showed that interviewees were of the view that newspaper framing has significant role to play in the conflict behaviours that mostly culminate into conflict. From their responses five key themes emerged explaining how newspaper framing contributes to interethnic conflict, in their view.

Figure 2: Thematic mapping of how newspaper practices promote conflict behaviours



**Inciting reports:** As identified by the informants, the first activity of Nigeria newspapers that carries great influence on what they think and how they feel about other ethnic groups is from the inflammatory reports they are exposed to almost on daily basis. This was also noted by Kalyango and Vultee (2012) that it was the inflammatory reports from the media in Rwanda that stimulated the hatred behavior which eventually led to ethnic cleansing of more than half a million Tutsi ethnic group. Regardless of their ethnic groups' affinities, the ethnic group leaders interviewed in this study similarly described the inflammatory reports on the pages of newspapers as unhelpful and dangerous to the co-existence of the ethnic groups in Nigeria. According to informant 21 (Hausa ethnic group leader) "They (newspapers) poison the minds of ethnic groups against each other. Sometimes they incite people to conflict". This claim was also confirmed by Informant 23 (Igbo ethnic group leader) who stressed that,

...newspapers set ethnic groups against each other. It's like poisoning the minds of one against the other through what we read on the pages of newspapers... Newspapers indirectly stimulate ethnic conflict through what they write.

Corroborating informant 23 statement above, one of the Yoruba ethnic group leader, informant 24 observed thus "the way newspapers report incident of ethnic misunderstanding are the main motives behind behaviours that responsible for ethnic conflict in Nigeria".

**Ownership interest:** Ownership plays an important role in determining what is reported in the media. Though, in Nigeria, newspaper (including electronic) ownership pattern is dual ownership which is government ownership and private ownership. This, no doubt has been stimulating discord among ethnic groups. One of the interviewees, informant 16, a Yoruba ethnic group leader, succinctly stated the key challenges and implication of ownership interest as a motive for conflict behaviours. He said,

Some people feel cheated and unjustly reported. And this happens mostly because of the ownership of these newspapers. This is even prompting all ethnic groups to have newspapers, radio and television for the purpose of promoting their ethnic interest.

Also holding the same view, informant 10, a Hausa ethnic group leader, noted that "everybody is trying to own a newspaper for the purpose of promoting their ethnic interest, political interest and economic interest". Another ethnic group leader with Yoruba interest, informant 22, also stressed that "ownership impact is too much on the performances of newspapers... Somebody somewhere usually dictates the focus of the newspapers".

**Double standard:** The issue of double standard in media coverage of ethnic issues has been identified mostly as conflict oriented (Galtung, 2002), because it is the application of different level attention, different tone and circumstance of coverage for similar situations and ethnic groups. This no doubt affects the relationship between ethnic groups in Nigeria. Significant numbers of the interviewees were of the view that double standard which is evident in newspapers news in Nigeria, has negative impact on the behaviours of some ethnic groups towards others. For instance, informant 10, a Hausa ethnic group leader, stated that:

Media also create this behavior through support they give to one group at the expense of the others... They protect, they cover up the mess of some ethnic groups and individual in the society. Whereas they quickly rush to the press to expose the

atrocities of other groups and some individuals.

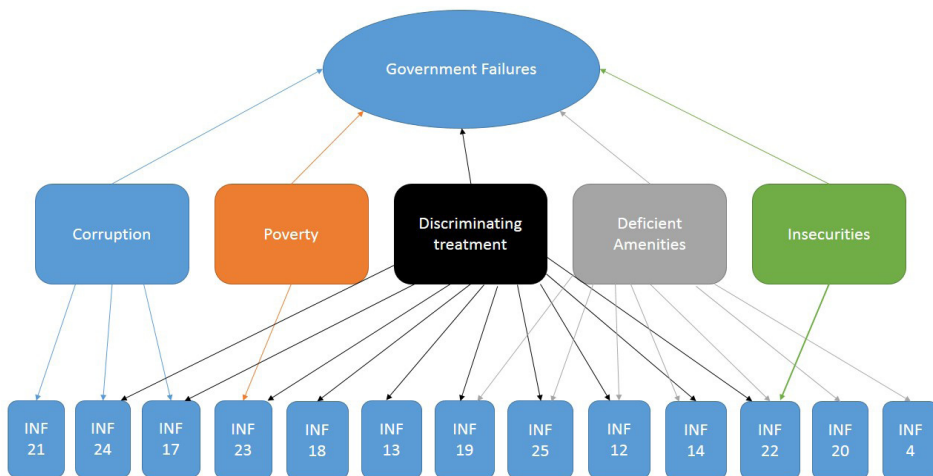
Also reiterating the implication of this double standard practice of Nigeria newspapers, an Ijaw ethnic group leader indicated that: "...some newspapers through their imbalance coverage create problem among ethnic groups...Newspapers have tagged my group as terror and cult but failed to report all the good things we do in the society".

**Name calling/ Labeling:** Name calling is equally referred to as labeling. It is a newspaper practice that categorizes people involved in the news into either good or bad. This practice indirectly removes blames on one group and relatively passing it to other (Galtung, 1998; Siraj, 2008; Tehranian, 2002). Confirming the implication of this practice by newspapers, informant 25, an Ijaw ethnic group leader, said "when newspapers tag people with different negative names they tend to be irrational, and angry". Similarly, informant 21, a Hausa ethnic group leader, noted that "newspapers helped in widening the differences between the Berons and the Hausas by calling some settlers". To informant 1, a Fulani, while referring to one of the main controversy that is continuously and currently fueling the Jos Beron and Hausa/Fulani conflict, said succinctly "they tag us settlers".

**Government failures and conflict behaviours**

Government failures which is a sub-theme that emerged from the informants perception of reasons for ethnic conflict in Nigeria, summed up a situation where the government becomes unable to take care and satisfy the basic needs of the citizen. Meanwhile, Halirru, (2012) notes that whenever a state fails to meet the needs of her people, there is high likelihood for such people to withdraw from state circle and turn to their ethno-political and religion circle with high hope of eliminating their marginalization in line with structural theory of conflict. In relation to that, this study discovered in line with Bates (2000) that conflicts are generated by many factors, some of which are deep-seated in behaviours. Ross (1993) also notes for instance that, in situations where economic and political discrimination and weak leaders are the defining characteristics of a society, the likelihood that negative forms of conflict will result are higher. The figure 1.3 below shows how government failure contribute to ethnic group leaders' conflict behaviours.

Figure 3: How government failures stimulate conflict behaviours





**Corruption:** Scholars, Ukiwo, 2003, Halirru, 2011 have noted that political and corrupt nature of the Nigerian government and the failure to deliver social services and good economic policy have contributed to the reappearance of ethnic groups conflicts. Majority of the informants agreed that brazen corrupt activities of the government make it inevitable for conflict to emerge. For instance, informant 21 emphasized this opinion this way “political leaders are so corrupt and insensitive to peoples’ needs”. Stating the key challenge to peace, informant 17, noted that “the fact that government too abandoned some ethnic groups also create problem of peace. Then political appointment too is not evenly distributed among ethnic groups”.

**Poverty:** Many scholars have tried to look at the economic dimension of the various conflicts in Nigeria and majority hinged it on poverty and economic hardship that people go through. That is why conflict matter cannot be separated from the problems of leadership. For most of the interviewees, the greatest failure of the Nigerian State is the economic hardship in which the ‘oil’ rich Nigerians have found themselves. This informed the perspectives of informant 23 who indicated that “government must eradicate poverty. Poverty is a source of worry and anger in the land so people have become so desperate”.

**Discriminating treatment:** One of the main argument of the structural conflict theory is that conflict is built into the particular ways societies are structured and organized. The theory looks at social problems like political and economic exclusion, injustice, exploitation, inequity etc. as sources of conflict. This also formed the perspectives of the interviewees who showed unhappiness to the discriminating treatment to some ethnic group. Informant 12 for example blamed the government for this. He noted that:

It (government) gets involved through some of the policy and actions that are not favourable to some ethnic groups... whoever is in power try to take care of his people and other get frustrated and you know, a frustrated person can do anything negative.

Also, arguing in the same manner, informant 13 disclosed that “behavior of conflict emanates from unfair treatment being meted out to the minority ethnic groups. It is expected that someone who is unfairly treated will react irrationally”. However, other people viewed that the blame is not only for government. According to informant 22, the blame also goes to even the ethnic leaders themselves as well as the traditional leaders in the society. “Well injustice of man against man is the number one reason that motivate some people into conflict. Injustice comes from government, it comes from traditional rulers and it comes from ethnic group leaders.

**Deficient amenities:** Dismal failure of government has plunged the masses into a situation of near to nothing in terms of their due democracy dividends. The educational system, health services, transport system and many social institutions are in crisis. This predicament is aptly stated by informant 22 that “government failure in the area of security, economy and some vital amenities are the motive for some of the conflict behaviours of ethnic members. Many people are frustrated and angry with the system”. Though Nigeria is the sixth producer of oil in the World but still all the required amenities for good living were not provided. The most disturbing is the situation of the areas where this oil is derived. An informant (4) from the oil producing area showed their frustration thus “Most of the South East and Niger Delta are neglected and as such the ethnic groups there are suffering from road network, portable water, and land to farm”. Another informant (20) from the area similarly

stated that “government neglect of my area is one reason for the conflict”. Lamenting the situation of the Northern part of the country, informant 19, disclosed that “No good education for our children, no amenities, we are just abandoned”.

### **Domination as a factor for conflict behavior**

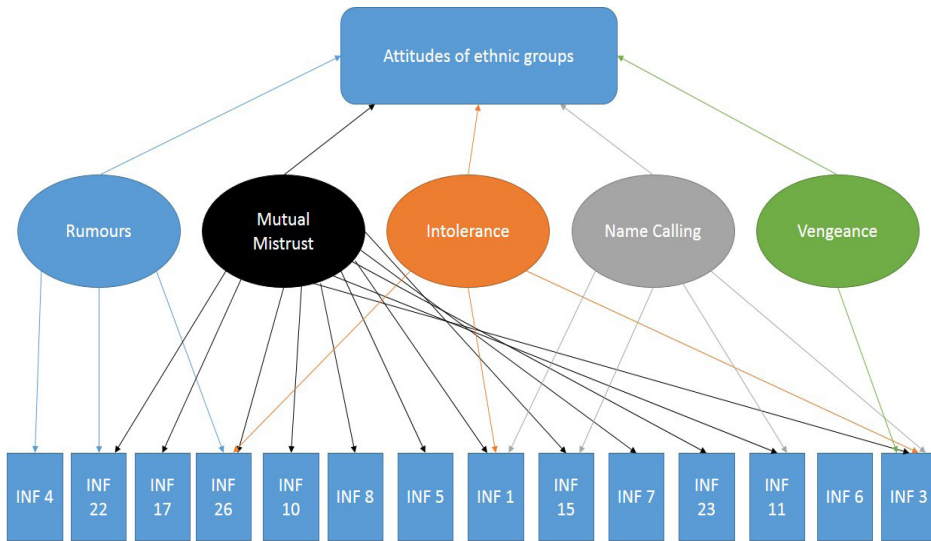
In an attempt to guide against domination of one ethnic group over the others in the scheme of things in Nigeria, the constitution clearly put up some mechanisms such as geo-political quota system and federal character criteria for any job opportunity to control the game of majority-minority representation in the public sector. However, despite the above measures taken in order to constitute cohesion, safety and security in the country, ethno-religious and political conflicts have continued to manifest thereby threatening the sovereignty of the Nigerian state and particularly under the present democratic dispensation. On economic domination for instance, informant 8 disclosed that “fear of one group dominating the other in some areas like politic, commerce etc. usually lead to each ethnic group fully prepared from time to time for conflict”. Similarly, a Fulani ethnic leader pointed out what usually lead to conflict with other ethnic group thus “They want to dominate everything. They want to even be the one to sell our cow on our behalf. At end of the day, they will make more money than we the owner of the cow. When we refuse this, they start to fight us”. However, informant 9 argued that the domination is peculiar to one group but cut across “In Nigeria certain group seem to dominate the politics and another dominate the economy”.

Meanwhile in the area of politics, most of the informant seemed to be dissatisfied with the North who is seen to be dominating the political arena. One of them said “domination of certain ethnic tribe in the political arrangement is another reason for our conflict”. In a similar manner, informant 18 stated that “Domination of some ethnic groups in the affairs of the country also create disaffection among ethnic tribe”.

### **Attitude of ethnic groups as a drive for conflict behaviour**

Ethnic group leaders are those in control of group members and who help ethnic groups to achieve their goals of defending the interest of the groups (DeKlein, 1994). Ethnic group leaders and ethnic group members most times mutually influence each other’s ideas as regards how to react to issues affecting the ethnic identity. Generally, ethnic militias have become phenomena in Nigerian history having being fingered in most of the ethno-political and religion conflicts that occurred. Most especially the ethnic groups affiliated to the four largest ethnic groups which consist of the Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups in the north, the Yoruba ethnic group in the southwest, the Igbos ethnic group in the southeast, the Ijaw ethnic group in the South south, the Kanuri ethnic group in the far northeast, and the Tiv ethnic group in the Middle Belt (Oladele, 2004). Based on the findings of this study, attitudes of ethnic groups stimulate ethnic conflict in diverse ways amongst which are: the attitude of vengeance, name calling, intolerance, mutual mistrust, and rumors. The figure 1.4 below show the links.

Figure 4: Attitudes of ethnic groups as cause of conflict



**Intolerance:** The inability of ethnic group in Nigeria to recognize and accept others' views due to ethnic or religious differences is one of escalating factor of conflict in Nigeria. Establishing this, informant 3, a Fulani leader stressed that "The Ibo and Niger Delta ethnic group always think we are parasite to the resources of Nigeria... they are not accommodating as we did for them in the north". Another informant stated it categorically that "Level of tolerance among ethnic group leaders is low", which is the main reason for the incessant class.

**Name calling/Degrading words:** Similar frequent incident among ethnic group that usually motivate conflict is the attitudes of using degrading words to qualify one another. The common phenomenon of social separation which evolved in many communities in Nigeria has promoted the classification of the settler and the indigene or Christian and Muslim dichotomy.

The interviewees also see this as a reason for the tension and conflict in Nigeria. Informant 15 noted that "indigenes see other from different ethnic group as strangers and settlers who should be submissive to the locals". Stressing the involvement of newspapers in this, informant 11 disclosed that "it is common to read on the pages of newspaper that Northerners are the settlers, they the transgressors". In another instance, while emphasizing this act of newspapers, informant 6, said "newspaper generalize terrorism activities of Boko Haram as Islamic".

Similarly, mutual mistrust, vengeance and rumours have been identified as other factors that motivate conflict in Nigeria. Most of the ethnic leaders observed that "lack of trust among ethnic groups in Nigeria makes it difficult to establish good relationship" and also the attitude of suspicious of each other on every issue in Nigeria is another reason.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study has significantly contributed to the understanding of potential influence of conflict

behaviours of ethnic group leaders on ethno-political conflict and the possible solutions to it. Understanding the influences towards such behaviours could hold lessons for governments, media, and the ethnic leaders themselves.

The research questions established for this study have been used to achieve the objectives of the study. The objective of the study was to determine the catalyst for behaviours responsible for ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. This study found that attitudes of ethnic groups, government failures, ethnic leadership style, electioneering activities, and majorly newspaper practice are the catalysts for behaviours that eventually responsible for ethnic conflicts. Some of these findings support framing and existing theories while some are novel to the issue. Based on this focus, the study discovered that newspaper was more sensational, promote certain interest and heavily politicized ethnic issues. The study's findings indicate that solutions rest on mutual interest, impartiality in resources sharing, professionalism in newspaper practice and government regulation of media, ethnic groups and ownership of newspaper in Nigeria.

## RECOMMENDATION

Meanwhile, emphasizing the complexity claim in ethnic conflicts, Sambanis and Shayo (2013) disclose that countries like Angola, Burundi, Sudan, Chad, Burma and Indonesia have spent half or more of their histories as independent countries fighting civil wars comparatively along ethnic lines, whereas Benin, Gambia, Guinea, Eritrea, Niger, Zambia, and Malaysia have succeeded in avoiding the escalation of ethnic conflicts to civil war. The fact that all these countries have a comparatively high ethnic polarization index (Sambanis & Shayo, 2013), and still able to manage it indicates that ethnic divisions and cleavages do not all the time constitute violence or increase political conflict. Therefore, should all the findings of this study considered for implementation, Nigeria is likely to be listed among the countries that live in peace even with ethnic diversities, as such, the great potential for unflinching development.

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