

## ETHNOPHOBIA AND THE CULTURE OF INCLUSION IN THE NIGERIAN NATION

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### Abstract

The fear of the unknown is part of nature's endowment of the instinct of self-preservation. Human persons would want their genealogy to be preserved. In Nigeria, we have the conglomeration of ethnic groups with hundreds of numerous tribal languages and cultures. However, the major tribes in Nigerian are Igbos, Hausa-Fulanis and Yorubas. These three ethnic groups overarch Nigerian people's language, culture and religion. But these tribal groups are divergent in all ramifications and rather than seeing themselves as fellow Nigerians, they loath each other; which encourages discrimination rather than inclusion. This study reveals that Nigerians feel disgusted to be given identity of another ethnic group. And that the Igbos are seen by other Nigerian ethnic groups as ambitious, domineering and lovers of money. As such they are feared and often disdained. Using the ethnographic and analytic methods of research, the work looks at the percentage of non-Igbos in a class of two hundred and fifty medical students at Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. It recommends that the Ethno-Phobia is uncalled for. It calls on other Nigerian ethnic groups to emulate what is good in the Igbo culture: peaceful, hardworking and tolerant. The question is: If Igbos economically progress in every part of Nigeria, what stops other tribes from progressing in Igbo land? Why fear those who have made meaningful contributions to the development of Nigeria cum the world? Can you mention a city in Nigeria that an Igbo man does not have a functional business centre? Why not emulate the progressives rather than fear them?

**Key words:** Nigeria, Igbo, Phobia, Ethnic group.

## Introduction

Many Nigerians are tired of the Nigerian nation and her political, economic, religious and educational systems. The generation Z are fed-up with the leaders of the country. They want a change and because the change refused to come, some of them migrate to other countries for greener pasture. The migration rate is alarming. Although it is often said that the grass is greener at the neighbour's lawn, but the Nigerian case appears to be true because Nigeria is a conglomeration of ethnic groups. We have the major tribes overarched by Igbos, Hausas-Fulani and Yorubas. According to Eruchalu, A. N. & Okafor, Pio-N, "the most prominent ethnic groups are the Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani, Edo, Ibibio, Tiv, Kanuri and Nupe. Some of Nigerian ethnic groups are so large that they have to be split into a number of states during creation from 1976 to 1993 and the smaller ethnic groups have very small population and had to be grouped together to form a state." (Eruchalu & Okafor 2018, p. 18). These ethnic groups have different cultures and religions. Their modes of dressing, eating, and worshipping are divergent. Unfortunately, each ethnic group claims to be the best. (Ezinwa 2014, 345-346).

Nigerians have also fought ethnic and intra and inter-tribal wars, "as was the case with Fulani conquest of Hausa land and parts of Northern Nigeria and Northern Yoruba land, including the Oyo conquest of Dahomey or the Asante conquest of Fante States" (Ezinwa 2014, p. 78); but prominent among these ethnic wars is the Nigerian and Biafran war. After the Nigerian Biafran war, Igbos are seen by the other Nigerian ethnic groups as rebellious, those who are seeking to secede from the Nigerian nation. "People were fed with stories of how each side to the war was out to exterminate the other from the face of the earth." (Eruchalu & Okafor 2018, 197). As a result of this, they fear each other, castigate the "other" and tag one another with inhuman names. The current agitation of Biafrans under the umbrella of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) whose rebel leader, Nnamdi Kalu is in castration is seen by some Nigerian ethnic groups as the resonance of the spirit of the Biafran hero and warlord, Dim Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu (Ezinwa 2014, p. 82).

However, the Igbos are not the only ethnic group that are agitating. The Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDELFO) led by G. G. Darah declared that they have disengaged themselves from Nigeria and established The Atlantic Republic. (Emmanuel July 3, 2022). The Yorubas have the Oodua Nation led by the agitator, Sunday Adeyemo, popularly called Sunday Igboho. The agitation of Nigerians is a clear sign that all is not well with the people. The Yorubas are seeking for the establishment of the Nigerian Indigenous Nationalities Alliance for Self-determination (NINAS).

(Agboluaje 19 March, 2021). The people are saying to the Nigerian nation, why not give us what is our due? We are marginalized. We are neglected by the Nigerian nation. We are not at home in our motherland. We are *bona fide* children of the Nigerian nation, but now we are made to feel like strangers in our fatherland; because there exists slave master relationship, the landlords and masters own the Nigerian nation while the slaves must work for them.

### The Background to the Study

As chaplains of the Ebonyi State College of Health Sciences and College of Agricultural Sciences, we see young students moving in and out of the university and the chaplaincies. It dawned on us that we rarely see the Hausa and Yoruba students. Even when there are Islamic programmes on the radio and television, we don't see many of them at the university. Even when some students come to read at the chaplaincies, one does not see the Muslim girls wearing their Hijab. It was rare to see Yoruba speaking students in the chaplaincies. On the Feast Pentecost Sunday, it is hard to get original Yoruba students to pray in their dialect. Curiosity, let us to start asking questions: Why is it that there are few Hausas and Yorubas at Ebonyi State Medical College and College of Agricultural Sciences? Could it be as a result of their Jamb score? Are they afraid of the Igbo students, and Igbo culture? Why do Igbo men send their daughters to Ebonyi State College of Medicine and the Muslims seem to be left out?

**Scope:** This study is on the ethno-phobia of Igbos of South Eastern Nigeria. Their central language is Igbo. The scope is made up of the five Eastern States: Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo., but the centre of study is Ebonyi State University. This work does not cover the other states' universities. Mention is made of other ethnic groups that should be part of the University but they are not.

**Objectives:** The objectives of this study are: To show how the hardworking people of Southern Eastern Nigeria are marginalized in their country because of their industrious character. And to seek to know why other ethnic groups especially Hausa and Yoruba are finding it difficult to study at Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. To encourage the culture of inclusion that will pave way for other ethnic groups to study at Ebonyi State University.

**Research Question:** How long shall ethnic phobia last? Why not let the ambitious Igbo ethnic groups go their own way or why not restructure the country so that all could be seen as a part of the whole? Why not introduce the culture of inclusion as opposed to exclusionism or otherization?

**The hypothesis** of the work are the two variables: Ethnophobia and culture of inclusion. The independent variable, ethnophobia causes the change while the dependent variable the culture of

inclusion is dependent on the ethnophobia. The complex hypothesis is that where there is inclusion, the public would benefit from the peaceful co-existence. The harmonious relationship between the ethnic groups will be result of the different groups coming to understand each other's culture, see each other as brothers and sisters, rather than as rivals.

**The theoretical framework.** This work upholds acculturation that is the culture of inclusion as opposed to assimilation, gruesome killing of Nigerians. It rejects tribalism but favours of inclusive governance.

**The Research Method:** The research method is ethnographic survey. This gives us the opportunity to use both the qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative research method utilizes books, Internet sources, libraries and non-numerical data. The quantitative research method uses quantifiable and numerical data, which allow us to represent our thoughts in diagrams, pie charts, etc. The authors were able to generate the number of medical students in 2023 set, interacted with them and thus present the number and the interpretation of the data collected.

### **Ethnophobia and Tribal Sentiments in Nigeria**

*De facto* is that Nigeria is a conglomeration of ethnic groups with tribal sentiments and interests. The excessive love of ones' own tribe to the detriment of other tribes is the problem. Ezinwa Vincent Chi gives the overarching meaning of tribalism. "Tribalism means behaviour or attitudes that are based on being loyal to a tribe or other social group. Tribalism also connotes the state of being organized in tribes to achieve ethnic or tribal interest and influences over others. Tribalism is another vice abhorred by society. It is evil and immoral behaviour and character that hinder education, nation building and national integration in Nigeria." (Ezinwa 2014, p. 205). Instances of favouritism abound. We have functional railway lines, wonderful road network, military installations, etc. all in the Northern part of Nigeria. But in the South Eastern part of Nigeria, we have police and military checkpoints manned by those who exploit the commuters. These militarized zones show the fear of an ethnic group. Furthermore, the Nigerian educational system is based on quota system. There is no equal standard in the admission of students into the Nigerian universities. To be admitted into the same school that offer almost everything free to Northern tribes (Uzochukwu, 2024, Pp. 69-71), the candidates from the Eastern State must score higher marks. "In Nigeria, ethnicity has ensured competition for ethnic superiority among the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo, Niger Delta, etc. as each ethnic group believes it is more progressive,

intelligent or more respectful than the other.” (Ezinwa 2014, 345-346). While some tribes seem to be systematically favoured and sustained, other tribes appear to be classified as second-class Nigerians. Hence, it could be said that Nigeria is ruled by tribalists who do not want the *status quo* to change. Tribalism leads to the marginalization and exclusion of some ethnic groups from the distribution of economic and natural resources of the Nigerian State. This does not encourage learning and development, rather it breeds conflicts, crisis and civil unrest (Uzochukwu, 2024, p. 71). Most Nigerian youths do not know the evil effect of the Nigerian Civil War, but tribal sentiments led to the formation of tribal agitators like Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Arewa Consultative Forum (ARF) which appear to be tilting towards the repeat of the Nigerian-Biafran Civil War (July 1966-January 1970). The Niger Delta Avengers for instance, attacked oil-company workers and oil-producing facilities and installations which caused a total shutdown of oil terminals in Delta State and the Federal Government of Nigeria suffered the ill-effect of the agitation of the group. The IPOB’s “sit-at-home” has grave consequences on both the lives and economy of the people. Many respectful Nigerians have been killed for “violating the sit-at-home order.” Markets and business centres are grounded to a halt because of “sit-at-home order.” These tribal groups and associations came into being because of exclusion and the marginalization of their ethnic groups by the Nigerian policies of ethnicity and divide and political policies. The total consequence include: Kidnaping and murdering of civilians such as the incident of the kidnap of the mother of Ngozi Okonjo-Iwuala (2018, pp. 1-3).

In Nigeria, we have the main religions, Christianity and Islam, which do not mean that paganism, atheism, animism, and other tribal religions do not exist. Christianity has become the religion and culture of those born in Middle Belt and South Eastern Nigeria while Islam is the religion and culture of those born in the Northern Nigeria. Therefore, fundamentalism and the fanaticism are not left out in the culture of religious bigotry and exclusivism. With the Muslim-Muslim tickets of the All Progressive Congress (APC) politics is now played along religious bigotry. The Nigerian policies are formulated and structured in such a way that Muslims are “born to rule.” “Nigeria is a country that practices ethnic politics because it is heterogeneous nation made up of so many tribes and societal fragmentation and the divide of the political and military leaders who have refused to forge national unity. Hence, it encourages tribal hatred, internal colonialism and politics or democracy by pressure in the polity.” (Ezinwa, 2014, p. 205). The religion of the leader is seen as the religion of the state. This led to the Sharia crises and the killing of Christians in Northern Nigeria, which rendered many people homeless “and refugees as such it exposes many Nigerians to poverty, disease, hunger, illiteracy, psychological trauma, fear, disgrace, rejection and backwardness.” (Ezinwa 2014, p. 274). The most recent ones are the killing of Deborah Samuel, a 200-level student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto who was

gruesomely murdered in the broad day light and burnt to ashes by jubilant crowd of young boys and men in the name of religion. The second one is the Owo massacre of over forty worships right inside St. Francis Catholic Church, Owo, Ondo State. There is the litany of the killing and abduction of priests. In 2018, fathers Joseph Gor and Felix Tyolaha and seventeen parishioners were killed at Mass. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, 2021 fathers Stephen Ojapa and Oliver Okpara together with Hassan Hassan and Ummie Hassan were abducted in the rectory. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, 2022, father Vitus Borogo was abducted and killed, etc. There is a wave of killing of people in Benue. According to statistics, “1, 043 people were killed in Benue between May 2023-May 2025.” (Abubakar, 16 June 2025). If not the culture of religious intolerance, what on earth could justify the murder of fellow Nigerians and human beings? According to John Odey, “religion, tribalism, nepotism, gross leadership failure and other atavistic and primordial sentiments have combined, weighed Nigeria down and crushed it. There is confusion in the land. There is panic in the land. There is anger in the land. There is danger in the land. Instead of flowing with milk and honey which is God’s assurance by providing everything that can make Nigeria great, our land is flowing with blood and tears.” (Odey 2018, pp. 1-2). John Odey goes on to say, “innocent Nigerians in certain parts of the country were routinely killed, their homes and businesses destroyed at the slightest pretext.” (Odey 2018, p. 43). Such killings bring intimidation, oppression, fear of the unknown gunmen, frustration, depression, disruption of economic activities and malevolent destruction of life.

The negative effects of tribalism, religious bigotry and cultural intolerance are cultural assimilation which is the effort to force others to lose all their cultural identities and values (material or non-material) and become like the majority. It is the extreme form of assimilation, that is, the forceful changes in artifacts, customs and belief that occur due to the killing of ethnic groups. Acculturation involves mutual diffusion of two cultures where by each culture is allowed to influence the other. According to Ezinwa Vincent Chi, “When two different cultures meet, culture contact has occurred. Then, both cultures will adjust its ways of life based on those of the other side. Each culture learns new behaviours, systems, skills, norms and values. The changes that occur when two cultures come into contact or diffuse, it is called culture transfer or acculturation ... Culture is dynamic to change and development. It means culture can change, culture is not static, any culture that does not change withers and dies.” (Ezinwa 2014, p. 11). Acculturation ensures growth, success and development of the community which is the opposite of assimilation that discourages development, encourages intolerance, and upsets the equilibrium of the peace and unity of the Nigerian nation. Unfortunately, with the bias between ethnic groups, the Nigerian Nation is not able to address their ethnic phobia.

## The Igbo Ethnophobia

Nigerian ethnic groups, such as Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani, etc., dread the “other” ethnic groups. Nigerian ethnic groups have derogatory names for each other. The Hausa/Fulani are called Muslim bigots, the Yorubas are called “Ndi Ofe Nmanu” (those whose soups are covered with oil). “The Igbos are by nature extremely egalitarian and individualistic.” (Eruchalu & Okafor 2018, 88). “Other” tribes accuse the Hausa/Fulani of not taking care of their *almajiri* and running the feudal system of government. “Hausa society believes in social distinction. People were treated in the society according to their status or social stands, there are two classes there, free born and slaves. Hausa society was divided into three groups namely chiefs (*sarakuna*) office holders *masu sarauta* and the commoners or subjects (*talakwa*). The feudal nature of the Hausa society helped to make the importance of these divisions very easily felt.” (Eruchalu & Okafor 2018, 41). The Hausa/Fulani commoners are those who serve the chiefs and office holders. The ordinary people rear goats, sheep and cattle for the lords of the society. The commoners are treated like slaves and they appear to be happy in their downtrodden states. The “other” Nigerian tribes loath seeing the *almajiri* roaming the streets like wild dogs. Rather than sending them to school which will empower them and uplift them from the dungeon of second class to free citizens, they are left in perpetuity in their downtrodden state. The individualistic, open-mindedness, fearlessness and multiculturalism of the Igbo man is seen as rebellion against Islamic feudal system of administration and governance. Thus, the intrinsic hatred and fear of the Igbos among Hausa/Fulani. The Hausa/Fulani feudal class sees the Igbos as their “subjects” especially after the conquest. “On the social side, there was increased emphasis on class distinction, differentiation arising from the fact that one man had political power, material wealth and status.” (Eruchalu & Okafor 2018, 43). However, the democratic nature and hardworking philosophy of every Igbo man and woman make them see themselves not as the slaves of the Hausa/Fulani but as their equal or even they try to lord it over them by telling them to their face that they are superior to them. According to Ezinwa Vincent Chi, “the Igbo spirit resented marginalization and oppression from the earliest times to the present with their hero and warlord, Dim Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu.” (Ezinwa 2014, 82).

The Igbos are industrious. They are exceptionally skillful. “The Igbo developed certain crafts to a very high standard quite early in their history.” (Eruchalu & Okafor 2018, 92). They are patient and visionaries when it comes to how to generate money. They take risks as well as flaunt their



hard-earned wealth. “The Igbo people are good traders, innovators and entrepreneurs; they easily venture into business by taking risk in order to make profit to build Business Empire to promote growth and create employment opportunities.” (Ezinwa 2014, 83). The Igbos own industries running into billions of Naira in almost every Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba towns and cities. Give them free hands, they would want “to take over” all Nigerian cities. “The Igbo people have rich and peculiar cultural heritage that enable them to adapt easily in any place they find themselves, both at home and abroad, since they are dynamic to change, to make progress and development.” (Ezinwa 2014, 82). But they are accused of being greedy, avaricious and over domineering. When it concerns money, they are touchy and aggressive. They are ready to fight for whatever it takes to be rich. Therefore, they are to be “checked” before they turn the Hausas/Fulani and Yorubas into their “working tools.” “The wealth and riches of Igbo people in Nigeria and abroad have recorded cases of persecution and attacks by envious host communities that do not have similar enterprising spirit like the Igbo.” (Ezinwa 2014, 83). They do not care that they are in Hausa/Fulani or Yoruba land as they turn some children of their hosts into drivers, gatemen and house helps. These sheer effronteries of the Igbos often get under the skin of their host communities.

The Hausa/Fulani and Yorubas have tremendous respect for their elders. The Yorubas prostrate before the Oba and members of his cabinet, their rulers as well as political office holders and elites. The Hausa/Fulani “are mainly nomadic herdsman and traders.” (Ezinwa 2014, 67). They have the town and cattle Hausa/Fulanis. They recognize “the supremacy of the sultan of Sokoto” and have emirs who rule the emirates. (Ezinwa 2014, 69). The *hoi polio* are contented with following cows from the Northern Nigeria to Eastern Nigeria, with hope that on a good day, they will be given their own cows by their feudal lord. They sometimes act as butchers and sales men for the feudal lords. However, the Igbo man respects elders *but*, in his self-worth and pride, challenges the *status quo* of the elders and wants even to over throw them because Igbo political system is fragmented and the kingship is not hereditary. “Therefore, any adult son who achieves greatness, wealth and wisdom could become an ‘Ozo’ title holder, hence a leader of the Igbo Federated village settings.” (Ezinwa 2014, 82). This makes other Nigerian ethnic groups fear the democratic, individualistic, power seeking and proud Igbo man.

The arrival of Islam at about 1349-1385 into the Hausa Land was through the help of Muslim merchants, and from them, new religion and culture was introduced into the Hausa land. “They flourished successfully during the trans-Saharan trade; a trade between North Africa and the Sudan (West Africa).” (Ezinwa 2014, 67). This meant the “adoption of Arabic names and titles, wearing of long flowing garments and the use of burnt bricks in building. It also introduced the Muslim festival of Id-el-fitri and the Islamic habit of husbands keeping their women in seclusion



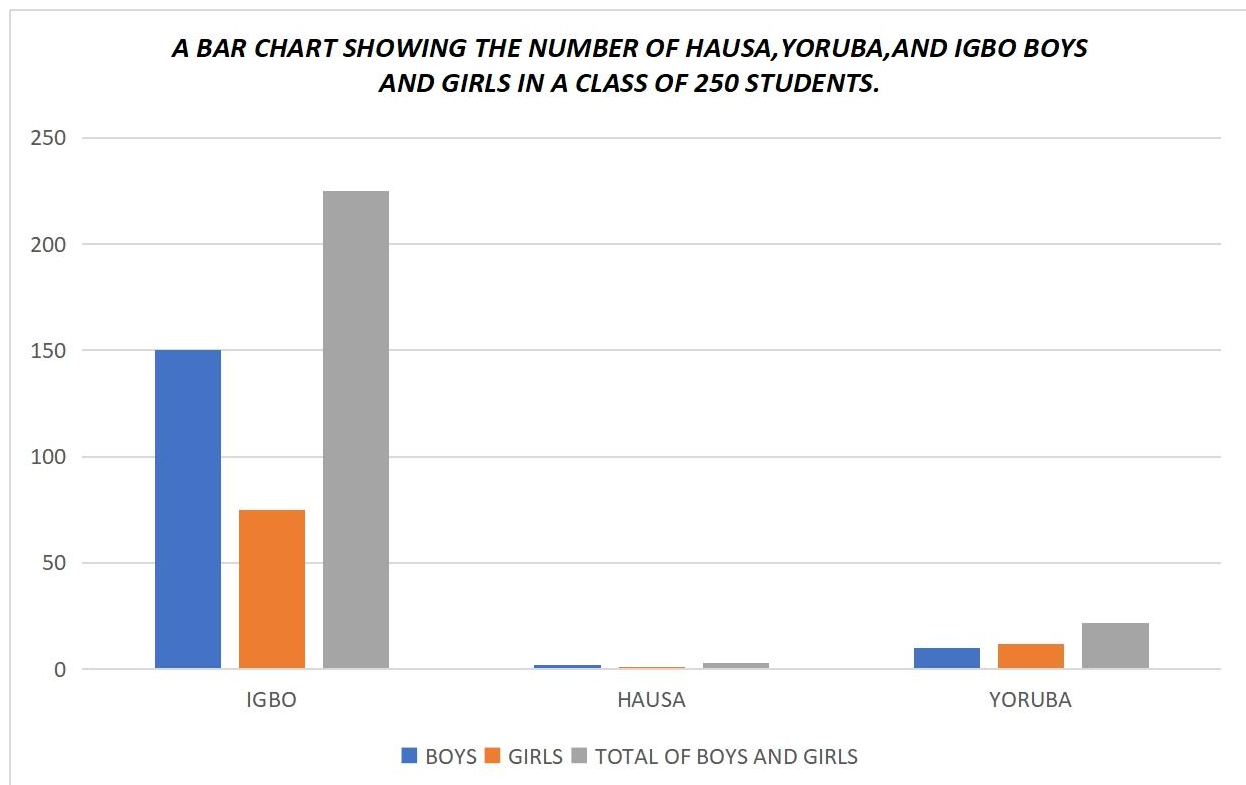
(in the Puradah).” (Eruchalu & Okafor 2018, 42). Islam gives the husband the right to marry four wives. When these women are left uneducated and kept at home for life, they are simply multiplying poverty and continuous creation of classes of the haves and the have not. The emphasis of their educational system is not the learning of Western Education, Western Education is forbidden (boko haram), but Arabic studies. Hence, “Muslim converts were expected to read the Quran and Quran in itself was in Arabic languages, Arabic schools were set up to educate these converts. They were taught the Arabic language as well as how to recite the verses of the Quran ... Islam enables Kings of Hausa states to have strong political control over their subjects.” (Eruchalu & Okafor 2018, 41). The reason is because those at the low strata of the society are encouraged to remain in the medieval system of education. Igbo men are always proud of their wives and daughters. They want to present elegant and admirable wives to visitors and friends. The Igbo wives are free to move around, have business centers but not to become street women or whores. In order to attract rich and responsible suitors, their daughters are taken good care of by the parents. These are big threats to Islam and her purdah system of female exclusion from the public eyes.

Although the Nigerian system of education is based on quota system, the Yorubas and the Igbos are in love with education. They spend fortune when it comes to the proper education of their children, and they do this without male and female distinctions. “The Igbo people cherish progress, education and have the spirit to learn new ideas and professions with either formal or informal methods and find it easy to work with other ethnic groups.” (Ezinwa 2014, 83). The Yorubas have good educational system and follow the Western System of Education. The Hausa/Fulani use Arabic system of education and “forbid” Western Education (boko haram). Recall the case of the Chibok girls (14-15 April, 2014), where about 276 girls were kidnapped from Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok by Islamic fundamentalists. What was their offence? The government sponsored female education. Those who educate girls are threats to the purdah practices of seclusion of women, wearing of burka, covering clothes from head to toes and the use of high walls, curtains and screens that separate women from the public eyes.

### **Demography of Students of Medicine and Surgery**

The number of the students in the whole college is not the study of this work. It is concerned with the number of different ethnic groups within the College of medicine, Ebonyi State University. Below are the demonstrations of the presence of Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani

students in a College of Health Sciences in Igbo land. The course is medicine and surgery (Med/Surg). The university remains Ebonyi State University.

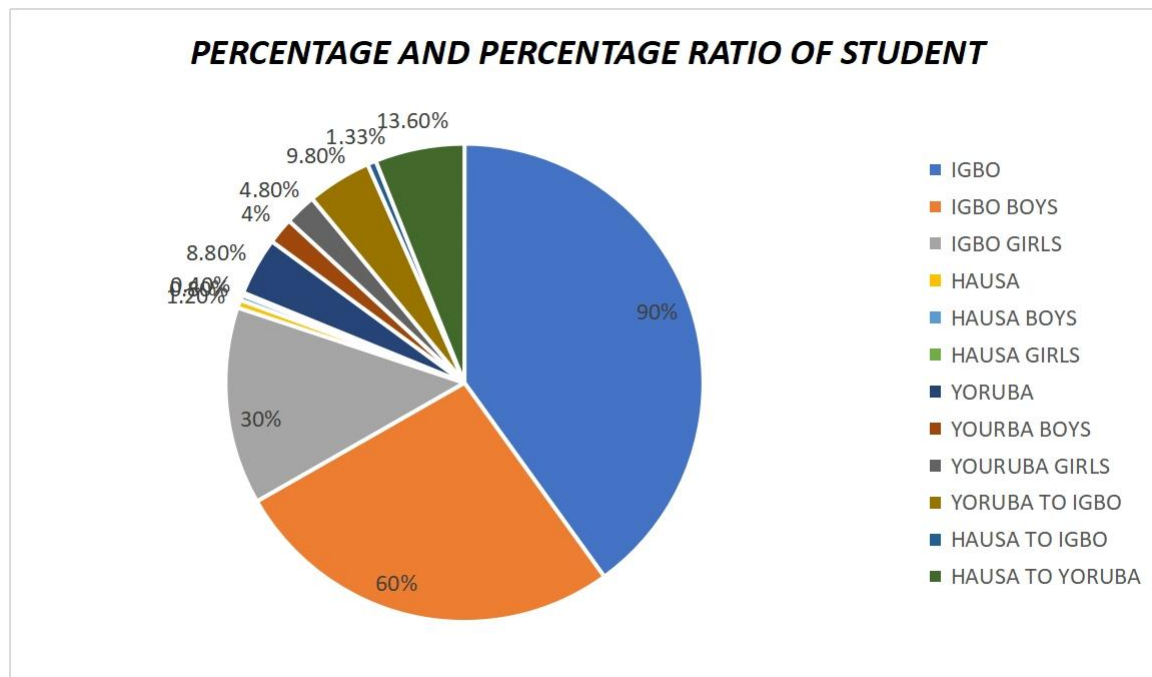


The total number of students in 300 level medical class is 250. The number of Igbo boys is 150 while Igbo girls is 75. Therefore, the total number of Igbo students in the class is 225. The number of Hausa boys is 2 while the number of Hausa girl is 1. Therefore, the total number of Hausa students is 3. The number of Yoruba boys is 10 while the number of Yoruba girls is 12, the total number of Yoruba students in the class is 22.

The ratio of Yoruba students to Igbo students is  $(22/225) = 1:10.23$

The ratio of Hausa students to Igbo students is  $(3/225) = 1:75$

The ratio of Hausa students to Yoruba students is  $(3/22) = 1:7.33$



***A PIE CHART REPRESENTING THE PERCENTAGE AND PERCENTAGE RATIO OF IGBO, HAUSA, AND YORUBA STUDENTS.***

The percentage of Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba students in the class of 250 students is 90%, 1.20% and 8.80% respectively. The percentage of Igbo boys, Hausa boys and Yoruba boys respectively is 60%, 0.80%, and 40%. The percentage of Igbo girls, Hausa girls, and Yoruba girls respectively is 30%, 0.40%, 4.80%. While the percentage ratio of Yoruba to Igbo, Hausa to Igbo, and Hausa to Yoruba is 9.80%, 1.33% and 13.60%. Using this chart, it indicates that the percentage of Igbos is higher compare to the Yorubas especially the Hausas.

The graph and the ratio show that the Hausa girls are almost invisible. When combined with the Hausa boys, they are still at the lowest strata of the class. The ethnophobia does not allow the Hausa/Fulani to study major courses in Igbo land. “It is important to note that people who cannot talk together cannot easily share ideas or cultural traits...” (Eznwa 2014, 339). The Yorubas are really visible in the class and shows the possibility of being recognized but they can barely influence decision making within the class.

### Evaluation and Conclusion

The act of ingroup-outgroup and outsider-insider categorization of people and the hatred of those tagged as outgroup and outsider have negative effects on the society in general and on the particular individual living therein. There is an ongoing rivalry and loathing of the other ethnic groups that often lead to violence among the rival ethnic groups. This shows itself in the looting and burning down of shops and business centres or even the targeting and the killing of members of one ethnic group in the Northern Nigeria, which is often based on religious bigotry, jealousy and envy. These intra and inter-ethnic conflicts have done more harm than good to the Nigerian society; such that families are displaced; businesses worth billions of Naira are burnt down; and the human life seems to worth less than nothing.

Another factor that promotes ethnophobia is tribalism; which frustrates national integration and destroys the spirit of meritocracy in the socio-political, economy and educational systems in Nigeria. “Tribalism encourages godfatherism, thuggery, money bag politics, rigging of elections, secret killings of opposition party members, hired assassin, maverick politicking, Maccavillain politics, and if you cannot beat them, you join them (Cross carpeting).” (Ezinwa 2014, 206). The trending thing in Nigerian politics is known as party delegates and money bags as well as Muslim-Muslim and Christian-Muslim presidential candidates. The delegates to the convention of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC) went home with tons of money. This is followed by the politics of *defection*. Fortunately, the Labour Party came up with the counter philosophy, no money bag politics, no bribery, get your Permanent Voters Card (PVC), etc. The 2023 electoral pull is now drawn along ethnic lines (Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo) and religious groups, Muslims versus Christians. To make sure Igbos Youths do not vote in Lagos State, Igbo traders who lucked up their shops and went for their Permanent Voters Card were attacked for trying to belong to the electoral process in Lagos State. According to Ochogwu Sunday (2022), “some traders of Igbo extraction, who had shut down their shops to register for Permanent Voters Card (PVC) were reportedly attacked by hoodlums.” These are done in the selfish interest of politicians and their ethnic groups. Hence, tribalism breeds corruption and favouratism that encourage the appointment of one’s family members and ethnic groups into

political offices. The philosophy of ethnophobia divides community members and places outsiders against insiders or the ingroup against the outgroup. The theory is: “we against them” and “they against us.” Ezinwa Vincent Chi rightly opines that “national integration can be possible if we appreciate, know, recognize, understand, and respect our differences, rather than one culture dominating the other cultures. Nigerians must try to understand one another’s way of life; that is cultural tolerance.” (Ezinwa 2014, 3-4). This can only be possible if we try to live above ethnophilic tendencies and religious bigotry.

This work recommends that the government should focus on role models. It is a truism that “representation matters.” All the groups matter. “In Nigeria (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, etc.) should refuse to hold desperately to its cultural ethnic sentiments when it concerns national integration and development. But they should take bold steps to inculcate a general national consciousness as against the narrow ethnic or tribe consciousness. The various tribes in Nigerian should promote what brings them together than tribalism and ethnic politics.” (Ezinwa 2014, 347-348). Therefore, there is need for a model of inclusiveness “by being empathetic and listening to all voices on your team.” There is need to diversify the leadership as diversity brings progress and strengthens group interest in building up the common goal. Team spirit is inevitable. When all the ethnic groups see themselves as working for the common good, they will achieve greater success.

Reward and punishments should also be carried out. Those who do well should be rewarded for their excellence while those who committed atrocities should be punished. There should be no sacred cows within the ethnic groups or a particular ethnic group made to appear more important than the other. Otherization should be stopped. There should abolishing of personal and ethnic group interests in political appointments. Unfortunately, we get the right people into the wrong office and the wrong people into the right office. That is the problem that has marred the wellbeing of the country, and led to the ethnophobia that we are suffering from.

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Uzochukwu, N. H. 2024, Quota System Regime for Achieving Equal Educational Opportunity in Nigeria: A Rethink, <https://acjol.org>, Vol 9, N0. 2.