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The challenge of ethnic diversity and HIV prevalence in Nigeria

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British colonial research put the number of ethnic groups in Nigeria at 200 in 1914-1934; Otite Onigu identified 374 ethnic groups in 1980s while M. Onwuejeogwu listed over 480 ethnic groups in 1990s. This makes Nigeria to be the most culturally diverse nation in the world. This diversity produces various shades of inter-ethnic conflicts and challenge of programmatic interventions to counter culturally specific unwholesome practices. This paper focuses on the influence of cultural and ethnic diversities in producing diverse HIV epidemic rates across the nation. Findings show a clear higher HIV prevalence rate in zones and states with significant higher levels of ethnic based violence especially in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Benue, Niger, Adamawa, Taraba, Kaduna, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Cross River States. North East and west have the most conglomerations of ethnic groups and also the highest HIV prevalence rates. But beyond data observation, there is no significant causal relationship between ethnic concentration producing violence and HIV prevalence but rather the conceptually known routes of sexuality, condom use are more predictive of HIV prevalence. The conclusion is that since sexuality issues is still very important in predicting HIV risk, Nigeria will do the best by prioritizing HIV prevention through the BC strategy especially targeting the 15 years and above population.

Key words: Ethnic group, sexuality, condom, ABC strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is made up of diverse ethnic groups with most of these groups concentrated in northern part. At the 1914 amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates by the British colonial power, each of the two parts was a conglomeration from several ethnic groups. Very few ethnic identities were pronounced from the east, west and north of Nigeria by early twentieth century, others less populous ethnic groups were subsumed in the big ones which are Yoruba to the west, Igbo to the east and Hausa/Fulani to the north. With the pronouncement of national government over the different ethnic groups, ethnicity started to breed. British colonial research data put the number at 200 between 1914 to 1934, Onigu Otite identified 374 ethnic groups in 1980s and

Onwuejeogwu M.A. listed over 480 ethnic groups. This paper attempts to analyze the cultural diversity of Nigeria as a predictor of structure of HIV prevalence. This is in the context of much accepted causal relationship between sexuality and HIV infection especially in sub-Sahara Africa. Specific objectives include:

1. To describe the existing ethnic diversity and its propensity for ethnic based violence in the country
2. To situate HIV prevalence across the political units within the context of ethnic structures
3. To identify the power of ethnic diversity with other factors at state level as predictor of HIV infection in Nigeria.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN NIGERIA

There is no agreeable list of all ethnic groupings in

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Nigeria. While for political convenience depending on the agenda and the purpose, the list may be confusing. Erroneously however notable ethnic groupings include, Nupe, kanuri, Hausa, Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, Ijaw, Tiv, Ibiobio and the Ijaw. In Onwuejeogwu (2007), using the concept of ethnic nationality which he meant by units of nations within the nation-state, he listed over 445 entities in the geographical Nigeria, making Nigeria to be the only country with the highest number of "ethnic nationalities". According to him, former USSR had 127 ethnic nationalities, China and India have over 40, USA has less than 50 excluding the Red Indians, England has four and Germany 15. Bala Usman (1994) in the same context had tried to clarify the use of the concepts of nation and ethnic grouping in the definition of cultural diversity of Nigeria, his first definition confirms Professor Onwuejeogwu explanation, to him it means, " a nation which is part of a larger multi-national polity…it is also conceived from the euro-anthropological stereotype to be characterized by common language, common culture, a common history, a distinct territory, a distinct cultural and political identity and even destiny" this is what Bala Usman termed racio-ethnic conception which typically exclude the western socio-political realities. From the analysis of latter scholar, Nigeria may even have thousands of cultural diversities not identified in terms of common politics, religion, crafts and other cultural features.

The second conceptualization is that nation "is essentially a political community whose basis is a common citizenship, irrespective of race" it could either be founded on race or ethnic bound. This is the reality in modern states. Those who belong to it hold to common historical and cultural experiences recognized by non-members (Usman, 1994: 3). The reality is that either in Nigeria or internationally, nationhood is increasingly being bifurcated due to political quest for resources and blurred historical and cultural commonality is dusted to produce more cultural diversities. In Nigeria, creation of states and local governments are agitated from the ethnic commonality point of view and increasing insurrections across continents to produce new States with ethnic boundaries are examples in former USSR, Sudan, China, Somali, Iraq and United Kingdom.

In another exposition on Nigeria's multi-ethnic configuration, Otite (1990, 2006) identified the nation as the most culturally diverse and ethnically pluralistic in Africa. According to him, cultural diversity in Nigeria has a growing complexity, there was evidence of a somewhat cultural homogeneity using language as a marker especially among southern Nigerians far before the colonial contact and due to constant inter and intra ethnic migrations, there has being overlapping socio-cultural relationship. He identified 374 ethnic groups as at 1980s and these groups still have differently and at varying level common linguistic traits and symbols. Using language criterion and population area, British colonial government documented 200 groupings in 1935 (Otite, 1990).

The pattern of cultural diversity in Nigeria is different from the Australian and North American configurations. Due to the political history of Nigeria, cultural entities also have geographical, political and governance boundaries. Firstly, multi-culturalism has been adopted in most developed nations as a policy for integrating the cultural diversities created as product of immigration to nations. This policy of accommodation for nation building started in most nations in the 1970s. But though Nigeria is a multi-cultural nation-state with diverse ethnic groupings based on language, history, cultural arts and crafts and geographical boundaries, it has not yet created any concrete policy or law to build on the ethnic heterogeneity of the nation. Instead, politics of denial to annex the entities as a nation in the forms of federal character, political zoning, state creation, 'the policy of advantaged and disadvantaged states' and other governmental frameworks meant directly to down play cultural identities while at the same time promoting cultural crafts and arts at the state level.

Therefore, multi-culturalism as a political engineering policy and legal framework is not applicable to Nigeria as the cases in Australia, Canada, USA and Britain. There is a tacit political denial of cultural identities and also the myth of ethnicity as blackmail for any attempt to crave for ethnic identity in relation to other identities. Another case of self denial of multi-culturalism is the official exclusion of most distinct cultural groupings are age-long geographically situated and are also agnatically united. Geographical boundaries are known and form basis for internecine warfare in annexing and defending territories up till 19th century and it is the undercurrent issue in most contemporary inter-communal or ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. This is more prevalent where we have packs of ethnic groups in limited areas. Examples are in north central, north eastern and the extreme southern areas of the country. Ethnographically, ethnic groupings are more of common rhraties traced to mythological ancestors and individual groupings can be linked to a grand mythological ancestor. A particular group is most of the time distinguished from another related group by variant of language and ancestral history. Examples are the various ethnic sub-groupings of the Yoruba and the Edo kingdom even with the Nupe ethnic group. This is unlike the cultural groupings in Europe and America forming the cultural entities not in terms of common ancestral relationship but to a "common root" in terms of place of origin, assumed biological affinity or rather race. In terms of racial classification, Nigeria distinct ethnic groupings mostly have same racial origin with the Hausa in the North as distinct.

At each phase of political history in Nigeria, the dimensions of ethnic conflict change with political restructuring. According to Onwuejeogwu (2007), just like any relationship among ethnic nationalities, Nigeria is characterized by ethnocentrism, group closure and

Table 1. Number of ethnic groups per States in Nigeria.

S/n	Zones/States	Number	S/n	Zones/States	Number
1	South-East : Abia	1	21	Gombe	5
2	Imo	1	22	Taraba	45
3	Anambra	1	23	Yobe	15
4	Enugu	1	24	**North-Central :** Benue	9
5	Ebonyi	1	25	Kogi	16
6	**South - South:** Cross river	29	26	Kwara	7
7	Akwa Ibom	8	27	Nassarawa	10
8	Rivers	8	28	Plateau	73
9	Bayelsa	3	29	Niger	20
10	Delta	7	30	FCT	4
11	Edo	5	31	**North-West**: Jigawa	5
12	**South-West** : Lagos	3	32	Kaduna	32
13	Ogun	1	33	Kano	5
14	Ondo	3	34	Katsina	2
15	Ekiti	1	35	Kebbi	6
16	Osun	1	36	Sokoto	4
17	Oyo	1	37	Zamfara	4
18	North-East: Adamawa	43			
19	Bauchi	65			
20	Borno	29			

Source: Onwuejeogwu (2007: 40-55).

conflict over resource mobilization. But it is heightened by poverty of deliberate national governmental management of the crisis. British colonialist created policy of segregating residency of Europeans called reservation areas from indigenous elites; this was inherited by the post colonial elites in the separate residential areas for local immigrants from other ethnic groups. Initially the immigrants due to smallness of population and economic power accepted the second class status but the continuous relationship of physical division closure and group closure between ethnic natives and ethnic settlers sharpen the separation and deepen tensions and become target areas of conflicts in virtually all major cities and rich agricultural areas of Nigeria.

Ethnic and cultural groupings in Nigeria are also imposed on mapping of religious patterns. It is assumed that northern groups are mostly Muslims while southern groups are Christians. But this has been widely denied as stereotype. The fact is that the most populous ethnic groups in most geographic regions tend to overshadow the ethnic status other smaller groups. There are the Hausa in the north that is

Table 1 shows the approximate distribution of ethnic diversity per state based on linguistic and spatial differences. This is drafted from Onwuejeogwu (2007) and Otite (1990). It shows that northern parts of the country have more than two-third of the different ethnic entities. All the states and zones with high share of cultural diversity are also areas of relative poor health

indexes, mostly Islamized than the Yoruba in the south west that is more Christianized and Igbo in the southeast that is also Christianized. However in these regions, there are also other religions either Christianity or Islam. And within the wide typified religion, there are several denominations and cults that produce intra-faith insurrection even bloody rebellion. Examples are the *Mataitsine* sect in 1980s, the *Boko Haram* Cult which started in 2009 all in the North. Ethnic groupings are broader than cultural groupings. In another way, a given ethnic area may include units of differentiated cultural groups though the latter may have ancestral linkage with neighboring groups. The diversity of Nigeria cultural configuration will continue not really due to cultural exclusively but rather a product of political weapon for each entity to express its uniqueness in order to attract political and economic resources from the national wealth. Territorial Chiefs want to be kings while small cultural areas are reinventing and reinterpreting historical genre to affirm their autonomous status.

Conflicts based on communal, ethnic or cultural exclusion relationship has been age-long and unabated. Toyinbo (2003) enumerated the various scale of various conflicts taken the forms of widespread arson, internecine warfare, and other dimension of crises claiming thousands of lives and consuming properties and even whole communities since independence. None of these States was spared since 2003 of contra ethnic relationships. But notorious States have been Nassarawa, Kano,

Table 2. Factors of HIV infection in Nigeria by zones.

S/n	Zones	No of ethnic groups (Onwuejeogwu, 2007)	Percentage comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS (NDHS, 2008)	Percentage sexual intercourse before age 18 (NDHS, 2008)	Percentage men condom use (NDHS, 2008)	2005 HIV prevalent rate (FMOH, 2006)
1	South-east	5	30.9	24.2	53.5	4.7
2	South-south	62	30.9	38.8	38.3	5.3
3	South-west	10	26.5	32.1	47.8	2.6
4	North-east	190	30.9	21.7	15.3	4.3
5	North-central	130	22.0	32.4	18.5	6.1
6	North-west	49	20.7	6.4	6.0	3.5
7	National	445	23.4	25.6	29.3	4.4

Kaduna, Adamawa, Borno, Kogi, Benue, Bauchi, Delta and Anambra.. These States also configure to areas of more concentration of cultural and ethnic diversity.

THE DIVERSITY OF HIV EPIDEMICS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria has the third highest burden of HIV in the world after China and India. The prevalent rate has been growing steadily since the first case of the infection was reported in 1986, from 1.8% in 1991, 4.5% in 1996 and 5.6% in 2001. It dropped to 5.0% in 2003, 4.4% in 2005 and 3.6% in 2007 (HERFON, 2006, NAHRS, 2008). It shows that Nigeria has over four million infected persons, making the nation to have the highest burden of the epidemics in Africa. But the national statistics are misleading for interventions in prevention, treatment, care and support services. For instance the 2007 sero-prevalence rate for the nation was 4.0% but infections across the nation varied from 8.5 in Benue State to the least of 1.0% in Ekiti State. States with highest prevalent rates mostly correspond to zones of ethnic concentrations and inter-ethnic violence. The most HIV prevalent states from each zone are: South East, Enugu State (6.5); South South, Akwa Ibom (8.0); South West, Ogun (3.6); North East, Taraba (6.1); North Central, Benue (10.0) and North West, Kaduna (5.6) (Nigeria, 2008). These states are not been spared from either political, religious carnages in the past two decades while the most violent-ridden zone, North central also accounts for the highest HIV prevalent rate,.

In attempting to explain the association between cultural violence and HIV prevalence, other conceptual factors of HIV prevalence are also identified. For instance knowledge of HIV is a product of HIV prevention education. In 2005 Federal Ministry of Health report of sero-prevalence survey observed that "high percentage of persons is aware of HIV/AIDS but accurate knowledge on how to prevent infection is limited" (FMOH, 2005: 4). The most predictive measure of adequate knowledge of HIV prevention is in terms of preventive action against the infection are sexual abstinence, being faithful to sexual partner and condom use.

In Table 2 zones of relative highest knowledge level could not produce necessarily acceptable sexual practice in terms of reduced age of sexual debut and condom use. Again health and HIV messages promoting condom use was explainable by liberal social lifestyle of the people in the south. The only correlative factor in the chart is condom use which measures how far knowledge is translated to practice to prevent HIV.

Condom use also can be used to explain a particular cultural disposition to HIV and contraception. But in this analysis, condom use per zone is not predictive of HIV prevalence. For instance, south east and south-south have the highest condom use in the southern Nigeria and equally the highest prevalence rate in the same pattern. In Table 2, In the North; north central has the relative highest condom use and also the highest HIV prevalence rate. This contradicts the UNFPA's (2011) efficacy model of condom use to reduce sexual transmission infections including HIV. Preston-Whyte (1999) and Orubuloye and Oguntimehin (1999) descriptively analyzed the social perception and utility of condom use in South Africa and Nigeria respectively with very poor acceptance index but in the contemporary period condom use have been more appreciated but still lower in Nigeria than most other African countries.

In concretely locating the explanation for Nigeria HIV prevalence, a statistical regression test was undertaken for the four variables likely to account for HIV prevalence rates across the thirty seven political units. The variables are: 1. Number of ethnic groups per State; 2. Comprehensive knowledge of HIV; 3. Age of first Sexual intercourse by age 18; 4. Condom use at first sexual intercourse. Table 3 shows the results.

The Table 3 illustrates the overall regression equation between the HIV epidemics across the states in Nigeria and the social factors of its infection. It shows that the pattern of condom use was the best predictor of HIV infection with *Beta* weight of about 38% with sexual debut having the second important predictive relationship followed by knowledge. The weakest factor was number of ethnic groups per State contributing about 9%. This shows that sexuality and safer sex issues are the most important direct factor driving HIV epidemic in Nigeria.

Table 3. Logistic regression analysis of states in Nigeria four factors accounting for HIV prevalence.

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t.	Sig
	B	Std. error	Beta		
Constant	0.570	2.515		0.227	0.822
No of ethnic group	1.391E.02	0.27	0.092	0.524	0.604
Knowledge of HIV	2.516E.O2	0.027	0.168	0.934	0.357
Sexual intercourse by age 18	3.463E.02	0.033	0.255	1.059	0.298
Condom at first sexual intercourse	0.113	0.076	0.382	1.483	0.148

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Though the primary hunch of this paper was not supported, that is ethnic and cultural diversity producing violence will have direct impact on HIV epidemics in Nigeria, it nonetheless remains a growing political problem associated undermining the very socio-economic development of the country. The fact is when safer sex especially sexual fidelity among the adolescents and adults and accessibility of male and female condoms are promoted, people are protected against infection. According to UNFPA, condoms have helped to reduce HIV infection where AIDS has already taken hold-Nigeria-and curtailed the broader spread of sexually transmitted infections. It also encourages safer sex in more general terms. The significant reduction in HIV infection in Cambodia, India, China, Uganda, Brazil and Thailand have been associated with deliberate acceptance of the use of condom among the most at risk population (UNFPA 2011). The fact is that though HIV knowledge is high in Nigeria, this knowledge will not translate into reduction in infection until a substantial number of the people engage in positive application of what they know especially safer sex practice through intensified campaigns for sexual fidelity and condom use (Adeyemi, 2010). In a 2007 report of Nigeria HIV and sexuality survey compared to other African countries; "While HIV prevalence rates remain relatively low in Nigeria compared to sub-Saharan Africa, risk behavior is comparatively high. The % women reporting sex before age 15 is substantially higher in Nigeria than in other countries (20.7% for women, 6.5% for men) while condom use at last high-risk sex is lower than other countries (24% for women, 46% for men)" (Nigeria, 2007).

While safer sex practices are to be encouraged, the enabling environment to promote greater uptake is not there. The level of poverty and the social and religious myths about condom serves as hindrances to access the practice.

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