ETHNIC POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE IN AKWA IBOM STATE

By

UNA, ARIT EFFIONG,
Department of Public Administration
Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus

And

EYO, UFORO ETIM
Department of Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management
Ritman University, Ikot Ekpene

Abstract

Akwa Ibom State is a culturally diverse state in Nigeria, with various ethnic groups coexisting within its borders. The major ethnic groups in Akwa Ibom State include the Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Eket, and Obolo, among others. This study examine three specific objectives which includes to examine the impact of ethnic politics on political appointment, infrastructure development and empowerment programme in Akwa Ibom State which were in line with the Research Questions and Research hypotheses. The study adopted the Style and Behavior Theory propounded by John B. Watson, and Constructivism Theory as the theoretical frameworks. The study adopted the survey research and descriptive design with a population of 4,000,000,000 having a sample size of 400 using Taro Yamani as the sampling techniques with primary and secondary sources of data, while the method of data analysis was Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that ethnic politics has a significant impact on Governance, Ethnic politics has a significant impact on infrastructure development, and Ethnic politics has a significant impact with empowerment programme in Akwa Ibom State. The results of this study demonstrate that ethnicity plays a significant role in shaping governance and political dynamics in Akwa Ibom State, which has three major ethnic groups; the Ibibio, Annang, and Oro, ethnicity can influence governance in several ways. From the result of the findings, it was recommended that Ethnicity should not be introduce into the politics of the state, That the Akwa Ibom State government should provide infrastructure to all parts of the state and finally, that the state government should ensure that empowerment programmes are distributed equally to all section of the state irrespective of gender.

Keywords: Ethnic Politics, Governance, Infrastructure, Political Appointment, Infrastructural Development, Empowerment Programmes

Background to the Study

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation State with socio-cultural difference between it component ethnic groups all of winch have resulted into cultural dissimilarity. This cultural dissimilarity has been manifested by, the difference in languages, dress and types of social system. Ethnicity is generally regarded as the most basic and politically salient identity in Nigeria. This claim is supported by the fact that both in competitive and non-competitive settings, Nigerians are more likely to define themselves in terms of their ethnic affinities than any other identity. Indeed, according to Lewis and Bratton (2002) ethnicity "is demonstrably

WORLD ATLAS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATION & MANAGEMENT
VOL7 NO1, DECEMBER 2024, NEW YORK CITY. ISSN: 2667-1069

UNA, ARIT EFFIONG
&
EYO, UFORO ETIM

the most conspicuous group identity in Nigeria". Akwa Ibom State is a culturally diverse state in Nigeria, with various ethnic groups coexisting within its borders. The major ethnic groups in Akwa Ibom State include the Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Eket, and Obolo, among others. Each of these ethnic groups has its own unique language, cultural practices, and traditions, contributing to the rich cultural tapestry of the state. In terms of governance, Akwa Ibom State operates within the framework of the Nigerian federal system (Udoms and Atakpa, 2017). The state has its own government, headed by a governor who is elected by the people. The government is responsible for the administration of the state, including the provision of basic services such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and security.

The diversity of ethnicities within Akwa Ibom State poses both opportunities and challenges for governance. On one hand, it enriches the cultural landscape and contributes to the overall diversity of the state. On the other hand, managing the interests and needs of various ethnic groups requires careful consideration and inclusive governance practices to ensure that all groups feel represented and empowered within the state (Bratton and Lewis 2002).

Politics in Akwa Ibom State is dominated by the three main ethnic groups, the Ibibio, Anaang and Oron. The ethnic politics in Akwa Ibom (State can be traced back to the colonial rea when the British Empire ruled over Nigeria. During this period, the colonial administration implemented a divide-and-rule strategy by recognizing and reinforcing existing ethnic and tribal identities (John and Guy, 2004). The result was the creation of artificial boundaries and administrative divisions which contributed to the emergence of distinct ethnic group with varying historical, cultural, and social backgrounds. One of the major ethnic groups in Akwa Ibom State is the Ibibio, who have historically been the most dominant and influential in the state. The Anaang, and (Oron, are other significant ethnic groups, each with its unique cultural traditions and languages. These ethnic divisions persisted into the post-independence era, shaping the state's political landscape.

Statement of the Problem

Ethnicity and governance issues are complex and multifaceted. It's important to acknowledge that ethnicity can often play a significant role in governance challenges, particularly in regions with diverse ethnic populations such as Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria. Marginalization, Resource allocation, political representation and social cohesion are some common problems related to ethnicity and governance in Akwa Ibom State. Certain ethnic groups may feel marginalized or excluded from political power and decision-making processes. Issues may arise regarding the equitable distribution of resources and development projects among different ethnic communities. Ethnic tensions can impact the fair representation of diverse ethnic groups in government offices and institutions. Interethnic conflicts and tensions can hinder social cohesion and overall development within the state (Bratton and Lewis 2002).

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that promotes inclusivity, equity, and mutual understanding among all ethnic groups. This may involve implementing policies and initiatives aimed at promoting interethnic dialogue, inclusive governance, and equitable resource allocation (Bratton and Lewis 2002). Encouraging

WORLD ATLAS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATION & MANAGEMENT
VOL7 NO1, DECEMBER 2024, NEW YORK CITY. ISSN: 2667-1069

◆ UNA, ARIT EFFIONG
&
EYO, UFORO ETIM

participation in decision-making processes, creating platforms for dialogue and understanding, and promoting diversity and inclusion in governance are essential steps toward addressing the challenges of ethnicity and governance in Akwa Ibom State. It's important for leaders and citizens to work together to build a united and cohesive society that values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all ethnic groups.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to investigate the impact of ethnic politics on governance in Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives include:

i. to examine the impact of ethnic politics on political appointment in Akwa Ibom State

ii. to determine the impact of ethnic politics on infrastructure development in Akwa Ibom State

iii. to access the impact of ethnic politics on empowerment programme in Akwa Ibom State

Research Questions

The study provides reliable answers to the following hypothetical questions.

1. What impact does ethnic politics have on political appointment in Akwa Ibom State?

2. To what extent does ethnic politics affect infrastructure development in Akwa Ibom State?

3. What magnitude of impact does ethnic politics have on empowerment programme in Akwa Ibom State?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Ethnic Politics

Ethnicity is a phenomenon in form and conflictual in nature and content such that people from different ethnic groups sees each other as competitors in the quest for resources rather than compatriots. This can only exist within a plural political states such as Nigeria with over four (400) languages. It is the relationship between the diverse ethnic groups with the political environment that produces ethnicity. In the case of Nigeria, its conflictual nature stems from interethnic competition for power and scarce resources. It is often characterized by inter-ethnic discrimination in jobs, housing, admission into higher institutions, scholarships, distribution of welfare services, marriage etc. This is often accompanied by nepotism and corruption. Merit is quite often sacrificed on the altar of ethnicity, thus, ethnic crisis becomes the resultant effects. (Obaje 2002).

Ethnic politics in Akwa Ibom State is a complex subject, rooted in the diverse ethnic groups that inhabit the region, such as the Ibibio, Annang, and Oro. These groups have historically vied for power and influence within the state's political landscape. The effects of ethnic politics can be seen in various aspects of governance, including resource allocation,

representation, and social cohesion. One significant effect is the competition for political positions, where candidates often appeal to their ethnic base for support, leading to tensions and sometimes violence during elections. This can hinder development and perpetuate a cycle of ethnic division. Moreover, ethnic politics can influence policy decisions, as leaders may prioritize the interests of their own ethnic group over others, potentially leading to marginalization and inequality.

Addressing these challenges requires fostering inclusive governance, promoting dialogue and understanding among ethnic groups, and implementing policies that benefit all residents of Akwa Ibom State, regardless of ethnicity. Furthermore, ethnic politics can impact infrastructure development and resource distribution within Akwa Ibom State. There may be disparities in the allocation of funds for projects, with certain areas receiving preferential treatment based on the ethnicity of the ruling political elite.

Efforts to address the effects of ethnic politics must be multifaceted and sustained, involving collaboration between government, civil society organizations, community leaders, and individuals. Promoting tolerance, understanding, and respect for diversity is crucial for building a more inclusive and cohesive society where every Individual can thrive, regardless of their ethnic background. Additionally, investing in education and economic opportunities in underserved areas can help bridge the gap and promote social cohesion across ethnic lines.

Ethnic politics and Political Appointment

Ethnic politics can have various effects on political appointments in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It is important to note that while ethnic politics exists in many regions globally, the specific effects can vary depending on the context and dynamics of each place. One potential effect is the promotion of ethnic bias in political appointments. Ethnic politics can lead to favoritism towards individuals from a particular ethnic group, resulting in an unequal distribution of positions. This can undermine meritocracy and limit opportunities for qualified candidates from other ethnic groups. Ethnic politics can also result in the marginalization of certain ethnic groups in political appointments. If one ethnic group holds significant political power or dominance, they may disproportionately allocate positions to their own members, thereby excluding others. This exclusion can create feelings of disenfranchisement and contribute to social tensions. Another impact of ethnic politics on political appointments is the potential lack of diversity in terms of representation (Achimugu, Ata-Agboni, and Aliyu, 2013). When appointments are primarily based on ethnicity, other important factors such as gender, age, and professional qualifications may be overlooked. This lack of diversity can limit the perspectives and experiences brought to policy-making and governance. On the other hand, if ethnic politics is practiced with inclusivity and fairness, it can foster social cohesion and harmony. By ensuring diverse representation and promoting equal opportunities, political appointments can help bridge divides between different ethnic groups, build trust, and promote a sense of unity among citizens.

Addressing the effects of ethnic politics on political appointments requires a comprehensive approach, including efforts to promote inclusive governance, merit- based appointments, and equitable representation (Achimugu, Ata-Agboni, and Aliyu, 2013). It would involve fostering a sense of national identity that transcends ethnic affiliations and

working towards a society where appointments are based on competence, integrity, and dedication to public service rather than ethnic background.

Ethnic politics and Infrastructural development

Ethnic politics can have both positive and negative impacts on infrastructural development in any region, including Akwa Ibom State. On the positive side, when different ethnic groups work together collaboratively, it can lead to shared resources and expertise that benefit infrastructural development. However, ethnic politics can also lead to divisions and competition for resources, which may negatively impact the allocation of infrastructure projects and funding.

In the context of Akwa Ibom State, it is important to recognize the diverse ethnic groups within the state and the potential for their cooperation or competition in the realm of infrastructural development (Fayemi, 2009). The government and key stakeholders should strive to promote inclusive policies that prioritize the overall development of the state, regardless of ethnic affiliations. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure that infrastructural projects are distributed equitably across the state, taking into consideration the needs of all communities.

Ethnic Politics and Empowerment Programme

Ethnic politics refers to the interaction of different ethnic groups within a specific political context, while empowerment programs are designed to provide marginalized or underrepresented groups with the means to gain power and control over their lives (John, and Guy, 2004).

Empowerment programs aimed at ethnic communities can take various forms, such as providing educational opportunities, creating economic development initiatives, offering leadership training, or advocating for political representation. These programs are crucial for promoting social justice, equality, and inclusion within diverse societies.

Theoretical Framework

Style and Behavior Theory - John B. Watson

The style theory acknowledges the significance of certain necessary leadership skills that serve as enabler for a leader who performs an act while drawing its parallel with previous capacity of the leader, prior to that particular act while suggesting that each individual has a distinct style of leadership with which he/she feels most contented. Like one that does not fit all heads, similarly one style cannot be effective in all situations. Yukl (1989) introduced three different leadership styles. The employees serving with democratic leaders displayed high degree of satisfaction, creativity, and motivation; working with great enthusiasm and energy irrespective of the presence or absence of the leader; maintaining better connections with the leader, in terms of productivity whereas, autocratic leaders mainly focused on greater quantity of output. Laissez faire leadership was only considered relevant while leading a team of highly skilled and motivated people who excellent track-record, in the past.

In applying this theory to the study, involves examining how different leadership behaviors contribute to inter-ethnic relations, governance effectiveness, and socio-political stability. Democratic leadership involves involving subordinates in decision-making processes and fostering a participatory environment. In Akwa Ibom State, leaders who exhibit democratic behaviors may facilitate dialogue and collaboration among diverse ethnic groups, allowing them to have a voice in governance processes. This approach can promote inclusivity, reduce ethnic tensions, and enhance the legitimacy of government decisions. Also, in Akwa Ibom State, laissez-faire leadership may result in a lack of direction or coordination in addressing ethnic tensions and governance challenges.

Overall, the significance of style and behavior theory in the study of leadership lies in its practical relevance, predictive power, adaptability, developmental potential, emphasis on inclusivity and diversity, and ethical considerations. By understanding and applying the principles of effective leadership behaviors, individuals and organizations can enhance their performance, foster positive relationships, and achieve sustainable success.

Ekwekwekwea theory

The theory was propounded by Eyo, Uforo Etim in 2022, while conducting a research to find out the socio-economic development indices of tricycle operation policy in Akwa Ibom State. The proponent observed that development of nations, states, local governments, organizations, ministries, agencies, department and individual are linked to input oriented factors such as funding, monitoring/ assessment and evaluation. He opined that an organization, individuals and countries are and will be developed as a result of advance idiosyncratic components emanating from human capital development. To him, he was of the opinion that more funding and training of workers in an organization, villages, communities, nations and citizens of a country will bring and offer more opportunities to individuals who would have remained unemployed, Eyo (2023). Urban development in this case is possible through the policy formulation and implementation strategy embark upon by the Akwa Ibom State Government in 2012 in finding a solution to the problem of Employment opportunities and frequent Accident within Uyo metropolis.

This theory shows that the input of Government factors in equal infrastructural development, political appointment and empowerment programmes like training and development of both the Ibibio, Oron and Annang will brings about a high level of development and avoids ethnic politics in Akwa Ibom State

METHODOLOGY

In this study, survey research and descriptive design was adopted with a research population 0f 4,000,000,000 (four million), consisting of the three (3) major ethnic group (Ibibio, Annang and Oro) in Akwa Ibom State as the sample size of this study was determined using Taro Yamani formula which was 100. The sampling technique adopted for this study was convenience sampling techniques. This method was adopted because all members of the population have equal right of being selected. Data were collected from primary source and secondary source of data. As the method of Data analysis was simple percentage while the hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The study had a response rate of 100% as the researcher issued 200 copies of the questionnaire which 100 was retrieved in usable form.

Table 4.1 Gender of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	42	64.6	64.6	64.6
	Female	23	35.4	35.4	100.0
	Total	65	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2024

The respondents were made up of 42(64.6%) male and 23(35.4%) female. This implies that more male were interviewed than female in Akwa Ibom State.

4.1.2 Hypothesis one

Ho$_1$: There is no significant impact between ethnic politics and political appointment in Akwa Ibom State.

The regression result that relate to this hypothesis is as presented in the table below;

Table 4.2: Regression results for hypothesis one

Variable	Coefficients	t-statistic	S.E.	Probability
Constant	0.685	0.987	0.694	0.327
PAppoint	-0.993	-2.756	0.360	0.008
R^2 = 0.108				
Adjusted R^2 = 0.093				
F-stat = 7.596				
Prob. (F-stat) = 0.008				
Durbin-Watson (DW) = 1.720				

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2024.

Given that the computed F-statistic value of 7.596 was obtained for the model and found to be statistically significant with a probability value of 0.008 (p>0.05). Based on this, the null hypothesis fails to hold, and is rejected. Thus, the alternative hypothesis which states that Ethnic politics has significant impact on political appointment in Akwa Ibom State is accepted.

4.1.3 Hypothesis two

Ho2: **There is no significant impact between ethnic politics and infrastructure development in Akwa Ibon State.**

The regression result that relate to this hypothesis is as presented in the table below;

Table 4.3: Regression results for hypothesis two

Variable	Coefficientst-statistic		S.E.	Probability
Constant	1.429	1.551	0.922	0.126
PAppoint	-0.444	-1.203	0.369	0.234
R^2 = 0.022				
Adjusted R^2 = 0.007				
F-stat = 1.446				
Prob. (F-stat) = 0.234				
Durbin-Watson (DW) = 1.549				

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2024.

Based on the decision rule of the study which states that null hypothesis will be accepted if the computed p-value is greater than the significant level of 0.05 (p>0.05). Otherwise, confirm the null hypothesis if the computed p-value is less than or equal to the significant level (p≤0.05). The null hypothesis two is accepted, because the p-value of 0.234 is greater than 0.05. There is no significant impact between ethnic politics and infrastructure development in Akwa Ibom State is accepted.

4.1.4 Hypothesis Three Ho3: There is no significant impact between ethnic politics and empowerment programme in Akwa Ibom State.

The regression result that relate to this hypothesis is as presented in the table below;

Table 4.4: Regression results for hypothesis three

Variable	Coefficientst-statistic		S.E.	Probability
Constant	1.600	2.254	0.710	0.028
PAppoint	0.474	1.342	0.353	0.184
R^2 = 0.028				
Adjusted R^2 = 0.012				
F-stat = 1.801				
Prob. (F-stat) = 0.184				
Durbin-Watson (DW) = 1.568				

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2024.

Based on the decision rule of the study which states that null hypothesis will be accepted if the computed p-value is greater than the significant level of 0.05 (p>0.05). Otherwise,

WORLD ATLAS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATION & MANAGEMENT
VOL7 NO1, DECEMBER 2024, NEW YORK CITY. ISSN: 2667-1069

UNA, ARIT EFFIONG
&
EYO, UFORO ETIM

confirm the null hypothesis if the computed p-value is less than or equal to the significant level (p≤0.05). The null hypothesis three is accepted, because the p-value of 0.184 is greater than 0.05. There is no significant impact between ethnic politics and empowerment programme in Akwa Ibom State is accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The joint influence of ethnic politics on political Appointment was also evaluated. The result in table 4.7 revealed the probability value of 0.008 (p<0.05), this implies that ethnic politics has a positive significant impact on Political Appointment in Akwa Ibom State. This can be further explained that Ethnic identity plays a significant role in political decision-making in Akwa Ibom State. This show that political appointment was based on ethnic sentiment from 2015 – 2023, most position were arrogated on ethnic bias in favour of the group the leader of the state come from. The finding is in line with the study conducted by Achimugu, Ata-Agboni, and Aliyu (2013).

The finding also revealed that ethnic politics has a positive and strong impact with infrastructure development in Akwa Ibom State. This implies that investments in infrastructure like bridges and flyovers have improved connectivity between different parts of the state, fostering social integration and cultural exchange. The result of this findings was in line with the works of Osondu, (2022).

The study further revealed that ethnic politics has a significant positive impact on empowerment programme in Nigeria. This implies that people are encouraged to take charge of their lives. They do this by addressing their situation and then take action in order to improve their access to resources and transform their consciousness through their beliefs, values, and attitudes. The findings are in consonance with the study conducted by Uchechukwu, (2020).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that ethnic politics has a significant impact on Governance in Akwa ibom State. Ethnic politics has an insignificant impact with infrastructure development in Akwa Ibom State- Nigeria. Ethnic politics has an insignificant impact with empowerment programme in Akwa Ibom State-Nigeria.

The results of this study demonstrate that ethnicity plays a significant role in shaping governance and political dynamics. In Akwa Ibom State, which has three major ethnic groups; the Ibibio, Annang, and Oro, ethnicity can influence governance in several ways: Ethnicity often determines the distribution of political power and the allocation of government resources. This can lead to competition and sometimes conflicts among different ethnic groups over political positions and access to resources. The interests and priorities of different ethnic groups may influence the policy decisions made by the government. Leaders may feel pressure to prioritize the needs of their own ethnic group, potentially leading to unequal distribution of development projects and services.

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VOL7 NO1, DECEMBER 2024, NEW YORK CITY. ISSN: 2667-1069

UNA, ARIT EFFIONG
&
EYO, UFORO ETIM

Recommendations

From the result of the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Ethinicity should not be introduce into the politics of the state because politics produces leaders in government which are put in place to provide evenly or equally to all areas of the state. When appointments are made on ethnic basis, it hampers good governance in the state.

2. Akwa Ibom State government should provide infrastructure to all parts of the state. Infrastructural development should not be place on the areas where leaders come from in depriving other areas that does not have representative in the leadership of the state.

3. The state government should ensure that empowerment programmes are distributed equally to all section of the state irrespective of gender. This is because equal empowerment would bring development (social and economic) to the people cum the state in general.

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VOL7 NO1, DECEMBER 2024, NEW YORK CITY. ISSN: 2667-1069

UNA, ARIT EFFIONG
&
EYO, UFORO ETIM

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VOL7 NO1, DECEMBER 2024, NEW YORK CITY. ISSN: 2667-1069

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&
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