



Research Article

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Structure versus Process: Exploring the Link between Distributive and Procedural Justice Beliefs and National Identification among the Peoples of Southern and Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria's ethno religious plurality has persistently hindered cohesion among its many peoples. Thus, for over four decades, a debate has been ongoing over whether or not the Nigerian polity should be restructured. The present study drew from System Justification Theory to examine how the constituent groups in Nigeria are apparently kept united amidst perceptions of injustice from some of her ethnic groups. The paper also examined the extent to which the perceptions of distributive and procedural justice influence national identification. The study involved a survey of 230 federal university undergraduates. Participants responded to a scale on distributive and procedural justice beliefs as well as on measures of national identification. Results revealed that distributive and procedural justice beliefs have a significant influence on national group identification. Furthermore, respondents from the southern Nigeria showed strong identification with their ethnic groups but weak identification with the national group, while participants from northern Nigeria showed strong identification with the ethnic group and an equally strong identification with the national group. These findings suggest there is less national cohesion among Nigerian ethnic groups than is necessary for faster national development. Recommendations are therefore made on how national cohesion might be achieved in spite of cultural differences.

Keywords: Justice, cohesion, national identification, Nigeria

1. Introduction

The debate on structures and the processes of governance has been on for a long time in Nigeria. On the one hand are the advocates of restructuring who argue that the nation cannot make much progress without a radical altering of her political structure. They believe that the failure of leadership is essentially a consequence of the poor structure of the country. Most of the proponents of this argument are from southern Nigeria; they believe that the structure of Nigeria, including the constitution, was tilted to favor the northern part of the country. On the other hand are those who believe that the Nigerian structures are really not the problem but the process of governance and administration. They believe that since there can never be a perfect structure; the failings of the managers of the process are the fundamental cause of the country's slow progress (*ThisDay*, 2018). It is generally presumed that this view is held by only those who are currently benefitting from the present lopsided status quo, most of whom are from northern Nigeria.

System Justification Theory can account for this phenomenon, as it states that people strive to defend and justify the status quo because it is beneficial to them (Jost & Banaji 1994; Jost & Hunyady 2002). This cognitive strategy serves the purpose of helping to keep existing social

orders in such a way that state institutions, whether political or economic, are regarded as legitimate and acceptable to members of both advantaged and disadvantaged social groups. Such advantaged groups usually emphasize on the strengths of the union in terms of might, diversity, large market and pluralism, among others. Quite a number of countries around the world are in this mould. In Spain, Catalonia has been agitating for self-determination on account of economic and political domination from other ethnic groups. It is among Spain's most prosperous regions, contributing a fifth of over one trillion euro to the economy, hence its demand for self-governance (Ancient Origin, 2017). However, the rest of the country continues to oppose this agitation by pointing to existing laws that do not support a separation.

There is a similar situation in the United Kingdom, where Scotland insists it is being shortchanged in resource allocation among the constituent units. This perception of injustice has led to calls for a referendum on the independence of Scotland. Seemingly superior arguments by those who highlighted the strengths of the union appear to have quelled such agitations. The refrain by this group as the Scotland independence campaign carried on was: "We are better together". This position is in consonance with system justification theory. Jost and Hunyady (2005) also noted that system justification theory has been used to explain numerous and seemingly paradoxical belief systems in a way that a polity could be perceived as orderly, organised and legitimate and thereby having acceptance by both the advantaged groups and disadvantaged groups within the same political or geographical entity. Studies have shown the success of this approach towards achieving stability and protection of emotional well-being by enhancing satisfaction with the existing social order.

Moreover, status quo beliefs may also increase positive affect and suppress negative affect among members of both advantaged and disadvantaged social classes (Jost and Hunyady 2005). Its effect has also been shown to be harmful as status quo beliefs promote preferences for advantaged groups, derogation of disadvantaged groups and a generally suppressed desire for social change (Jost & Banaji 1994; Jost et al. 2004). While there have been volumes of studies on national identity formation processes, it would seem that this paper is the first attempt at linking beliefs about distributive and procedural justice to national identity construction. Thus this study seeks to examine how constituent ethnic groups classified as advantaged and disadvantaged construct or negotiate identity amidst the perceived injustice from one or some of the other ethnic groups.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 National Identification

According to Social Identity Theory, people tend to identify with something bigger than themselves, e.g. a collective national or ethnic group. It is from such a grouping that an individual develops a social identity, that is, a sense of belonging to an important big social entity (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). This is important in many ways because it helps individuals to bolster self and have a positive affect of relevance and a sense of importance. For example, an American citizen may not hesitate to introduce himself or herself as an American in an international setting, except for security reasons. This may also be true of British, French and German citizens. Normally our group memberships result in these pleasant feelings because we perceive our own group in a positive light. Duriez et al. (2013) extended this view by submitting that the (national) group we identify with depends on our pre-existing ideas about how we think a society should be organized and about the conditions out-group members need to fulfill to become in-group members. Moreover, national identity formation is not given but achieved (Caltabiano, 1984; Hogg, Abrams and Patel, 1987), although this is also dependent on achievement of equity and fairness. If a group fails to achieve this standard, it is believed that there may be a problem of acceptance of membership of such a group.

In spite of the realities of multiculturalism and globalization in today's world, national identity is considered to be an important individual characteristic (Oppenheimer, 2011) because it is "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social

group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Turner 1982: 255). Besides, our sense of identification determines our perception of who we are, where we are from, how we interact with others and how we classify others (Billig, 1995). In spite of the importance of knowledge of identity about social affect and behavior, it has received little or no attention especially in terms of social cohesion. The present study attempts to bridge this gap in the literature. Indeed, our understanding of national identification is important because there is ample evidence that the strength of national identification may influence attitudes towards the in-group (e.g., own nation) as well as towards out-groups, i.e. other nations (Barrett,2007; Rutland, 1999).

2.2 *Distributive and Procedural Justice*

Distributive justice is the perception of the fairness of decisions on allocation or distribution of resources (Adams, 1965), while procedural justice is the perception of the fairness of how the decision was arrived at, including rules or interpersonal treatment (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Lind & Tyler, 1988). Previous studies have found that people tend to make unique judgments about the fairness of outcomes vis-a-vis the procedures employed and this can in turn determine people's behavior, attitude and decisions. Some recent studies show that perception about procedural and distributive justice influences our assessment of fairness, as well as our dispositional tendencies to perceived outcomes versus rules and processes as uniquely deserved. Todd (2009) reported that distributive justice beliefs are associated with negative affectivity. While belief in fair outcomes (distributive just world beliefs) was generally associated with greater positive affectivity, belief in fair processes (procedural just world beliefs) was modestly associated with decreased negative affectivity. In addition, positive and negative affectivity were predicted by interactions between procedural and distributive just world beliefs, with each accentuating the general emotional benefit provided by the other. Finally, an interactive effect of procedural just-world beliefs and social class was obtained for positive affectivity, with greater positive affectivity occurring for disadvantaged (lower income) individuals who had strong procedural just-world beliefs. In general, these results suggest the potential for unique and interactive relationships between particular system-justifying beliefs and measures of emotion, especially when it involves advantaged versus disadvantaged groups.

2.3 *Hypothesis*

The hypotheses below were tested:

1. There is a significant relationship between justice beliefs and national identification.
2. The Yoruba of southern Nigeria will be significantly high on the ethnic group identification measure and significantly low on the national group identification measure.
3. The Igbo of southern Nigeria will be significantly high on the ethnic group identification measure and significantly low on the national group identification measure.
4. There will be no significant difference in the scores of the Hausa on the ethnic group identification measure and the national identification measure.

3. Method

3.1 *Procedure*

The study sampled 230 participants from the three major ethnic groups of Nigeria: Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. The participants were undergraduate students of a federal university. The study adopted the convenient sampling method. All participants were requested to respond to questions on measures described in the sections below:

Section A: This section was made up of 6 question items developed to get responses from the respondents on general information on biodata which included gender, age and level of education, among others.

Section B

3.2 Strength of Identification Scale (SoIS; Barrett, 2007; Midzic, 2007)

The Strength of Identification Scale (SoIS) was developed originally by Barrett (2007) and Midzic (2007) to measure the strength of national identification. It is made up of six questions dealing with the degree of national identification, viz: affect towards national identity, positive and negative internalization of national identity (i.e., the feelings associated with positive and negative evaluations by others of one's own nation), importance of national identity, and pride in identifying with the nation. The scale has a reliability coefficient of 0.87 (Midzic, 2007). These questions may be answered on a 4-point Likert-type scale. For instance, the degree of national identity could be assessed by the item 'I feel Nigerian' and participants would be expected to answer either 'Strongly agree' or 'Strongly disagree'. The same goes for such items as 'Being Nigerian is important to me', 'I am proud to be Nigerian', 'I feel a bond with Nigerian people', 'In many ways, I resemble other Nigerian people' and 'I consider myself a typical Nigerian'.

3.3 Sections C&D

Sections C and D measured the degree of identification with ethnic groups and was slightly reworded to reflect the major ethnic groups rather than the Nigerian identity. For example, for the Yoruba ethnic group the items included 'I feel Yoruba', 'Being Yoruba is important to me' and 'I am proud to be Yoruba', each of which required the response 'Strongly agree' or 'Strongly disagree' etc.

3.4 Section E

The Distributive and Procedural Justice Scale comprised 6 scales adapted from Colquitt (2001). It assessed perception of fairness on allocation of resources between the northern and southern parts of the country. Items featured included 'Do you believe that justice and fairness are the guiding principles in allocation of resources by the Nigerian government?', to which the responses were (a) Not at all (b) Agree (c) Strongly agree (d) Undecided (e) Disagree (f) Strongly disagree

4. Results

Table 1.0. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Profile of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	97	48.5
Female	103	51.5
Total	200	100.0
Age Group		
16-20yrs	121	60.5
21-30yrs	77	38.5
31-40yrs	1	0.5
41-50yrs	1	0.5
Total	200	100.0
Level of Education		
Undergraduate, B.Sc.	184	92.0
Others	16	8.0
Total	200	100.0
Place of Birth		
Nigeria	198	99.0
Outside Nigeria	2	1.0
Total	200	100.0

The table above presents the gender distribution of the respondents. There were 97 (48.5%) male and 103 (51.5%) female respondents. With regard to educational status, there were 184 (92.0%) undergraduate respondents and 16(8.0%) graduates/postgraduate respondents. In terms of place

of birth, 198 (99.0%) respondents were born in Nigeria and 2 (1.0%) were born outside Nigeria. On the item 'Have you ever traveled out/or lived outside Nigeria before?' 57 (28.5%) respondents answered in the affirmative while 143 (71.5%) gave a negative answer.

Furthermore, 4 (7.0%) respondents had stayed outside Nigeria for less than a week, 9 (15.8%) had spent 1-4 weeks outside Nigeria, 10 (17.5%) had had spent a month outside Nigeria, 21 (36.8%) had spent 1 month and a week to 12 months outside Nigeria, and 13 (22.8%) respondents had spent above 1 year outside Nigeria.

4.1 Hypothesis 1

H₁: There is a significant relationship between justice beliefs and national identification.

Table 2.0: Justice beliefs and national identification

	Justice, fairness and equality are the most important requirements for a society	When there are positions the number one principle should be ensuring that everybody from each state is treated using same criteria	For equality, it is okay for some states to be denied their rights	Some people in the country are treated differently from others	When people are working together on a task, each member of the group ought to receive the same reward regardless of the amount of effort each team member puts in
Chi-Square	15.872	22.510	11.127	3.561	1.184
Df	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.003	.000	.025	.469	.881

a Kruskal Wallis Test

b Grouping Variable: In many ways resemble other Nigerians

** P < .05

The table above tests the relationship between justice beliefs and national identification. The chi-square (X^2) values of 15.872, 22.510, 11.127, 3.561 and 1.184, the tabulated values of 9.487, 9.487, 9.487, 9.487, 9.487 and the respective P values of 0.03, 0.000, 0.025, 0.469 and 0.881 show that only three of the variants of justice beliefs are significant and the other two are insignificant. These results suggest that overall the stated hypothesis is accepted. Thus one's perception of justice determines the extent to which one identifies with a group.

4.2 Hypothesis 2

H₂: The Yoruba of southern Nigeria will be significantly high on the ethnic group identification measure and significantly low on the national group identification measure.

Table 3.0: Yoruba group and identification

	I feel Yoruba	I feel a bond with Yoruba people	Being Yoruba is important to me	I consider myself a typical Yoruba	In many ways I resemble other Yoruba people
Chi-Square	21.104	9.138	12.126	12.346	22.917
Df	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.058	.016	.015	.000

a Kruskal Wallis Test

b Grouping Variable: I feel Nigerian

** P < .05

The table below shows the scores of the Yoruba respondents on their ethnic group identification measure and the national identification measure. With respect to the item 'I feel Nigerian', the items 'I feel Yoruba', 'I feel a bond with Yoruba people', 'Being Yoruba is important to me', 'I consider myself a typical Yoruba' and 'In many ways I resemble other Yoruba people' show the P values of 0.000, 0.058, 0.016, 0.015 and 0.000 respectively, thus indicating that it is more significant identifying as a Yoruba person.

4.3 Hypothesis 3

H₃: The Igbo of southern Nigeria will be significantly high on the ethnic group identification measure and significantly low on the national group identification measure.

Table 4.0: Igbo group and identification

	I feel Igbo	I feel a bond with Igbo people	Being Igbo is important to me	I consider myself a typical Igbo	In many ways I resemble other Igbo people
Chi-Square	8.034	4.810	4.116	7.802	3.013
Df	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.045	.036	.049	.050	.029

a Kruskal Wallis Test

b Grouping Variable: I feel Nigerian

**P < .05

The table above shows the scores of the Igbo respondents on the group identification and national identification measures. With respect to the item 'I feel Nigerian', the items 'I feel Igbo', 'I feel a bond with Igbo people', 'Being Igbo is important to me', 'I consider myself a typical Igbo' and 'In many ways I resemble other Igbo people' show the P values of 0.045, 0.036, 0.049, 0.050 and 0.029 respectively. This suggests that an Igbo person feels much more Igbo than they feel Nigerian.

4.4 Hypothesis 4

H₄: There will be no significant difference in the scores of the Hausa on the ethnic group identification measure and the national identification measure.

Table 5.0: Hausa group and identification

	I feel Hausa	I feel a bond with Hausa people	Being Hausa is important to me	I consider myself a typical Hausa	In many ways I resemble other Hausa people
Chi-Square	.993	3.428	1.429	3.819	2.951
Df	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.803	.330	.699	.282	.399

a Kruskal Wallis Test

b Grouping Variable: I feel Nigerian

The table above shows the scores of the Hausa respondents on the group identification and national identification measures. With respect to the item 'I feel Nigerian', the items 'I feel Hausa', 'I feel a bond with Hausa people', 'Being Hausa is important to me', 'I consider myself a typical Hausa' and 'In many ways I resemble other Hausa people' have the P values of 0.803, 0.330, 0.699, 0.282 and 0.399 respectively. The result shows there is no significant difference in the scores of the Hausa respondents on ethnic identification and national identification. In other words, identification by the Hausa at the ethnic and national levels is the same, being neither higher nor lower.

5. Discussion of Findings

The first finding is that there is a relationship between justice beliefs and national identification. This is supported by Lind and Tyler (1988) where they noted that people's attitudes and behaviours towards a group is determined by their perception of the fairness of the group or its members in how resources are allocated and the rules for such allocations. This is also consistent with the submission of Fraser (2005) who stated that social justice and cohesion cannot be achieved where there is an unfair distribution of socioeconomic resources, cultural or symbolic domination and

misrepresentation, i.e. exclusion from the decision-making process. Fraser further observed that these three must be addressed to achieve social cohesion. Novelli, Lopez-Cardozo and Smith (2015) added reconciliation to the factors identified by Fraser, particularly for nations in conflict or just out of conflict, so that historic and present tensions as well as grievances are dealt with to build a more peaceful and cohesive society.

Hypotheses two and three align with the finding in Leszczensky (2013) that ethnic identification is not causally related to national identification but there are unobserved variables that cause national and ethnic identification to go in different directions. In a similar vein, Verkuyten, (2005) reported that ethnic and national identities are not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, the findings in studies on immigrants equally show that ethnic identification do not translate into favorable negotiations over a national identity (see Kadianaki 2011, Asekun & Martins 2017). The results from the fourth hypothesis of the present study confirm the assertion by Stryker (1980) that people possess multiple identities which are related to multiple social roles. Social roles are embedded in social relationships; therefore, a person's commitment to a social role is a function of the extent to which their social relationships are woven around this role (Simon, 2004).

This shows that it is possible to have a positive ethnic identity and a positive national identity at the same time, and vice versa. The present study shows that of all the ethnic groups examined, only the Hausa ethnic group has this attribute and, as pointed out earlier, this also confirms the proposition that the advantaged group in a union will invariably want to maintain the status quo and thus have positive affect for the union while the disadvantaged groups may remain discontented. This potential link between positive affect and distributive justice is pointed out in the literature on discrete emotions that show happiness and pride (i.e. high positive affect) for those who benefit in lopsided political arrangements (e.g. Weiss, Suckow & Cropanzano, 1999). Moreover, a relationship between procedural justice and negative emotion is supported by past research that suggests anger and frustration, i.e. high negative affect for those who feel shortchanged by a political arrangement (De Cremer, 2006).

6. Conclusion

The results of this research provide further evidence on the existence of several social identities that can be constructed concurrently depending on the prevailing variables in a society. The implication of this is that people will owe allegiance to only their ethnic group and consider the national group as an out-group if they perceive themselves as disadvantaged in a political union. In the case of the Nigerian federation, such aggrieved people have tended to promote schism, nepotism and tribalism, which have been identified at different times as the bane of the Nigerian society. There have been agitations in different parts of the country for equitable distribution of the country's resources among the constituent units. To this end, the allocation process and the rules guiding these activities need to be reexamined so that a consensus may be reached on how this should be done fairly for the nation to become a more cohesive national group. Social cohesion can be achieved when policymakers commit to allocating resources fairly and equitably among the country's constituent units. This will promote a sense of belonging and encourage hard work and harmonious living among the peoples of Nigeria, thus reducing unnecessary tension in the polity and fostering political growth and economic development in the country.

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