## *RESEARCH ARTICLE*

## ETHNIC POLITICS AND THE CREDIBILITY OF THE 2019 KOGI STATE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN LOKOJA METROPOLIS

**Innocent Jooji**

Department of Political Science and Diplomacy, Faculty of Social Sciences, Veritas University, Abuja-Nigeria.

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| *Manuscript Info* | *Abstract* |
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This study seeks to investigate the factors that triggered ethnic politics during the Kogi state 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolisand how it undermined the electoral process during the Kogi state 2019 gubernatorial election. The study collected data from primary and secondary sources. This study used a sample of 400 people from the study's population of 137,301. Meanwhile, weighted mean was used to analyze the data collected. Besides, the alternative hypothesis which states that there is significant relationship between factors that promotes ethnic politics such as political marginalization and illiteracy, electorates' value system, weak electoral laws and corruption and the Kogi state 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis is accepted. Also, the alternative hypothesis which states that there is significant relationship between the ways ethnicity undermined the credibility of electoral process during the Kogi state 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis is accepted. Lastly, media and civil society organizations should work closely to raise public awareness on the dangers inherent in ethnic politicsand advocate for accountability and transparency in the electoral processes in Nigeria.

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## Introduction:-

The relevance of cultural distinctions within society has become a fundamental component of contemporary politics, which is often referred to as "conflict identities," "identity politics," "ethnic politics," or "politics of differences." Although, societal knowledge of diversity is nothing new. Furthermore, as various attempts to reconcile cultural diversity and identity-related differences with civic and political cohesion have been made, an increasing number of countries have come to accept the fact that their population is multi-ethnic, multi-religious, or multi-cultural in nature as an irreversible fact (Heywood, 2007:212).

The ideological conflict between the United States and its allies and the former Soviet Union and its allies came to an end with the end of the Cold War. However, as the conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Rwanda, East Timor, Sri Lanka, and a number of other countries illustrate, the first decade after the Cold War did not bring the promised end to warfare between nationalist or ethnic groups all over the world. Moreover, such clashes usually revolve around issues of identity, territorial control, and policymaking access. Inequitable access to economic, political, and social resources is another factor that leads to these clashes.

**Corresponding Author:- Innocent Jooji**
Address**:-** Department of Political Science and Diplomacy, Faculty of Social Sciences, Veritas University, Abuja-Nigeria.

Over the years, researchers and policymakers seeking practical solutions have struggled with these contradictions. As a result, the issue arises: how can conflict, particularly those centered on identity concerns, be alleviated or minimized in order to overcome wealth and power inequities and establish peace? Despite the fact that the United States of America has long been a multi-cultural society due to its immigrant population, the issue of identity conflict was not addressed until the rise of the black consciousness movement in the 1960s and the introduction of reverse discrimination, which gives blacks preferential treatment based on prior discrimination.

Since the early 1970s, Australia has been formally dedicated to resolving conflict identities in recognition of its increasing "Asianization."New Zealand's national identity is also linked to its acceptance of Maori culture's influence on it. Canada has shown its strongest public commitment to resolving conflict identities by attempting to achieve reconciliation between French-speaking Quebec and the English-speaking majority population, as well as respecting the rights of indigenous Inuit. The United Kingdom's multiculturalism recognizes the existence of sizable Black and Asian communities while rejecting the demand that they adapt into white society. This is true for Turkish organizations in Germany (Heywood, 2007:212).

On the other hand, the Nigerian state is sometimes depicted as a deeply divided society in which significant political problems are vigorously debated along ethnic, religious, and regional lines (Smyth & Robinson 2001). The most violent contestation occurs over issues that are regarded critical to the state's existence and legitimacy, and over which opposing factions tend to deploy exclusionary, winner-take-all policies. Controlling governmental power, allocating resources, and citizenship are only a few examples.

Due to its complex network of politically significant identities and history of chronic and seemingly intractable wars and instability, Nigeria has been dubbed one of Africa's most severely divided regimes. Since its inception as a colonial state, Nigeria has faced with a recurring problem of territorial or state legitimacy, which has impeded efforts at national integration, democratization, stability, and economic development. The civil war in the late 1960s appears to have been the crisis' pinnacle, erupting immediately after the country's independence in 1960.

Furthermore, conflict identities in Nigeria are generally expressed in terms of ethnic, regional, and religious identities, with non-territorial identities such as class, gender, and youth being encased inside these territorial identities. The colonial experience, which created a culturally constructed and divided Nigerian state while doing nothing to promote a united Nigeria, has had a significant impact on these identities. Rather, ethnocentrism, ethnic minority insecurity, democratic instability, ethno-military infighting, and secessionist war among big-tribe hegemons were nourished by the colonial regionalist federal inheritance.

Moreover, rather than diminishing, ethnic politics have become more pervasive and powerful in the post-civil war period, with aggrieved sections of society embracing fragmentation as one of the viable answers to the 'National Question.' As a result, the consequences of Nigeria's diversity in a volatile political environment are as grave as ever (Osaghae et al 2005). Since returning to democratic governance on May 29, 1999, Nigeria has seen a rise in ethnic violence. In light of this, the goal of this research is to investigate the impact of ethnicity on electoral legitimacy in the Kogi state gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis in 2019.

### Research Questions
a.What are the factors that promote ethnic politics during the2019 Kogi State gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis?
b. How has ethnicity undermine the credibility of electoral process in Kogi state 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis?

### Research Hypotheses
**a.** There is no significant relationship between factors that promotes ethnic politics and the Kogi state 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis.
b. There is no significant relationship between the ways ethnicity undermines and the credibility of electoral process during the Kogi state 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis.

## Objectives of the Study:-
a. To find out the factors that promote ethnic politics during the 2019 Kogi state gubernatorial election.

b. To understand the many ways ethnicity, during the Kogi state 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis, undermines the electoral process' credibility.

## Literature Review:-
### Ethnic Politics and Identity Politics
The existence of two or more groups with differing characteristics inside the same political system is a fundamental prerequisite for ethnic conflict to occur. Disagreements among ethnic groups or with state authorities are common. The study focuses on ethnic conflict with the government. Brass' contribution is critical in this sense since he explored the intricacies of a political system that led to ethnic groups' growth as a challenger to national authority (Brass, 1991:13-17). Brass, (1991) expands his arguments with the assistance of instrumentalists, who believe that the promotion of socio-economic status is the major cause behind individual's act of creating affiliations, in his dispute regarding ethnic politics and ethnic groups as a challenge to governmental power. They also see ethnicity as a tool for achieving specific goals.

Brass (1991) claims that ethnicity's importance is determined by political and economic factors. Ethnic elites play a crucial role in ethnic mobilization and demand raising. Ethnic conflict is a result of a variety of political reasons, and it becomes significant when the government responds. Scholars have distinguished between developed and third-world states in order to better understand the role of the state in promoting or managing ethnic strife.

The other significant studies provided by Jackson(1990) focused on the role of third-world countries in ethnic strife. He referred to third-world countries as "quasi-states." After the decolonization process, these states emerge. These states are granted independence by developed countries who believe in providing communal goods to their residents first and foremost. Second, in dispersing benefits, these states enlist the help of society. Regrettably, these norms have not been extended to post-colonial countries.As a result, independence benefited a dominating group while the majority of ethno-national groups continued to suffer. According to Jackson's theory, third-world countries have weak institutions and little capacity to address relative hardship among distinct groups, which is why ethnonationalist sentiments are on the rise. As a result, identity movements draw attention to the disparities between the opposing parties over irreconcilable aims.

Suberu et al (2005) suggest that identities do not cause conflicts on their own. To put it another way, just because a country contains multiple ethnic or religious groups does not mean that conflicts will inevitably arise. Only when people mobilize around their identities or when they become politicized can they become the source of conflict. As a result, the job is to investigate the mechanism by which identity variety is translated into conflicts, a process known as 'ethno-genesis' by ethnicity studies. From a historical standpoint, this is what we try to do in this part.

Sule et al (2018) investigated the impact of money on Nigerian politics, focusing on general elections held in the country since the fourth republic's reinstatement. Money has been a factor in determining the outcome of elections in Nigeria since the fourth republic, according to their findings. They emphasized that the issue is money politics, or the excessive use of money in the electoral process, which has resulted in the rise of selfish politicians who have utilized the proceeds of power to enrich themselves and use public property for their own private gain. They conclude that until the regulatory agencies in charge of overseeing elections and punishing offenders improve their efforts to reduce the excessive use of money in Nigerian politics, the country will continue to produce inept leaders, leading to bad governance, power abuse, and the misappropriation of national resources for private gain.

Adekola et al (2019) looked into electoral giving and the misery of democracy in Nigeria. They stressed that through election gifts, Nigerian citizens have sold their commonwealth to politicians who should not be in any position of authority. They go on to say that the non-evaluative and clientelist attitude to democracy is to blame for the dismal realities of Nigeria's election system, and that only civil society engagement can save the country's crumbling democracy. From the above review of literature, how does ethnicity affect the credibility of the Kogi State gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis in 2019?how has ethnicity harmed the electoral process in Kogi state 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis? are not addressed in these studies. It is for this reason; the researcher intends to make contributions to this research endeavour.

## Research Methodology:-
This research used a descriptive survey design. The study collected data from two sources: primary and secondary sources. This study used a sample of 400 people from the study's population of 137301 using Taro Yamane formula. Meanwhile, stratified random sampling was used for the study, and the questionnaires were analyzed using a weighted mean.

### Data Presentation and Analysis
The questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents to analyze answers to research questions. Out of the 400-questionnaire given to respondents, 387 were returned. This is used for the analysis of data; the results obtained are presented in tables below.

### Sex Distribution
**Table 1:-** Shows the sex distribution of respondents.

| Sex | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Male | 198 | 51.16 |
| Female | 189 | 48.84 |
| Total | **387** | **100** |

Field survey, 2021

From the table 1 above, Male respondents make up 51.16 percent of the total, while female respondents make up 48.84 percent. The majority of respondents are men, as evidenced by this statistic.

### Age Distribution
**Table 2:-** Shows the age distribution of respondents.

| Age | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 18 – 25 | 84 | 21.71 |
| 26 – 35 | 95 | 24.55 |
| 36 – 45 | 88 | 22.74 |
| 46 – 55 | 56 | 14.47 |
| 56 – 65 | 42 | 10.85 |
| 66 and above | 22 | 5.68 |
| Total | **387** | **100** |

Field survey, 2021

Table 2 shows the age distribution of respondents. Thus, 21.71 percent of respondents are between the ages of 18 and 25, 24.55 percent are between the ages of 26 and 35, 22.74 percent are between the ages of 36 and 45, 14.47 percent are between the ages of 46 and 55, 10.85 percent are between the ages of 56 and 65, and only 5.68 percent are between the ages of 66 and 65. The majority of the respondents are teenagers, according to the findings.

### Educational Level
**Table 3:-** Shows the educational level of respondents.

| Educational Level | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| FSLC | 32 | 8.27 |
| SSCE | 65 | 16.80 |
| OND/ND/NCE | 90 | 23.26 |
| HND/PGD | 75 | 19.38 |
| B.Sc./BA/B.Ed | 68 | 17.57 |
| M.Sc./MA | 47 | 12.14 |
| PhD | 10 | 2.58 |
| Total | **387** | **100** |

Field survey, 2021

Table 3 shows the educational level of respondents. Thus, 8.27 percent of respondents have FSLC, 16.80 percent have SSCE, 23.26 percent have OND/ND/NCE, 19.38 percent have HND/PGD, 17.57 percent have B.Sc./BA/B.Ed,

12.14 percent have M.Sc./MA, and just 2.58 percent have PhD degrees. According to the findings, the majority of the respondents are educated and literate.

**Marital Status**
Table 4:- Shows the marital status of respondents.

| Marital Status | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Single | 203 | 52.45 |
| Married | 184 | 47.55 |
| Total | **387** | **100** |

Field survey, 2021

From the table above, there are 52.45% of single people and 47.55 percent of married people among the respondents. The majority of respondents are single, as evidenced by this statistic.

**Research Question 1:**
What are the factors triggered ethnic politics during the 2019 Kogi State gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis?
Table 5:- Shows factors triggered ethnic politics during the 2019 Kogi State gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis.

| S/N | Items | Responses | | | | | Mean ($\bar{X}$) | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | SA | A | U | SD | D | | |
| 1. | Does political marginalization influence ethnic politics in Kogi State's 2019 gubernatorial election? | 136 | 148 | 16 | 38 | 49 | 3.74 | Accepted |
| 2. | Does illiteracy promote ethnic politics in Kogi State during the 2019 gubernatorial election? | 191 | 150 | 10 | 17 | 19 | 4.24 | Accepted |
| 3. | Does the value system of the electorate be blamed for ethnic politics in the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State? | 215 | 146 | 4 | 10 | 12 | 4.40 | Accepted |
| 4. | Does ethnic politics play a large role in the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State as a result of Nigeria's weak electoral laws? | 87 | 139 | 16 | 67 | 78 | 3.23 | Accepted |
| 5. | Does corruption triggersethnic politics during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State? | 158 | 167 | - | 30 | 32 | 4.01 | Accepted |
| | **Grand mean ($\bar{X}$)** | | | | | | **3.92** | **Accepted** |

Field survey, 2021

From table 5 above, item 1 – 5 each have mean value above 2.50. It has grand mean of 3.92 which is above the cut-off mean. It therefore implies that, the majority of the respondents agreed that political marginalization influences the ethnic politics during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State; and that illiteracy encouragesethnic politicsduring the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State. Also, it implies that, the respondents agreed that the electorates' value system is responsible for ethnic politics during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State; and that weak electoral laws in Nigeria is one of the major causes of ethnic politics during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State. The study further shows that majority of the respondents agreed that corruption encourages ethnic politics 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State.

**Research Question 2:**
In what ways has ethnicity undermine the credibility of electoral process during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State?

**Table 6:-** Shows ways ethnicity undermine the credulity of electoral process during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State.

| S/N | Items | Responses | | | | | Mean ($\bar{X}$) | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | SA | A | U | SD | D | Mean ($\bar{X}$) | Decision |
| 11. | Ethnicity negatively influence the credulity of the electoral process during the 2019 Kogi state gubernatorial election. | 150 | 189 | 10 | 17 | 21 | 4.11 | Accepted |
| 12. | Ethnicity trigger corruption by politicians after they are voted into power since they would want to get return on money invested during election campaigns. | 165 | 154 | - | 30 | 38 | 3.98 | Accepted |
| 13. | Ethnicity contribute to the wrong candidates and/or political parties being elected into office thereby restricting the voting power of the electorates. | 144 | 141 | 16 | 34 | 52 | 3.75 | Accepted |
| 14. | Ethnicity triggers electoral violence and conflicts during electioneering process. | 139 | 145 | 23 | 37 | 43 | 3.78 | Accepted |
| 15. | Ethnicity frustrate the efforts of democratic institutions in ensuring credible elections. | 66 | 161 | 17 | 76 | 67 | 3.20 | Accepted |
| | **Grand mean ($\bar{X}$)** | | | | | | **3.76** | **Accepted** |

Field survey, 2021

From table 6 above, item 11 – 15 each have mean value above 2.50. It has grand mean of 3.76 which is above the cut-off mean. This, therefore implies that, the majority respondents agreed that Ethnicity has implications on the credibility of the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State. As such, the respondents agreed that ethnicity negatively impact the quality (freeness and fairness) of the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State; that ethnicity trigger corruption by politicians after they are voted into power since they would want to get return on money invested during election campaigns; and that ethnicity contribute to the wrong candidates and/or political parties being elected into office thereby restricting the voting power of the electorates. It also implies that, the majority of the respondents agreed that ethnicity triggers electoral violence and conflicts during electioneering process; and that ethnicity frustrate the efforts of democratic institutions in ensuring credible elections.

## Discussion of Research Findings:-
From table 5 above, item 1 – 5 each have mean value above 2.50. It has grand mean of 3.92 which is above the cut-off mean. It therefore implies that, the majority of the respondents agreed that political marginalization influences the ethnic politics during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State; and that illiteracy encouragesethnic politicsduring the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State. Also, it implies that, the respondents agreed that the electorates' value system is responsible for ethnic politics during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State; and that weak electoral laws in Nigeria is one of the major causes of ethnic politics during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State. The study further shows that majority of the respondents agreed that corruption encourages ethnic politics 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State.By and large, the alternative hypothesis which states that there is significant relationship between factors that promotes ethnic politics and the Kogi state 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis is accepted.

Table 6 clearly answered research question two which sought to find out how has ethnicity undermine the credibility of electoral process in Kogi state 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis. From table 6 above, item 11 – 15 each have mean value above 2.50. It has grand mean of 3.76 which is above the cut-off mean. This, therefore implies that, the majority respondents agreed that ethnicity has implications on the credibility of the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State. As such, the respondents agreed that ethnicity negatively influences the credibility of the Kogi state 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis; Also, that ethnicity trigger corruption

andcontributed to the voting of wrong candidates and/or political parties into office thereby restricting the voting power of the electorates. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents agreed that ethnicity triggers electoral violence and conflicts during electioneering process; and that ethnicity frustrate the efforts of democratic institutions in ensuring credible elections. Lastly, the alternative hypothesis which states that there is significant relationship between the ways ethnicity undermines and the credibility of electoral process during the Kogi state 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis is accepted.

## Conclusion:-
One of the most notable features of contemporary politics is a rising understanding of the importance of cultural distinctions within society, which is frequently characterized as "conflict identities," "identity politics," or "politics of differences." The acknowledgement of diversity throughout society is not new, of course. Furthermore, as various attempts have been made to reconcile cultural diversity and identity-related differences with civic and political cohesion, an increasing number of countries have come to accept the fact that their population is multi-ethnic, multi-religious, or multi-cultural as an irreversible fact.

Nigeria has been classified as one of Africa's most deeply split governments due to the Nigerian state's complex web of politically significant identities and history of chronic and apparently intractable wars and instability. Nigeria's efforts at national cohesiveness, democratization, stability, and economic change have all been hampered by a persistent problem of territorial or state legitimacy since its establishment as a colonial state. The civil war in the late 1960s, which erupted soon after the country's independence in 1960, appears to have been the crisis' apex.

On the whole, since the return of Nigeria to democratic rule on May 29, 1999 there is the rising incidence of ethnicity in most of the elections conducted. To this end, ethnicity has become one of the instruments for social and political mobilization which has to a large extent has damaging consequences on the electoral process of the country. Thus, there is the need to address this rising tide of ethnic politics in the country.

## Recommendations:-
The media and civil society organizations should work together to raise public awareness about the hazards of ethnicity in elections, as well as the prospects for accountability and good government. To ensure practical commitment to reducing ethnic politics at the polling unit level, the enlightenment should be extended to security personnel and communities where INEC draws its election workers.

All parties must respect each other's campaign events and materials and refrain from using hostile speech or behavior in their campaigns. To prevent such interruptions of their opponents' freedom to assemble, party leaders should take responsibility for regulating their members and supporters.

INEC should join the civil society group in pushing for election reforms, collaborating closely with all key stakeholders. It is critical that INEC, as part of its review of the election process and in response to Nigerians' expressed concerns, pursues a concerted alliance and collaboration with stakeholders, including the National Assembly, civil society organizations, political parties, the executive, and the media, in order to achieve long-term electoral reforms to address the increasing tide of ethnic politics in Nigeria politics.

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