

**POLITICAL INEQUITY AND THE RESURGENCE OF
ETHNIC NATIONALISM IN NIGERIA: AN ANALYSIS OF
THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF BIAFRA (IPOB)**

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ABSTRACT: Ethnic nationalism resurgence was manifested in the renewed demand for Biafra by the secessionist organizations especially the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The study therefore, examined political inequity and ethnic nationalism in Nigeria with particular reference to the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The theory of political instrumentalism advanced by the American philosopher John Dewey in 1949 formed the theoretical basis for this study. The study adopted survey research design. Data were derived from primary and secondary sources. The population of the study constituted the member of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the old Eastern region comprising of the current South East and South-South geopolitical zones. Convenience sampling technique was used to select a sample of 400 respondents for the study. The data generated were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Chi-square. The study found that ethnic politics has fuelled political inequity in Nigeria. Ethnic politics has resulted to dangerous forms of ethnic nationalism and increases political inequalities in Nigeria. Competition for state power and natural resources were also found to have enhanced ethnic nationalism in Nigeria. The study recommends that an all-inclusive political system is the key solution. Nigeria should create an inclusive political system where ethnic and religious affiliation will no longer be a defining factor in political participation.

Keywords: Ethnic, Nationalism, Resurgence, Politics, IPOB

INTRODUCTION

Political inequity and ethnic nationalism have continued to pose a serious threat to Nigeria and has had adverse effects on prospects of promoting good governance or democracy. Nwofe (2017) maintained that in a society bonded by a concatenation of diverse ethno-nationalism, the struggle for inclusion and exclusion becomes particularly unavoidable. Ethnicity has continued to serve as resources for political manipulation in Nigeria resulting in dominant ethnic groups excluding minority groups within national policies that reflect the interests and activities of the national majority. This has given rise to ethnic nationalism resurgence in Nigeria. The rise of ethnic nationalism resurgence in Nigeria in the last two decades is not unconnected with the unequal distribution of the country's political, economic and social wealth. These inequalities have caused mistrust, fear and disunity among ethnic groups in Nigeria given rise to severe divided ethnic line and tension in Nigeria.

Theories of nationalism have emphasized how political inequity has motivated secessionism and not necessarily in violent ways, there are also strong reasons to believe that similar mechanisms can help account for violent conflict in the developing world. For example,

observers have emphasized how the Biafran conflict in Nigeria in 1967 or the secessionist conflict in Punjab in the early 1980s were fuelled by perceptions of economic and political injustice (Bookman, 1992). Deiwiks, Cederman and Gleditsch (ND) noted that a closer scrutiny of the cases highlighted in prior studies demonstrates that both relatively poor regions such as Biafra, the former Eastern Region of Nigeria, as well as relatively richer regions such as Slovenia and Croatia have been involved in violent secessionist conflict. While the mere wealth difference between a region and the rest of the state does not necessarily result in violence, the apparent political and economic distributional inequities are likely to develop into contentious issues between a region and the centre. In particular, in cases where regions have a distinct ethnic identity, perceived ethnic discrimination through economic disadvantages and political inequity may trigger or reinforce ethno-nationalist grievances, thus increasing the risk of secessionist agenda.

Recent research has shown that ethnic grievances due to political exclusion or domination by other groups may increase the risk of secessionist agenda (Walter, 2009; Wimmer, 2002), but most existing research on inequity and ethnic nationalism have ignored political inequity. However, federal states often host a multitude of nationalities, and the boundaries of ethnic groups and regions sometimes overlap. In such polities, interregional inequities may trigger economic and political grievances that give rise to violent, ethno-nationalist struggles. Conversely, ethno-nationalist grievances can also exacerbate conflicts over economic and political issues. Since political and economic grievances may coincide, it is sometimes not even clear whether the predominant conflict issue is cultural or national autonomy or economic or political inequity between groups. While some of the literature on regional inequity takes into account the regional concentration of ethnic groups (Bakke & Wibbels, 2006; Sambanis & Milanovic, 2009), few analyses of the effect of regional inequity on conflict have considered ethno-nationalist grievances explicitly.

However, studies done by Collier & Hoeffler (2004) and Fearon (2003), have dismissed inequity as a cause of ethnic nationalism and civil war and claim that there is no empirical support for this claim. Also, Fearon and Laitin (2003), also reject both ethnic and political grievances as explanations of ethnic nationalism, based on measures of individual-level income inequality as well as purely demographic indicators of ethnic diversity such as the ethno-linguistic fractionalization index. The authors conclude that neither economic inequality nor ethnic grievances increase the risk of conflict. However, since these empirical results are based on individual level measures, disregarding the relationship between inequality and other social cleavages, it is still possible that there may be important relationships between political inequity and ethnic nationalism.

This study argue that their findings reflect choices regarding the units of analysis and measures of inequity and the conventional individual-level measures of inequity do not capture group or regional differences as with the case of Indigenous People of Biafra, which are highly salient in ethno-nationalist and secessionist agenda. In fact, there are good reasons to believe that civil-war violence arises from interaction involving collective actors, such as ethnic groups or political organizations, rather than being a primarily individual-level phenomenon. By relying on regional measures of inequity, this study explored whether there is evidence for a general link between political inequity and ethnic nationalism resurgence in Nigeria using IPOB agitation for the State of Biafra as the focus of the study.

Theoretical Orientation

This paper was anchored on the theory of political instrumentalism advanced by the American philosopher John Dewey in 1949. Instrumentalism stresses malleability of ethnic sentiments that depends on circumstance and the choice of the individual. This is also different from social constructivism because this choice is not hinged on the rational calculation of the individual as stressed by social constructivism but through manipulation via ethnic sentiments. The theory of political instrumentalism attributes the outbreak of inter-group conflict to ethnic entrepreneurs who capitalize on the availability of ethnic networks to mobilize masses along ethnic lines (Cohen, 1996). This especially occurs when political elites are in danger of being 'ethnically outbid' by extremists or when domestic or international challenges threaten their political survival and interests. Instrumentalism views ethnicity as the means to some specific political end when identity is circumstantially played up (Joireman, 2003). Instrumentalism therefore stresses the malleability of individuals through the whipping up of ethnic sentiments. The instrumentalism perspective to the study of ethnicity posits that ethnic identities are important because of the circumstances or the role of elites in manipulating identity. Ethnicity disappears once its utility is no longer required. This simply shows that ethnicity is both pervasive and deeply rooted because it is politically useful.

Instrumentalism sees ethnicity as a dependable variable, controlled according to its strategic utility for achieving more secular goods (Conversie, 2006). It hinges on the affiliations of individuals to the community which are economically and politically beneficial to them. That is to say, they are based on rational awareness and not closeness as in the case of primordialism, but the need for socio-political and economic protection or common interest. Young (1986) opines that the instrumentalist perspective saw ethnicity as a vehicle for socio-political and economic competition, hence as political contingent, situational and circumstantial. He further posits that ethnicity is salient only in so far as it serves to orient people in pursuit of other interests vis-à-vis other people who are seen as holding contractive ethnic identities. A contractive ethnic identity is shaped by the unequal distribution of political power and resources; where political and economic powers have been constructed around the dominant ethnic groups. Considering this, one can state that the ultimate objective of ethnicity to the instrumentalists is driven by the interest of the groups which may be political or economic.

The instrumentalist approach attributes that ethnicity is circumstantially construct in a given society. If this is the case, it means that ethnicity is highly susceptible to manipulation; or better regarded as a social phenomenon constructed for mobilization. However, shortcomings notwithstanding, the theory of instrumentalism addresses the core of the subject matter of this study, which is political inequity and ethnic nationalism with focus on renewed demand for Biafra by IPOB. It addresses the issue of why ethnic oriented organizations such as IPOB are emerging in Nigeria. Because instrumentalism views the mobilization of ethnicity to accomplish a political end and given the roles certain actors at the leadership apex of IPOB played in giving birth and nurturing of the organizations, this choice becomes appropriate.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was survey research design. In this study, the survey research design enabled the researcher to determine the relationship between political inequity and ethnic nationalism in Nigeria using Indigenous People of Biafra as the focus of the study.

The target population of this study was the members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the entire old Eastern region comprising the current South-east and part of South-South region of Nigeria.

Importantly, this paper was designed to generate data from the members of the Indigenous People of Biafra. Using the convenience sampling technique, two states each from South-East and South-South regions of Nigeria were selected for the study. The states are Anambra State, Abia State, Rivers State and Imo State. A total of one hundred (100) respondents were selected from each of the sample states giving a total of four hundred respondents. Thereafter, a simple random sampling technique was used to select the members of IPOB for the study. The essence is to give a fair, equal chance and opportunity to all the respondents.

This study employed the quantitative method of data collection in which it made use of primary data collected with the aid of a questionnaire. The quantitative method of data analysis was employed to analyse the data. Frequency tables and simple percentages were employed in analysing the data while chi-square inferential statistics was used to test the hypotheses at varying degrees of freedom (df) and 0.05 level of significance. This was done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Inequity and Ethnic Nationalism: The Nexus

Some commentators had argued that post-war events in Nigeria indicated otherwise for the former Biafrans, particularly the dominant Igbo ethnic group, whom they argued were re-absorbed into Nigeria as conquered people (Arnadiume, 2000; Ikpeze, 2000). The argument justified the perception of many Igbo people that they were reabsorbed as second-class citizens, hence the cries of marginalization and agitations for it to end. Onu (2001) argues that the resurgence of Igbo nationalism, which is currently spearheaded by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a dominantly youthful and radical organization, is a result of their frustration in the Nigerian entity. Ikpeze (2000), in an attempt to establish the marginalization of the Igbo in post-war Nigeria, articulated four clear dimensions for marginalization of the Igbo, which have manifested to include economic strangulation, politico-bureaucratic emasculation, military neutralization and ostracism. Some of the issues he articulated to prove the marginalization of the Igbo include the 20 Pounds ceiling placed on bank lodgements for every Igbo after the war, notwithstanding how much such person had in a bank. This action has been interpreted as a calculated policy to neutralize the savings and capacity of the Igbo in order to rehabilitate and re-integrate into the Nigerian economy (Ikpeze, 2000; Ojukwu, 2005).

Related to this is the sudden withdrawal of federal troops stationed in the east, a ploy that was aimed at denying the Igbo economy the stimulus for recovery, as Igbo people who could have been empowered as suppliers to the troops were denied the opportunity (Ikpeze, 2000). The timing of the indigenization policy, a programme enacted by the military administration of General Gowon, transferring significant shares of fully owned foreign companies operating in Nigeria to the Nigerian people shortly after the war when the Igbo were financially constrained to participate, incapacitated the Igbo economically (Ikpeze, 2000). The implication of this was the inability of the Igbo to form an Igbo-based national party in the mould of the first republic National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC) in post-war transition to civil rule

programmes that can compete favourably with other parties that are dominantly Yoruba or Hausa-Fulani.

Enduring post-war peace depends largely on the degree to which combatants are able to reconcile war related grievances through post-war settlement. In other words, effective post-war settlement is critical in bringing about enduring peace. Post-war settlement in Nigeria cannot be said to be effective as it was not based on any clear plan; but rather, on the rhetoric of “No victor, No vanquished” and “Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Reintegration” (the 3Rs) put forward by the Nigerian government. Although the policy of “No victor, No vanquished” allowed general amnesty to the secessionists and ensured that the widespread fear of post-war genocide did not materialize, it prevented any critical look into the past, especially in the form of a meaningful discussion of the pre-war and war time grievances (Stremlau, 1977). On the other hand, the 3Rs which represent an expression of the Nigerian government’s desire to rehabilitate war-affected persons and infrastructure and to reintegrate Biafra into the Nigerian society were poorly implemented. The relief and rehabilitation programme was handled at two levels – the Nigerian Red Cross was authorized to deal with all private foreign donations and direct field operations, while the National Commission for Rehabilitation was responsible for handling all official foreign relief assistance. The post-war relief operation suffered from poor organization and serious lack of resources, making it difficult for the government to carry out direct person-to-person relief on any meaningful basis. Ayida (1987) noted that this development forced the government to focus more broadly on national reconstruction as a way of creating conducive economic and social environment for speedy adjustment and recovery.

The failure of the Nigerian government to adequately address the humanitarian disaster caused by the war in the Igbo area has been construed by some people as a continuation of the government’s victimization policy. Against the backdrop of the insufficiency of its supplies, the government’s decision to reject aid from countries and humanitarian organizations perceived to have aided Biafra during the war was seen as a mark of its insensitivity to the plight of Biafrans. Individuals such as the former Biafran leader, Chukwuemeka Ojukwu, accused the Nigerian government of not showing genuine interest in reconciling with the separatists. He asserted a few months after the war that:

What we have today is a white-imposed solution to satisfy white economic interests. There has been no solution to the problems that divide the two countries. The war was supposedly fought for unity; let Nigeria proceed and unite. Reports so far indicate a marked reluctance or unwillingness on the part of the federating force to federate. The basic needs of the people are not met; no food, no medicine, no shelter, no money. Pledges made during and after [the war] are not fulfilled. I know that here I enter into controversy. There have been reports and denials about the true situation. I think uncertainty creates a most unfortunate situation, because all it can do is prolong the feeling of insecurity and hamper the progress of necessary reconstruction (Tamuno & Ukpabi, 1989).

The design of the post-war reconstruction programme indicates that the Nigerian government did not plan to focus on the reconstruction of the Igbo areas which were the main theatre of war. The reconstruction programme was broadly formulated and embedded in the Second National Development Plan (1970-74). Although reconstruction of war damaged facilities was a guiding factor in prioritization of projects in the plan, the reconstruction focused on the

economy as a whole in order to correct the generally accepted weaknesses of past (economic development) and present (war-time financial) policies (Minabere, 2000). Such a broad-based strategy removed attention from the extremely needy Igbo areas. The £400 million budget announced by the East Central State for reconstruction of war damages was not fully implemented because the federal government did not release substantial part of its share based on claims of lack of money. Even when the financial fortunes of the federal government improved tremendously as a result of the oil boom of 1973-74, the government used little of the oil revenue to directly fund reconstruction projects.

Ibeanu, Orji and Iwuamadi (2016) maintained that since the 1970s, the core of Igbo grievances has moved beyond the question of insecurity of lives and properties to economic disempowerment and political marginalization. There are several economic policies and actions of the government which are perceived to be punitive and designed to economically disempower the Igbo. Widely cited examples of these policies include the decision to exchange Biafran for Nigerian currency only for a specified lump sum, regardless of the amount of currency owned by an individual. Ogbuagu (1983) noted that another is the auction of foreign owned enterprises to Nigerians through the indigenization policy of 1972. The policy is seen as unfavorable because it came at a time when the Igbo were just coming out of a devastating war and lacked the resources to acquire shares in the auctioned companies. Tamuno (1972) also noted that “the issue of ‘abandoned property’ – regarding the takeover of Igbo-owned real estate by ‘indigenes’, especially by minority groups in Port Harcourt after the war, with little or no compensation – is perhaps the most outstanding symbol of post-war injustice against the Igbo. To Nwosu (1998), the 1976 boundary adjustment exercise which excised and transferred mineral-rich areas of Igboland like Ndoni/Egbema and parts of Ndoki South of Imo River to neighboring Rivers and Cross River (now Akwa Ibom) States is also seen as a major act of economic disempowerment”. Lastly, Igbo leaders point to the seeming unwillingness of the federal government to invest in the infrastructural development in Igboland as a glaring example of economic disempowerment. They perceive the action as a continuation of the government’s reluctance to reconstruct war damaged infrastructure in the area.

Ibeanu et al (2016) noted that political marginalization is the major form of victimization against the Igbo in the post-war period. There are two main dimensions to the claims of Igbo political marginalization. The first is the purported deliberate exclusion of the Igbo elite from top political positions at the federal level. Nwala (1997) noted that the Igbo elite have used every available opportunity to make a case against the seeming calculated effort to make the Igbo ‘second class citizens’ by denying them representation in key appointive positions in the country. Suberu (1991) opined that the second dimension to the claims of Igbo political marginalization touches on the issue of states creation. Since the 1970s when states became the basic units of sharing federal resources and amenities, the Igbo elite have repeatedly argued that the area has been grossly shortchanged in state creation exercise. Ohaneze-Ndi-Igbo, in particular, has claimed that the Igbo which rank in population with the Yoruba of South West zone and Hausa/Fulani of North West zone have continued to be allocated a number of states pointedly lower than the shares of these zone (Ohaneze-Ndi-Igbo, 1999).

What the foregoing does show is that there has been a consistent case for Igbo victimization spanning several decades. Minabere (2000) noted that even in the midst of the mutual claims of marginalization by various groups in post-war Nigeria, the Igbo have successfully differentiated their case by pointing to a historical trend in the group’s victimization in modern Nigeria. Achebe (1983)’s assertion that the civil war gave Nigeria a perfect and legitimate

excuse to cast the Igbo in the role of treasonable felon, a wrecker of the nation” buttresses the sentiments of many Igbo who see acts of victimization against the group as a form of war reparation. On one hand, this feeling provides a basis for the persistence of Igbo grievances and animosities, while on the other hand it serves as a glaring indication of the failure of post-war settlement in Nigeria. The overall result of all these is that many Igbo people, in the words of James O’Connell, remain “secessionists at heart” even though they accepted the Biafran defeat (O’Connell, 1993).

Complaints of deficient infrastructural development in Igbo land, which is said to be the cause of mass migration of Igbo people to other areas of the country for economic survival, has also been mentioned. Also of note are cases of discrimination against the Igbo in the location of industries initiated by the federal government and the attendant loss of benefits of linkages. The deliberate neglect of ecological problems in the east, especially the problem of soil erosion, end up in the loss of agricultural lands and settlements, has also been mentioned. Ecological devastation in Igbo land becomes obvious in relative terms when compared with the massive attention given to desertification in the north and beach erosion in the western parts of Nigeria by the federal government (Ikpeze, 2000).

Apart from these economically disempowering policies, other instruments were also used to effectively exclude the Igbo from economic and political power. Such include the 'tokenist' appointments to strategically insignificant positions under military administrations, marginal presence in the administrative and headship of federal ministerial and extra-ministerial departments and parastatals. Another important issue that is often cited is the distortions of the federal structure to the disadvantage of the Igbo. Also, that the Igbo have the least number of states and local governments compared to the other geo-political zones in the country. The implication of this is the smaller resources that accrue to Igbo states from the centre and insignificant representation in federal institutions such as the National Assembly, where number of states and local government areas is a determining factor (Obiora, 2014).

Furthermore, the indifferent response of the federal authorities and even governments of non-Igbo states to uphold the constitutionally inviolable natural residency and citizenship rights of original Igbo owners, as far as the issue of 'abandoned property' of the Igbo who fled the mass killings and war, is also mentioned (Ikpeze, 2000). This issue was more pronounced in post-war Port Harcourt, where Igbo landlords who fled the war came back to find people occupying their property, with the government doing nothing to help them regain their properties. Aware of the role Nigerian military officers of Igbo extraction played in the Biafran armed forces, there was a policy to ensure under-representation of the Igbo in the post-war military establishments (Ikpeze, 2000). For instance, reabsorption of military men and women of Igbo extraction after the war was negligible, for the few that were re-absorbed, rate of upward mobility were very slow to prevent resurgence of the Igbo militarily. Related to this is the virtual exclusion of Igbo land from highest sensitive military facilities and installation such as mechanized division or armouries (Ikpeze, 2000).

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In this section, the data generated from the members of Indigenous People of Biafra were presented, analysed and interpreted. A total of four hundred copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, out of which three hundred and fifty seven copies of the questionnaire were properly filled and found relevant to the study. Therefore, the analysis in

this section was based on the relevant copies. The first section covers the demographic features of the respondents. The second section analysed the data relevant to research questions while the final section tested the hypotheses earlier formulated.

Table 1: Gender of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	147	41.2	41.2	41.2
	Male	210	58.8	58.8	100.0
	Total	357	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows the distribution of respondent base on their gender. 147 respondents representing 41.2% are female while 210 respondents representing 58.8% are male. This indicates that there are more male than female members of Indigenous People of Biafra.

Table 2: Marital Status of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	64	17.9	17.9	17.9
	Married	274	76.8	76.8	94.7
	Others	19	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	357	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above indicates the marital status of the respondents. Majority of the respondents representing 76.8% of the respondents are married, 17.9% of the respondents are single while the remaining 5.3% chose others as their response. This implies that majority of the sampled members of IPOB are married.

Table 3: Age Distribution of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 - 30 years	62	17.4	17.4	17.6
	31 - 40 years	89	24.9	24.9	42.3
	41 - 50 years	170	46.6	46.6	88.9
	51 years and above	36	10.1	10.1	100.0
	Total	357	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows the age distribution of the respondents. It revealed that 62 respondents representing 17.4% falls within the age bracket of 18 - 30 years. 89 respondents representing 24.9% fall within the age bracket of 31 to 40 years, 46.6% of the respondents fall within the

age bracket of 41 to 50 years, while the remaining 10.1% fall within the age bracket of above 51 years and above. This implies that majority of the sampled members of IPOB falls within the age bracket of 41 - 50 years.

Table 4 Response to Item One: Colonial Administration Institutionalized a Dichotomous Political System that made the Struggle for Ethnic Identities Inevitable

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	15	4.2	4.2	4.2
Disagree	9	2.5	2.5	6.7
Undecided	15	4.2	4.2	10.9
Agree	173	48.5	48.5	59.4
Strongly Agree	145	40.6	40.6	100.0
Total	357	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above indicates that 145 respondents representing 40.6% strongly agreed that colonial administration institutionalized a dichotomous political system that made the struggle for ethnic identities inevitable, 48.5% of the respondents agreed, 4.2% of the respondents were undecided, 2.5% of the respondents disagreed while the remaining 4.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This implies that colonial administration institutionalized a dichotomous political system that made the struggle for ethnic identities inevitable.

Table 5: Response to Item Two: Political Inequalities, Injustices and State-orchestrated Violence Against a Particular Ethnic Group leads to Ethnic Nationalism

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	36	10.1	10.1	10.1
Disagree	29	8.1	8.1	18.2
Undecided	8	2.2	2.2	20.4
Agree	189	52.9	52.9	73.4
Strongly Agree	95	26.6	26.6	100.0
Total	357	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 above shows that 95 respondents representing 26.6% strongly agreed that political inequalities, injustices and state-orchestrated violence against a particular ethnic group leads to ethnic nationalism, 52.9% of the respondents agreed, 2.2% of the respondents were undecided, 8.1% of the respondents disagreed while the remaining 10.1% strongly disagreed. This implies that political inequalities, injustices and state-orchestrated violence against a particular ethnic group lead to ethnic nationalism

Table 6: Response to Item Three: Political Subjugation of a Particular Ethnic Groups Leads to Ethnic Nationalism

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	37	10.4	10.4	10.4
Disagree	51	14.3	14.3	24.7
Undecided	15	4.2	4.2	28.9
Agree	165	46.2	46.2	75.1
Strongly Agree	89	24.9	24.9	100.0
Total	357	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 6 above indicates that 89 respondents representing 18.2% strongly agreed that political subjugation of a particular ethnic groups leads to ethnic nationalism, 46.2% of the respondents agreed, 4.2% of the respondents were undecided, 14.3% of the respondents disagreed while the remaining 10.4% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This implies that political subjugation of a particular ethnic groups leads to ethnic nationalism.

Table 7: Response to Item Four: The Current Secessionist Movements are not Unconnected to Perceived Political Inequity and Marginalization Giving rise to Severe Divided Ethnic Lines.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	26	7.3	7.3	7.3
Disagree	28	7.8	7.8	15.1
Undecided	21	5.9	5.9	21.0
Agree	140	39.2	39.2	60.2
Strongly Disagree	142	39.8	39.8	100.0
Total	357	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 7 above indicates that 39.8% of the respondents strongly agree that the current secessionist movements are not unconnected to perceived political inequity and marginalization giving rise to severe divided ethnic lines, 39.2% of the respondents agreed, 5.9% of the respondents were undecided, 7.8% of the respondents disagreed while the remaining 7.3 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed. This implies that secessionist movements arise as a result of perceived political inequity and marginalization.

Table 8: Response to Item Five: Inequality has Caused Mistrust Among Ethnic Groups in Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	37	10.4	10.4	10.4
Disagree	51	14.3	14.3	24.7
Undecided	15	4.2	4.2	28.9
Agree	165	46.2	46.2	75.1
Strongly Agree	89	24.9	24.9	100.0
Total	357	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 8 above shows that 24.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that inequality has caused mistrust among ethnic groups in Nigeria, 46.2% of the respondents agreed, 4.2% of the respondents were undecided, 14.3% of the respondents disagreed while the remaining 10.4% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This implies that inequality has caused mistrust among ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Table 9: Chi-square Tests for Hypothesis One

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	109.320 ^a	24	.000
Likelihood Ratio	142.711	24	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.556	1	.010
N of Valid Cases	357		

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Since the Pearson chi-square value of 109.320 at 24 degree of freedom is significant at .05 alpha level, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. Hence, we conclude that ethnic politics has significantly fueled resurgence of ethnic nationalism by Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This paper investigated political inequity and ethnic nationalism resurgence in Nigeria using Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as the focus of the study. The data generated and analysed showed that ethnic politics has fuelled political inequity in Nigeria. This finding has been substantiated by the analysis of questions which showed that colonial administration institutionalized a dichotomous political system that made the struggle for ethnic identities inevitable. This political inequity has led to ethnic nationalism resurgence in Nigeria. This inequity has caused mistrust among ethnic groups resulting in the current secessionist movements. The political dominance of a particular ethnic group in the mainstream politics as obtainable in Nigeria has enhanced ethnic mobilization. The current high followership of IPOB is typical example as most of the supporters and sympathizers believe that it will help them to counter the political dominance of the Fulani-Hausa ethnic group.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper covered political inequity and ethnic nationalism in Nigeria with particular reference to the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) from 2011 to 2017. The study found that ethnic politics has fueled resurgence of ethnic nationalism by Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The study also found that competition for state power and natural resources has enhanced ethnic nationalism in Nigeria. The study further found that political exclusion of an ethnic group in the main stream politics leads to resurgence of ethnic nationalism by Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Complaints of deficient infrastructural development in Igbo land, economically disempowering policies, economically disempowering policies, the distortions of the federal structure to the disadvantage of the Igbo, insignificant representation in federal institutions such as the National Assembly and deliberate neglect of ecological problems has been identified major issues fueling ethnic nationalism among Indigenous people of Biafra. Indigenous People of Biafra view these as a form of political inequity when compared to what is obtainable in other parts of the country and other ethnic counterpart. This has culminated into agitations for self-determination and calls for disintegration of the country by IPOB.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The study contends that an all-inclusive political system is the key solution. The current public discourse is focused on political restructuring along ethnic lines. The calls for a political arrangement where major ethnic groups will have control over their geographical areas as well as resources therein might help. The danger is that rather than unify Nigeria, it may further divide the country along ethnic and religious lines. Therefore, Nigeria should create an inclusive political system where ethnic and religious affiliation will no longer be a defining factor in political participation. What Nigerians need, and are clamouring for, is a country that will accommodate them regardless of ethnic or religious creed. Political, religious and ethnic tolerance is the key to political success, therefore political inclusivity must account for greater tolerance for it to be effective.
2. There should be a rethink on the part of the government. They should embrace dialogue with secessionist group like IPOB and stop the counter-productive strategy of suppression as it is in line with the rule of law which is an important element of democracy and stand to be a better option capable of yielding positive results. Ethnicity is a fact of life that is very strong in the Nigerian context and cannot be easily wished away.

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