

Influence of Religious and Ethnic Affiliations on Election Anxiety amongst Electorates in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of religious and ethnic affiliations on election anxiety amongst electorates in Nigeria. The study adopts the survey research design. The population comprises the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. A sample of 200 participants were involved in the study. The purposive sampling method is adopted to select the participants from the three major ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. The participants, incidentally drawn from the population to take part in the study are both males and females; Hausas, Igbos and Yorubas, as well as Christians and Muslims. The model is a 3 ethnic conditions (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) x 2 religious affiliation conditions (Christianity and Islam) factorial design. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) designed by Spielberger in 1989 is the instrument used to obtain data for the study. It is hypothesized that religious and ethnic affiliations have main and interaction effects on anxiety. Findings reveal that there is no significant main effect between religious affiliation and election anxiety. Also, there was no significant main effect of ethnic affiliation on election anxiety. Additionally, results reveal that there was no significant interaction effect of religious affiliation and ethnic affiliation on election anxiety. Hence, it is recommended that further research should be carried out before any general election or when elective offices are being sought and candidates are campaigning for election to be able to test the election anxiety at its more severe state.

Keywords: Religion, ethnicity, conflict, election, anxiety, voters

INTRODUCTION

Nigerian personality is a panicking one and observation shows that Nigerians rush in everything they do, such as; to take taxis, rush at taking short cuts. Furthermore, anxieties can be expressed in many forms as seen in children throwing tantrums and crying and also in adults who engage in substances such as alcohol and drugs, mostly to numb anxieties of the day. Anxiety, according to the Diagnostic Statistical Manual V(DSM V) of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2013), is the anticipation of future threat. Different types of anxiety disorders exist such as phobias, obsessive compulsive disorders, generalized

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anxiety disorders and recently election anxiety (APA, 2013). Election anxiety is a feeling of fear which is irrational amongst electorates. The feelings are purely a cognitive process which reflects in the attitudes of the electorates during and immediately after an election. Therefore, this study theoretical framework is predicated on the cognitive theory (Beck, 1963). Our behaviours, according to Beck (1963), are purely an outcome of our cognitive process. Hence, the way we think, act and behave are purely the role of cognitive process. Our culture, attitudes and beliefs system are largely cognitive process, religion which is part of culture is a cognitive process, our ethnic affiliation is part of our culture which reflects as a cognitive process in the way we think as an ethnic group; the way we behave as an ethnic group through our cognitive processes.

The last general election in 2015 in Nigeria came with much anxiety. People were of the opinions that Nigeria will break-up; that different catastrophes and disasters might occur and many lives would be lost. These feelings led to serious migration of people and their goods from the country for other countries to find safety. Others were leaving where they lived to places they will be identified, such as Hausas leaving the East back to the North, and Igbo's leaving the North back to the East, because of fear of the unknown (The Guardian newspaper, January, 2015). In this study, religious affiliation means, that the participants identify with either Christianity or Islam and the principles and beliefs of that religion. Likewise, ethnic affiliation means to identify with the culture, norms, principles and way of life of a dominant ethnic majority such as; Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as seen here in Nigeria. Additionally, election anxiety means threat or misfortune to occur as a result of the election. According to Abdel-Khalek and Lester (2009), religious affiliation refers specifically to religious group membership regardless of religious activity or participation. In this study, religious affiliation is used to mean the self-identified or an individual's association with a particular religion either a Christian or a Muslim, as against denomination or sub-denominational religious group membership. Nigerians in Diaspora were also seen expressing these anxieties too because they were scared for their loved ones left behind, all because they do not know what the future holds in respect to Nigeria's elections for 2015.

Ethnic and religious affiliations role in psychopathology have been examined by researchers with varying results. Ilori, Adebayo and Ogunleye (2014) examine the influence of religiosity and paranormal beliefs on the development of psychopathology symptoms among groups of people from two different ethnic origins; they found a significant difference between Igbo and Yoruba on paranormal beliefs, depression and anxiety dimensions of psychopathology but no significant difference was discovered on religiosity. It was concluded that paranormal beliefs partially influence psychopathology but religious beliefs do not have any influence on psychopathology. Wen (2012) examines the relationship among gender, religiosity, and death anxiety and found significant results in the relationship between religiosity and death anxiety, and a positive relationship between intrinsic religious motivation and frequency of religious service attendance and strength of belief. Idahosa (2013) explains that Nigeria has played host to different types of conflict, especially since the beginning of the forth republic, critical amongst these is ethno religious conflict, whose centrifugal

tendencies potent dangerous vortex for the corporate existence of the country. Idahosa (2013) argues that the frequent tensions created by several factors within Jos and metropolis have led to crisis and insecurities in most electoral fronts. Miller (2011), Gomez, Hans and Kraus (2007) have emphasized on anxiety as a determinant of voting behaviour, believing that anger may allow people to vote for the government in power whose policies or actions could not make them happy and take them out of anger. Anxiety would determine voting behaviour in a manner making the electorates vote for a candidate whose policy they “prefer” (Miller, 2011). White people may require in-depth analysis and explanation before they vote for a party or candidate (Gomez, Hans and Kraus, 2007).

Sheriff, Abdullahi and Kabir (2015) in their study on voting behaviour amongst electorates in Nigeria, made a retrospective analysis of voting behaviour over the past elections. They took a standpoint that voting behaviour and choices among Nigerians were determined by ethnicity, tribalism, regionalism and religious affiliations. Nigerians fully monetized politics and money politics shaped their voting behaviour as their votes went to the highest bidder. Election is seen as providing peaceful change of government, it also provides social groups with the chance of resolving their conflicting needs peacefully. Voters are considered to be rational and intelligent in their choice among candidates. However, an opposing view sees elections as merely symbolic in character. According to this position, elections are a secular ritual of democracy (Niemi and Weisberg, 1976). If Nigerians were vulnerable, for example under the previous regime, their lives were then at risk and vulnerable. Sheriff *et al* (2015) also argue that there was low turnout in 2015 election unlike in previous elections which witnessed massive turnout, and this was due to fear of post – election violence as people with voters cards fled without voting.

In a study by Adigwe (2007) to investigate ethnic and gender differences in test anxiety and achievement test performances of Nigerian junior secondary school students with a sample consisting of 100 Ibibio, 100 Yoruba and 100 Tiv students randomly drawn from four rural schools in each ethnic zone. Multivariate analysis of variance indicated that (i) there were significant ethnic and gender effects on the test anxiety of the students (ii) test anxiety was affected by the interaction effects of gender and ethnicity. Asnaani, Richey, Dimaite, Hinton and Hofmann (2010) examine race-ethnic differences in the lifetime prevalence rates of common anxiety disorders, they examine data from the Collaborative Psychiatric Epidemiology Studies (CPES). Their results show that White Americans were more likely to be diagnosed with social anxiety disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and panic disorder than African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans. African Americans more frequently met criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder than White Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans. Asian Americans were also less likely to meet the diagnoses for generalized anxiety disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder than Hispanic Americans, and were less likely to receive social anxiety disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder diagnoses than White Americans. The results suggest that race and ethnicity need to be considered when assigning an anxiety disorder diagnosis, and possible reasons for the observed differences in prevalence rates between racial groups are discussed.

Williams, Chapman, Wong and Turkheimer (2012) identify ethnic identity as a factor contributing to resilience and coping in African Americans; this may include positive feelings of ethnic affirmation and belonging, appreciation for ethnic identity and increased ethnic behaviours. Williams, Chapman, Wong and Turkheimer (2012) research findings support the proposition that a strong, positive ethnic identity may serve a protective role among African Americans by moderating the relationship between discriminatory experiences and psychological well-being. An Afrocentric perspective may also contribute to reduced anxiety due to a greater emphasis on a present versus future-oriented worldview.

Ethnic minorities may be at risk of psychopathology due to distress over experiences of racism, stress over unequal treatment, and anxiety about future experiences of discrimination (Johnson, 2006; Soto, 2011). One factor that may confer resilience against psychopathology is the construct of ethnic identity. Ethnic identity consists of a sense of commitment and belonging to an ethnic group, positive feelings about the group, and behaviours that indicate involvement with the ethnic group (Phinney and Kohatsu, 1997; Roberts R., Roberts C. and Chen 1999; Avery, McKay, Wilson and Tonidandel 2007). Some works have been done on election anxiety, a few that have been done, were not empirically proven, and were done based on peoples observations, some were carried out by political scientists. The studies examined the origin and development of ethnic politics and its impact on postcolonial governances (Ayatse and Iorhen, 2013, Sheriff, Abdullahi and Kabir, 2015).

Psychologists, especially clinical psychologist are yet to do empirical studies on election anxiety in Nigeria and on the Globe. Therefore, this study aims to bring in these perspectives to bare here in Nigeria. Research has shown ethnic identity to be associated with a number of psychological variables. Much of the previous research on the psychological correlates of ethnic identity has focused on children and adolescents because the process of developing an ethnic identity is thought to typically begin in adolescence. Among adolescents, achieved identity has been found to be positively associated with self-esteem, coping, sense of mastery, and optimism; conversely, loneliness and depression have been negatively related to ethnic identity (Roberts R., Robert C. and Chen, 1999). Hunter and Schmidt (2010) hypothesize that ethnic identity serves a protective role. This study made use of theories of Freud and others such as the psychodynamic theory, and the social learning theory by (Bandura, 1986). This study examined the following hypotheses.

1. There is a significant main effect of religious affiliation on election anxiety.
2. There is a significant main effect of ethnic affiliation on election anxiety.
3. There is a significant interaction effect of religious affiliation and ethnic affiliation on election anxiety.

METHOD

This study adopts the survey research design to examine the influence of religious and ethnic affiliations on election anxiety amongst electorates in Nigeria. The population comprises the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. A sample of 200 participants were

involved in the study. The purposive sampling method was adopted to select the participants from the three major ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. The sample included 85(54.5%) males and 71(45.5%) females; 90(50.3%) people were Hausa, 44(24.6%) were Igbo's and 45(25.1%) were Yoruba; 131(74.9%) were Christians and 44(25.1%) were Muslims. Participants were between the age of 18 – 56 with the mean age of 33.64, standard deviation of 8.577. The educational qualifications of participants are: primary qualification 2(1.2%), secondary qualification 37(22.3%) and tertiary qualification 127(76.5%). All respondents are from Jos, Plateau State. The study was an ex post facto study. It consisted of two independent variables, namely, religious affiliation and ethnic affiliation. The former had two levels: Christianity and Islam. The latter had three levels, namely, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups. It was therefore a 2x3 factorial design. The design was adopted because the elections had come and gone and the independent variables were inherently not amenable to manipulation.

The study utilized a questionnaire that included Spielberger (1968) State-Trait Anxiety inventory in addition to demographic items. The STAI was developed by Spielberger in 1968. The State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) is commonly used to measure trait and state anxiety (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg and Jacobs, 1983). It can be used in clinical settings to diagnose anxiety and to distinguish it from depressive syndromes. From Y, its most popular version, has 20 items for assessing trait anxiety and 20 for state anxiety, state anxiety include. "I am tense, I am worried" and "I feel calm, I feel secure". Trait anxiety items include "I worry too much over something that really doesn't matter" and "I am content, I am a steady person." All items are rated on a 5 point scale (e.g from "Almost Never" to "Almost Always") higher scores indicate greater anxiety. Internal consistency coefficients for the scale here ranged from .86 to .95, test retest reliability coefficients have ranged from 0.65 to 0.75 over a 2 month Interval (Spielberger et al, 1983). Test-retest coefficient for this measure in the present study ranged from .69 to .89 considerable evidence attests to the construct and content validity of the scale (Spielberger, 1989). Jegede (1979) used the STAI-1 on Nigerian subjects and found it to be culture – free, with a reliability of 0.77 and internal consistency coefficient as high as 0.98. Awaritafe and Kadiri (1981) validated the instruments on Nigerian subject. Imade (1986) reports a significant relationship between the Awaritafe psychological index and STAI (X-1) for males, and API and STAI (X-2) for females.

The participants were selected using Non-Probability sampling; the purposive sampling technique was used, this was so because all the three ethnic groups and two religious group are represented in Jos. A total of 200 participants selected for the study, out of which 44 were Igbos in Apata area of Jos, 45 were Yoruba, a cross section of Christians in Redeemed Christian Church of God, and 90 were selected also from the Hausa population in Jos north area. The instrument was distributed to the participants and it took them approximately 45 minutes to fill the questionnaire. At the end of the exercise 179 copies of questionnaire were retrieved, 21 were not properly filled and so were discarded by the researchers. Therefore the researcher made use of 179 copies of completed questionnaire. It took the researcher approximately 12 months to complete this

study. The researchers were introduced as social science researchers to the participants from university of Jos and sought the participant's consent before distributing the questionnaire. They were also informed their right to withdraw from participation at any stage of the research without consequences. Therefore, all participants in the study did so voluntarily. The researcher assured the participants that every information given will be used for research purpose only. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The hypotheses were tested with the 2-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The mean scores and Standard Deviation were presented on tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 above shows the mean scores on election anxiety across the religious affiliations of participants. The table shows that the mean score of election anxiety for Christian participants was 78.25 (SD = 1.66), and the mean score for Muslim participants was 70.80 (SD = 9.60) indicating a higher mean score on election anxiety by Christians. Table 2 shows the election anxiety mean scores across ethnic affiliations. The table reveals that across the three ethnic groups; the Hausa ethnic group had a mean election anxiety score of 74.57 (SD = 2.01), and the Igbos had a mean score of 80.51 (SD = 2.97), while the Yoruba ethnic group had a mean score of 73.34 (SD = 9.60). The mean scores in the table suggest that the Igbo ethnic group had a higher election anxiety score. Table 3 above shows the mean score on election anxiety on the combined effects of religious and ethnic affiliations. The following are the mean scores on election anxiety: Christian Hausa 79.54 (SD = 2.80), Christian Igbo 80.51 (SD = 2.97), Christian Yoruba 74.68 (SD 2.87); Muslim Hausa 69.61 (SD 2.90), and Muslim Yoruba 72.00 (SD = 18.98). The mean scores suggest that the Christian Igbos had a higher election anxiety mean score.

Results on table 4 reveal that there was no significant main effect of religious affiliation on election anxiety, $F(1, 170) = 0.414$, $p = 0.521$ with election anxiety mean scores of 78.25 and 70.80 (see table 2) for Christians and Muslims respectively. The hypothesis there is be a significant main effect of religious affiliation on election anxiety was rejected. The hypothesis that there is a significant main effect of ethnic affiliation on election anxiety was accepted as the results in table 2 reveal that there was no significant main effect of ethnic affiliation on election anxiety, $F(2, 70) = 0.459$, $p = 0.633$ (see table 5); with election anxiety mean scores of 74.57, 80.51, and 73.34 for Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba ethnic groups respectively (see table 3). The results further reveal that there was no significant interaction effect of religious affiliation and ethnic affiliation on election anxiety, $F(1, 70) = 0.137$, $p = 0.712$ (see table 3). Table 4 shows the election anxiety mean scores across religious and ethnic affiliations. The hypothesis that there is a significant interaction effect of religious affiliation and ethnic affiliation on election anxiety was accepted.

This study was aimed at investigating the effects of religious and ethnic affiliation on election anxiety amongst electorates in Nigeria. However, the study had some limitations which included; the difficulty in getting willing participants because of the security challenge, people were skeptical to participate. It was difficult to ascertain if participants had election

anxiety, because the study was done about a year after election where everyone was calm. The first hypothesis shows that there was no significant main effect of religious affiliation on election anxiety amongst electorates. This could be possible because the participants filled the questionnaire about a year after the general elections in Nigeria. The result is supported by the findings of Ilori, Adebayo and Ogunleye (2014), whose findings indicated that there is no significant effect of religiosity on any dimension of psychopathology. The result of this study is also supported by researchers such as Sheriff, Abdullahi and Kabir, (2015). They took a stand point that Nigerians monetized politics and money politics shape their voting behaviour. Researchers such as Gomer, Hans and Kraus, (2007), have emphasized on anxiety as a determinant of voting behaviour, believing that anger may allow people to vote for the government in power whose policies or action could not make them happy and take them out.

The second hypothesis also shows that there was no significant main effect of ethnic affiliation on election anxiety amongst electorates. The findings show that ethnic affiliation had no significant main effect on election anxiety amongst electorates; this could be as a result of Nigerians wanting change and got tired of the same way things have been done in the country. Nigerians wanted change not minding the ethnic affiliation the person bringing the change belongs to. The result is supported by the findings of Roberts R., Robert C. and Chen (1999), who assert that among adolescents, achieved ethnic identity has been found to be positively associated with self-esteem, coping, sense of mastery and optimism; conversely, loneliness and depression have been negatively related to ethnic identity. The findings of Reininghaus *et al* (2010), reveal that the association between ethnic identity and psychosis was not found among white British individuals. The findings of Hunter and Schmidt (2010) reveal that in their comprehensive review of anxiety psychopathology in African American, they hypothesis that ethnic identity serves as a protective role against anxiety as well.

Table 1: Mean Score of Election Anxiety across Levels of Religious affiliation

Religious affiliation	Mean score of Election anxiety	Standard Deviation	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Christianity	78.25	1.66	74.97	81.52
Islam	70.80	9.60	51.85	89.76

Source: Survey, 2016

Table 2: Mean Score of Election Anxiety across Levels Ethnic Affiliation

Ethnic Affiliation	Mean score of Election anxiety	Standard Deviation	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Hausa	74.57	2.01	70.60	78.55
Igbo	80.51	2.97	74.67	86.37
Yoruba	73.34	9.60	54.39	92.29

Source: Survey, 2016

Table 3: Mean Score of Election Anxiety across Religious Affiliation and Ethnic Affiliation Interaction

Religious affiliation	Ethnic affiliation	Mean score of Election anxiety	Standard Deviation	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Christianity	Hausa	79.54	2.80	74.02	85.07
	Igbo	80.51	2.97	74.66	86.37
	Yoruba	74.68	2.87	69.03	80.33
Islam	Hausa	69.61	2.90	63.89	75.32
	Igbo	-	-	-	-
	Yoruba	72.00	18.98	34.52	109.48

Source: Survey, 2016

Table 4: Two-way ANOVA Source Table Religious and Ethnic Affiliation on Election Anxiety

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Corrected Model	3262.827	4	815.707	2.263	.064
Intercept	100755.869	1	100755.869	279.560	.000
Religious affiliation	149.178	1	149.178	.414	.521
Ethnic affiliation	330.965	2	165.482	.459	.633
Rel.Affil*Ethnic Affil	49.324	1	49.324	.137	.712
Error	61269.481	170	360.409		
Total	1077005.000	175			
Corrected Total	64532.309	174			

Source: Survey, 2016

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study investigates the effect of religious and ethnic affiliation on election anxiety amongst electorates in Nigeria. All participants were from Jos, because all the three ethnic groups are being represented in Jos. Participants filled the State Trait anxiety inventory (STAI 1 and 2), to measure the level of election anxiety. The results shows that there was no significant main effect of religious affiliation on election anxiety, there was no significant main effect of ethnic affiliation on election anxiety, and there was no significant interaction effect of religious and ethnic affiliation on election anxiety. The findings of this study will therefore give more room for clinical psychologist to study the variable of interest, and explore the topic. It therefore recommends that clinical psychologist should carry out study on election anxiety. Further study should be carried out before election or when candidates are campaigning for election. Studies on the effect of voting behaviour on election anxiety should be carried out also by clinical psychologist.

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