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## Humanizing Ethnic Workforce Diversity in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Organization: A Grounded Theory Case Study in Abuja, Nigeria

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### **Abstract:**

*The 21<sup>st</sup> century organizations comprise diverse individuals from different ethnic ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, orientations, ideas, and perspectives on life in general; who come together as a team to achieve a common organizational goal, and managing these diversities has not been an easy task for the human resource development managers as the employees' uniqueness subconsciously play out which tend to interfere with organizational, managerial policies, thereby posing a challenge in the management of these differences. This study seeks to examine the humanization of the challenges faced in managing these ethnic diversities in an ethnically diverse organization. A case study of the Grounded Theory approach was employed on a sample of 49 staff in a Real Estate Company in Nigeria, who were administered a semi-structured interview. The findings show that the attributes of ethnic diversity are natural traits that form the individuals' personalities, and as a result, individual differences should be respected and properly managed for positive organizational productivity and competitive advantage.*

**Keywords:** Humanizing, institutional theory, ethnic workforce diversity, human resource management, constructivist grounded theory

### **1. Introduction**

Due to globalization and the progressive development in the country, migration in Nigeria is inevitable. Globalization and advancement in Nigeria have led to an increase in ethnic diversity in the workforce of organizations as individuals from diverse, unique ethnic backgrounds, orientations, cultures, etc., tend to display their different ideas and perspectives to life in the organization and it has been a challenging task for the human resource management to manage these differences. Human migration could be termed a social phenomenon in different parts of the world, making it a major factor for ethnic diversity in heterogeneous organizations. Literally, Human migration means a change in the location of a person or group of people from one cultural area to another, either temporarily or permanently (Britannica, 2022). Migration is defined as an act of moving from one area to another in search of job opportunities and a better standard of living, as portrayed by Harris and Todaro (1970), who introduced "imperfections in the labor market in the context of internal migration from rural to urban areas." The distinctive rate of unemployment and wage differentials between the rural and urban sectors are part of the major factors of migration.

The International Organization of Migration gave a broader definition, which is "The movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition, and causes; it includes movement of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification" (IOM, 2011). It also involves the increased rate of human mobility, with the majority of people migrating from one place to another not just as migrants in search of new homes but as migrants who visit different countries where they probably stay for longer or shorter periods of time. As a result of this, countries are being populated with individuals of diverse nationalities/ethnic groups who tend to work in various organizations in order to fend for themselves, thereby increasing the rate of ethnic diversities in the organizations (Collier, 2015, Pg.180).

Globalization, on the other hand, is another major factor that leads to ethnic diversity in organizations. The word 'globalization' could be used to describe "the growing interdependence of the world's economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people, and information" (Kolb, 2018).

Real estate investment, as a case study, is a high profit-oriented business that is given keen attention due to its critical role to mankind and its contribution to the national economy and the socio-economic development in Nigeria. The Human resource development of most organizations' human capital within the context of a profoundly ethnically diverse

team plays a very important role in the job performance of the employees as well as the organizational productivity. The ethnic diversity of the majority of the organizations in Nigeria puts the human resource development sector in a challenging position to properly manage. Workforce diversity management in the context of an ethnically diverse team is a vital factor in ensuring a positive mindset and productivity in the organization, but it is not an easy task. It is important to note that employees are more than just the talents and skills for which they were hired. They are embodiments of unique traits and characters that can be traced back to their unique cultures, backgrounds, orientations, and upbringings, and these factors contribute to their various personalities. When companies recognize, acknowledge, and respect these differences that make each individual unique, it has a tendency to create scepticism (Kurter, 2020).

Managing cultural diversity in the workforce might not be an easy task, as the managers are put in a challenging position to manage and deal with the employees' diversities. However, it is encouraging to focus on the benefits that ethnic diversity brings to the organization in terms of innovation, creativity, unique ideas, etc., because each individual in an organization brings with them a unique collection of viewpoints, thoughts, beliefs, and ideas, allowing employers to have diverse perspectives on various business difficulties and possibilities. (Jouany & Martic, 2021). This can be used as a competitive advantage in the organization. On the other hand, understanding that these cultural traits create the unique identities of the employees, which is a natural part of them, gives the managers a different mindset on how to manage them.

Diversity is recognized as a holistic concept that is currently undergoing socio-cultural metamorphosis throughout the world and, because of its complexity, is one of the most difficult problems facing organizations today (Cletus et al., 2018), as it has fostered a multicultural dynamism in many organizations. (Peoplescout, 2018; Hunt et al., 2015). Amaliyah (2015) defines workforce diversity as a concept that refers to the differences among those who work for or for a company, whereas Barak (2016, p. 136) defines workforce diversity as the division of the workforce into distinction categories that:

- Have a perceived commonality within a given cultural or national context and
- Impact potentially harmful or beneficial employment outcomes such as job opportunities, treatment, and so forth (Katsiaficas et al., 2013)

On the other hand, ethnic diversity may be defined as distinct variances between people of various ethnic groups and subtle differences in behavior among members of the same ethnic group who live within the larger culture (Katsiaficas et al., 2013).

This study seeks to investigate the challenges faced by human resource development managers in managing an ethnically diverse team and the best practices and strategies for managing its diversities.

### 1.1. Institutional Theory

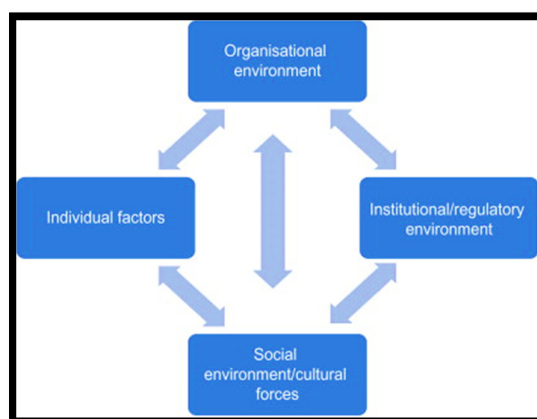


Figure 1: Institutional Theory Framework

Source: Greve & Argote, 2015

Institutional theory in an organization can be seen as a process by which an organization creates its rules and policies towards organized social behavior. These policies can either be influenced by individual or environmental factors with the aim of achieving an organizational social structure. According to Suddaby (2013), institutional theory is a way of looking at how businesses are formed, how management decisions are made, and how social factors rather than economic ones are to blame. Some areas of the institutional theory influence behavioral theory (Greve & Argote, 2015). The institutional theory contributes to explaining organizational activities that contradict economic logic. It puts into consideration the individual factors, the social and organizational environment, which influence managerial decisions, practices, and innovations. The main principle of the theory illustrated in figure 1 is that in an organizational context, individuals from various ethnic groups are impacted by their distinct individual factors/ characteristics, which influence their actions and attitudes in the organizational environment. This makes it important for the organizational management to put into consideration the policy of inclusion in their decision-making organizational policies and practices. These managerial practices, innovations, policies, and decisions can possibly aid in humanizing the diversities in the

organization. The fundamental tenet of institutional theory holds that the adoption and maintenance of many organizational procedures frequently depend more on social forces for legitimacy and conformity than on technical requirements for economic performance (Suddaby, 2013).

### *1.2. Human Resource Development (HRD) in an Ethnically Diverse Team*

There are different functions of human resource development, such as leadership, organizational behavior, conflict management, decision-making, and organizational communication. In as much as this study focuses more on the management of ethnic diversity in the organization, it largely falls at the HRD and how they affect ethnic diversity. Basically, HRD intertwines organizational management, conflict management, and leadership management, as well as managing ethnic diversity in the whole organization and how they affect the performance of the organization.

Human resource development, which is also known as HRD, is aimed at managing and improving the competencies of the employees to enhance their current job performances as well as being equipped for future roles. It serves as a framework for assisting staff members in developing their capacities so that the company may get a competitive edge. (Sands, 2020). HRD emphasizes motivating and developing the employees using some laid down policies and programs in accordance with the organizational objectives to achieve organizational growth and productivity regardless of organizational ethnic diversity because an effective HRD program may boost corporate efficiency and profitability while enhancing employee happiness. (Hunjra et al., 2010; Mudor, 2011; Kwenin et al., 2013; Andreassi et al., 2014). Since diversity contributes to organizational growth and productivity, it is expected that HR departments with ethnically diverse workforces will have inclusion policies and programs that take all ethnic groups into account. Furthermore, it is important to effectively maximize diversity's potential by ensuring organizational equality among all employees, regardless of their ethnic background. Some benefits of human resource development to the organization in the context of ethnic diversity are discussed below:

- Human resource development enhances organizational objectives and goals, as their strategized training and developments are channeled towards improving the employees. The results are seen in the job performance of these employees.
- The HRD plays a huge role in making the organization recognized in its sector because working out programs that improve the workforce of the company would certainly reflect positively on the organizational productivity, and this creates a recognizable brand for the organization. The HRD is viewed as a very crucial section of the organization responsible for enhancing higher productivity, good profitability, and better relationships among ethnically diverse teams.
- The HRD develops and enhances both the talents and skills of the employees regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, channeling their abilities and capabilities towards a competitive advantage for the organization, which improves the employee's participation and motivation, thereby increasing organizational productivity.

The degree of happiness that employee experiences at work is influenced directly or indirectly by human resource development, which is responsible for planning, hiring, training, employee promotions, rewards, incentives, compensations, appraisals, wages, and setting regulations. Ijigu (2015) asserts that human resource development practices can contribute significantly to employee satisfaction, which lowers absenteeism and employee turnover, and increases employees' loyalty to organizations. As a result, HR managers are expected to ensure their staff members' job satisfaction and adopt strategies to increase staff commitment, motivation, and dedication. Every person has to feel like they belong and have an identity in the company, and there needs to be effective organizational communication to inspire workers and increase their job satisfaction, which will boost output and productivity.

## **2. Literature Review**

Contrary to what some writers have claimed, Hofhuis et al. (2016) concur with Jayne and Diboye (2004) that a varied ethnic workforce does not necessarily result in improved performance or outcomes in an organization, despite what some of the optimistic proponents have frequently said. Regardless of the advantages that an ethnically varied group may bring to an organization, managing such a group can be difficult due to social categorization and the attraction that can result from people belonging to similar ethnic groups who understand and identify with one another. Power struggles, disagreements, significant employee turnover segregation, discrimination, poor communication, and emotional problems eventually result from the workforce (Ikon & Osemene, 2017). Prieto et al. (2011), citing Jayne and Diboye (2004), highlighted four major gaps of a diverse ethnic workforce to back up their claims. The failure of diversity programs can be ascribed to either the organizations' inability to pay attention to the needs associated with an ethnically diverse staff in order to realize its advantages; the lack of diversity inclusion policies in the organizational policies; or the fact that some employers fail to adopt some effective human resource diversity management practices (D'Netto et al., 2014).

Due to its socio-cultural and multicultural dynamism across the world, diversity is seen as one of the most difficult challenges encountered in businesses today (Cletus et al., 2018; Peoplescout, 2018; Hunt et al., 2015). Previous research studies have proved the advantages and challenges of ethnic diversity in organizations (Emma, 2019; Hunt et al., 2015; Dhuppar, 2015; Ikon & Okolie-Osemene, 2017; Hofhuis et al., 2016; Ugwuzor, 2014; Dike, 2013). According to certain theories, ethnic diversity may be perceived as both a strength and a weakness for some companies. As a result, it can be thought of as a two-edged sword (Zhan et al., 2015). The benefits of diversity are typically understood in terms of the cognitive outputs, such as increased innovation, creativity, and ideas that personnel from diverse social and racial backgrounds possess and exhibit inside the firm. Nonetheless, the negative effects of diversity are typically acknowledged

in terms of negative behavioral and emotional consequences, such as reduced social cohesiveness, interpersonal disputes, and increased staff turnover because of employees' perceived ethnic and behavioral differences (Ikon & Okolie-Osemene, 2017; Hofhuis et al., 2016; Ugwuzor, 2014; Koopmans & Schaeffer, 2015) and this is traceable to the management techniques used in managing these cultural diversities in the organization. It is important that managers appreciate the benefits of ethnic diversity and, at the same time, find suitable ways to accommodate the challenges that come with it because they are certainly inevitable, as pointed out by Mwinami (2014), who claims, "Challenges of ethnic diversity are inevitable when individuals with distinct differences work in the same workspace or environment."

Based on prior research, it is understood that ethnic diversity in a team could be seen as a two-edged sword due to its positive and negative effects on the organization (Zhan et al., 2015). The literature review also reveals that some managers lack managerial skills to properly manage an ethnically diverse team, which poses a challenge in management, and this has an impact on job performance, as was noted by another study, which demonstrates that effectively managing diversity can result in more committed, better satisfied, better-performing employees and potentially better financial performance for any organization. It also reveals that managing an ethnically diverse team is not an easy task as it involves dealing with people from diverse ethnic groups and backgrounds who have different beliefs, understanding, and orientations (Adebisi et al., 2014; Bamgbade et al., 2014).

Most research investigations used a quantitative method, which tends to restrict the results, and this comes off as a gap because most of these studies did not reveal the human factors at the micro level involved in managing an ethnically diverse team, as there were no deep connections with the managers to fully understand the challenges faced in managing an ethnically diverse team. The qualitative methodology used in this study enables semi-structured interviews with respondents to engage them in-depth and collect significant relevant material for the research at hand.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1. Grounded Theory Framework

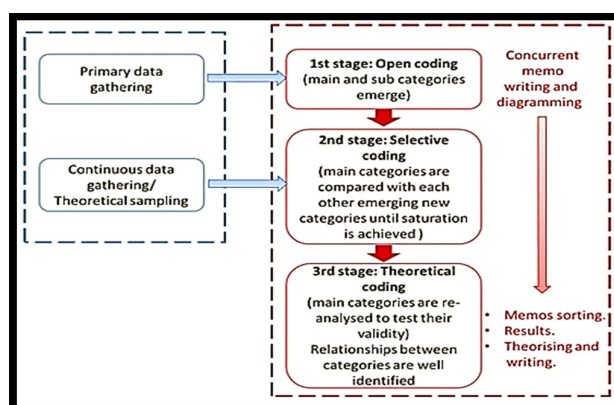


Figure 2: Constructivist Grounded Theory  
Source: Hussein, 2020

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of the different processes carried out in the research. By gathering data, interpreting it, and allowing themes to emerge inductively, the grounded theory technique enables the researcher to investigate the case study management difficulties through theory construction. This strategy enables the researcher to examine and take note of the respondents' expressions, experiences, and insights through their interactions, activities, and participation. (Kamarudin, 2017).

This research utilizes a constructivist grounded theory approach to collect data through a semi-structured interview which was conducted on 49 middle-level managers of a Real Estate company in Abuja. The term "semi-structured interview" refers to a type of interview where the interviewer does not rigidly adhere to a predetermined set of questions but instead asks more open-ended questions to allow for a discussion with the interviewee rather than a direct question and response style. Even yet, there is a protocol for the semi-structured interview that acts as a guide to prevent a complete veering from the topic of the interview. The interviewed middle-level managers were selected because they operate between the macro and the micro levels in the company, thereby acting as a channel in between and being in a better position to provide relevant information for the research under study. Prior to the interview date, the respondents were contacted to remind them of the scheduled interview and time. The Constructive paradigm, which mostly utilizes the qualitative approach such as interviews (either unstructured, structured, or semi-structured), observations, document analysis, etc., aided in providing in-depth information from the respondents who tend to share their personal experiences and expressed their feelings towards the research under study, and this helps the researcher in constructing the reality from the information provided. The data saturation point was identified by the quality and amount of data received from respondents, which is an event when there are no fresh or relevant perceptions about the class and linkages across classes are well-defined and confirmed (Strauss & Corbin, 2014).

### 3.2. Data Analysis

The collected data were transcribed and further imported into Atlas.ti software. Version 8.0 of ATLAS.ti was used in the analysis of the transcripts. Atlas.ti is a software program used to organize and manage unstructured data and store documents such as transcripts, pictures, video, and audio materials by coding the data, building concepts, and connecting them in networks (Frieze, 2019). Open coding, Axial coding, and Selective coding were carried out in the coding process.

## 4. Findings and Discussions

Generally, managing people can be challenging irrespective of their ethnic groups because an individual's personality also comes to play in one's behavior (Elgoibar et al., 2017). "It's not easy to manage people generally, even if it is from the same ethnic group, as long as you people are different, you people have different personalities, you think in different ways, it's not easy to manage people, that's just the truth, it takes a lot of patience" (P39). "Human management in itself can be challenging because you are meeting people. It's not about you people are from the north and all of that; it is beyond that, it's about the upbringing. You have people with different upbringings because Mr. A may be brought up in a way that he should be expressive, and Mr. B may not be brought up in that way. So, human management plays a pivotal role." (P26).

Below are the emerged themes which are further discussed:

Emerging Themes	Keywords/Phrases
Cultural conflicts	"Fighting." "Pointing a finger at somebody is like cursing the person." "The man is the head and whatever the man says is like...it is final". "You shouldn't be expecting the kind of respect you want from your wife from me in the office because you are a man."
Gender issues	"... A family where the man is the head and whatever the man says is like...it is final!" "I'm not your wife! We are in the office." "You shouldn't be expecting the kind of respect you want from your wife from me in the office because you are a man."
Understanding diverse cultures	"It is actually challenging." "First of all, you need to understand each person," "You need to understand each person and it takes time." "So, you need to understand each and every other person in the team to know that this is what they believe, and this is how they do, and how they relate." "It is really, really tasking, I will not lie to you, it is really, really, really tasking because it takes over time to know how this person behaves."
Diverse levels of reasoning	"Human beings are different." "The level of reasoning and the level of processing things might be different." "The other persons are trying to catch up or are not catching up." "You have to now break it down to the barest minimum or the barest for them to understand."
Cliquishness	"People are drawn to people that they have something in common, and which is language." "You just see them in clusters, talking in their native language." "The fact that they are from the same place..." "You will gravitate towards people that you tend to share the same mutual, maybe love for something." "Whenever you are in any group, you want to add your own personal people that are close to you." "If you tend to speak the same language, there is that tendency that you people may tend to get along." "I did not understand that it was the easy communication or the fact that they are from the same place that started it." "They speak the same language." "Some form stronger friendships with those from the same part as theirs." "They tend to be closer to you." "Tell you more stuff and trust you more."
Tribalism, segregation, and sidelining	"Constantly speaking their language." "It was about me they were discussing." "The people that you are having personal issues with are from the same language-speaking part of the country." "High rate of tribalism" "Shade of segregation" "Eh, you are not Yoruba!" "Favor themselves."
Religion	"The major thing that influences us in Nigeria as youth is the religion." "My most challenging issue." "Handling this whole religion thing, the Christians, the Muslims." "They think differently." "It's religion." "Even among the Christians, we are still divided." "I think that is the basic problem."

Table 1: Emerging Themes

The results in table 1 revealed seven themes that were pointed out by the respondents to pose a challenge in managing an ethnically diverse team. These themes are:

- Cultural conflicts
- Gender issues
- Understanding diverse cultures
- Diverse levels of reasoning
- Cliquishness
- Tribalism, segregation, and sidelining
- Religion

#### 4.1. Cultural Conflict

According to the data, cultural conflict does not necessarily refer to physical aggression, violence, or fights but rather to some specific aspects of human behavior, actions, or words that have different meanings, positive or negative, which may have been misunderstood or misinterpreted differently based on different cultures. When there are issues of misinterpretation, this relates to issues of respect, sensitivity, and manners, which were mentioned in the data. An instance of cultural conflict was expressed in a statement during a clash between two female employees and one of them expressed, "Why would you be pointing your fingers at me? Where I came from, pointing a finger at somebody is like cursing the person" (P6). Apparently, the pointing of the finger in "lady A's" culture was a taboo and couldn't be tolerated, whereas "lady B" did not find anything wrong with the pointing of the finger because it meant nothing in her culture.

#### 4.2. Gender Issues

Some cultures regard men as being superior to women, and individuals from those ethnic groups assume it is normal everywhere because of the orientations they have had while growing up. Therefore, coming into an ethnically diverse team, those cultural traits tend to play out subconsciously, which causes ethnic conflicts in the organization. A respondent recalled:

*There are people who, maybe in their families... Okay. Using myself as an example - we are three girls and a boy and in my home, we grew up with my father telling us that a woman can do what a man can do, even more... and there is this other guy that is from a family where the man is the head and whatever the man says is like... it is final! Of course, he is the head, you know, he's the head, but we are not in your home right now; We are in the office and here I am not your wife; you shouldn't expect me to show you the same kind of respect in the office that you want from me as your wife in the house because you are a man. So, those are the kind of issues I have encountered with my own team members where maybe a girl is trying to, like, be a voice, and give you that voice of change of reasoning you want. A man is thinking she's probably talking him down or something (P32).*

To grow up with the cultural impression that the man is regarded as the head in everything and everywhere tends to influence the attitude of some of these male employees in the workspace. To them, it is disrespectful for females to raise their voices at them or to give them instructions because they believe a man is superior to a woman. Therefore, coming into the work environment with this cultural notion tends to bring about conflicts in the workplace.

#### 4.3. Understanding Diverse Cultures

To be able to manage an ethnically diverse team, it is important to have some level of understanding of diverse cultures and the factors which propel individuals to act in some certain way; with that knowledge, the manager should be able to have a better understanding and organizational communication. A respondent expressed his/her challenge in managing ethnic diversity, which required him/her to understand each person's individual differences to be able to manage them. S/he stated:

*It is actually challenging. First of all, you need to understand each person, imagine where you have a team of five persons and the five of you are from different ethnic groups and you are the one leading the remaining four persons. You need to understand each person and it takes time. Okay, just like I say, Yoruba people, when they are speaking their dialect, they always shout. If you do not know that this is how they do, you will think that this person is always screaming at you like whenever he or she is talking, so you need to understand each and every other person in the team and know that this is the way they behave. This is what their belief system is, and this is, umm, this is what you need to do, just to bring everybody under the canopy. So, you need to understand each and every other person in the team to know that this is what they believe, and this is how they do, and how they relate... and it is really, really tasking, I will not lie to you, it is really, really, really tasking, because it takes over time to know how this person behaves (P19).*

Another respondent further affirms the challenges in understanding diverse cultures. In the bid to manage diverse ethnic groups, s/he stated:

*So, as the head of investment, I understand that, okay, there are different personality types with different upbringings, but you do not necessarily have to use the stick approach every time. Oftentimes, it helps if you draw the individual closer to find out why they do what they do, to see things from their own perspective, and try to now understand where they are coming from and know how to adjust or relate with them. So, the way I relate to Mr. A may be quite different from the way I relate to Mr. B. because if I am trying to use one*

*brush to paint everybody, that may not work, and that may cause more chaos or more conflict than living in peace and in harmony (P45).*

As expressed above, managing diverse individuals can be challenging because it requires the manager to study and understand the diversity in the employees to be able to work as a team. Understanding the diversity of the workforce gives the manager an idea of the employees' capabilities and abilities to work as a team, which helps in the assigning of duties and the general development of the employees; it also gives the manager an idea of the management strategy to apply on the diverse workforce, hence the importance of understanding their diversities, which is not an easy task.

#### 4.4. Diverse Levels of Reasoning

Another challenge of managing diverse ethnic groups expressed by one of the respondents was the aspect of their mental capacity and reasoning. Individuals with different upbringings tend to have different levels of reasoning and perspectives on things which usually pose a challenge in managing the diversities, especially in the areas of communication of ideas or manner of approach to issues. S/he stated:

*The most challenging aspect of working with diverse groups, you know, human beings are different, so the level of reasoning and the level of processing things might be different, so on that premise, when you are trying to reason in a particular thought frequency, and the other persons are trying to catch up or are not catching up could pose as a challenge to you, so most times, you have to now break it down to the barest minimum, or the barest for them to understand, so most times, these are the basic challenges you might have communication process or communication barriers could also be a challenge (P17)*

The statement above justifies the fact that being on a totally different frequency of reasoning in a team can really be frustrating and challenging for the manager because it disrupts the flow of organizational communication. Humanizing these issues requires the manager to organize frequent training where the employees tend to continuously improve themselves to be relevant in the organization.

#### 4.5. Cliquishness

In accordance with the theory of social identity and categorization, which contends that people categorize themselves and others in accordance with some salient characteristics, such as gender, race, or ethnicity (Treppe & Loy, 2017; Hogg, 2018), the study's data depicts cliquishness as people congregating due to a shared interest, concern, culture, or language, even though there is an intangible strong bond that binds them together that relates to office networking, it is understood that Individuals who share similarities in ethnic background or language tend to naturally gravitate towards each other, they form closeness or bond, some form cliques amongst themselves. This was expressed by some of the respondents:

*...People are always gonna be people; people are drawn to people that they have something in common, which is language (P1).*

*...Of course, whenever you are in any group, you want to add your own personal people that are close to you; without even knowing, you will gravitate towards people with whom you tend to share the same mutual, maybe love for something and of course, easy communication is always going to be a good point (P36).*

*...So, I noticed that oftentimes, especially in this part of this climb, if you tend to speak the same language, there is that tendency that you people may tend to get along; it could be sentimental because you see someone who shares your native language and all of that. So, you people tend to switch away from English and now speak your tribal dialect; it is like finding common ground and it makes people bond (P27).*

*...Based on the lower levels, what I find among people is that; some form stronger friendships with those from the same part as theirs, or if they speak the same language as you do, they tend to be closer to you, tell you more stuff and trust you more (P15).*

Based on the above statements made by different respondents, it is understood that individuals who share similarities easily relate with each other and have a better understanding of each other based on their similar ethnic background or culture, and in the real sense of it, it is normal. However, its adverse effect is the fact that it consciously or unconsciously gives the minority group the feeling of inferiority or feeling of being sidelined as this closeness, bonds, or formation of smaller groups in an organization tends to further lead to tribalism, segregation and sidelining of the minority ethnic groups.

#### 4.6. Tribalism, Segregation and Sidelining

Based on the collected data, and as explained in the previous theme (Cliquishness), it was understood that closeness based on similarities in culture or language, as well as the formation of bonds or smaller groups in an organization, tend to further lead to tribalism, segregation and sidelining of the other ethnic groups which is similar to the cases in some previous studies (Ikon & Osemene, 2017), because individuals who share similarities tend to be loyal to each other to a certain extent, to the detriment of others whom they do not share the same similarities with, and this was expressed in the statements made by some of the respondents:

*...I had this issue where I had to deal with a group of people because they were constantly speaking their language and I later got to find out that it was about me they were discussing, which I was not really happy about, but because I come from the minority part of the country, I don't tend to have that kind of connection in the company (P41).*



*...They behave in a way I do not like; some of them throw that shade of segregation... "Eh, you are not Yoruba! You are not Yoruba!" - That kind of thing. So they like to throw it in a way (P3).*

This act of tribalism and segregation has a high tendency to naturally affect relationships amongst other staff, as it could psychologically affect individuals of the minority group because it has a way of negatively influencing one's mental health, which is bad for productivity.

#### 4.7. Religion

Religion is a very deep and it is also a crucial factor amongst individuals because it has a lot to do with their belief system, faith and what they stand for, and it is a factor that cannot be compromised, just like culture, which could be seen as a way of one's life (Sibani, 2018) and to an extent, defines an individual; religion, on the other hand, sets a pattern for most individuals to live by, and for that, it cannot be jeopardized. One of the respondents stated:

*...The major thing that influences us in Nigeria as youth is the religion, the whole Christian...Muslim...; I think that is my most challenging issue, handling this whole religion thing, the Christians, the Muslims, how they think differently, and all of that. I think that is the most challenging (P48).*

*The problem with Nigeria is not really the tribe; it is not the different tribes but the religion because, as I told you, I deal mostly with young people. So, most of all, we did not even grow up in our states or where we are from exactly, to say that is what influenced us (P24).*

Religion is portrayed as a challenging factor in managing an ethnically diverse workforce because some religions are predominant amongst some particular ethnic groups and some religious fanatics tend to go to any extent in upholding their religious faith and beliefs regardless of the environment and organizational policies; and this tends to influence the individuals' behaviors and attitudes, the fact that religion and belief are considered sacred to most religious individuals, and cannot be compromised regardless of the circumstance; it tends to influence their senses of reasoning and mindsets. Regardless of these diverse religions, for an organization to function properly, it is important to recognize and respect the individuals' diverse religions, regardless of what they practice, because it goes a long way in influencing their attitudes to work.

#### 4.8. Word Cloud of Keywords and Phrases Associated with Challenges Faced by the Managers

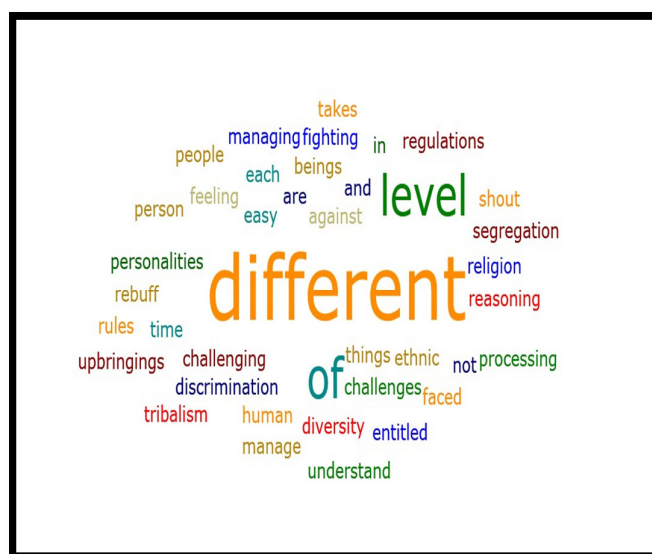


Figure 3: Word Cloud

Figure 3 presents the exact words extracted from the interviews which were conducted with middle-level managers. These words are associated with the challenges faced by managers in managing ethnically diverse teams.

In figure 3 the word cloud presents the keywords and phrases which depict the challenges faced in managing an ethnically diverse team. It portrays the exact words used by the managers. Some of these words are: 'different,' 'challenging,' 'fighting,' 'tribalism,' 'segregation,' 'upbringings,' 'personalities,' 'reasoning,' 'rebuff,' etc. These words capture the managers' expressions as they describe the difficulties they encounter when leading an ethnically diverse team because these teams typically consist of individuals with varying personalities, backgrounds, and upbringings, as well as differing capacities for reasoning and information processing. These ethnicity-related differences frequently result in cultural conflicts, which can lead to hostility, discrimination, tribalism, or segregation. At the end of the day, it is understood that individuals have different ways of interpreting ethnicity and general issues because different individuals have their unique backgrounds, personalities, feelings and how they respond to diverse issues, which create more challenging situations, thereby contributing to the challenges faced by the managers in managing them. Basically, it was understood that managing human beings generally is not an easy task.



#### 4.9. Theory of Inclusion

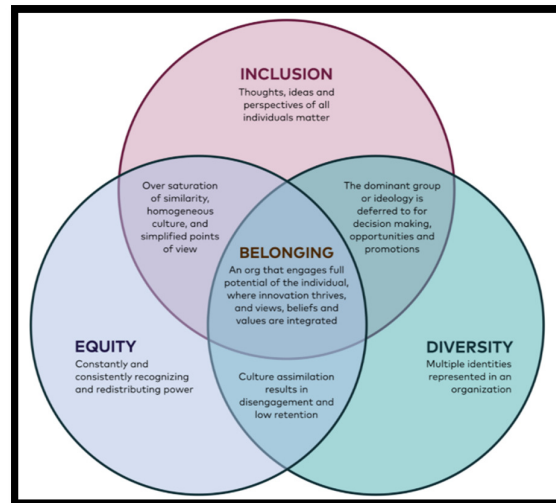


Figure 4: Theory of Inclusion

Source: Burnette, 2019

Figure 4 gives a detailed description of the theory of inclusion, which is important in managing an ethnically diverse team. To fully maximize the full potential of the ethnically diverse workforce, there is a need for individuals in the organization to have a sense of belonging and ethnic equality. Although managing an ethnically diverse team can be challenging, the managers must consider the uniqueness of the diverse ethnicities in the decision-making, organizational policies and practices.

#### 5. Conclusion and Implication

This research provides a view of an ethnically diverse organization with individuals from different cultures, backgrounds, beliefs, and values working as a team, displaying their unique characteristics, which tend to clash with another's culture and beliefs, thereby posing a challenge in managing their differences. Managing an ethnic workforce has not been an easy task as it entails a lot, especially in dealing with diverse ethnic differences (Akinnusi et al., 2017; Lorette, 2013). It can also be challenging in scenarios where individual ethnic differences such as culture, beliefs, or values tend to play out and interfere with organizational practices and policies.

Regardless of these challenges, humanizing the employees' ethnic differences from the recognition and acceptance point of view is important. It is understood that these differences make up these individuals, hence the need to be respected. Therefore, the theory of inclusion is paramount where diverse identities are represented because these diversities can be used as a competitive edge for the success and productivity of the organization.

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