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THE EFFECT AND CAUSES OF TRIBALISM IN NIGERIA

In Nigerian context, **tribalism** is defined as social phenomenon associated with the identity of members of a competing communal group(s) seeking to protect and advance their interest in a political system. The relevant communal factor may be language, culture, race, religion and/or common history.

Tribalism can also be defined as the state when people are organized by tribes and their lifestyles. The tribe means either the clan or extended kin group which shares a common ancestor, or, according to a more modern definition, it is a group of people who share common lifestyles, habits, and interests.

The problem of tribalism is that, people of different tribes are separated from each other. The tribe members usually identify with their tribe very strongly and they feel truly connected only with people of their own beliefs. They often have set stereotypes about the other tribes, which prevent them from broadening their mind, learning more about different cultures and befriending people who do not belong to their own tribe thereby lacking knowledge on the basic things they are supposed to know on other tribes. I was once asked by one of my lecturers who is a tribalist, a tribalist is a person who:

* Boasts about the merits and good qualities of the tribe, but refuses to recognize its bad qualities and faults, sometimes even trying to hide them.
* Gives all the privileges to the native tribe’s people, but tries to exempt them from any obligations and duties when it comes to humiliating and dangerous missions.
* Shows favoritism towards people of their tribe and is picky when it comes to people who do not belong to their tribe.
* Firmly believes that people from the other tribes are not worthy of help, sticks to the stereotypes against them.
* Prefers marriage only between the members of a native tribe, as opposed to the intertribal marriages.

There are huge numbers of tribes in Nigeria. This includes lots of different minor tribes, but the largest and most famous ones are Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa. All of them have their own customs, culture and beliefs. Sometimes, these tribes can misunderstand each other because of their different worldviews, and this is one of the biggest social problems in Nigeria nowadays.

Most times we ask ourselves one same question all over and over again **“what are the causes of tribalism in Nigeria?”** well; Tribalism can be interpreted as superiority complex among specific ethnic group, which makes them prejudiced towards their neighbors. The existence of tribalism traces back to the era of slavery. However, in the modern days of Nigeria, this issue still exists and prevents so many people from getting along and uniting to combat more relevant issues, which concern all of the Nigerian people. Tribalism influences many spheres of social life – for instance, quite often competent workers are overlooked because of their tribal identity. There are a lot of causes which contribute to the unfortunate tendency of tribalism in Nigeria. Here, we will list some primary ones.

* **Religious intolerance** – one of the critical issues in Nigeria is the conflict between Muslims and Christians. There is a strong hostility between these two groups, both religious and ethnic. The religious bigotry has already caused a lot of deaths. A lot of nationalists strongly believe that there is no country like Nigeria, only a territory and that it was a colossal mistake to unite the northern and southern parts. The Islamist organization “Boko Haram” is also a significant problem, because they regularly terrorize and kill people who support the western ideals and traditions, both Christians and Muslims. They are trying to impose the radical Muslim faith and Sharia law on people. However, Nigeria is a multi-religious country, and everyone should be allowed to express their own beliefs freely.
* **Lack of vision** – since the country is formed out of different nationalities which all have their own views and traditions, there is no such thing as patriotism when it comes to Nigeria. It is hard to inspire the patriotic feeling in the citizens. Even though Nigeria has a national anthem, flag and other symbols of national identity, not many people attach any deep meaning to them.
* **Marginalization** – this term means underestimating the importance of a particular ethnic group. Since there are so many ethnic communities in Nigeria, there is a high chance that some of them will be unseen and unheard, and their opinion, in the long run, will be made unimportant. Even though the government is searching for a proper solution to this problem, it has a long way to go before it is finally solved.

With all the causes listed above comes with its **effect on the society**,

Tribalism obviously has an extremely negative effect on Nigeria’s unity, and in some cases, can even be life-threatening, because some people are ready to do anything to stand for their ideals. The tribalist experiences of the other countries show us that such division brings nothing but conflicts, fear and exclusion. To become a really strong nation, we have to accept each other with all the differences and try to find the compromises in a peaceful and non-violent way. Nigerian people show their strongest qualities and learn to get along with each other regardless of their cultural and social differences; Nigeria will become a nation instead of a territory.