

**IDENTITY POLITICS AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN
NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF BUHARI'S REGIME.**

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GOU/U22/POL/320

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ENUGU STATE.**

JULY

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PROJECT PRESENTED
TO DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
GODFERY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, UGWUOMU-NIKE, ENUGU
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF M.SC. DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

SUPERVISOR: MR ONYISHI ANTHONY

JULY, 2026.

DECLARATION

I, Emmanuel Anita Daberechi, an undergraduate student in the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Godfrey Okoye University, with registration number GOU/U22/POL/320, hereby certify that this research is my original work and has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for the award of any diploma or degree at Godfrey Okoye University or any other institution of higher learning.

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CERTIFICATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I give thanks to Almighty God for His grace, strength, wisdom, and guidance throughout the course of this research work. His mercy, protection, and unfailing love made the successful completion of this study possible.

I sincerely express my profound gratitude to my project supervisor, Mr. Onyishi Anthony, for his guidance, constructive corrections, encouragement, and invaluable contributions toward the success of this work. Your academic support, patience, and commitment are deeply appreciated.

My sincere appreciation also goes to the following lecturers and staff for their support, encouragement, and contributions to my academic journey: Prof. Sam Ugwuozor, Dr. Chidozie Alex Ogbonnia, Dr. Onwo D., Rev. Sis. Dr. Lucy Umeh, Dr. Mrs. Ifedi Francisca, Prof. Jide Chime, Monsieur Yong Marinus, Dr. Alex Ogbonna, Mr. Ejike Nnaji, Mr. Nweke Clement, Dr. Mbaeze Netchy, Rev. Fr. Dr. Ogbuka Ikenna, Mr. Okonkwo W. O., Dr. Ezechi Kingsley, Prof. John Odo, and Mrs. Chioma Obidike (Secretary) for the knowledge and moral support they provided during the course of my academic pursuit.

I am deeply grateful to my parents, family members, and friends for their prayers, encouragement, financial support, and understanding throughout the period of this research. Your unwavering love and support gave me the strength to persevere.

Special appreciation goes to all the respondents who participated in this study by providing valuable information and opinions that greatly contributed to the successful completion of this research work.

Finally, I sincerely appreciate everyone who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the successful completion of this project. May Almighty God bless you all abundantly.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria using the administration of Muhammadu Buhari as a case study. The study was motivated by the increasing influence of ethnic, religious, and regional considerations on governance, political appointments, policy implementation, national unity, and political stability in Nigeria's democratic system. The main objective of the study was to examine the extent to which identity politics affected democratic governance in Nigeria during Buhari's administration from 2015 to 2023. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used. Primary data were collected through the administration of questionnaires to selected respondents, while secondary data were obtained from textbooks, journals, newspapers, government publications, and internet materials. A sample size of 100 respondents was selected using the simple random sampling technique, while 95 questionnaires were successfully retrieved and analyzed. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and chi-square (χ^2) statistical method. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used. Primary data were collected through the administration of questionnaires to selected respondents, while secondary data were obtained from textbooks, journals, newspapers, government publications, and internet materials. A sample size of 100 respondents was selected using the simple random sampling technique, while 95 questionnaires were successfully retrieved and analyzed. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and chi-square (χ^2) statistical method. The findings revealed that identity politics significantly influenced policy implementation, federal appointments, and political representation during Buhari's administration. The study further revealed that identity politics negatively affected national unity and political stability in Nigeria, as many respondents perceived government actions and appointments to favour certain ethnic and regional groups. The hypotheses tested confirmed that identity politics had significant effects on democratic governance in Nigeria during the period under study. The study concluded that identity politics remains a major challenge to democratic governance, national integration, and political stability in Nigeria. It recommended the promotion of national unity, merit-based political appointments, strengthening of democratic institutions, political education, equitable distribution of national resources, and encouragement of issue-based politics to reduce the negative effects of identity politics in Nigeria.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to study

Identity politics has become one of the most influential factors shaping democratic governance in plural societies across the world. It refers to the tendency of individuals and groups to base political choices, participation, and demands on shared identity characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, region, language, or culture. In deeply diverse societies, identity politics often influences who gets political power, how resources are distributed, and how citizens perceive fairness and inclusion in governance. While identity politics can promote representation of marginalized groups, it can also deepen divisions, weaken national unity, and undermine democratic principles when it is used as a tool for exclusion or favoritism.

In Africa, identity politics is particularly significant due to the colonial legacy of arbitrary borders that brought together diverse ethnic and religious groups into single political units. Many African states, including Nigeria, are multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies where political competition often reflects identity-based cleavages rather than ideological differences. As a result, elections, appointments, and policy decisions are frequently interpreted through ethnic and religious lenses. This has contributed to persistent tensions, struggles for inclusion, and debates over fairness in governance.

Nigeria presents one of the most complex cases of identity politics in Africa. With over 250 ethnic groups and a nearly balanced religious division between Christianity and Islam, Nigeria's political landscape has long been shaped by ethnic and regional considerations. Since independence in 1960, issues such as minority marginalization, regional competition between the North and South, and the struggle for equitable representation have remained central to governance challenges. To address these concerns, Nigeria introduced mechanisms

such as the federal character principle, which seeks to ensure that political appointments and public institutions reflect the country's diversity. However, despite such measures, identity politics continues to strongly influence political behavior and governance outcomes.

In Nigeria's Fourth Republic, which began in 1999, democratic governance has been continuously affected by identity-based politics. Political parties often rely on ethnic alliances to win elections, while political leaders are frequently judged based on their ability to represent the interests of their regional or ethnic groups. This has led to recurring accusations of nepotism, marginalization, and unequal distribution of national resources. In many cases, public trust in government institutions is shaped not only by performance but also by perceptions of ethnic or religious bias.

The administration of Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023) provides a critical period for examining the relationship between identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria. Buhari, a former military head of state and elected president under the All Progressives Congress (APC), came into power with strong support from the northern region and parts of the southwest. His administration operated in a politically sensitive environment characterized by security challenges, economic recession, and increasing regional tensions. Throughout his tenure, debates emerged regarding the ethnic and regional composition of key political appointments, with critics alleging that his government favored individuals from certain regions, particularly the northern part of the country.

During this period, Nigeria also experienced heightened security challenges, including the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, farmer-herder conflicts in the middle belt, and separatist agitations in the southeast, particularly from groups such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). These crises were often interpreted through identity-based perspectives, further intensifying divisions within the country. Public discourse increasingly reflected

concerns about marginalization, exclusion, and unequal treatment of different regions and ethnic groups.

Furthermore, democratic governance under Buhari's administration was widely debated in relation to accountability, inclusiveness, and respect for federal character principles. While the government defended its actions as merit-based and security-driven, critics argued that the pattern of appointments and policy decisions weakened national cohesion and deepened distrust among citizens. These debates highlight the complex interaction between identity politics and governance in Nigeria's democratic system.

Against this background, this study examines identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria, using Buhari's administration (2015–2023) as a case study. It seeks to understand how identity-based considerations influenced political leadership, governance practices, and national unity during this period. By doing so, the study contributes to broader discussions on how multi-ethnic societies can strengthen democracy while managing diversity in a fair and inclusive manner.

Statement of the problem

Despite Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, the practice of democratic governance has continued to face serious challenges, many of which are rooted in identity politics. In a country characterized by deep ethnic, religious, and regional diversity, political competition and governance decisions are often interpreted through identity lenses rather than national interest. This situation has raised concerns about fairness, inclusion, and unity in the Nigerian political system.

One of the major problems in Nigeria's democracy is the persistent perception of unequal representation in government appointments and key political offices. Although the Nigerian Constitution provides for the federal character principle to ensure equitable distribution of political positions among states and ethnic groups, there have been continuous allegations

that successive governments do not fully comply with this provision. During the Buhari administration (2015–2023), these concerns became more pronounced, with critics arguing that key appointments in security, finance, and political offices appeared to favour certain regions over others. Whether these claims are fully accurate or not, the perception of imbalance alone has contributed significantly to public distrust in government.

Another major issue is the impact of identity politics on national unity and cohesion. In Nigeria, political decisions and government actions are often interpreted differently across ethnic and religious groups. This has led to increased suspicion among citizens and a weakening of national identity. Instead of seeing government as neutral and representative of all Nigerians, many citizens perceive it as serving particular ethnic or regional interests. This perception undermines trust in democratic institutions and reduces citizens' confidence in governance.

Furthermore, Nigeria has experienced rising security challenges during the Buhari administration, including insurgency in the Northeast, banditry in the Northwest, and separatist agitations in the Southeast. These conflicts are not only security issues but are also deeply connected to identity-based tensions. In many cases, responses to these crises were criticized as being uneven or biased, further intensifying accusations of marginalization and exclusion among different groups in the country.

In addition, the problem of weak national integration and political polarization continues to affect democratic governance in Nigeria. Political parties and electoral outcomes are often shaped by ethnic and regional alliances rather than ideological or policy-based competition. This has limited the development of strong national political institutions and contributed to recurring cycles of mistrust between different groups.

Against this background, the central problem of this study is that despite constitutional provisions and democratic institutions aimed at promoting inclusion, identity politics continues to strongly influence governance in Nigeria. This has raised important questions about the extent to which the Buhari administration (2015–2023) was able to manage diversity, ensure equitable representation, and strengthen democratic governance in the country.

Therefore, this study seeks to critically examine how identity politics affected democratic governance in Nigeria during Buhari’s administration.

Research Questions

Since this research seeks to examine the identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023, the research questions are designed to capture the key issues raised in the statement of the problems and objectives.

In line with the objectives of the study, the following research question were formulated to guide the investigation:

1. To what extent did identity politics influence policy implementation at federal level in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023?
2. How did identity politics influence federal appointments during Buhari’s regime?
3. How had identity politics affected National Unity under Buhari?

Objective of the study

Main objective:

The general objective of this study is to examine the impact of identity politics on democratic governance in Nigeria during the administration of Muhammadu Buhari 2015 and 2023.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the extent to which identity politics influence policy implementation at the federal level in Nigeria during the Buhari administration (2015 and 2023).
2. Investigate how identity politics influenced federal appointments during Buhari's regime.
3. Assess the effects of identity politics on national unity under the Buhari administration.

Significance of the study

This study is significant because it will contribute to the understanding of how identity politics affects democratic governance in Nigeria, particularly during the administration of Muhammadu Buhari. . The study will help scholars, students, and researchers to better understand the relationship between identity politics, policy implementation, federal appointments, national unity, and political stability.

The study will also be useful to policymakers and government officials by providing insights that can promote fairness, inclusiveness, and national integration in governance. In addition, it will serve as a reference material for future researchers on identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria.

Scope and limitations of the study

This study focuses on the relationship between identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria, using President Muhammadu Buhari's regime as a case study. The scope of the study covers the period of Buhari's administration from 2015 to 2023, with particular attention to electoral processes, political appointments, governance practices, and policy implementation during this period. The study examines how ethnic, religious, and regional considerations influenced democratic governance under the Buhari administration.

The study is limited by certain factors. One major limitation is the reliance on secondary sources such as books, journal articles, government reports, and newspaper publications due

to limited access to primary data. In addition, the sensitive nature of identity politics may restrict the availability of detailed and unbiased information. The study is also constrained by time and resources, which may limit the depth of analysis. Despite these limitations, the study provides a useful understanding of the impact of identity politics on democratic governance in Nigeria during Buhari's regime.

Operational Definition of Terms

Identity Politics: Identity politics refers to a form of political behavior and mobilization in which individuals or groups support political ideas, leaders, or parties based on shared characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, region, or culture rather than ideology or policy performance. In this study, it explains how ethnic and religious identities influence political participation and governance in Nigeria.

Democratic Governance: This refers to the practice of democracy as reflected in electoral processes, accountability, inclusiveness, rule of law, and participation in governance under the Buhari administration.

Buhari's Regime: This refers to the period when Muhammadu Buhari served as the President of Nigeria, from May 29, 2015, to May 29, 2023. His administration is the case study for examining identity politics and democratic governance in this research.

Political Appointments and representation: This refers to the selection and appointment of individuals into public offices and government positions during Buhari's regime, particularly as influenced by ethnic, religious, or regional considerations.

Policy Implementation: This means the execution of government policies, programmes, and decisions during Buhari's administration and how identity politics affected their formulation and execution.

National Unity and stability: In this study, national unity refers to the level of cohesion, inclusion, and sense of belonging among Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious groups during Buhari's regime.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature on identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria and other plural societies. It examines relevant scholarly works, conceptual clarifications, theoretical frameworks, and empirical studies that help to explain the relationship between identity-based politics and governance outcomes. The purpose is to situate this study within existing academic discussions and identify gaps that this research seeks to fill.

Contextual Review

Identity Politics

According to Cressida Heyes (2007), identity politics refers to political activities organized around the interests and experiences of shared social identities such as ethnicity, religion, race, or culture. Similarly, Donald Horowitz (1985) argued that identity politics is common in multi-ethnic societies where political competition is shaped by ethnic and regional loyalties. In Nigeria, identity politics is often reflected in ethnic favoritism, religious sentiments, and sectional interests in governance.

Audre Lorde (1984) made a significant contribution to identity politics in *Sister Outsider*, where she argued that differences in race, gender, class, and sexuality should not be viewed as barriers but as sources of strength. She maintained that acknowledging these differences is essential for resisting oppression and achieving social justice.

Judith Butler (1990) contributed to identity politics through her theory of gender performativity in *Gender Trouble*. She argued that identity, particularly gender identity, is socially constructed through repeated social practices rather than being biologically determined. Her work challenged fixed notions of identity and influenced feminist and queer political thought.

Charles Taylor (1994) advanced the politics of recognition by arguing that recognition is a fundamental human need. He maintained that denying recognition to individuals or cultural groups constitutes a form of oppression and that democratic societies should recognize diverse identities to promote equality and inclusion.

Bhikhu Parekh (2000) contributed significantly through his theory of multiculturalism. He argued that cultural diversity should be respected within democratic societies and that minority identities deserve equal recognition without compromising national unity. His work supports inclusive governance and cultural pluralism.

Seyla Benhabib (2002) examined identity politics from the perspective of democratic deliberation. She argued that while cultural identities deserve recognition, they should remain open to dialogue, negotiation, and change within democratic societies rather than being treated as rigid or permanent categories.

Kwame Anthony Appiah (2005) argued that identities are important for social belonging but warned against making them rigid or exclusive. He maintained that individuals possess multiple identities and should not be confined to a single cultural, ethnic, or religious identity in political life.

Francis Fukuyama (2018) argued that modern political conflicts are increasingly driven by demands for recognition and dignity rather than purely economic interests. He maintained that identity politics has become central to democratic politics because individuals and groups seek acknowledgment of their cultural, ethnic, religious, and social identities.

Rogers Brubaker (2004) argued that identity should not be viewed as a fixed category but as a dynamic process shaped by political, social, and historical contexts. He cautioned scholars against treating identities as permanent or naturally existing, emphasizing instead the fluidity of group identification.

James Tully (1995) argued that democratic societies should recognize cultural diversity through constitutional dialogue and accommodation. He maintained that minority groups should actively participate in shaping political institutions rather than simply adapting to dominant cultural norms.

Amy Gutmann (2003) argued that democratic citizenship requires equal respect for diverse identities while promoting civic participation and mutual understanding. She emphasized that identity recognition should strengthen rather than undermine democratic unity.

Manuel Castells (1997) argued that globalization and technological change have transformed identity into a major source of political mobilization. He maintained that individuals increasingly organize around cultural, religious, ethnic, and national identities in response to rapid social transformation.

Melissa S. Williams (1998) argued that marginalized groups require political recognition and fair representation within democratic institutions. She maintained that identity politics enhances democratic legitimacy by ensuring that diverse voices are included in political decision-making.

Anne Phillips (2007) argued that democratic institutions should move beyond merely recognizing identities to ensuring meaningful political representation of marginalized groups. She emphasized that identity politics should promote equality without reinforcing stereotypes or essentialist assumptions.

Democratic Governance

Larry Diamond (1999) defined democratic governance as a system of government characterized by accountability, political participation, rule of law, and protection of citizens' rights. Similarly, Claude Ake (2001) viewed democratic governance as a process that ensures

popular participation and responsive leadership. Democratic governance promotes transparency, inclusiveness, and equal representation in society.

Robert A. Dahl (1989) made a significant contribution to democratic governance in *Democracy and Its Critics*. He argued that democratic governance is founded on political equality, citizen participation, effective representation, and accountability. According to Dahl, a democratic government must provide opportunities for citizens to participate in decision-making and influence public policies.

David Beetham (1991) defined democratic governance as a system in which governmental authority is exercised according to democratic principles and under the control of the people. He argued that democracy requires popular participation, accountability, transparency, and respect for human rights.

Amartya Sen (1999) argued that democratic governance is essential for human development because it promotes political freedom, public participation, and government responsiveness. He maintained that democratic governments are better positioned to protect citizens' welfare and prevent social crises through public accountability.

Joseph A. Schumpeter (1942) defined democracy as an institutional arrangement in which individuals acquire the power to govern through competitive elections. His procedural approach emphasizes free and fair elections as the foundation of democratic governance.

Samuel P. Huntington (1991) argued that democratic governance is characterized by competitive elections, political participation, and peaceful transfer of power. He further explained that the consolidation of democracy depends on stable political institutions and constitutional governance.

Francis Fukuyama (2013) argued that democratic governance requires not only democratic elections but also effective state institutions, the rule of law, and accountable government. He

maintained that these three pillars collectively determine the quality of governance in democratic societies.

Leonardo Morlino (2004) explained that democratic governance is reflected in the quality of democracy, measured by the rule of law, accountability, responsiveness, political participation, equality, and protection of civil liberties.

Guillermo O'Donnell (1994) argued that democratic governance should go beyond electoral democracy by ensuring horizontal accountability, where independent institutions monitor and restrain the abuse of executive power.

John Dryzek (2000) contributed through the theory of deliberative democracy, arguing that democratic governance should encourage public deliberation, inclusive dialogue, and citizen participation in policymaking rather than relying solely on elections.

Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright (2003) argued that democratic governance should promote participatory governance by involving citizens directly in public decision-making processes, thereby strengthening accountability and policy effectiveness.

Jan Kooiman (2003) viewed democratic governance as the interaction between the state, the private sector, and civil society in addressing public issues. He emphasized collaboration, participation, and shared responsibility in governance.

Thomas Carothers (2002) argued that successful democratic governance requires institutional reforms, rule of law, effective political competition, and active civil society participation. He emphasized that democracy promotion should focus on strengthening governance institutions rather than elections alone.

Pippa Norris (2012) argued that democratic governance is strengthened by electoral integrity, citizen trust, political participation, and institutional accountability. She maintained that democratic legitimacy depends on both democratic procedures and effective governance.

Concept of Federal Appointments and Representation

According to Philips (1989), federal appointments and representation involve the equitable distribution of political offices and public positions among different groups within a federation. In Nigeria, the federal character principle was introduced to ensure fairness and reduce ethnic domination in public institutions.

Review of Themes of Research Questions

Theme 1: Identity Politics and Policy Implementation in Nigeria

Several scholars have examined the influence of identity politics on policy implementation in Nigeria. Richard Joseph (1987) argued that ethnic and sectional interests often influence government decisions and policy processes in Nigeria. Similarly, Rotimi Suberu (2001) maintained that identity considerations affect the distribution and implementation of public policies, especially in a multi-ethnic state like Nigeria. These scholars observed that political leaders sometimes prioritize ethnic and regional interests over national interest during policy implementation.

Lewis (2011) examined governance, political institutions, and policy implementation in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative research design and relied on secondary sources such as government documents, academic journals, and policy reports. Data were analyzed using content analysis. The study found that ethnic and regional interests often influence government policy decisions and implementation, thereby reducing policy effectiveness and public confidence in governance. The study concluded that strengthening democratic institutions and promoting inclusive governance are necessary for effective policy implementation.

Ibrahim (2007) investigated the relationship between identity politics and public policy in Nigeria. The study employed a qualitative research design using secondary data obtained from books, journal articles, official reports, and policy documents. Data were analyzed through descriptive and content analysis. The findings revealed that ethnic, religious, and regional considerations frequently influence policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria, often resulting in unequal distribution of public resources. The study concluded that reducing identity-based politics is essential for improving policy implementation and democratic governance.

Jinadu (2011) examined governance, federalism, and identity politics in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design and utilized secondary sources of data, including government publications, scholarly articles, and constitutional documents. Data were analyzed using content analysis. The findings showed that identity politics significantly shapes policy implementation and public administration, particularly in relation to resource allocation and political inclusion. The study concluded that adherence to constitutional principles, especially the federal character principle, would promote equitable policy implementation and strengthen democratic governance.

Theme 2: Identity Politics, Federal Appointments, and Representation.

Scholars have also linked identity politics with federal appointments and political representation in Nigeria. Eghosa Osaghee (1998) argued that ethnic politics significantly influences the sharing of political offices and public appointments in Nigeria. In the same vein, Attahiru Jega (2007) noted that the issue of representation and federal character remains central in Nigerian politics because different groups seek equal participation in governance. Under the Buhari administration, debates over appointments and representation generated concerns about favoritism and marginalization among some regions.

Jinadu (2002) examined the relationship between federalism, political representation, and national integration in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative research design and relied on secondary sources of data, including government documents, constitutional provisions, academic journals, and textbooks. Data were analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that equitable political representation and adherence to the federal character principle are essential for promoting national unity and reducing ethnic tensions. The study concluded that fairness in federal appointments is necessary for strengthening democratic governance in Nigeria.

Nwabueze (2003) examined constitutional democracy and political appointments in Nigeria. The study employed a qualitative research method using secondary data from constitutional documents, judicial decisions, books, and journal articles. Data were analyzed through doctrinal and content analysis. The findings showed that failure to comply with constitutional provisions on equitable representation often creates perceptions of exclusion and political marginalization. The study concluded that strict observance of the federal character principle is vital for ensuring justice, inclusiveness, and democratic stability.

Suberu (2004) examined federalism, ethnic conflict, and political representation in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative case study design and utilized secondary data obtained from government reports, policy documents, books, and scholarly publications. Data were analyzed using content analysis. The findings indicated that political appointments and representation are often influenced by ethnic and regional considerations, resulting in persistent debates over equity and inclusion. The study concluded that strengthening federal institutions and ensuring balanced political appointments are essential for promoting democratic governance and national cohesion.

Theme 3: Identity Politics and National Unity

The relationship between identity politics and national unity has attracted scholarly attention.

Ali Mazrui (1980) argued that ethnic and religious divisions weaken national integration and social cohesion in African states. Similarly, Okwudiba Nnoli (1978) maintained that ethnic politics creates distrust and rivalry among groups, thereby affecting national unity in Nigeria. These scholars emphasized that excessive identity politics can threaten peaceful coexistence and collective national identity.

Ekeh (1975) examined the relationship between ethnicity, civic identity, and national integration in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative historical research design and relied on secondary data obtained from books, archival materials, government publications, and scholarly journals. Data were analyzed using historical and content analysis. The findings revealed that ethnic loyalties often take precedence over national identity, thereby weakening national unity and citizens' commitment to the state. The study concluded that promoting a shared national identity and strengthening democratic institutions are essential for achieving national cohesion.

Lewis (2007) examined governance, ethnicity, and national integration in Nigeria. The study employed a qualitative research design using secondary sources, including policy documents, government reports, books, and journal articles. Data were analyzed through content analysis. The findings indicated that identity politics has contributed to regional distrust, ethnic competition, and weak national integration. The study concluded that inclusive governance, equitable resource distribution, and effective democratic institutions are necessary for strengthening national unity.

Ibrahim (2006) investigated the impact of ethnic and religious identity on national cohesion in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design and relied on secondary data collected from academic publications, policy documents, newspapers, and

official reports. Data were analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that identity-based politics encourages mistrust, political exclusion, and social division among Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious groups. The study concluded that policies promoting equality, inclusion, and national integration are necessary for sustaining democratic governance and national unity.

Theme 4: Identity Politics Political Stability

Scholars have further examined the effect of identity politics on political stability. Samuel Huntington (1968) observed that political instability often occurs when political competition is driven by group identities and weak institutional structures. Also, Larry Diamond (2005) argued that ethnic and religious politics contribute to political tensions, insecurity, and democratic instability in developing countries such as Nigeria. This suggests that unmanaged identity politics may negatively affect political stability and democratic governance.

Nwagbo and Abaneme (2021) examined the relationship between identity formation and political stability in Nigeria's democratic experience from 1999 to 2017. The study adopted an ex post facto research design and relied on secondary sources of data, including books, journal articles, and government publications. Data were analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that identity politics, particularly ethnic and religious considerations in public appointments and resource allocation, contributed significantly to political instability and weakened democratic governance in Nigeria. The study concluded that government should promote justice, equity, and merit in governance to enhance political stability.

Moyosore (2022) examined the challenges of identity politics to democratic governance in Nigeria. The study employed a qualitative research design using secondary sources and discussions with selected Nigerians. Data were analyzed through content analysis. The findings showed that political elites often manipulate ethnic and religious identities to gain or retain political power, thereby increasing political tension, weakening democratic institutions,

and threatening political stability. The study concluded that adherence to the rule of law, ethical leadership, and national interest are essential for sustaining political stability in Nigeria.

Yahaya and Ibrahim (2024) investigated the implications of ethnicity and identity politics for democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative research design and utilized content analysis of political speeches, electoral reports, and scholarly literature. The findings revealed that identity politics intensified political polarization, weakened democratic consolidation, and undermined political stability, particularly during the 2015, 2019, and 2023 general elections. The study concluded that constitutional reforms, inclusive governance, and issue-based politics are necessary for strengthening political stability and democratic governance in Nigeria.

Theoretical Review

The study is anchored on two major theories; ELITE and SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY.

Elite Theory

Elite Theory was developed by Vilfredo Pareto (1916), Gaetano Mosca (1896), and later expanded by Robert Michels (1911). The theory argues that political power is always concentrated in the hands of a small group of elites, regardless of the democratic structure of a state.

The core proposition of the theory is that these elites control decision-making processes, political appointments, and resource distribution in order to maintain their dominance. Michels further explains this through the “iron law of oligarchy,” which states that all organizations, even democratic ones, eventually become controlled by a few individuals.

In relation to this study, Elite Theory explains how identity politics in Nigeria is often used by ruling elites to influence policy implementation and federal appointments. Under the administration of Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023), political power distribution and

appointments were widely perceived to reflect elite and identity-based considerations, which affected representation and national integration.

Mills (1956), in *The Power Elite*, argued that political power in society is concentrated in the hands of a small group of influential individuals who occupy strategic positions in government, the military, and the economy. According to him, these elites dominate decision-making processes and shape public policies to protect their interests rather than those of the general population. His work reinforces the argument of Elite Theory that democratic institutions are often controlled by a privileged minority.

Lasswell (1936) argued that politics is fundamentally about "who gets what, when, and how." He maintained that political elites determine the allocation of public resources, opportunities, and political offices. His work supports Elite Theory by emphasizing that those who control political power largely determine government policies and the distribution of national resources.

Dahl (1961), although critical of the classical elite perspective, acknowledged that political influence is often exercised by organized groups and influential individuals. In *Who Governs?*, he argued that power may be shared among competing elites rather than being concentrated in a single ruling class. His contribution broadened discussions on elite influence in democratic governance.

Bottomore (1993) examined the role of elites in modern political systems. He argued that every society has a relatively small group that exercises significant political, economic, and social influence. According to him, elites play a central role in governance because they possess greater access to power, education, and resources than the general population.

Sartori (1987) argued that democratic systems inevitably produce political elites who compete for power through political parties and elections. While democracy allows citizens

to choose leaders, political decision-making remains largely controlled by elites with greater political experience and organizational capacity.

Keller (1963) emphasized that elites are indispensable in modern societies because they provide leadership and make critical decisions affecting national development. She maintained that elites emerge in different sectors of society and influence governance through their expertise, authority, and control of institutions.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory was developed by Henri Tajfel (1986) and John Turner (1986). The theory explains that individuals derive their identity and self-esteem from the social groups they belong to, such as ethnicity, religion, or region.

The main proposition of the theory is that people naturally categorize themselves into in-groups and out-groups, leading to favoritism toward their own group and discrimination against others. This group-based identity strongly influences political behaviour, decision-making, and social relations.

Applied to this study, Social Identity Theory explains how ethnic, religious, and regional identities shape political behaviour in Nigeria. During the Buhari administration (2015–2023), identity-based affiliations influenced political participation, appointments, and perceptions of fairness in governance, thereby affecting national unity and political stability.

Hogg (2001) expanded Social Identity Theory by explaining that individuals develop a strong sense of belonging and self-esteem through their membership in social groups. He argued that group identification influences attitudes, perceptions, and political behaviour, especially in societies characterized by ethnic, religious, or cultural diversity. According to Hogg, individuals tend to support leaders and policies that protect the interests of their identity groups.

Abrams (1990) argued that social identity significantly influences intergroup relations and political participation. He maintained that individuals often evaluate themselves based on the status and achievements of the groups to which they belong. This attachment encourages loyalty to one's group while increasing competition and prejudice toward other groups, particularly in politically divided societies.

Brewer (1991) emphasized that individuals naturally seek inclusion within their own social groups while distinguishing themselves from members of other groups. She argued that this desire for group belonging often shapes political preferences, voting behaviour, and public perceptions of government. According to Brewer, identity-based loyalty can strengthen social cohesion within groups but may also contribute to political division in multicultural societies.

Ellemers (1999) explained that individuals' commitment to their social identity affects their attitudes, behaviour, and political decisions. She argued that strong identification with ethnic, religious, or regional groups increases support for leaders perceived to represent those identities. Her work demonstrates how identity influences participation in democratic processes and perceptions of political representation.

Brown (2000) examined the relationship between social identity and intergroup relations. He argued that competition between social groups often produces prejudice, discrimination, and conflict, particularly in ethnically diverse societies. He concluded that effective governance requires institutions that promote equality, fairness, and cooperation among different identity groups.

Empirical Review

Several scholars have examined the relationship between identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria, particularly during the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. Their studies provide useful insights into governance, political inclusion, federal appointments, national unity, and democratic stability.

Okafor (2020) examined identity politics and governance in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative research design and relied on secondary sources of data, including books, journal articles, government reports, and policy documents. Data were analyzed using content analysis. The study found that ethnic and religious considerations significantly influenced lopolitical appointments and policy implementation in Nigeria, thereby weakening national integration and democratic development.

Adebayo (2021) investigated the implementation of the federal character principle and political representation under the Buhari administration. The study employed a descriptive research design using secondary data obtained from official government publications, policy documents, journal articles, and textbooks. Data were analyzed through content analysis. The findings revealed that appointments into key political offices were widely perceived as favouring certain ethnic and regional groups, creating feelings of marginalization among other groups.

Ibrahim and Yusuf (2022) examined the relationship between identity politics and political stability in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative research design and utilized secondary data from scholarly publications, government reports, newspapers, and official documents. Data were analyzed using content analysis. The study found that identity-based political competition contributed to distrust, insecurity, and weak national unity during the Buhari administration.

Eghosa Osaghae (2018) examined the effect of identity politics on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative research design and relied on secondary data collected from academic publications, government reports, and policy documents. Data were analyzed through content analysis. The study concluded that political leaders frequently

relied on ethnic and regional loyalties to gain and sustain political power, thereby weakening national unity and promoting political exclusion.

Ibrahim and Hassan (2021) investigated ethnic politics and political participation in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and collected data from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through questionnaires, while secondary data were sourced from books and journal articles. The quantitative data were analyzed using simple percentages, while qualitative information was analyzed descriptively. The study found that many Nigerians continued to vote and align politically based on ethnic and religious affiliations rather than policy issues.

Okeke (2021) examined separatist agitations and national integration during the Buhari administration. The study adopted a qualitative research design using secondary sources comprising books, newspapers, government publications, journal articles, and policy reports. Data were analyzed using content analysis. The study found that perceptions of marginalization, particularly in the South-East, intensified separatist movements and weakened public confidence in the Federal Government.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Social Identity Theory as propounded by Henri Tajfel (1979) and later developed by John Turner (1986). The theory emerged from studies on group behavior and intergroup relations in society.

Social Identity Theory explains that individuals derive their identity and sense of belonging from the social groups to which they belong. These groups may include ethnicity, religion, culture, language, region, or political affiliation. According to the theory, individuals naturally classify themselves and others into categories known as the “in-group” and the “out-group.” The in-group refers to the group an individual belongs to, while the out-group refers to groups perceived as different or outside one’s identity group.

The theory further argues that individuals tend to favour members of their own group in political, economic, and social interactions. This group loyalty often results in discrimination, marginalization, and unequal treatment of people outside the preferred group. As a result, political competition in multi-ethnic societies is frequently influenced by ethnic, religious, and regional sentiments rather than national interest or merit.

Henri Tajfel (1979) identified three major processes within Social Identity Theory:

Social Categorization – This refers to the process by which individuals classify themselves and others into social groups such as ethnic groups, religions, or regions.

Social Identification – This occurs when individuals adopt the identity and behaviour of the group they belong to and develop emotional attachment toward that group.

Social Comparison – This involves comparing one’s group with other groups, often leading to feelings of superiority, favoritism, or discrimination.

The relevance of this theory to the present study lies in its ability to explain the nature of identity politics in Nigeria. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society where political activities are often influenced by ethnic, regional, and religious considerations. Political actors and citizens frequently align themselves with groups sharing similar identities, especially during elections, political appointments, and policy implementation.

Under the administration of Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023), issues relating to federal appointments, resource allocation, and policy implementation generated public debates and accusations of favoritism, marginalization, and unequal representation among different ethnic and regional groups in Nigeria. These perceptions strengthened identity-based political sentiments and affected national unity and political stability.

The theory is therefore relevant because it provides a framework for understanding how ethnic, religious, and regional identities influenced governance and political behaviour during Buhari’s administration. It also helps explain how identity politics contributed to divisions, distrust, and tensions among various groups in Nigeria.

However, despite its relevance, the theory has been criticized for placing excessive emphasis on group identity while paying less attention to other important factors such as economic interests, institutional structures, and leadership style in political behaviour. Nevertheless, the theory remains useful in explaining the influence of identity politics on democratic governance in Nigeria.

Basic Assumptions of Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory is based on the assumption that individuals derive part of their identity and self-esteem from the social groups to which they belong. These groups may be defined

by ethnicity, religion, culture, language, region, or other shared characteristics. The theory assumes that individuals naturally classify themselves and others into different social groups, develop emotional attachment to their own groups, and compare their groups with others. This process often results in in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination, which influence social interactions, political behaviour, and decision-making. In plural societies such as Nigeria, these assumptions help explain why political participation, voting behaviour, leadership selection, and public appointments are frequently influenced by ethnic, religious, and regional identities rather than merit or ideology.

Application of the Theory to the Study

Social Identity Theory is relevant to this study because it provides a framework for understanding the influence of identity politics on democratic governance in Nigeria. The theory explains how ethnic, religious, and regional identities shape political attitudes, leadership preferences, and citizens' perceptions of governance. During the administration of Muhammadu Buhari, issues relating to federal appointments, policy implementation, resource allocation, and responses to national challenges were often viewed through identity-based perspectives. These perceptions contributed to debates about inclusion, marginalization, national unity, and political stability. The theory therefore helps explain the relationship between identity politics and democratic governance during the period covered by this study.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses shall guide the study:

Hypothesis One

H0: Identity politics did not significantly influence policy implementation at the federal level in Nigeria during Buhari's regime.

H1: Identity politics significantly influenced policy implementation at the federal level in Nigeria during Buhari's regime.

Hypothesis Two

H0: Identity politics did not significantly influence federal appointments and representation during Buhari's regime.

H1: Identity politics significantly influenced federal appointments and representation during Buhari's regime.

Research Design

This study adopts the descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey design is a systematic method used in social science research to collect information from a group of people in order to describe, examine, and analyze their opinions, attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions concerning a particular phenomenon.

According to Kerlinger Fred (1973), research design refers to the plan, structure, and strategy used to obtain answers to research questions and control variance in a study. Similarly, C. R. Kothari (2004) defined research design as the arrangement of conditions for data collection and analysis in a manner that combines relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure.

The descriptive survey design is considered suitable for this study because it enables the researcher to gather relevant information from respondents concerning identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria during the administration of Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023). The design allows the researcher to describe existing political realities relating to policy implementation, federal appointments, national unity, and political stability.

The survey approach also helps in obtaining firsthand information through questionnaires distributed to respondents who possess knowledge about political developments in Nigeria. Through this method, respondents are able to express their views and experiences regarding

the influence of ethnic, religious, and regional identities on governance under Buhari's administration.

Another reason for adopting the descriptive survey design is that it allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data may be analyzed statistically using percentages and chi-square, while qualitative responses help provide deeper explanations concerning the impact of identity politics on governance.

The design is also appropriate because the study does not intend to manipulate variables but rather seeks to observe, examine, and analyze existing political conditions and perceptions as they occur naturally within society.

However, despite its usefulness, the descriptive survey design has some limitations. Responses from participants may sometimes be biased due to personal opinions, political interests, or emotional attachments. In addition, some respondents may not provide accurate information. Nevertheless, the design remains suitable because it provides reliable data for understanding the relationship between identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria.

Method of Data Collection

This study shall make use of both primary and secondary methods of data collection. The combination of these methods is necessary to ensure accuracy, reliability, and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Primary Method of Data Collection

Primary data shall be obtained through the use of structured questionnaires administered to selected respondents. The questionnaire shall contain relevant questions designed to obtain respondents' opinions and perceptions concerning identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria under the administration of Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2023).

The questionnaire shall consist mainly of close-ended questions to make responses easier to analyze statistically. Respondents shall include civil servants, political analysts, lecturers, students, and members of the public who possess adequate knowledge of political developments in Nigeria.

The use of questionnaires is considered appropriate for this study because it enables the researcher to collect firsthand information directly from respondents within a short period of time. It also ensures uniformity in responses and enhances objectivity in data collection.

Secondary Method of Data Collection

Secondary data shall be sourced from existing materials related to the study. These materials shall include textbooks, academic journals, newspapers, government publications, conference papers, internet materials, and previous research works on identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria.

The secondary sources are important because they provide background information, theoretical explanations, empirical evidence, and scholarly opinions relevant to the study. They also help the researcher to understand previous works carried out by other scholars and identify gaps in literature.

The combination of primary and secondary sources of data collection is therefore necessary to ensure adequate and balanced information for the successful completion of the study.

The Study Area

The study area for this research is Nigeria, with particular focus on the federal political administration under Muhammadu Buhari from 2015 to 2023. Nigeria is located in West Africa and operates a federal system of government made up of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Nigeria is regarded as one of the most populous countries in Africa and is characterized by ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity. The country is broadly divided into major ethnic groups such as the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo, alongside several minority ethnic groups. Religion also plays a significant role in the political and social structure of the country, with Islam and Christianity being the dominant religions.

The choice of Nigeria as the study area is informed by the persistent influence of identity politics in the country's democratic process. Political activities in Nigeria are often shaped by ethnic loyalty, religious affiliation, and regional considerations, especially in elections, political appointments, policy implementation, and distribution of national resources.

The administration of Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023) witnessed several debates and controversies concerning federal appointments, representation, national unity, and political stability. Many Nigerians perceived certain government actions and appointments as favouring particular ethnic or regional groups, thereby generating concerns about marginalization and imbalance in governance.

Therefore, Nigeria provides a suitable environment for examining how identity politics affects democratic governance, policy implementation, federal appointments, national unity, and political stability during the Buhari administration.

Population of the Study

The population of the study refers to the entire group of individuals or elements relevant to the research from which data is collected. According to Kothari (2004), population refers to the total number of people or items under investigation in a research study.

The population for this study comprises individuals who possess adequate knowledge and understanding of identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria during the administration of Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023). These individuals include civil servants,

political analysts, lecturers, students of political science, journalists, and members of the general public.

The choice of these categories of respondents is based on the assumption that they are knowledgeable about political developments, policy implementation, federal appointments, national unity, and political stability in Nigeria. Their opinions and experiences are therefore considered relevant to the objectives of the study.

The target population is also considered appropriate because identity politics affects different sectors of society, especially within the political and public administration system. By involving respondents from different backgrounds, the researcher is able to obtain diverse views and reliable information concerning the impact of identity politics on democratic governance in Nigeria.

Due to the large nature of the population and limitations such as time, finance, and accessibility, the researcher shall select a representative sample from the population for effective administration of questionnaires and proper analysis of data.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Sample size refers to the number of respondents selected from the total population for the purpose of the study. According to Yamane Taro (1967), a sample is a representative portion of the population selected for observation and analysis in a research study.

For the purpose of this study, a sample size of 100 respondents selected from the target population. The sample size is considered adequate because it enables the researcher to obtain relevant information within the available time and resources while ensuring effective management and analysis of data.

The study shall adopt the simple random sampling technique in selecting respondents. Simple random sampling is a probability sampling method in which every member of the population

has an equal chance of being selected for the study. According to Kothari (2004), simple random sampling helps to reduce bias and ensures fairness in the selection process.

The technique is considered suitable for this study because it gives equal opportunity to all categories of respondents, including civil servants, lecturers, political analysts, students, journalists, and members of the public. This helps to ensure objectivity and reliability in the data collected.

The respondents shall be selected randomly from different groups within the study population based on their knowledge and understanding of political developments during the administration of Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023). The use of the simple random sampling technique will therefore enable the researcher to gather diverse opinions concerning identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria.

However, due to limitations such as time constraints, financial challenges, and accessibility to respondents, the researcher may not be able to cover the entire population. Nevertheless, the selected sample is considered representative enough to provide valid and reliable findings for the study.

Validity and Reliability

The research instrument subjected to face and content validity by the project supervisor and experts in political science to ensure that the instrument measures what it is intended to measure.

Method of Data Analysis

Reliability ensured through proper structuring of the questionnaire and careful administration of the instrument to respondents. Data collected from the respondents through questionnaires shall be carefully organized, coded, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The descriptive

method shall involve the use of simple percentages, frequency tables, and distributions to present and summarize respondents' opinions on identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria.

The hypotheses formulated for the study tested using the chi-square (χ^2) statistical technique. The chi-square method is suitable because it helps to determine whether there is a significant relationship between identity politics and democratic governance variables such as

Research Questions	Hypotheses	Major Variables	Empirical Indicators	Method of Data Collection	Source of Data	Method of Data Analysis
To what extent did identity politics influence policy implementation at federal level in Nigeria between 2015–2023?	H0: Identity politics did not significantly influence policy implementation.	X = Identity Politics Y = Policy Implementation	Policy favoritism and respondents' perceptions (42.1%, 36.8%)	Questionnaire	Primary and Secondary Sources	Percentage and Chi-square
How did identity politics influence federal appointments and representation during Buhari's regime?	H0: Identity politics did not significantly influence appointments and representation.	X = Identity Politics Y = Federal Appointments/Representation	Regional appointments and representation (47.4%, 31.6%)	Questionnaire	Primary and Secondary Sources	Percentage and Chi-square
How had	H0: Identity	X = Identity Politics Y		Questionnaire	Primary	Percentage

identity politics affected national unity and political stability under Buhari?	politics did not significantly affect national unity and political stability.	= National Unity/Political Stability	National unity and political stability perceptions (45.3%, 33.7%)	aire	and Secondary Sources	ge and Chi-square
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CHAPTER FOUR PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis, interpretation, and discussion of data collected for the study titled *Identity Politics and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: A Case Study of Buhari's Regime (2015–2023)*. The chapter is designed to analyze the responses obtained from the field in relation to the research objectives, research questions, and hypotheses formulated for the study.

Data used in this study were obtained primarily through the administration of questionnaires to selected respondents who possess adequate knowledge of political developments in Nigeria during the administration of Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023). The responses gathered from the respondents were carefully organized, coded, and analyzed for proper interpretation.

The chapter specifically examines the extent to which identity politics influenced policy implementation, federal appointments and representation, national unity, and political stability in Nigeria under Buhari's administration. The data collected are presented using frequency tables and simple percentages for clarity and easy understanding.

Furthermore, the hypotheses formulated for the study were tested using the chi-square (χ^2) statistical method in order to determine whether there is a significant relationship between identity politics and democratic governance in Nigeria.

Distribution And Retrieval Of Questionnaires

Questionnaire Status	Frequency	Percentage
Number Distributed	100	100%
Number Retrieved	95	95%
Number not Retrieved	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The table above shows that a total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to respondents, out of which 95 questionnaires representing 95% were successfully retrieved, while 5 questionnaires representing 5% were not returned. Therefore, the analysis of this study is based on the 95 questionnaires retrieved from respondents.

Presentation and Analysis of Research Question One

Research question one:

To what extent has identity politics influenced democratic governance in Nigeria during Buhari's regime?

Responses on the Influence of Identity Politics on Democratic Governance

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	40	42.1%
Agree	35	36.8%
Disagree	12	12.6%
Strongly Disagree	8	8.5%
Total	95	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The table above indicates that 40 respondents representing 42.1% strongly agreed that identity politics influenced policy implementation during Buhari's regime, while 35 respondents representing 36.8% agreed. However, 12 respondents representing 12.6% disagreed, while 8 respondents representing 8.5% strongly disagreed. This implies that the majority of respondents believe that identity politics significantly influenced policy implementation at the federal level during Buhari's administration.

Research Question Two

How did identity politics influence federal appointments and representation during Buhari's regime?

Responses on Ethnic and Religious Consideration in Governance

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	45	47.4%
Agree	30	31.6%
Disagree	10	10.5%
Strongly Disagree	10	10.5%
Total	95	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Interpretation

The table above reveals that 45 respondents representing 47.4% strongly agreed that identity politics influenced federal appointments and representation during Buhari's regime, while 30 respondents representing 31.6% agreed. Meanwhile, 10 respondents representing 10.5% disagreed and another 10 respondents representing 10.5% strongly disagreed. This suggests that identity politics played a major role in federal appointments and representation during the Buhari administration.

Research Question Three

How had identity politics affected national unity and political stability under Buhari's administration?

Responses on Identity Politics and National Unity

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	43	45.3%
Agree	32	33.7%
Disagree	11	11.6%
Strongly Disagree	9	9.4%
Total	95	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Interpretation

The table above shows that 43 respondents representing 45.3% strongly agreed that identity politics affected national unity and political stability under Buhari's administration, while 32 respondents representing 33.7% agreed. On the other hand, 11 respondents representing 11.6% disagreed, while 9 respondents representing 9.4% strongly disagreed. This indicates that identity politics negatively affected national unity and political stability during Buhari's regime.

4.4 TEST OF HYPOTHESES

Formula for Chi-square (χ^2)

$$\chi^2 = \sum (O-E)^2 \text{ divided by } E$$

$$\chi^2 = \text{Chi-square}$$

O = Observed Frequency

E = Expected Frequency

Σ = Summation

Hypothesis One

H0: Identity politics did not significantly influence policy implementation at the federal level during Buhari's regime.

H1: Identity politics significantly influenced policy implementation at the federal level during Buhari's regime.

Chi-square Calculation Table

Responses	Observed Frequency (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
Strongly Agree	40	23.75	16.25	264.06	11.12
Agree	35	23.75	11.25	126.56	5.33
Disagree	12	23.75	- 11.75	138.06	5.81
Strongly Disagree	8	23.75	- 15.75	248.06	10.44
Total	95	95			32.70

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Decision Rule

Reject H₀ if the calculated χ^2 value is greater than the table value at 0.05 level of significance.

Decision

Since the calculated χ^2 value of 32.70 is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected while the alternative hypothesis (H₁) is accepted.

Conclusion

Identity politics significantly influenced policy implementation at the federal level during Buhari's administration.

Hypothesis Two

H₀: Identity politics did not significantly influence federal appointments and representation during Buhari's regime.

H₁: Identity politics significantly influenced federal appointments and representation during Buhari's regime.

Chi-square Calculation Table

Responses	Observed Frequency (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
Strongly Agree	45	23.75	21.25	451.56	19.01
Agree	30	23.75	6.25	39.06	1.64
Disagree	10	23.75	- 13.75	189.06	7.96
Strongly Disagree	10	23.75	- 13.75	189.06	7.96
Total	95	95			36.57

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Decision

Since the calculated χ^2 value of 36.57 is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion

Identity politics significantly influenced federal appointments and representation during Buhari's administration.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis carried out in this chapter revealed that identity politics significantly influenced democratic governance in Nigeria during the administration of Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023).

The findings showed that identity politics greatly influenced policy implementation at the federal level. Government policies and actions were often perceived through ethnic, regional, and religious considerations, thereby affecting public trust and inclusiveness in governance.

The study also revealed that identity politics significantly influenced federal appointments and representation during Buhari's administration. Many respondents believed that political

appointments favoured certain ethnic and regional groups, leading to feelings of marginalization among other groups in the country.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that identity politics negatively affected national unity and political stability in Nigeria. Ethnic and religious sentiments contributed to political tension, distrust, division, and instability within the country.

These findings agree with the views of scholars such as Okwudiba Nnoli (1978), Eghosa Osaghae (1998), and Rotimi Suberu (2001), who argued that identity politics remains a major challenge to democratic governance, national integration, and political stability in Nigeria.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined *Identity Politics and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: A Case Study of Buhari's Regime*. The study was conducted to investigate the extent to which identity politics influenced democratic governance in Nigeria during the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari.

The study revealed that identity politics significantly affected democratic governance in Nigeria. Findings showed that ethnic, religious and regional sentiments played major roles in political appointments, policy implementation and distribution of national resources during Buhari's administration.

The study also found that ethnic and religious considerations greatly influenced governance processes and public perception of the government. Many respondents believed that favoritism and sectional interests weakened citizens' trust in democratic institutions and governance.

Furthermore, the study discovered that identity politics negatively affected national unity and political stability in Nigeria. The perception of marginalization among some ethnic and regional groups contributed to political tension, division and distrust among citizens.

The hypotheses tested in Chapter Four confirmed that identity politics had significant effects on democratic governance, governance processes and national unity during Buhari's regime.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that identity politics remains a major challenge to democratic governance in Nigeria. The study established that the manipulation of ethnic, religious and regional identities during Buhari's administration contributed to political division, weakened democratic values and reduced national integration.

The study further concludes that identity politics encourages favoritism, marginalization and unequal political representation, thereby affecting good governance and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The excessive emphasis on ethnic and religious loyalty over merit and national interest undermines political stability and national development.

Therefore, for democracy to thrive in Nigeria, political leaders and citizens must place greater emphasis on national unity, inclusiveness, fairness and competence rather than ethnic or religious considerations.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

Promotion of National Unity: The government should promote policies and programmes that encourage national integration, unity and peaceful coexistence among different ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria.

Merit-Based Political Appointments: Political appointments and distribution of public offices should be based on merit, competence and fairness rather than ethnic, religious or regional considerations.

Strengthening Democratic Institutions: Democratic institutions such as the judiciary, electoral bodies and anti-corruption agencies should be strengthened to ensure justice, transparency and accountability in governance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Questionnaire on Identity Politics and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: A Case Study of Buhari's Regime.

Department of Political Science and
International Relations
Godfrey Okoye University
Enugu State

Dear Ma/Sir

I am a final year student conducting a research on *Identity Politics and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: A Case Study of Buhari's Regime*. This questionnaire is strictly for academic purposes. Please kindly provide honest answers to the questions below. All information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours Faithfully,

EMMANUEL ANITA DABERECHI

Researcher

SECTION A:

PERSONAL DATA

1. GENDER

(MALE)

(FEMALE)

2. AGE.....

() 18-25

() 26-35

() 36-45

() 46 and above

3. Educational Qualification.....

() SECONDARY SCHOOL

() OND/NCE

() HND/B.Sc

() POSTGRADUATE

4. Occupation:_____

SECTION B:

Research questions

Instruction: Tick (✓) the option that best represents your opinion.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Identity politics influenced democratic governance during Buhari's regime				
2	Ethnic considerations affected political appointments during Buhari's administration				
3	Religious sentiments influenced governance decisions in Nigeria				
4	Identity politics contributed to political instability in Nigeria				
5	Identity politics weakened national unity in Nigeria				
6	Political leaders use ethnic identity to gain political support				
7	Merit should be prioritized over ethnicity in political appointments				
8	Democratic governance can improve if identity politics is reduced				

KEYS

1. STRONGLY AGREE
2. AGREE
3. DISAGREE
4. STRONGLY DISAGREE