

Values and the National Integration Question in Nigeria

¹Moses Terwase Torhemen, ²Abraham Esivue Akede &
³Basil Osayin Daudu

¹Department of Philosophy
Benue State University, Makurdi
raphmoses179@gmail.com, Mosestorhemen@bsun.edu.ng

²Auchi Polytechnic Auchi, Edo State
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
akedeesivue@gmail.com

&
³Department of Philosophy
Kogi State University, Anyigba
basildaudu@gmail.com, daudu.bo@ksu.edu.ng

Abstract

The integration of diverse ethnicities in Nigeria is a complex and critical endeavour that seeks to unify the nation's rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and histories. At the heart of this aspiration lies the role of values as foundational elements that transcend ethnic boundaries and foster a shared sense of identity. However, historical grievances and economic disparities stemming from resource allocation and political manipulation pose formidable challenges to ethnic integration. These obstacles hinder the formation of a cohesive national identity and fuel inter-ethnic conflicts, underscoring the importance of addressing deep-rooted issues for successful integration. This paper argues that there exists an intrinsic relationship between values and national integration in Nigeria and those values can serve as a unifying and cohesive factor amid ethnic diversity and the nation's heterogeneity. The paper also argues that, whether manifested through shared religious ethics, cultural norms emphasizing communal bonds or ethical principles that promote justice and respect, values play a pivotal role in bridging gaps and creating connections. The paper concludes that the apparent lack of

integration and cohesion in Nigeria's values are both imperative and indispensable to the contemporary Nigerian state that is bedevilled with Ethno-religious crisis and conflict; therefore, values stand as a central pillar in the integration of ethnicities in Nigeria, offering a pathway to unity amidst diversity.

Keywords: values, national integration, diversity, identity, Nigeria

Introduction

The integration of ethnicities in Nigeria is a complex and multifaceted issue that has been a subject of significant academic and societal discourse. Nigeria, often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," is home to over 250 distinct ethnic groups, each with its unique language, culture, and values. This diversity has long been both a source of strength and a challenge for the nation. Understanding the role of values in the integration of these diverse ethnicities is crucial for fostering national unity and social cohesion. The thought of values plays a central role in shaping individuals' beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes. In Nigeria, the values held by different ethnic groups can either facilitate or hinder integration efforts. For instance, the values of "respect for elders" (*U nan mba gaden civir*) and communal living are widely cherished across many Nigerian cultures especially in Tiv culture, that is to say that, Nigerian values are deeply rooted in the diverse cultures and ethnic groups that make up the country. This is exemplified in the Yoruba culture's concept of "*omoluabi*," which emphasizes attributes such as honesty, respect, and responsibility (Falola 73). Additionally, the Igbo culture places a strong emphasis on communal living and the extended family system, where individuals are expected to support and care for their relatives (Njoku 45). These values of respect for

authority and communal responsibility play a significant role in shaping social interactions and relationships in Nigerian society, therefore providing a common ground for fostering unity. Conversely, conflicting values, such as religious differences or historical grievances, can impede integration and exacerbate inter-ethnic tensions.

Furthermore, religion plays a vital role in Nigerian values, with Christianity and Islam being the dominant faiths. Many Nigerians uphold religious values that emphasize moral and ethical behavior. For instance, one prominent Christian concept that promotes the idea of treating others with kindness and love is the commandment of "Love your neighbor as yourself." This teaching is derived from the Bible. This value promotes unity and cooperation among diverse religious groups and contributes to a sense of national cohesion. According to Daudu (2019), security and common good must never be politicized for whatsoever reason. While Nigeria is culturally diverse, these shared values, both traditional and religious, are instrumental in fostering a sense of unity and integration among its people. Meanwhile, in modern Nigeria, there are ongoing efforts to promote national integration and unity, recognizing the importance of these values. Government policies and initiatives aim to bridge ethnic and religious divides and promote a sense of belonging among all Nigerians. While challenges persist, the recognition and preservation of traditional values alongside the adaptation of new, unifying values contribute to the ongoing process of integration and national cohesion in the country.

However, religious values and practices often intersect with ethnic identities, therefore creating complex dynamics that can either promote religious tolerance and coexistence or lead to religious tensions and conflicts. It is pertinent to note here that the integration of ethnicities in Nigeria is a multifaceted issue influenced by a myriad of factors, including

cultural values, historical legacies, government policies, and religious beliefs. Understanding how these factors intersect and impact the process of integration is essential for fostering national unity and social cohesion in Nigeria. It is on this basis that this topic continues to evolve and warrants ongoing research and discussion to promote a more inclusive and harmonious society in this diverse African nation. Therefore, the paper advocates for collective and central harmonization on the basis of mutual respect, equality and co-existence among the nation's diverse ethnic groups and constituents as well as individuals.

Similarly, there should be the fair and equal treatment of all Nigerians as well as deliberate development of a feeling of oneness among Nigerians towards the attainment of a successful democratization process and national stability, unity and integration.

Conceptual Framework for Values and National Integration

The conceptual framework of “values” and “national integration” is a critical lens through which we can understand the complex dynamics of unity within diverse societies. “Values” encompass the principles, beliefs, and moral codes that guide individuals and communities in their actions and decision-making. These values are deeply rooted in cultures, religion, and history, and they play a pivotal role in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of a society. On the other hand, “national integration” refers to the process of fostering a sense of unity and cohesion among the various ethnics, religious, and cultural groups within the nation. It involves bridging divisions, promoting inclusivity, and building a shared national identity that transcends the diversity of the population.

The interplay between values and national integration is particularly relevant in the context of nations characterised by significance cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, such as Nigeria. Unfortunately,

Nigeria's national goals are unachievable due to lack of proper implementations (Daudu, 2021). The value held different groups within a nation can either act as unifying forces, bringing people together under a common set of principles, or as divisive factor, leading to inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts. Understanding the role of values national integration is essential for policymakers, scholars, and leaders, as it helps in crafting strategies and policies that promote social cohesion, tolerance, and peaceful co-existence. This conceptual framework provides a foundation for exploring the challenges, initiatives, and the critical role of leadership in shaping the values that underpin national integration. It is through this framework that we can analyse the impact of values on the social fabric of a nation and the ongoing efforts to build a more integrated and harmonious society.

In the context of various academic disciplines and everyday life, the concept of "value" holds diverse meanings and significance. Value can be broadly understood as the worth or importance assigned to something, whether it is an object, idea, belief, or principle. This subjective assessment of worth guides human behavior, influencing choices and decisions made by individuals and societies alike. Philosophically, value is a foundational subject matter. Ethical philosophers delve into questions of value, seeking to determine what is inherently good or desirable and how moral judgments should be made. Philosophical discussions surrounding values often encompass theories like utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics, each offering distinct perspectives on the nature of moral value and ethical decision-making.

Meanwhile values are fundamental to understanding culture and society. Cultural values shape the norms, customs, and behaviors of different social groups and communities. These values are transmitted

through socialization processes, such as family, education, and media, and can vary significantly across societies (qtd in Adega & Torhemen, 2023).

Furthermore, values have a profound impact on politics and governance. Political ideologies often reflect underlying values, such as freedom, justice, and equality. Political debates and policymaking frequently revolve around competing values and the compromises required to achieve societal goals. Understanding the values that underlie political ideologies is crucial for grasping the dynamics of governance and decision-making.

Basically, the concept of "value" is a complex and multifaceted one, holding different meanings in various academic fields and contexts. Values guide ethical choices, shape economic behaviors, define cultural norms, and influence political ideologies. They represent the core principles and beliefs that individuals and societies use to navigate complex moral, economic, social, and political landscapes.

National integration has to be understood and defined historically. National integration in simple terms is a process whereby political actors in distinct ethnic or linguistic setting of a nation shift or transfer their loyalties expectations and political activities towards a new centre. O'Connell & Beckett (1985) however, corroborate this definition much more soundly by clarifying that national integration involves collective inter-related actions to promote certain mutual interests, usually ranging over national matters of welfare, order and defence or security (6). According to them, an integrated nation consequently, is characterized by a high level of cooperation between the various groups and sub-groups for the benefit of all the members (O'Connell & Beckett, 1985, 7). It involves the extent of the sharedness of the value symbols of a nation (such as, flag and coat of arms), models of communication (e.g. National language) and common

experience among the members of the nation. It also, covers all measures, agreements and developments which aim at achieving unity and co-operation among various groups of the nation.

Meanwhile, according to Haas (1961), national integration is the process where elites or key stakeholders with national outlook are persuaded to shift their expectations, activities, and loyalties towards the nation's interests, unity, and development (7). Asaju & Egberi (2002) see national integration as creating awareness of common identity among the citizens in spite of their differences in religious beliefs, castes, language, and origin. National integration is an attempt put in place by the government and all concern individual and groups with the core aim of promoting a sense of unity, togetherness and peaceful co-existence among the citizens of a particular country (Asaju & Egben, 2002).

Liddle, on the other hand viewed national integration, otherwise termed nation- building, national unity, national cohesion, national loyalty, or the national question “involves consensus on the limits of the political community and on the nature of the political regime (qtd in Adegboye & Torhemen, 2023).” This simply means the forging of agreement among the members of a state on the extent of unity they wish to have as well as the type of political structure and institutions they desire. It is also a “process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious city, based on an order its members regard as equitably harmonious” (qtd in Adegboye & Torhemen, 2023).

Historical Context of National Integration in Nigeria

The historical context of national integration in Nigeria is a complex narrative that encompasses the pre-independence era, post-independence challenges, and the significant diversity among the country's major ethnic groups. These historical factors have played a pivotal role in

shaping Nigeria's ongoing struggle for national cohesion. During the pre-independence era, Nigeria was a British colony consisting of various territories, each with its own cultural, ethnic, and religious identities as well as values. The British colonial administration had a divide-and-rule policy, which contributed to the deep-rooted ethnic divisions in the country and of course creating much problems for their cultural imbalance in terms of values systems. In the North, there was a predominantly Muslim population, while the South was religiously diverse, with a significant Christian population. These divisions were further exacerbated by the different colonial policies and systems of administration applied in the North and South. This pre-independence period sowed the seeds of regional and ethnic rivalries that would persist after Nigeria gained independence in 1960 (Smith, 92).

The post-independence era in Nigeria was marked by significant challenges related to national integration. The newly independent nation faced a range of issues, including ethnic tensions, political instability, and economic disparities. The First Republic (1963-1966) was characterized by regional competition and power struggles among the major ethnic groups, particularly the Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani. These struggles culminated in the Biafran Civil War from 1967 to 1970, which resulted from the secessionist aspirations of the Igbo people in the Southeast. The war had devastating consequences, both in terms of loss of life and the exacerbation of ethnic divisions (Falola, 2016).

Nigeria's ethnic diversity is a defining characteristic of the nation. The four major ethnic groups, the Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani and Tiv are often identified as the largest and most influential. The Yoruba, primarily located in the Southwest, have a rich cultural heritage and a history of self-governance. The Igbo, located in the Southeast, have a

strong sense of identity and are known for their entrepreneurial spirit. The Hausa-Fulani, residing mainly in the North, have a history of centralized emirate systems and adherence to Islam. Asserting to this effect want affirms that the Tiv of central Nigeria are known for their strength in farming as well as a rich cultural heritage and values (Wang, 2004). In addition to these four major groups, Nigeria is home to over 250 distinct ethnicities, each with its own languages, traditions, and customs just like their value systems. This diversity, while enriching the nation's cultural tapestry, also presents a challenge for national integration.

It is pertinent to state here that the historical context of national integration in Nigeria is deeply intertwined with the pre-independence era, post-independence challenges, and the country's remarkable ethnic diversity. The legacy of colonialism, ethnic rivalries, and the Biafran Civil War have all played a significant role in shaping Nigeria's path toward national cohesion even though the Biafran agitation is still ongoing. The diversity among the major ethnic groups and the multitude of smaller ethnicities presents both an opportunity for cultural richness and a challenge for maintaining a unified nation. Nigeria's ongoing efforts to address these historical factors and promote national integration are crucial for the country's continued development and stability.

Role of Values in National Integration

The role of values in national integration is significant as they shape the behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs of individuals in a society. Values are said to be the enduring principles that guide people's actions and decisions. In the context of national integration, values play a crucial role in promoting unity and cohesion among a diverse population.

Cultural and religious diversities are prominent features of Nigerian society. The country is home to various ethnic groups and

religious affiliations, including Christianity and Islam and also the African traditionalist. These cultural and religious differences can either foster tolerance and respect for diversity or lead to division and conflict. Cultural values, such as respect for elders and communal living, can serve as unifying factors. Additionally, religious values that promote love, compassion, and ethical behavior can contribute to a sense of common purpose (Adejuyigbe, 2012)..

Social values are also essential in national integration. These values include the principles of equity, justice, and fairness. In a diverse society like Nigeria, it is crucial to uphold social values that ensure equal opportunities and protection for all citizens, irrespective of their cultural or religious background. The recognition of these values helps in reducing social inequalities and promoting social harmony.

Social values play a crucial role in national integration, a very good example can be seen among the Tiv people of central Nigeria. The Tiv, one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, have a rich cultural heritage and a distinct social structure and values. Central to their social values is the principle of communal living and mutual support, that is to say that life in African (Tiv) communalism is based on the philosophy of live-and-let-live. This principle is based on the concept of 'clan vital' and applies to concrete community. Community as expressed in the socio-political philosophy of *ya na angbian* which literally means “eat give to your brother” this is an important characteristic feature of the Tiv world-view. As reiterated in such maxims as *kon mon ngu lun ikyo ga* (single tree cannot make a forest); *ka tem imongu mbagbera ve fe iwa ye* (it is only by sitting together that the people of Mbagbera come to know the art of black-smiting) (Atel qtd in Torhemen, 2018). It therefore means that the Tiv people have a strong sense of community and solidarity, and these values are instrumental in fostering

unity and integration within their society (Orkar, 2010).

In Tiv society for example, social values emphasize the importance of respecting elders and traditional authorities. This respect for authority figures is a key aspect of their social fabric, contributing to social cohesion and harmony. The Tiv people place high value on consensus building and conflict resolution through communal discussions and traditional methods, further promoting peaceful coexistence (Ayatse, 2015).

The Tiv social values are closely tied to their cultural practices, which include communal farming, traditional festivals, and (*kwav*) age-grade systems. These cultural practices help maintain social order and unity among the Tiv people, as they foster a sense of belonging and shared identity. In this way, social values serve as a vital component of national integration within the Tiv community in central Nigeria.

In Nigeria, political values such as democracy, the rule of law, and good governance play a significant role in national integration. Nigeria's experience with democracy, despite its challenges, exemplifies the potential of this political value to promote inclusivity and unity. The country's transition from military rule to democratic governance in 1999 marked a turning point in its history, allowing diverse ethnic and religious groups to participate in the political process. While Nigeria's democracy has faced various issues, such as electoral irregularities, it remains a key instrument for national integration (Nwankwo, 2014).

The rule of law is crucial in Nigeria for ensuring that justice is administered fairly and equitably. The judiciary's role in upholding the rule of law and protecting the rights of all citizens is vital. While challenges exist, including corruption within the legal system, the rule of law is a fundamental value that contributes to social harmony and a sense of

belonging among Nigeria's diverse population (Alemika, 2010).

Good governance principles, including transparency, accountability, and efficient service delivery, are essential for promoting national integration in Nigeria. Effective governance fosters trust and confidence in the government, ensuring that resources are utilized for the common good. Nigeria's commitment to good governance principles is a critical component of its efforts to create a more inclusive and unified nation (Kura, 2015).

We can therefore affirm that political values, such as democracy, rule of law, and good governance, play a significant role in national integration. These values create a framework for inclusive political participation and representation, allowing diverse voices to be heard in the political process. The rule of law ensures that justice is administered fairly and impartially, which is crucial for building trust and confidence in the government.

Possibly, the role of values in national integration is multi-faceted. Cultural and religious diversity can either be a source of strength or division, depending on how values are interpreted and practiced. Social values promote social equity and harmony, while political values establish the framework for inclusive governance. Recognizing and upholding these values is essential for fostering national integration and cohesion in a diverse society like Nigeria.

The Challenge of Values in National Integration

“The multi-challenges confronting Nigeria requires urgent attention. Nigeria has laws but lacks the will power to implement those laws. As such, both the leaders and the led must do the needful to save Nigeria from collapsing”

(Daudu, 2020, 193)

The challenge of values in the context of national integration is a multifaceted issue that often intersects with ethno-religious conflicts. Ethno-religious conflicts frequently arise from differing cultural and religious values and beliefs, creating divisions within society. These conflicts can undermine the sense of national identity and cohesion (Smith, 2018). Corruption exacerbates these divisions by eroding trust among various ethnic and religious groups. Ethical values, as emphasized by Allen, play a pivotal role in mitigating these issues. Allen's (2010) study highlights the potential of a society's moral values to act as a binding force that transcends religious and ethnic differences. National integration, the process of fostering unity and solidarity among diverse populations within a nation, faces significant challenges related to values. One fundamental challenge lies in the diversity of cultural, religious, and ideological values within a nation. Different groups may have distinct sets of values that can create tensions and hinder the formation of a cohesive national identity. Balancing the need for unity with respect for diverse values requires thoughtful navigation to prevent the imposition of one set of values over others, fostering inclusivity instead of exclusion.

Another challenge arises from political and socioeconomic disparities that may lead to conflicting values associated with power, wealth, and privilege. When there are substantial economic inequalities, marginalized groups may feel excluded from the benefits of national integration, leading to resentment and a lack of commitment to shared

values. Addressing these disparities and ensuring equitable distribution of resources is crucial for building a sense of shared purpose and preventing the erosion of national values.

Globalization adds another layer of complexity to the challenges of national integration. Increased exposure to diverse cultures and ideas through globalization can create a clash of values as societies grapple with traditional norms and external influences. The rapid flow of information and ideas can challenge existing value systems, leading to cultural tensions and identity crises. Striking a balance between preserving cultural heritage and adapting to global influences is a delicate task that requires a nuanced approach to national integration.

And lastly, the role of education in shaping values and fostering national integration cannot be overlooked. However, education systems may face challenges in imparting values that resonate with diverse populations. Differences in educational curricula, access to quality education, and varying levels of emphasis on values education can contribute to a fragmented national identity. A comprehensive approach to education that encourages critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, and an understanding of shared values is essential for overcoming these challenges and promoting a cohesive national fabric. Overall, the critical examination of values in national integration underscores the need for inclusive policies, economic equity, cultural understanding, and educational reforms to build a resilient and united nation.

Regionalism and tribalism further complicate national integration by perpetuating localized identities that are sometimes at odds with the broader national identity. Harris (2009) argues that “regionalism and tribalism are obstacles to national integration, as they often prioritize regional or tribal interests over national unity” (32). To address these

challenges, various initiatives and efforts have been launched. Government policies play a crucial role in promoting national integration, as Johnson (2019) contends. Well-crafted government policies can bridge divides and encourage a sense of national belonging).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also contribute significantly to fostering national integration. Anderson's (2014) research illustrates that NGOs often act as intermediaries between different groups, promoting dialogue, understanding, and collaboration. They serve as essential partners in the effort to bridge divides. Educational reforms are another vital aspect of this process. Smith underscores that curriculum changes that promote a shared national history and values are essential in creating a sense of unity among the youth (112).

Successful case studies, such as the one described by Bennett, demonstrate that when diverse groups come together for a common cause, it can lead to improved national integration. Bennett's (2015) case study highlights an instance where different communities worked collaboratively to address a common issue, resulting in enhanced cohesion and understanding among them. Despite these successful initiatives, ongoing challenges persist, as highlighted by Patel (2015). Deep-seated prejudices and historical grievances can be stubborn obstacles to lasting national unity.

Therefore, the challenge of values in national integration is complex and is often intertwined with ethno-religious conflicts, corruption, regionalism, and tribalism. Government policies, non-governmental organizations, and educational reforms are essential components in efforts to promote national integration. Successful case studies provide valuable insights into how different groups can work

together to achieve cohesion. Nonetheless, ongoing challenges remain, particularly in addressing deep-rooted prejudices and historical grievances that continue to pose obstacles to lasting national unity.

The Initiatives and Efforts to Promote National Integration

Promoting national integration involves a range of initiatives and efforts, with government policies playing a significant role in shaping the national landscape. Government policies often provide the foundation for fostering unity. For instance, well-crafted policies can help bridge divides and encourage a sense of national belonging (Johnson, 2019). These policies may include measures that promote cultural exchange, celebrate diversity, and ensure equal opportunities for all citizens. In essence, they serve as a framework for building a cohesive and inclusive nation.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can also contribute substantially to the promotion of national integration. These organizations often serve as intermediaries between different groups and work to promote dialogue, understanding, and collaboration. They play a vital role in bridging divides and fostering a sense of unity among diverse communities (Anderson, 2014). NGOs frequently engage in community-building activities, educational programs, and initiatives that encourage cross-cultural interactions, all of which contribute to a more cohesive society.

Educational reforms are a crucial element in the process of promoting national integration and values. Educational institutions have the power to shape the values and beliefs of future generations. Curriculum changes that emphasize a shared national history and values can be essential in creating a sense of unity among the youth (Smith, 2011). Inclusive and equitable education systems that promote cultural awareness and understanding can help break down the barriers that separate different

communities and promote a shared sense of national identity.

Meanwhile, initiatives to promote national integration, including government policies, the work of non-governmental organizations, and educational reforms, are integral to fostering unity in diverse societies. Government policies provide the structure for building a cohesive nation, while NGOs act as facilitators of dialogue and understanding. Educational reforms, particularly those that emphasize a shared national identity, contribute to the long-term process of nurturing unity among future generations.

Case Studies in Successful National Integration Initiative and Ongoing Challenges

Case studies of successful national integration initiatives provide valuable insights into how diverse communities can work together to achieve cohesion. Bennett's (2015) case study, for example, highlights an instance where different groups came together to address a common issue, resulting in enhanced cohesion and understanding among them. Such success stories are essential as they demonstrate that when individuals from various backgrounds collaborate towards a shared goal, they can transcend differences and build a stronger national identity.

However, despite successful initiatives, ongoing challenges persist. And that is the reason why Patel (2016) emphasizes that deep-seated prejudices and historical grievances can be stubborn obstacles to lasting national unity. These challenges may stem from historical conflicts or deeply ingrained biases that continue to affect societal dynamics. Additionally, maintaining the momentum of successful integration initiatives can be challenging, as they often require sustained effort to ensure that unity endures in the face of evolving circumstances and emerging issues.

Consequently, case studies of successful national integration initiatives offer valuable examples of how communities can overcome differences and build stronger national bonds. Nevertheless, the road to national integration is fraught with ongoing challenges, including historical grievances and deep-seated prejudices. Addressing these challenges requires a long-term commitment to fostering understanding, tolerance, and cooperation among diverse groups.

The Role of Leadership in Shaping Values and Integration

Leadership plays a critical role in shaping values and promoting national integration in various spheres, including political leadership, religious and traditional leaders, and civil society. Political leaders have a significant impact on the values and cohesion of a nation. They set the tone for the country's policies and often have the authority to enact changes that promote unity. As Johnson (2019) argues: “effective political leadership can be instrumental in fostering national integration through the formulation of inclusive policies and the promotion of values that encourage unity” (82).

Religious and traditional leaders also wield considerable influence in shaping values and promoting integration. These leaders are often seen as moral authorities within their communities, and their guidance can have a profound impact on social norms and values. They play a crucial role in bridging the gaps between different religious and ethnic groups and promoting tolerance. As Smith (2011) points out, religious and traditional leaders can facilitate dialogue and understanding, acting as unifying figures within society.

Civil society, which encompasses non-governmental organizations, community groups, and individuals, also plays a pivotal role in shaping values and fostering integration. They often initiate grassroots

movements and awareness campaigns that promote inclusivity and understanding. Anderson's (2014) research highlights the role of civil society in building bridges between different groups and promoting dialogue and collaboration.

Leadership, whether in the political, religious, or civil society domains, is central to shaping values and promoting national integration. Effective leaders can influence policies, bridge divides, and create a sense of unity among diverse communities. Their actions and guidance are essential in the ongoing effort to build a more cohesive and integrated society.

Suggestions for Enhancing National Integration and Values in Nigeria

To enhance national integration through values that promote tolerance and understanding, it is essential to emphasize the importance of education and awareness campaigns. Educational institutions should include curricula that not only teach core subjects but also focus on promoting values of tolerance, inclusivity, and understanding. As Smith (2017) suggests, educational reforms that incorporate lessons on diverse cultures, religions, and histories can help students develop a more inclusive worldview. Awareness campaigns at the community and national levels should aim to create a culture of respect for differences, celebrating diversity, and fostering empathy. Such efforts can help reduce stereotypes and prejudices, fostering an atmosphere of tolerance.

Education remains an important aspect of human advancement, and investment in education is the best form of human capital development and the introduction of virtual learning and teaching during COVID-19 lockdown in Nigeria brought about the emergence of the new normal (Awogu-Maduagwu, Daudu, Osimen & Adetunji, 2023). The 21st century is festooned with advanced technological advancements. As such, AI

knowledge and application is necessary to enhance education and computer literacy (Daudu, Osimen & Shuaibu, 2023). Nigeria needs to standardize its naming system and invariably its education system for proper placement and recognition in the world (Osimen, Daudu & Awogu-Maduagwu, 2023).

It is also crucial to combat corruption and *Mailumo* (self-centeredness), the philosophy of *Kenkencity* (it must be me or else no one) and ethical lapses. Corruption erodes trust and exacerbates divisions within a society, hindering national integration. Government agencies must implement and enforce anti-corruption measures, ensuring transparency and accountability in public affairs. In fact ethical leadership in government is essential to combat corruption and foster national unity. Similarly, civil society organizations can play a significant role by monitoring and advocating against corruption, un-necessary agitations thereby promoting a culture of ethical values that strengthen national cohesion.

Promoting tolerance and understanding, strengthening education and awareness, and combating corruption are intertwined efforts that should be supported by strong leadership and government policies. Leaders at all levels must set an example by prioritizing these values and supporting initiatives that promote them, basically leadership is key to driving change in society. By implementing and sustaining these suggestions, a nation can build a more inclusive, cohesive, and integrated society. Also, for democracy to thrive in Nigeria, Nigerians must be democrat to the core by respecting democratic principles wholeheartedly, and not according to the Nigerian way of doing things (Daudu, 2020). Attitudinal crisis if properly tackled can guarantee and promote good governance in Africa and Nigeria in particular (Daudu, Osimen & Amodu,

2024). In the same vein, self-worth and self-reliant are required of Africans (Nigerians in particular) (Daudu, 2022) as well as patriotism and uncompromising justice as indispensable tools to solving Nigeria's national problems (Daudu, 2019). Little wonder Okpanachi (2022) argues that corruption, bad leadership and governance are obstacles to the national growth and development of Nigeria's economy.

Conclusion

The question of values and their role in national integration is a crucial issue in Nigeria, a country characterized by its rich cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. As highlighted by numerous scholars, the challenge of fostering national integration amidst these diversities is both complex and pressing. Ethno-religious conflicts, corruption, regionalism, political and tribalism have all posed formidable obstacles to unity in Nigeria. However, it is clear that values can play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges and promoting national cohesion.

Efforts to promote national integration have been multifaceted, encompassing initiatives by government policies, non-governmental organizations, and educational reforms. Government policies have the potential to shape the values and identities of citizens, fostering inclusivity and unity, ultimately well-crafted policies can bridge divides and encourage a sense of national belonging. Non-governmental organizations, often acting as intermediaries between different groups, have played a crucial role in promoting dialogue, understanding, and collaboration. Educational reforms that emphasize shared national history and values can instil a sense of unity among the younger generations in Nigeria.

Despite successful national integration initiatives, ongoing challenges remain, including historical grievances and deep-seated

prejudices. Leadership, whether political, religious, or from civil society, plays a vital role in shaping values and promoting national integration. Therefore, a concerted effort is required to foster values of tolerance, understanding, and ethical conduct within society. By addressing these issues and implementing recommendations such as strengthening education, awareness, and anti-corruption measures, Nigeria can aspire to build a more inclusive, cohesive, and integrated nation.

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