Research Article

THE EFFECT OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY ON SOCIAL RELATIONS WITHIN THE INHABITANTS OF BUEA, SOUTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

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Abstract

Every human community has its unique culture which must be respected and enhanced by its members. Culture shapes the way people see themselves and others, and how they interact with others. The town of Buea has recently experienced a tremendous population growth rate with the pull factor been its calm nature despite the present socio-political crisis. The urbanism of the area could be characterised by the proliferation of many churches, the presence of many associations and cultural groups. In the midst of all this, it is sometimes very difficult to actually know people's personality or cultural affiliations; the cultural diversity of people found in Buea, and how this diversity affects their relationship with one another had been a great concern. This study therefore is aimed at examining the effect of ethnic diversity on social relation within the different ethnic groups that are found around Buea. Data was gotten through critical observation, and with the use of an open-ended questionnaire and interview guide, vital information was obtained from 100 respondents drawn from the neighborhoods of Molyko, Great-Soppo, and Buea-Town and purposive sampling technique was deployed. The data was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative approach. The findings reveal that aspects of ethnic diversity which are very eminent amongst the settlers of Buea, have to a certain extend affected their social relations though in most cases they are doing all to adhere to the principle of 'unity in diversity'. The research concludes that though people relate at a reduced rate through ethnic lines, social relations amongst the different ethnic groups in Buea is cordial; despite their differences they are doing all to ensure that they strive for the same passion and common goals. The researcher therefore recommends that the government of Cameroon should develop Pidgin Language and make it an official language and that it should ensure that the Department of Cultural Sciences be extended to other State and Private Institutions in Cameroonians.

Keywords: Ethnic Diversity, Social Relations, Ethnicity, Ethnic Group, Buea.

INTRODUCTION

Human groups are different in biological characteristics, language, cultural tradition and forms (Jing, Masamichi and Li, 2006). This implies that all nations are multi-ethnic in nature with differences in the socio-cultural sphere between the different ethnic groups. Amidst this, ethnic differences are meant to serve advantageous positions in the building block of social relations of people in the society. Ethnic diversity within Cameroonian societies increases due to the arrangement among nations that typically includes the reduction or elimination of trade barriers and the coordination of monetary and fiscal policies, the quest for formal education at the different levels, the proliferation in trade, and the movement of people from one country or locality to another (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2002). Therefore, it is paramount to have an insight on the impact/effect of ethnic diversity on social relations, the economy and living conditions among those within the territorial confines of the nation Cameroon. Previous research works have turn to establish the validity of some negative relationship that have existed between ethnic diversity and social relations, ethnic diversity and growth, ethnic diversity and the quality of public goods installed in an area (Allport, 1954). It also stood tall on the fact that people doubt the honesty of those they consider unalike to themselves (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2002). Putnam (2007) in the work of Loxbo (2018) reveals that a distress-causing outcome of growing ethnic diversity becomes noticeable that people 'hold stubbornly to a position', while according to Delhey and

Newton (2005) cited in Loxbo (2018), communities with a high level of belief in the honesty, integrity and reliability of others are often ethnically of the same kind or nature and supports the principle of equality for all people. Furthermore, Allport, (1954) argues that the feeling of emotional closeness, connectedness and supportiveness among various ethnic groups can to a certain extent decreases in-group partiality that prevents objective consideration of an issue or situation. Thus, Stolle *et al.,* (2008) perceived it and brought into existence the inclusion of antecedent out-group members. To buttress this, Letki, (2008) holds that the imbricating states of difficulty in inequality and deprivation that needs to be resolved are the linchpin hampering the extension of trust to a relatively large circle of unfamiliar others and harmonious living together in the society. With this, Hooghe (2007) cited in Loxbo (2018) pointed out that, conceding that socio-economic factors moderate the effect of ethnic diversity, the future of the belief in the honesty, integrity and reliability of others is expected to be determined by the way society handles group boundaries, group recognition and patterns of contact and segregation. Uslaner (2012), in line with this affirms that when every individual gets an equal right to access all the available resources and opportunities and benefits directly or indirectly, it brings about wall-to-wall feelings of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit, thereby, building bridges for trust in more-and-more multi-ethnic societies. Nevertheless, Kumlin and Rothstein (2010) ascertain that institutions that are free from favouritism, self-interest, bias or deception, conforming to established standards are to a distinctly greater extent imperative for enhancing social trust, hence a healthy social relation among people in heterogeneous societies. The fate of harmonious living together in multi-ethnic societies like Buea

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remains a subject of discussion (Paige, 2002). This article embarks on investigating the effect of ethnic diversity on social relations in Buea and was intended at establishing the reliability to theories that link diversity to mistrust and negative correlation to social relations. For better understanding of the geographical location of Buea, see figure one below.
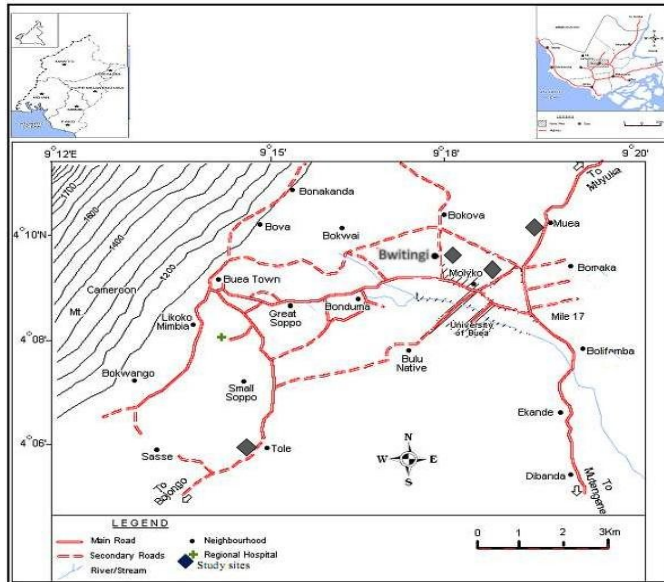
Source: Uploaded by J.O. Akpotuzor, https://www.researchgate.net.retrieved on the 4/04/2023 at 10pm

Figure I. Spatial Layout of Buea Municipality

Statement of the problem

Buea has grown massively in population with the influx of different people coming from different towns and villages to settle and search for a greener pasture. This town of legendary hospitality is also characterised by the proliferation of many churches, associations and cultural groups. In the midst of all this, it is difficult to know who is who, the cultural diversity found in Buea, and how this diversity affects relations between inhabitants of the area. The diversity may be that of religious, ethno-tribal, or ethno-cultural. It is also very difficult to actually know how the people are coping and living with all these diversities; whether they are interacting with others or there is tension between them as a result of their diversity. Unlike in other towns like Yaoundé where people are assigned tag names such as "les anglofools", "les Biafra", "les enfants de Ni-John", "l'ennemi dans…la maison" Tongtina, Sardina and the use of hate speech and xenophobic behaviour is very common thereby creating tension amongst them. Previous research reveals that Buea has distanced itself from such tags and tension irrespective of its diverse nature. Moreover, since the 90s, the use of the offensive term like "come-no-go", synonymous to a dreaded skin disease, used to degrade people from the grass fields or *graffi* is scarcely been heard now our days. The great bone of contention therefore to the researcher is: what makes Buea not a conflagration for ethnic lines to occur? What are the strategies put in place to ensure unity in diversity amongst those living in Buea? Although studies have been done on aspects of ethnicity in Cameroon, since the emergence of the ongoing socio-political crisis, little or no study has been conducted on aspects of ethnic diversity and social relation in Buea. It was as a result of this that this study was intended at investigating issues of ethnic diversity and

evaluate its effects on social relation amongst those living in Buea.

LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL REVIEW

This research made use of two theories: Symbolic Interactionism theory by George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) and Social Constructivism theory by Vygotsky (1968). These theories have influenced discussions on the dynamism in ethnic relationships and have profound impact on social relations of different group of people in a community such as Buea. These theories asserted that society is a product of the everyday social interactions among people, a product of shared symbols such as language. They rely on the reality of human's day-to-day actions which are interactions (Mead, 1934). It stresses that people create, negotiate, and change social meanings through the process of interaction. To them, reality is seen as dynamic and people as active knowers, that is, people are linked to social action and perspectives, and knowledge as an instrumental force that enables people to solve problems. It holds that human development is socially placed, and knowledge is built through a mutual or reciprocal action with others (McKinley, 2015). More so, people work together to construct artifacts, language and culture are the frameworks through which humans experience, transmit information, knowledge and comprehend reality (Detel, 2001). Language and culture play basic and fundamental roles both in human intellectual development and in how humans perceive the world.

METHODOLOGY

Facts concerning the effect of ethnic diversity and social relations in Buea were obtained from two sources such as primary (survey questionnaire, interview and observations) and secondary sources (consultation of archives, official documents, letters and project reports, Maps, published and unpublished dissertations, theses and internet. Secondary data was from most recent editions. Because of the difficulties encountered in studying all the ethnic groups found in the South West Region, the researcher was limited only to ethnic groups found in Buea. Convenient and purposive sampling techniques were used respectively as it targets the key informant (three multi-ethnic neighbourhoods: Molyko, Buea-town and Great-Soppo) thereby achieving objectivity and subjectivity and the population was divided into age, sex, occupation, level of education, ethnic group of origin and income level. With the use of questionnaire, open and close ended questions were administered to 100 persons by the researcher and research assistant. The research took into consideration three nodal points from where people can relate or be at conflict with one another. These were the market, church, and neighbourhood. These were areas targeted in collecting data. The fly-on-the-wall critical observation method was used to obtain an insight of the direct experiences of the people as meaning-making agents in their everyday life. For the sake of confidentiality and ethical considerations, the interviewees' names were not taken and what they said was not recorded but codes were assigned to the different categories of respondents. A signed copy of the authorization from the institution was showed to them in other to win their trust. All above involved lot of ethical issues, organizing the field and embarking first on recognition trip to create preliminary rapport. Lastly, participant observation was also done side by side field work period. This gives a detail outlook on what is

on the ground and reduces the chances of favouritism. A descriptive analysis technique was employed such that the data was described in a constructive way and patterns emerged that fulfilled every condition of the data. It involved reading the data, demarcating the data, eliminating irrelevancies, grouping and naming data into constituents, and arranging the data into themes that accurately and fully describe the participants' lived experiences. More so, the data was analyzed narratively, involving capturing and reviewing respondents' information to get more insight into their lived experiences. With the use of excel 2013 for windows 2013, figures and tables were gotten. This was geared towards arriving at results that were to be forced to experience the inference of general laws from particular instances to general and qualitative concerns, judgment and conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The extent to which ethnic diversity affects social relations in Buea

Ethnic Diversity and House Allocation

Shelter from time memorial had been very paramount to everyone be it where one was born or where one plans to settle. Thus, the inhabitants of Buea are either renting or living in their constructed houses as shown below.
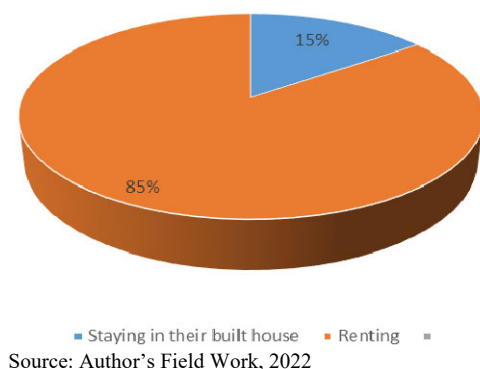

Source: Author's Field Work, 2022

Figure 2. House Status of Respondents

Figure 2 above indicates that 85% of the respondents are renting while 15% reside in their own built houses. Those residing in their owned houses said owning a house gives them a sense of relief from rents payment and self-aggrandizement. Building a house, they said was like a dream, and thanks to those around who encouraged them and even informed them on the availability of a land to be leased. Some of them added that being delivered in Buea served as an added advantage in the expansion of their social networking and employment opportunities. To them, their cordial relationship with those around them triggered their willingness to own properties in a neighborhood and area which they do not stem from. With this, the respondents revealed that it was due to trust between the residents of the cluster, friends from other clusters, norms experienced in common, the profits of social reciprocal action, and the aggregative action towards a common intention that enabled them acquire land and were able to build. The potency of the state of connectedness and mutual dealings between inhabitants of Buea act upon the decisiveness to lay the groundwork for belonging and possessing a property in a neighborhood. Awaworyi and Smyth (2021) advanced that owning a house often symbolizes the most superior status,

thus, promoting a psychic well-being. It is a great significant propeller for the accruement of wealth particularly in Buea which has lived through rapid increase in living accommodations values. Rohe and Stegman, (1994) made it clear that owning a house is linked with increased self-pride and higher life gratification. Similarly, those renting reported that during the search for a house, the house owners (landlords) always requested to know from which ethnic group were they coming from as well as their main source of income. Other landlords will even go further to ask for marital status, previous residence and reasons for relocating. More so, the respondents held that the request by the house owners was geared towards taking inventory of the category of people seeking accommodation in their compound, all in a bit to avoid accommodating problematic individuals who may not be able to meet up with their rents and other demands. The preference of married couples by some landlords was to avoid unnecessary sexual scandals in their compounds. To many, the above questions serve as a guide to who actually they are to leave with since they are used to leaving with people from divergent ethnic groups. Though in some houses the landlords were fortunate to have people from the same ethnic group, in most cases the tenants were from a different ethnic group and they all accepted that they leave in harmony as was evidence through the paying of house rent, electricity and water bills which were distributed equally and based on consumption. As regards the time to which the landlords respond to a tenant's house worry ranging from perforated corrugated sheets causing water to drip to the house, painting or plumbing work, they all revealed that it depends on the tenant's faithfulness to rents payments.

Similarly, the 15% of respondents who were house owners revealed that they were not inhabitants from Bakweri origin but that land was sold to them without asking about their ethnic origins and so do the same to their tenants. They added that they concentrated more on the attitude of the person requesting accommodation in their compound, and the person's source of income to avoid harbouring criminals; though in actual sense, it is very difficult to know who is who at first site. A landlord reveals that "*we do harbour people from our same ethnic group in our compound as tenants but the funniest of it is that our tribe's people are instead the one's bridging the terms of agreement, and making us regret why we accepted lodging them in the first place*", (Interview with key informant one, male Landlord, aged 55 years, on the 15th July 2022) This therefore constraints the relationship between the landlords and the tenants thereby resulting to a negative effect of ethnic cleavage on social relation.

The right or chances to obtain a house tend to be equal irrespective of once ethnic group. This gives evidence of the overwhelming preference in Cameroon for home ownership. A similar situation was noticed by Finney and Bethan (2013) in England and Wales where house ownership or landlord-tenant relationship was inversely proportional. This preference was actively boosted by successive governments through elaborate and systematic plan of action such as 'right to buy,' 'shared ownership' and 'help to buy' (ibid). The proportion of any ethnic group living in rented houses does not vary between clusters in Buea. No ethnic group has a distinct geographical area of habitation. Compounds and neighborhoods with haphazard assortment of diverse ethnic people denotes a decrease in social distance between ethnic groups, and an increase in social relations between them.
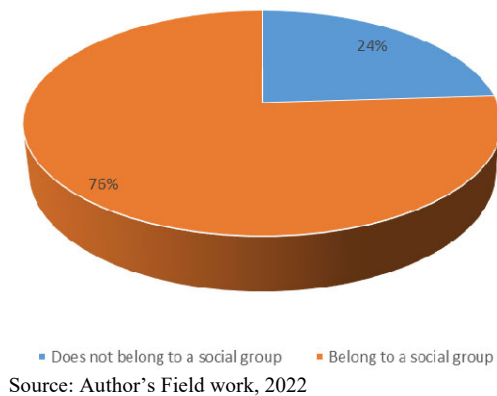
Source: Author's Field work, 2022

Figure 3. Social Interaction rate of Respondents

Figure 3 above shows that 24% of the respondents do not belong to any social group. This is due to the following: low self-esteem, lack of finances to meet up with the group's financial obligation and the fear of joining a cult. Lack of finances can lead to lack of confidence and esteem lost. Low self-esteem negatively affects one's social life and one's self can become painfully self-conscious; having the feelings that those who judge will also be judged. In this line, they will be forced to distance themselves from social situations (Woolfe, 2019). On the other hand, 76% of the respondents belongs to at least one social group and they attested that they are joining different social groups due to the following reasons: objectives of the group, activities carried out by the group, the morals portrayed by the group, the lifestyle of its members, the impacts of the group to its members and because their friends are members of that group. On the same trajectory, they also take into consideration equality in age and social level before joining a social group. With this, there is positive relationship between ethnic diversity and social relations.

From research, it is observed that social interactions between inhabitants of Buea is spiced up by many activities which are vividly expatiated below:

➢ **Support amongst Inhabitants of Buea**

The spirit of togetherness and harmony amongst the members of these different groups, and also amongst those who do not belong to any social group is instilled through the involvement in voluntary support of activities. They voluntarily mobilize their resources, either as group members in a church, charitable organizations, professional groups, to support one another and those they consider the less privilege. These support include the following: financial support (contribution of money to support their members and friends when need be), social support (accepting and understanding one another, calming their fears, and reliably be there for one another), support through prayers, (boost the morale of their members and friends with counselling and encouraging words, and then praying for God's intervention upon their lives), belonging support (doing things together and giving hopes to one another) and information/educational support (listening to educative and other interesting programs and news and relaying friends with such vital information, and also help each other in understanding the content taught in school). In this line, funds are raised to support one another in joyous and sad events, regardless of religious or cultural backgrounds. Members are empowered to ensure they have sociocultural and socioeconomic security. They also promote themselves culturally and raises funds to support developmental projects.

With respect to the desire for solidarity and the need to live together and share views, people with common ambitions and passion to commit themselves with social aspects like charity, "njangi" and savings come together. This provides a platform for social interaction, mutual assistance and self-help. Thus, social responsibility between members is promoted. In their different social groups, members willingly teach others their different traditional songs, drum styles and dance steps so that the group can be lively. This period of togetherness is seen as a period of sharing inspiring ideas, time for intellectual exchanges, a period for encouragement and belonging, and a period to feel safe and secure, have fun, laugh out worries, and discuss without borders. Scientific results according to the National Institute of Health {NIH, 2017} reveal that one's social connections to others be it romantic partners, family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, clubs, and religious groups have potency on one's biology and well-being (NIH, 2017). To further expatiate, the inhabitants of Buea have a positive attachment or belonging to their social groups to which they belong; and their orientation is geared towards the feelings of responsibility for the common good and willingness to comply to social rules and norms. Attachment is a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings (Bowlby, 1969). The level of attachment to a greater extent influences moral uprightness of people of the different ethnic groups. This has an impact on people's ability to learn and assimilate knowledge as well as its application. Ainsworth (1989) on her part believes that people who are securely attached seem better adjusted socially, have higher self-esteem, and are better behaved in the society that those who are not for secured social ties results to longer lifespan. Social relationships help to reduce stress and heart-related risks and such connections may make one to have a more positive outlook on life and a better physical and mental health (NIH, 2017). On the other hand, loneliness and social isolation may result in poorer health, depression, and increased risk of early death (ibid).

➢ **Language of Communication**

The language of communication observed within the different groups in Buea include Pidgin English, English language, and Ethnic language. Pidgin English and English language are the most commonly used with the exception of a village meetings where the tribal language is used. At the level of the village meetings, the main justification behind the use of ethnic language is to ensure secrecy though in most cases salient points are interpreted in either Pidgin or English Language to outsiders who are married from that ethnic group. This affirms with the social constructivism theory that stipulates that language is the framework through which humans experience, transmit information, know and comprehend reality (Detel, 2001). According to Vygotsky (1986), language plays a basic and fundamental role both in human intellectual development and in how humans perceive the world (Ibid). Language provides meaning to humans by means of symbols. Human interaction and communication, are facilitated by words, gestures plus symbols that have acquired an agreed upon conventional meaning (Blumer, 1969). Humans' linguistic abilities as quoted by Detel (2001), reveals that, language enables people to overcome the natural limitations of their perceptual field (the totality of the environment that an individual perceives at a particular time) by imposing culturally defined sense and meaning on the world. Moreover, Mead in the work of Blumer (934) also ascertains that, human beings have the capacity for language and thus can think, reason,

communicate, and coordinate their actions with others. The ability to think is shaped by social interactions. From interactions, people learn the symbols and meanings that allows for the thinking process performance.

Nevertheless, misunderstanding always arise between members in the course of social relationship and roles execution. "*Arguments are very normal in life, but healthy social relations is fight fair*" (Interview with key informant two, a chief aged 50 years, on the 15th July 2022). Symbolic interactionism is concern with the meaning people give to actions and events and understanding how these meanings are synthesized mentally and negotiated (Blumer, 1969). Meaning is a condition that emerges as a result of the interaction of group members (Tezcan, 2005).

"*These misunderstandings were as a result of differences in ideas, disrespect of one's personality, poor behavior, poor manner of approach, poor management of funds, misinterpretation of what is said and favoritism*" Interview with key informant 1, a notable aged 45 years, on the 20th July 2022).

Kent et al (2003) then corroborated by saying that, we look at people, events and objects and assume that their meanings and significance are easily discerned and that others will agree with us. On the other hand, members of dissimilar groups can see the same event or behavior in very different ways (ibid). Piaget in the work of Detel acclaims that people respond not to external stimuli but to their interpretation of those stimuli (Detel, 2001). This affirms with Blumer's (1969) Meaning Principle in the Symbolic Interactionist theory which asserts that, the interpretation process that occurs between interactions helps create and recreate meaning and that it is the shared understanding and interpretations of meaning that affect the interaction between individuals. Individuals act on the premise of a shared understanding of meaning within their social context. Thus, interaction and behavior are framed through the shared meaning that objects and concepts have attached to them. This was also attested by a respondent when she said:
"*During the different periods of misunderstanding, the different tribe's members of the conflicting parties take different stand points which could be very objective, others biased and supported their tribe's people*" (Interview with key informant 3, a tenant aged 35 years, on the 30th July 2022)

Simpson and Yinger (2013) reveals that the unfair treatment of a person or group on the basis of partiality that prevents objective consideration of an issue or situation stems from misunderstanding and ignorance. Conflicts according to them, often involve disagreements over definitions of the situation in question. This definition may thus become an area contested between different stakeholders or by an ego's sense of self-identity. A definition of the situation is related to the idea of "framing" a situation. Even at this, the people are always objective to resolve their issues in an amicable manner. Banban (2018), reveals that, "*A gentleman gets along with others, but does not necessarily agree with them*". It therefore implies that a gentleman should strive to achieve harmony even in disagreement, meaning that, one should acknowledge differences, but also work towards harmony and balance by adding what is missing and reducing what is in excess (Banban, 2018). One can build bridges to trust, respect, and understanding across cultures as one interacts with one other. Social relationships are about accommodating differences and

having the ability to listen, recognize, respect and appreciate others (Egoh, 2019). Furthermore, what is more, safety in and around the home is cherished by all, as well as it is a determinant to whether people settle in a place or relocate to other areas, they feel safer. Some people feel safer where they were born and grew up, but feel unsafe in a new-environments, while others feel safer where they are located than where they were born and grew up. With this a respondent affirm that: "*there is no ethnic group in Buea that sees itself superior to another and because of this, no one sees his/herself as an outsider*". Instead, they urged the different ethnic groups do invite others to fellowship with them should they have a grand occasion/celebration. This builds the spirit of oneness and unity in diversity. Acclaiming to the word of Jesus in the book of 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 which stipulated that, there is one body with parts and so the eye cannot say to the leg you are not needed, so too the hand cannot say to the eye you are not needed, each and every part of the body is needed for the better functioning of all. Schmid et al, (2014) postulated that the presence of ethnic out-groups leads individuals to feel more threatened, cultivating greater out-group partiality that prevents objective consideration of an issue, thereby driving down social relations and cohesion. However, when those individuals who view out-groups negatively see the diversity of their community increasing, their views of their neighbours may become worse as their neighbours become increasingly from ethnic out-groups. At the same time, individuals who do not view out-groups negatively will likely remain unaffected by the diversity of their community as the ethnic makeup of their neighbours is unlikely to affect their perceptions of their local area (ibid). A respondent affirms that:

"*I have never been set up or attacked by someone or a group of people because of ethnic differences. Instead, the children of the different ethnic groups move together with one another either to the stream or public tap to fetch water, to school, to church, to market and also play around together*".

Relationship amongst Buea inhabitants is with respect to the proximity of living distance and not by ethnic origin. In this light, diversity has an indirect positive effect on local trust through lower threat which results from diversity, steering of feelings, emotions or peace of higher contact in diverse areas. Holding more positive views of ethnic out-groups could potentially lead to more positive views of one's community in more diverse areas (Schmid *et al.,* 2014). This is in contrary to Putnam's (2007) argument that ethnic diversity causes people to withdraw from social life and that people living in ethnically heterogeneous neighborhoods perceive a greater threat to resources such as jobs and to their way of life. It affirms with the view of Pettigrew *et al.* (2011) that stipulated that in-migration efforts, positive contact experiences between members of different ethnic groups could possibly lead to cooperation and respect which in turn can improve social relations and cohesion.

Conclusion

The research was aimed at examining the effect of ethnic diversity on social relations among inhabitants of Buea. The research findings proves that ethnic diversity has the propensity to hollow out harmonious living together among Buea inhabitants and Cameroonians as a whole. It can influence the psychological make-up and well-being of people in exciting as well as challenging ways. Ethnic Diversity can

affect people's value systems, increase productivity, improve creativity and it can also cause conflicts with others (Kathie, 2021). Paradoxically, Buea inhabitants relate and associate with one another with respect to what unites them and what they want to achieve. Their one-to-one connections with each other are the foundation for change. Building relationships with people from different cultures is key in building diverse communities that are powerful enough to achieve significant goals. In social interactions, the expressions of emotions are substantially influenced by the relationship between the interaction partners and can convey affiliation or dominance (Smosky and Bachoroswski, 2003 and Hess et al, 2005). It is with this Stolle et al, (2008) stood firm that the outward appearances of increased heterogeneity are significantly determined by the quality of contacts amongst diverse groups, not leaving out the degree of equality in the society as pointed out by Kumlin and Rothstein (2010). In this accord, the way of life, manner of approach, attitude, character, sincerity, humility, patience, passion for something, mutual understanding, common goal, trust worthiness, and socially flexible are criteria used by Buea inhabitants to select their friends.

The research also studied the effects of ethnic diversity on the well-being and contentment of individuals vis-a-vis their housing conditions. The research findings indicated that there was no significant impact of diversity on house allocation to tenants, attacks, criminality or violence in the neighbourhood, interpreted as more inconsequence than enmity between neighbours. They do not perceive any threat to resources like jobs, housing and to their way of life. Buea inhabitants have a strong, solidly built and caring relationships based on trust, tolerance, understanding, and shared goals. Trusting relationships are the glue that hold people together as they work on a common problem. Awaworyi and Smyth (2021) cited that, trust is a unit of great significance that acts upon housing tenure at several levels. In this line, Kleinhans (2009), ascertains that trust offers a legal power or sanction which makes it possible for people to ask for, and provide other residents with, the support and help needed to establish good neighbourhoods. Residents who feel that there are high levels of social relations, cohesion, and trust, reflected in parties, street and events and neighbourhood associations are more likely to wanting to establish roots in that neighbourhood (Awaworyi and Smyth, 2021). What is more is that, proficiency in Pidgin English and English language are determinants to friendship choices between inhabitance of Buea. Low level of Pidgin English and English language proficiency is linked to low ability to recrudesce friendship ties outside of one's own ethnic group.

Regrettably, there are many shackles to the social relations of people within Buea and Cameroon as a whole, triggered and propelled by the political atmosphere. It is difficult to find a mayor in a council or government delegate in a city council who is not a native of that area. Most often, nominations/ elections are not done with respect to "who can actually deliver" or fitting the square peak in a square hole" but is based on ethnic origin such as "where is his/her origin and/or from which political party (political ethnicity) is he/she militating with". There is unequal distribution of power and scarce resources along regional and ethnic bases and biases. It is often characterized by inter-ethnic discrimination in jobs, admission into professional institutions, distribution of welfare services, just to name a few. Merit is quite often sacrificed at

the altar of tribalism; thus, ethnic crisis becomes the resultant effect (Obaje, 2002). Ethnic prejudices and antagonism are most prevalent and most violently expressed in situations where employment in the civil services, industries, universities and in other places is made in such a way that one may become suddenly conscious of one's ethnic tags and one's difference from competitors, depending on how one's employment needs and interests are satisfied or denied (Barongo, 1983). Ethnicity sets in, in the state of affairs of inter-ethnic contentions for scarce resources, recognition, political positions and power, especially in societies that admits inequality as innate and material wealth is highly honored (Nnoli, 1978). Ethnicity is not per se negative; but the use of the ethnic factors in political contestation often yields negative outcomes (ibid). Cameroon as a heterogeneous society has continually faced the problem of ethnic consciousness as it has been entrenched in the Cameroon society. This has gone to the extent that any activity or program of action initiated by the government of the day is seen as being influenced by ethnic considerations (political ethnicity). This situation is fast becoming a value and conscious thought among each national in Cameroon. This has caused more harm than good to social relations and national integration in Cameroon. It is therefore the relationship between the diverse ethnic groups with the political environment that produces ethnicity (Achimugu et al. 2013).

Finally, most form of intergroup relations is multiculturalism, in which cultural distinctions are made between groups and the groups are regarded to have equal standing in society (Richard, 2000). There is an awareness of the differences that exist between the different ethnic groups in Buea. With all this in mind, the inhabitants of Buea have learnt to appraise their personal preconceptions, unimaginative and conformist ideas about other groups of people; and have adopted an accommodative, tolerative, and an appreciative manner of living with one another. This has triggered the likelihood of working jointly and mutual aid amongst the different ethnic group of people leaving in Buea. Close relationships among ethnic groups promote ethnic tolerance in the society (Powers and Ellison, 1995). This is done by providing more precise information and contributing to the progress of well-disposed perceptions of other groups (Carithers, (1970); Ellison and Powers, (1994) and Powers and Ellison, (1995)). The quality and quantity of relationships amongst the people in the community is rich, which positively impacts social relations in Buea. Hence, the relationship between people in Buea is not through ethnic ties and ethnic diversity has a positive effect on social relations in Buea.

Recommendations

Haven looked at the effect of ethnic diversity and social relation of the different ethnic groups in Buea, South West Region of Cameroon, it is hoped that the following recommendations made will help to improve other institutional/regional and national cultural organizations.

- The government of Cameroon should development Pidgin Language and make it an official language in Cameroon. This will help resolve issues that comes up as a result of misinterpretation of what is said, hence the language will be a strong unifying factor amongst the citizens.
- The government should create a Department of Cultural Sciences in which Cameroonians will be given an in-depth knowledge of the different people that make up Cameroon, their values, beliefs, artifacts, and customs. This knowledge

will ease cultural integration and social relations amongst Cameroonians.

- There should be an educational campaign that promotes inclusion, respect and tolerance to ameliorated discrimination and prejudice.

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