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Research Article

Exploring social tolerance in the light of identity markers within a heterogeneous population: a demographic study in a multi-tribal context

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Abstract: This study was designed to assess how primary identification markers affected social tolerance in a multi-tribal setting among a heterogeneous population. A sample of 312 participants was selected using the purposive sampling technique. A search of the literary documentation yielded three modalities of the dependent variable. Thus, data were collected from the Feeling Thermometer, Affirmative Action, and Multiculturalism scales. We assessed participants' levels of identification with identity markers to determine their impact on social tolerance. The findings suggest that measures of social tolerance are somewhat significantly influenced by Cameroonians' levels of affiliation with their key identity markers. However, tolerance decreases when tribal identity becomes stronger. Conversely, the effect of linguistic and religious identification forces on social tolerance varies depending on the object to be tolerated. These findings contribute to a better understanding of the determinants that influence social tolerance in a tribal setting.

Keywords: Social tolerance, primary identity markers, multi-tribality, multi-ethnic

1. Introduction

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization UNESCO [1] peace is unthinkable without tolerance. In this regard, it appears to be an imperative in multicultural societies. Religion, tribe, and language, to name a few prominent identity markers, are used to define ethno-cultural diversity. These are at the root of several social divisions that shape intergroup relations politics. As a result, they are quite stressful in a multi-ethnic society. Several historical facts attest to this, including the Rwandan genocide, the Sunni-Shiite conflict in Iraq, and the Holocaust, to which the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon has now been added. Cameroon is a unique country on the African continent. It is a tribal nebula. There are over 250 tribes, each with their own set of habits and customs as distinct as the languages they speak. Furthermore, ethno-cultural diversity is one of the main attributes it has earned the reputation of being an "Africa in miniature" throughout the continent [2]. However, what is undoubtedly perceived by many people as a benefit to the country is sometimes regarded as a ticking time bomb by many other experts [3, 4]. Given the deadly violence that Cameroon has been experiencing in the NOSO (North-West and South-West) for the past six years, they were most likely right. Indeed, the conflict known as the "Anglophone Crisis" pits the English-speaking part of the country against the state, but it also reflects a much deeper ethnological reality that is often tends to be overlooked. It is a conflict involving all ethnic groups in the western part of the country, because they have been concentrated in this

specific geographical area since the colonial era. Thus, ethnicity, as well as religion, is undoubtedly a sensitive and conflict-provoking topic in Cameroon. The heterogeneity of the social categories that they underpin raises the issue of resources distribution. According to Verkuyten and Thijs[5] multi-ethnic societies face several challenges on the political, economic, social, educational, and health fronts. All these social problems tend to divert tribality into tribalism [6]; just as the border between ethnicity and ethnocentrism is increasingly fragile these days [7]. Across the country, the fruits of intergroup positivity are being promoted as guarantees of peaceful living. In the media, slogans about living together or social tolerance never end. As a result, an exploratory study that would provide information on the impact of primary identity markers on social tolerance in Cameroon is of interest. From tribe to religion what best predicts the dependent variable's operating methods in this study?

The urgency of managing social differences led the monarchies of the 17th century to promote tolerance. Tolerance is an attitude that entails putting up with what one does not like in order to seek understanding and peace with others [8]. This is the reason why this idea is very debatable in the social sciences. By definition, it is an insult [9], while in practice, it is the foundation of modern societies' survival [10]. Then no social virtue, such as tolerance, can be perfect. Research has shown that peaceful coexistence between diverse groups is inextricably associated with social tolerance.

Social tolerance is an important dimension of intergroup positivity [11]. It is distinct from interpersonal tolerance [12] and political tolerance [13, 14]. Social tolerance is the ability of members of out-groups to coexist despite their differences in cultural practices [15]. In social psychology, experts pay close attention to it. Social tolerance has been theorized in so many ways in social psychology. Thus, measurement strategies that assess social tolerance abound in psychosocial research and vary between researchers or from context to context. Brewer and her colleagues measured it using the in-group feeling thermometer [11], multiculturalism, and affirmative action [16].The intersection of these three operating methods makes social tolerance to be referred as an approval of any social prerogative that is primarily, but not exclusively, oriented in favor of other groups of belonging, (minorities in most cases). This study intends to measure social tolerance using the thermometer of in-group feeling, endorsement of positive discrimination policies, and multiculturalism as a result of these methodological strategies.

1.1. The in-group feeling thermometer

Basically, the feeling thermometer is a methodological tool specific to political research. These items are designed to gauge people's attitudes and emotions toward a political object or organization [17, 18]. From the perspective of intergroup orientation, the feeling thermometer is frequently used not only to estimate the perception of the out-group, but also the representations of intergroup relations, generally in an environment where intergroup contact is effective [19]. Several studies have found that intergroup contact improves relationships between people from different groups. [20, 21]. However, intergroup contact is judged more through its quality than its quantity. As a result, the intergroup feeling thermometer contains an emotional component that may influence cognitive reactivity to proximal contacts [22]. In the context of this study, the in-group feeling thermometer would provide information on the degree of closeness [11] or appreciation [23] of individuals toward a number of relevant groups evolving in the same social context.

1.2. Affirmative action

The ideal of social equality advocated by modern democracies requires them to level the various social collectives in terms of prerogatives and rights. This social balance takes the place of ethno-cultural justice [24]. This is where affirmative action programs can help with this. Their content and application differ depending on the context. For example, we

talk about Affirmative action in the United States, positive action in Italy, or positive measures in Switzerland. As far as Cameroon is concerned, the most popular affirmative action policy is commonly known as the Regional Balance Policy (RBP). The RBP has been applied since 1982. It is a set of rules and institutional measures that consist in diversifying the human resource in recruitment within the public administration and the political sphere on the basis of ethno-regional membership; and to proceed with fairness in the awarding of public contracts, while taking ethno-regional membership into account. In addition, the RBP advocates for ethnic minorities' educational advantages. From this perspective, Yodou Sibeudeu [25] found a link between the RBP and the prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts in Cameroon. Thus, a favorable attitude towards positive discrimination measures such as affirmative action or RBP is a form of social tolerance [16].

1.3. Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is the third modality of social tolerance examined in this study. According to Nye [26] multiculturalism is not a reality that we can choose or avoid nowadays. Currently, identity claims experienced by the world are linked to cultural diversity constraints. Thus, more than just an ideology or current of thought, multiculturalism is also a social problem. It is in this sense that Hall [27] defines it as a set of strategies and policies aimed at governing and managing the problems of diversity and multiplicity that all societies face. Multiculturalism is then relevant for the purposes of this exploratory study due to the diversity that characterizes Cameroon on tribal, linguistic, and religious levels. Furthermore, experts suggest that support for multiculturalism is a positive attitude toward members of outgroups [28, 29, 16, 30]. As such, multiculturalism represents an issue in the reduction of prejudice and discrimination based on personal attributes as innate as tribality in Cameroon. Because the intention behind this concept is to develop and promote a living space that is viable and conducive to the recognition and acceptance of group membership, whatever it may be. Unfortunately, multiculturalist attitudes are ideals that are hard to achieve in a multi-ethnic society. Indeed, social competition is one of the underlying issues of ethnic diversity [31]. Thus, looking at the other as a normal human being with rights similar to one's own is a much more difficult cognitive task to perform than looking at them as what they are: an enemy or a rival. In this sense, each out-group is considered as an obstacle to the influence of an in-group in search of a positive social identity. The salience of identity markers therefore underpins group differentiation in a multi-tribal society.   In Cameroon, there are three primary identifiers: tribe, language and religion.

1.4. Linguistic and religious ethno-tribal markers

There are more than 250 tribes living in Cameroon. The tribe is undoubtedly the most salient and the most authentic of the three primary identity markers. Insofar as, compared to language and religion, this social identity is not an imported product of European imperialism in Africa. Ethnic cleavages are based on Tribal identification. In this sense, ethnic diversity can be both an asset and a hindrance to the peaceful coexistence of individuals from different group membership. It all depends on the angle of analysis. In the cameroonian social context, tribality is an asset as long as it is not misguided into tribalism. Unfortunately, this is not the case when we rely on empirical research finding [31, 6, 32, 33]. As such, tribal identification is a thorny issue that makes one cringe just as linguistic identification.

While Cameroon does have several vernacular languages as a result of its ethno-tribal diversity, it is also well known that these various local languages are structured around the two official languages inherited from its colonial past: French and English. As such, they have also become important cultural supports. Thus, all Cameroonians, regardless of ethnic group membership, speak French or English, or at least have an interest in it. By

opting for a united Cameroon in 1972, the State provoked a certain competition between them, much to the chagrin of the vernacular languages [34]. Cameroonian tribality is segmented into two ethno linguistic groups. This reality tends to reinforce a reciprocal stereotyping between the members of these two ethno linguistic groups [35, 36]. The management of these linguistic divisions at the level of various spheres of social life has led to the Anglophone Crisis for six years now. Each identity marker clearly underpins a typology of social cleavage.

The Cameroonian confessional environment is just as diverse as the linguistic and ethnic landscapes. Cameroon demonstrates religious tolerance by claiming to be secular in its constitution. Christianity is the predominant religion in regions other than those of the North, Adamawa, and the Far North. If this part of the country could not stand up to genuine opposition to Islam, it could not stand up to the religion of the settlers. Initially Catholic, the religion of Cameroon is today in full flux. We observe the dizzying rise of several dissident factions which reinforce the divisions between Catholicism, Protestantism and Pentecostalism goes without saying that the presence or formation of several groups with the same ideological (truth interpretation), human and even financial (number of faithful), geostrategic (acquisition of new sites) objectives automatically generates competition, which can lead to intergroup tensions. The Cameroonian religious landscape is dominated by Muslims, Catholics, Protestants, and NRM (new religious movements) carried out under the aegis of Pentecostalism.

Muslims are the majority in the northern part of the country, because Islam preceded Christianity there, at the time of the Crusades. It has been said that there are dissenting factions within Christianity, but it turns out that this schism is just as prevalent within Islam. The main competing groups that dispute the Cameroonian Umna are Twelver Shiism and Wahhabism [37]. Although the former is the oldest branch of Islam and even dates back to its inception, its introduction to Cameroon is pretty latest with Sheikh Hassan Nsangou. According to Louër [38], the main problem facing this branch is its out datedness by most Muslims, especially Sunnis who do not recognize any Muslim credibility in it. This can only lead to frustration that could benefit Wahhabism, which has carved out a prominent place for itself on the Cameroonian Muslim scene. His entry into Cameroon considerably shook the hegemonic position of the Sufiya brotherhood [37], thus causing a decline in the background of its two main tendencies, tidjaniya and qadiriya [39].

1.5. This research

This research intends to explore the relationship between primary identity markers and the modalities of social tolerance mentioned above. It aims to provide answers to two specific questions. Firstly, what are the terms of social tolerance in Cameroon? The answer to this question involves the operating methods of social tolerance identified in the literature. Secondly, what is the impact of identification with primary identifiers on these operational modalities? With reference to the previous theoretical-empirical considerations, it clearly appears that each identity marker is at the origin of a specific typology of social cleavage. Therefore, we hypothesize that due to the long tradition of coexistence stemming from their historical evolution, Cameroonians have a favorable attitude to the terms of social tolerance defined within the framework of this study. Similarly, the key identity traits they identify with would have an impact on social tolerance. However, we also do not expect this connection to be significant overall, given the vagaries of multi-tribal communities. On the contrary, we expect the effect of identity markers on social tolerance to vary from one measure to another.

2. Methodology

The investigations of this study were the subject of a psychosocial survey. This was carried out in several populated neighborhoods of Yaoundé, Cameroon's political capital.

2.1. *The participants*

The sample of this research is heterogeneous. The participants come from ethno-cultural backgrounds that are diverse as their occupations. Purposive sampling was used to select them. Respondents were recruited on the basis of their biographical characteristics, especially socio-identity plurality. Thus, only those who identified with the three identity markers received the three measures of social tolerance discussed in this study. Three students were trained in the administration of measuring instruments. They went door to door. The participants range in age from 18 to 75 years old (Mage = 25.4), with 169 females and 143 males.

2.2. *Material and procedure*

The participants first filled out the required socio-biographical information, which included the research's discrimination criteria. Those who were eligible continued the study and received the three instruments for collecting the dependent variable.

2.2.1. Measurement of primary identity markers

Primary identity markers were measured in terms of group identification (What tribe do you belong to? What language group do you belong to? What religious group do you belong to?); and strength of identification (How strongly do you identify with your tribe? How strongly do you identify with your language group? How strongly do you identify with your religious group?), α = .81.

2.2.2. Thermometer of in-group feeling measurement

Methodologically speaking, this instrument has been used countless times in empirical research. It helps to assess intergroup positivity especially in multi-ethnic or cultural contexts. It usually takes the form of a thermometer, on which participants must indicate their proximity to a relevant out-group. Over time, its re-elaboration has produced various forms that do not, however, betray its original idea and function. Although some researchers like Alwin [40] suggest that an 11-point thermometer increases the chances of achieving a very satisfactory level of reliability, we opted for a 7-point coding ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (enormously). The items of this scale were developed using the item syntax of Bookalam's in-group feeling thermometer |23]. The feeling thermometer of this study has 18 items in total (α = .89) (e.g to what extent do you like the tribes of the Center region? To what extent do you like the tribes of the West Region?)

2.2.3. Measurement of affirmative action (AA)

AA is included in Brewer and Pierce's study [16] as a measure of social tolerance and as a measure of out-group positivity [41]. In Cameroon, the most popular positive discrimination policy is the RBP. Due to the background of this research, we used a version of the original AA adapted by Dzuetso Mouafo [42]. It has a total of 8 items, coded in 7 points (α = .63). Three of these items are reverse coded (In the future, I will sign a petition protesting against quota policies; Regional balance Policy unfairly favors people from certain regions; Regional balance policy prevents the most qualified from being promoted).

2.2.4. Measurement of multiculturalism

In a multi-ethnic setting, attitudes towards multiculturalism are part of methodological strategies for assessing intergroup positivity. Then endorsement of multiculturalism is a form of social tolerance [16]. In this study, 13 items served as measures of multiculturalism (α = .70). Thus, the five items of multiculturalism used in Verkuyten's study [43]; the five items used in Wolsko et al. [44]; and the first three items of Munroe and Pearson's Multicultural Attitude Scale questionnaire [45] were translated into French and adapted to our context.

3. Results

The data were analyzed using inferential statistics, especially the Chi-square test and the Pearson correlation.

Table 1. Correlational analysis between the different strengths of identification and the different levels of social tolerance

	Tribal identification force	Linguistic identification force	Religious identification force	Tolerance to the feeling thermometer	Tolerance to the affirmative action	Tolerance to the multiculturalism
Tribal identification force	1					
Linguistic identification force	.411**	1				
Religious identification force	.326**	.303**	1			
Tolerance to the feeling thermometer	.244**	.613**	.661**	1		
Tolerance to the affirmative action	.340	.530	.251	.122*	1	
Tolerance to the multiculturalism	.563*	.384	.491	.224**	.383**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This table highlights a fairly direct and positive, but below average, correlation between the different identification strengths (tribal and linguistic, tribal and religious, linguistic and religious). However, we note that those who identify with their tribe are also more likely to identify with the language they use on a daily basis. As for the different aspects of social tolerance, we note that those who support affirmative action are more likely to endorse multiculturalism. But the correlation with attitudes expressed in the feeling thermometer is weak. Furthermore, the strength of tribal identification is moderately related to tolerance towards multiculturalism, but weakly linked to tolerance for the feeling thermometer and affirmative action, which are strongly correlated with the linguistic identification strength. This strong correlation can also be observed between the linguistic identification strength and the feeling thermometer.

Table 2. Analysis of the dependency link between the strength of identification and the level of tolerance in the participants

Identification force		Total	Tolerance level (DV)					
			to the feeling thermometer		to the affirmative action		to the multiculturalism	
			Weak	High	Weak	High	Weak	High
Tribal	Weak	122	31	91	40	82	6	116
	High	190	29	161	55	135	8	182
Total		312	60	252	95	217	14	298
Chi-Square (χ^2(312))			χ^2(312) = 0.125 ; p = .03 ; Ddl = 1		χ^2(312) = 0.517 ; p = .05 ; Ddl = 1		χ^2(312)) = 0.087 ; p = .00 ; Ddl = 1	
Contingency coefficient			0.016		0.041		0.017	
Linguistic	Weak	117	35	82	39	78	5	112
	High	195	25	170	56	139	9	186
Total		312	60	252	95	217	14	298
Chi-Square (χ^2(312))			χ^2(312) = 13.757 ; p = .00 ; Ddl = 1		χ^2(312) = 0.736 ; p = .04 ; Ddl = 1		χ^2(312) = 0.020 ; p = .00 ; Ddl = 1	
Contingency coefficient			0.205		0.048		0.008	
Religious	Weak	126	35	91	36	90	6	120
	High	186	25	161	59	127	8	178
Total		312	60	252	95	217	14	298
Chi-Square (χ^2(312))			χ^2(312) = 9.940 ; p = .00 ; Ddl = 1		χ^2(312) = 0.352 ; p = .00 ; Ddl = 1		χ^2(312) = 0.037 ; p = .01 ; Ddl = 1	
Contingency coefficient			0.176		0.034		0.011	

The statistical test is significant at P = 0.05. According to the contingency table above, individuals with low identification strength to the three identity markers are less numerous than those with high identification strength (N = 122, 117 and 126). Individuals with strong tribal, linguistic and religious identification support social tolerance and are more numerous in each of these case (N feeling thermometer = 182; N affirmative action = 186 and N multiculturalism = 178). Consequently, these data give credence to our initial hypotheses. We first notice that the strength of tribal identification has an effect on the measures of social tolerance (χ^2_{cal} = 0.125, 0.517 and 0.087 > χ^2_{obs} = 0.016, 0.041 and 0.017 ddl = 1) with respectively 3%, 5% and 0% risk of error > (α = 0.05). The linguistic identification strength has a relative significant effect on social tolerance when compared to the previous strength (χ^2_{cal} = 13.757, 0.736 and 0.020 > χ^2_{obs} = 0.207, 0.048 and 0.008, p = 0, 4, ddl = 1). Third, the strength of religious identification has also an effect on social tolerance modalities (χ^2_{cal} = 9.940, 0.352 and 0.037 > χ^2_{obs} = 0.176, 0.034 and 0.011).

4. Discussion

According to the results ethnicity has a weak impact on social tolerance. Ethnicity would therefore be a poor predictor of social tolerance in Cameroon. The activation of tribal identification makes inter-ethnic competitiveness salient. Frantic pursuit of a positive social identity fuels interethnic competition that extends beyond the individual to the group level [29, 46]. In this perspective, ethnotribal identity could challenge national identity, despite being thought to be superior by several studies [47, 16, 48]. Base of these findings, Messanga [6] assumes that the tribe in Cameroon would be superior to the state. If this scientific assumption were to be proven in future research, it is suggested from the perspective of Roccas and Brewer [11] that socio-identity plurality may mitigate the perverse effects of tribal identification while reinforcing the effect of social tolerance on this same identity factor.

Regarding the strengths of linguistic and religious identification, the results show that their impact on social tolerance varies depending on what is included in this concept. But compared to tribal identification, measures of social tolerance are negotiated quite well with both key identifiers, apart from multiculturalism. Indeed, the multiculturalism items mentioned by the authors in the context of this study point to the development of a vital space in which particularities thrive as human beings, regardless of their group affiliations. Insofar as it underpins a competitive and thus conflicting identity, linguistic identification strength would have had a minor impact on adherence to multiculturalism. A study also found that despite the quantity of intergroup contacts between Cameroon's two linguistic groups, the quality is at stake. Anglophones and Francophones have mutual prejudices against each other [36]. Consequently, the high frequency of the endorsement of RBP could be explained by individuals perceiving in the term "ethnic minorities", people from ethno-regional minorities of their own language group.

Regarding the strength of religious identification, a significant effect was expected on all measures of social tolerance, due to the content of religious sermons (Charity, love of neighbor, etc.). The results, however, reveal a significant link between the strength of religious identification and the feeling thermometer, as opposed to the link between the latter, RBP and multiculturalism. This could be explained by the fact that religious identity is, like the other two, a competitive social identity. According to these findings, Bayart and Mbembe [49] demonstrate that ethnocentrism has the ability to become embedded in the Cameroonian religious landscape, which already competitive per se, regarding the numerous religious denominations encountered in the country.

5. Conclusion and perspectives

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between primary identity markers and social tolerance in a multi-tribal setting. The data was collected from a heterogeneous population. The results reveal some specific additional information. First, according to an Afrobarometer study [50], Cameroonians have a certain culture of intergroup social tolerance. Secondly, this social tolerance manifests itself in practice through proximity to relevant outgroups, then through favorable attitudes towards positive discrimination policies such as RBP, and finally through the endorsement of multiculturalist ideology. Third, the findings show that primary identity markers derived from Cameroonian ethno-cultural diversity have an effect on social tolerance. However, this causal link turned out to be weak as expected. These findings are timely for a socio-cultural investigation of the determinants of inter-tribal and inter-religious tolerance in Cameroon. In addition, they raise other relevant questions about the factors that may empede intergroup coexistence in a multi-tribal environment. This could highlight the limits of tolerance as a social policy in favor of minorities within majority communities.

Social tolerance is a broad concept worthy of scientific and political attention. Consequently, we would benefit from studying its contours in order to promote it more effectively. Such a project requires a diversity of methodological approaches for a better understanding of the phenomenon. Further, the adaptation of the collection tools used in this study is relevant to a multi-ethnic environment. However, the context in which these methodological tools were designed multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism from the standpoint of races, or the naturalization of immigrants. In Cameroon, we are rather dealing with natives from the same territory who belong to different tribal groups. Future research could therefore develop a tolerance scale that best matches this ethno-cultural specificity in order to contextualize the link between group identification and social tolerance more appropriately. Furthermore, identity differences are supposed to make the difference in multi-ethnic societies according to Holoien [51]. Base of the findings of this study, one could say that this is not quite the case. To that end, the data from this exploratory work should put the public authorities on the spot. Since the impact of primary identity markers (especially the tribe) on intergroup positivity is weak in a social

environment where cultural diversity is supposed to be an asset for the nation's influence, then this reveals an issue in the management of this cultural diversity.

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