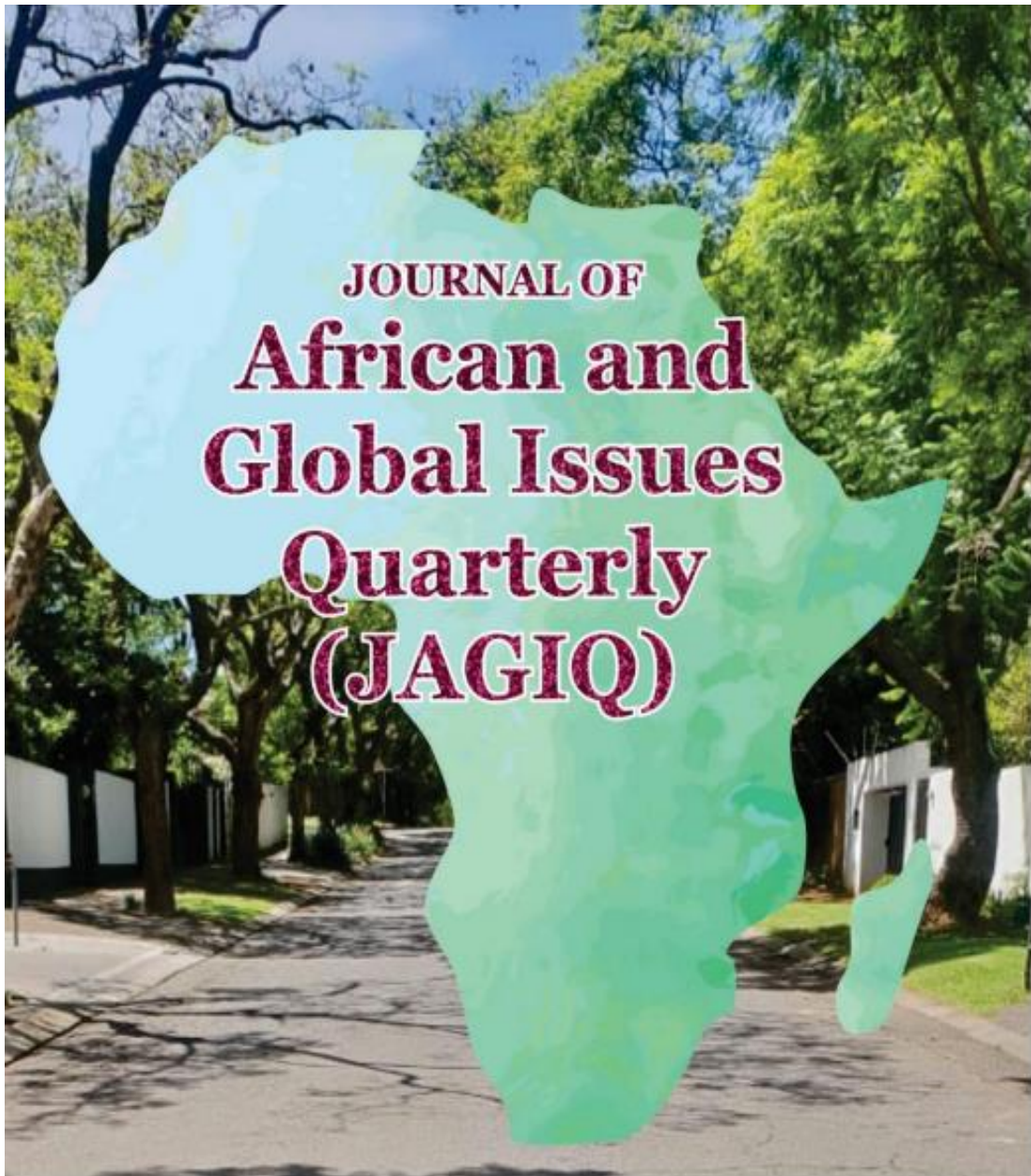




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EDITORIAL NOTE

This volume represents concerted calls within and outside Africa on the need for multidisciplinary collaboration and research output. Specifically, papers were drawn from all disciplines and research focuses, which has further increased the quality of research and collegial engagement. Hence, topics covered in this volume cut across the areas of economics, politics, security, ICT, indigenous knowledge, development studies, finance, trade, youth engagement, agriculture, democratization, and nation-building, among others.

For instance, Thizwilondi Josephine Mudau in *African Youths and the Promotion of Sustainable Development through the Lens of Indigenous Knowledge (IKS) in the 21st Century* employed qualitative desktop research methodology in synthesizing existing literature to argue that IKS represents a dynamic body of wisdom encompassing sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, and community resilience and offers proven, contextually grounded solutions to modern challenges like climate change and food insecurity. The analysis highlights youth-led initiatives across the continent that are revitalizing indigenous crops, integrating traditional ecological knowledge with climate adaptation strategies, and using digital platforms for cultural preservation. Mudau concluded that for Africa to achieve authentic and sustainable development, a concerted effort is needed to empower youth through inclusive education, supportive policy frameworks, and intergenerational dialogue, thereby transforming indigenous knowledge from a cultural heritage into a living toolkit for a resilient future.

Masila Joshua Masipa in *Beneficiaries of Corruption? An analysis of the function of South African banks in handling and making money from crime proceeds* adopted institutional theory and the political economy of corruption and a qualitative research design that combines semi-structured interviews with compliance officers, financial regulators, and civil society actors with document analysis of Zondo Commission and Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) reports, legal statutes, and policy papers in examining how, in spite of strict anti-money-laundering (AML) and anti-corruption laws, South African banks may profit from, handle, or ineffectively stop the flow of monies associated with corruption. Specifically, with an emphasis on whether banks directly or indirectly benefit from the proceeds of crime, Masipa investigated the relationship between financial institutions and illegal financial flows within the following objectives: (1) assess the regulatory framework that oversees AML compliance; (2) examine high-profile cases of corruption in which banks are implicated; (3) evaluate due diligence and institutional accountability; and (4) suggest changes to improve ethical banking governance.

Then Sipho Patrick Bhengu-Mancosa & Andrisha Beharry-Ramraj in *Advancing Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprise Growth through Digitalized Enterprise and Supplier Development in South Africa* examined the current state of Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) in South Africa, investigated the role of digitalization in enhancing ESD, identified the challenges and opportunities in digitalizing ESD, and provided recommendations for policymakers, corporates, and Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs). A qualitative secondary data approach was employed, drawing on thematic analysis of existing literature, reports, and industry initiatives. For key findings, Bhengu-Mancosa & Beharry-Ramraj indicated that ESD adoption remains limited; digitalization (Mancosa) significantly enhances market access and supplier diversity; infrastructure and skills gaps persist; and strategic digital integration can unlock growth opportunities for SMMEs.

Lere Amusan & Ebenezer O. Oni, in their study, *Disinvestment of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in Developing Areas: An Assessment of Shoprite Disengagement in*

Nigeria, started by reflecting on why, at the global level, many MNCs have started to disengage from their host states. In a bid to respond to the possible reasons, Amusan & Oni pushed further into examining possible reasons that could explain why Shoprite, a large South African retailing company, disinvested from Nigeria after operating in the country for about 15 years, using secondary sources supported by primary data and personal observations. For them, the reasons range from political, economic, marketing, and legal to civil society attitudes towards their business. Employing the twin theories of neoliberalism and oligopoly that facilitate globalization, Amusan & Oni concluded that, aside from losing litigation to its erstwhile Nigerian business partners, competition from domestic and foreign retail companies contributed in no small measure to why Shoprite exited the Nigerian market.

In A sober teacher is a problem”: Unpacking Political Ideology and Emancipatory Struggles Within teacher unionism, Zwane Theminkosi Trevor & Matsepe David adopted the grounded postcolonial theory in examining how teacher unions embody and deploy political stances and ideologies to promote the emancipation and freedom of education, as well as the broader communities they aim to serve. Clearly, Trevor and Matsepe employed a qualitative interpretivist approach to analyze data from narrative interviews with unionized educators, along with further examination of public union discussions. Key findings of their research indicated four interrelated themes: (1) political consciousness as both a threat to order and a driver of democratic emancipation; (2) teacher unions functioning as a counter-hegemonic force challenging neoliberal geopolitics and political norms; (3) the ideological repositioning of teacher unions as intellectual activists rather than compliant officials; and (4) tensions between political agency and professional identity.

Douglas Nyath in Rural Youth and the Future of Farming in Sub-Saharan Africa: Revisiting the Abandonment Debate explored whether rural youth are truly abandoning agriculture or are instead redefining their involvement through diversified livelihood strategies. It examines the socio-economic, institutional, and cultural factors influencing youth decisions and analyzes how emerging hybrid forms of engagement—such as agriprenuership and part-time farming—are reshaping rural economies. A systematic desktop synthesis of peer-reviewed literature (2000–2025) was conducted using databases like Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science. Nyaath observed that youth disengagement from agriculture is not uniform but context-specific, and the key determinants to such disengagement include land scarcity, education, labor market structures, gender norms, and limited access to finance and technology.

Then, in ***Equal Ideals, Unequal Realities: Gender Dynamics in the Workplace of an International Religious Non-governmental Organisation in Eswatini***, Thembumenzi Jomo Ntshalintshali & Innocent Simphiwe Nojiyeza examined attitudes, experiences, and organizational practices regarding gender roles, power dynamics, and inclusivity by drawing on in-depth interviews and focus groups with 20 employees from a range of departments and hierarchical levels. The results of their findings show that male participants, who were primarily ideologically devoted to gender equality, showed conflicted feelings about shifting power dynamics. Unconscious bias, policy implementation gaps, and organizational culture were equally identified as the primary obstacles to change. The results emphasize that in order to guarantee changes in gender equality, context-specific solutions are required that go beyond the adoption of policies.

In Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Environmental Conservation Ngugi’s Petals of Blood, Thabo Prince Zondo started by reflecting on members of the impoverished and socio-economically disadvantaged community who are distressed by incessant drought and who consult

a seer and offer sacrifices to seek solutions. Using this as a point of departure, Zondo explored how text gestures and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) address the real dilemmas faced by Africans following the extensive and cross-generational crises that accompany coloniality. In this, Zondo provided an ecocritical reading of the text, drawing on relevant postcolonial/decolonial ideas to illustrate the ways in which indigenous African epistemologies can indeed boost efforts at environmental conservation and poverty alleviation in rural communities today.

Also, **Rendani Tshifhumul** in *Exploring the Role of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Healing Practices and Resilience During the COVID-19 pandemic in Thohoyandou*, presented a narrative inquiry into the experiences of individuals who survived COVID-19 without requiring hospitalization, based on in-depth interviews with three respondents. For Tshifhumul, among the identified practices were the inhalation of steam treated with stones and salt, as well as the application of various herbal concoctions, including *Tshiumbeumbe*, *Musese*, *Mufula Musudzungwane*, *Miora*, and *Mubomo*, guava leaves, and lemon grass tea, including a mixture that comprises onion, ginger, lemon, honey, and garlic. Therefore, Tshifhumul concludes that these findings not only shed light on the adaptive strategies employed by individuals in response to the pandemic but also underscore the significance of traditional healing practices in the context of contemporary health crises. Khulisile Judith Nkuna & Sikhumbuzo Sibuso Khoza, in their work, *Capturing Cultural Heritage: Exploring the Poetic Elements of Domesticated Animal Praise*, carried out an analytical analysis of the lyrical components found in the praises of Siswati domestic animals. Nkuna & Khoza observed that expressing gratitude to animals for their contributions to human life remains a significant goal of animal praise. Reflecting on case studies, they noted that the Nguni people view domestic animals as very close environmental companions, particularly for those who live in rural areas. Praise poetry's primary goal is to commemorate great men's accomplishments. However, the reverse is the case for the Swati people, who have a tradition of honoring non-human animals in their poetry, including the wild animals they encounter in their environs as well as the domestic livestock they raise.

Intaher M. Ambe, Ellsworth C. Jonathan, Phathutshedzo D. Lavhelani,* and David H. Selby, in their study, *Exploring the landscape of demand management practices in the public health sector in the Gauteng Province, South Africa: An Empirical Analysis*, employed secondary sources in determining what demand management practices are employed within Gauteng, South Africa, and public health sector institutions. Findings in their study revealed substantial obstacles in organizational structure, demand management techniques, budget, and alignment between demand planning and strategic goals, as well as supply chain management (SCM) rules, regulations, and specifications. They conclude that the paucity of demand management implementation in public sector organizations reveals a misalignment between strategic goals, demand management, and demand planning, resulting in a loss of value for public sector organizations.

Aderinsola E. Kayode, Shalini Sing, & Patricia P. Badenhorst's research, *ICT for Indigenous Knowledge Dissemination and Education in Africa: A Systematic Review*, conducted a systematic review of literature published between 2015 and 2025 to examine how ICT tools and platforms have been deployed to support indigenous knowledge dissemination and education in African contexts. The findings of their research indicated that ICT can enhance indigenous knowledge preservation, improve youth engagement, facilitate intergenerational learning, and broaden global visibility of African knowledge systems when implemented with community participation. However, challenges remain regarding digital access, cultural sensitivity, intellectual property rights, and the sustainability of technology-driven initiatives.

In ***Donald Trump-Twitter Diplomatic Disruptions And Impact On The Post-World War II International Order.***, Ndivhoniswani Aaron Tshidzumba & Puseletso Nthate examine how President Donald Trump's unprecedented use of Twitter as a direct channel for foreign policy communication disrupted established diplomatic norms inherited from the post-World War II international order. Through content analysis of Trump's social media communications, examination of foreign policy outcomes, and comparative analysis with traditional diplomatic practices, Tshidzumba & Nthate demonstrated that Trump's social media presidency constituted a significant departure from institutional diplomacy and contributed to broader challenges facing the established international order. Further findings reveal that digital direct engagement by heads of state bypasses institutional constraints, undermines multilateral consensus-building, and creates new vulnerabilities in international relations.

Furthermore, in ***Determinants And Effect Of Small-Scale Livestock Production On Household Income In Malawi: Evidence From Fifth Integrated Household Survey***, Gladson Andrew Chipala, Christopher Chombo & Hannah Dunga examined the determinants and effects of small-scale livestock production on household income among farmers in Malawi, using cross-sectional data from the Fifth Integrated Household Survey (IHS5) with a sample of 8,795 households. Their key findings indicate that household size, access to credit, access to extension services, landholding size, distance to the market, and location in the Northern region significantly increase the likelihood of participation in livestock production. Notably, households engaged in livestock production earned, on average, an additional MWK 36,405.76 compared to non-producing households, demonstrating its important role in improving economic welfare.

In ***Navigating Artificial Intelligence Personalization and Consumer Privacy in Digital Marketing across South Africa and Global Contexts***, Suraksha Moothura and Andrishya Beharry-Ramraj critically examined how AI-driven hyper-personalization in digital marketing influences consumer privacy, with a specific focus on its ethical implications and regulatory challenges in South Africa in comparison to global standards using desktop literature review methodology. Moothura & Beharry—Ramraj observed that ethical concerns such as manipulation, algorithmic bias, and reduced consumer autonomy were found to be inadequately addressed in South Africa, where legal instruments like POPIA lack the specificity and enforcement capacity evident in global standards like the GDPR. Taleat, Bisiriyu Abiodun & Lukamba, Muhlya Tshombe's article, ***Energy Sustainability and Sustainable Development Agenda: The Role of Public-Private Partnership in South Africa***, investigated the role and effectiveness of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in South Africa's energy development towards sustainability using a qualitative desk research methodology to analyze secondary data from policy documents, scholarly literature, and government publications. For Abiodun & Tshombe, key findings demonstrate that PPPs have attracted a substantial amount of private investment and benefited the economy through job creation and community development. However, institutional and systemic barriers, e.g., Eskom monopoly, regulatory uncertainty, grid integration constraints, and institutionalized dependency on coal, impede the full implementation of PPPs in accelerating the energy transformation. Hence, they recommend policy stability, energy regulation reform, enhancing financial methods, and ensuring that social equity consideration is factored into PPP structures.

For Olukayode Idris Lasisi in ***The Governance–Development Nexus in Nigeria: A Conceptual Synthesis of Good Governance and Policy Discourse Theories***, a qualitative, conceptual, and desk-based review approach was employed, relying on the literature, policy documents, and theoretical frameworks in reevaluating the governance development interface in Nigeria in terms of the role of institutional weaknesses, the inconsistency of policies, and discursive framing in the

determination of sustainable development outcomes. Findings revealed that weak institutions, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, low accountability, and marginalization in policymaking processes bedeviled Nigeria's sustainable development, thereby distorting policy implementation and weakening effective service delivery. Lasisi concludes by calling for the need to strengthen institutions, improve transparency, guarantee policy sustainability, encourage civic participation, and apply digital governance solutions, which is essential to attaining sustainable development.

Eyitayo Francis Adanlawo & Mpho Chaka in *The Effect of Ethnicity And Politics on the Democratization of African Nations* examined the theoretical challenge that ethnicity poses to the African state and the challenges it poses for democratization on the continent. To guide the discourse, critical questions are raised: What kind of connection exists in Africa between politics and ethnicity? Under what conditions may ethnicity either support or undermine democracy? Can citizenship rights be reconciled with ethnicity? . Furthermore, Adanlawo & Chaka explored the evolution of ethnicity from the viewpoints of development communication and provided it with a psycho-social meaning. In their conclusion, Adalanwo & Chaka posited that, if ethnicity has an informative component, we should anticipate that voters' reliance on ethnic cues will decrease when certain forms of higher-quality information become available.

Lindokuhle Senamile Ntuli & Innocent Simphiwe Nojiyeza in *Does Resource Scarcity Constrain Rural Women's Entrepreneurial Performance in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa?*, examined whether resource scarcity significantly constrains the entrepreneurial performance of rural women in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa. Anchored in the Resource-Based View (RBV), the study adopts a quantitative research design using survey data collected from 273 rural women entrepreneurs across uMhlabuyalingana, Big5Hlabisa, and eJozini municipalities. **Ntuli & Nojiyeza** revealed statistically significant relationships between entrepreneurial performance and seven resource-based constraints: leadership skills, financial institutional barriers, entrepreneurial experience, regulatory constraints, access to financial resources, technological limitations, and limited training opportunities. Lastly, in *Transformative Governance Frontiers: Relational Public Administration for Smart City Inclusivity*, Melvin Diedericks examined the conceptualization of informal systems in the context of South African smart city initiatives. By repositioning informal systems as co-creators in urban governance, this study advocates for a paradigm shift from technocratic optimization to relational inclusion. This reframing aligns with South Africa's constitutional and developmental goals, enabling transformative governance and the effective localization of SDGs in sustainable cities.

It is expected that these works compiled in this volume will further enrich the discourse and provide policy options to individuals, governments, and countries, particularly in Africa.

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THE EFFECT OF ETHNICITY AND POLITICS ON THE DEMOCRATISATION OF AFRICAN NATIONS

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Abstract

The concept of ethnicity and its implications for politics in Africa cannot be taken for granted as it produces different outcomes in different states. It is argued that the concept of ethnicity should be nuanced when considering its role in African democracy and development. From this perspective, the paper examines the theoretical challenge that ethnicity poses to the African state and the challenges it poses for democratisation on the continent. To guide the discourse, critical questions are raised: What kind of connection exists in Africa between politics and ethnicity? Under what conditions may ethnicity either support or undermine democracy? Can citizenship rights be reconciled with ethnicity? This study explores the evolution of ethnicity from the viewpoints of development communication and provides it with a psychosocial meaning. This article posits that, if ethnicity has an informative component, we should anticipate that voters' reliance on ethnic cues will decrease when certain forms of higher-quality information become available.

Keywords: *Ethnicity, politics, Development communication, Identity, Democratisation*

Introduction

Ethnic identity appears to have replaced the currency of delayed dreams for cultural, political, and economic strength (Batrićević et al., 2024; Bareilly et al., 2021). The people of a nation generally share a common national identity, and creating that shared identity is a component of nation-building. Some make a distinction between a civic nation and an ethnic nation based on shared identity and adherence to a set of political principles and institutions and the tie of citizenship to

nationality (Otinche, 2021). Many people think that ethnic identity-based political activity is a primary cause of polarising conflict in the modern world (Esman, 2019; Kögler & Dunaj, 2018). According to some academics, the world is experiencing an ethnic renaissance that has the potential to upend long-standing political structures (Adelakun, 2023; Igboin, 2023). Instead of being static categories before, during, and following colonial authority, African ethnic groups are today recognised as open-ended, dynamic processes of social and political

development. Groups emerge and dissolve, change their names, adapt their customs, dispute the criteria for membership, and articulate various demands towards other ethnic groups and state institutions (Omi & Winant, 2020). The possibility provided by recent changes in the structure of political, economic, and moral power is typically cited as the reason for the seeming rise in ethnic cohesion and political engagement. Many see ethnic identity politics as an effort by those with limited authority to express their rights to material resources and political influence, as well as to validate their threatened identities (Chaka & Adanlawo, 2023). For the majority of subordinate groups, their primary leverage is the potential for societal instability (Williams & Liu, 2023; Goodrich & Namchu, 2019). Therefore, ethnic identity politics threatens the centralising ideas that underpin the control of these institutions, which include a shared national identity and individual rights.

According to this perspective, ethnic identity politics is a means for the weaker members of society to challenge the status quo. Minority ethnic groups are thought to be the root cause of polarising disputes (Beaty et al., 2021; Tepfenhart, 2013). This viewpoint, however, ignores how ethnicity and identity politics contribute to the majority and dominant groups' ability to hold onto political power. Ethnic identity politics may be crucial to modern state development and upkeep rather than just being "a weapon of the weak". Batrićević et al. (2024) assert that ethnic identity politics have played a crucial role in the functioning of modern nation-states, rather than merely serving as a tactical response to a crisis in political authority. Actually, it could be challenging to distinguish between ethnicity and identity politics in contemporary politics.

According to Copeland and Boulianne (2022), militant ethnic politics have been

on the rise in many nations, despite attempts in some to restrict the expression of ethnic conflict by outlawing openly ethnic parties and/or requiring candidates to have at least a certain amount of support throughout the nation (Stavenhagen, 2016). Social identity theory-based approaches emphasise the advantages that an individual receives from belonging to a specific identification group. Voting for a candidate from one's own ethnic group may yield psychological satisfaction, as suggested by theories that explore the relationship between ethnic voting and electoral behaviour.

The issue of the nation and national identity is a topic of much discussion, not only in post-colonial developing nations but also in certain developed nations. The question of whether modern states can be considered nations, whether the concept of a nation can be (re)constructed and (re)imagined, and whether it is possible to convince disparate communities within a state that they share a single national identity, or, on the other hand, whether comparable groups within two distinct states might consider themselves to be part of two distinct nations remains a topic of discussion among scholars.

Theoretical Foundation

Social identity theory

The idea expressed in ethnocentrism that some groups consider themselves to be better than others is formalised by social identity theory (Rukiko & Amani, 2025; Kögler & Dunaj, 2018). Ethnocentrism's observation that some groups believe they are better than others is formalised by social identity theory (Rukiko & Amani, 2025; Kögler & Dunaj, 2018). That is, when given the opportunity, people tend to offer their own group greater material resources than other groups, and they generally give their group's personal characteristics, language, and opinions higher ratings than other groups. It is hardly surprising that when presented with the opportunity to compare groups directly,

individuals tend to favour their own group, as they often strive to demonstrate its superiority over others. Preda (2023) avers that social rivalry is the main means by which people establish a stable and positive identity for themselves.

According to Armitage-Chan (2020), identity is inherently about conflict. Ethnic group conflict and violence in the political arena may therefore be independently caused by identity and the attempts to achieve and preserve it. Individual or group identity can, however, develop or persist in ways other than conflict. Identity politics can be used in any kind of politics to mobilise specific groups of people required to acquire or hold onto power because of the degree of conflict that is inherent in the political process (Xaba et al., 2024; Thiel et al., 2023). This suggests that identity politics can be a strategic tool for political actors, leveraging shared identities to galvanise support and strengthen their position amidst the competitive nature of political dynamics. Consequently, it highlights the complex interplay between identity and power in shaping political outcomes.

Political parties in ethnically diverse states like the US and South Africa must appeal to various groups since they rely on the support of several ethnic constituencies. Nonetheless, there are several instances where the "wedge issue" of ethnicity has been used to divide political support along ethnic lines (Fox, 2024; Omi & Winant, 2020). According to the notion, dominant groups can limit the political power of others while preserving and strengthening their own through identity politics. This dynamic often leads to a cycle of mistrust and rivalry, making it increasingly difficult for parties to foster a cohesive national identity. As a result, political discourse becomes fragmented, with leaders exploiting ethnic differences to galvanise their bases rather than promoting inclusive policies that benefit all citizens.

Borras Jr (2020) asserts that political movements have splintered as a result of their inability to develop a cohesive identity and associated political goal. Therefore, it is accurate to state that ethnic identity politics are a significant tool for establishing and preserving supremacy, as well as for challenging it. The intricate dynamics of ethnic identity politics reveal a landscape marked by both division and the potential for challenge. By fostering mistrust and rivalry among communities, such politics fragment the broader political discourse, ultimately hindering inclusive governance. Leaders frequently exploit these ethnic differences, prioritising base mobilisation over the development of policies that could unite rather than divide. This not only reinforces existing power structures but also creates an environment where supremacy is both established and contested. Thus, while ethnic identity can serve as a source of community strength, it equally poses significant challenges to social cohesion and democratic integrity when manipulated for narrow political gains.

Literature Review

The role of ethnic identity and politics in democracy

The question of which of the constituent elements of ethnic identity politics leads to conflict? It is important to answer. Is it ethnic identity itself? According to Chaka and Adanlawo (2024), the battle over ethnic identity is fought in a variety of contexts, including politics. According to Jesse (2014), there is also a chance that conflict will only arise when political confrontations use ethnic identity as a weapon. This implies that ethnic identity is especially contentious because of the political environment. Since ethnicity's modern beginnings, the nation-state has used ethnic identification as a means of forming and re-forming the body politic. One useful and psychologically significant form of group identity is ethnicity (Begeny & Huo, 2018; Verkuyten, 2018). This

would explain why, despite the ambiguous and changing foundation of ethnic organisation, ethnic identities nevertheless have resonance with people.

Additionally, ethnic politics have made it possible for corrupt leaders to receive support from their ethnic communities (Amadi, 2023; Adanlawo, 2017). Instead of strongly opposing corrupt leaders and denouncing their actions, the populace supports them because of their ethnicity and ethnic politics, which allows them to carry on with impunity. Without a doubt, ethnic politics have had a significant detrimental impact on the country's progress toward democracy. However, in Africa, ethnicity has played a significant role in political pluralism (Mncwango & Asanlawo, 2024; Bienen, 2019). It can be rightly said that ethnic formations are often the most significant countervailing force to state power.

The psychosocial functions of ethnic identity

According to Preusche and Göbel (2021), ethnic identity can boost self-esteem, which promotes psychological health. Jones and Neblett (2017) assert that ethnic community membership can be a significant source of self-esteem that is independent of one's status and accomplishments. Strong ties to stigmatised groups could act as a buffer against feelings of inferiority when confronted with low status, according to a psychological study.

Psychological research suggests that strong attachments to stigmatised groups may act as a protective barrier against feelings of personal inadequacy when faced with low status (Zhang et al., 2021; Crocker & Major, 2013). Members of ethnic groups are also granted a certain level of social status according to their position within the community. This indicates that individuals who form close bonds with stigmatised groups may experience enhanced self-worth, as these relationships can mitigate

the negative effects of societal perceptions of low status. Consequently, the social dynamics within ethnic communities can influence individual identity and self-esteem. Batrićević et al. (2024) aver that ethnicity can provide existential stability because it validates members' goals, values, beliefs, customs, and behaviours. Last but not least, being actively involved in and identifying with an ethnic group can help people take collective action and shield them from group dangers like physical assault or political marginalisation. Members of an ethnic group who are viewed by others as a single organism have a similar destiny and hence gain from some level of cooperation.

Ethnicity as a facilitator of communication

Voters will focus on the little information they do have that will allow them to predict the candidates' future behaviour if they are not provided with trustworthy information on the policies or qualifications of political candidates. According to Hale (2023), voters will use ethnicity as a shorthand for decision-making more often if they know less about the candidates in the election. As a result, it is quite difficult for African voters to learn about their election rivals. There are just not many of the heuristics that voters in most developed democracies use to improve the effectiveness of information gathering and decision-making processes. This is on top of the dearth of information on a number of candidate characteristics, including education, policy stances, and past performance as officeholders (Bouchard, 2022).

When voters lack more relevant information, they are forced to rely largely on ethnicity, one of the few reasonably priced ways to learn about rivals. According to Nkomo and Adanlawo (2024), ethnicity building is both political and cultural; it is not necessarily cynical and opportunistic; rather, it can occasionally be a survival tactic used by those who are trying to prove their

humanity. Ethnic politics have made it challenging for the majority of African nations to elect the best leaders for their political journeys. In many countries, ethnic politics have slowed down political progress. Unfortunately, the election of candidates in most African nations has been based on 'where the candidates came from rather than on the right candidates for the election.

Why national identity?

The process of constructing a national identity inevitably involves building a nation and *vice versa*. Without first having a nation, it is impossible to talk of a national identity. Since a nation involves people who imagine themselves as having a common identity and who constitute its membership (Rhodes, 2012), the two terms are constantly in consonance. In many instances, scholars define the two terms identically and this underlines their almost seamless connection. It is important to note that by constructing a nation, therefore, national identity is also constructed.

The steps taken to promote Nation-building can be divided into two categories (Alesina et al., 2021). Firstly, there are direct initiatives taken to foster integration and a sense of national identity and pride. And secondly, there are the reactive measures taken by governments to minimise the political effects of ethnic and cultural cleavages within society. As discussed in this paper, an obvious initiative is the creation of symbols of national identity. Flags, anthems and sharing, all serve this important purpose. Sports teams may also become nation builders, particularly if successful in international competition. In recent years, States in Africa and all over the world, Angola, Malaysia and Ukraine among others have thought it important to establish national airlines, to symbolise both independence and the modernity of their nations.

Collective identities continue to be an intrinsic part of human beings (Escalera-Reyesm, 2020). People, over the years,

have identified with religion, gender, age, race and class among others. People have allegedly been willing to surrender their own liberties and curtail those of others in the name of national identity. They have been prepared to trample on the civil and religious rights of ethnic, racial, and religious minorities whom that nation could not absorb (Calver et al., 2025; Dikici, 2022).

Hence, racial identity was crucial, and thinking in racial terms was a part of life that could not be escaped. Segregated education was but one institution that played a crucial role in keeping people of different races apart. According to Reddy and Adanlawo (2018), the racial hierarchy was kept intact due to the disparities in the quality of education that was provided for the different race groups.

What then is national identity and why does it arouse so much emotion? And is the concept of national identity always a positive attribute to a social community of people? The researcher highlights the notion of transcendence, and Mamphela Ramphele's metaphor of a larva and a butterfly. "It is only as we open ourselves to the possibility of adventure and change that we discover the unknown possibilities that dwell within us". The problem is that we instinctively cling to who we have become through decades of entrenched separate identities (Reid & Kampman, 2020).

Political and voter participation

In recent times, the increased interest and attention given to political participation and voter turnout have reflected the crucial significance of citizens' involvement in democratic decisions such as voting and electoral participation (Kostelka et al., 2024). However, the increase in the scope of government activities has led to considerable growth in political participation. Batrićević et al. (2024) describe political participation as the acts that individuals take in an effort to support or influence politics and the government.

This simply connotes individually motivated actions of citizens or voters to sustain or change a particular government in power, which most times are through political participation. Political participation gives the citizens a privilege to pass across their concerns to government officials while putting them under pressure to respond (Adanlawo & Rugbeer, 2021). This singular act by the citizens can further be examined from the perspective of citizens (voters) expressing their views, concerns, and preferences through voting. Hence, voters are turning out to use the election to voice their opinions, concerns, and preferences about the prevailing regime policies and actions.

Political participation is not limited to citizens' role in voting their leaders out of office. but Hale (2023) explains political participation from three main points of view: 1. participation as an influencing attempt, 2. participation as direct decision making and 3. participation as political discussion. As an influencing attempt, it connotes that participation is aimed at influencing the government and this is done with the aim at affecting government decisions (Hale, 2023; Goodnow, 2017). Consequently, this description of political participation indicates that citizens are allowed to make known their preferences, while it also served as mechanism through which citizens make the government to react to their will and desires.

In summary, the description of political participation can be grouped into three classifications:

1. Responsive democratic model—attempt to influence those that have a say in government
2. Participatory democratic model—to have a say in government by oneself
3. Deliberative democratic model—means of finding out what to say in government.

Therefore, citizens' participation both in governmental activities and electoral

process are essential for a viable democracy, and this serves as a main indicator for democratic performance (Lasswell, 2017; Jones & Neblett, 2017). Hein (2017) is of the opinion that the more the citizens participate in politics, the more developed or enhanced such democracy. This therefore ascertains the establishment of a relationship between political participation and democracy. It can be rightly said that political participation attracts those mechanisms through which the public can express their concerns as far as public issues are concerned and that elections seem to be the basic and important activity in which the public can use. In realisation, voting in elections is seen as the most important form of political participation.

Reconciling voter participation with the electoral system, Fox (2024) described voter participation as a rational act. Owolabi et al. (2024) argue that democracy is made possible by voting; without it, the system breaks down. Clearly, voter participation is determined by a combination of determinants such as economic factors, demographic factors, voter demographics, voting expenses, voting's strategic importance, campaign interest, and the sense of duty to cast a ballot. Another determinant is institutional or structural constraints. However, in most African nations, a combination of the above factors goes a long way to determine the reasons why people vote or refuse to vote.

Conclusion

Within the African perspective, history has demonstrated that democratic transitions frequently did not result in enduring democracy since legal institutions and constitutions do not ensure democratic practices (Maphela & Adanlawo, 2025; Wironen et al., 2019). In light of the above, it is important to note that “a prerequisite for a healthy, sustainable democracy in Africa is an informed citizenry that partakes in the democratic process” (Adewale & Abdullahi, 2024, P. 32).

Therefore, in order to maintain the democratic process, such "active engagement necessitates communication to emerge between a citizenry and its chosen representatives." This makes it abundantly evident that the public should be able to engage in the communication process.

Ethnic identity-based identity politics can be very contentious and violent at times. Contrary to common belief, this is not because minority groups who are desperate for wealth and power are the only ones who engage in ethnic identity politics. Groups of majority or minority employ their constituents' ethnic identities to organise political activity, develop political awareness, and assert their claims to social, economic, and other resources. Conflict between groups over supremacy can lead to ethnic identity and political power. Naturally, if ethnic identification did not have a strong emotional connection with people and have significant psychosocial purposes for them, such attempts to use ethnic identity would fail. People are united within a certain ethnic group, but they also see other groups as competitors or threats to their political objectives, making identity politics both unifying and divisive.

Therefore, identity politics derives its power from the factors that shape its dynamics. The state must refrain from measures that encourage or worsen the

marginalisation or exclusion of some groups, such as ethnic/religious minorities, if Africa is to curb the tendency of political elites to exploit ethnicity, which frequently results in ethnic conflicts and violence. Therefore, a commitment to equity and justice must be deeply embedded in African nations. When a country's government is equitable and fair, it will experience peace and national unity. These are necessary components for the growth, advancement, stability, and integration of the country. This study thereby concludes that ethnicity played a vital role in shaping African political systems. The persistent ethnic conflicts in Africa underscore a critical need for addressing the marginalisation of ethnic and religious minorities, which often fuels the flames of violence and discord. Political elites frequently manipulate ethnic identities for their own gain, exacerbating division and unrest within communities. To forge a path towards genuine peace and national unity, it is imperative that systems of equality and justice are established and upheld. These foundational elements not only serve to heal societal rifts but also foster an environment conducive to growth, stability, and integration across the continent. Ultimately, a concerted effort to recognise and rectify these injustices is essential for building a harmonious future where diversity is celebrated rather than feared.

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