

Ethnic Diversity and Social Relations in Buea, South West Region of Cameroon

Dr. Louis Besinga Ekane¹, Ayuk Collinayamba²

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social & Management Sciences

Email: [louis.besinga\[at\]ubuea.cm](mailto:louis.besinga[at]ubuea.cm)

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 that has been plaguing the North West and South Region for the past seven years. 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 of great concern. This study therefore is aimed at describing the relationship that exist between the different ethnic groups in Buea and to examine the extent to which ethnic diversity affects social relations in Buea. Data was gotten through critical observation, and with the use of an open - ended questionnaire, vital information was obtained from 100 respondents drawn from the neighborhoods of Molyko, Great - Soppo, and Buea - Town. The age range of the respondents was between 20 - 59 years and purposive sampling technique was deployed. The data was described in a constructive way, while eliminating irrelevances, grouping and naming data into constituents, and arranging them into themes that accurately and fully describes the participants' lived experience. The data was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative approach. The findings reveal that despite the fact that issues of ethnic diversity is very eminent amongst the settlers of Buea, they are virtually living in harmony thereby adhering to the principle of 'unity in diversity'. The research concludes that though people relate at a reduced rate through ethnic lines, social relations in Buea is based on accommodating and respecting one another's way of life, mutual understand, manner of approach, same passion for something, common goals, speaking of the same language, and ethnic diversity has positive effects on social relations in Buea. The study proposes that the government of Cameroon should development Pidgin Language and make it an official language. Also, the Department of Cultural Sciences should be extended to other state and private institutions in which Cameroonians will be given an in - depth knowledge of the different people that make up Cameroon, their values, beliefs, artifacts, and customs.

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

1. Introduction

According to Schaefer (2000), every human community has its culture which is distinct from that of other communities, respected and enhanced by members of that community. Therefore, sharing a similar culture helps to define the group to which someone belong. Culture shapes the way people see themselves and others, and how they interact with others. Human groups are different in biological characteristics, language, cultural tradition and in forms (Jing, Masamichi & 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. When people harmoniously live together, they learn about their culture and the cultures of others thereby comprehending different ways of viewing things and serving their society. This enables them to dispel negative conventional or formulaic conceptions or images and personal biases about different groups of people thereby making them see reasons to recognize, appreciate, and respect ways of being that are acculturated (Jing, Masamichi & Li, 2006).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that one of the fundamental problems that Cameroon is facing today is that of national integration and issues of healthy - social relations amongst its citizens. Harmonious living together in Cameroon has been of challenge due to: cultural and religious differences,

the disparity of the vulnerable population, and the recent socio - political instability rocking the two Anglophone regions of the country (UNESCO, 2019). The most obvious cultural differences that exist between people are language, traditions, shared conception of morality, and religious belief (UNESCO, 2001).

Buea being a cosmopolitan town encompassing people with different ethnic affiliations. Ethnic blend is adhesive and frankincense for harmonious living together among the inhabitants of Buea. Paradoxically, there are many shackles to the social relations of people within Buea in particular and Cameroon at large which are all triggered and propelled by the political atmosphere. Within our present dispensation, it is difficult to see a municipality whose vote holder is not an indigene from the area. Most often, nominations or elections are not done based on competence and capability nor on the ability of being able to deliver but is based on the origin of the candidate, the history of his/her parents of lineage and the political party (political ethnicity) into which he/she is militating with. A tag has been assigned to members of different ethnic groups, geo - political regions and political parties due to their ethnic/geo - political origins and political affiliations. There is unequal distribution of power and scarce resources along regional and on ethnic bases which is often characterized by inter - ethnic discrimination in the areas of job, admission into professional institutions, distribution of welfare services, promotions and appointments. Merit is quite often sacrificed on the altar of tribalism; thus, ethnic crisis becomes the resultant effect (Obaje, 2002). Ethnic prejudices and antagonism are most

Volume 12 Issue 5, May 2023

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prevalent and most violently expressed in situations where employment in the civil services, industries, universities and in other places such 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 is seen as being influenced by ethnic considerations. This situation is fast becoming a value and conscious thought among each of

its citizens. This has caused more harm than good to social relations and national integration in Cameroon. Nnoli (1978) also observed similar situation in Nigeria where ethnic cleavages are seen as the main determinants of political affiliation and social relations. It is therefore the relationship between the diverse ethnic groups and the political environment that leads to ethnicity (Achimugu et al, 2013).

Furthermore, knowledge on ethnic diversity and social relations will aid politicians and policy makers curb hate speech, division, and xenophobic behaviours; thus, better explain the socio - political problem plaguing Cameroon, and its implication for a non - killing society—"a human community, smallest to largest, local to global, characterize by no killing of humans and no threat to kill; no weapons design to kill humans and no justifications for using them; and no of society dependent upon threat or use of killing force for maintenance or change" (Paige, 2002).

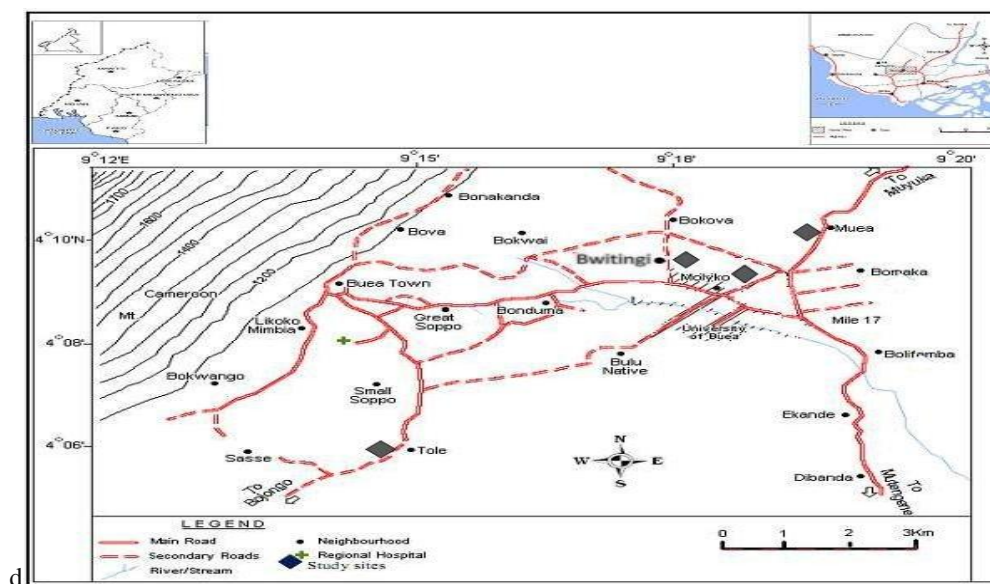


Figure I: Spatial Layout of Buea Municipality

Source: Uploaded by J. O. Akpotuzor, <https://www.researchgate.net>, retrieved on the 4/04/2023 at 10pm

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 *graffis* 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 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.

2. Theoretical Review and Theoretical Framework

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 assert 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.

3. Methodology

The research made use of qualitative research design in which it employed the use of two sources in obtaining vital information pertaining to ethnic diversity and social relations, that is, Primary sources which comprises of open - ended questionnaire and critical observations and secondary sources which comprises of consultation of archives, map, published and unpublished journals, and internet. The design was suitable because it sought to describe the relations between ethnic groups and was able to examine the extent to which ethnic diversity affects social relations in Buea, while at the same time suspending the researchers’ preconceived assumptions about the phenomenon. This design gave the researcher the opportunity to gain a richly detailed understanding of the topic, based on first - hand experience. It was concerned with establishing answers to the “whys” and “how’s” of the phenomenon in question. For convenience, the research work was limited to the town of Buea. With the use of convenient and purposive sampling techniques respectively, key informants were gotten from three multi - ethnic neighbourhoods: Molyko, Buea - town and Great - Soppo. The research made use of people between the age range of 20 - 59 years and people from different ethnic groups, all works of life and educational levels.

With the use of an open - ended questions, comprehensive and thorough interviews were administered to 100 persons by the researcher. The research took into consideration three nodal points from where people can relate or be at conflict with one another such as the market, church, and neighbourhood and these were areas targeted in collecting data. The non - participant 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. A signed copy of the authorization from the institution was showed to them in other to win their trust.

Data was collected from the 10/07/2022 to the 31/08/2022 with the use of two languages: Pidgin English and English language. It was decoded and translated. 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 irrelevant materials, 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 developed. 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.

4. Results and Discussion

Relationship between the Different Ethnic Groups in Buea

Table 1a: Ethnic Groups in Buea

Are there different ethnic groups in Buea	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	95	95
No	5	5
TOTAL	100	100

Source: Author’s Field work, 2022

Table 2b: The different Ethnic groups in Buea

What are the different Ethnic groups in Buea	Aghem, Bafaw, Bakossi, Balondo, Balong, Bamileke, Bamum, Barombi, Bassa, Bayang, Becheve, Beti, Boki, Bulu, Duala, Ejagham, Ekwot, Ewondo, Fang, Fulani, Igbo, Iploh, Kom, Lower Ngemba, Massa, Mbo’o, Moghamo, Mokpe, Mondani, Noni, Nsei, Nso, Nweh, Oku, Oliti, Oroko, Ugar, Upper Ngemba, Vungo, Wimum.
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Source: Author’s Field work, 2022

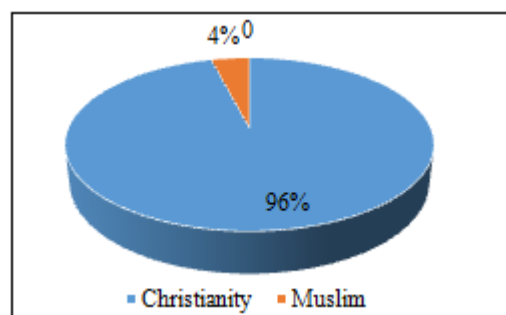


Figure 2: Religious Status of Respondents

Source: Author’s Field work, 2022

Findings from table 1a above indicates that there are different ethnic groups in Buea as acclaim by 95% of the respondents. Within the 40 ethnic groups in Buea as seen in table 1b, it was realized that 96% are Christians and 4% are Muslim (see figure 2 above). This therefore makes Buea an ethnic crossroad with an extraordinary heterogeneous population. These are people with different languages, institutions, belief systems, cultural practices, and way of life who have settled in Buea for one reason or the other. Belief system and doctrine plays a vital role in the social

relations of people with those considered non indigenes. The Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Baptist Churches are considered mainstream churches. Lang (2014) argues that these mainstream churches are presented by their followers as the dominant religious tradition while ignoring the existence of others.

Paradoxically, though there are members of different denominations holding on different faiths, belief systems and doctrines, their relationship with non - members and those who do not hold on the same doctrine is cordial as quoted by respondents (**Interview with key informant 1, a chief aged 50 years, on the 15th July 2022**). He went further to reveals that:

“We are interested in the common values we share as Cameroonians and as children of God and we do respect the beliefs, traditions and doctrines of others though we do not uphold the same”. The cordiality in their relationship is propelled by the fact that, they are created by, and are serving the same creator, though using different nomenclatures and approaches. In this line as they relate with others, they advanced, they either keep away denominational doctrines and embark on the word of God/Allah, or keep an open mind, shunning stereotype, and listening to each other’s views, or are not involved in religious shifts that do not benefit them. Buea being a multi - religious society is a blessing though made up of lots of challenges. Meyer (2019) opines that Pentecostalism’ is not isolated and the “born again Christians” cohabit with all sorts of others who are perceived as enemies.

To add, personalism stresses on a person’s nature as a social being. Personalists hold that, the person never exists in isolation, hence, persons find their human perfection in communion with other persons. Interpersonal relations are never senseless or optional to the person but are indicated by their nature and an essential component of their fulfillment (Abebe, 2022). Symbiotically, the World Council of Churches (WCC) arose out of the ecumenical movement and is based on following premises:

- The WCC is a fellowship of churches that confesses the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- It is a community of churches united in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ. (John 17: 21) (World Council of Churches, 2017).

Table 2: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	40	40
Married	60	60
Total	100	100

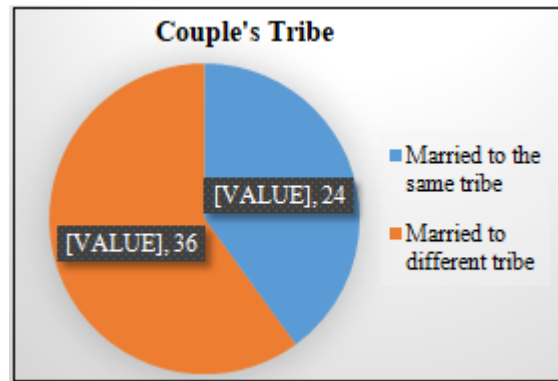


Figure 3: Tribes of the Spouses of Respondents
Source: Author’s Field work, 2022

Findings on table 2 shows that 60% of the respondents are married while 40% are single. According to a respondent, marriage is generally good for health and it is important aspect of family upbringing (NIH, 2017). Within the 60% of respondents who declared they were married, 60% of them got married from their same ethnic lineage, while 40% got married to those not of the same ethnic lineage (see figure 2 above). Those whose spouses were not from their same ethnic lineage reveals that aspects of relationship and love is not based on tribal lineage, since marriage entails mutual understanding and a deep emotional feeling for one another. They also affirmed that their traditional beliefs and customs affected their attitudes towards those not from the same ethnic lineage but at a lesser extent as noted in their statements:

“Our different cultures, shape our behavior, define what we value, and how we should live life”. When confronted with situations that has to do with conflicting values, in order to allow peace to reign in most cases they are waved out while in other cases they are confronted. The 16% of those married to those from different ethnic lineage reveals that:

“Our husbands always refused us from kissing them specially when they realized that we eat snails, “Mungwin” or “Nqui” and to some husbands strict warning or embargo is giving to their wives never to serve them food that is cooked in the same pot used in cooking snails”.

Schaefer (2000), ascertains that when deeply submerge in an unaccustomed culture, a person may feel unexpectedly perplexed, lack of confidence or assurance, out of place, even ignobly timid and faint - hearted. She therefore concluded by saying that every human being in one way or the other have always turn to consider their cultural values as superior to others (seen as the main culture) and so all other cultures most merge or follow suit. While cultures adopt the word mores (norms deemed highly necessary to the welfare of a society) others uses folkways (norms governing everyday social behavior whose violation raise comparatively little concern).

On the other hand, those who got married to non - natives affirms that:

“Getting married to other tribe’s has helped to eliminate in me the ideology of attributing a particular trait or behavior to members of a whole ethnic group”.

They respondents went further to explained that, at first, they used to see all Bakweri people as lazy, Bayangi as prostitutes and Bamileke as occultists. Such assumptions could be very misleading because there are Bakwerians who are not lazy, Bayangi's who are not prostitutes and Bamileke people who are not occultists. Cultural diversity has greatly helped us to be fully aware and respect ways of being that are not essentially theirs. They strongly re-affirm that the abundant diversity of cultures should be recognized, differences respected, the validity of different cultural expressions and contributions acknowledged, valuing what other cultures offer, furnishing support and encouragement to the contribution of distinctly dissimilar groups, empowering people to strengthen themselves and others so as to achieve uttermost potentials by being critical of once biases; and celebrating rather than just tolerating the differences, in order to bring about unity through diversity (Rosado, 2021). People through active participation build or create basic knowledge by themselves through inquiry and discovery (Detel, 2001). Knowledge according to Him is not simply constructed but constantly been re-constructed. With this, Piaget cited in the work of Detel (2001) claims that People respond not to external stimuli but to their interpretation of those stimuli.

More so, the respondents who got married to those not from their same ethnic lineage continued by saying that they do attend cultural meetings of their spouses, and they have been able to build a bigger family from what they originally had. With this, they strongly echoed that getting married outside has helped them attain higher level of security and many uncountable blessings and assistance from their in-laws. A respondent reveals that

"I feel more secure and safe getting married to people from other tribes,"

Because of uncertainty of what their spouse, spouse relatives and spouse friends may do, even with those from the same ethnic lineage, people fear hurting them and statements like "this woman is from a different tribe and so no one should there try to touch her" are commonly used. The respondents further reveal that from time memorial, experience have proven that the fact that people are different so too they turn to see and do things differently. All the above is guided by the following: the place of origin, where a person grew up, his/her degree of socialization, the type of people they socialized with, and also his/her individual temperaments. For one therefore to relate so well, one need to tolerate what is consider nonsense because, from the nonsense one can be able to obtain some sense; accept people's differences, engage in meaningful dialogue to clear doubts, embrace what one views as good, and try the "ways" of others before drawing conclusion, said a respondent. Another respondent then articulated that:

"No man is created bad, no culture is bad or evil, but once doctrines make one see them that way just because they are not in conformity with the others doctrine".

Furthermore, the research findings indicated that, intermarriage increases the possibility of developing friendship ties with other groups in Buea. This implies that

members of a particular ethnic groups accommodate each other as social equals (Kalmijn, 1998). Friendships between different group of people and inter-marriages are most important in social relations. This is because they serve as a means of expressing the most intimate ties that exist between distinctly separate ethnic group members (Gurak, & Fitzpatrick, 1982). It contributes in building bridges between social groups, and brings multi-ethnic societies together. Thus, intermarriages could be seen as a citadel of social proximity. The beingness of interethnic marriages between members of distinctly separate ethnic groups is likely to be considered as a bridge to help mitigate issues of violent and conflict, and ensure a healthy social relation of members of a society (Monden, & Smits, 2005). Many marital ties between members of distinctly separate groups gives rise to other social contacts like friendships amongst them (Smits, 2009).

In the same light, there is a high probability of progenies of distinctly dissimilar groups to meet each other in the school milieu, in the cluster, or during leisure activities (hours). Mixed marriages among members of distinctly dissimilar groups serves as a colligating factor in the society. It does not only link up two individuals, but larger groups to which these individuals belong. Inter-ethnic marriages create a bridge between those larger groups across whose family members and friends of the partners may come in touch with each other and a new group of boundaries surpassing personal contacts and collaborations that may come into being (Smits, 2009).

Ethnic cleavages in Buea

As concerns ethnic cleavages, the respondents revealed that they relate socially well with people from varied ethnic lineage, categories and denominations in as much as they respect one another, understand each other, and portray good morals toward each other. They see everyone as human beings, created by the same God and in God's image; and as a result, everyone deserves equal treatment. The ethnic group of someone does not matter. What matters is what they can offer to see that life goes on well. Even at this, the respondents added that they reciprocate based on how they are treated. For you to grow in life, you have to keep tribal issues aside and go in for genuine relationship with people that matter (**Interview with key informant 2, a notable aged 40 years, on the 20th July 2022**).

In this vein, the United Nations expatiate that effective social relations are all about accommodating differences and having the ability to listen, recognize, respect and appreciate others (Egoh, 2019). This proclamation is a means of regularly mobilizing the international community's efforts in favour of peace, tolerance, inclusion, understanding and solidarity, and as an opportunity for all to express the deeper desire to live and act together, united in difference and diversity, in order to build a sustainable world based on peace, solidarity and harmony (Esse, 2021). Social relations in Buea and Cameroon as a whole entails human bonding and fairness, love, equality, responsibility, and accountability (Egoh, 2019). It warrants Cameroonians to inculcate ethical societal principles such as mutual respect, recognition of different identities and cultures, and the promotion of an egalitarian society (Gil, 1976). With this in

mind, differences in cultures bring about rich cultural diversity, which is rather a force to reckon with as a people.

Similarly, findings from the research reveals that despite the ethnic diversity that prevails in Buea, the inhabitants and non - inhabitants do interact and keep a close contact with each other especially with those who actually play a positive impact in their lives. That is, people who practice what they preach, people who are kind and do not try to justify their wrongs, those who appreciate others for any little support made, those who listen actively to what is said and those who are sincere about their emotions. Such category of people include: their classmates, colleagues at work, business mates, social group members, friends, neighbours, church members, village meeting members, family members, and in - laws. The manner of approach and way of life portrayed will determine the degree of relations and interaction between them—whether they will be friends or just acquaintances. The respondents also argued that coming from the same tribe with a person does not warranty they will relate and interact well. Some acclaim that most of their support in life came from people out of their tribal link. Therefore, high quality friendships are likely to be characterized by the following: support, reciprocity and intimacy (Amati, Meggiolaro, Rivellini, & Zaccarin, 2018).

Allport (1954), stated that contact between different groups of people that affords pleasure; being in harmony with one's taste or linking and cooperative can lessen prejudice towards the other group. Affording pleasure; being in harmony with one's taste or linking and cooperative close interaction can result from contact within schools, churches, workplaces, social gatherings, leisure sports and in residential areas (Hewstone & Brown 1986). In this view, the Cameroon Government through informative and educative platforms has for the past years been able to advocate for aspects of understanding, respect, tolerance, responsibility and inclusion as central values in the national goals. The great borne of contention therefore in Cameroon is promoting or building aspects of unity in diversity in all its forms be it in the workplace, and political composition of members of a political party with recognition that doing so serves as a value proposition for both employers, employees, and party members. Newman et al., (2018) also observed a similar situation in Australia where issues of ethnic diversity was very prominent. Cultural diversity helps one to be fully aware and to respect ways of being that are not essentially ours. One can build bridges of trust, respect, and understanding across cultures as one interacts with one another (<https://libguides.cccneb.edu>). Unity in diversity will make a country an interesting place to live, as people from diverse cultures contribute language, skills, new ways of thinking, new knowledge, and different experiences. With this, there will be a variety in spice of life and thus ensuring that diversity is strength (**Interview with key informant 1 and 2, a chief aged 55 years, and a notable aged 35, on the 23rd July 2022**). Similarly, it was critically observed that the degree of relations between two people of different ethnic groups was different from that between two people of the same ethnic group. This was visible with the ethnic groups of Nso, Oku, Bangwa, and Kom people. This was evident in the instant change of attention and concentration from the previous person to the next, and change of

language of communication with the person they were socializing to their native language to communicate with the one termed “brother or Sister”.

It was also observed that multi - distinct personality of an individual was a widely known remarkable development in Buea. Inhabitants of Buea have more than one social identity. People were also identified with respect to their clusters and religious background, for example, statements like: “*I am a Soppo boy, and I am a daughter of Zion*” were often used. At one point in time, they demonstrate and identify with respect to one's identities. Xiaotong (1999) holds that identities of different levels can co - exist without being conflicting. When ethnic groups live together, and people from diverse ethnicities co - habitats in the same region/town for a long time, a regional/town community is formed (Banban, 2018). The identity of people living in that community is based on factors related to the territory, such as, natural environment, historical anecdotes, and cultural heroes, and obviously, it also includes common interests (ibid). That is, they form a common consciousness and common interest linked with the territory. This kind of territorial identity of different ethnic groups is further developed in the interactions between individuals (Banban, 2018).

More so, based on market experience it was realized that in the market, the buying capability of customers is dependent on a number of factors such as: goods and services meeting the demand of the customers, those who sells the quality of the product, the price and the quantity. Others also have people that on a regular base buy from them called “customer”; they can even be sold on credit base and they will receive preferential treatment. These customers are not usually built on ethnic links but due to their way of life, and special considerations expand their bandwidth of customer services. These traders in the market have a culture of fun making and the assigning of pet names to their customers which serves as an attention magnet to them. The relationship amongst them is seen in the fact that they are business people who congregate in the market to sell their goods and not as people from the same ethnic group. This is visible even in their positioning, that is, the specialized nature of the location of their businesses. Businesses of similar goods and those selling the goods cluster together irrespective of the tribes and religious background of the vendors.

It is also worth noting that if a particular customer is in need of something that the business person does not have, there is always a tendency for the business person to scout but to his/her ethnic group of origin that has been termed “brothers or sisters”. The said item might only be obtain from a friend if that said brother or sister is not having it. It was also observed that while some people are struggling to avoid issues of ethnic lineage in the name of customer some are still holding firm to it since they think that it is very imperative to promote theirs. These vendors in return gives preferential treatment to those of their same ethnic group while disfavouring those not from their ethnic group.

Furthermore, similar scenario was observed in Churches like Catholic, Presbyterian and Baptist. In these institutions,

there is the principle of first come and first serve and not based on ethnic lineage or position as regards allocation of seats. These encourages interaction even with those one does not know. Issues of diversity also cuts across vernacular, for example, in groups like the Temple and Hallelujah choirs of the Presbyterian Church Buea, their membership is diverse in its ethnic lineage. Temple choir is a Manyu descend choir, while Hallelujah choir is a Bali Descend choir. Most of the members in these different choirs are not from Manyu nor Bali respectively, and most of those who write and teach songs in these different vernacular choirs are not natives of that area. They write the songs in English, hand it to a chorister who knows the language to translate before assigning music to it. But members of such choir are obliged to learn the languages, the cultural beats and steps, create a blend in the music style involving different cultural rhythms, accommodating and respecting each other. Members of their executive bureau are also ethnically diverse. Everyone who has fulfilled the registration requirements is seen as a member without prejudice stemming from ethnic lines. It is a similar scenario with non - vernacular groups like Christian Men or Women Fellowship, Christian Men Workers, Christian Women Association, Holy Family Singers, Young Christian Workers Choir, Christian Youth Fellowship, and the Congregational Choirs like the Saint Charles Choir of Saint Charles Lyonga Parish Molyko, Jordan English Choir of Presbyterian Church Great - Soppo and Redemption Choir of Presbyterian Church Molyko. The main objective of all these church groups or choirs is to come together and sing praises to Yahweh since it is often said that he/she who sings prays twice.

Nevertheless, despite the harmony that cuts across the different ethnic groups that exists in Churches, it will be tantamount to committing suicide or fallacy for one to say that there are no traces of tribalism in Churches. Issues of tribalism could be traced as people of particular ethnic group and region do project their own through juicy openings be it at the level of groups and congregation. In most cases they stand to protect those from their tribe even when they falter; they form small camps to build up strategies to grasp what they want irrespective of whether there is competency or not. Similarly, it was critically observed that the relationship between Pentecostal Christians and members of the mainstream churches is very poor. Some of these Pentecostals define non - members and those who do not hold on to their doctrines as “unbelievers and people of the world.” With this, they have little or nothing to do with them. Socialization between a Pentecostal and members of the mainstream churches is at the surface level. Cordiality only sets in when the Pentecostal is struggling to convert the other so as to follow their trend.

5. Conclusions

The composition of contemporary Buea is multiethnic in nature, encompassing people from diverse ethnic groups who have come to Buea for one reason or the other. In order to keep themselves in the bond of unity, they have been able to bring themselves together under the umbrella of a social group/association and village meeting and not as an ethnic group per se. Therefore, they identify more with their village group than the global ethnic group. These associations are

made up of people from diverse tribes, socio - professional, socio - economic and religious backgrounds. Membership into these village meetings depend on who you are married to and your village of origin. These numerous social groups/associations and village meetings in contemporary Buea vivaciously constitutes what actually makes up the town as it has been described as the land of legendary hospitality. These social group’s functions either as “Njangi” group, football veteran association, youths’ group, quarter meeting, singing group, common initiative group, village meeting, professional group, students association, dance group, and solidarity group. The ethnic composition of these different groups/associations is diverse in nature. Membership into these groups is not based on ethnic links, but upon registration and respect of rules and regulations. Way of life, manner of approach, attitude, character, sincerity, humility, patience, spiritual life, marital status, passion, age, mutual understanding, common goal, trust worthiness, and social flexibility are criteria used by Buea inhabitants to select their friends.

In addition, inhabitants of Buea do associate with one another at first instance without bordering to know where they come from. Even when they come to know, the precise origin such as village/tribe of location is not of prior importance. A general label is mostly used to describe people: Bamileke man, Bayangi/Manyu man, Bamenda man, Yaoundé man, Duala/Sawa man, Oroko man and Bakossi man. People relate and associate with one another with respect to what unites them and what they want to achieve. Social relations in contemporary Buea are guided by factors such as age, occupation, passion, attitude, values, mutual understanding, cooperation, business, social life (Relaxation), marital affiliations, and goals to be achieved. So, an individual associate with diverse groups of people and transcends across different ethnic borders and feel happy and complete when with friends. They feel fulfilled and see those around them as reliable.

Mindful of the ethnic cleavages amongst those in Buea, they have been able to adopt an accommodative, tolerative, and an appreciative manner of living with one another. Close relationships among ethnic groups promote ethnic tolerance in the society (Powers & 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; Powers and Ellison, 1995). These inhabitants living in heterogeneous neighborhoods in Buea do not perceive any threat to resources like jobs, housing and to their way of life. 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.

In summary the following adjectives could be used to describe the inhabitants of Buea: **Trust,**

Respect for one another, Equality in partnership, Communication, Fun and Support:

6. Recommendations

Haven looked at the different ethnic groups in Buea as well as the relationship that exist between 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.

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.
- 3) There should be an educational campaign that promotes inclusion, respect and tolerance to ameliorated discrimination and prejudice.

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