

ETHICS, CULTURE, AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AMONG INDIGENOUS AND SETTLER COMMUNITIES IN KETU, LAGOS STATE

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ABSTRACT

In urban Nigeria, the indigenous and the settler groups meet on a daily, long-lasting basis, challenging the questions of belongingness, recognition, and power. The research explored how ethics and culture influenced peaceful coexistence between indigenous and settler people in Ketu, a multi ethnic neighbourhood in Kosofe Local Government Area in Lagos State. An exploratory qualitative design was employed; the interviews applied were semi-structured (n=8), paired (n=4), and non-participant observation in markets and communal settings. A total of twelve participants were chosen purposively to include indigenous residents, settler residents, and community gatekeepers. Thematic analysis showed that in Ketu, coexistence was considerably governed by ethical commonalities like respect, tolerance, hospitality, and common responsibility, which defined the day-to-day interaction and cooperation in economic and religious settings. Nevertheless, coexistence was not equal and unconditional. Authority systems based on indigeneity meant that settlers were limited in their participation in the leadership and decision-making processes, which strengthened the symbolic and practical limits of belonging. The effect of these dynamics was that they created a negotiated form of coexistence that was characterized by moral restraint in place of institutional inclusion as a means of containing peace. The research found that, although in Ketu, civic ethics prevailed in everyday life with peaceful relations, subtle forms of exclusion, which are based on indigeneity, nonetheless dictated the local way of governance and the social

hierarchy.

Keywords: *Indigenous–settler relations; Ethics; Culture; Negotiated coexistence; Urban Nigeria*

1. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, urban centres have long served as an arena of extreme social interaction, economic interaction, and cultural plurality. Cities like Lagos have seen a mix of people from around the nation come together as a result of trade, jobs, and political hubs. This ongoing internal movement has given rise to complicated patterns of indigenous and settler society whose coexistence is not only unavoidable but also disputed. In modern, urbanized Nigeria, the indigenes and settlers are not only demographically different but also entrenched in issues of belonging, resource access, political inclusion, and cultural acknowledgment. These differences are frequently negotiated in the daily contexts of markets, neighbourhoods, religion, and local government, and the urban setting has been an important site for regulating coexistence (Animasawun, 2016; Solaja et al., 2013). In Lagos State, interaction is aggravated by high population density and ethnic mixes, which result in a pattern of everyday cooperation with tensions that persist.

Indigenous-settler coexistence is ethically and culturally based on the central focus of the dynamics. Coexistence goes beyond mere physical co-location to encompass common moral expectations, norms of reciprocity, and acknowledgement of cultural difference. Using the Igwebuiké philosophy, Kanu (2022) highlights relationality, collective responsibility, and mutual recognition as the ethics to live peacefully and reasonably in plural societies. In this view, the peace has never been maintained by the blanking out of the difference, but rather by the ethical interactions and adherence to the good of the whole. Agbara (2011) by the same means contends that intercultural hermeneutics and interreligious discourse would be critical in promoting convivencia in Nigeria, especially where ethnic and religious identities overlap.

Although such ethical constructs are relevant, the existence of structural inequalities and past grievances continues to negate urban coexistence in Nigeria. Informal practices and institutional arrangements that reinforce the dichotomy between indigene and settlers have frequently been used to favor so-called sons of the soil at the expense of the long-term populations of migrants in terms of land, jobs, political representation, and social services (Adamu, 2012; Achimugu, Ata-Agboni, and Aliyu, 2013). Competition for economic resources and ethno-religious mobilisation often fuel such exclusions in Lagos, and may turn simple arguments into identity-based conflicts of larger scale (Adeyeri, 2021; Jegede, 2019). Such divisions have been supported by media representations and political discourses, which make

settlers appear as outsiders or threats, which have enhanced mistrust and social fragmentation (Nsude and Elem, 2020).

The main issue, hence, is the gap between Nigeria on the one hand and its ideals of unity and the realities of lived coexistence in the urban setting. Even though cultural diversity is usually praised in a rhetorical discourse, there are no sufficient operational systems of managing the difference and developing ethical relationships between the indigenous and settler populations. Other forms of discrimination, which are subtle, inequality of access to power, and suspicion between each other, indicate that coexistence in most urban environments is tentative and negotiated, not fixed and institutionalized.

The primary aim of the research is to explore the ethical and cultural issues that affect the calm coexistence of indigenous and settler communities in Ketu. The study, in particular, aims to examine the cultural practices and values that define daily interaction; assess ethical norms, beliefs, and perceptions that define inclusion, exclusion, and belonging; and determine challenges and opportunities to promote sustainable coexistence in a plural urban environment. Based on these aims, the research question is the following: How do indigenous and settler communities in Ketu interpret and negotiate coexistence? What moral and cultural variables encourage or discourage harmonious relationships? And what are the ways of enhancing mutual acknowledgment and social cohesiveness in urban Nigeria?

The importance of the research is both theoretical and real-world. It will add to the literature on indigene settlement relations by prefiguring ethics and culture as points of analysis alongside the prevailing structural and political accounts of conflict. The research contributes to comprehending the influence of moral thinking and cultural sense on the daily relationships in cities by exploring philosophical and sociocultural approaches to coexistence (Kanu, 2022; Agbara, 2011; Anzaku et al., 2025). In practice, the research can be applied to policymakers, civil society actors, and community leaders aiming to find ways to approach peacebuilding in the cities of Nigeria in a context-sensitive way.

2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual and theoretical framework that directs this research is the combination of ethics, culture, and social identity, which interact to form trends of peaceful co-existence of indigenous and settler populations in urban Nigeria. Instead of viewing conceptual variables and theory as different levels, the framework integrates them to make sure that abstract ideas are transformed into visible social practices and analytically significant relationships. The model presupposes that coexistence is not only produced by the formal institutions and state policies but also remains in constant production and disputation with the daily interactions, moral judgments, and identity-based relations in the community

(Adamu, 2012; Achimugu, Ata-Agboni, and Aliyu, 2013).

2.1 Moral Responsibility in Ethics as Practised

In this context, ethics is defined as practised moral responsibility in daily social life. With reference to African communitarian philosophy and the Igwebuiké school of thought, ethical behavior is perceived as relational and based on common humanity, mutual duty, and collective good (Kanu, 2022). Ethics can be empirically viewed in the form of respectful communication, economic fairness, communal space, sharing, informal mediation of conflicts, and a show of solidarity across ethnic and religious lines.

Discriminatory language, unequal application of communal norms, lack of access to economic networks, and moralizations to explain unequal treatment are all signs of ethical breakdown. Such trends are indicative of what Adeyeri (2021) describes as the weakening of informal peacebuilding processes in urban Lagos, where insecurity and competition put a burden on the ethical relationships. Forgiveness and reconciliation, as highlighted by Anzaku et al. (2025), are not discussed as a set of abstract principles but as moral activities that can restore broken social ties.

2.2 Culture, Identity, and Inclusion

The second pillar of the framework is culture and identity, which are relational and situational as opposed to fixed. Through language, religion, mode of dressing, joining associations, and observing common practices, cultural identity is manifested. Empirical analysis of Lagos markets demonstrates that these practices of everyday cooperation and recreation of exclusionary hierarchies go hand in hand (Animasawun, 2016; Solaja et al., 2013).

Cultural diversity turns into a conflict when it is politicised or presented in zero-sum terms, especially in economic competition and disputed belonging (Omotosho et al., 2020). Cross-group involvement in social and economic activities leads to inclusion and boundary-making narratives, unequal access to positions of leadership, and informal hierarchies in the markets and neighbourhood organisations lead to exclusion. Past and recent researches show that long-term settlement does not necessarily lead to complete social acceptance of settler groups, which strengthens marginalisation despite daily collaboration (Adeboye & Fourchard, 2003; Adamu, 2012).

2.3 The application of Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory is the key explanatory factor in understanding the role of indigene-settler differences in coexistence. These categories serve as salient social identities in Nigeria and shape the perception of entitlement, threat and belonging (Adamu, 2012). In-group favouritism, stereotyping, unequal trust and preferential access to economic or political benefits are empirical evidences of identity salience. Literature on the relationship between ethnic identity and lack of governance and violence emphasizes the negative impact of exclusionary identity politics on social

solidarity and democratic stability (Achimugu, Ata-Agboni, and Aliyu, 2013; Okechukwu, 2021).

But identity differentiation does not by itself explain why every day cooperation is maintained in non-country districts such as Ketu. The studies of Lagos show that coexistence is frequently sustained where tensions co-exist, implying that there are moderating forces across identity lines (Animasawun, 2016).

2.4. Communitarian Ethics as Moral Control

The communitarian ethical theory offers this balancing dimension by stressing moral responsibility, collective responsibility, and acknowledgement of the other as a moral equal. According to Agbara (2011), plural societies require intercultural hermeneutics and dialogue that is based on ethical mutuality. In this context, communitarian ethics controls identity-based exclusion by placing moral restraint on in-group dominance. In these cultures where these standards of ethics are firmly developed, the boundaries of identity are blurred; where they are less powerful, ostracism and silent hostility rise (Adeyeri, 2021; Anzaku et al., 2025).

2.5 Interaction and Outcomes

Peaceful coexistence is thus theorized as the product of the interaction of identity differentiation and ethical control. The mechanisms of social identity create a social boundary and hierarchy, whereas communitarian ethics limits such processes by making shared moral rules. The relationships between these forces create either inclusion or marginalisation, which is further influenced by media stories and political language in their daily spaces like markets, religious institutions, and neighbourhood associations (Nsude& Elem, 2020).

2.6 Applicability in the context of Ketu

This framework, when applied to Ketu, Lagos State, facilitates an overview of the silent tensions, informal exclusion, and asymmetries of power coupled with collaborative and solidarity practices. It places the local experiences in the context of the national trends of migration, citizenship, and security (Ojo, 2024; Prah, 2004), and provides the anticipation of how the ethical reasoning and cultural sense-making influence the coexistence on the level of the community.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on indigenous-settler relations in Nigeria is united by the significance of migration, citizenship, and belonging in defining coexisting and conflict but is divided on how these processes ought to be understood. One of the literatures considers internal migration as something that undermines territorially bound conceptions of indigeneity, especially in an urban setting where migration is motivated by economic prospects and not ancestry (Ojo, 2024). In this sense, cities are viewed as negotiated belonging places. Conversely, a second line of argument maintains that the federal design of Nigeria institutionalised indigene/settler

difference, which has turned migration into a political issue and institutionalised different rights to citizenship that marginalize settlers despite protracted residence (Adamu, 2012). It is therefore a debate on whether migration enhances pluralism or further exclusion by politicised identity categories.

Urban-based empirical research does not emphasize formal citizenship but on day-to-day intercourse. Studies of Lagos markets reveal that coexistence is rather practical than harmonious. Animasawun (2016) proves that traders collaborate regularly across ethnic boundaries to survive economically, and at the same time, negotiate through autochthonic claims. On the same note, Solaja et al. (2013) demonstrate how market structures facilitate regular interaction and recreate ethnic hierarchies and unequal economic power.

In addition to structural explanations, the ethical and cultural aspects of coexistence receive more focus due to the accumulating literature. Those who rely on African communal thought maintain that ethics based on common humanity and general obligation are essential in the management of diversity. According to Kanu (2022), with the help of the Igwebuiké philosophy, coexistence is a moral duty that relies on relationality, whereas Agbara (2011) talks about intercultural hermeneutics and interreligious dialogue as an avenue to convivencia. The views overlap in normative focus on ethics as regulatory power and are criticized for having little empirical interaction with day-to-day practice in unequal urban settings.

The other debate is on the issues of cultural and religious identity in conflict. Omotosho, Ihekuna, and Fakoya (2020) state that diversity does not create conflict, but identities that are politicised or put into a zero-sum context will. Adeyeri (2021) builds on this argument and connects ethno-religious tension in Lagos to the wider issue of human security by indicating that insecurity undermines trust and informal coexistence mechanisms. Conversely, security-focused research highlights how identity tensions can turn violent, form ethnic militias, and become democratic (Achimugu, Ata-Agboni, and Aliyu, 2013; Okechukwu, 2021; Egbefo, 2018). Although these works differ in size and focus, they all remind us of the rather thin line dividing peaceful coexistence and open conflict.

Peacebuilding literature is more optimistic as it prides itself on processes that maintain coexistence amidst structural tensions. According to Jos's studies, dialogue, inclusive leadership, and community-based initiatives are strong measures of dealing with religious and ethnic diversity (Tuduks& Adamu, 2024). The actual realisation of the concept of reconciliation by Anzaku et al. (2025) can be seen as an ethical and realistic process that entails forgiveness, truth-telling, and moral commitment. Studies centered on the media also reveal that storytelling may either strengthen indigene-non-indigene boundaries or foster understanding as well as understanding by framing (Nsude& Elem, 2020). These analyses lead to a belief

that coexistence is constructed in the process of social practice, and not preserved passively in institutions.

The comparative approaches place the experiences in Nigeria in the context of the wider African and global trends. Prah (2004) shows that ethnic conflicts in Africa tend towards a mixture of pragmatic coexistence and structural exclusion, especially in situations of fragility of the state and rivalry in citizenship. These comparative observations indicate that the indigene-settler relations in Nigeria are not unique but belong to the global issue of diversity management in the migrant-inflected urban areas.

In general, it has been found in the literature that coexistence and conflict are two complementary processes, that day-to-day cooperation usually conceals inequality, and that ethics and culture have a vital yet under-evaluated role in governing social relations. Yet, non-violent micro-tensions in urban settings, including neighbourhoods in Lagos, are under-researched, and ethical frameworks are not often a part of empirical community-based studies. To fill these gaps, this paper will discuss the intersection of ethics, culture, and identity in Ketu, Lagos State.

4. METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted an exploratory qualitative research design used to explore the ethical and cultural underpinnings of the peaceful coexistence of indigenous and settler populations in Ketu, Kosofe Local Government Area, Lagos State. The aim of the exploratory orientation is deliberate because the research does not aim to generalise results across the cities of Nigeria but instead to produce context-specific information regarding how ethics, culture, and daily social practices define coexistence within a multi-ethnic urban setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative method is suitable since the problems of ethics, identity, belonging and coexistence are inherent in meanings and lived experiences that cannot be measured in numbers (Patton, 2015). Earlier research on the dynamics of indigene-settler relations and peacebuilding in Nigeria has shown that qualitative inquiry is appropriate to describe moral thinking, daily interaction, and feelings of belonging and non-belonging (Animasawun, 2016).

This study was done in Ketu, a community in Kosofe Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos State, Nigeria. Lagos State is the commercial city of Nigeria and one of the biggest urban centers in Africa, occupying an area of 3,577.28 km² and having an overpopulation of more than 27 million people, which demonstrates the long-term demographic strain on urban populations (Lagos Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Kosofe LGA is a densely populated urban region whose size is about 84.4 km² (Lagos Bureau of Statistics, 2012). In this respect, Ketu is a highly condensed residential and business area in which social life is highly agglomerated around the markets, transport routes, and religious areas, which makes it a suitable location for

exploring how the everyday moral rules and cultural practices govern coexistence in a plural urban environment.

The research population included adults living in Ketu, represented by indigenous as well as settler groups. Eligibility requires at least five years' residence. The study involved twelve respondents using purposive sampling, which is a common sampling technique in qualitative research to find participants who possess information and are relevant to the studied area because of their lived experience (Patton, 2015). Community networks, market associations, and religious institutions helped in the recruitment. The thematic saturation set the adequacy of the sample, which is considered to be the stage when no new themes were generated upon the core analytic categories; two extra interviews were done after which no new themes were identified (Guest et al., 2006).

The sample included four native residents, four non-native residents, two leaders of community or market associations, and two religious leaders. Participants varied in sex, age, and profession. This writing also made sure to bring in the daily players as well as informal authority figures that shape coexistence, mediation, and moral direction norms. The study does not assert such claims in the community-wide sense; instead, these constitute certain perspectives used to shed light on the prevailing ethical discourses and cultural reasonings that are functioning in Ketu.

Information gathering was done using semi-structured interviews, paired interviews, and non-participant observation. Eight respondents were covered in separate semi-structured interviews, which allowed delving deeper into individual experiences, the perception of ethics, cultural activities, and attitudes toward inclusion and exclusion. Four of the respondents participated in paired interviews that were conducted in two sessions. The paired format facilitated an interlocutary interaction and active sense-making, lacking the dynamics of pressure potential of larger groups.

The non-participant observation was carried out during three weeks in major community areas such as markets, transport centers, and places of worship. The observation was concentrating on patterns of interaction between indigenous and settler residents, the use of language, on informal methods of conflict resolution, and on manifestations of cooperation or tension, in everyday life. The observations gave the interview data contextual grounding and the opportunity to compare the reported experiences and observed practices.

Thematic analysis was used in data analysis. Every interview and paired discussion was tape recorded with consent and verbatim transcribed. The interviews were conducted in English with minimal use of Yoruba or Nigerian Pidgin when necessary. Preliminary open coding produced recurring themes, which were grouped into larger themes like communal responsibility, cultural identity, moral

obligation, inclusion, exclusion, and conflict management. Communitarian ethical views were applied to interpretation, especially the Igwebuike philosophy (Kanu, 2022).

Reflexivity of the researcher was ensured during the study by making notes of reflection and repeatedly comparing the meanings against the findings of the participants and observations. Methodological triangulation, member checking with a sample group, and thick description were used to increase the credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). The research process was dominated by ethics: informed consent was involved, the anonymity of the data was ensured with the help of pseudonyms, and the interviews were held in a culturally sensitive manner, which is a best practice in socially sensitive conflict research in Nigeria.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Ethical Norms Shaping Intergroup Relations

According to the interview responses, ethical norms are a significant, but weak, means of controlling the relations between the indigenous inhabitants and settler inhabitants of Ketu. The mentioned values of respect, tolerance, hospitality, and obedience to authority were often referred to by the participants when describing everyday interaction. These were what were called as practical rules to avoid conflict in daily life. One native resident told me:

“Peaceful coexistence means respecting customs and authority. If people respect elders and traditions, there will be no problem.” (I2, Indigenous Resident)

On the same note, settler respondents stressed ethical restraint more as a strategy of survival than as an equality:

“We practice patience and respect because we know we are not from here.” (I5, Settler Resident)

Settler participants also focused on self-presentation to achieve peace. According to these accounts, ethics are not a mutual moral obligation but rather an asymmetrical expectation, in which settlers are expected to show compliance so that peace can be kept. Ethical values seem to mitigate open conflict, but they are applied unequally. Several respondents mentioned breakdowns in ethics in case of land, leadership, or political recognition problems:

“When issues of land or leadership come up, respect disappears.” (I6, Settler Resident)

Native respondents also confessed that respect is also strained where authority is questioned. This implies that ethical norms serve as a stabilising process in normal conditions but assume a secondary role to indigeneity-based demands when power or resources are at stake. Ethics in Ketu, instead of ensuring inclusion, seem to govern the coexistence within the accepted boundaries, which underpins the results

of Adamu (2012) on conditional citizenship.

5.2 Cultural Practices Influencing Coexistence

The accounts of participants show some trends whereby cultural practices facilitate collaboration and strengthen exclusion. Markets were again and again seen as arenas of practicality, in which economic interdependence provisionally abides ethnic difference:

“In the market, we mix freely because everyone wants to sell and survive.”
(I5, Settler Resident)

Markets were generally described as spaces where the ethnic difference is compromised by economic considerations. Cultural boundaries, however, are still evident in non-economic realms. Natives emphasized that some of the customs are exclusive to outsiders:

“Markets allow cooperation, but when it comes to festivals and traditions, outsiders are not involved.” (I2, Indigenous Resident)

The cultural practices, which included language usage, burial ceremonies, and traditional ceremonies, were termed as subtle indicators of belonging. Although not necessarily manifested as conflict, such boundaries lead to tacit exclusion. These omissions were largely attributed to being normal, with no direct opposition. According to one of the community leaders:

“Markets bring people together, but identity still affects trust.” (I9, Community Leader)

Ethnic divisions were partially relieved in religious spaces. One of the religious leaders clarified:

“In the church and mosque, everyone is equal, but outside it is different.”
(I11, Religious Leader)

The difference herein indicates the potential of cultural and religious practices to blur identity lines under certain circumstances, but not in the context of general power structures. Cultural coexistence in Ketu, as such, does not seem to be wholly integrative, but is situational and compartmentalised.

5.3 Indigenous–Settler Interaction Patterns and Power Asymmetry

The dealings between native and settler inhabitants were often characterized as peaceful, yet wary, and manifested negotiated coexistence, not social integration. Sometimes long-term settlers became informally recognised as insiders:

“Some settlers are seen as almost indigenes, but they still know their limits.”
(I1, Indigenous Resident)

Discussion of leadership and decision-making created a powerful power

asymmetry. Indigenous respondents admitted openly to the monopoly of power structures:

“Leadership belongs to indigenes. Settlers can contribute, but decisions are for us.” (I3, Indigenous Resident)

Settler respondents affirmed this exclusion:

“We pay levies like everyone else, but we cannot contest leadership positions.” (I5, Settler Resident)

Instead of confronting these inequalities, settlers wrote about adaptive mechanisms, including silence, avoidance, and using intermediaries:

“We usually avoid conflict. Leaders speak for us.” (I6, Settler Resident)

This asymmetry is also shown in conflict management mechanisms. Although the use of elder and religious leaders was often referred to as mediation, these processes are more likely to maintain hierarchies than to change them:

“Elders resolve disputes quietly before they get serious.” (I9, Community Leader)

Such trends show that peace is preserved in Ketu not equality but restraint, negotiation and acceptance of unequal relations of power.

5.4 DISCUSSION

This paper explored the interaction of ethics, culture, and identity to influence the coexistence between the indigenous and the settlers in Ketu, Lagos State. The results indicate a structured type of urban pluralism that is neither integrated nor in an open conflict, but stabilised asymmetry. Cohexistence is served by restraint and pragmatic collaboration and adaptive bargaining, but access to symbolic and political power is organized according to the indigene status. This part critically places these findings in the current body of knowledge and explains the theoretical impact of the study.

5.4.1 Ethics Of Conflict Moderation And Not Structural Transformation

African communitarian philosophy views coexistence based on mutuality, sharing in humanity, and a sense of duty (Kanu, 2022; Agbara, 2011). In this view, ethical commitment is to serve as an inclusive belonging basis. Empirical observation made by Ketu, however, makes this normative expectation complex. Respect, patience, and obedience to elders are ethics that are well known and put into practice. They are unofficial rules of conduct that make de-escalation and civility a possibility. Their use, however, is not even. Settlers refer to ethical restraint as a condition to be accepted, and indigenous participants refer to respect as recognition of territorial power. Ethical discourse thus fixes order and does not redistribute power.

This observation refines communitarian ethics as it shows its regulatory and not redistributive role in circumstances of deep-seated identity hierarchy. Ethics soften open enmity and not the bloodline of leadership or nominal possessions. The

research is an empirical confirmation of the argument by Adamu (2012) that effective citizenship is mediated by indigeneity, even in the most urbanised environment. But it goes further and demonstrates that even though such mediation is reproduced by formal institutions, everyday moral expectations also reproduce it.

5.4.2 Pragmatic Interdependence and Economic Integration Limits

Ketu market spaces are urban areas where cooperation is instrumental. The participants repeatedly stressed the point that survival in an economy requires cross-ethnic co-operation. This observation supports the study by Animasawun (2016), who identified that everyday interdependence exists alongside autochthonous claims to boundaries in the Lagos commodity markets, and the research of Solaja et al. (2013), who identify that the market structures simultaneously provide a platform of interaction and reproduce subtle hierarchies. The Ketu case, however, shows that economic integration does not necessarily imply political or symbolic integration. The identity limits are re-established in the fields of leadership, cultural festivals, and authority within the community. In this way, teamwork is spatially and functionally delimited.

Omotosho et al. (2020) claim that diversity is destabilising when politicised in zero-sum systems. These results indicate that politicisation in Ketu is not dramatic and violent. Instead, it is entrenched in non-spoken assumptions regarding who is legitimately in power. The economic interdependence overpowers identity salience at the cost of transactional contexts but fails to overpower indigene entitlement at the cost of governance contexts. Coexistence is thus reflective of stratified inclusion: economic inclusion but not full political inclusion.

5.4.3 Silent Exclusion and the Naturalisation of Hierarchy

In Nigeria, conflict-oriented studies tend to predict ethnic militancy, democratic, and governance collapse (Achimugu et al., 2013; Egbefo, 2018; Okechukwu, 2021). These analyses focus on rupture, yet they hide the daily manifestations of systematic inequality. The Ketu results show that there is another dynamic: the hierarchy is reproduced silently within the acceptable limits. Settlers contribute economically, pay levies, and socially, but leadership is largely indigenous. This marginalization is hardly openly disputed. Rather, settlers adjust by remaining silent, evading, and using intermediaries. Informal mediation systems place more emphasis on stability and conflict avoidance instead of structural reformation.

This trend is indicative of what Animasawun (2016) identifies as quotidian autochthony and reinforces the larger view of the Prah (2004) that African plural societies tend to maintain pragmatic coexistence on top of unequal citizenship regimes. The paper, therefore, redefines exclusion as routine and not episodic. Peace Ketu does not lack hierarchy but governs it.

5.4.4 Religion as Compartmentalised Moral Universalism

Religious establishments were identified as places where ethnic differences are put

on hold. This result is in line with the scholarly focus on interreligious dialogue and mutual normative orientations as stabilising functions (Agbara, 2011; Tuduks& Adamu, 2024). But this ethical equality is still contextual. There are indigene-settler asymmetries outside a religious context.

Adeyeri (2021) attributes ethno-religious tension in Lagos to human security issues at large. The Ketu results show that religion reduces enmity but does not have the institutional power to change the governance systems. The compartmentalisation of moral universalism takes place. It makes the interaction less aggressive but does not push territorial rights.

5.4.5 Identity Salience and Ethical Containment

Ethical moderation and identity differentiation relate to each other: this is the main explanatory process of the research. The indigene-settler categories are still relevant in the situation of land, leadership, and symbolic recognition. It confirms literature that ethnicity is associated with governance and citizenship stratification (Adamu, 2012; Achimugu et al., 2013). Nevertheless, identity salience is conditional as opposed to absolute. Identity boundaries are pushed to the background of practical need in economic and mundane social spaces. They are accentuated in symbolic and political spaces. Ethical standards serve as preventive tools to curb the tensions before going into open conflict. Anzaku et al. (2025) reiterate that reconciliation is an active moral process; the results, in this case, show that even without equalising power, coexistence may be stabilised due to the presence of moral processes.

The result of this dynamic is what can be conceptualised as stabilised asymmetry: a type of coexistence that is marked by daily contact across groups, the lack of large-scale violence, and structural inequality. Moral talk maintains civility and disengages the entitlements.

5.4.6 Theoretical Contribution

This research paper promotes three theoretical improvements. First, it empirically shows that communitarian ethics in urban Nigeria are regulatory structures and not vehicles of egalitarian change. Moral language lessens confrontation and does not always yield structural inclusion. Second, it changes the analytical emphasis on blatant manifestations of ethnic violence to formidable power reproduction. Although conflict scholarship focuses on crises (Egbefo, 2018; Okechukwu, 2021), this paper emphasizes continuity in the face of asymmetry.

Third, it idealises coexistence in Ketu as a negotiated equilibrium as opposed to harmonious pluralism. Ethical forbearance and worldly system of mutual dependence hold coexistence together but are stratified by the title of indigene. The study combines ethical philosophy with the grounded qualitative evidence, therefore, bridging normative and empirical literatures to add a micro-level explanation of how plural urban communities maintain peace without institutionalised equality.

6. CONCLUSION

This research adds to the existing discourses on indigenous-settler relations in Nigeria by redefining the conceptualisation of coexistence in a plural urban setting. The study does not develop the urban diversity using the duality of harmony and conflict, but instead creates a more complex perspective on coexistence as a negotiated and morally controlled order. By so doing, it questions the assumption that peace as such is the result of integration, and that exclusion as such must be an open crisis to be analytically important. Combining communitarian ethics and identity-based analysis, the study shows that moral norms and social identities do not act alone. Ethical discourse influences conduct, calms the situation, and maintains civility. But identity-based rights allow access to power and symbolic property. A combination of these forces results in a differentiated and stable social order. This redefines coexistence not to mean the lack of tension, but the control of tension.

The theoretical importance of the research is that it refines communitarian thinking and conflict-based schooling. The humanist ideologies of ethic focuses and moral duty, but the fact is that the nature of human society can be seen in the reality of urban Nigeria, which endures the constraints of moral universalism in deep-rooted territorial disputes. Simultaneously, violent and breakdown literature ignores the more muffled reproduction of hierarchy that takes place in non-crisis contexts. Through foregrounding mundane practices, this study can fill the gap between normative and structural accounts, showing that inequality may be maintained in nonviolent settings and still does not lead to an open breakage. The paper also highlights the significance of micro-level investigation in interpreting pluralism. Federalism, citizenship, and ethnic politics analysis at the national level is the necessary background, but again, it mostly ignores how coexistence is practiced and negotiated at the neighbourhood level. Urban living is not simply defined by the formal policy but by informal expectations, adjustment strategies or moral thinking ingrained in everyday living. The identification of this dynamic broadens the methods of analysis of diversity governance in Nigeria and elsewhere.

The wider implication here is that moral discipline is not sufficient in a sustainable pluralism. Though the idea of ethical restraint brings some stability to social life, the long-term cohesiveness is based on the overall inclusion of institutional arrangements that respond to the asymmetry of authority and recognition. Lack of such recalibration makes stability conditional and subject to the changes in political or economic pressure. The comparative analysis should be continued in future studies to understand more of whether negotiated stability is a general trend in Nigerian cities or differs by region and population structure. Longitudinal research would also shed light on whether generational shift has altered the perceptions of indigeneity and belonging in highly urbanised settings.

Conclusively, this paper confirms that plural societies cannot co-exist by accident or default. It is proactively generated by interaction, negotiation, and boundary maintenance. This is a complex process that requires understanding to develop theoretical clarity and to guide policy interventions in order to create more equitable urban futures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Empower Institutionalised Local Governance:** The urban neighbourhood community leadership must embrace more precise criteria that identify long-term residence and indigene status. Implicit exclusion can be minimised by formalising the participation rights and preserving local stability.
2. **Empower Open Intermediation Processes:** More open and representative dispute-resolution processes should be added to informal elder-led mediation to make sure that conflict management will not strengthen hierarchy by default.
3. **Encourage Interracial Civic Platforms:** In addition to markets and religious spaces, formal civic spaces ought to be created in which both indigenous and settler residents together discuss community matters, promoting common ownership and not parallel participation.
4. **Loose Political Classification of Rigidity of Indigene Participation:** The policies of local governments must gradually stop depending on the indigene-based entitlement in local level appointments and recognitions, particularly in urban centres with long-term migrant settlement.
5. **Funding Urban Pluralism Education Projects:** Ethical norms can be strengthened by community-based educational programs that underline the idea of shared urban citizenship and shared moral responsibility, as well as encourage more all-encompassing understandings of belonging.

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