



Ethnic Conflict between UIT and UTM University Students: Root Causes, Governance and Response

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Abstract

Interethnic relation is an inevitable aspect of any social relationship. The main aim of this study was to assess the interethnic relation between UIT and UTM university students especially the case of University undergraduate students. The study employed qualitative case study design through dealing with wide ranges of primary and secondary sources. Key informants and FGD participants were selected based on both purposive and snowball sampling. The data obtained from both primary and secondary sources were analyzed using thematic analysis. This study revealed that collective memory, activists and political parties with extremist ideas, unverified or edited historical narrations, hate speech, social media, and abusive statements of government officials are behind the cause of the interethnic conflict between UIT and UTM students in BDU. The university organized SD programs and a consistent dialogue and successive training that aims to create interethnic friendship ought to be rendered so that there exists a smooth interethnic relation between UIT and UTM students. The researcher recommended that the ethnic identity of every Ethiopian should be respected, while at the same time national identity must be stressed in order not to repeat the previous mistakes of over emphasis of either ethnicity or nationality.

Key words: *Ethnicity; Ethnic Groups; UIT; UTM*

Background of the Study

Ethnicity is now universally regarded as a key element in the political process including African states. However, the word itself is a recent development, first appearing in the Oxford English Dictionary only in 1953. (Moges, 2017) noted that the late 20th century reality is evidenced by the fact that ethnic groups, are figured as major "political" elements and major political collective actors in several societies. Ethnicity has gained scholarly attention from 1960s onwards. During the period between 1980s and 1990s, number of scholarly publications have emerged, particularly in the fields of political science, sociology, history, and social anthropology (A History of Anthropology, 2013).

It is mostly argued that the modern multi ethnic state of Ethiopia had a history of war and continuous southward expansion that resulted in the subjugation of several ethno cultural groups. In this regard, he also stated that “the creation of the Ethiopian empire state in the last quarter of the 19th century and the historical dynamics that defined its subsequent evolution, resulted in national domination by one or more ethnic groups over multitude of others” (2003,p.33). Among other things, deliberate exclusion of the history, language, and culture of the dominated ethno cultural groups from the school curricula cited as critical feature of their marginalization (Ibid).

The wide spread armed struggle across the country resulted not only in the overthrow of the military government that ruled the country for 17 years but also marked the end of the era of the unitary state that lasted for about a century. Some of the major issues to be discussed in the subsequent part of the study include whether the post 1991 changes introduced responded to the demands of national movements. With the coming to power of EPRDF, which is composed of ethnically based armed political groups; a transitional government is established with in an overriding ideology of equality and self-administration of nations, nationalities and peoples (Habtu, 2015). Accordingly, Ethiopia’s history has been changed from assimilation to recognition of multi-ethnic society. The present government of Ethiopia introduced ethnic federalism to address ethnic and other long existing political and societal problems in the country.

Currently, critics on ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia point towards the EPRDF government’s state structure. It is argued that the “self-government” structure created by the government had separated different ethnic groups, who were in the past living within the same administrative borders, into different regional states and limited their access to common resources like pasture lands. Studies indicate that contrary to the very problem it was intended to address, the implementation of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia seems to have created more problems than it set to solve (Gudina, 2007). Since 1991, Ethiopia has gone further than any other country in using ethnicity as the central organizing principle of a federal structure of government (Habtamu, 2013).

On the other hand, there is an emerging argument about conflicts in Ethiopia, which portrays it as elite-driven conflict rather than ethnic conflict. In his article about “Ethnic Conflict in the Horn of Africa: Myth and Reality”. Now days, universities have become a place where commotion, because of ethnic tension, happens more often.

Most importantly, institutions of higher education have become targets of opposing political forces and radical religious elements as well. In the political sphere, history informs us that after independence most African uni-versities have been hotbeds of political dissent, and often representing and spearheading radical reform agendas that put them at odds with governments. On the other hand, uni-versity students are also victims of competing, and often violent politi-cal forces whose motives are far less clear to an average student who is being mobilized. Incidents of this sort are not new to Ethiopia. Similar to other places, conflicts among students having ethno-political or religious dimensions were already evident. In diverse nations such as Ethiopia, these mobilizing strategies are so divisive and might lead to interethnic and interreligious misunderstandings that could lead to a full-blown conflict. Similar events that happened after 1991, to some extent, have managed to polarize ethnic and religious groups in a way to under-mine the peace and stability of the country.

The current political landscape in the country, which is characterized by an upsurge of ethnic-based conflicts, also shaped the conflict dynamics in Ethiopia’s public universities. Universities have seen a dramatic resurgence of ethnic-violence in recent times, reflecting the political tension that the country is undergoing. They have been rocked by wave of ethnic-based conflicts since Abiy Ahmed took the helm of the premiership in April 2018. Ethnic based violence has become a common phenomenon in many of the Public Universities in Ethiopia, particularly over the last decade.

Problem Statement

The first higher education institution in Ethiopia was founded in 1950 as University College of Addis Ababa. (Molla, 2018) noted that since the foundation of higher education in Ethiopia, the most important opposition, resistance and threat to any government in Ethiopia came from the intellectuals. (Brief Assessment of Higher Education Governance in Ethiopia on JSTOR, n.d.) also said that since early 1960s the time when most of the current party leaders were higher education students, Ethiopia higher education has been the breeding ground for the would be leaders of the country. In that time, it was in universities that the most contentious issues of the time like “Meret Le Arashu” and equality of nations and nationalities came to the forefront. Studies about interethnic relation and violent conflicts among students in Ethiopian universities are limited and most of which are studies focusing on a single event, therefore they lack comprehensive analysis. (Teferi, 2012) conducted a research on the main causes of the post 1991 ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia with the theoretical ground of instrumentalism. However, it is known that ethnicity in Ethiopia is unlikely to be studied with one or two isolated theories since a single perspective or theory (primordialism, constructivism and instrumentalism) could not fully elaborate the phenomenon. (Moges, 2017) studied ethnicity with a theoretical ground of constructivist alone, and Batayehu (2016) and Birhanu (2018) with a theoretical ground of instrumentalism that is difficult to study ethnicity from a single theory framework.

The researcher is thus interested to study the interethnic relation between UIT and UTM university students because of the following reasons: It is estimated that Ethiopia has a population of more than 100 million. Of which, the UTM and the UIT are the two numerical majority ethnic groups consisting of 34% and 27% respectively. “University has more UIT and UTM students than any other ethnic groups”, (STU president of BDU, 2019). The problem of interethnic relation in the university needs due monitoring especially using political tools. The main objective of this study is thus to understand, with in the context of the current political reform, the root causes, governance and response of ethnic conflict between UIT and UTM university students in BDU.

Research Methodology

This study applied qualitative approach under interpretive paradigm, which states that the social world should be studied in its natural setting through the standpoint of the participant. In accordance with the existing theories on interethnic relation and ethnicity (primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism), an integrated approach was emphasized to study the interethnic relation between UIT and UTM university students. Integrated approach emphasizes that ethnicity is partly culturally given and natural, socially constructed and decisions of individuals too (Nigusie, 2018). The rationale for selecting this theory is deeply justified under literature review section. This study employed both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were collected through interview including face to face and telephone interview and FGD while the secondary data were gathered via document analysis.

The study employed purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The participants were selected based on non-probability sampling (purposive sampling). While selecting purposefully the researcher tried to consider their ethnic group, experience or stay in the campus and other factors.

Review of Literature

An ethnic group is a group organized based on a common set of social, economic and political activities consisting members who share a common conviction and interest. Bates (2002) states that symbolism of the group is a characterization of collective myths of origin and kinship as expression for

the cultural uniqueness and elaborated language heritages. Bruce (2004) defined an ethnic group as a set of people that share common racial and cultural characteristics. Hence, the factors used by scholars in describing an ethnic group which include primordial characteristics like common ancestry, language, and culture are not only the bases for identifying the members of one ethnic group from another but also factors that keep the members together by creating cohesion and solidarity. (Ethnic Federalism and Conflict in Ethiopia – ACCORD, n.d.) noted the Ethiopian government, “use of the term NNPs in the constitution as synonymous with ethnic groups. “Nation”, “Nationality” and “People” are terms related to ethnic groups in that they also refer to a group of people.

Ethnicity

Etymologically, the term ethnicity is derived from the Greek *ethnos* and the term has been employed to describe different things from animal multitudes to groups of warriors (FORTIER, 2010). Through time, the meaning of *ethnos* becomes changed. The term ethnicity has also various conceptions and analytical views. Many social science scholars define ethnicity in different ways and they believe that there is difficulty of getting a clear definition.

Primordialism

Primordialism is the oldest of all theories of ethnicity dating back to 1950s and 1960s. Primordialists in their analysis claim that, ethnicity refers to the condition of belonging to a certain group based on common primordial ties such as kinship, language, culture, customs and religion (Esteban et al., 2012). As Tronvol and Asefa stated, “ethnicity is an inherent and natural aspect of human existence, which is endowed to individuals by an accident of birth from their parents” (2002, p.25). Therefore, for primordialists “ethnicity is fixed at birth, ethnic identification is based on deep, ‘primordial’ attachments to a group or culture”. Che (2016) argued that at birth, one becomes a member of a particular group and he will never be member of another group. That means one is always and invariably UIT, UTM, Gumuz or Agew.

Instrumentalism

This approach came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, in the debate about white ethnic persistence in what was supposed to have been an effective melting pot. Instrumentalism emerged in the early 1970s as a response to primordialism (Nigusie, 2018). The proponents of instrumentalist thesis (Adlparvar & Tadros, 2016) claim that ethnicity is based on the rational awareness used for socio-political and economic competitions. According to instrumentalists, ethnicity, interethnic relation and ethnic conflict result only when ethnic identities are politicized or manipulated to generate political and socio-economic advantages for an ethnic group at the cost of depriving or neglecting other ethnics (Linking Instrumentalist and Primordialist Theories of Ethnic Conflict, n.d.). Accordingly, instrumentalists point to factors other than ethnic identity to explain ethnic conflicts. These include, security concerns (Posen 1993); competition and inequality (Gurr, 1994); and greed (Collier and Hoeffler 1998; 2000; and 2004).

Constructivism

Another model of ethnicity that began to surface with in the field of anthropology, sociology and political science during the 1960s was constructivism. (Fox, 2001) argued constructivists hold that ethnic groups are not born but made. Constructivists stress the importance of the socially constructed nature of ethnic groups, drawing on Benedict Anderson's concept of the imagined community (Malshvic, 2004). Proponents of this account point to Rwanda as an example since the Tutsi/Hutu distinction was codified by the Belgian colonial power in the 1930s based on cattle ownership, physical measurements and church

records. (Fox, 2001) mentioned that constructivists categorically reject the notion that ethnic identity is both a natural phenomenon and a tool that is manipulated by ethnic entrepreneurs for individual and collective political ends. Constructivists contend that ethnic and national identities are enduring social constructions. In other words, ethnic identities are products of human actions/choices rather than biologically given by nature.

Integrated Approach

The integrated approach of ethnicity is mainly a synthesis of the core argument of the primordialism, constructivism and instrumentalist theories. The argument is formulated based on four major propositions that are directly linked to the contribution of each theory. Yang (2000) proposed that the first central argument of the integrated approach is the assumption that ethnicity is partly culturally given and natural since there are some primordial elements that we cannot deny, for instance religion, territory, language, physical appearance, material, cultural, livelihood and history. (Nigusie, 2018)

Secondly, ethnicity is socially constructed. The construction of ethnicity, according to this approach, takes place through various ways; ethnic categorization rules, social conditions and structural issues. Ethnicity is the work of society where by societal standards and categorization rules such as ancestry or social class, that might be written or unwritten, governs one's ethnic affiliation. Ethnic categorization rules also are not uniform across societies; they change for society to society. Consequently, the same person could be categorized in to different ethnic groups by different societies. In addition, social conditions like migration can construct new ethnic membership or identity of individuals and groups. There may be ethnic switching like religious conversion. Thirdly, ethnicity is something that is the decision of individuals themselves who would decide their ethnicity based on some calculation like material gain. Thus, an individual's interest to some extent shapes the ethnicity one selects.

Cultural Norms and Practices

In discussing interethnic relationships, some clarifications are in order. The study of cultural differences has been increasing and culture has many different meanings. (Gurung, 2006) defined culture as a dynamic, yet stable, set of goals, beliefs, and attitudes shared by a group of people. Culture can also include similar physical characteristics (e.g., skin color), psychological characteristics (e.g., levels of hostility), and common superficial features (e.g., hairstyle and clothing). Culture is dynamic because some of the beliefs held by members in a culture can change with time. However, the general level of culture stays mostly stable because the individuals change together. The beliefs and attitudes can be implicit, learnt by observation and passed on by word of mouth, or they can be explicit, written down as laws or rules for the group to follow. (Gurung, 2006) Not only political and economic problems caused inter-ethnic conflicts, but also culture has its own significant contribution. Kymlicka states that a societal culture is defined as: a culture which provides its members with meaningful way of life across the full range of human activities, which including social educational, religious, recreational and economic life encompassing both public and private spheres. These cultures tend to be territorially concentrated and based on a shared language. Furthermore, Brown identifies two factors of ethnic conflict in relation to culture. These are cultural discrimination against minorities and group histories and group perceptions of themselves and others. Pertaining to cultural discrimination against minorities, a politically dominant group encroach its tradition, values and beliefs on other groups. Brown also put it the second factor is in relation to the historical beliefs of the group, which has an influence over the other group. In this notion differences and discrimination culture among ethnic groups are become the source of the conflict.

Discussion

Description of the Study Area

The university is a combination of two smaller institutes formed earlier, after the departments were gradually raised to a degree level starting from 1996 (Ayele, 2013). The first was Polytechnic Institute, which was established in 1963. The other was Teachers College, which had been established more than three decades ago as the Academy of Pedagogy in 1972. Currently, the official slogan of the university is “Wisdom at the source of the Blue Nile”. The university is composed of five colleges, four institutes, seven faculties, two academics and one school. The two institutions were integrated into University following the council of Ministers regulation no. 60\1999 (Ayele, 2013). The university was inaugurated on May 6, 2000, and the Polytechnic Institute and the Teachers College became the Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Education respectively (Gared, 2016). In addition, the university added two more faculties, that of business and Economics and the Faculty of law, which were established in 2001 and 2003 respectively. The university is now one of the biggest institutions in Ethiopia, it is a home to 52,830 students, offered in 69 undergraduates disciplines, 118 masters and 32 PHD.

The Nature of UIT and UTM University Students’ Ethnic Conflict

Relationships between ethnic groups are conditioned in the first place by the degree of difference between them in terms of their history, traditions, customs, patterns of behavior, and cultural traits. These characteristics may promote close relationships between certain groups while contributing to tensions between others.

Some students from both ethnic groups said there is a limited contact between UTM and UIT students in the campus. In these groups, negative stereotyping is often seen toward each other. This shows that tensions persist because of their difference in ethnic background. The relationship is getting worse. Other ethnic groups are troubled because of two ethnic groups. Another student from UIT ethnic group added the causes are related to political elites (activists as he said) who use the conflicts for their own convenience or opportunistic reasons. They thought the students from their particular ethnic groups are economically excluded etc. and it will become easier to get them engaged in conflict. (IAS4, Interview from UIT student, 5/9/2020)

A closer look at the university and students of both ethnic groups revealed that many ethnic-based conflicts are driven by security dilemmas. The FGD from the UTM students revealed the following key things as to how the nature of interethnic relation was soared. Most staffs and management are locals. We were highly troubled to get them acquainted because of who we are and how we speak. The other thing is the classroom environment is not suitable to individual differences, because English was expected to be the curricular language however teachers there teach us in Amharic (especially Amharic metaphors), in the language that most of us don’t understand. (FGD from UTM students, 5/6-14/2020 through telegram).

A fight occurred at Woldya University in UIT region between students watching a football match on television. One student was thrown off a building, and 13 were injured from both ethnic groups. As retaliation, violence began in BDU main Campus.

Based on the document analysis, one may also claim that for most part of Ethiopian modern history, UIT is a cultural and political dominant ethnic group. Nevertheless, this has been changed and since 1991 Tigre has become the political dominant ethnic group (Ethnic Pluralism as an Organizing Principle of the Ethiopian Federation | F, n.d.). This indicates that the UTM has been minority in the Ethiopian politics despite it is the largest ethnic group in the country. In (Regional Integration, Identity

and Citizenship in the Greater Horn of Africa | Request PDF, n.d.), it was mentioned that this created politically motivated superior/inferior dichotomy, and high polarization among these ethnic groups. Students mentioned that the ethnic polarization and political rivalry between UIT, UTM and Tigre are some of the factors contributing to the ethnic tension and conflict among students who are members of these ethnic groups.

Intergroup relations are not static. On the other hand, others who subscribed to ethno-nationalist stance regard the Amharic Language as an instrument of domination and marginalization (for example (Hussein, 2008) and fear a possible backlash against the use of vernacular languages in schools (for example, Hussien, 2008). The negative attitude to the representatives of different nationalities was owing to the level of students' knowledge and awareness of culture, history, traditions, and national characteristics of various ethnic groups.

Nonetheless, the perception that he is favoring his own UTM political base is questionable to say the least. In this light, his recent appointment of General Adem Mohammed, an UIT, as new military chief of staff, instead of the UTM deputy chief who was next in line, could refute his argument. Politically, significant ethnic problems frequently arise in contexts of objective conflicts of interest. For example, when one group has subdued other but conflicting interests (in the commercial, territorial, religious, or other domains) may play an outstanding role and lead to conflict even if all ethnic groups are equal in terms of their constitutional and political position. Besides, it will be inconceivable to judge the prime minister within a couple of years for the restructuring program by itself takes a long process.

Language and Ethnicity Based Friendship

Around December 2019, a student of BDU (from Oromia region) was heading to the Gym and his phone rang while entering the Gym. People most of whom were students started mocking at the way he speaks Amharic language when speaking publicly. He then hang up the phone and started warming up. "It was difficult to express your identity and speak your language in a majority of others," said to me. Let us look at what a student from UIT ethnic group mentioned.

Another most important factor leading students to feel ethnic tension is economic inequalities. If there is unfair economy/ resource sharing among different ethnic groups and if this is agenda for the larger community, students could reflect these economic inequalities question when they join universities. Ethnic conflict occurs when a particular set of factors and conditions converge: a major structural crisis; presence of historical memories of inter-ethnic grievances; institutional factors that promote ethnic intolerance; manipulation of historical memories by political entrepreneurs to evoke emotions such as fear, resentment and hate toward the "other"; and an inter-ethnic competition over resources and rights.

Collective Memory

Collective memory refers to the memories of a group of people who have collected them through shared social experiences. I think the wrong propaganda sprayed by the EPRDF regime is behind all these problems. In addition to the above, there is an established misleading rhetoric or conception that the UIT dominated and ruled over the rest of Ethiopia for many generations.

Response

One of the strategies in promoting and managing diversity in higher education is providing various opportunities for students that help them acquire knowledge about and experience diversity (Umbach & Kuh, 2006). BDU has positioned "promoting diversity" as a core management initiative that helps to achieve its mission. Different programs and activities contributing to promoting diversity are also

included in the University's five-year strategic plan. The programs and activities include developing a system that enables students to become individuals who have good ethical and social values and are capable of respecting and promoting diversity (BDU, 2011). It also aimed at developing and delivering courses on diversity and gender assertiveness to undergraduate students, establishing a graduate program in multicultural studies, creating a sense of belonging and a culture of participation and responsiveness, encouraging students to participate in different co-curricular activities. Providing relevant continuous professional development training for teachers, organizing seminars or conferences or panel discussions on ethics, social values and diversity issues and organizing major cultural events at institutional level were to mention any (BDU, 2011).

However, peace-making sessions and discussions between federal and regional governments have long been given in both cases and regions. A peace making session called "a sustained dialogue" aimed at getting the students together and bringing the situation where it was before had been organized in the university. In the peace making session, students from both ethnic groups were invited in the coffee ceremony, invited to talk free. The SD lasted for about a week and was fruitful in a sense that it brought these students together, though for short, and made them think nationally than locally.

Meaning the conflict was contained, but not for so long. As of my field experience, a new directive of entrance and exit times for all students was enforced by federal police. Moreover, federal police oversaw the whole area by shift thus; this has prevented other contingencies of conflicts. It is known that conflict incidents have diminished after federal police were deployed in the university.

As far as my data are concerned, the university management had failed to orchestrate a strong measure up on students that provoke other students to violence and ethnic strife. For instance, on June, 2019, Debre Birhan University identified 58 students as responsible for the violence to the earlier ethnic based violence (Zecharias, 2020). To remind you, there was a fight between a few students in Debre Birhan during graduating class final soccer game that became a full-scale ethnic based conflict. When it comes to BDU, there is no as such a promising measure nor an executive agent enforcing laws on the behalf of the university. Nellas (2019) revealed that the Kosovo, Turkey and Sri Lanka universities managed tools to recover the conflict and reconcile students in their universities. For example, in Kosovo, the University of Pristina, struggled to overcome identity politics and reform at the pace the country needs. However, in the case of BDU (main campus), the university management seems halfhearted in bringing a longstanding heal for the interethnic conflict.

Consequences of ethnic tensions in the university

(Exploring the Current Practices of Jaarsumma as Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms: The Case of Dambi Dollo Town, n.d.) claimed ethnic tensions among students in public universities hence he identified the consequences of ethnic tension and I summarized it in the following ways. He divided the consequences as educational, societal, political and economic. There were educational consequences such as disturbing academic programs, disturbance academic life of the normal students, deterioration of quality of education and so forth. While societal consequences were such as loss of life, ethnic petrolization, physical damage, social instability and decrease in social bond were identified. Loss of trust of government and financial resource damage were the political and economic consequences of ethnic tension respectively. Let us see the consequences of ethnic tension in BDU main campus.

My respondent from UTM ethnic group revealed that students from both ethnic groups have been injured; there was damage to property (e.g. Public buses were stoned, trees have been cut down to make sticks and desks were a lot torn apart) and others (TIOS9, telephone interview from UTM student, 5/16/2020). While the interview of students from UIT revealed the following things. "Teaching learning process was interrupted for a short while, there was a lock down for 14 days while we can neither get out

nor can we get in. It is agreeable that the lock down was seemingly correct for it reduces the conflict” (IAS6, telephone interview from UIT student, 5/1/2020).

Challenges in Maintaining Inter-ethnic Solidarity in the campus

Despite the measures taken to address the problem of interethnic conflict, students are still suffering from ethnic conflict. “I feel irritated while using Facebook since I usually find derogatory phrases and insults posted. I think this worsens the interethnic relation. Those derogatory remarks are posted from both ethnic groups. Accordingly, Facebook will be a challenge in maintaining interethnic relation solidarity in the university.

BDU lacks good strategies to effectively deal with diversity-related issues. Some of the strategies that the University used for managing diversity include guidelines, rules, and regulations. The students’ discipline guideline (Kibret & Abera, 2015) lists different activities that are not allowed on campus and the potential disciplinary measures that will be imposed on students failing to obey the rules and regulations. The guideline on worship, dress code, and food etiquette in HEIs (Sun, 2021) also states what is and is not allowed in relation to religious issues. Effectively applying guidelines and rules and regulations could contribute to the process of managing diversity, but they are not as such good strategies to achieve a positive living and learning environment and deal with diversity-related issues before they cause problems. Unlike other strategies such as diversity-related courses and diversity training, they are less educative and their effects are not long lasting.

As far as the researcher is concerned, since Dr. Abiy took office on 2 April 2018, Ethiopians have witnessed something unusual in their country’s politics and this has created a big problem. The constituent parties of the ruling coalition have been openly in disagreement with one another, people of different ethnic groups began to speak publicly, criticize actions of government and academic freedom that we never had experienced. This made the ethnic tension high and I am afraid it continues. Therefore, as to the qualitative data analysis, the status of the environment in the University is not encouraging because of the political opening.

As outlined in the literature review, while primordialists emphasize differences in ethnic identities, instrumentalists accentuate ethnic grievances arising from the politicization of ethnic identity differences to explain ethnicity and interethnic relations; and social constructivists say ethnicity is socially constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. To illustrate the integrative model from the study, UIT and UTM students University have ethnic grievances emphasized by instrumentalists such as inflammatory information in one hand and this emboldened the divide and revived memories of ancient history that is primordial sentiments in another hand. By cementing differences among the students of BDU, Facebook and other local Medias used ethnic grievances at the heart of instrumentalism to reinforce primordial identities. At the beginning of the political reform in Ethiopia, both ethnic groups had a cohesive relations manifested in terms of weeding out “ emboch ” in Lake Tana which is found in UIT region, demonstration in Gondar for the Martyrs of UTM brothers etc. However, this did not last long rather the ethnic strife rampantly expanded all over the country.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the summary of the findings and conclusion based on the data analyzed. In fact, each of the objectives has already been discussed and concluded briefly in the concerned chapters and sections. The main objective of this study was to assess the root causes, governance and response in the UIT and UTM students’ conflict in University, specifically Main Campus.

Regarding to the last objective, this study revealed that collective memory, activists and political parties with extremist ideas, unverified, un documented and twisted or carefully edited historical narrations, hate speech, social media, abusive statements of government officials are behind the cause of the interethnic conflict between UIT and UTM students in BDU. Specifically, graffiti, ethnic strife in other universities, interpersonal conflicts and so forth found to be triggering factors for the interethnic conflict between the concerned students. As a result, students became victims of violence, destruction on the properties of the university perpetrated, and the teaching-learning process was compromised.

In BDU, the interethnic relation between the UIT and the UTM students' case revealed that their amicable positive relation became more unpleasant and quarrelsome since 2018 in contrast to their long lasting good relationships. To settle the ethnic conflict in the university, both regional and federal police were deployed; moreover, there was a Sustained Dialogue Program that aims to boost the positive interethnic relations among these students.

Recommendation

My recommendation goes to different agents with a direct role in diminishing interethnic conflicts, nurturing positive relations between the concerned students. The first being the students themselves, the recommendation first directs to them, the university management, the government and future researchers are also found deserving of recommendation. For the students, there should be an inclusive ethnic dialogue among students in their first day to school so that it could help to detoxify such incidences. To do this, there must be a professionally supported discussion to eliminate the historic discontent. Moreover, students should be supportive of intergroup friendship by taking successive training and activities that would promote the national unity rather than a single ethnic group and should foster a culture of inter-ethnic communication based on ethnic tolerance and mutual respect; briefly, there should be students' cooperation campaign in a regular basis.

The university management should provide an environment where students are generally considered to be of equal status regardless of their backgrounds so that students could develop a multicultural personality through the formation of knowledge about their own and different ethnic cultures. The management should also motivate students to study national peculiarities, traditions, rituals, customs of their nationality and different ones by providing multicultural programs. The government should also provide scientific support to the educational institutions while creating the conditions for harmonization of interethnic relations so that students could cultivate positive attitude towards other nationalities by means of joint cultural activities in educational institutions. It shall create psychological and pedagogical situations giving the youth an awareness of the value and importance of different nationalities in the world. In addition, the government should be abide by the applications of medemer (synergy or inclusivity) and yiqirta (forgiveness) at all levels. To the support of this, (Taye, 2018) stated that the promotion of an overall identity could prevent ethnic conflict because the commitment to a common citizenship could neutralize claims for secession and lead to interethnic cooperation.

Researchers ought to introduce the experience of other countries in the formation of positive inter-ethnic relations in the educational environment, and they should also be providing a constant scientific analysis. The researcher also suggests that researchers should be reflexive and critical when using ethnic categories in their analyses. Concisely, the ethnic identity of every Ethiopian should be respected, while at the same time national identity must be stressed in order not to repeat the previous mistakes of over emphasis of either ethnicity or nationality.

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Declaration of Interest

The author declares that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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