

Neighborhood in the Savannah: An Ethnology of the Fulani & the Kanuri Ethnic Groups of North Eastern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT:

The Fulani and Kanuri are distinct ethnic groups, though analogous in practices such as religion, marriage, environmental co-existence and other aspects of life. In North Eastern Nigeria, both ethnic groups co-locate in the same environment in some states including Borno, Yobe and Bauchi. The main objective of this study was to assess and analyze cross-cultural patterns, similarities, and differences of both ethnic groups. The study also assessed the centuries of co-existence and the “joking relationship” that exists between them. It further dispelled the claim that the Fulani ethnic group shows a trend of conflict with neighbors in most areas where they reside due to their nomadic life. The population of the study consisted of 1,834,630 persons drawn from the local government areas of 3 states under study (Bauchi, Borno and Yobe) based on Nigeria, 2006 National Population and Housing Census. The total sample size selected was 384 using research advisor 2016. The sample was proportionately distributed according to the size of the respondents’ populations in the selected Local Government Areas. A purposive and convenient, non-probability sampling study design was employed and administered. Data was collected using key informant interviews (KII) with community leaders, religious leaders, women elders and people of the communities. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted through small groups, separately for males and for females due to the sociocultural setting of the communities. Hausa language was adopted and used as the common language of communication. The reliability of the instrument was determined by the researchers using the test-retest method. The internal consistency of the instrument was calculated using Cronbach’s alpha at .766. The design was chosen due to geographical consideration, availability & accessibility of respondents, having specific target group in mind due to the homogeneous nature of the study, and being a qualitative and exploratory study. The findings revealed that there is a strong network of relationships between the Kanuri and the Fulani ethnic groups and other people of the study communities. Findings of the study further established “Joking Relationship” as a catalyst for peace and social cohesion among the ethnic groups. Despite diversity in cultural norms, beliefs, values, practices and social background, there had never been any war or major fight among the ethnic groups and their neighbors. Finally, it is recommended that if people recognize their differences in

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culture, beliefs, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and political inclination, and value unity in diversity as found in the study communities, there would be harmonious co-existence and sustainable peace within and across Nigeria. This would happen only through mediation, dialogue, reconciliation, while maintaining a certain level of tolerance within neighbourhood.

KEY WORDS: neighborhood, savannah, ethnology, co-existence, farmer-herder conflict, nomadic life.

BACKGROUND

The Fulani and the Kanuri have lived together for many centuries in North Eastern Nigeria. History holds that both ethnic groups are of foreign origin. Lamrecht, F. L. (1976) indicated that the Fulani migrated from the Nilo-Sudanese areas during the expulsion of the Hyksos pastoral kings of Asiatic origin from Egypt in 1570 B.C. They belong to the “Hamites” of nilotic origin, having long-horned cattle. They speak a language similar to that of people from coastal Senegal, the land of the Wolof and the Serer. The Fulani have physical features similar to the Ethiopians, northern Sudanese and the Egyptians; not negroid, light-skinned, mostly tall and slender, having oval-shaped faces and a straight, narrow nose and their hair tends to be long and curly (Lamrecht, F. L. 1976). Due to the search for grazing fields and water, the Fulani can be found in many countries in West Africa including Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Cameroon, Niger, Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania, Chad, and Burkina Faso. Other countries are Central African Republic, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (Anter, T. 2011).

The Kanuri, on the other hand, are the Kanembu ethnic group who spoke a Nilo-Saharan language located at the crossroads between northern Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. They spread from Lake Chad in the south, to the Sahara Desert and Maghreb-al-Aqsa in the north and the West African region, North Africa and Arabia. At different times of its history, Kanem Borno Kingdom or Empire covered the eastern and western sections of Lake Chad basin (Barkindo, B.1985). The Kanuri are also found in large numbers in southeastern Niger, in Sudan, Chad, Cameroun, etc. The Kanem empire was in existence since the 8th century under the leadership of Duguwa Dynasty (later replaced by Sayfawa Dynasty) and covered between Lake Chad and the Bahr el-Ghazal in the region of Kanem (in Chad). The kingdom had both agriculturalists and pastoralists who formed the Kanembu ethnic group. The Kanembu ethnic group spoke a Nilo-Saharan language (Barkindo, B. 1985: 230).

INTRODUCTION

The ethnography of the Fulani and the Kanuri shows similarities in origin, both speak foreign languages, and at a time, the Kanuri were also pastoralists. Thus, the two ethnic groups came primarily from North Africa and the West African Savannah. They both speak a Nilo-Saharan language, are pastoralists and practice agriculture for subsistence. They are spread in many parts of West Africa. The two ethnic groups practice Islam as their religion. In the present day, North Eastern Nigeria, they intermarry among themselves. This presents a good ethnology of the two ethnic groups. In North Eastern Nigeria, both ethnic groups are found across the following states, including Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Taraba, Bauchi, Gombe. However, this study is focused only on those states that both ethnic groups co-locate or live in the same environment (State and Local Government Area). As such, only three (3) states in the North

East are affected: Bauchi, Borno and Yobe. In Borno State, both ethnic groups co-locate majorly in Kaga LGA, Damboa LGA, Gubio LGA, Konduga LGA, Jere LGA, and Magumeri LGA. In Yobe State, both ethnic groups co-locate in Fune LGA, Damaturu LGA, Gaidam LGA, Tarmuwa LGA, Gujba LGA, Dapshi LGA, Yusufari LGA, Yunusari LGA, Gashuwa LGA, Jakusku LGA, Karsuwa LGA and Machina LGA. In Bauchi State, both ethnic groups co-locate in Alkaleri LGA, Misau LGA, Katagum (Azare), Gamawa LGA, Itas LGA and Zaki LGA. However, this is not to say that there are no Kanuri or Fulani ethnic groups located in other states or LGAs of North Eastern Nigeria including Gombe, Adamawa, Taraba, and places such as Jama'are LGA in Bauchi, etc. This study focuses only on where both ethnic groups live together (co-locate).

History has it that since the Jihad of Othman Dan-Fodio in the early 19th century (1804), both ethnic groups have been known to be living together peacefully, accommodating each other and with their other neighbors especially, the Hausa ethnic group, and have not had any major inter-religious or inter-ethnic conflict. Bukari, Sow, & Scheffran (2018) hold that Cultural neighborhood describes two groups that are ethnically and culturally different than just living in the same community and geographical place and interact with each other through activities such as trade. However, as pointed earlier, the Fulani, due to their nomadic life as claimed, have shown a trend of conflict between farmers (sedentary) and nomads (pastoralists). Evidence abounds to support the claims that Herder-Farmer conflicts exist between the Fulani nomads and sedentary farmers in Plateau, Benue, Taraba, other Middle-belt states and parts of South-Eastern Nigeria, involving loss of lives and property (Mikailu 2016). However, tracing the ethnography of Fulani nomads, most of these conflicts arise as a consequence of cultural practice of transhumance, a migratory movement by the nomadic Fulani herders from the North (during Winter) to the South (during Summer) along designated grazing routes that cut across regional and national borders in search of greener pasture and water for their cattle (Anderson 2016). The Fulani are dependent upon the family's herd for subsistence and surrenders all life chances to the herd and thus, becomes a "servant of his cattle". The Fulani holds that farmers often steal from their herds. They are often armed with weapons to protect their territory and livestock as they cannot afford to watch their cattle die or be stolen away. A loss of cattle therefore, is a loss of cultural identity (Mikailu 2016). Armed with weapons for their protection does not make them militias or Boko Haram or foreign killer herdsmen - who instigate violence to create a conducive environment for arms trafficking, kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, and expansion of terrorism.

Until recently, there seems to be a political dimension of this farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria with increasing traction especially in the Middle-belt fueled by the outcome of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria that brought General Muhammadu Buhari (RTD), (a Fulani by origin) to power as the elected President of Nigeria (Emmanuel, T.V. and Bernard, U.N. 2020). Most of the recently reported cases soon after the 2015 general election were fueled by the misconception that the outcome of the election in favour of the Fulani was thought to be a continuation of the Fulani jihad of Othman Danfodio (1804) and the proselytization of Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto (1960s) against certain Non-Muslims or Christian ethnic nationalities, namely, the Numan in Adamawa State, the Tiv and Idoma in Benue State,

the Igala in Kogi State, the Jukun in Taraba State, the Bajju in Southern Kaduna, and the Berom in Plateau State (Krista, M. (2019); Emmanuel, T. V. and Bernard, U.N. 2020).

The question remains: why did this conflict with farmers over grazing land not occur during the many centuries of neighborhood between the Fulani and the ethnic groups in the Middle-Belt until recently, shortly before and after the general election of 2015 that brought Gen. Muhammadu Buhari into power? In his Novel, "Burning Grass," one of the African Writers Series published in 1962, Cyprian Ekwensi wrote that

"When they begin to burn the grass in Northern Nigeria, it is time for the herdsmen to be moving the cattle southwards to the banks of the great riverin search of water and green grass...[and]...when Chief Mai Sunsaye smells the smoke of burning grass, he knew it was time to go..."

Ekwensi, C. (1962), an Igbo man by origin from Enugu State, published his Novel in 1962 while he was 41 years old. That means that nomadic transhumance from the North during the dry season to the South has always been there peacefully even before 1962 and the Fulani nomads and their Middle-belt neighbors have been living peacefully in the same neighborhood. Considering the year this novel was published (1962) to the time when conflict escalated between farmers and herders in the Middle-belt especially in Benue and Plateau States and particularly after the general election of 2015, what happened to the peaceful co-existence in the Middle-belt between Farmers and Herders? Or what happened to the non-existence of violence or outcry labeled against the Fulani after the regime of Muhammadu Buhari or his demise? These are unanswered questions that need further investigation because it is outside the scope of this study and is a limitation as this study is limited only to the North East Sub-region of Nigeria. Why do such conflicts not happen between the Fulani and their Kanuri, or other neighbors such as the Hausa over many centuries of co-existence?

The Process of Transhumance in Nigeria (the Fulani temporary migration from North-South)



A Fulani man migrating from Northern Part of Nigeria to Southern Nigeria in Search of Pasture for his cattle during the dry season. This movement is reversed during the wet season.

Captured for this study.

Study Objectives:

The objective of this study is to identify and analyze cross-cultural patterns, similarities, and differences of the Fulani and the Kanuri ethnic groups of North Eastern Region of Nigeria.

Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. identify similarities and differences in social, cultural, and economic practices including marriages & kingship, religion, settlement pattern, occupation or commerce, etc., among both ethnic groups.
2. assess the centuries of co-existence between the two ethnic groups to dispel the claim that the Fulani ethnic group is in conflict with neighbors wherever they are due to their nomadic life.
3. establish whether there has been a documented conflict or civil strife between the Fulani and the Kanuri as neighbors since after the Jihad of Othman Danfodio in 1804?
4. establish the significance of the “Joking Relationship” between the Fulani and the Kanuri ethnic groups regardless of age, gender, or social status in the study communities.
5. establish the sharing of working tools such as hoe, cutlass, farms, viewing centers, playground, town halls, mosques, churches, in common across ethnic groups or members of the communities under study.

Research Questions:

1. Are there sociocultural, economic, and environmental similarities and/or differences between the Fulani and the Kanuri ethnic groups as neighbors in North Eastern Nigeria?
2. Why are the Fulani Ethnic Group considered to be in conflict with their neighbors wherever they reside as claimed?
3. Is there any documented conflict or civil strife between the Fulani and the Kanuri as neighbors since after the Jihad of Othman Danfodio in 1804?
4. What is the significance behind the “Joking Relationship” that exists between the Fulani and the Kanuri ethnic groups regardless of age, gender or social status in the study communities?
5. Do the communities share things in common such as viewing centers, playground, town halls, mosques, churches, farms, etc?

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL MODELS

Neighbourhood and Co-existence:

Kernerman English Multilingual Dictionary (2006-2013) provided that neighbourhood is a system allowing organized groups of people to police their neighbourhoods to prevent crime. Britannica www.britannica.com > topic > neighborhood-sociology, gives a definition of neighbourhood as an “immediate geographical area that surrounds a family’s place of residence that is bounded by physical features such as streets, rivers, train tracks, and political divisions.”

It involves social interaction between the neighbours with a sense of shared identity, and similar socioeconomic and demographic characteristics.

Moshe, M. (2001) stated that neighbourhood involves peaceful coexistence which can only be advanced through the building of mutual relationships and that peace building requires recognition of human rights as a tool to promote relationships both within and between societies. Peaceful co-existence also depends on the solidarity of societies and how persons act and communities behave.

Khaminwa, A. N. (2003) posited that coexistence is when two or more people live together in a nonviolent relationship, respect their differences, interact with a commitment to tolerance and mutual respect, and settle conflicts without recourse to violence. Khaminwa (2003) gave two typologies of co-existence: passive coexistence which occurs where relationships are characterized by unequal power relationships, little inter-group contact, and little equity with absence of social justice. The author added that this type of environment may lack violence, however, the institutional structures often impede community growth, peace processes, and the development of democracy. Inter-group conflicts hardly occur in such environments or communities and the groups can still coexist peacefully. This is not the type of environment we expect to see in the communities under this study. Khaminwa calls the second typology active coexistence. Under this typology, coexistence is characterized by a recognition and respect for diversity and an active embrace of difference but with equality of access to resources and opportunities, and promoting equity in all aspects of life. The relationship fosters peace and social cohesion based on fairness, justice, and inclusiveness in all aspects of life. This is the type of environment or communities expected to be seen under this study. In another perspective, Durkheim conceptualized neighbourhood or co-existence in terms of social cohesion as the interdependence, shared loyalties, and solidarity between members of society (Durkheim 1893). Schiefer & Van der Noll (2017, p. 17) defined social cohesion as “a descriptive attribute of a collective, indicating the quality of collective togetherness.” Chan et al. 2006; Green & Janmaat (2011) added that social cohesion consists of three multidimensional constructs: (a) social relations which consist of social networks, participation, trust, and mutual tolerance; (b) attachment and belonging; and (c) orientation to the common good, which includes feelings of responsibility, solidarity, and acceptance of and compliance with social order and rules. The authors defined attachment and belonging as the self-perception of the group as an integral part of one's self-identity. Schiefer & Van der Noll (2017) further indicated that attachment and belonging is the dimension most closely related to the relationship between people and place (i.e., the neighbourhood). In their theory of sense of community belonging, McMillan and Chavis (1986) theorized that sense of community belonging consists of four elements: (a) group membership (sense of belonging), (b) influence (sense of mattering), (c) needs fulfilment (meeting needs), and (4) emotional connection (sense of shared history, places, and time).

The “Joking Relationship.”

The joking relationship is one of the most important strategies for building and maintaining peace and social harmony in traditional societies. It is a social practice that promotes peace and harmony among individuals and groups in communities. It enables two or more individuals

from the same ethnic group or distinct ethnic groups to engage in teasing, bantering one's joking partner, just to stimulate a friendly or harmonious relationship, create shared fun, cause amusement & laughter, or build intimacy just for the humor in it. The joke(s) may also take the form of criticism as a means of promoting fraternity, social harmony, and reinforcing peace in communities involved.

This joking relationship is a common practice among some ethnic groups especially in West Africa including Niger, Mali, Barkina Faso, South Africa and other countries of the world (A. Radcliffe-Brown, 1940; Lamile, N. E., 2019; Youssouf Diallo, 2006; Hein, A. N., 2021; Davidheiser, 2006; Sogoba, 2018; Parkin, 1993). Jones (2007) and Smith (2004) pointed that this relationship might have existed in the Mali Empire during the height of the Mali civilization and likely linked to a past incident of shedding blood that motivated leaders of the communities to sign a pact that initiated joking among the community people and prevented any further conflict among them.

A similar joking relationship exists between the Fulani and the Kanuri people of North Eastern Nigeria (this study population). However, unlike some negative happenings among other ethnic groups in West Africa such as in Barkina Faso and Mali, whereby Parkin (1993), Smith (2004) and Sogoba (2018) reported that the joking relationship has limits based on gender (i.e not permitted between sexes) and intermarriage is prohibited across the ethnic groups, it is entirely different among the Fulani and the Kanuri ethnic groups in North Eastern Nigeria. There is no restriction or limitation involved in exchanging jokes regardless of age, gender, marital status or social status or position of power & authority, provided that individuals show respect for each other. There is also a high degree of intermarriage among the ethnic groups (Bello, B. F. 2022).

As a demonstration of peaceful co-existence for many centuries, the Fulani and the Kanuri ethnic groups have been in this "joking relationship." It shows social bonding between the two ethnic groups characterized by the exchange of playful or teasing remarks especially among the settled town Fulani and the Kanuri. This joking relationship happens whenever and wherever they are together, till today. It ties the two ethnic groups even among political elites and the most powerful leaders in Northern Nigeria based on history and convention. This joking relationship is purported to be linked to the Jihad of Othman Danfodio in the 19th century (1804). The height of it is the resultant political power relation that further governed the two ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria being the "dominant political power class" since Nigeria's independence in 1960. There is strong evidence to suggest political hegemony by the two ethnic groups in Nigeria. For instance, the Sultan of Sokoto is the Chairman of traditional rulers in Northern Nigeria followed by the Shehu of Borno (Bello, B. F. 2022). The Kanuri have produced a Military Head of State (General Sani Abacha), Nigerian First Republic politician (Zanna Bukar Dipcharima), Sir Kashim Ibrahim (the first indigenous governor of the Northern Region), Kashim Shettima (current democratic Vice President of Nigeria), and a host of eminent personalities; Emirs, State Governors, Ministers & Ambassadors.

The Fulani on the other hand, have produced four Heads of State: Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (Nigeria's First Prime Minister), Alhaji Shehu Shagari (First Civilian President), General Muhammadu Buhari (Military Head of State & Civilian President) and Umaru Musa

Ya'radua (Civilian President of Nigeria). Other powerful political elites among the Fulani ethnic group include: Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, (the Sarduna of Sokoto and First Premier of the Northern Region), Alhaji Atiku Abubakar (Civilian Vice President of Nigeria), Hajiya Amina Muhammed (Under-Secretary of the United Nations (current)), and a host of eminent personalities; Emirs, State Governors, Ministers and Ambassadors. Both ethnic groups show dominance in the political scene in Nigeria. Despite their positions of authority and power, the joking relationship between the Fulani and Kanuri happens among these elites when and where they meet during official public functions and other personal matters, especially because both ethnic groups have planted the seed of unity among them through intermarriages. Notwithstanding the recurring terrorist attacks and inter-ethnic/inter-religious clashes in the North East Sub-region of Nigeria, the Joking relationship still exists among the Kanuri & the Fulani ethnic groups today. The joking relationship has thus, become a strategy that further cements peace and friendship among the two ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Fethullah M. Gülen's model or paradigm of peaceful coexistence

This model was presented by Celik & Valkenberg (2007) as an approach to dialogue and peace. The authors distinguished four dimensions of peace - eternal peace, inner peace, interpersonal or inter-communal peace, and global peace (Celik & Valkenberg 2007). They argued that these four dimensions of peace are possible only when accompanied by moral values, mutual knowledge and acceptance of cultural and religious identity. In particular, the authors presented and described Gülen's idea of education as a practical means to achieve peace, and his dialogue approach as an alternative for dispute resolution and as a tool for building a culture of peace between and within societies. This theoretical model or paradigm has close relevance to the environment or communities this study addressed. These study communities have diversity in religion, culture, ethnicity, language, and levels of literacy. They require dialogue, education (through mass literacy intervention), conciliation between people, and promoting unity in multiplicity of culture and religion to inculcate tolerance, understanding, and peace through dialogue. Society should live in peace through dialogue and education. Gülen's theory (2004), as presented by Celik, Gurkan & Valkenberg (2007), clearly demonstrates that for instance, education plays a crucial role in nurturing peaceful co-existence among communities and their people. It equips individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to appreciate diversity, resolve conflicts, and engage in dialogue. The contributors maintained that education through schools and institutions should aim at prioritizing the promotion of tolerance, understanding and dialogue among people and between or within communities. Dialogue, on the other hand, is essential for resolving differences and fostering understanding and peace. Encouraging discussions among community people helps dispel stereotypes and misconceptions.

The People, Environment & Culture:

This section focuses on the settlement pattern, trade/commerce, marriage practices, religious practices, etc.

1. Settlement Morphology:

a) **The Kanuri:** Kanuri settlements comprise walled compounds, made up of either mud-roofed or grass-mat thatched conical roofs. Usually, there are farmsteads surrounding the settlement,

with barns, pastures, a few goats & sheep and free land for farming and other structures. The typical Kanuri settlements in villages range in size from 1,000 to 5,000 people of three or four households. However, currently, about one-quarter live in cities with populations of more than 10,000. For instance, Maiduguri, a major city and the Borno State Capital, has a metro area population in 2024 of 870,000, UNOCHA (2024, September). Below is a typical village Kanuri settlement as described.



Adopted from Bello, B.F. (2022).

b) The Fulani: the Fulani rural settlement differs from that of the Kanuri as it is semi-structured and comprised of grass-mat thatched conical roofs. Typical nomadic Fulani live in domed houses known as a Bukkaru or suudu hudo, literally "grass house." It also has farmsteads surrounding the settlement, with pastures, cattle, donkeys, sometimes, a horse or camel (for the head of household), goats, sheep, chicken and free land for farming and other structures. Recently, settled or semi-settled Fulani who are sedentary and live in cities or towns, now live in mud or concrete block houses. Like the Kanuri, the Fulani have major cities and towns like Sokoto with a population of (761,000, a 3.68% increase from 2024), Jalingo with a population of 660,213, Bauchi with a population of (724,000 in 2025, a 3.87% increase from 2024), and Gombe with a population of (620,000 in 2025, a 4.03% increase from 2024) (<https://www.macrotrends.net>). Below is a typical village or rural Fulani settlement.



Adopted from Matthew Atungwu (2025, May 21)

2. Religious Practices.

a) **The Kanuri:** The Kanuri were the first to embrace Islam and their Kanem rulers were among the first to be Islamized in sub-Saharan Africa in the 11th century. The empire of Kanem-Bornu became renowned for its Islamic culture with their rulers, the Mais, undertaking the hajj, building mosques, and converting non-Muslims to Islam (Barkindo 1985: 235; and Lavers 1993: 257.). Till today, over 99% of Kanuri are Muslims. Islam is the central ideological force in the daily lives of the Kanuri, affecting the thinking, practices, and behavior of the people.

b) **The Fulani:** On the other hand, the Fulani are among the first ethnic groups in Sub-Saharan Africa to accept Islam, though much later than the Kanuri; however, they started the spread of Islam through Jihads. The first Fulani jihad occurred in Bondou, close to the Islamized Sénégal valley, when in the 17th century they succeeded in taking over from the local Mande rulers. By the second half of the 18th century, they had conquered Fouta-Toro the homeland of the Tukolor. In 1804 the most famous of the western African jihads was launched in Hausaland by Usman dan Fodio. This Jihad conquered all the Hausa Kingdoms, the Yoruba of Oyo including Illorin Empire, and the Nupe Kingdom. However, in 1808, the Fulani conquest was checked in Bornu. The forces of Fulani rebellion and invasion had been stopped by the ancient monarchy of Bornu and Kanem, Muḥammad al-Kānemī. According to him, he had already embraced Islam even before they started their Jihad.

3. The Marriage practices of the two ethnic groups

a) **The Kanuri People:** the conduct of marriage as narrated by Ronald, C. (1960) and Abraham, R. (1966) among the Kanuri is unique not only in the North Eastern Region but in the Northern part of Nigeria due to its high cost and sophistication. Barkindo, B. (1985) added that most young men do not marry early as they cannot afford it, until they reach their late teens to mid-twenties. Most Kanuri men have their first marriage at the age of twenty. The parents marry a young bride to their sons or male children, often between the ages of ten (10) and fourteen (14). The young men are advised to marry a young virgin the first time so they can grow old together. There are steps, according to Barkindo, that follow in the Kanuri marriage:

a) pre-wedding rituals: the period of Kerawo. Kerawo, is the Kanuri term for love and it precedes every other activity. For the Kerawo to be fully established, the boy and the girl have to see somewhere, either on first sight or subsequently, one falls for the other. Once Kerawo is fully established. b) the next step is the Kela Tulowo (period of self-introduction): This is the step that the intending groom introduces himself to the girl's family. The groom and a few of his close friends visit the girl's family to greet her parents and introduce himself. Following the introduction, the girl's family immediately 'launches' an underground investigation into the boy's character, occupation and background. If they are satisfied with the results, they will ask the boy to 'validate' his 'intention' by sending his family for formalization of the marriage processes. c) Ra'aki, Koro, Sadau and Sarte (pre-wedding Preparation). Ra'aki, Koro, Sarte and Sadau are the major pre-wedding activities that in the overall, open and pave way for a wedding in Kanuri. Ra'aki (Declaration of Interest) is the first ritual with which the Kanuri wedding is opened. The groom's family then sends its contingent, involving a large number of people, to the bride's family to 'formalize' their son's intention to marry their daughter. The process is called 'Gawo', meaning formal presentation of the boy to the girl and leads to Kwor

(request) where the official consent of the girl is sought. If there is agreement or acceptance, a dowry (Sadawu) is paid. The dowry is an outrageously large amount of money, as high as N500,000, and in the case of some families, run into millions. This is normally calculated based on the price of gold gram (Shishi Gold) or a quarter of a dinar. If the two families agree on this, the next phase is to negotiate the date of the wedding: Sarte. Lots of gifts (Kare Ra'akiye) are brought to the bride and her family as bride wealth which may include boxes of clothing, cosmetics, etc for the bride and packs of sweets, biscuits, and kola nuts for the family. The bride's family will also give Kingiyaram —a gift given in return of a gesture. This typically includes fried chicken, meat, drinks and snacks. The wedding strictly follows Islamic injunctions by ensuring the presence or availability of 'waliyyi' (the giver), who could be her father or guardian, observance of 'Sadawu' which is the dowry, 'Sigga' (the act of asking and acceptance between the family of the bride and groom and their witnesses). This is strictly Islamic.

The wedding ceremony involves decoration of the bride and other females' hands and legs with Lalle (Henna). Sacks of henna leaves, soaps, kola nuts, chewing gum, candy, boxes of clothes, and incense, popularly called "Turaren wuta and Humra," are given to the bride's aunts from her father's side (bawaa). They exchange it with the groom's family. There is the Wushe-wushe night (a colorful event on the eve of the big day at the bride's home). As prescribed in Islamic tenets, the Kanuri marriage ceremony also observes the walimat (wuskru). When the marriage ceremony takes place, dishes are prepared and dignitaries, friends and well-wishers are invited to the bride and groom's homes to dine. After the wedding, when the bride finally leaves for the groom's house, which is her life-long matrimonial home, things like 'Kaulu' which is the washing of hands and feet with palm oil and milk, washing of her hair, and her conveyance to the groom's house in a car, will all be paid for by the groom's friends.

It should, however, be noted that due to the dynamics of urbanization, western education, the influence of Islamic religion, and the expensive nature of the traditional rites described above, the observance of the Kanuri traditional marriage no longer strictly holds and in most urban areas such as Maiduguri, there are increasing intermarriages with the Hausa, the Fulani and other ethnic groups.

a) **The Fulani Marriage:** Fulani practice endogamy, which involves marrying a relation or close cousin. The Fulani seldom marry outside their tribe keeping the wealth within the family unit. The first choice of marriage partner is a patrilineal parallel cousin. If that is not possible, their other choices are for the partners to share a great-grandfather, a great-great grandfather, or a patrilineal cross cousin. One of the most interesting parts of the Fulani marriage system, is marriage by betrothal. Wabara, S. N. (1963), Adebayo, A. G. (1991) and Lamrecht, F. L. (1976) in their study of the Fulani tradition, narrated that the parents of young children betroth them at very young ages, below five years but the proper marriage takes place when they are at puberty, normally between ages 10, 13 and 14. However, this tradition is gradually going into extinction as inter-ethnic marriages are now common among the Fulani and other neighbours such as the Kanuri and the Hausa. Girls now marry the men of their choice. The majority of Fulani observe the Islamic way of marriage. The Fulani are allowed according to

Islamic injunction to marry up to four wives if they so wish. This is an area of similarity with the Kanuri marriage.

Aside from the foregoing betrothal and Islamic forms of marriage, the Fulani practice other traditional forms of marriage which are of three or two types depending on the tribe's requirement and preferences. They consist of the flogging called *Sharo*, *Koowgal*, a dowry payment, and *Kabbal*. The *Kabbal* is an Islamic ceremony akin to marriage ceremony but without the attendance of the bride or groom (the *pulaku*). The *Sharo* isn't compulsory or recognized in certain tribes while the *Koowgal* is the most important part of the union. The *Koowgal* is the handing over of a herd of cattle as dowry prior to the maiden moving in as a wife. This involves the bride's father transferring one of his herd to the groom (as gift), legalizing the marriage. The groom or the parents pay the 'Sadaqi' or bride price. This is a required marriage dowry given by the groom to the bride. There are many gift exchanges between the groom and bride's family including bride wealth which may consist of clothes (fabric), bracelets, calabashes, etc. An important public acknowledgment of the marriage is the movement of the bride to her husband's village, termed *bangal*. The women of that village come to greet her, and the welcome is a rite of passage for the bride. The bride's status increases with each child she delivers, especially with the birth of males. Upon arrival at the groom's home, the bride wears four bangles on her legs while two are worn on her hands. She has to wear these bracelets between four and six months. During this period, the youngest woman in the groom's home takes care of her.

METHODOLOGY

Study Areas, Population and Sample.

In North Eastern Nigeria, the Kanuri and Fulani ethnic groups are found across all states, including Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Taraba, Bauchi, Gombe. However, this study is focused only on those states where both ethnic groups co-locate, or co-exist or live in the same environment (State and Local Government Area (L.G.As)). Only three (3) states are affected: Bauchi, Borno and Yobe. In Borno State, both ethnic groups co-locate in Kaga LGA, Damboa LGA, Gubio LGA, Konduga LGA, Jere LGA, and Magumeri LGA. In Yobe State, both ethnic groups co-locate in Fune LGA, Damaturu LGA, Gaidam LGA, Tarmuwa LGA, Gujba LGA, Dapshi LGA, Yusufari LGA, Yunusari LGA, Gashuwa LGA, Jakusku LGA, Karsuwa LGA and Machina LGA. In Bauchi State, both ethnic groups co-locate in Alkaleri LGA, Misau LGA, Katagum (Azare), Gamawa LGA, Itas LGA and Zaki LGA. However, this is not to say that there are no Kanuri or Fulani ethnic groups located in other states or LGAs of North Eastern Nigeria including Gombe, Adamawa, Taraba, and places such as Jama'are LGA, etc.

The study focused only on areas where both ethnic groups live together (co-locate). Three L. G. As were selected for the study in each of the 3 States (**Borno State:** Kaga, Jere, Gubio); **Yobe State:** Fune, Damaturu, Geidam; and **Bauchi State:** Misau, Katagum, Gamawa).

The population of the study consists of **1,834,630** persons drawn from the 3 selected Local Government Areas (L.G. As) of the 3 states, based on the 2006 National Population & Housing Census. **The total sample size selected was 384 using research advisor 2016.** The sample was proportionately distributed according to the size of the respondents' populations in the 3

selected Local Government Areas. Purposive and convenient sampling technique was used to select respondents. The design was chosen due to geographical consideration, availability & accessibility of respondents, having a specific target group in mind due to the homogeneous nature of the study, and being a qualitative and exploratory study. The selected L.G.As and their population distribution in each of the 3 states are as presented in the table below.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by State, LGA, Population and Sample size.

SN.	State	LGA	Population	Sample
1.	Borno	a. Kaga	89 996	19
		b. Jere	209 107	44
		c. Gubio	151 286	33
2.	Yobe	a. Fune	301 954	62
		b. Damaturu	87 706	18
		c. Gaidam	155 740	33
3.	Bauchi	a. Misau	261 410	54
		b. Katagum	293 020	61
		c. Gamawa	284 411	60
Total			1834630	384

Source: Nigeria, 2006 National Population and Housing Census

The main instrument for the study is a self-developed questionnaire. The questionnaire covers responses from heads of the clans, the elderly and other members of the Fulbe and Kanuri, respectively. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was developed and discussed the history and analogy of the sampled sites. The research instruments were submitted for content and face validation to two selected experts in Fulbe and Kanuri culture at Bauchi State University, Gadau (Katagum -Azare Axis) and Yobe State University, Damaturu. Pilot study was conducted using two local government areas: Alkaleri LGA in Bauchi State and Machina LGA in Yobe state which, though identified among the Local Government Areas listed under the 3 States for this study, were not selected as sample L.G.As (see table 1 above). This was done to determine the validity and reliability of the questions, clarity of terminology, time schedule, and the securing and ordering of the questions. The reliability of the instrument was determined by the researchers using the test-retest method. The internal consistency of the instrument was calculated using Cronbach's alpha at .766.

Data Collection Procedure

A qualitative method using key informant interviews and focus group discussions was employed for the study. Field interviewers were recruited; each had a minimum of a university qualification or its equivalent. The criteria for selection of interviewers included the following:

familiarity with the prevailing cultural setting, living or working in the environment or community, having personal interest and commitment to the research work, and above all, ability to speak Hausa, the most commonly spoken local language that prevails in the area (with the option of being able to speak Kanuri or Fulfulde) for better understanding. Each site had interviewers according to the size of the sample: Borno 84 samples with 2 interviewers; Yobe 118 samples with 3 interviewers; Bauchi 182 samples with 4 interviewers (384 samples). Thus, a total of 9 interviewers were recruited and centrally trained in Damaturu, Yobe State. The training involved translation and interpretation of the questions into Hausa (the most commonly spoken language) for better clarity and to avoid ambiguity. Observations and corrections on the instruments and data collection procedure were addressed based on the pilot study conducted using two Local Government Areas earlier mentioned above. The pilot study enabled uniform interpretation of questions in the question schedule, as well as better understanding of the questions during the field work. In addition to the Principal Investigator who was in Damaturu, Yobe State, two supervisors, one for Borno State (from University of Maiduguri) and Bauchi State (from Bauchi State University, Gadau) were engaged and conducted the training, supervised the field work, and reviewed the correctness and completeness of the completed instrument. The instrument contained both closed and open-ended questions which allowed further probing.

A total of six (6) Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions were conducted; two (2) in each state in one selected LGA. In each of the selected LGAs, the two (2) group sessions involved one session for females and one for males regardless of age which permitted flexibility and freedom of expression within each group as the Fulani/Kanuri cultural settings do not allow the co-presence of males and females irrespective of age. In each FGD session, each group consisted of 6-8 respondents depending on the sample size and availability of respondents in each L.G.A. A male investigator and a female note-taker were engaged for all sessions in the three (3) selected L.G.As. Each session lasted for about 60 minutes. Hausa was used as the common language during each group session due to the level of literacy and the sociocultural environment. Materials for the focus group sessions were made available and included a discussion guide, a note pad for note-taking, a note-taker, a tape recorder, set of tapes, tablets, a conducive environment, and availability of respondents. Investigators were reminded also to use Android phones in case of IT failure. The recorded session conversations were later transcribed and translated into English and compared with the notes taken during the sessions. The purpose of the FGDs was to collect more in-depth information about the reasons behind the peaceful co-existence of the two ethnic groups over many centuries of neighbourhood, the joking relationship among the ethnic groups, and the absence or presence of any serious misunderstanding or civil strife, or religious/ethnic conflicts over the years, etc.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Categories	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	249	64.8

Characteristic	Categories	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
	Female	135	35.1
Age	28-37	47	12.2
	38-47	221	57.6
	48-57	47	12.2
	58-67	69	17.9
Marital status	Single	47	12.2
	Married/Cohabited	289	75.3
	Divorced/Separated	48	12.5
Educational level	Koranic	48	12.5
	Primary	54	14.1
	Secondary	147	38.3
	University	135	35.2
Religion	Muslim	378	98.4
	Christian	4	1.0
	Others	2	0.5
Occupation	Government Employee	114	29.7
	Private/Self Employed	46	11.9
	Farmer	123	32.0
	Unemployed	81	21.1
	Others	20	5.2

Source: Field Data, February 2026

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by demographic variables for KII. The results showed that male respondents were 229(59.6) indicating that the male respondents were more numerous than female respondents, who numbered 135(40.4). The survey showed that marital status comprised single respondents numbering 47(12.2), married respondents 289(75.3), those who are divorced were 48(12.5), while there were no widows or widowers among all respondents. The result also showed respondents' ages fell between late-20s to mid-50s with the largest proportion within the ages of 38-47 (221) constituting 57.6% of the respondents.

The distribution of respondents by educational level showed that those with Secondary Education almost competed with those who have University Education 147 (38.3) and 135 (35.2), respectively, both of which were much higher than Quranic Education 48(12.5). This may be due to environmental factors, including the availability of western educational institutions spread across the communities (3 Universities in Bauchi State, 2 Universities in Yobe State and 4 Universities in Borno State (including private) and several colleges of

education and polytechnics across the three states. This also shows that the level of literacy is high among respondents. However, the proportion of the Quranic education shown is inversely related to the proportion of Muslims among respondents as high as 378 (98.4) presented in Table 1 above. A high percentage of Muslims would have responded more positively if the question asked was for Islamiya Education, perhaps due to the influence of Western Education. Islamiya Education combines both Western and Arabic Literature and learning.

On the occupational categories, it is common to suggest that farmers are more numerous, at 123(32.0), than any other occupational group in these communities. In most communities in Northern Nigeria, including the communities in the North-Eastern states, few people are in private practice or self-employed, except for petty trading or local businesses. Apart from their involvement in Government Employment 114(29.7) and Farming 123(32.0), people remain idle or are unemployed 81 (21.1).

Research Question 2: Why are the Fulani Ethnic Group considered to be in conflict with their neighbors wherever they reside as claimed?

Table 2: Duration of Stay

Characteristic	Categories	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Co-existence: Since your stay in this Community, have you witnessed civil strife, conflict or war between the Kanuri and Fulani Ethnic Groups?	None Ever Existed	377	98.1
	One Time	5	1.3
	Two Times	2	0.5
Nature of Your Stay	Permanent Resident	260	67.7
	Short Term Stay	56	14.5
	Employee/Casual Laborer	68	17.7
How long have you lived in this Area?	1-3 years	95	24.7
	3-10 years	100	26.0
	Lifelong	185	49.2

Source: Field Data, February 2026.

Respondents were asked how long they have lived in the community of study. The study shows that about half of the respondents 189(49.2) reported having spent all their lives (lifelong) in the communities under study. A total of 100(26.0) respondents reported having lived for between 3-10 years, while 95(24.7) respondents had lived for 1-3 years. On average, the length of co-habitation is over 100 years among the two ethnic groups in their respective communities.

The nature of stay further shows the degree of co-habitation as respondents who are permanent residents are higher in number 260(67.7), which surpasses the combined responses obtained from both respondents on short-term stays 56(14.5) and those respondents that are temporary

or casual laborers 68(17.7). The outcome of this characteristic (Nature of Stay) further supports the strength of co-existence among the Fulani and Kanuri ethnic groups with those who reported being permanent residents as reflected in their high numbers.

A total of 377(98.1) respondents reported that they had never witnessed any cases of civil strife or war between the Kanuri and the Fulani ethnic groups since they lived in the communities under study which further justifies the level of peaceful co-existence among the two ethnic groups as neighbors. However, a negligible number of respondents reported having witnessed such strife or war once or twice, perhaps due to misunderstanding of what constitutes civil strife or war, which are beyond mere internal squabbles or quarrels.

Research Question 3: Has there been any documented conflict or civil strife between the Fulani and the Kanuri as neighbors since after the Jihad of Othman Danfodio in 1804?

Descriptive statistics were used to answer this Research Question as in the table below.

Table 3: Neighbourhood and Co-existence

S/N	Variables	X	SD	Decision
1.	The Kanuri and Fulani are the two major ethnic groups in this Neighborhood	4.7	.44	Agree
2.	There are multi-ethnic groups in this neighborhood and are willing to help each other	4.3	.48	Agree
3.	The Fulani and Kanuri ethnic groups generally get along in harmony with each other very well	4.2	.67	Agree
4.	Both Muslims and Christians in this neighborhood live with one another as brothers & sisters	4.4	.49	Agree
5.	The Fulani and Kanuri ethnic groups do not share the same religion	2.3	1.02	Disagree
6.	The Fulani & Kanuri ethnic groups in this neighborhood intermarry among themselves	4.2	.84	Agree
7.	People in this neighborhood fight each other frequently.	1.7	.44	Disagree
8.	The Fulani and Kanuri ethnic group in this neighborhood hardly have quarrels among themselves	4.4	.88	Agreed
9.	The Fulani ethnic group in this neighborhood likes to engage in fights with other ethnic groups.	1.5	.88	Disagree

Source: Field Data, February 2026.

Table 3 above presents the opinions of respondents who indicated that two ethnic groups, Kanuri and Fulani, are the major ethnic groups among the multi-ethnic groups in the study area and all multi-ethnic groups in the study area are always willing to support each other. The table further indicates that the two major ethnic groups get along with each other very well. They

also adhere to the same religion (Islam). Despite the recurring terrorist attacks and inter-ethnic/inter-religious clashes in the North East Sub-region of Nigeria, multi-ethnic groups in the communities under study hardly fight each other and notwithstanding their religious differences, they live with one another as brothers and sisters. One of the most prominent features among the two major ethnic groups (Fulani and Kanuri) in the study communities is the high level of intermarriage between them, which further strengthened their peaceful relationship. This demonstrates good and peaceful neighbourhood and strong co-existence.

Research Question 4: What is the significance behind the “Joking Relationship” that exists between the Fulani and the Kanuri regardless of age, gender or social status in this Community?

Descriptive statistics were used to answer this Research Question as shown in the table below.

Table 4: Joking Relationship between the Fulani and the Kanuri

S/N	Variables	X	SD	Decision
1.	There is a strong inter-ethnic “Joking Relationship” between the Kanuri and the Fulani ethnic groups, always	4.6	.48	Agree
2.	The joking relationship between the Kanuri and the Fulani ethnic groups does not extend to involve children and women	1.4	.86	Disagree
3.	The Fulani and the Kanuri ethnic groups share the same cultural practices such as marriage, housing, livelihood & certain rights of passage e.g. Sharo, hence reason for joking relationship	1.4	.86	Disagree
4.	There is a claim that the Joking Relationship came about since the time of Othman Danfodio Jihad of 1804.	4.4	.48	Agree

Source: Field Data, February 2026.

Table 4 above presents the opinions of respondents about a strategy for building harmony and maintaining a peaceful relationship between the two ethnic groups (Kanuri and Fulani) in the areas of study. Despite their cultural differences such as forms of marriage, housing pattern, livelihood, initiation for adulthood such as Sharro, the two ethnic groups have strong inter-ethnic “Joking Relationship.” The results indicate that the joking relationship is not restricted among the ethnic groups across age or gender, provided that there is recognition for differences in social status and age.

Research Question 5: Do the communities share things in common such as viewing centers, playground, town halls, mosques, churches, farms, working tools, etc?

Simple percentages were used to answer this Research Question as shown in the table below.

Table 5: Joint Activities Organized/Participated by Community Members

S/N	Variables	YES	%	NO	%
1.	Do you have a common community viewing centre?	54	100. 0	0	(0.0)

S/N	Variables	YES	%	NO	%
2.	Do you have a common community playground, e.g. for football, cultural display (wrestling and dancing during festivities)?	54	100.0	0	(0.0)
3.	Do you have a community town hall for meetings and other programs, e.g. ceremonies, election and reconciliation?	54	100.0	0	(0.0)
4.	How often do the communities hold the meeting?				
	Every week	6	11.1		
	Every Two Weeks	27	50.0		
	Once a month	21	38.9		
5.	Do you have a central Mosque where all Muslims pray on Friday or Idle Fitr?	54	100.0	0	(0.0)
6.	Do you have a church for common Sunday Sermon?	54	100.0	0	(0.0)
7.	Do you share public transport for movements, regardless of ethnic or religious denominations?	54	100.0	0	(0.0)
8.	Do you have community associations for the benefit of the community as a whole?	37	68.5	17	31.5
9.	Do you share or exchange in common working implements such as tools, cutlasses, hoes, farms, and gardens without monetary exchange (i.e. involving monetary values)?	54	100.0	0	(0.0)
10.	Do you have farms shared by a community or a household?	54	100.0	0	(0.0)

Source: Field Data, February 2026.

Table 5 presents the distribution of respondents according to joint activities organized and undertaken by community members to further demonstrate the level of peaceful neighborhood and co-existence. The results showed that all 54 respondents (100%) in the study agreed that the communities have common community event centers that bring people together such as viewing centre, common playground, community town hall for meetings for hosting football, cultural display, ceremonies, election and reconciliation. The communities under study have a common central Mosque for Muslim worship and a common Church for Christian Sunday worship, respectively. The table further showed that all the respondents in the sample, 54 (100%) agreed that their communities share public transport for movements regardless of ethnic or religious denominations. In the communities under study, members share working implements (tools) such as cutlasses and hoes. Farms and gardens are also lent out without monetary exchange rather than the owner(s) leaving them fallow.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed the distribution of respondents by demographic characteristics in Table 1. One interesting finding is that the distribution of respondents by educational level showed that those with Secondary Education almost competed with those who have University Education 147 (38.3) and 135 (35.2), respectively, and both outnumbered those with Quranic

Education 48(12.5) considering the high percentage of Muslims. Perhaps, Quranic education would have had more positive responses if the question had asked about Islamiya Education due to its influence by Western Education. Islamiya Education combines both Western and Arabic Literature and learning. So, in Nigeria today, especially in the North Eastern Region and other northern parts of the country, Islamiya Education is widespread (reading and learning of the Quran, Islamic principles, values, morals and understanding Islamic law), especially among youths and adolescents in schools up to tertiary institutions. The few Muslims that reported Quranic Education 48(12.5) are likely to be those with low literacy in Western Education or who only studied Quranic literature (learning & memorization of the Holy Quran) which was instituted many centuries ago since the introduction of Islam in the Northeastern region of Nigeria.

The result further delved into neighbourhood by showing the level of co-existence among the ethnic groups through the length or duration of stay within the study communities (Table 2). Almost half of the respondents 189(49.2) reported having spent all their lives (lifelong) in the communities under study. A total of 100(26.0) respondents reported having lived for between 3-10 years, and, on average, the length of co-habitation is over 100 years among the two ethnic groups in their respective communities. Respondents who were permanent residents were higher in number 260(67.7), which surpasses the combined responses obtained from both respondents on short-term stays 56(14.5) and those respondents that were temporary or casual laborers 68(17.7). The significance of these findings demonstrates the level of peaceful co-existence between the two ethnic groups in their communities including their other neighbors. Khaminwa, A. N (2003), posited that coexistence is when two or more people live together in a nonviolent relationship, respect their differences, interact with a commitment to tolerance and mutual respect, and settle conflicts without recourse to violence. During the FGD, respondents pointed out that “ *we don’t fight in this community, not to talk of war.*” A respondent added that “*Since I was born over 50 years ago, I had never witness any civil strife or serious fight between a Kanuri man and a Fulani man. We have lived together for many centuries in peace. Our children are friends and even intermarry among themselves.*”

The finding of the survey further revealed that the Fulani ethnic group in the communities under study does not fight with other ethnic groups as claimed (Table 3). Despite the recurring terrorist attacks and inter-ethnic/inter-religious clashes in the North East Sub-region of Nigeria, multi-ethnic groups in the communities under study hardly fight each other and notwithstanding their religious differences, they live with one another as brothers and sisters. Table 3 shows a high level of intermarriage among the two ethnic groups which further cements the peaceful relationship. In an earlier submission under the empirical model for this study, Moshe, M. M. (2001) narrated that neighbourhood involves peaceful coexistence which can only be advanced through the building of mutual relationships and that peace building requires recognition of human rights as a tool to promote relationships both within and between societies. Peaceful co-existence also depends on the solidarity of societies and how persons act and communities behave. Khaminwa, A. N. (2003) posited that coexistence is characterized by a recognition and respect for diversity and an active embrace of difference but with equality of access to resources and opportunities, and promoting equity in all aspects of life. The

relationship fosters peace and social cohesion based on fairness, justice, and inclusiveness in all aspects of life.

A strategy for cementing relationships and peaceful co-existence between the two ethnic groups as neighbors is presented in Table 4, the “Joking Relationship.” During the FGD sessions, respondents were not able to trace the origin of the joking relationship but most respondents agreed that it started as far back as the Jihad of Othman Danfodio, 1804, which aligns with the outcome of the KII as in table 4 above. Many respondents including the elderly said that *“they only grow to see their parents and grandparents in this joking relationship”* but did not indicate when it began. Others expressed that the jokes bring harmony and good relationship within the neighbourhood. The respondents in the FGD expressed that the forms of jokes are primarily *“teasing, bantering one’s joking partner, just to stimulate friendly or harmonious relationship, create shared fun, cause amusement & laughter, or build intimacy just for the humor in it”*. The jokes, according to respondents, do not include mocking, harassment, passing insults, and abuse. This differs from those found in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger (Parkin, 1993; Smith, 2004; and Sogoba, 2018), who reported that the joking relationship has limits based on gender (i.e., not permitted between sexes), marriage is prohibited across the ethnic groups and the jokes involve mockery, insults, criticism, etc. Though the origin of the joking relationship was not established, the general consensus during the survey especially among the elderly, is that it has a link with the Islamic Jihad of Othman Danfodio of 1804 (both KII & FGD results).

The results of this survey clearly negate the assertions of Parkin (1993), Smith (2004), and Sogoba (2018) and indicate that despite their cultural differences such as forms of marriage, housing pattern, livelihood, initiation for adulthood (rights of passage) such as Sharro, the two ethnic groups have strong inter-ethnic “Joking Relationship,” which is not restricted among the ethnic groups across age or gender, provided that there is recognition for differences in social status and the aged persons. There is also strong intermarriage among both ethnic groups (Table 3).

An outstanding area that further demonstrates neighborhood and peaceful co-existence is building bridges (social cohesion) by sharing things in common (Table 5) including community events and other social activities that bring people together such as viewing centre, common playground, community town hall for meetings for hosting football, cultural display, ceremonies, election and reconciliation. The above submissions justify Durkheim’s (1893) social cohesion as the interdependence, shared loyalties, and solidarity between members of society, while Schiefer & Van der Noll, (2017) further posited that social cohesion is an “attribute of a collective, indicating the quality of collective togetherness.” McMillan and Chavis (1986) concluded that sense of community belonging consists of four elements: (a) group membership (sense of belonging), (b) influence (sense of mattering), (c) needs fulfillment (meeting needs), and (4) emotional connection (sense of shared history, places, and time).

CONCLUSION

This study has identified some cross-cultural patterns, similarities, and differences in terms of

settlement morphology, marriage practices, religious practices, etc., between the Kanuri and the Fulani as neighbors in the selected study communities in North Eastern Nigeria. The study primarily assessed the centuries of peaceful co-existence between the two ethnic groups within the study communities, established the significance of “Joking Relationship” as a catalyst for peace and social cohesion, and further cemented peaceful relationships between both ethnic groups through sharing things in common including community events and other social & religious activities. Although antagonism, prejudice, and disagreement are bound to occur when people of different cultural identities interact with each other, this study revealed that such occurrences are rare across these communities. The study also dispelled the misconception about the Fulani ethnic group that they are always in conflict with their neighbors wherever they find themselves, particularly as, in this study, they are at peace with their Kanuri and other neighbors in the study communities. It has shown that the people in the study communities appreciate the importance of unity in diversity. The concept of peaceful co-existence has clearly demonstrated that despite diversity in cultural norms, beliefs, values and social background, people can live together in a harmonious relationship, show tolerance and respect each other, thereby facilitating the strength of cohesive neighbourhoods and social networks among themselves.

Recommendations

In Nigeria, the North Eastern States are considered war zones or trouble areas due to the activities of insurgency. However, multi-ethnic, inter-tribal, and community conflicts are not common among the people in this part of Nigeria. As the findings of this study suggest, if we recognize, respect and value unity in our diversity not only in the North Eastern States, but across Nigeria generally, there would be harmonious co-existence. It is, therefore, recommended that:

- Individuals, groups or tribal and ethnic entities should be aware of their differences in culture, beliefs, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and political inclination in order to achieve sustainable peace.
- To emulate the act of neighbourhood and peaceful co-existence depicted by the Fulani and their Kanuri neighbours seen in this study, dialogue, massive awareness creation towards conflict resolution and recognition of human and sociocultural rights, must be observed; while avoiding violent acts and maintaining a certain level of tolerance between different ethnic, tribal and religious groups across communities in each state of Nigeria.
- Both the States and the Federal Government of Nigeria must take a leading role in promoting peaceful co-existence through mediation, dialogue, reconciliation among its people across communities in the country.

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