

SOCIO-CULTURAL AFFINITY AND BORDER SECURITY IN NIGERIA: EVIDENCE FROM COMMUNITIES ALONG THE NIGERIA-NIGER FRONTIER

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Abstract

Border management in post-independence Nigeria is characterized by complexities and externalities and how to address this paradox remains a challenge. This study examined whether socio-cultural affinity among communities located along the Nigeria-Niger border is associated with informal cross-border movement and, by extension, with perceived national security outcomes in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design covering five Nigerian states contiguous with the Republic of Niger: Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Zamfara, and Katsina. Using Yamane's sample size formula at a 5% precision level, 400 questionnaires were distributed proportionately across the study area; 375 valid responses were retrieved, representing a response rate of 93.8%. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' characteristics, while Pearson correlation was applied to test the relationship between socio-culturally driven informal cross-border movement and national security at $\alpha = 0.05$. The respondents were predominantly male (68.3%), within the economically active age group of 31-40 years (34.9%), first-degree holders (54.1%), and public servants (43.7%). The inferential result revealed a weak but statistically significant negative relationship between informal cross-border movement propelled by socio-cultural affinity and national security ($r = -.114$, $p = .027$). The finding suggests that, although socio-cultural affinity is not the only driver of insecurity, it constitutes an important non-physical dimension of border porosity that can weaken formal border controls when left unmanaged. The paper argues for a broader border security framework that combines surveillance and enforcement with community engagement, intelligence gathering, and locally grounded awareness programmes in borderland settlements.

Keywords: Socio-Cultural Affinity, Border Communities, Informal Cross-Border Movement, Border Security, Nigeria-Niger Frontier