

## **Development Implications of Social Capital among the Igede of Central Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

One of the undaunted challenges facing many countries in Africa is that of achieving development. Many African states remain underdeveloped despite the various investments made by successive governments in achieving development. As such, many groups have begun to look inwards using association, identity, love and trust, summed up as social capital to achieve development in their various communities. This study examined the relationship between social capital and sustainable development among the Igede of Central Nigeria. The methodology was basically qualitative. Data was generated through key informant interviews (KII), in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussion (FGDs). KII interviews were conducted with traditionalist (titled) male and female, IDIs were conducted with male and female opinion leaders, leaders of community development associations, political office holders among others. FGDs were conducted homogenously on the basis of age and sex. Findings revealed the existence of strong bonding social capital but weak bridging and linking social capital. The study therefore recommended the development of strong bridging and linking social capital through socialization, awareness creation, civil society actions as well as the use of identity by political office holders to create stronger links between government and the people.

**Keywords: Development, identity, Igede, social capital, under development**

### **Introduction**

Achieving development has remained an undaunted challenge in many African countries. Many African states especially, former colonies remain underdeveloped despite the various plans, strategies and investments of successive governments towards achieving development. The Nigerian state, presents as one state, where so much effort has been advanced towards achieving sustainable development from the post independence era till date without success (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011; Eneh, 2011). Successive governments in Nigeria since independence in 1960 have pursued the goal of development through structural change without success. Countries such as China, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia were far behind Nigeria in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in 1970, but today, beyond overtaking Nigeria, they have become major players in the world economic system (Sanusi 2010;Ewetan and Urhie 2014). Though

successive governments have devised various policies to enhance development, many of these policies have failed.

Nigeria's earliest effort at achieving development started with development planning in 1962. It was aimed at ensuring economic growth with priority on agriculture, manpower training and industrial development. This plan was however interrupted by the Nigerian civil war. A lot of infrastructure had been destroyed and there was need for reconstruction. This formed the basis of the second development plan (1970-1974) (Marcellus 2009 and Ogechukwu 2011) which was aimed at reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged structures during the civil war. An indigenization decree was also enacted to put the economy and development of Nigeria in the hands of Nigerians. The third development plan (1975-1980) focused on consolidating the gains from the oil boom, while the fourth development plan (1981-1985) failed and was grossly affected by oil prices. In 1986, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was adopted by the Nigerian government (Obadan, 2001; Aladekomo, 2004; Obadan, 2003; Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011). SAP failed to bring about the expected wealth creation and development. Nigerians popularly regard SAP as a period of lack, suffering and hunger. Besides development planning, various agricultural development and poverty alleviation programmes such as Operation feed the Nation (OFN), Young Farmers Club, National Directorate for Employment (NDE), Directorate of Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), National Poverty Alleviation and Eradication Programmes, (NAPEP) and Youth Empowerment Schemes (YES) were developed and adopted in Nigeria without reasonable change in the life of Nigerians (Olayiwola and Adeleye, 2005; Marcellus, 2009; Adedayo, 1985; Ibietan and Ekhosuehi, 2013). Many of these programmes, though plausible on paper, their implementations were marred by corruption, nepotism, ethnic politics, civil disturbances, tribalism and many other social vices. The failure of the various policies and programmes to achieve development has led individuals to begin to look inwards in terms of evolving home grown development strategies. As such many individuals and groups have begun to look inwards using association, identity, love and trust summed up as social capital to achieve development.

Social capital has been defined variously by scholars. Coleman (1990) defines social capital as cooperative relationships within families and communities. Woollock (2000) defines it as shared values and norms, essential for social behaviour that are reflected in individual's personal relationships, their trust in each other and shared sense of civic responsibility, something that makes society more than and beyond the sum of individuals. Evans (2002) further looks at it as resources within communities which are created through the presence of high levels of trust, reciprocity and mutuality, shared norms of behaviour, shared commitment and belonging, both formal and informal networks and effective information channel which may be used productively by individuals and groups to facilitate actions to benefit individuals, groups and the larger

community. Social capital on the whole, refers to relation of mutual benefit characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity.

Scholars further classify social capital into bonding, bridging and linking social capital. Bonding social capital refers to the relationships we have with members of our families and ethnic groups (Brisson and Usher, 2005). It involves trust and reciprocity in closed networks and helps in the process of getting by in life on a daily basis. Bridging social capital refers to relationships with people who are not like us, different socio-economic status, different generations or ethnic groups. Linking social capital refer to relationship with people in power (Leonard, 2004). Linking social capital enables individuals and community groups to access resources, ideas and information from formal institutions beyond the immediate community. On the whole, social capital is about networks, relationships and collective action that can enhance development. According to Narayan (2000), social capital is the vehicle through which many rural areas or communities may develop. It is believed to have many benefits, such as, stronger communities, better education, economic propensity for people (Leonard, 2004; Hawkins and Maurer, 2009 and Adger, 2010).

The concept of social capital has gained currency in recent times and is increasingly been regarded as critical to achieving development. Recent development discourse has begun to focus on social capital in view of the failure of modernization strategies to achieve development and has made it imperative to understand and examine how vulnerable populations use resources available to them to survive poverty and underdevelopment. Social capital exists in all societies, but it can be distributed in very different ways. The family is an important source of social capital, even though the structure differs from society to society. Social capital relies on people looking beyond themselves and engaging in supportive or helpful action. The importance of social capital in achieving human and sustainable development has been widely researched on by scholars. According to Dipasqvale and Glaeser (1999) and Putman (1993); Omobowole and Olutayo (2009), social capital promotes cooperation, collaboration and coordination and brings about outcomes such as political participation and good governance. Paldam and Svendsen (2000); Casey and Christ (2005) believe that social capital led to successful cooperatives movement in Denmark between 1850 and 1900. The need for the utilization of social capital to achieve development has become relevant in recent times due to economic decline and increasing poverty, which is endemic in many African countries. Though hardship exists, people utilize social capital to bring about development. The fact that social capital has been portrayed as beneficial does not mean it always translates into development. In some cases, the content of the social capital can inhibit development. It is the opinion of this paper that the specific realities of individuals and groups have to be examined in other to understand the precise value of their social capital for development. It is against this back drop that this study examines the relationship between social capital and development among the Igede people of Central Nigeria. The study specifically seeks

to identify and examine the nature of bonding, bridging and linking social capital among the Igede in Central Nigeria; and the impact of Igede social capital on human development.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Description of Study Area**

The Igede are the contemporary inhabitants of present day Oju and Obi local government areas of Benue State. In the recent past, the Igede occupied only Oju local government area which was bordered to the North - West by the Idoma in Otukpo Local Government Area, to the North -East by the Tiv, in Gwer - West Local Government Area, the Izis of present day Ebonyi State and the Ukelle and Yachi of present day Cross River State to the South - West and South - East (Odey, 1980). The name Igede describes the people, their language and their land. The Igede language in the wider context of African group of language falls within the Kwa sub-group of the Niger-Congo family (Odey 1980). It has five dialects; the dialects are – Ito, Uwokwu, Ainu, Igabu, Itakpa and Igede - Central which is regarded as the purest form of the language. The population of Igede according to the 2006 census is 168,491. The major occupation among the Igede include trading, subsistence agriculture, civil service, teaching and many other professions. Igede was chosen for the study because it is one of the most underdeveloped areas in Benue State where social capital is visible in the formation of association and the use of social ties for community advancement.

The methodology adopted was basically qualitative. Data was generated through key informant interviews (KIIs), in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussion (FGDs). KII interviews were conducted with traditionalist (title holders) male and female, IDIs were conducted with male and female opinion leaders, leaders of community development associations and political office holders. FGDs were conducted homogenously on the basis of age and sex. The male and female FGDs were conducted in two groups of 18-39 years and 40years and above. Participants were drawn from residents of the Igede speaking areas. Each FGD session had between 6-10 participants. An interview guide was used to generate data and these were subsequently subjected to content and descriptive analysis.

## **Result of Findings**

### **Bonding Social Capital among the Igede**

Bonding social capital describes connections within a group of community and is characterized by high levels of similarity in demographic characteristics, interest, origin, history and identity. For a better understanding of bonding social capital among the Igede, it is important to examine their history and identity. According to oral history, the Igede were natives of Sabon Gida Ora in present day Edo State. They are said to be the

descendants of a certain *Agba*, a high chief at Sabon Gida Ora in contemporary Edo State. He had fourteen sons which are today regarded as the founders of the fourteen clans of Igede. The clans are actually named after these fourteen sons. They were predominantly involved in farming, fishing and hunting. Oral history traces Igede's migration to an altercation between an Igede woman and an Ora woman. Trouble started when an Ora woman broke the (earthen) water pot of an Igede woman at the stream. The Ora woman apologised and offered to replace it with another pot but the Igede woman refused and insisted that she wanted that particular broken pot replaced. This led to a quarrel, initially involving the two women but later spread to other members of the society and a full scale quarrel and exchange of words ensued between the Ora and Igede men and women. After a long time of quarrelling at the stream, an uneasy peace agreement was eventually reached. Subsequently, an Igede borrowed the cutlass of an Ora man. In the process of using it, it fell into a river. This time, the Ora man demanded the same cutlass that had fallen into the river. A consequent quarrel resulting from this altercation between the two groups resulted in a full scale war, which Igede lost. This loss led to their migration to their present location after having various stop overs at Nsukka (present day Enugu State, Nigeria), and Edumoga (Benue State). The Igede reside and relate on the basis of clannish relationship. Beyond the *Ugbiyegwu*, the Igede are organized in fourteen clans which refers to the fourteen children of the *Agba*, King at Sabon Gida Ora. Decisions are made by the elder members of the society. Presently, the Igede have a paramount chief, which is known as *Adi Igede* or the father of Igede

The small unit of social capital among the Igede is the household, or *Ododo-epwa*. *OdodoEpwa* according to Iganga (2008) is indicative of the polygamous nature of most African societies. In an *Ododa-epwa*, each wife and her children constitute a household. Also a man's family does not only include his conjugal family, but those of his brothers and in some cases cousin. Various families who traced their descent to one father are called *Ugbiyegwu*. *Ugbiyegwu* Igede bonding social capital is evidenced in their value for members of family, kinship group and the ethnic group in general. This is shown in the response below:

My wealth is my family members. Of what use is money, houses and a big farm if there is nobody that enjoy these things with. An Igede man values brothers and sisters above everything. Even if I don't have money, the fact that I have family members that I can count on is sufficient. If I organize an occasion now, no matter how much food I prepare, people will judge the success of the occasion by the members of my relatives that came from far and wide (IDI with a 45 year old farmer).

This response above, show that Igede people value family relations and members of the ethnic groups. In terms of celebration or grief, they draw upon these relations to cope with the grief and for survival. To further show the nature of bonding capital, the Igede

are organized in clan association and all these umbrella associations come under the umbrella organization *Ominyi Igede*, meaning, the voice of Igede. Responses from Key Informants show the value the Igede people have for the association;

We cannot live alone; we have to form groups with others that are like us, so that we can draw strength from one another. We have village association for both males and females and we also have these associations at the level of the clan. We encourage our young ones to form these associations because we believe that your strength and success as a human being depends on your associations (KII with a 70 year old retired civil servant/Igede).

Another says:

We have these associations here in the village and every town where our people settle, they form these associations. So we are all connected wherever we go. Our people value these meetings (word for association and groups). If you don't join any, when you have a loss, you will grieve alone, but if you are a member, they others will rally round you to help you (45 year old/Okada rider/Oju).

The responses above show the value attached to association. Association is critical to human existence. In pre-colonial times, the communal family system was prevalent in many societies. Among the Igede, they were organized around *Ugbiyegwu*— kinship group. This relationship has remained over the years, though they trace their origin to one progenitor called Agba. They are organized in fourteen clans, reminiscent of the fourteen children of Agba. Within these clans they are organized in *epweji* (villages). Within the villages, there are patrilineages called *Onegba*. Each *Onegba* comprises several extended families called *Ugbiyegwu*. *Ugbiyegwu*, literally means “fruits of the common hearth” (Odey, 1980). An *Ugbiyegwu* comprises of several *Odeda epha* (smaller families). Each *Ugbiyewo* has an *Ogabo* (Elder) who is the spokesman. Each clan has an *Adikobia* who is the spokesman of the clan. All these *Adikobias* are answerable to the smaller chiefs and then there is an *Adigede* who is a paramount chief. It is important to note that the relationship of *Adikobia* is replicated in the towns where the Igede's settle. The *Adikobias* form the decision-making body of the Igede outside their traditional towns. The point of emphasis here is the fact that association is highly valued. Those who are not members of these associations are seen as proud and self-conceited and arrogant. This can be seen in the responses below:

Some people especially those in town don't like to join these associations. They feel they don't need others. They feel that those of us who join associations are illiterate and backward. They feel they are too educated to join us (KII with 75 year old/farmer/Oboru).

Some of the young people in the town feel they are self-sufficient but they usually suffer when they have a loss and they have to bring the corpse back home. It is then, many of them will realize value of these associations (KII, 60 years old/female/farmer/Obi).

The responses above go on to show the value that is given to membership of association. Beyond the fact that these associations are a form of identity, it signifies wealth and individuals are able to draw strength from them during their period of grief. The responses above also confirm the existence of bonding capital among the Igede people. Their bonding capital here involves value for interaction and association, where individuals draw strength to everyday social existence. Their bonding capital here also results in the formation of association which results in collective actions. The formation of association enables them to exhibit egalitarian, social, political, cultural, trust, cooperation and public spirited attributes (Omobowale and Olutayo, 2009, Putman, 1993). These associations further encourage members to contribute their own quota to development.

Beyond drawing strength and sympathy from associations, they contribute to the development of their communities through these associations. The responses below show the fact that associations are able to attract development projects to their community.

The road to this community was graded by an organization but we had to contribute part of the money before they help us with the rest. Our association chapters in the town contributed money and sent to us. We were then able to pay our part so that the road can be graded (KII with 70 years old/Retired Civil Servant/Ohirigwe).

We have been able to contribute money to sink boreholes, fix culverts in our communities. Also, those in the town contribute to repair broken down bridges and boreholes (IDI with 55 years old/Female/Civil Servant).

These responses show that associations can be used to enhance development, so social capital can be mobilized to bring about development in the community. Other associations in the town also contribute to human development. For instance, a group of women called *Achilla* daughters came together to sensitize the community about the importance of girl child education and the dangers of circumcision. This point is further buttressed by the responses below

Some of our daughters who are educated in town have taken it upon themselves to ensure that our children go to school. Some of them take upon themselves to send money for school fees for our children. In fact, one of them gave me money to start the business I am currently doing

We depend on one another a lot. I remember when local government workers were not being paid. We received a lot of help and support from our relatives in the town and from those who were into farming in the village. We would not have survived that period without them.

Findings from the study further revealed that association can also be used to enhance empowerment. This is shown in the responses, “during one military regime we were told that we could access loans for garri processing machines. Through our women association, we were able to purchase a garri processing machine for use in the community” (KII with 65 years old/Farmer/Ito).

The responses in this section so far show the nature of bonding social capital among the Igede and the fact that it could be mobilized to being about development. As much as social capital can be used to enhance development, a caveat was however discovered in the course of the study. The bonding social capital can also have negative influence on development as can be seen in the responses below.

One of the challenges I have with the Igede man is that we value our associations and family relationship so much as we don't work hard to improve ourselves. The trend in many families is that once one person has made it and has money, the rest of the family members will relax and settle down to wait for that one person to give to them. If that person is not able to give to them, he or she is seen as wicked and stingy (KII with 75 year old/Retired Civil Servant).

There is a trend that I don't like with some of our people. They lazy about because they feel that one of their brothers in the town has arrived so they can leverage on his success, as much as association or family relationship is important, we should strive to have our own and not only regard our brother's success as our own, therefore, we fold our hands and settle down to spend the money (KII with 80 year old/Adikobia).

Another in the course of FGD said

There is this brother who has a wife and two children without any source of livelihood. My sister and I felt marriage would make him responsible, so we married for him. We kept sending monthly allowance to him until my daughter who is a caterer in the town asked him to come and join her in her catering work so that he can fend for himself and his family. Can you believe that he left, return back to the village after two weeks with the excuse that the work was too difficult?

In concert with him, another respondent says;



My daughter is a successful entrepreneur in the town. I have a brother that is doing nothing in the village and my daughter sends money to him from time-to-time. She decided to employ him as a security in her house. My brother could not even work for her for a month. He said he was a man and will not be controlled by a woman.

In support of this, another respondent said, in the course of FGD and the others agreed with him; “my brother’s problem is my problem, so also my brother’s money is my money. I can call my brother’s wife and children my own, whatever my brother has I also have. So if he has succeeded, he has succeeded on our behalf”.

These responses point to a situation where bonding capital can be used negatively. Here people over rely on the norms of trust and friendliness to exploit sympathy and other valued resources without reciprocity. Bonding social capital is valuable but can be used negatively when the norms of love, trust and association are not reciprocated or used negatively.

### **Bridging Social Capital among the Igede**

Bridging social capital is known as cross cutting ties. It is a type of social capital that occurs when members of one group connect with members of other groups to seek access or support to gain information. Geographically, Igede shares boundaries with other ethnic groups within and outside the State. To the Northern side, they are bounded by the Tiv in Gwer and Idoma in Otukpo Local Government Areas. They are also bounded by the Tiv and Idomas on the Eastern boundary and the Ebbi of Ogoja in Cross River State. The geographical location of this ethnic group inherently suggests that they are surrounded by ethnic groups such as Idoma, Tiv and the Ebbi of Ogoja in Cross River State. It is important to examine the relationship of the Igedes to these ethnic groups in order to properly place their bridging social capital in perspective. Findings from the study showed that the Igedes are able to connect with other ethnic groups within the social environment and seek support. Inter-ethnic relations between the Igede are cordial as evidenced by the KII response below;

We relate well with the Idoma and Tiv and other ethnic groups that have settled in our place. We buy their things and they also buy from us. We meet them in the market, at school, at work and even in the church. Our people are naturally peaceful people so we don’t usually have problem with our neighbours. We relate well with them, all my years I spent in the city working, we are able to form associations with other ethnic groups at work or in the church.

The responses above show that the bridging social capital here revolves around cordial interaction with people outside the ethnic group. The emphasis here is cordiality. This

form of social capital tends to be fragile and less permanent; the ties here are not as strong as that of bonding social capital. Findings from the study further revealed that there were identity connection/contest issues inherent in their bonding social capital (inter-group relations). The following responses further attest to this.

As much as we relate well with these ethnic groups, there are some underground issues, because of some of these issues some of us interact with them with caution. Some of the ethnic groups like Tiv and Idoma look down on us. The Idoma see us as inferior to them, while among the Tiv, Igede is synonymous to house-help or slaves.

Another says: “we don’t like to marry the Idoma because they see us as inferior to them. Most times, they refer to us as Egede as against Igede, that is, the correct name. We too call them *apoto* or *Idada*, the name of their special soup that is prepared without palm oil”.

Another respondent also says: “it is forbidden for us to even inter marry with the Tiv. Even though, no concrete explanation has been given, it is a taboo that carries life-long sanctions that are transferable from one generation to the other”.

Another also says: “the Idoma only use us to get number and score political points against the Tiv ethnic group. Besides that, they usually take all the important opportunities that come to the zone. We are only relevant to them numerically”.

The responses go to show the place of identity in social relation. These responses show that identity which is a critical aspect of bonding capital can weaken the bridging capital. Identity defines who an individual is in relation to others in the same social environment. This definition extends to access to valued goods in the society. Identity can enhance bonding capital and weaken bridging capital. Here individuals trust members of their ethnic groups more than outsider. Very strong bonding social capital can lead to social exclusion and even mutual suspicion between ethnic groups and can in turn, hamper development efforts within a heterogeneous setting.

### **Linking Social Capital among the Igede**

Linking social capital refers to the extent to which individuals build relationships with institutions and individuals who have relative power over them. That is, to provide access to services, jobs or resources (Woolock, 2001; Szreter and Woolock, 2004). Linking social capital provides access and connection to power structures and institutions unlike bonding capital. Bridging and linking capital are characterized by exposure to new ideas (Woolock, 2001). Linking ties may include civil service organizations, voluntary groups, government agencies, service providers, representatives of the public, elicited politicians, political parties and the private sector, e.g. banks. This form of social capital is valuable in the sense that it increases access to key resources outside the community.

Findings from the study revealed that there was linking social capital in form of non-governmental organizations, both local and international. Non-governmental organizations had initiated and executed various developmental programmes in the area of HIV/AIDS, water and sanitation, provision of infrastructure in schools to enhance education, renovation of bridges, drilling of boreholes among others. Also sensitisation programmes have been carried out in the area of harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, early marriage and male son preference. Findings further revealed that the private sector such as the network providers were also able to contribute to the development of the area in terms of corporate social responsibilities in form of renovations and repair of bridges. Some of these network providers include MTN, Airtel and GLO. Some of the respondents however raised concerns about the contribution of the government, political leaders and parties in the area. The responses below attest to this.

Sometimes we feel forgotten. It's like the government has forgotten us. We see people during campaigns, they make all sorts of promises but after the elections, we don't see them. Even some of our sons and daughters in political positions don't help matters. Once we vote and they win, they become very unapproachable. You can't see them... they become very proud, some of them even see us as beggars (KII/ 45 yr old Lecturer Oju).

Some of the things government has done, don't last at all. Look at the Oju/Awaji road, it was poorly done, the road did not last. When one of our son's was the economic adviser to Obasanjo, he started a major road connecting Oju to Cross River. Since he left the position, the work has slowed down. We feel some people have collected money and disappeared as usual (IDI/ 50 yr old farmer/ Oboru).

In fairness to some of them, they have tried. One was a commissioner who ensured that communities were connected to light. There are others who fixed culverts but some are so shameless. The roads to their villages are bad and they are doing nothing about it (IDI/70 yr old/ retired Lecturer / Ohirigwe).

The responses above, show the perception of the people about the presence of government, political leaders and political parties. Most of the respondents see government as far from the people. The political office holders on the other hand, present a situation of their being handicapped in terms of linking their people properly with the government. These responses from the FGDs attest to this;

.... Indeed, government is very far from the people. Most of our roads are deplorable. Many communities are inaccessible especially during the rainy season. Our people do not have access to quality education. The health centers are dilapidated and lack basic health facilities.....

You know, politics is a game of numbers, in our setting, the winner takes it all.... The Igede are a minority and do not really have a voice. So they are unable to really attract development to their people. Politically, the Igede is weak unfortunately. This makes it difficult for you to achieve much when in political office. Most times you barely struggle to survive and maintain your position. Sometimes, it looks like we are beggars politically.

The responses above overtly present a weak linking social capital among the Igede. This has implication as it limits access to key resources outside the community and formal decision making with regards to issues that concern their lives. This weak social capital can lead to social fragmentation and disenchantment from the State, violent conflict and consequently underdevelopment and social exclusion.

The social aspect or the social relations that can enhance development is increasingly gaining attention. This is because of the realization that the development of the society does not necessarily lie in the economic exchanges but in social organisation and social transformation of the society. The social relations within a society have to be examined because they are critical in terms of enhancing development. Findings from the study reveal a strong bonding capital among the Igede. This bonding social capital is critical for the survival of the social group (Wellman and Frank, 2001; Scorza, 2004; Omobowale and Olutayo, 2009). These shared norms of love and trust, shared commitment is critical especially in the light of the fact that there is no much presence of government or other such formal institutions in the area. Their bonding social capital provides service in times of pain, lack and stress.

On the basis of bonding capital, clannish associational groups are formed so as to provide the needed help during times of difficulty. This implies that the Igede have a strong sense of identity. On the basis of the strong bonding capital, they Igede are of one ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is critical especially in a country like Nigeria where ethnicity is sometimes, the basis of access to resources. Beyond the nuclear and extended family setting, ethnicity provides a basis of collective conceive or organic solidarity. Bonding social capital further contributes to people's likelihood to engage in any action outside their comfort zone that can improve their lives (Bandura, 1997; Ferguson and Dickens, 1999; Warren, Thomson and Saegert, 2001). Furthermore, bonding social capital provides a necessary antecedent for developing a powerful bridging capital (Ferguson and Dickens, 1999).

Bridging social capital among the Igede appears to be low. Their connection with other social/ethnic groups is low. This has far-reaching implications. Bridging social capital is valuable as it opens up social and economic opportunities to those belonging to less powerful and excluded groups. Bridging capital was found to be low as a result of identity contests, inferiority/superiority relations. Bridging capital allows different groups

to share and exchange information, ideas, and innovations and build consensus among the groups representing diverse interests. It has the capacity to create an inclusive institutional structure that is more democratic in nature and has implications for broader political and economic development (Kanchan, 2002; World Bank, 2004; Jordan 2015). The low level of bridging capital among the Igede may be a contributing factor for the low level of development in the area.

Findings from the study reveal a weak linking capital among the Igede. Linking social capital involves social relations with those in authority and this can be used to access resources and power. It is very important in development as it connects government and government officials with the people and provides information (Stone, Wendy and Huges, 2002). Linking social capital is also central to wellbeing, especially in poor countries and communities. It opens up economic opportunities to those belonging to less powerful or excluded groups (Woolock, 2001; Jordan, 2015) It is important to note that all forms of capital are important for development. No one form is more important than the other. A possible balance of the three can bring about development among the Igede as well as all such communities.

### **Conclusion/Recommendation**

Social relations are critical to the development question. They present a departure from the modernist and dependency ideas of adopting development from the West or totally disconnecting from the West respectively. Paying attention to social capital in development matters is critical because the social realities of individuals and groups differ. Their social reality, world view and everyday experiences have implication for the sustainability of any development effort. It is important for a shift in focus from the over generalization of the modernization and dependency perspectives to the examination of the specific realities of individuals in order for development to be achieved and remain sustainable. Focusing on social capital and its place in development represents this shift.

Social capital is critical to development because it strengthens social cohesiveness, it contributes to economic, social and political behaviour as it enables the sharing of information, facilitates collective decision making and it also mitigates opportunities behaviour. As critical as social capital is to development, it can also be used to impede development. A lack of balance of the various kinds of social capital can lead to underdevelopment. It is important for an appropriate balance to be maintained so that sustainable development can be enhanced. The study has highlighted the fact, that the Igede have a strong bonding capital and weak linking and bridging capital. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

Firstly, bonding social capital among the Igede should be strengthened. The negative aspects of bonding social capital where some exploit the love and trust of others without

reciprocating such should be discouraged. Bonding social capital should be utilized beyond human development to social development.

Secondly, bridging social will have to be developed among the Igede. Their relationships with other ethnic groups will have to be improved upon. Igede is a minority ethnic group in Benue State. It is important for the Igede to reexamine their taboos with regards to other ethnic groups within their social environment. Moving out of their comfort zone to interact more deeply with other ethnic groups is important. Issues of perception of other groups about them can be addressed through interaction and negotiation.

Thirdly, the Igede people can mobilize their bonding social capital to ensure that they are not marginalized politically. Weak linking social capital will only worsen and widen the gap to achieving development. Bridging capital can furthermore be developed by conscientisation on positive ways to use identity and its construction.

Fourthly, linking social capital which has to do with government and formal institutions relations will have to be developed by political office holders as well as non-governmental organizations working in the community. The political office holders as well as other gate keepers will have to make concerted efforts to link the Igede with the government. This will enhance government presence in the area. The Igede can also mobilize their bonding social capital to write proposals that can attract grants for indigenous development from nongovernmental organizations.

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