

Creating an Inclusive Society: The Role of Ethnic Social Movements in Promoting Equality and Inclusion in Ghana

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Abstract

Social movements are known to be great advocates of inclusivity. With the world's considerable commitment to promoting social inclusion as contained in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the importance of social movements has been reinvigorated. Absent in the literature, however, is student minority ethnic movements' role in promoting social inclusion in Ghana. This qualitative study provides an exploratory assessment of the roles of functional student minority ethnic groups in promoting equality among students of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, from the perspective of movement members and their patrons. By relying on the qualitative-exploratory research design, in-depth interviews were conducted with 8 participants [comprising of members (3), executives (3) and patrons (2)] of three selected functional student minority ethnic groups (National Association of Nzema Students [NANS], Volta Region Students' Association [VORSA] and Dagomba Students Association [DASA]) in Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology between April 24, 2020 and May 7, 2020. Data were thematically analysed and normative standpoints of participants were presented as quotations. The main findings were that the groups were formed to engender development and promote inclusion in varied forms across the different ethnic groups they represent. They have accomplished these through promoting gender, income, ethnic and spatial dimensions of inclusion by undertaking an array of activities. The ethnic social movements hold prospects for the development and promotion of inclusivity and equality. Nonetheless, these groups are confronted with issues of member apathy and financial constraints, thus hindering their efforts in implementing their programmes and activities. In tandem with the framing theory, leaders of the movements have a task to present or "frame" the core values held by people it seeks to recruit by branding the movements in a way that appeals to them and fulfils their deeply held values.

Keywords: Equality, ethnic minority, KNUST, inclusive society, social movement

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1. Introduction

Ethnic groups were constructed around the world in the wake of the dissolution of empires and ensuing migration (Wimmer, 2013; 2008; Brubaker, 1998). Only a few societies are ethnically homogeneous, with the larger society varying greatly in size, number and the degree of cultural difference among ethnic groups, and their extent of economic and political power. Ethnicity comes with dividends and debits. While ethnic diversity debit is far from universality, ethnic diversity dividends are also real (Kirk et al., 2018). These diversity dividends are best explored at the sub-national level, in regions, administrative areas, cities, neighbourhoods and firms; because interactions within these units are devoid of problems of artificial national borders and make it easier to control for potentially conflating variables (Kirk et al., 2018). Ethnic diversity is thus a coin with two sides; ethnic diversity dividend engender growth and development and ethnic diversity debit especially when states distribute resources and repression along ethnic lines engender inequality (Loveman, 1999; Alonso, 1994; Barkey & Parikh, 1991; Enloe & Ellinwood, 1981; Enloe, 1978). This diversity debit requires concerted efforts for its minimization.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reflects one of those concerted efforts on the need to move towards more egalitarian, cohesive and solidarity-based societies by calling for “no one to be left behind” on the road to development (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2016). The Open Working Group’s 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8, 10, 11, and 16 all refer to inclusion. Targets 17 and 18 of the SDGs propose increasing “significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data, disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts” by 2020, denoting emphasis on “inclusion”. As a consequence of globalization, liberalization, and democratization, increasing international attention has been devoted to promoting inclusion (Silver, 2015). “Ethnicity” is used as a tag of relationship that denotes caste or tribe or language group that may have similar characteristics.

There is an active, mass-based demand for an end to patriarchal power in all purviews of our social, economic, political and cultural lives so long as aggrieved populations with insatiable needs exist. Social movements as an “organised set of constituents pursuing a common political agenda of change through collective action” (Batiwala, 2012: 3), play important roles in global

struggles for equality and inclusion. Race and ethnicity are crucial aspects of social movements (Oliver, 2017). Morris and Braine (2001) distinguish three types of social movements: liberation movements, equality-based and social responsibility movements. Jasper (2008) distinguishes between “citizenship” movements of groups excluded from full political participation and “post-citizenship” movements of groups who are included in political systems. Both typologies point to differences between social movements of oppressed groups and “issue” movements. However, neither classification recognizes group-focused movements arising from dominant groups, nor do they explicitly recognise “race” the so-called “social responsibility” or “post-citizenship” movements that are empirically grounded in dominant majorities. Morris and Braine (2001) argued that differences exist between social movements of embedded subordinate groups whose distinctions are externally imposed and movements by comparatively privileged people pursuing “social responsibility” issues.

The social construction of ethnicity emphasizes how political processes create ethnic groups. As a result, the ethnic character of a social movement is important in ways that “mainstream” studies on social movements (Saperstein et al., 2013; Brubaker, 2012; 2009). Social constructions are neither optional nor superficial. As Morris and Braine (2001: 25) put it, “social constructions themselves are products of power relations and historical forces, not neutral negotiations among individual or collective actors of equal social resources and standing”. Ethnic majorities and minorities are products of a society’s history and formation and tied up with definitions of nation and citizenship which create homogeneity out of prior diversity. Social movements are entangled with ethnic group formation and boundaries are products of state actions (Vermeersch, 2010; Berbrier, 2002; Marquez, 2001). Ethnic minority movements are movements that are led by and empirically have a majority of participants who are from one ethnic minority. They differ in whether they frame themselves as group-oriented or issue-focused movements.

The formation of social movements has also been linked to student activism. Student activism ranges from protests against university administrations to mobilizations that have contributed to the downfall of governments. Many students, brimming with idealism, have initiated social movements or joined existing ones. The social movement box describes an important social movement action that began with a sit-in at a lunch counter by four college students in 1960. In

the years that followed, hundreds of thousands of students became active in the civil rights movement, as well as the anti-war, women's, environmental, and gay rights movements. It is in light of these student movements that student minority ethnic social movements have been established and operational in several tertiary institutions across the globe. Ghana and for that matter, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) is inclusive in this list. While ethnic social movement research has received research attention in Ghana, the focus of previous research excluded student movements. Previous research span politicization, conflict, and political participations' influence on ethnic social movements (Chazan, 1982); how proletarian, class struggle and splintered urbanism engender ethnic movements (Asante & Helbrecht, 2018); partisan politics and the rise of women's movements (Fallon & Fallon, 2008); and the risk, motivation and cost of social movement activism (Afagbedzi, 2019).

Notwithstanding the long-standing operationalization of different student minority ethnic social movements among students of KNUST, there is no evidence of literature on these movements' roles in promoting equality among students. The world has never been more concerned about reducing inequality than what is outlined in the 2030 agenda of the SDGs. This goal is only achievable through an amalgamation of small but interconnected efforts of different groups around the world. Exploring the role of student minority ethnic social movements in promoting equality using KNUST's case provides insight into the successes of these movements and areas that must be augmented. Relating to this, the study investigated the role of student minority ethnic social movements in promoting equality in KNUST. The study hypothesized that the activities of student minority ethnic social movements have greatly promoted equality among students of KNUST but limited member enthusiasm in the activities and financial constraints hinder the effectiveness of these ethnic minority social movements. The next section of the paper presents the theoretical framework, followed by the profile of the study area, methods, results and discussion, while the final aspect deals with the conclusion.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study is underpinned by the Framing Theory. This theory describes the processes through which an individual embraces an ideology, supports and participates in a social movement (Hurtikova, 2013; Snow & Benford, 1988; Snow et al., 1986). The advocates of the framing theory conjecture that leaders of social movements have a task to present or "frame" a social

movement in terms of the core values held by people the movement seeks to recruit. Therefore, whatever social structural conditions that might be present, grievances do not become social movements unless social movement actors can create viable organizations, mobilize resources, and attract large-scale followings. Framing is the process of describing the movement in a way that makes sense, appeals to people, and fulfils their deeply held values. Therefore, framing is similar to making claims. Snow and Benford (1988) explained that social movements interpret and provide meanings for conditions, actions, and events in a manner that mobilize potential participants.

Framing accomplishes three tasks: diagnosis, prognosis and motivation. Diagnosis framing explains why a condition or pattern of behaviour is a problem and what or who causes it; prognosis framing proposes a solution and a plan of action, including strategy and tactics, for social movement participants; and motivational framing explains why people need to act to deal with the problem. The leaders of social movements try to shape their public image to show that their goal and underlying ideology align with deeply held cultural values. In summary, the thesis of the framing theory is the idea that social movements emerge because of framing: the process of describing a social movement in such a way that appeals to people. From the perspective of this theory, this study examined the objectives of the student minority ethnic groups as well as the impacts they have made on promoting inclusion.

3. Description of the study area

KNUST is situated within the Oforikrom Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. KNUST first started as the Kumasi College of Technology by a Government Ordinance on October 6, 1951. Formal operations started on January 22, 1952, with 200 Teacher Training students who were relocated from Achimota College to form the pioneering students of the College. The Government of Ghana in December 1960 appointed a University Commission to advise it on “the future of University Education in Ghana, in connection with the proposal to transform the University College of Education and the Kumasi College of Technology into independent Universities in Ghana”. Consequently, the Kumasi College of Technology was converted into a full-fledged University by an Act of Parliament on August 22, 1961 (International Programmes Office, KNUST, 2015). KNUST was formally inaugurated on Wednesday, November 29, 1961 and ascended to a University status till present. The university (KNUST) has undergone major

transformations. The vision of KNUST is to advance knowledge in science and technology for sustainable development in Africa.

The mission of KNUST is also to provide an environment for teaching, research and entrepreneurship training in science and technology for the industrial and socio-economic development of Ghana, Africa and other nations. It is worth noting that the University also offers service to the community, is open to all people and positions itself to attract scholars, industrialists and entrepreneurs from Africa and the international community. Currently, the school has a student population of more than 50,000 students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. With cultural domination sometimes erasing or blurring group differences when ethnic minorities are required to adopt the cultural practices of the dominant groups; the situation of the school (KNUST) within the most dominant ethnic group in Ghana (the Akan ethnic group) has the tendency of producing cultural dominance. This might have led to the formation of the various ethnic social movements to preserve the identity of the minority ethnic groups – and possibly increase social inclusion and harmonisation.

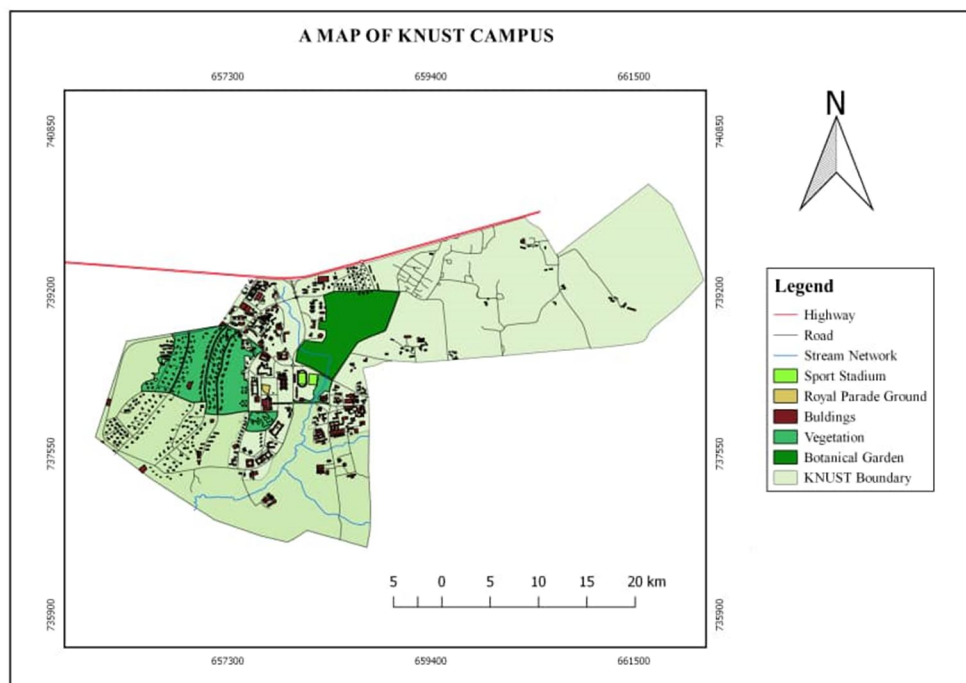


Figure 1: A map of KNUST

4. Materials and Methods

4.1 Research Design

A colossal decision in the research design process is the choice of the research approach since it influences how data is gathered and analysed (Aaker, Kumar & Day, 2008). Bearing in mind the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative, exploratory research design was adopted. The qualitative approach offered a maximum interaction between the researchers and the interviewees which generated a meaningful collaborative effect (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As a result, the researchers and participants were interdependent and mutually interactive and remained open to new knowledge throughout the study. The adopted approach was in line with the study's objective of gathering in-depth information and providing a comprehensive and discerning understanding of members' and patrons' opinions on the role of ethnic social movements in promoting equality; with a focus on student minority ethnic social movements in KNUST. Specifically, the hermeneutic phenomenological design to qualitative studies was employed to focus on the cohesion of a lived experience within a specific group. The goal of this approach is to obtain a narrative on the particular phenomenon (the role of ethnic social movements in promoting equality) and to gain new insights and understanding of that experience (Bynum & Varpio, 2018; Creswell, 2013; Laverly, 2003). The study results were reported using the consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) (Tong et al., 2007).

4.2 Sources of Data

Within the scope of research, data sources comprise both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of data constitute data gathered by the researcher directly from the respondents or unit of analysis of the study. The secondary data, however, denotes data provided to the researcher by another entity. In other words, secondary data is collected by someone else other than the researcher. Data for this study was obtained from primary sources only, specifically from members and patrons of operational student minority ethnic social movements in KNUST. Therefore, the data used in the analysis was generated by the authors through interaction with the study participants.

4.3 Unit of analysis

The study comprised two different participant groups: members of the ethnic social movements and the patrons of the ethnic social movements. In total, 10 participants, comprising 8 members of the ethnic social movements and 2 patrons [one of the groups could not provide a patron] of

the movements participated in the study. The units of analysis were considered appropriate due to their direct relationship or connection with the issue under consideration, thus placing them in a better position to provide insightful information on the role of ethnic social movements in promoting equality.

4.4 Sampling technique

Firstly, the administrator in charge of student's affairs at the Dean of Students Office of KNUST provided a list of registered ethnic social movements operational at the time of the study. A purposive sampling frame was used to recruit members and patrons from three different ethnic social movements (Dagomba Students Association [DASA], National Association of Nzema Students [NANS] and Volta Region Students' Association [VORSA]) that were operational on KNUST campus. By employing the purposive sampling technique, only persons deemed to be relevant to the study based on their potential to provide worthy information on the subject matter were selected (Falade & Adebayo, 2020). The selection of the three aforementioned student minority ethnic groups was also hinged on the vibrancy of these groups in championing equality and inclusion, as ascertained in a pilot study. Pilot experiments help to evaluate the feasibility and improve upon study designs prior to undertaking the main research (Apuke, 2017). Emails containing an introductory letter and request for participation in the study were sent out to the executives of the three selected ethnic social movements. Follow-up phone calls were made to verbally explain the overall purpose and motivation of the study to the respective groups. Each ethnic social movement was asked to present at least five respondents (a patron, one executive, and three members) to participate in the study. However, all the ethnic social movements were unable to provide five respondents each. But together, they presented 10 respondents, made up of patrons, executives and members of the movements. A detailed explanation of the objectives and benefits of the study was given to the 10 persons presented by the groups and 8 of them willingly agreed to participate with the remaining two opting out. In addition, the groups were entreated to ensure gender representativeness in the contacts that were provided. The participants were, therefore, given a date for the phone interview. The choice of phone interview was appropriate, due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in Ghana (Morgan, Awafo & Quartey, 2021; Morgan, 2020; Morgan and Awafo, 2020) of which the closure of schools was a consequence. As a result, phone interview was adopted as the means of interacting with the respondent, since school was not in session and the respondents were in distant locations

(coupled with the restriction on movements). Although telephone interviews are less desirable alternative to traditional face-to-face interviews (Irvine et al., 2013; Novick, 2008), telephone interviews are gradually becoming a more favoured form of conducting interviews (Carr & Worth, 2001). Its weakness of the loss of nonverbal data and contextual data, as well as data distortion, is refuted by non-incorporation of nonverbal cues into the transcripts, but relying solely on verbal transcripts during data analysis (Lechuga, 2012). It also ensured convenience, cost reduction and less pressure on the authors (Lechuga, 2012).

4.5 Data collection instruments

In-depth interview guides were used to obtain data from the respondents. This offered the respondents the opportunity to express their opinions and beliefs about the research objective (Saunders et al., 2009). The guide was designed in English. The guide was also field-tested with three participants who were outside the study sample but from the study site. Overall, the field testing informed the researchers of some necessary modifications especially in the guide format, sequence and concepts. After the changes from the field test, the final in-depth interview guide captured information relating to motivation for establishing the ethnic movements, the roles of the ethnic movements in promoting equality, the impacts of the ethnic movements in promoting equality and the challenges faced by the ethnic movements in promoting equality.

4.6 Data collection process

All interviews were conducted in English via phone calls and each lasted for a minimum duration of 40 minutes. The interviews were conducted by the first author who has a social science background as well as the second author. In all, 8 in-depth interviews were conducted, comprising members (3), executives (3) and patrons (2), between April 24, 2020 and May 7, 2020. With prior consent from the participants, all the interviews were audio-recorded. As required, ground rules were established to regulate the conversation; the purpose of the session was reviewed and informed consent was obtained at the start of each interview. The opening question asked participants to give an account of the background to the formation of the ethnic movements. Participants were also asked to provide details of the roles of the ethnic movements in promoting equality. The final question offered the participants the opportunity to describe the impacts of the ethnic movements in promoting equality and the challenges faced by the ethnic movements in promoting equality and inclusion. These questions generated further arguments and discussions which yielded in-depth data for the study. At the end of every conversation, the

authors recapped the salient points raised and the views articulated by the respondents for their affirmation or rebuttal.

4.7 Analytical framework

The audio-recorded tapes were transcribed. The transcripts were subjected to an iterative thematic review, where each member independently read the transcripts and took note. The data were screened and reviewed for understanding and where discrepancies occurred, consensus was negotiated until a unanimous decision was reached. The domineering themes identified were analysed using the thematic approach. The thematic approach provided an impetus for the identification, analysis and reporting of patterns within the data. Direct quotations were used in reporting the findings.

4.8 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in this study was established according to the four criteria recommended by Gunawan (2015): credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. For credibility, all the interviewees were allowed to provide comments or feedback on the authors' interpretation of the data. To achieve both dependability and confirmability, the authors listened to the audios several times and scrutinised the transcripts. In enhancing transferability, the group made a strenuous effort to include participants unrelated to one another as this was one of the inclusion criteria outlined for the ethnic movements in submitting the persons to be interviewed. To ensure that the questionnaire and the interview schedule contain the right kind of questions, and to ascertain whether the chosen methodology would help meet the objectives of the study, a pilot experiment was carried out. According to Apuke (2017), pilot experiments help to evaluate the feasibility and improve upon study designs prior to the carrying out of the main research. The pilot experiment included three participants who were outside the study sample but from the study site. Overall, the field testing informed the researchers of some necessary modifications especially in the guide format, sequence and concepts. In line with Bashir et al. (2008), the validity of the study was enhanced through reliance on literal statements of the participants, groups' agreement on the descriptive data collected, and informal check with participants for accuracy, in addition to participants' review of the synthesis of interviews.

4.9 Ethics

The nature of this general survey among voluntary members of the ethnic social movements did not require any formal ethical approval. All participants provided informed consent prior to participating in the research activities. Written and oral informed consents were obtained from each respondent for submission of this manuscript for publication. Additionally, the responses were conveyed in a way that ensured the anonymity of the participants.

5. Results

In this study, the aim was to understand the role of ethnic social movements in promoting inclusion. This section, therefore, presents the results of the thematic analysis. The participants expressed general enthusiasm towards promoting inclusion through their activities while they lament member's apathy and financial constraints. In all, four (4) themes emerged from the analysis and are thematically reported below.

5.1 Motivation for Establishing the Ethnic Movements

As a warm-up question, participants were asked to provide information on the period or the year their associations were formed. The discourse revealed that the associations have been in existence since the late 1990s to the early 2000s as non-formalized groups. They have been drafted into formalized groups, recognizable by the school authorities between 2015 and 2016 per groups and associations regulations of the University as outlined in the Students' Guide and Code of Conduct (KNUST, 2017).

VORSA has been in existence for some time now but became a fully-fledged association recognizable by the university authorities in the year 2016 after we went through vetting and were given a certificate to operate. [Participant 2, executive, VORSA]

NANS was formed in the late 1990s to the early 2000s but we regularized it with the university directives in 2015. [Participant 7, member, NANS]

The results indicate that the associations existed and operated in two phases. The unofficial phase [prior to 2015] and the official phase [2015 to date]. For this work, the focus is not on a specific time frame but rather the collective actions of the groups towards promoting inclusion within the Ghanaian society. It was discovered that the goal of the groups was to create a platform for students from their specific ethnic backgrounds to give back to their region as well as serve as a united front in championing the development of their respective ethnic groups and areas. On the specific reasons for establishing these groups, it was uncovered that there was the

need to embark on educational activities in the regions (source) of these ethnic minorities since they lagged behind in terms of literacy and human capital development. As a result, these tertiary students were intended to serve as “drivers of passion”, “motivators” and role models to the younger generations of their ethnic groups to engender the needed interest among the younger generation for the educational quest, thirst and hunger. This was supposed to be accomplished by gathering material, intellectual and spiritual resources for developing the region and broadening the ethnic groups in their entirety. Here are excerpts from some participants.

As an ethnic group, we've realized how important education is to socio-economic development, but in contrast, there is high illiteracy among our members. So we decided to pull our efforts together and let the tertiary students lead that process since they have the ideas and passion. [Participant 5, Patron, DASA]

Our ethnic group and by extension our region lags behind when it comes to development. So we came together as students from that ethnic group to join forces and see how best we can transform our locality and reduce the geographical disparity of development that has saddled the country since the colonial period. [Participant 3, Patron, VORSA]

Also, it was uncovered that these groups were formed to promote unity among members on campus and other associations in the country as well as cooperate with other groups whose goals are in tandem with theirs. Thus, these groups were formed to promote development in varied forms [both directly and indirectly].

5.2 Roles of the Ethnic Movements in Promoting Equality

The specific roles performed by the associations revealed three core functions: educational outreach in their respective areas of origin, community services to vulnerable groups and ancillary services. As reported earlier one of the reasons for birthing these groups was to promote education within their communities. They accomplish these through educational outreach and campaigns. For instance, the president of VORSA indicated this in furtherance of his exposition on the specific roles performed by the association:

Every other summer holiday, our association organize our members and send them to specific districts in dire need of teachers. As part of their internships, they teach in schools in the district [from crèche to senior high schools]. This has two sides, on one side we are imparting knowledge and on the other side, we motivate them to learn and be better achievers than us. Aside from these, we organize inter-school quiz and debate

competitions for schools in our communities, especially the deprived ones. This has helped improve their oral and written English. [Participant 2, executive, VORSA]

As part of the effort towards gathering material, intellectual and spiritual resources for developing the regions of the ethnic groups, the movements indicated that they undertake community services. Specifically, the respondents indicated that they assemble students from diverse fields [health, agriculture, sociology among other disciplines] that help in community services especially during the summer breaks. It was discovered that these activities were directed at the vulnerable and the marginalized in society [the aged, the disabled, women and children]. One interesting thing discovered here was that these activities are not necessarily exclusive to the members of their ethnic background but are sometimes open to the Ghanaian populace, depending on the funding regime.

Year in year out, we send a lot of our members to do community services depending on their field of study and their interest among other factors. We do community sensitization on health, sanitation and environmental management. Students reading agriculture-related courses help small-holder farmers. [Participant 8, executive, NANS]

We give back to society whatever we've learnt in school. So as a leader of the association, I arrange for members who are willing to contribute their knowledge and expertise to community development. This has helped several communities. [Participant 1, member, VORSA]

The last but not least role performed by these groups comprise ancillary services like overseeing the welfare of their members amidst a host of other roles. The groups have developed a welfare system with a means that identifies needy members and provide them with the needed assistance. Most of the respondents indicated that some of the students [members of their ethnic groups] would not have been able to pay their fees without this arrangement. Thus, the groups are helping the less privileged to participate in higher education. These excerpts throw light on this point:

We have a funding arrangement for a limited number of needy students. We often reach out to prominent persons from our ethnic group for funds to support this initiative. Also, we contribute semester dues which are used for running the operations of the group amidst supporting needy students. [Participant 2, executive, VORSA]

Some organizations have decided to support the education of persons from our ethnic groups and they have given us the onus to identify such needy persons among us. So with

their help, I can say we have been helping and would continue to help the less privileged access tertiary education. [Participant 8, executive, NANS]

These varied roles the respondents indicated are geared towards accomplishing the missions of the groups as enshrined in the reasons for their formation.

5.3 Impacts of the Ethnic Movements in Promoting Equality

The third theme identified in the study was the impacts of the activities of the student minority ethnic groups in promoting equality. The thematic analysis revealed four major sub-themes under which the impacts can be classified [gender, income, ethnic and geographic inclusion]. Throughout the interviews with the participants, it was revealed that their activities and undertakings have implications for promoting gender-based activities. One of such gendered impacts is the promotion of young girls' education. Educating a girl for a nation's health and economic development is emphasized in their activities and this achieved significant results according to the respondents. While they are not oblivious of other campaigns on young girls' education, they added that their voice is part of the array of entities championing female education in Ghana.

If you educate a woman, you educate a nation is a commonly used expression in Africa reflecting the need for girls' education. Awareness of these benefits of female education has engendered actions at the micro and macro (global) level towards enhancing female education. These we have also contributed to in our small ways. In some communities in which we run educational campaigns, most of the girls who dropped out of school are re-entering. Also, we have campaigns targeted at reducing teenage pregnancy-an enemy to female education. [Participant 5, Patron, DASA]

Also, it emerged from the interaction with the respondents that their activities impact on activities of small-holder farmers. Through extension and educational programmes undertaken by some of these groups, farmers in the communities now employ modern methods of farming which increase their yields and by extension their incomes. Here is a quote from one of the participants:

Last two years, [by then I was in the first year], we visited some villages up north to undertake extension services. They accepted us and pledged to practice whatever we've taught them. On a fact-finding mission last year, we've seen improvements in their

activities and they attested it the improvements themselves. I'm glad we're making the necessary impacts we desired as an association. [Participant 1, member, VORSA]

The findings again revealed that the impacts of their activities on promoting inclusion also span ethnic inclusion and geographic inclusion. As their names suggest, the groups are ethnic social movements, by this definition, ethnicity underlies their activities. They do this by pushing the frontiers of inclusion as far as their ethnic backgrounds are concerned. Similarly, they ensure that geographically separated communities are also included by extending their activities to these areas. In fact, the operations of these groups are largely vibrant in bridging ethnic and geographical barriers since their activities are mostly targeted at deprived communities.

5.4 Challenges Faced By the Ethnic Movements in Promoting Equality

All the participants held the view that their associations faced some challenges in their quest to promote inclusion amidst other functions for which they were formed. Paramount among these challenges were the issues of member apathy and financial constraints. On the apathy of the members, the respondents lamented some of the members' unwillingness to participate or even affiliate with the groups. According to the executives, data from the Dean of Students suggests that they have a lot of members but in practicality, only a minute segment actively participates or associates with the groups.

From the Dean of Students Office, there are several VORSA students but less than one-tenth of them have registered and even that, only a handful of them come for meetings. This affects our activities a lot. [Participant 2, executive, VORSA]

As a consequence of the apathy, financial constraints emerged. The outreach programs and other activities undertaken by the associations are expensive and they have difficulty funding such programmes. The semester dues [GHS 5.00] per member are always not forthcoming since they are not actively involved in the activities of the association. This has somehow and sometimes rendered the association operational on a cyclical basis [only functional when it has funds to undertake activities and programmes].

We rely on dues to fund our activities. But my brother [making reference to the interviewer], where would you get them to pay? They do not come to meetings. When you come across the ones you know, their rhetoric is what would I gain from the association? It is frustrating enough to lead this association. [Participant 8, executive, NANS]

Despite of the challenges, the participants indicated that they do their best to hold the association together while asking benevolent citizens of their ethnic groups to support their courses on campus.

6. Discussion

The study used a qualitative, exploratory interview approach to examine the role of minority student social movements in promoting equality. The findings indicate that associations were formed to promote the development of the ethnic groups amidst tackling other societal problems like education. This is in tandem with the views of Batliwala (2012) that social movements pursue a collective action in the global struggle for equality and inclusion. The prevailing social systems constitute a satisfactory basis for social action (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2015; Turner & Killian, 1957) and drive the formation of the groups. The findings support Staggenborg's (2015) arguments that where equilibrium situations are far from existence, social movements emerge to drive society towards some level of equality and equity. Our findings also agree with that of Olzak (2007) who stated that social movements generate collective action advocating fundamental changes in the political or economic and/or ethnic arrangements in society. However, in contrast to the assertion of Olzak (2007) that nationalist movements are likely to come into conflict with existing state authorities and international systems, our findings did not establish any instance where the ethnic social movements conflicted with state authorities or international systems. Additionally, in contrast to violence which is often associated with a critical number of ethnic social movements (Wolff, 2007), our study did not discover any trait of violence in their activities. To achieve the myriad goals of enhancing the courses of the various ethnic groups the movements represent, they relied on non-violent tactics and approaches.

The results show that issues of gender equality and the education of girls were often on the priorities of the ethnic social movements. The findings bear credence to the long-held belief that social movements often champion issues that affect women and children. Epple and Schief (2016) found that the rights and privileges of women are the core issues pursued by some social movements. In addition to promoting gender equality, social movements also promote income equality by demanding improvements in the conditions of the groups they represent. This supports the viewpoint of other researchers on the role of social movements (Gaby and Caren, 2016; Bapuji and Neville, 2015; Vermeersch, 2013). Specifically, Vermeersch (2013) noted that

some social movements find it useful to organize a group around a common ethnic identity when they sense that this group has been placed in a specific position in the workplace, experiences a common form of discrimination, or suffers from income inequality. This points out the fact that social movements play vital roles in ensuring the groups they represent are better off and rise above certain vulnerabilities that dissuade them from progressing and advancing as individuals of that group or collectively as a group.

Participating in a collective action or social movement comes at a cost and/or risk that can eventually deter people from active participation (Ruz, 2015; Fernando 2012; Jones 2010). It is, therefore, apparent that the ethnic movements will encounter challenges in their quest to champion issues that affect them. Apathetic membership and financial constraints were identified as the major hindrances to the vibrancy and activism of the ethnic social movements. The findings were in tandem with that of Afagbedzi (2019), who studied the risk, motivation and cost of social movement activism. In the study, it was established that apathy and fiscal constraints were major challenges confronting social movements. Member apathy and financial constraints of the groups validate the claims of the framing theory that social movements are redundant without an appropriate “frame” in terms of the core values held by people it seeks to recruit (Snow & Benford, 1988). There are some limitations in this study that should be highlighted. Though this is the first known study that provides evidence of how student minority ethnic social movements promote inclusion in Ghana, the findings of the study are not representative and generalizable due to the study methods particularly the small sample size and the sampling approach. Again, social desirability biases are inevitable due to the reliance on participants’ accounts and narratives.

7. Conclusion

In this exploratory qualitative study, the roles of student minority ethnic social movements in promoting inclusion in Ghana was explored by conducting probing interviews with patrons, executives and members of three of such movements in KNUST. The main lesson from the in-depth interviews is that all the participants agreed that the ethnic social movements have undertaken activities geared towards promoting social inclusion of varied forms. Specifically, the activities have impacts on the gender dimension of inclusion, income, the ethnic and spatial or geographical dimension of inclusion. The majority of the participants, however, lamented

member's apathy and financial constraints in implementing their programmes and activities. In tandem with the framing theory, leaders of the movements have a task to present or "frame" the core values held by people it seeks to represent. This is because the formation of social movements is under finite competitive conditions which require the leaders to create viable organizations, mobilize resources, and attract a huge following to remain functional.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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