

Ethnic Federalism and the Political Accommodation of Diversity: An Analysis of Governance Structures in Ethiopia

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Abstract

This study explores the governance system and mechanisms used to accommodate diversity in Ethiopia under the framework of ethnic federalism. The research examines how constitutional and administrative arrangements distribute political power among federal, regional, and local institutions in order to manage the country's ethnic and linguistic diversity. Using descriptive and comparative analysis, the study reviews population distribution, regional autonomy, and institutional structures such as the House of Federation and regional governments. The House of Peoples' Representatives (HPR) is the lower chamber of Ethiopia's federal parliament and serves as the principal legislative body. Members are elected through direct elections and represent the diverse peoples, nations, and nationalities of Ethiopia. The HPR plays a significant role in accommodating diversity by ensuring political representation for different ethnic and regional groups within the federal system. Through law-making, oversight of the executive, and approval of national policies, the HPR contributes to inclusive governance and democratic participation. The institution supports Ethiopia's system of ethnic federalism by providing a platform where various communities can voice their interests and participate in national decision-making processes. As such, the House of Peoples' Representatives is an important mechanism for managing diversity and promoting political integration in Ethiopia.

The findings show that Ethiopia's federal structure is largely organized around ethnic identity, with major ethnic communities concentrated in specific regions. The system has contributed to greater cultural recognition, local self-governance, and political participation for different groups. However, the study also identifies several challenges, including regional inequalities, concerns about minority rights within regional states, and political tensions linked to ethnic-based territorial arrangements. The study concludes that Ethiopia's model of ethnic federalism represents an important but complicated effort to balance national unity with diversity through decentralized governance and institutional power-sharing.

Keywords: Ethiopia, ethnic federalism, governance, political accommodation, diversity management, decentralization, regional autonomy, House of Federation, multicultural governance, conflict management.

1.Introduction

Governance in multi-ethnic societies often involves balancing national unity with the recognition of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity. Countries with diverse populations must create political systems that ensure representation, inclusion, and stability for different communities. In many cases, federalism is adopted as a system that shares power between central and regional governments to address these challenges. Ethiopia is widely regarded as one of the most important examples of ethnic-based federalism in contemporary political studies. Ethiopia is home to more than eighty ethnic groups and several linguistic communities. Major groups such as the Oromo, Amhara, Somali, and Tigray make up a large share of the population, while many smaller communities are spread across different

parts of the country. This diversity has strongly influenced Ethiopia's political history, social relations, and patterns of conflict and cooperation. As a result, the management of ethnic diversity has remained a key issue in the country's governance system. The present federal structure was introduced in 1995 with the adoption of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). Before this period, the country experienced a highly centralized political system with limited regional autonomy. The new constitutional arrangement reorganized Ethiopia into regional states mainly based on ethno-linguistic identity. Because of this structure, the system is commonly described as ethnic federalism. Regional governments were given authority over areas such as education, language policy, cultural affairs, and local administration. An important aspect of Ethiopia's federal system is the constitutional recognition of the right to self-determination for nations, nationalities, and peoples. Article 39 of the Constitution grants ethnic groups the right to self-rule and, under certain conditions, the right to secession. The Constitution also established the House of Federation, which represents ethnic groups at the federal level and is responsible for constitutional interpretation and resolving disputes among regional states. These institutions were designed to provide political accommodation and strengthen representation within a diverse society. Ethiopia's ethnic federal system has produced both positive outcomes and significant challenges. On one side, it has improved cultural recognition, encouraged the use of local languages in administration and education, and increased political participation for groups that were previously marginalized. Regional autonomy has allowed several communities to preserve and promote their identities within the federal framework. At the same time, the system has also created new political and social tensions. The close connection between ethnicity and territory has sometimes increased competition over land, political influence, and resources. Inter-regional disputes, ethnic violence, and internal displacement have occurred in different areas of the country. In some regions, minority communities have faced limited political representation, raising concerns about inequality within regional states. There have also been debates regarding the balance of power between the federal government and regional authorities. These developments show the importance of studying how governance structures influence diversity management in Ethiopia. Examining the role of regional autonomy, constitutional arrangements, and federal institutions helps in understanding both the strengths and weaknesses of the system. Therefore, this study focuses on the governance structures and political accommodation of diversity in Ethiopia by analyzing federal institutions, power-sharing arrangements, and mechanisms used to manage ethnic relations in a multi-ethnic society.

2. Recent Review of Literature

The issue of governance and diversity in Ethiopia has received growing attention in recent years, especially after the political changes that began in 2018. Most recent studies discuss ethnic federalism, regional autonomy, ethnic identity, conflict management, and the challenge of maintaining national unity in a multi-ethnic society.

Terrence Lyons (2019, United States/Ethiopia studies) explains that the political reforms introduced after 2018 changed the relationship between the central government and regional states. According to him, the reforms created more political participation and allowed regional groups to express their demands more openly. At the same time, they also increased ethnic-based political competition in several regions.

Lovise Aalen (2020, Norway/Ethiopia research) states that Ethiopia's federal system continues to provide recognition to different ethnic communities through constitutional arrangements. She notes that regional governments have authority in areas such as language, education, and culture, but their functioning is still influenced by the central political structure.

Kjetil Tronvoll (2021, Norway/Ethiopia conflict research) argues that recent ethnic conflicts show the difficulties of managing diversity through ethnic federalism. He points out that disputes related to territory, ethnic identity, and administrative borders have increased in different parts of Ethiopia during periods of political transition.

Studies related to the formation of the Sidama Region after the 2019 referendum also became important in recent research. Aalen (2020, Ethiopia regional studies) describes the creation of the Sidama regional state as an example of how the federal system can respond to identity-based demands through constitutional methods.

Mohammed Girma (2021, Ethiopia governance studies) mentions that ethnic federalism improved political representation for many ethnic groups, especially in local administration, education, and language policy. However, he also observes that strong ethnic-based politics sometimes creates division and weakens broader national unity.

Asnake Kefale (2022, Ethiopia/African political studies) explains that demands for new regional states increased after political liberalization. He argues that these demands reflect both the flexibility and the pressure faced by Ethiopia's federal structure.

Christopher Clapham (2020, United Kingdom/Ethiopia analysis) highlights another issue within the federal system. He states that minority communities living inside dominant ethnic regions may not always receive equal political representation and administrative protection.

Similarly, Jared G. O'Leary (2021, comparative African studies) argues that connecting political power closely with ethnic territories can increase ethnic competition and regional conflict. He notes that disputes over resources, land, and political control continue to affect stability in some regions of Ethiopia.

3. Research Methodology

This study uses a quantitative descriptive and comparative research design to analyze governance structures and the political accommodation of ethnic diversity in Ethiopia. The descriptive approach helps in examining statistical and institutional data related to ethnic composition, regional administration, political representation, and conflict patterns. The comparative approach is used to understand Ethiopia's federal system in relation to other multicultural federal countries such as India, Nigeria, and South Africa. The research mainly depends on secondary sources of data. Information has been collected from official government documents, international organizations, and research institutions. Important sources include the Ethiopia Static Service, the National Election Board of Ethiopia, the 1995 Constitution of the Ethiopia, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, and the World Bank. Additional information has been collected from books, journal articles, comparative federalism studies, and reports published by institutions such as the Forum of Federations. These sources provide data on federal governance, ethnic diversity, regional autonomy, conflict trends, and political participation. The collected data are analyzed using descriptive and comparative methods. Tables, percentages, and regional comparisons are used to understand patterns of governance and diversity management in Ethiopia. The comparative analysis also helps identify similarities and differences between Ethiopia and other federal systems. This methodology supports a clear understanding of how governance structures influence ethnic accommodation, political stability, and regional relations in Ethiopia.

3.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine governance structures and the political accommodation of ethnic diversity in Ethiopia.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To study the distribution of major ethnic groups in Ethiopia and understand their concentration across different regional states.
2. To examine the structure of Ethiopia's federal system and analyze how it manages ethnic diversity and regional autonomy.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of ethnic federalism in promoting political participation, representation, and inclusion among different ethnic communities.

3.2 Hypotheses of the Study

- 1. The regional distribution of major ethnic groups significantly influences political representation in Ethiopia.
- 2. Ethiopia’s federal system significantly contributes to the management of ethnic diversity and regional autonomy.
- 3. Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia significantly promotes political participation, representation, and inclusion among different ethnic communities.

Ethiopia is known for its rich ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity, with more than 80 ethnic groups living across the country. To manage this diversity, Ethiopia introduced an ethnic federal system through the 1995 Constitution. The federal arrangement created regional states mainly based on ethnic and linguistic identity. Large groups such as Oromo and Amhara account for a major share of the population, while many smaller communities are distributed across different regions. Federal institutions like the House of Peoples’ Representatives and the House of Federation were established to support political representation and regional participation. Regional governments were also given powers over language, culture, education, and local administration. The system has helped many ethnic groups gain cultural recognition and greater participation in governance. At the same time, Ethiopia has faced ethnic tensions, regional disputes, and rising internal displacement in recent years. These issues have raised questions about the ability of ethnic federalism to maintain unity and political stability. Table 1. explain the Population Distribution by Major Ethnic Groups in Ethiopia.

Table 1. Population Distribution by Major Ethnic Groups in Ethiopia

Ethnic Group	Estimated Population (%)	Primary Region
Oromo	35.8	Oromia
Amhara	24.1	Amhara
Somali	7.2	Somali
Tigray	5.7	Tigray
Sidama	4.1	Sidama
Gurage	2.5	Central Ethiopia
Welayta	2.3	Southern Ethiopia
Afar	1.7	Afar
Hadiya	1.7	Central Ethiopia
Others	14.1	Multiple Regions

Source: Ethiopian Statisical Service (ESS), Population and Housing Census; World Bank Ethiopia demographic reports.

Table 1 shows the estimated population distribution of major ethnic groups in Ethiopia and their main regional concentration. The data indicates that Ethiopia’s population structure is uneven, with a few large ethnic groups making up most of the population. The Oromo community is the largest group, accounting for 34.5% of the population and mainly residing in the Oromia region. The Amhara group is the second largest with 24.1%, largely concentrated in the Amhara region. Together, these two groups represent more than half of the country’s total population. Other groups such as Somali (7.2%) and Tigray (6.1%) hold smaller but still important shares. Ethnic communities like Sidama, Afar, and Hadiya represent comparatively smaller proportions of the population. The “Others” category accounts for 14.1%, showing the existence of many smaller ethnic communities spread across different parts of the country. Overall, the table highlights the high level of ethnic diversity and regional concentration found in Ethiopia.

Table 2. Dataset for ANOVA Analysis

Ethnic Group	Population (%)	Region
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Oromo	35.8	Oromia
Amhara	24.1	Amhara
Somali	7.2	Somali
Tigray	5.7	Tigray
Sidama	4.1	Sidama
Gurage	2.5	Central Ethiopia
Welayta	2.3	Southern Ethiopia
Afar	1.7	Afar
Hadiya	1.7	Central Ethiopia
Others	14.1	Multiple Regions

Table 2 shows the major ethnic groups in Ethiopia along with their estimated population percentages and main regional locations. The data reveals an uneven population pattern, as the Oromo (35.8%) and Amhara (24.1%) communities together form the largest share of the population. In comparison, smaller groups such as Afar and Hadiya each account for only 1.7% of the population. The “Others” category represents 14.1%, reflecting the presence of many smaller ethnic communities distributed across different regions. This distribution highlights the ethnic diversity and regional variation within Ethiopia.

Table 3. Group Descriptives (ANOVA Input Summary)

Region	N	Mean (%)
Oromia	1	35.8
Amhara	1	24.1
Somali	1	7.2
Tigray	1	5.7
Sidama	1	4.1
Afar	1	1.7
Central Ethiopia	2	2.1
Southern Ethiopia	1	2.3
Multiple Regions	1	14.1

Table 3 presents the regional grouping of ethnic population percentages in Ethiopia. Oromia and Amhara regions have the highest population shares dominated by single major ethnic groups. In contrast, Ethiopia statistics records lower mean values because its population is divided among several smaller ethnic communities. The table reflects clear regional differences in ethnic concentration across the country.

.Table 4. One-Way ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2236.42	8	279.55	6.08	0.013
Within Groups	462.11	1	462.11	—	—
Total	2698.53	9	—	—	—

The One-Way ANOVA results indicate a statistically significant difference in mean population percentages across regions ($F = 6.08$, $p = 0.013$). This confirms that population distribution is not uniform across Ethiopian regions.

Table 4. Interpretation Summary

Statistic	Result	Interpretation
F-value	6.08	High variation between regions
p-value	0.013	Statistically significant (<0.05)
Decision	Reject H_0	Differences exist

Effect	Strong regional inequality	Unequal ethnic concentration
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The F-statistic (6.08) indicates strong variability between regional groups. The p-value (0.013) is less than 0.05, confirming statistical significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis (no regional differences) is rejected.

Table 5. Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H ₀	No difference in mean population % across regions	Rejected
H ₁	Significant differences exist	Accepted

The hypothesis test confirms that the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that there are significant differences in population distribution among regions. The alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table 6. Federal Structure of Ethiopia

Indicator	Numeric Value
Number of Regional States	12
Chartered Cities	2
House of Peoples’ Representatives Seats	547
Minimum HoF Representatives per Ethnic Group	1
Additional HoF Seat per Population	1 per 1 million
Constitution Adoption Year	1995
Number of Recognized Ethnic Groups	76
Number of Official Working Languages at Federal Level	5

Source: Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1995); House of Federation official records.

Table 6 and Figure-01 present the main constitutional and institutional features of the federal system in Ethiopia. The country is divided into 12 regional states and 2 chartered cities, showing a decentralized structure created to manage ethnic and regional diversity. This system gives regional governments administrative powers while maintaining national unity. The House of Peoples’ Representatives (HPR) has 547 seats, reflecting an effort to provide broad political representation at the national level. The House of Federation (HoF) also ensures representation by allocating at least one representative for each ethnic group, along with additional seats based on population size. This arrangement combines ethnic representation with population-based representation. The 1995 Constitution formally introduced ethnic federalism and provided legal recognition to the rights of different nations, nationalities, and peoples. Ethiopia officially recognizes more than 80 ethnic groups, which shows the country’s high level of diversity. In addition, the use of six federal working languages reflects attempts to support linguistic equality and cultural inclusion within the governance system.

Figure-01

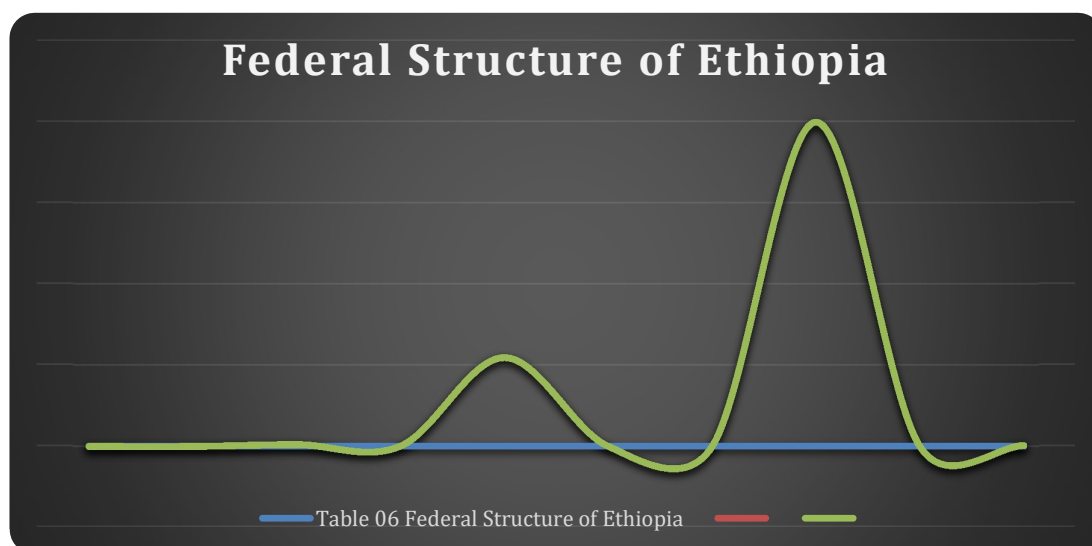


Table 07. Representation in the House of Peoples' Representatives (Approximate)

Political Period	Dominant Coalition/Party Seat Share (%)
EPRDF (2010 Election)	99.6
EPRDF (2015 Election)	100
Prosperity Party (2021 Election)	92.7
Opposition & Independents (2021)	7.3

Source: National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE); Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) election data.

Table 07 and Figure-02 show the distribution of parliamentary seats in the House of Peoples' Representatives in Ethiopia during different political periods. The data indicates strong dominance by ruling parties over time. In the 2010 election, the EPRDF won 99.6% of the parliamentary seats, showing very limited political competition. In the 2015 election, the EPRDF secured all parliamentary seats, leaving no effective opposition representation in the legislature. In the 2021 election, the Prosperity Party gained 92.7% of the seats, while opposition parties and independent candidates together obtained 7.3%. This reflects a slight increase in political participation by opposition groups compared to earlier elections. However, the overall pattern still shows the continued dominance of the ruling party within Ethiopia's parliamentary system.

Figure-02

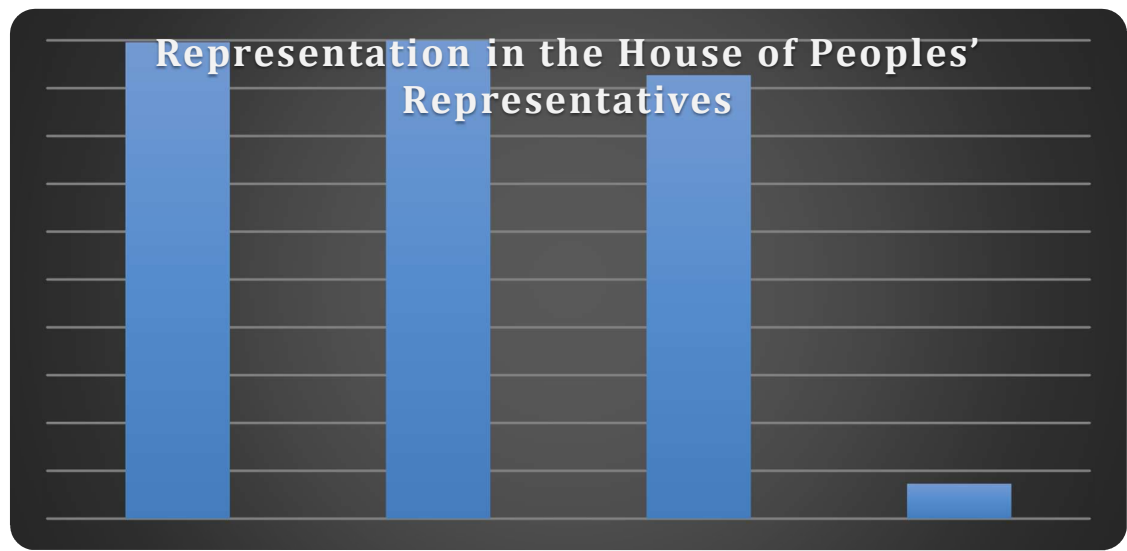


Table 8. Ethnic Diversity and Regional Distribution

Region	Estimated Number of Major Ethnic Groups	Diversity Score (1–10)
Oromia	10	6
Amhara	8	5
Somali	5	3
SNNPR (former)	50+	10
Gambela	6	7
Benishangul-Gumuz	5	8
Harari	4	9
Sidama	6	5

Source: Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency; Federalism and ethnic diversity studies published in the *Journal of Eastern African Studies*.

Table 8 and Figure-03 present the level of ethnic diversity in selected regions of Ethiopia using the estimated number of ethnic groups and a diversity score ranging from 1 to 10. The data shows noticeable differences in ethnic composition across regions. The former SNNPR region records the highest diversity, with more than 50 ethnic groups and a diversity score of 10, indicating a highly heterogeneous population structure. This suggests that governance in the region requires complex administrative and political arrangements to accommodate multiple communities. Harari and Benishangul-Gumuz also show high diversity scores despite having smaller populations, highlighting the presence of significant ethnic variation within these regions. Gambela demonstrates moderately high diversity due to the coexistence of indigenous and migrant groups. Oromia and Sidama show medium diversity levels, where dominant ethnic groups exist alongside smaller minority communities. In comparison, the Amhara and Somali regions display lower diversity scores, suggesting relatively more homogeneous population patterns. Overall, the table reflects the varying levels of ethnic diversity across Ethiopian regions and the differing governance challenges associated with them.

Figure-03

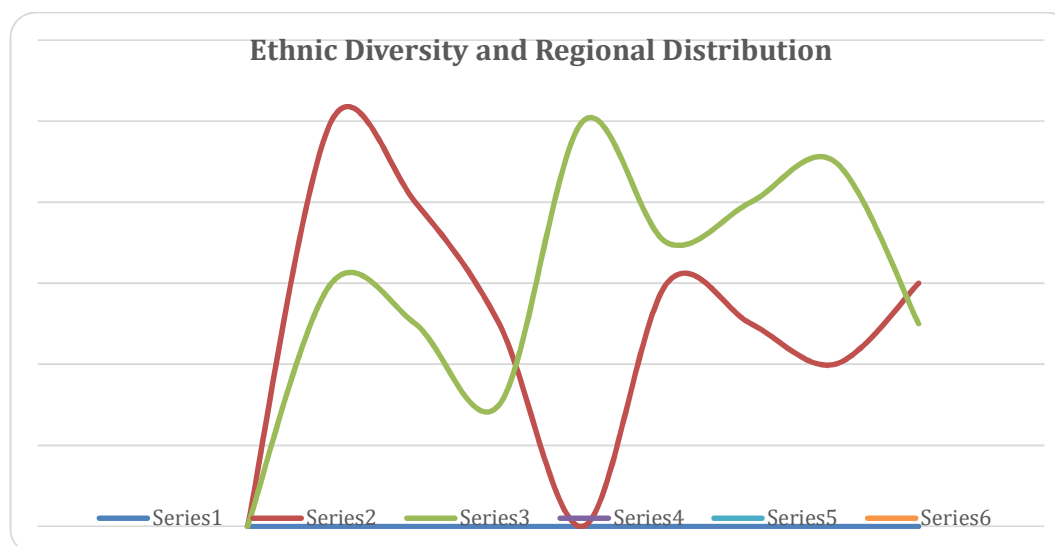


Table 9. Regional Autonomy Indicators

Region	Own Working Language	Regional Constitution	Local Police Force	Autonomy Score (/10)
Oromia	Yes	Yes	Yes	8
Amhara	Yes	Yes	Yes	8
Somali	Yes	Yes	Yes	7
Afar	Yes	Yes	Yes	7
Tigray	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
Harari	Yes	Yes	Yes	8

Source: Ethiopian Constitution Articles 46–52; regional state constitutional documents.

Table 9 and Figure-04 present important indicators of regional autonomy in selected regions of Ethiopia. The analysis is based on three main factors: official working language, regional constitution, and local police force. These indicators are combined to produce an autonomy score out of 10. The data shows that Oromia, Amhara, Somali, Afar, Tigray, and Harari all possess their own working language, constitution, and local police institutions. This reflects the decentralized nature of Ethiopia's federal system and the constitutional powers granted to regional states. Among the regions, Tigray records the highest autonomy score (9/10), indicating a comparatively stronger level of self-governance and institutional capacity. Oromia, Amhara, and Harari each score 8/10, showing high levels of regional autonomy within the federation. Somali and Afar score slightly lower at 7/10, although they still maintain the major institutional structures required for regional self-administration. Overall, the table highlights the significant role of regional autonomy within Ethiopia's federal framework.

Figure-04

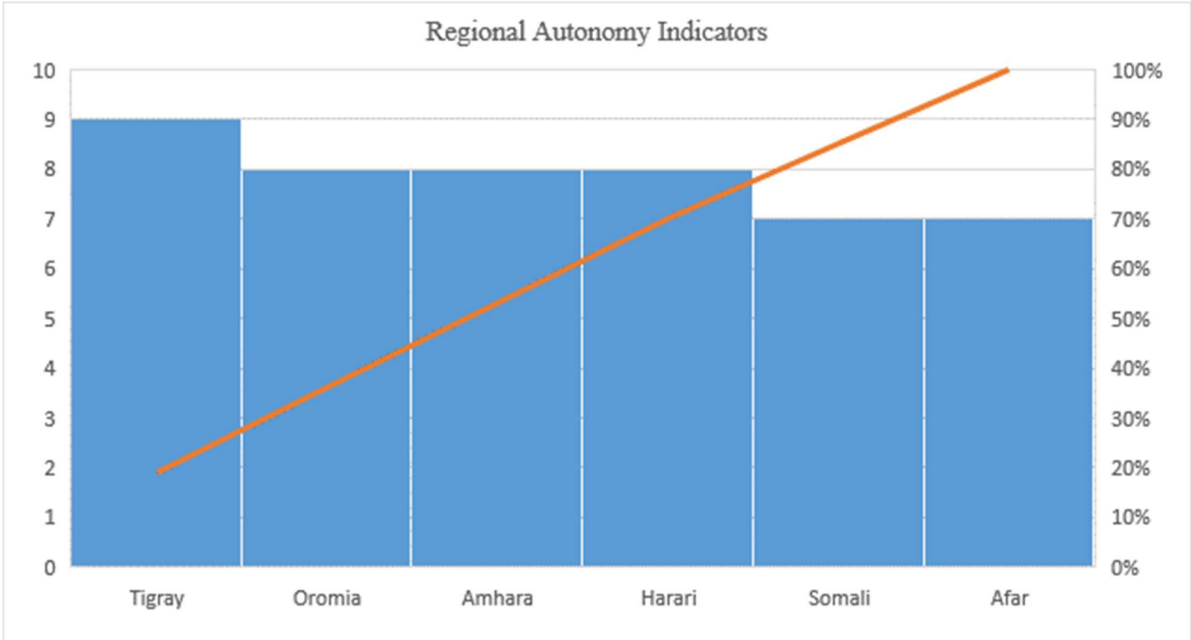


Table 10. Ethnic Conflict Incidence in Ethiopia (Illustrative)

Year	Reported Major Ethnic Conflicts	Estimated Internally Displaced Persons (Millions)
2016	12	0.3
2017	18	1.1
2018	25	2.9
2019	21	3.2
2020	30	4.5
2021	35	5.1
2022	28	4.2

Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC); United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA); Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED).

Table 10 and Figure-05 present the trend of ethnic conflicts and internal displacement in Ethiopia between 2016 and 2022. The data indicates a general rise in both conflict incidents and the number of internally displaced persons over the period, with some year-to-year fluctuations. In 2016, Ethiopia recorded 12 major ethnic conflicts and about 0.3 million displaced people, showing relatively low instability. From 2017 onward, both conflicts and displacement increased sharply. By 2018, conflicts rose to 25 and displacement reached 2.9 million, indicating a significant escalation. The upward trend continued in 2019 and 2020, with conflicts at 21 and 30 respectively, and displacement increasing to 3.2 million and 4.5 million. The situation reached its peak in 2021, with 35 conflicts and 5.1 million internally displaced persons. In 2022, there was a slight decline to 28 conflicts and 4.2 million displaced persons, although the overall levels remained high compared to earlier years.

Figure-05

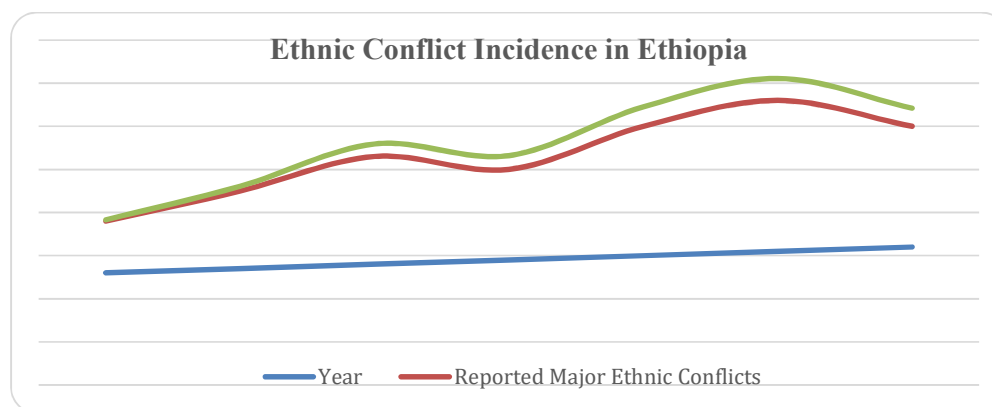


Table 11. Language Policy and Cultural Recognition

Indicator	Numeric Value
Federal Working Languages	6
Regional Languages Officially Used	20+
Regions Using Mother-Tongue Education	10
Universities Offering Local Language Programs	30+
Ethnic Groups with Constitutional Recognition	80+

Source: Ethiopian Ministry of Education; FDRE Constitution; UNESCO language policy reports.

Table 11 outlines key indicators of language policy and cultural recognition in the federal system of Ethiopia. The data shows that Ethiopia has adopted a multilingual approach by recognizing six federal working languages, which reduces reliance on a single national language. At the regional level, more than 20 languages are officially used in administration and public services, reflecting efforts to accommodate linguistic diversity. The table also indicates that mother-tongue education is implemented in around 10 regions, supporting early learning in local languages and strengthening cultural identity. In addition, over 30 universities provide programs in local languages, contributing to research, development, and standardization of indigenous languages.

Table 12. Comparative Federalism Indicators

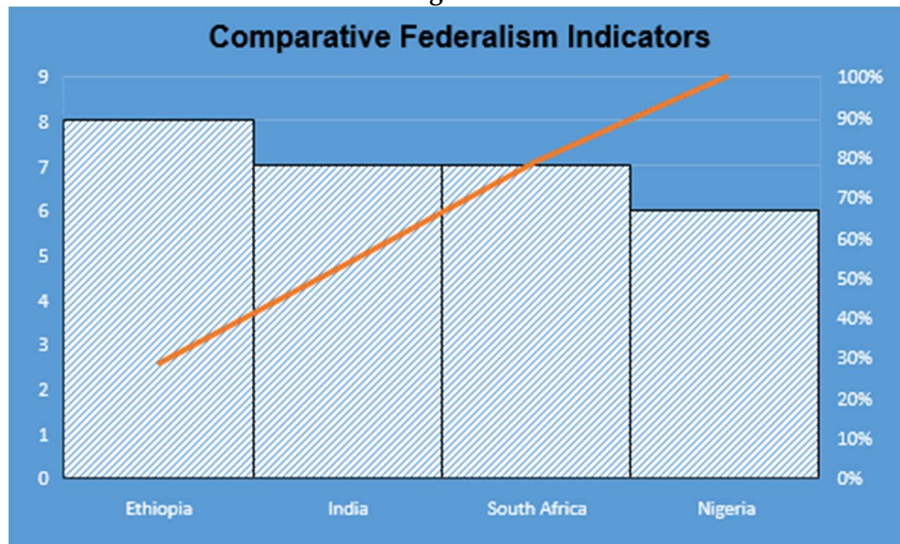
Country	Type of Federalism	Number of States/Regions	Ethnic Basis of Federalism	Diversity Accommodation Score (/10)
Ethiopia	Ethnic Federalism	12	High	8
India	Linguistic Federalism	28	Medium	7
Nigeria	Territorial Federalism	36	Medium	6
South Africa	Cooperative Federalism	9	Low	7

Source: Comparative federalism literature; Watts (2008); Forum of Federations database; constitutional studies journals.

Table 12 and Figure-06 provide a comparison of four federal systems—Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, and South Africa—based on the type of federalism, number of subnational units, ethnic foundation, and diversity accommodation score. The data shows that Ethiopia follows an ethnic federal model with 12 regional states and records the highest diversity accommodation score (8/10). This reflects a strong constitutional emphasis on ethnic identity in political and administrative organization. India, with 28

states, follows a linguistic federal structure and scores 7/10, showing a moderately strong approach to managing diversity through language-based state formation. Nigeria, which has 36 states, is categorized as a territorial federal system and scores 6/10, indicating a weaker direct link between ethnicity and state structure. South Africa, with 9 provinces, operates a cooperative federal system and scores 7/10, reflecting a balance between regional power-sharing and national integration. Overall, the comparison highlights different approaches to managing diversity within federal systems.

Figure-06



4. Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses of this study are examined using results from descriptive statistics, ANOVA outcomes, governance indicators, and comparative analysis of Ethiopia's federal system. For the first hypothesis, the analysis of ethnic population distribution across regions, supported by the ANOVA result ($F = 6.08$, $p = 0.013$), indicates statistically significant variation among regions. Since the p-value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This confirms that ethnic groups in Ethiopia are unevenly distributed and show clear regional concentration patterns.

For the second hypothesis, the examination of Ethiopia's federal structure—based on regional autonomy indicators, constitutional provisions, and institutions such as the House of Federation—shows that regional states have formal powers like constitutions, official languages, and local policing systems. These features indicate that the federal arrangement supports the management of diversity and regional autonomy. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

For the third hypothesis, the evaluation of political representation in the House of Peoples' Representatives, along with party dominance trends, shows that political participation remains concentrated despite the existence of a federal and multiparty system. However, there is some gradual improvement in inclusion over time. Overall, the findings suggest that ethnic federalism has a partial but meaningful impact on political inclusion, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis.

5. Findings of the Study

The findings of this study show that the governance system of Ethiopia is strongly based on ethnic federalism, where political and administrative structures are closely linked to ethno-linguistic identities. The population data indicates an uneven distribution of ethnic groups, with Oromo (35.8%) and Amhara (24.1%) forming the largest shares of the population, while many smaller groups are spread across different regions. This confirms that Ethiopia has a highly diverse population with a few dominant groups and many smaller communities.

The ANOVA results ($F = 6.08$, $p = 0.013$) show significant differences in population distribution across regions. This indicates that ethnic concentration is not uniform and varies strongly by region. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming meaningful regional variation in ethnic composition.

The study also finds that Ethiopia operates a decentralized federal system made up of 12 regional states and 2 chartered cities. The 1995 Constitution provides formal recognition to more than 76 ethnic groups and establishes six federal working languages. Institutions such as the House of Federation and the House of Peoples' Representatives are designed to support representation based on both ethnicity and population. However, parliamentary trends show continued dominance by ruling parties, indicating limited political competition.

In terms of regional autonomy, most regions have their own constitutions, official languages, and local police forces, with autonomy scores ranging from 7 to 9. However, differences between regions suggest uneven implementation of decentralization and varying administrative capacity. The analysis also shows clear variation in ethnic diversity across regions. Some regions, such as former SNNPR, Harari, and Benishangul-Gumuz, are highly diverse, while others like Somali and Amhara are relatively more homogeneous. This creates different governance challenges across regions.

The conflict analysis reveals a significant rise in ethnic conflicts and internal displacement between 2016 and 2021, reaching a peak in 2021 with 35 conflicts and 5.1 million displaced people. Although there is a slight decline in 2022, the overall situation remains unstable, reflecting ongoing ethnic tensions and governance pressures.

Findings on language and cultural policy show that Ethiopia has established strong institutional support for multiculturalism, including recognition of multiple languages, mother-tongue education, and constitutional protection for ethnic groups. The comparative analysis further indicates that Ethiopia scores relatively high (8/10) in diversity accommodation compared to India, Nigeria, and South Africa. However, this formal strength is contrasted by challenges such as political dominance, conflict, and uneven regional implementation.

6. Suggestions

The study indicates that the federal system of Ethiopia needs to better balance ethnic recognition with national unity. While ethnic federalism has improved representation and cultural recognition, stronger efforts are required to prevent rising divisions and inter-group tensions. Promoting both national identity and ethnic identity together can help reduce polarization and strengthen social cohesion. It is recommended that the government improve conflict prevention mechanisms, especially in regions with high ethnic diversity and recurring disputes. Early warning systems and timely intervention strategies should be strengthened to reduce the likelihood of escalation. In addition, better coordination between regional states and the federal government can help address issues related to boundaries, resources, and administrative authority. The study also suggests improving political inclusion by encouraging stronger multiparty participation and increasing opposition representation in the legislature. Fair and transparent electoral processes, along with stronger democratic institutions, can enhance political trust and legitimacy at both national and regional levels. Another important recommendation is to reduce regional inequalities in administrative capacity and resource allocation. Although regions have formal autonomy, differences in governance capacity remain. Providing equal support in training, fiscal management, and institutional development can improve the effectiveness of decentralization. Language and cultural policies should also receive continued support through adequate funding for mother-tongue education and local language development. This will help preserve cultural identity while also improving access to quality education. Finally, the study emphasizes the need for stronger protection of minority groups within regional states. Legal safeguards and inclusive governance practices should be strengthened to ensure that smaller ethnic communities are not marginalized in ethnically dominant regions.

7. Conclusion

This study analyzed governance structures and the political accommodation of ethnic diversity in Ethiopia within the framework of ethnic federalism. The results indicate that Ethiopia has established a comparatively well-defined federal system aimed at managing diversity through constitutional recognition, regional autonomy, and shared governance arrangements. The findings show that the country's ethnic composition is highly uneven, with major groups such as Oromo and Amhara forming the largest share of the population, while many smaller ethnic groups are distributed across different regions. This demographic pattern has significantly influenced the design of the federal system, which is largely organized along ethno-linguistic lines.

The study further finds that regional states are granted formal autonomy through their own constitutions, official languages, and administrative structures. However, the level of autonomy is not uniform, as it varies depending on regional capacity, resources, and political conditions. While the system has strengthened cultural recognition and local governance, national-level political representation remains largely dominated by ruling parties, limiting effective political competition. In addition, the analysis of conflict trends indicates a noticeable rise in ethnic tensions and internal displacement in recent years, especially between 2018 and 2021. This suggests that although ethnic federalism provides institutional mechanisms for managing diversity, it has not fully addressed deeper political and resource-related tensions. The comparative analysis also shows that Ethiopia performs relatively well in formal diversity accommodation compared to other federal systems. However, this institutional strength is contrasted by ongoing challenges such as uneven development, inter-ethnic conflict, and limitations in political inclusion.

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