



The Nation and Personal Identity

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Abstract

The study looks into the role of national identity in the formation of personal identity and character in individuals. The study seeks to comprehend how national ideas and ideals influence how people choose to identify themselves and experience the world. The study also considers ethnicity and regionalism, as well as how they intersect with national and personal identity.

Using statistical data from credible sources, inspection of relevant studies, use of primary data and the case study of Tanzania, the study's findings try to understand better how external forces dictate the lives of the everyday person.

Introduction

The rise of populism, authoritarianism, and right-wing politics at the start of this decade has raised debate about who belongs to which country and what makes one a citizen of that country. While many believed that the growth of globalisation would result in the rise of a singular global identity, this decade has shown that nations and, to a lesser extent, people are growing more defensive of their country's traditional conceptions.

This new surge in nationalism and the preservation of national identity will shape not only the global narrative for decades to come, but also the personal lives of ordinary people, how they interact with others, how they interact with media and information from around the world, and even how they see themselves.

This study attempts to comprehend how nationhood influences the lives of ordinary people in a society where self-identification is becoming increasingly linked with national identity.

Methodology

This study used a questionnaire-based research methodology. For the case study employed in this research work, the questionnaire sought to investigate how Tanzanian national identity shapes the identity of its people. The questionnaire contains questions that probe the nuance of Tanzanian national identity and how the many interpretations of national identity affect the daily

lives of ordinary Tanzanians. A total of 100 Tanzanians from various socioeconomic backgrounds completed the questionnaire.

A review of relevant literature was used to complement and broaden the findings of the questionnaire approach.

Understanding National Identity

National identity is defined as a sense of belonging to a state or nation with distinct traditions, values, and language, and it is frequently incorporated into one's personal identity.

A closer look into national identity demonstrates how ill-defined the idea is. National identity is associated with the concept of nations and states, however, nations and states are artificial constructs.

National identity also shapes millions, if not billions, of people's narratives, making national identity very subjective.

So, why is a subjective and inconsistent concept so crucial to the human condition? For ages, many social scientists have attempted to address this question. According to the primordialist school of thought, people value national identities because they are natural, that humans have evolved this sense of belonging, and we cannot alter our sense of national identity.

More modernists do not agree with primordialism's view on national identity, modernists attribute the rise of modern industrial societies to the establishment of national identity. Innovations such as mass communication and the increased scale of warfare which demanded more enthusiastic troops, worked as catalysts in the development of the contemporary concept of national identity and nationalism. This is evidently seen when taking into consideration that 140 of the 195 independent nations that comprise the United Nations were established within the last century.

According to certain studies, national identity is interwoven in everyday activities and is even integrated into modern-day routines. Practices such as singing the national anthem at school, swearing the oath of allegiance, and viewing national news are examples of civic engagement. Major events, such as the Olympics, help to instill a national narrative or identity in the population. Because of the integration of national identity into daily life, national identity has become a crucial identification component in modern times.

National identity is a relatively fresh addition to the story of humanity but it plays a significant role in the human story.

Understanding personal identity

The concept of personal identity is a concept that has been debated for millennia. Personal Identity can be understood as a conglomerate of ideas, perceptions, beliefs and evaluations that an individual holds for him/herself.

Identity is influenced by a myriad of factors such as personal experience, gender, race, family, ethnicity, sexual orientation, politics, economic conditions and of course nationality.

Identity is influenced by an individual's sense of belonging and community, and while most of human history has seen people identify with smaller groups such as tribes, clans, and villages, modern life has made the nation an integral part of one's belonging, and more and more people now identify with their nations rather than tribes or clans.

A Case Study on Tanzania

To better understand the role of national identity in the formation of personal identity, this study uses a case study on the United Republic of Tanzania. The case study compares information from secondary sources with responses from the questionnaire used.

Understanding the Tanzanian national identity

Tanzania is a country on Africa's Eastern Coast. It has a total land size of 947,300 square kilometres and is surrounded by eight other countries. It is located in the East African Rift Valley and is home to three great lakes: Victoria, Tanganyika, and Nyasa (Malawi).

Tanzania has a population of 65,642,682 people as of 2023, with Black Africans constituting 99% of the population. The country's population has an average age of 18.9 years.

Tanzania is a Unitary Republic formed by the merger of the Republic of Tanganyika and the Revolutionary Republic of Zanzibar on April 26, 1964.

Politically, Tanzania is part of the East African Community, the Southern Africa Development Community, The African Union, The United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Although Tanzania is a young nation, some important aspects of Tanzanian national identity include national values such as peace, unity, and solidarity, important national figures such as late President John Joseph Pombe Magufuli and Julius Nyerere, the Swahili language- Tanzania's national language- and diversity and inclusion.

Data interpretation and analysis

This study examines statements from a random sample of 100 Tanzanians. The participant's age ranged from 16 to 60 years. The questionnaire aims to probe the idea of the Tanzanian national identity and see how it affects the daily lives of the participants.

The statements used in the questionnaire address two main topics;

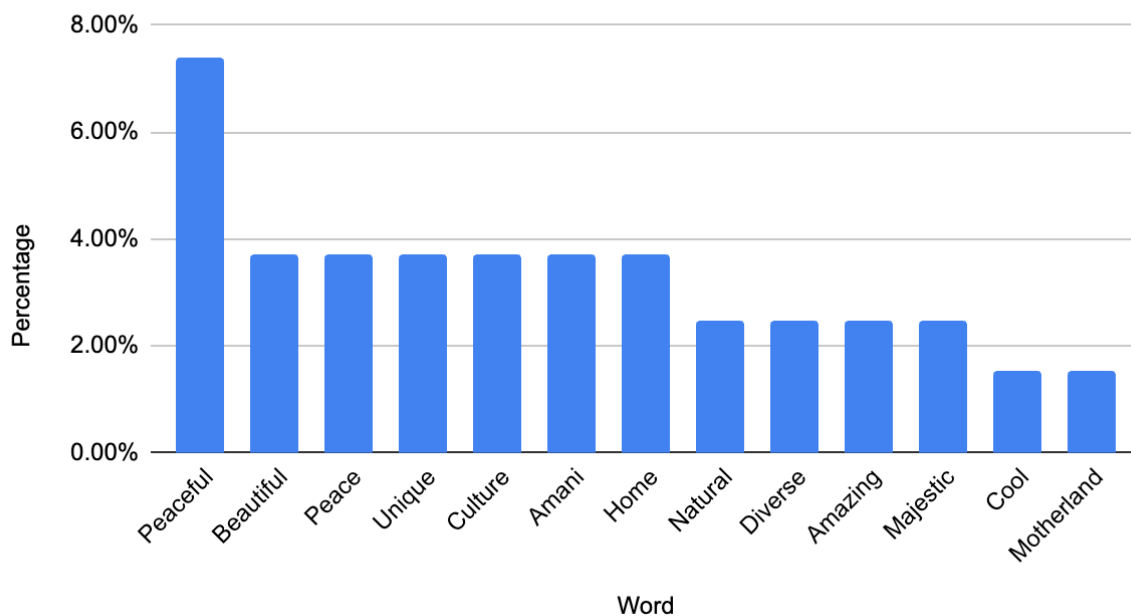
1. The Tanzanian National Identity
2. The Role the Tanzanian national identity plays on the identity of the people

A. Statements pertaining to the Tanzanian National Identity

1. Describe Tanzania in one word

The overwhelming majority of responses for this prompt were positive, indicating a favourable attitude toward the Tanzanian national identity. The bar chart below illustrates the words selected by the sample as well as the proportion of the sample who stated the words.

Percentage vs Word



Graph 1: Responses to the question “Describe Tanzania in one word”

The majority of the sample classified Tanzania as an area of peace or something associated with peace, like the Swahili word Amani, which means peace. Tanzania is associated with peace by 14.81% of respondents. Other respondents define Tanzania as a place where they belong, with adjectives such as home, motherland, culture, and natural accounting for 11.38% of all responses.

The remaining responses provide insight into previously highlighted Tanzanian principles such as diversity or are just favourable comments about the country.

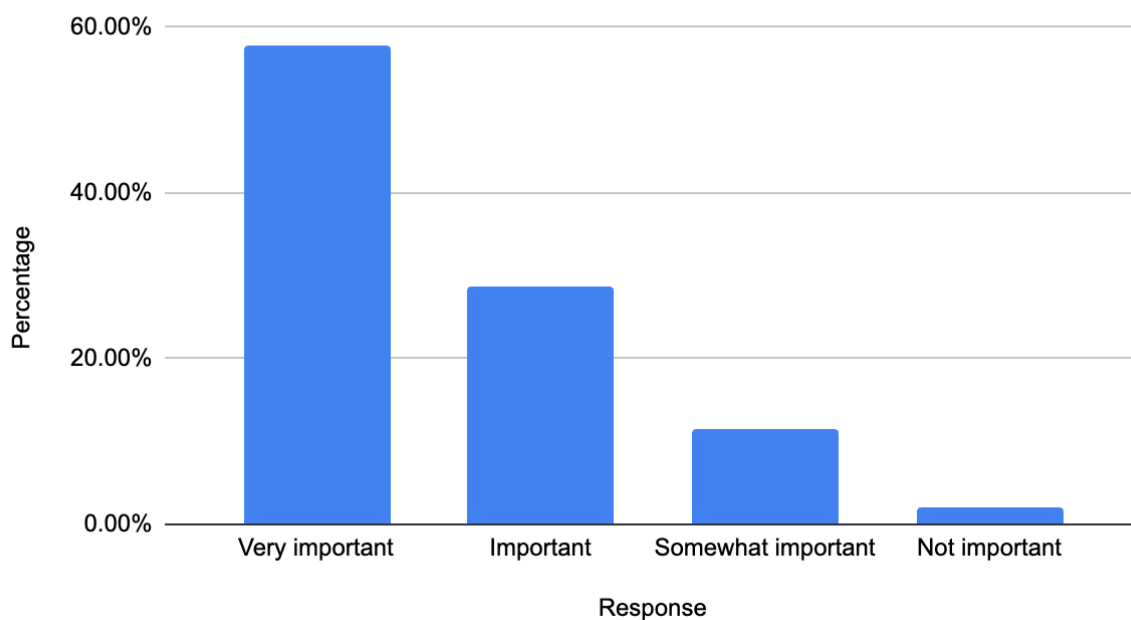
2. How important is Swahili to your Tanzanian identity?

This prompt seeks to determine whether the Swahili language is part of a common identity shared by the majority of Tanzanians.

The majority of respondents said Swahili is an important aspect of their Tanzanian identity, with 57.9% saying it is very important to their identity, 28.6% saying it is important, 11.4% saying it is somewhat important, and 2.1% saying it is not important at all.

The bar chart below shows the responses from the sample and the proportion of the responses from the sample

Percentage vs Response



Graph 2: Responses to the question “How important is Swahili to your Tanzanian Identity?”

The responses indicate that there is a shared Tanzanian national identity despite the country’s young age and that Swahili is an important part of this identity.

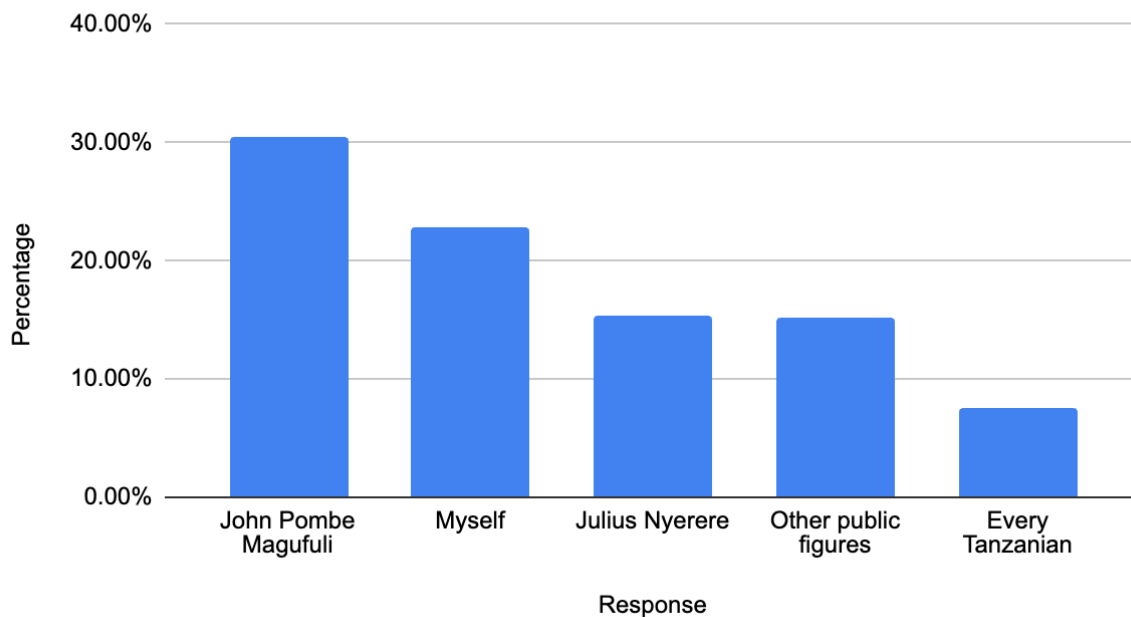
3. Name one person who perfectly captures the Tanzanian spirit.

People usually associate a shared figure with their sense of national identity. This question seeks to elicit a person who most Tanzanians link with Tanzanian identity. The late President John Magufuli received the most comments, accounting for 30.4% of all responses; similarly, the

country's first president, Julius Nyerere, received a substantial number of responses, accounting for 15.3% of all responses. Other public figures such as Paul Makonda, Mange Kimambi and Said Bahkresa also combined for 15.2% of the total responses.

An intriguing aspect of this question is that 22.9% of the respondents stated that they themselves capture the Tanzanian spirit, even higher than the responses for Julius Nyerere. This illustrates how the people of Tanzania believe that they mirror their country's spirit/identity. The bar chart depicts the sample responses and their proportion to the total responses.

Percentage vs Response



Graph 3: Responses to the question "Name one person who perfectly captures the Tanzanian spirit"

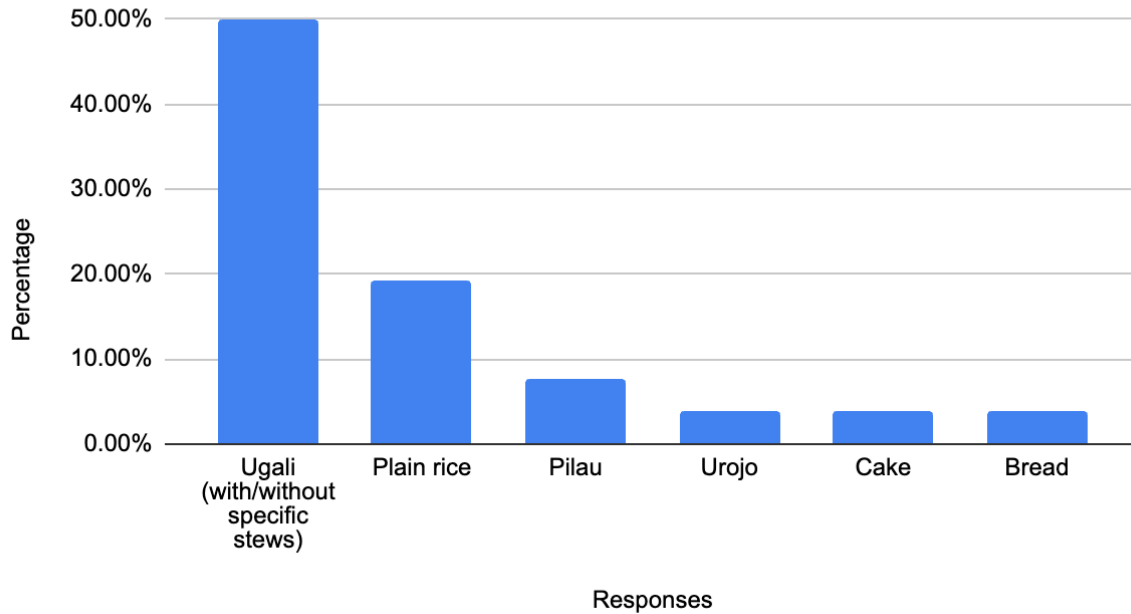
John Pombe Magufuli dominating the poll over Julius Nyerere might also indicate that the formation of the Tanzanian identity is new or the understanding of the Tanzanian identity has changed in recent times.

4. If Tanzania were a dish what would it be?

A common food can be utilised to indicate a common national identity; this inquiry attempts to identify what dish is for Tanzania. Almost half of the respondents mentioned Ugali in answer to this question, with 49.9% mentioning Ugali or Ugali with a specific stew. Plain rice received 19.2% of the input, while Pilau received 7.7%.

The bar chart below illustrates the proportion of responses to the prompt.

Percentage vs Responses



Graph 4: Responses to the question “If Tanzania was a dish, what would it be?”

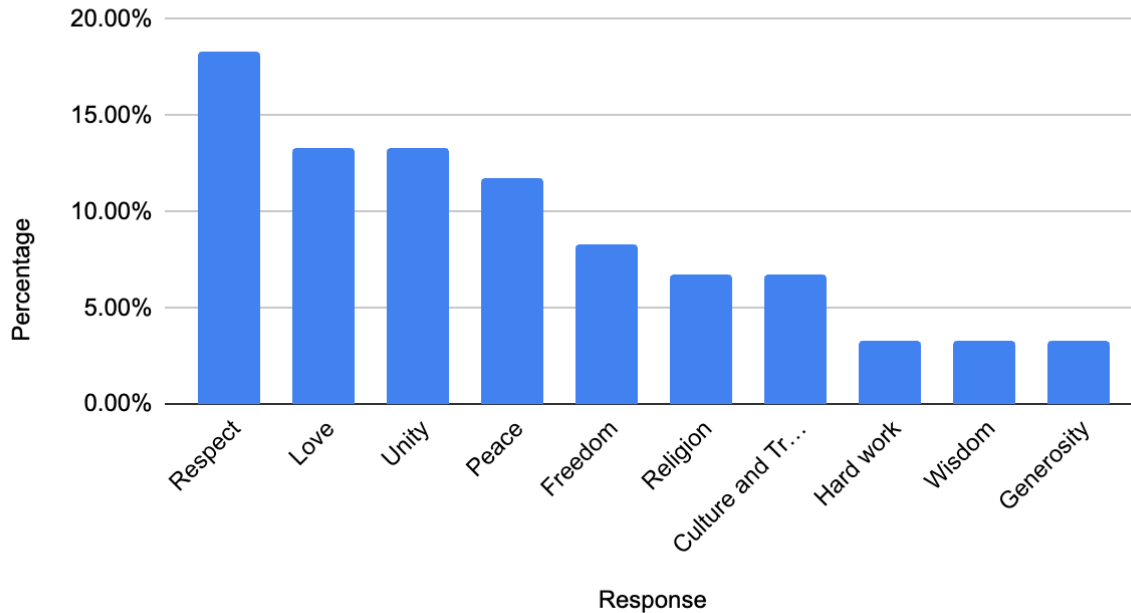
5. What are core Tanzanian values to you?

An important aspect of the national identity is the national values. This question tries to understand if the general public’s view on national values is similar to those stated by the government i.e. Peace, Unity and Solidarity.

The survey responses are consistent with the professed national ideals of Peace, Unity, and Solidarity. 18.3% of all responders expressed respect, 13.3% expressed love, and 11.7% expressed peace, with the remainder expressing values such as freedom, religion, hard work, generosity, and others.

The bar chart below shows the responses to this prompt and their proportions.

Percentage vs Response



Graph 5: Responses to the question “What are core Tanzanian values to you?”

B. Statements pertaining to the role played by National identity on Personal identity

1. Who is a Tanzanian to you?

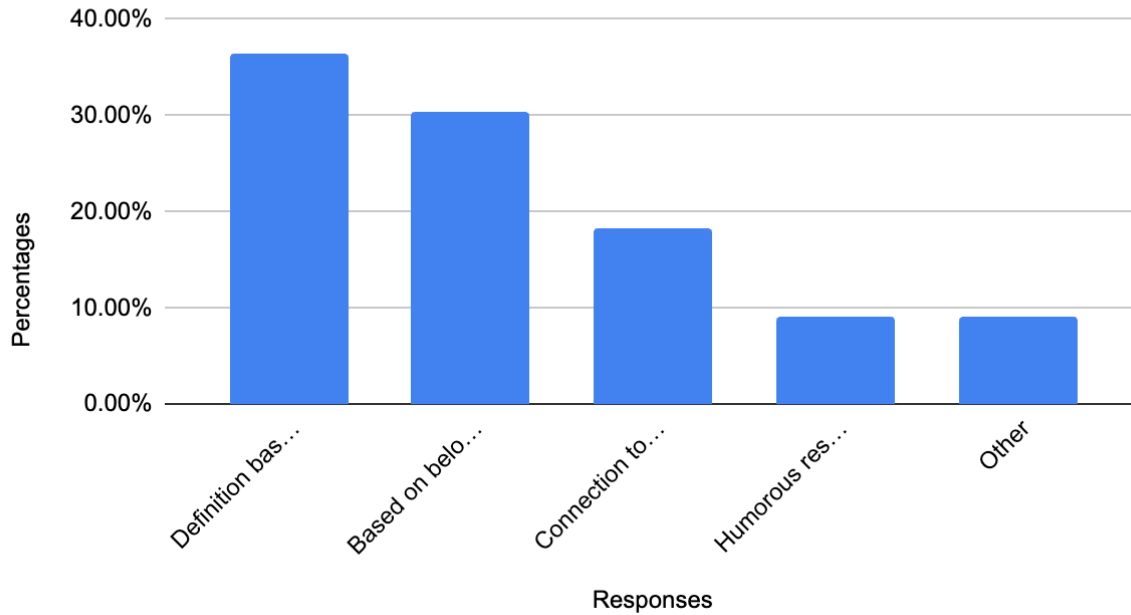
This question seeks to comprehend how Tanzanian National Identity influences how individuals see who or what constitutes a Tanzanian.

A majority of respondents defined a Tanzanian as someone with Tanzanian citizenship or someone who was born in Tanzania, 36.4% of responses were of this sort. 30.3% of responses said a Tanzanian is a person who feels connected or belongs in Tanzania while another 18.2% said a Tanzanian is a person who is connected to Tanzanian values.

While the majority of respondents claimed that birth was a big element in becoming Tanzanian, the majority also felt that one can become Tanzanian if they feel they belong or have a connection with the country.

The bar chart below depicts the responses to the prompt and their proportions

Percentages vs Responses



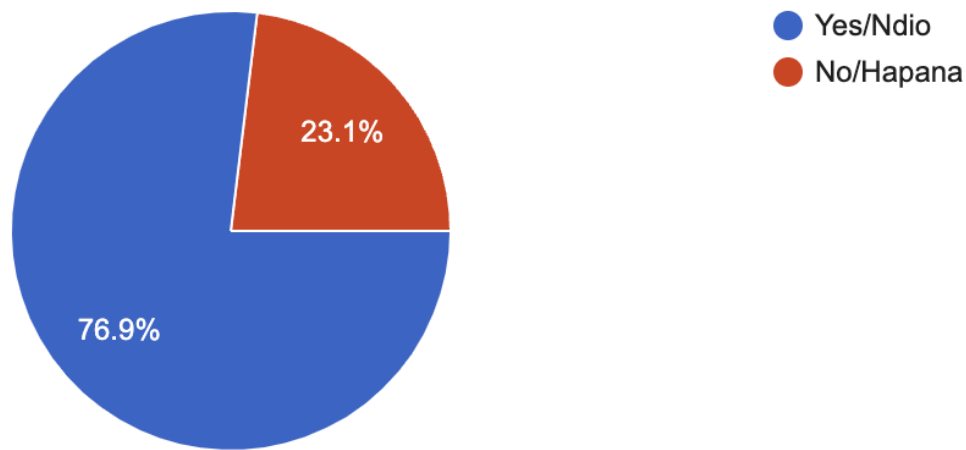
Graph 6: Responses to the question “Who is a Tanzanian to you?”

2. Do you think you fulfil your own definition of Tanzanian?

The majority of respondents think that they meet their own definition of Tanzanian and consider themselves to be authentically Tanzanian.

76.9% of the respondents say that they fulfil their own definition of Tanzanian while only 23.1% of respondents say otherwise.

The pie chart below depicts the responses to the prompt



Graph 7: Responses to the question “Do you think you fulfil your own definition of Tanzanian?”

3. Do you feel more connected to a specific region of Tanzania?

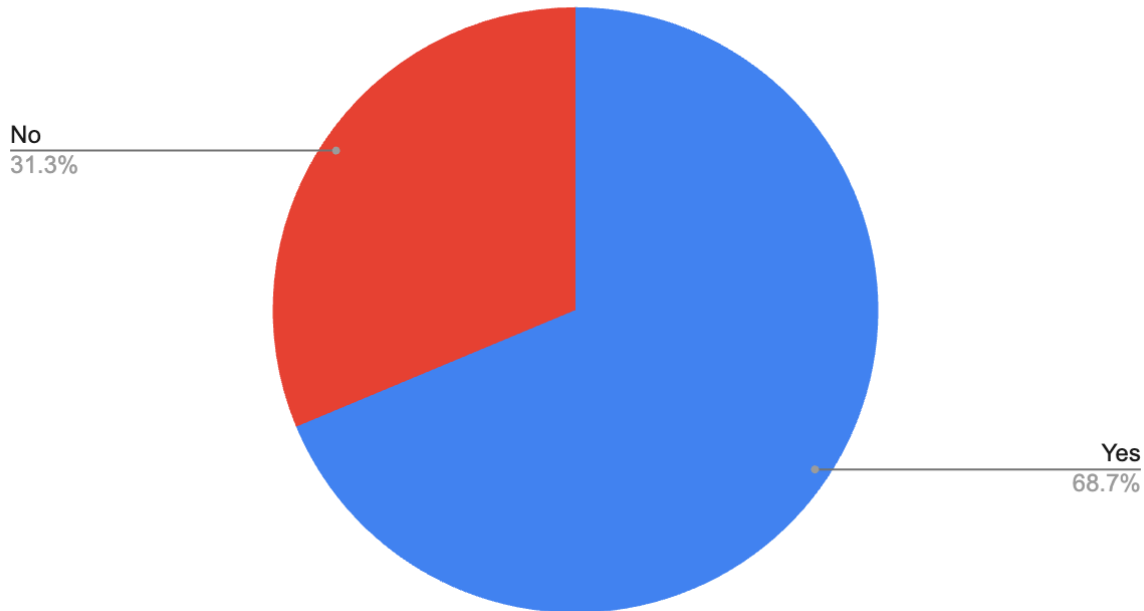
As discussed, for the majority of human history people have identified themselves as small groups like families, clans or villages instead of whole nations. This question tries to understand if the Tanzanians still affiliate themselves with smaller groups or do they identify themselves by their nations wholly.

Of the respondents, 68.7% agreed that they felt a greater sense of being part of a specific part of Tanzania; many gave reasons such as family history, firsthand experience, or a unique bond with the region. Only 31.3% disagreed, citing things like growing up in different parts of the country and the importance of national identity over regional identity.

Another interesting factor cited by the sample as to why they feel more connected to a specific region is economic factors such as job opportunities, with a substantial number of respondents stating a connection with Dar es Salaam because of all the opportunities it has.

The proportion of the responses to this prompt is depicted in the pie chart below

Percentages



Graph 8: Responses to the question “Do you feel more connected to a specific region of Tanzania?”

4. Have you faced discrimination based on being Tanzanian?

Discrimination is one way a person's identity might be impacted by their national identity.

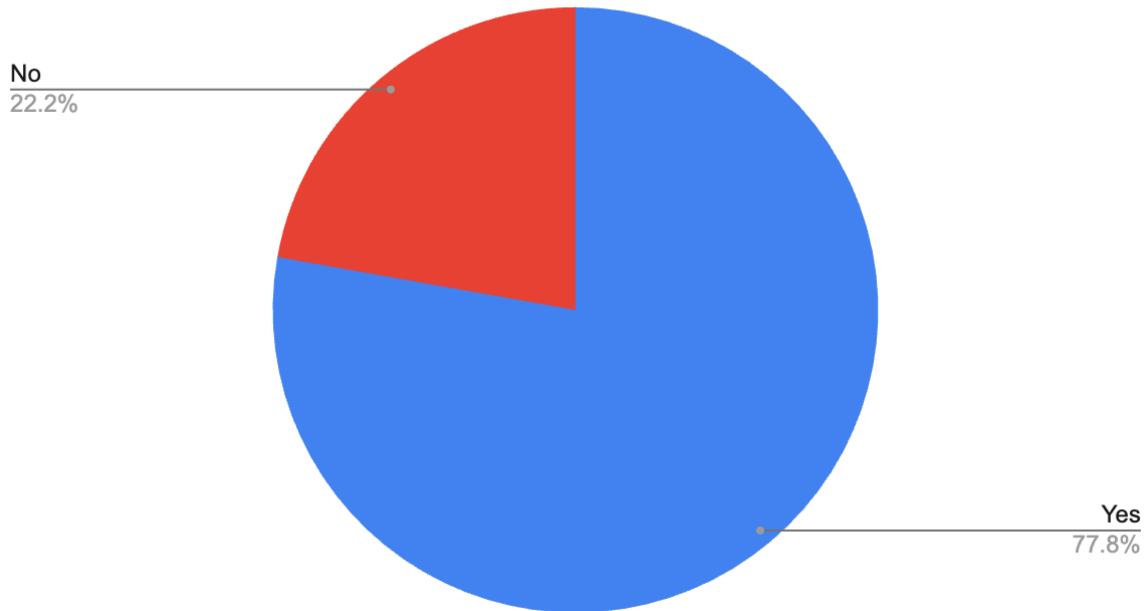
Discrimination can affect how an individual looks at himself/herself and even how he/she perceives his own national identity which might be the cause of discrimination. This prompt seeks to ascertain whether Tanzanians face the same kind of discrimination as many others due to their national identity.

77.8% of respondents stated that they have never experienced discrimination because of being Tanzanian while 22.2% of respondents say they have stating there is subtle discrimination in international travel.

The sample's good attitude and assessment of their own country may be attributed to the absence of prejudice.

The percentage of responses to this prompt is displayed in the pie chart below.

Percentages



Graph 9: Responses to the question “Have you faced any discrimination based on being Tanzanian?”

5. How does being Tanzanian affect your daily choices and life?

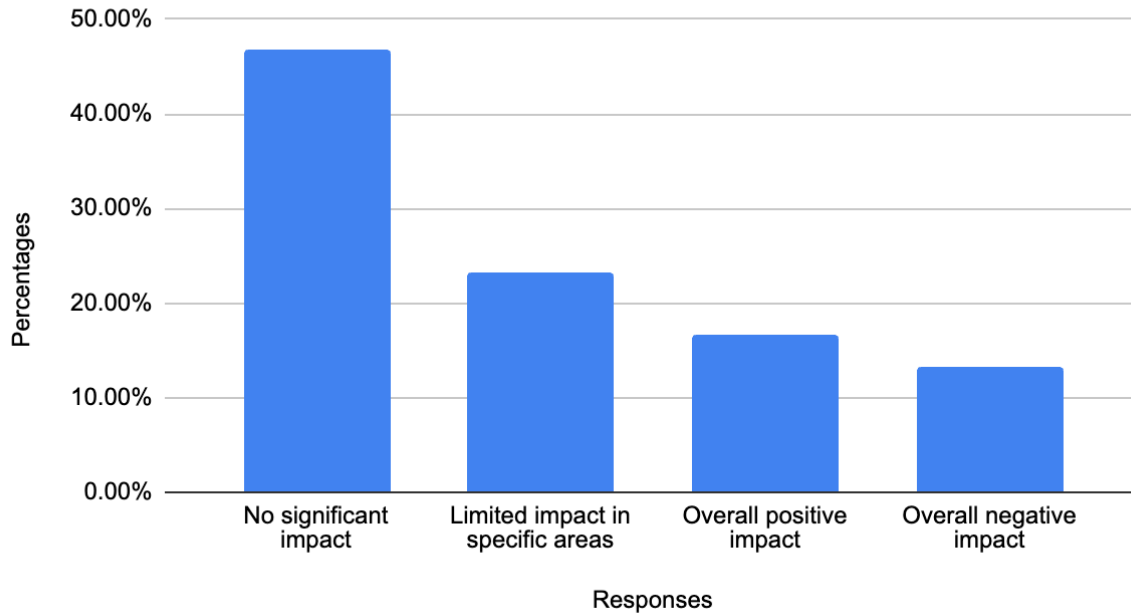
A person's national identity might have an implicit or explicit impact on their daily decisions. This question examines whether the sample's decision-making is specifically impacted by their national identity.

Of those surveyed, 46.7% said their national identification had no bearing whatsoever on their day-to-day activities, while 22.3% said it had a minimal influence in some situations. 13.7% of replies indicated a negative impact and 16.7% indicated a favourable influence.

Something to note about this prompt, most of the respondents attribute factors such as the economic condition of their country as having more impact when it comes to their decisions.

The bar chart below shows the distribution of the responses from the sample

Percentages vs Responses



Graph 10: Responses to the question “How does being Tanzanian affect your daily choices and life?”

6. How does being Tanzanian affect your sense of belonging or community?

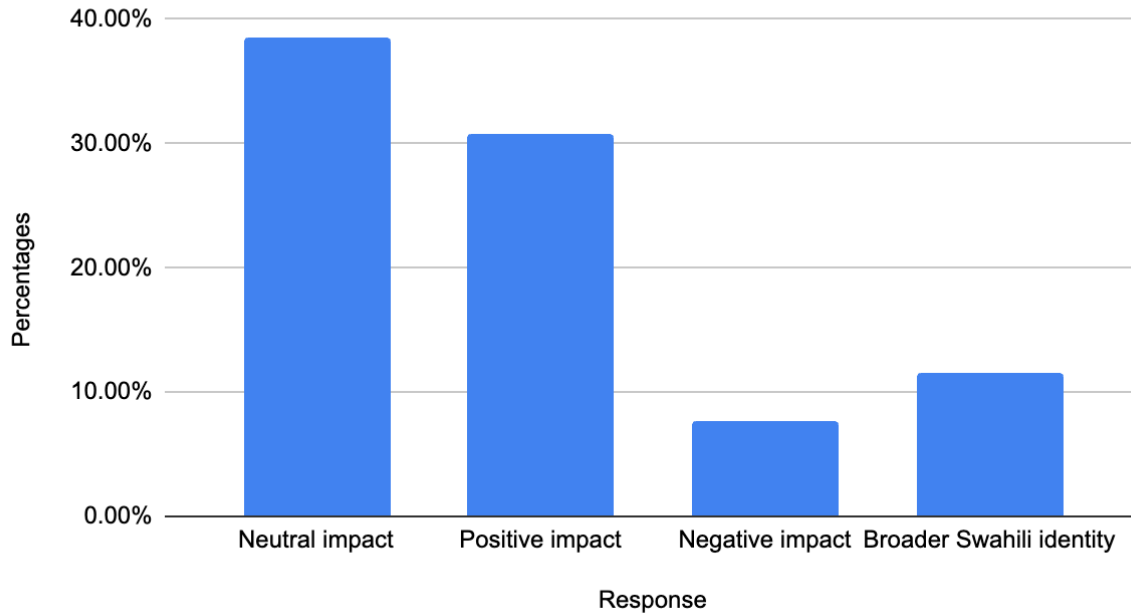
People's sense of self-worth is significantly influenced by their sense of belonging and integration into a community. A person's sense of belonging and, consequently, self-perception are greatly influenced by their national identity.

This inquiry seeks to ascertain how Tanzanian national identity influences people's sense of belonging. 38.5% of respondents stated that their national identity has no impact on their sense of belonging. 30.8% say their national identity has a positive impact on their belonging while only 7.7% has a negative impact on their belonging, a further 11.5% state they feel their national identity improves their belonging when it comes to Swahili communities or even a broader African community.

The improved sense of community caused by the national identity might improve the sense of personal identity of the citizens.

The bar chart below shows the responses to this prompt

Percentages vs Response



Graph 11: Responses to the question “How does being Tanzanian affect your sense of belonging or community?”

7. How does being Tanzanian shape your views on issues like politics, social justice, or economic development?

In the modern day, opinions on matters such as politics, economic growth, and social justice play a larger role in defining an individual's identity. This inquiry seeks to discover how a person's national identity shapes their opinions on these matters and influences how they identify.

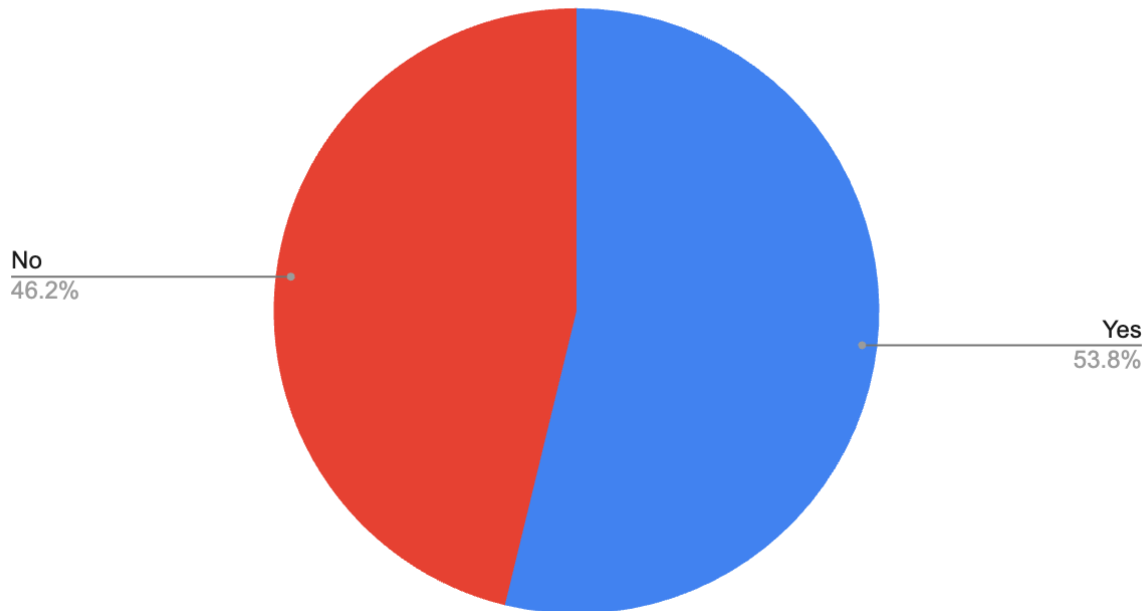
The majority of respondents—53.8% of them said yes to the prompt, compared to 46.2% who said no—stated that their national identity did affect their opinions on these matters.

Regarding politics, the majority of those surveyed desired to see the current system altered or criticised. Comments ranging from dissatisfaction to excitement were sparked by economic

progress, and when it came to social justice, the majority of replies focused on the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities.

The data related to this prompt is depicted in the pie chart below

Percentage

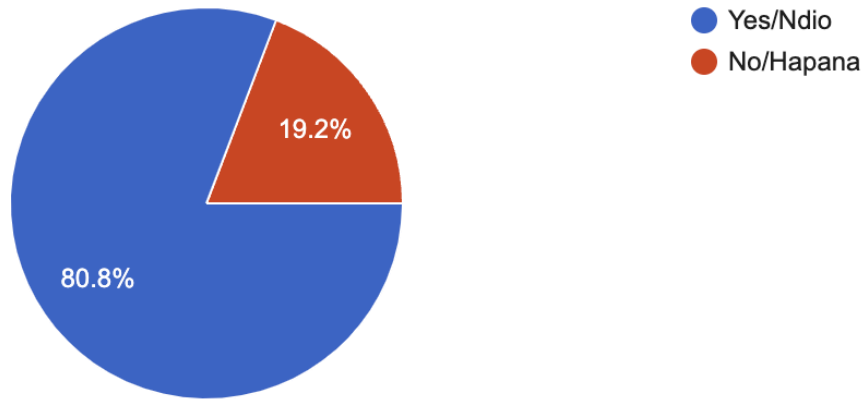


Graph 12: Responses to the question “How does being Tanzanian shape your views on issues like politics, social justice or economic development?”

8. Are you a Tanzanian patriot?

Since patriotism is a crucial component of identity, this question explores whether the respondent's sense of patriotism is influenced by their Tanzanian national identity.

The overwhelming majority of respondents said they are patriots, with 80.8% stating so and only 19.2% saying differently. The pie graph below depicts this.



Graph 13: Responses to the question “Are you a Tanzanian patriot?”

Limitations of the study

1. A sample size of 100 is insufficient to draw broad conclusions about a country with a population of more than 60 million people.
2. The survey was distributed only to the residents of Dar es Salaam, therefore opinions from people in other Tanzanian regions are not represented in the study.

Research Findings

1. Despite a nation's young age, citizens can have a strong sense of national identity.
2. The de facto national identity formed by governments and other influential groups is not dissimilar to the national identity perceived by the general public.
3. Individuals believe important aspects of national identity such as national ideals, are mirrored in themselves.
4. Individuals with a strong sense of national identity are not likely to have special connections with specific regions, clans or tribes of their nation.
5. Unique ties to specific regions are formed not only via family history or culture but also through the economic landscape.
6. Reduced discrimination leads to more positive attitudes towards national identity, causing individuals to incorporate more of their national identity into their personal identity.



7. National identity plays a small role in the day-to-day decisions made by individuals. Factors such as the economic landscape of a place affect those decisions.
8. National identity is important in determining a person's sense of belonging and community.
9. Individuals' opinions on social justice, politics, and economic progress are influenced by their national identity.

Conclusion

The influence of national identity on the formation of personal identity is significant. This study employs a number of ways to investigate this vast subject. In this study, results were drawn using a review of relevant literature, a case study, and primary data. While the notion of national identity is new to human history, it plays an essential part in the construction of individual identities in the modern world, and most people consider themselves as reflections of their nation.

More research like this should be conducted to better understand how the concept of a nation impacts everyday people and how influential forces can exploit this to their advantage as the decade progresses.

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