Short paper

Types and frequency of fingerprint minutiae in individuals of Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups of Nigeria

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Received: 27th May 2018, Revised: 8th March 2019, Accepted: 29th April 2019

Abstract The population distribution of fingerprint minutiae is necessary to improve efficiency of fingerprints in identifying individuals in a population-specific manner. The objective of the study was to determine the distribution of different types of minutiae fingerprint feature in two Nigerian ethnic populations. Fingerprints from forty-four (44) Igbo individuals and forty-four (44) Yoruba individuals, both of Nigeria were collected using a manual impression method that uses ink pad and paper. Of all the minutiae types considered, bifurcations and convergences accounted for 54.85% of the study’s total minutiae counts (TMC). This study shows that the Igbo ethnic group consistently have higher count of all minutiae types and higher total minutiae counts for both hands statistically significant at P<0.001. We found association between gender and minutiae distribution in some minutiae types including fragment/point or dot (FP), overlap (OL) and break (BR). This work revealed important variations among individuals from the two ethnic groups on the distribution and variability of minutiae in Nigeria populations.

Keywords: Dermatoglyphics, fingerprints, forensic, Igbo, minutiae, Nigeria, Yoruba.

1 Introduction

The study of dermatoglyphics in humans involves analyzing the epidermal ridges on the surface of the palms, soles, fingers, and toes of humans (Cummins and Midlo 1943). Dermatoglyphics have been widely employed in areas as anthropology, genetics and evolutionary studies in characterizing populations, analyzing the nature and origin of human variability, population
structure assessment, and the micro-differentiation among populations (Meier 1980, Durham and Plato 1990, Segura-Wang and Barrantes 2009). Previous studies of dermatoglyphics in human populations have hinted on the usefulness of pieces of information obtained from these characteristics in the understanding of the evolution and genetic structure in human populations (Blangero 1990, Crawford and Duggirala 1992), in characterizing syndromes and diseases (Schaumann and Alter 1976), and in personal identification in the field of forensic sciences (Dankmeijer et al. 1980, Champod et al. 2004, Faigman et al. 2008).

Worldwide, only features such as main pattern type, pattern intensity index or ridge count have been widely studied (Aase and Lyons 1971, Karthick et al. 2015), whereas other features, such as the minutiae or epidermal ridge breadth have received comparatively less attention, despite being of considerable interest due to their direct relevance in personal identification (Loesch 1983, Dankmeijer et al. 1980, Champod et al. 2004, Gutierrez-Redomero et al. 2007, Gutierrez-Redomero et al. 2011). The minutiae representation of the fingerprints has now been adopted by most of the commercially available automatic fingerprint matching systems because it has been relatively demonstrated to be stable (Pankanti et al. 2002) and can be extracted from low quality images whereas it is difficult to extract ridge features from low quality images (Iloanusi 2011).

Nigeria is a country of more than 150 million people, and her ethnic landscape is dominated by three major tribes: Hausa, Igbo and Yorubas according to National population commission (NPC) report of 2006. Although there has been considerable amount of dermatoglyphic studies carried out on Nigerian populations, only a few characteristic features have been focused on, while some others have received less or no attention. The earliest works on fingerprint characteristics for individuals of Nigerian origin were performed by Lestrange (1953) and Ojikutu (1964). Jantz and Brehme (1978) performed the first extensive in Yoruba finger and palmar dermatoglyphics, though Lestrange (1953) had reported a small number of females and Ojikutu (1964) had included Yoruba as part of his Nigeria sample.

These studies established the frequencies of the arch, loop and whorl pattern types in different Nigerian ethnic groups. Several other studies in different ethnic groups reporting frequencies of pattern types include Jaja et al. (2011) who studied the dermatoglyphics of the Ogoni people focusing on pattern frequencies, ridge count and A-B ridge count and Otobo and Jarimbo-Otobo (2016) who assessed the digital and palmar characteristics in the Ijaw ethnic group with a surprising high radial loop frequency. Eboh studied the digital dermatoglyphics of Anioma and Urhobo people of Nigeria and found no association between ethnicity and pattern while Mohammed (2014) studied digital dermatoglyphics in the Kanuri.

Several other studies assessed the association between different pattern types and health condition/phenotypes and often generated pattern frequencies
as part of it report. Dike et al. (2012) performed a comparative dermatoglyphics study of digital pattern, tri-radii and palmar distances in diabetic and hypertensive individuals in Rivers state. An association was observe between ulnar loop and hypertensive subject as well as between whorls and diabetic subject. Ethnicity was not considered. Oladipo et al. (2009) studied the association of digital and palmar dermatoglyphics pattern in Nigeria women with malignant mammary neoplasm and obtain significantly high mean DAT and a reduced total right ridge count as being indicative of the condition. Oladipo et al. (2010) examined the digital and TFRC as well as DAT and ATD in obese Ibibio individuals and concluded that arch on the first digit was significantly associated with obesity with a greater ATD and DAT in unobese individual.

An association study of dermatoglyphics in cancer patients indicated a 74.9% loop pattern on the right hand and 68.5% on the left hand, both significantly higher than in non-cancer individuals (Umans et al. 2013). Adekoya et al. (2013) assessed the relationship between dermatoglyphics and multiple intelligence among selected secondary schools students in Nigeria and found significant associations. The Yoruba in Jos were examined by Akimgbade et al. (2014) while Nigerians of undefined ethnicity were evaluated for association of dermatoglyphics and ABO blood group with no significant associations (Eboh 2013). The association of dermatoglyphics pattern in congenital deaf and mute as well as handedness has been reported (Osunwoke et al. 2010, Ogunaite et al. 2014).

The type and distribution of minutiae in the fingerprints of Nigerian have received little or no attention. However, Orike et al (2016) have reported an effort to explore the forensic applications of fingerprint minutiae for inferring the gender and ethnicity of an individual from fingerprints of an unknown Nigerian origin. Several studies have recently been undertaken on fingerprints from the Hausas of Nigeria. Recent studies by Adamu et al. (2016a, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b), Adamu (2017), and Adamu and Taura (2017) have investigated the minutiae in the Hausa population in Kano and estimated its association with sexual dimorphism in epidermal ridges, sex variation in thumb minutiae, estimation of body mass index, and sex estimation. There is therefore a need to assess the type and frequencies of different fingerprint minutiae in Nigerians of other ethnic origins, including Igbo and Yoruba.

2 Material and Methods

The population site for this study was University of Lagos. Samples were collected from staff and students of the University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos state, Nigeria, who volunteered to participate in the study. The selected participants were verified to be of Igbo and Yoruba ancestry which extends to at least 2-3 previous generations on both parent’s genealogies. Consent of the
participant was obtained adequately educating them on what the study aims to achieve and the risk involved in the data collections. Every participant was made to sign an informed consent after reading it to them. The participant’s demography including sex and tribal classification were obtained through a designed questionnaire are shown in Table 1. Participants were between the ages of 18-60; 44 Yorubas and 44 Igbos.

**Table 1:** Demography of the participants

| Ethnicity | Male Frequency | Female Frequency | Total |
|-----------|----------------|------------------|-------|
| Yoruba    | 30             | 14               | 44    |
| Igbo      | 36             | 8                | 44    |
| Total     | 66             | 22               | 88    |

Plain fingerprint of participants was collected manually using a blue-inked pad and a sheet of paper. Individual participant’s fingers were placed on the ink pad and then pressed on the paper which contained spaces for each of the ten fingers and also had provision for obtaining the participants personal and demographic data. The definitions of the minutiae used are according to Gutiérrez-Redomero et al. (2011) (Figure 1). The fingers/ digits were
designated the following letters: thumb (T), index (I), middle (M), ring (R) and little (L). The hands were designated left (L) and right (R).

The fingerprints were carefully examined with the aid of a hand lens. The occurrence of each type of minutiae were counted and recorded against each fingerprint. The difference in proportions of minutiae between the ethnic groups was tested for statistically significance using Fisher’s exact test and Univariate analysis on SPSS 21. The significance level was set at 0.053.

3 Results

The comparison made between the frequencies of the different classes of minutiae is also presented in Table 2. Among the study population the most frequent type is the bifurcations and convergence, which accounted for 54.85% of the study’s total minutiae counts (TMC). Fragment/point or dot and the bridge type, were the next most frequent representing 12.40% and 10.16% of the study’s TMC respectively. Association of the distribution of the minutiae types (MTs) on ethnic group was found for return and bifurcations and convergence at P< 0.01, while those found in overlap and crossbar were at a higher significant level of P<0.001 (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of different minutiae types in the two populations (total n= 21450).

| Minutiae Type               | Count          |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
|                             | Yoruba (n=10,206) | Igbo (n=11,244) |
|                             | N (%)  | Total (%) | N (%)  | Total (%) |
| Bifurcations and Convergence (BC) | 11,764 (54.85) | 5,916 (57.97)* | 5,848 (52.01) |
| Fragment/point or dot (FP)  | 2,660 (12.40) | 1,256 (12.3) | 1,404 (12.49) |
| Bridge (BG)                 | 2,178 (10.15) | 1,066 (10.45) | 1,112 (9.88) |
| Ridge Ending (ER)           | 1,328 (6.19)  | 556 (5.45)  | 772 (6.87)  |
| Overlap (OL)                | 854 (3.98)    | 338 (3.3)   | 516 (4.59)  **
| Break (BR)                  | 808 (3.77)    | 292 (2.86)  | 516 (4.59)  |
| Enclosures (EN)             | 758 (3.53)    | 338 (3.31)  | 420 (3.74)  |
| Crossbar (CP)               | 628 (2.93)    | 288 (2.82)  | 340 (3.02)  **
| Return (RT)                 | 406 (1.89)    | 90 (0.88)   | 316 (2.81)  **
| Others (OT)                 | 66 (0.31)     | 66 (0.65)   | 0 (0)       |

* Significantly higher at p<0.01, ** significantly higher at p<0.001
Table 3: The total count of minutiae (mean ± SD) over whole fingerprint for both hands.

| Hands          | Total (n=88) | Ethnic group (n=88) |
|----------------|--------------|---------------------|
|                |              | Yoruba (n=44) | Igbo (n=44) |
| Both Hands TMC | 243.75 ± 61.15 | 232.51 ± 76.16 | 256.20 ± 38.07* |
| Right hand TMC | 124.02 ± 38.65 | 117.38 ± 40.69 | 131.30 ± 37.15 |
| Left hand TMC  | 119.73 ± 38.03 | 115.20 ± 47.02 | 124.46 ± 25.27 |

* Significantly higher at p<0.001

In the study population, the counts (TMC) for the right and left hands were unequal between the tribes for both hands (Table 3). However, there was no significant association between tribal classifications and the varying TMCs for the right and left hands. On the other hand, this significant association was discovered for the total TMC.

Table 4: Presence or absence of different types of minutiae on all or any of the ten fingers and their descriptive statistics (Mean ± SD).

| Minutiae type | Total (N=88) | Yoruba | Igbo |
|---------------|--------------|--------|------|
|               | Present (%)  | Mean ± SD | Present (%)  | Mean ± SD | Present (%)  | Mean ± SD |
| BC            | 88 (100) | 133.68 ± 32.37 | 44 (100) | 134.45 ± 36.48 | 44 (100) | 132.91 ± 27.19 |
| ER            | 82 (93.18) | 15.09 ± 14.99 | 38 (86.36) | 12.64 ± 14.55 | 44 (100) | 17.55 ± 15.17 |
| FP            | 88 (100) | 30.23 ± 14.12 | 44 (100) | 28.55 ± 13.91 | 44 (100) | 31.91 ± 14.28 |
| OL            | 80 (90.91) | 9.70 ± 7.56 | 36 (81.82) | 7.68 ± 8.28 | 44 (100) | 11.73 ± 6.22 |
| CP            | 78 (88.64) | 7.14 ± 6.68 | 38 (86.36) | 6.55 ± 7.24 | 40 (90.91) | 7.73 ± 6.10 |
| BG            | 88 (100) | 24.75 ± 12.33 | 44 (100) | 24.23 ± 13.57 | 44 (100) | 25.27 ± 11.08 |
| BR            | 80 (90.91) | 9.18 ± 8.46 | 40 (9) | 6.64 ± 7.604 | 40 (90.91) | 11.73 ± 8.59 |
| EN            | 86 (97.73) | 8.61 ± 8.11 | 42 (95.46) | 7.68 ± 9.72 | 44 (100) | 9.55 ± 6.08 |
| RT            | 68 (77.73) | 4.61 ± 6.08 | 28 (63.64) | 2.05 ± 2.56 | 40 (90.91) | 7.18 ± 7.39 |
| OT            | 12 (13.64) | 0.75 ± 3.295 | 12 (27.27) | 1.50* ± 4.56 | 0 (0) | 0 |

¶ significantly higher at p<0.001; * significantly higher at p<0.01

Bifurcations and Convergence (BC); Fragment/point or dot (FP); Bridge (BG); Ridge Ending (ER); Overlap (OL); Break (BR); Enclosures (EN); Crossbar (CP); Return (RT); Others (OT)
From our data, we discovered that, not all minutiae types (MTs) were not present in all individuals. The only constant minutiae types (MTs) in the population were the bifurcations and convergence (BC), fragment/point or dot and the bridge types (Table 4), which showed varying levels of presence ranging from 77 - 93%, while the MT with the lowest presence level was the trifurcations; Dock and others types, found in only 13% of the study population. Furthermore, the frequencies of presence or absence of the MTs showed different variations according to the ethnic groups. However, dependence of the level of presence of the MTs on tribal classifications was only statistically significant in the trifurcations; Dock and others MT at \textit{p}<0.001, while the dependence was significant at \textit{p}<0.01 for overlap and return MTs (Table 4). While the tribal classification dependence on gender was not found to be significant for any of the classes of TMC (Figure 2), the analysis of the distribution showed that gender dependence was significant for the distribution of some MTs within the study population.

![Fig 2. Profile plot of the interaction of ethnicity and gender in the distribution total minutiae counts (TMC); for both hands (A), the right hand (B) and the left hand (C).]
We went further to check the dependent association between gender classifications and the distribution of the MTs (Table 5). The MTs distributions were found to be gender dependent in the bifurcations and convergence (BC), ridge ending (ER), fragment/point or dot (FP), overlap (OL) and break (BR) MTs. Furthermore, we also checked the tribal distributions of these MTs and their corresponding gender dependent association.

Table 5. Distribution of different minutiae types between the genders.

|       | MALE          | FEMALE        | P-Value (Fischer’s Test) |
|-------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|
|       | Present (%)   | Mean ± SD     | Present (%)   | Mean ± SD     |               |
| BC    | 100           | 132.36 ± 31.07| 100          | 138.03 ± 36.17| 0.008         |
| Igbo BC| 100           | 127.20 ± 25.23| 100          | 162.05 ± 13.43| 0.004         |
| ER    | 93.94         | 18.30 ± 16.40 | 90.91        | 6.21 ± 5.23   | 0.001         |
| Yoruba ER | 86.67       | 16.12 ± 16.42 | 85.71        | 5.41 ± 4.32   | 0.008         |
| FP    | 100           | 30.11 ± 15.08 | 100          | 32.15 ± 11.53| 0.001         |
| Igbo FP| 100           | 30.34 ± 15.12 | 100          | 39.52 ± 4.23  | 0.003         |
| OL    | 93.94         | 11.80 ± 8.22  | 81.82        | 7.21 ± 5.76   | 0.003         |
| Yoruba OL | 86.67     | 10.36 ± 9.68  | 71.43        | 4.72 ± 3.56   | 0.007         |
| BR    | 90.91         | 11.01 ± 9.6   | 90.91        | 5.23 ± 4.23   | 0.0001        |
| Igbo BR| 88.89         | 13.03 ± 9.51  | 100          | 8.18 ± 5.44   | 0.004         |
| Igbo EN| 100           | 10.09 ± 6.43  | 100          | 6.61 ± 1.57   | 0.007         |
| Igbo RT| 88.89         | 8.01 ± 8.62   | 100          | 5.72 ± 1.03   | 0.005         |

4. Discussion

In the application of fingerprinting for forensic identifications, ridge count and pattern type are not the only features in used. The absolute position, direction, and type of minutiae (e.g. termination or bifurcation) are also used. As important as minutiae are, only a few human population studies have been carried out (Gutierrez-Redomero et al. 2012) while fewer none has been carried out in Nigeria. The few studies on minutiae in Nigeria did not set out to evaluate the population characteristics of pattern. In the use of minutiae feature of fingerprint in identification, the frequency of appearance in the population is an important factor to consider (Gutiérrez-Redomero et al. 2011). This is because the features that are frequent in the population will be less indicative or unique to individuals than the rare features in the population. Gutierrez-Redomero et al. (2012) stated that the frequency of minutiae change in relation to population.
The most frequent minutiae type in our study, i.e. bifurcations and convergence, which accounted for more than 54.85% of the study’s total minutiae counts (TMC) is way higher than the 28.23 % recorded in a Spanish population (Gutiérrez-Redomero et al. 2011) for the same combined minutiae type. We collected our samples manually as against digital collection used in the case of the Spanish population and the dichotomy in the sample sizes. The rarity of the bifurcations and convergence may have also buttressed its value for identification in Spanish population, but not in Nigerian population as they are more frequent. Also ridge ending with a frequency of about 5% contradicts 65% frequency recorded in the same Spanish population. Therefore, further studies should be carried out to establish the variation in minutiae frequency in relation to population, especially using digital tools as used in the earlier minutiae studies.

Although Okajima (1970), Gutierrez-Redomero et al. (2007) and Gutierrez-Redomero et al. (2011) found basis for statistical association between some minutiae types’ distribution and gender, our study was able to find this association for MTs that showed no association in previous studies including fragment/point or dot (FP), overlap (OL) and break (BR) minutiae. Because there has been no work on the distribution study of minutiae on any Nigerian population, the results of this study could not be compared with previous study on Nigerians, hence further studies are still needed if the application of minutiae feature of fingerprint in forensic identification is going to be taken seriously in Nigeria.

5 Conclusions

The results of this study have provided us with insights on more morphological differences that exist even between different ethnic populations of the same country especially in dermatoglyphics. This knowledge if well researched on and harnessed can be an efficient and cost effective tool in forensic identifications of individuals of different ethnic groups in developing countries like Nigeria.

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