

Federalism and the Quest for Restructuring in Nigeria: Implication for Development

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ABSTRACT

In recent years a number of authors have delved into the subject of restructuring in Nigeria. However, unlike the others, this study aimed at examining the impact of restructuring on the socio-economic development of Nigeria. The study is methodologically structured in both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The latter drew its information from secondary sources such as textbooks, journal, articles, World Bank publication and internet sources. These were cogently described, explained and analyzed within the context of the subject matter under investigation. The quantitative approach involved the administration of structured questionnaire administered to sample population of 400 drawn from six Universities representing the six geopolitical zones. The responses from the questionnaire were analyzed and tested by using a non-parametric statistical tool; chi-square (X^2) at 0.05 level of significance at three degrees of freedom (3df). The findings reveal that there was significant relationship between restructuring and socio-economic development measured in terms of poverty reduction, improved educational capacity and health care delivery. Based on these findings, the study recommended that the federal government must as matter of urgency, take proactive steps to resolve the issues of poverty, improved the quality of education and health care delivery. These can be achieved through good governance that will be accountable and transparent to Nigerians, which must precede restructuring to achieve the desired results. Unless these proactive steps are taken the call for restructuring may not likely provide the desire results.

KEYWORDS: *Federalism, Restructuring, Implication, Development and Governance.*

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, federalism as a system of governance has been a pivotal aspect of political organization particularly in multi-ethnic societies such as Nigeria. It is on the basis of this that Nigerian federal system from inception was established to accommodate and protect its diverse ethnic groups and regional interest while promotion unity and development. However, over the years the system has faced significant challenges as many Nigerians have not seen the hopes and aspiration associated with its adoption. This explains why many are agitated and have openly called for restructuring (Ikelegbe, 2004). This call is not a mere political slogan; it represents a critical examination of how Nigeria's brand of federalism can be optimized to enhance national development. This call has assumed an unprecedented upsurge in recent years as many Nigerians have not fully appreciated the utility of federalism in the last sixty four years since independence. Instead, they have called for true federalism (Jinadu, 2004) with restructuring as a vehicle through which this can be realized and sustained.

Studies on the quest for true federalism through the mechanism of restructuring have been expansive. For example, Oonisakin (2018) had emphasized the various models of governance that can facilitate inclusivity and representation among the diverse ethnic groups while addressing the issue related to marginalization. Momoh (2018) had also expressed the

federal structure of Nigeria and its implication for governance and development. He argued that true federalism remains a sine-quo non for addressing regional disparities and equitable distribution of resources. Ayoade (2000) and Nnoli (1995) have explored the historical context of Nigerian federalism, emphasizing its colonial roots and its implication for contemporary governance. Their works highlight how the original design for federalism aimed at accommodating diversity has always resulted in tension among different ethnic groups, leading to conflict that undermine national cohesion.

Other contributors such as Osaghae (1998) and Suberu (2001) have delved in the dynamics of power distribution within the federal structure. They argue that the decentralization has marginalized regional governments, stifling local initiatives and exacerbating inequality across states. This centralization is often seen by many Nigerians as barriers to effective governance and sustainable development, prompting discussions about the need for greater autonomy for states which today have fueled the demand for restructuring. Adibe (2018) also delved on the political implication of restructuring in Nigeria and analyzing how difference political actors have approached the topic, the motivations behind the calls which include resource control, federalism regional autonomy and a critique of the political landscape that have shaped these discussions.

These works collectively address various aspects of restructuring within the context of Nigerian federalism, ranging from historical context to political dynamics, national integration, local government governance and state autonomy, each contributing significantly on how restructuring could reshape the nation's future. Yet, there remains a notable gap concerning the practical implication of restructuring on development outcomes within the context of Nigeria's federal structure. While the above scholars have articulated the theoretical underpinning of federation and its challenges, they have not systematically analyzed how the proposed restructuring measures could translate into tangible benefits for economic growth, social equity and political stability. This oversight is critical because understanding these implications is essential for policy makers aiming to implement reforms that genuinely address the needs of Nigerians which are as diverse as the population itself. Moreover, existing studies often focus on political dimension without adequately considering economic factors or social indicators that are crucial for assessing development outcome. For example, while some researchers discuss fiscal federalism role in resource allocation among states (Ogunnaices & Ojo, 2016) they do not fully explore how these financial arrangements impact local economics or citizens welfare directly.

This study therefore aims at filling this gap by examining the relationship between federalism, proposed restructuring efforts and their implications for development in Nigeria. It will interrogate existing literature and provide new insight into how restructuring could foster an environment conducive to sustainable development. In this way one will be able to understand how both the political structures and socio-economic realities may contribute in recalibrating the country to provide rapid growth and development within the context of Nigeria's federal structural arrangement and justifies the clamoring quest for restructuring in recent times.

This is important because as Nigeria grapples with the issues related to governance inefficiencies and socio-economic disparities exacerbated by its current federal structure, it becomes imperative to critically assess how restructuring can serve as a catalyst for meaningful development. This exploration will not only enrich academic discussions but also inform policy decisions aimed at fostering unity and progress within Nigeria's complex socio-political landscape.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This issue of restructuring in Nigeria has generated significant attention in both academic and policy cycles, particularly regarding its implication for development outcome.

Restructuring is a process of reorganizing the political, economic and social frameworks within the country to enhance governance, efficiency and equity. In Nigeria, the issue has been debated extensively due to the country's complex socio-political landscape characterized by ethnicity, regional disparity and historical grievances.

Nigeria is a nation with a rich tapestry of ethnic groups and cultures which has often led to tension and conflict over resource allocation and political representation. The current federal structure has been criticized for fostering inequality and marginalization among various ethnic reforms. As a result, the call for restructuring has emerged from different quarters advocating for more decentralized system that could potentially empower local governments and promote equitable development.

Despite extensive literature on restructuring, there remains a stable gap concerning the empirical evidence linking restructuring initiatives directly to measurable development outcomes. While theoretical discussions about regarding how restructuring could lead to improved governance and economic performance, there is insufficient-analysis on how these changes translate to tangible benefits for the citizens. This gap which is the focus of this study hinders policy makers from making informed decisions based on concrete data. To address this gap, the following research questions are formulated.

- i. How is restructuring going to reduce poverty in Nigeria?
- ii. How will restructuring improve access to education in Nigeria?
- iii. Can restructuring provide adequate health care delivery in Nigeria?

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

i. FEDERALISM: This is a constitutional mechanism whereby power and authority are shared between the central government and its component units such as the states and local government areas. This system allows the component units to enjoy a degree of autonomy, particularly in resource generation and utilization, making them coordinate rather than subordinate to the central government. Examples include, Nigeria, USA, Switzerland.

ii. RESTRUCTURING: Despite its numerous meanings, the word as used here refers to the reorganization, rearrangement and repositioning of the administration system to enhance efficiency in such a way that the states have autonomy in the generation and utilization of their resources in such a way that will be beneficial to local communities.

iii. DEVELOPMENT: The word means different things to different people. For this study; the world is used to mean any process which is aimed at improving the living standard of the citizens. Development efforts therefore will out of necessity must aim at reduction of unemployment, inequality, inflation price stability and protection of the environment. Thus, the aim of any development effort is improving the living standard of Nigerians.

iv. GOVERNANCE. This is the process of utilization material and human resources to achieve governmental predetermined goals and objectives. This usually involves the exercise of authority by those recruited or appointed to manage governmental institutions. There is no doubt that there are two types of governance; bad and good governance. For this study, governance is taken to mean good governance; a process of harnessing human and material resources to improve the livelihood of the citizens

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on the restructuring and its impact on socio-economic development are not easy to find. However, a number of authors have made an indirect link between restructuring and development. According to Stiglitz (2002) restructuring often involves policy reforms that facilitate market efficiency. He argues that effective restructuring must consider the importance of asymmetries in markets and who they can lead to inefficiencies. Therefore, this perspective highlights the need for policies that facilitate information flow among market participants,

which is crucial for socio-economic development in the case of Nigeria, restructuring. Numerous studies have explored the impact of restructuring on socio-economic developments on different contexts. For example, Baker (2018) examined the effects of corporate restructuring on employment levels in manufacturing sectors. The findings indicated that while initial job losses were common during restructuring phases, long term effects included increased productivity and potential job creation as firms adapted to how market condition. Khan & Junaid (2020) analyzed how state led restructuring influenced poverty reduction strategies their research highlighted that successful restructuring could lead to improved infrastructure and services, and ultimately enhancing living standards for marginalized population. Although the level scenarios are related to restructuring from the economic perspectives. These are level cases studies to show that restructuring will lead to socio-economic development. For example, Seekings & Natrass (2005) have pointed out that post-apartheid restructuring in South Africa was aimed at addressing historical inequalities through policies promoting inclusive economic growth.

Fischer (2019) has also pointed out that the transition economic of Eastern Europe post-1990 underwent extensive restructuring as they shifted from controlling planned economies to market oriented systems. Although the transition was fraught with challenges, they ultimately resulted in greater economic integration with global markets and improving living standards over time. These cases illustrate how targeted restructuring can lead to significant social changes alongside economic improvement.

In the context of Nigeria, restructuring has a historical context which could be traced to colonial rule and subsequent independent. The amalgamation of diverse ethnic groups into a single political entity led to persistent tension regarding resource control and representation (Osaghae, 2018). This was exacerbated by the civil war (1967-1970) when the clamour for inclusion into governance structure by ethnic nationalities became predominant in the policy. However, the debate has intensified in recent times due to the present economic realities, where unemployment, excruciating poverty and insecurity have become recurrent realities. This explains why Ezeani (2021) has emphasized that without addressing structural inequalities through effective governance reform socio-economic development will remain a mirage. This call for restructuring in recent times has included, the formation state policies, fiscal federalism and local government autonomy. The implication of this is the improvement of service delivery at the local level fostering economic growth through localized decision-making process and enhancement accountability among public officials (Adeola, 2023). However, Nwankwo (2022) has caution against hasty restructuring in which many exacerbate the existing tension among ethnic groups rather than promote unity. Therefore, any restructuring initiative must consider the socio-political dynamics that are peculiar to Nigeria.

The above is by no means an attempt to diminish the practical implication restructuring in Nigeria as there are classic cases where restructuring led to significant socioeconomic development in different areas of Nigeria. In Lagos for example local government reforms led to significant improvement in infrastructure and service delivery (Ogunleye & Adetunji, 2023). Conversely, states with less effective governance structure continue with poverty underdevelopment despite class for restructuring. Thus, it safe to argue that since the epistemic relevance of restructuring is rooted from federalism which emphasizes decentralization, it should be encouraged because it will allow for equitable distribution of resources and power among the diverse multiple ethnic groups (Akinyemi, 2020). In this way peace and unity among these groups will be guarantee and development.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The establishment of an appropriate theoretical framework is an essential aspect of any political science-oriented study. In this regard, this study has utilized the context of institutional

theory. This is a framework that seek to understand the structures, norms and rules that shape social behaviour within organization. It emphasizes, the role of institution; defined as established laws practices and customs influencing organizational action and decisions. The theory emerged in response to the need for deepen understanding of how organization operate within the social context particular in legitimacy and stability.

In their seminal work, “institutional organization: formal structures as Myth and Ceremony” Meyer & Rowan (1977) establish the idea organization are not merely rational entities focused on efficiency but are also shaped by cultural and social pressures that dictate their structure and behaviour (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The utility of this theory to this study is that Nigeria operates a federal system characterized by multiple levels of governments including; federal, states and local governments. These levels put together generate institutional pressures such as public opinion, civil society advocacy for equity among regions, international donors’ expectations for good governance practices etc. These pressures are the ones that shape how restructuring institutions are formulated and executed.

The application of this theory to this work therefore suggests correctly that any restructuring effort in Nigeria must consider the institutional context within which it operates. Efforts aimed at changing the structures without addressing the underlying legitimacy issues will fail. For example, if the citizens perceive restructuring as merely a tool political gain rather than genuine reforms aimed at improving their socio-economic conditions resistance may soon set in. Thus, institutional theory provides us with a valuable insight into the complexities surrounding restructuring in a federal system such as Nigeria. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for policy makers aiming at effective government reforms that resonates with the diversified multi-ethnic needs of Nigerian citizens. It is for this reason that the study is anchored on institutional theory.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized both the qualitative and quantitative methods. The former involved data drawn from secondary sources such as textbooks, journal, articles, government publication, and internet sources etc. These are cogently described discussed, explained and analyzed within the subject matter under investigation. The quantitative method involved the administration of questionnaires to a sample population of 400 drawn from six universities from the six geopolitical zones using the maximum variation sampling technique. These universities include, Federal University, Otuoke (South-South), Lagos State University (South West), University of Nigeria, Nsukka South East; University of Maiduguri (North-East); University of Ilorin (North-Central); and Ahmadu Bello University; Zaria (North West) for this to be achieved the researcher employed the services of resource persons in the six universities whose responsibility was to administer and retrieve the questionnaires. The process took four weeks in all. The sample mainly academic staff of social sciences purposively selected because of the assumption that as social scientists they were in a better position to appreciate the variables under investigation.

Table 1 below shows the distribution of sample per each university.

S/N	University	Male	Female	Total
1	Federal University Oluoka (S.S)	35	25	60
2	Lagos State university (S.W)	35	25	60
3	University of Nigeria, Nsukka (SE)	35	35	70
4	University of Maduguri (NE)	35	35	70
5	University of Ilorin (N.C)	35	35	70
6	Abmadu Bello University Zaira (NW)	35	35	70
Total				400

Source field work. 2024

The responses were tabulated and tested using a non-parametric statistical tool; chi square X^2 at 0.05 level of significance and 3df. Where $X^2 = \sum \frac{(Of-ef)^2}{ef}$

Where:

X^2 = chi-square

\sum = Summation sign

Of = observed frequency

ef = expected frequency

- = Division sign

PRESENTATION OF RESULT

HYPOTHESIS I

(H₀) There is no significant relationship between restructuring and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

(H_i) There is significance relationship between restructuring and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Items	SA/A	SD/D	Total	Df	X ² - Cal	X ² - Cri	Decision
1	55	45	400				
2	59	41	400				
3	66	34	400	3		7.82	H ₀ is rejected
4	61	39	400		35.28		

Source: Field work, 2024. **P>0.05**

In Table 1 above, at an alpha level of 0.05 and a degree of freedom (df) of 3, the critical value is 7.82, while the computed value is 35.28. Since the computed value exceeds the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates a significant relationship between restructuring and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2

(H₀) There is no significant relationship between restructuring and improved access to education in Nigeria.

(H_i) There is significant relationship between restructuring and improved access to education in Nigeria.

Items	SA/A	SD/D	Total	Df	X ² - Cal	X ² - Cri	Decision
1	65	35	400				
2	50	50	400				
3	64	36	400	3	6.63	7.82	H ₀ is Retain
4	64	39	400				

Source: Fieldwork, 2024. **P>0.05**

In Table 2, with a significance level of 0.05 and a degree of freedom (df) of 3, the critical value is 7.82, while the computed value is 5.64. Since the computed value is lower than the critical value, the null hypothesis is upheld. This indicates that there is no significant relationship between restructuring and enhanced access to education in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three

(H₀): There is no significant relationship between restructuring and provision of adequate health care delivery in Nigeria.

(H1) There is significant relationship between restructuring and provision of adequate health care delivery in Nigeria.

Items	SA/A	SD/D	Total	Df	X ² - Cal	X ² - Cri	Decision
1	56	44	400				
2	58	42	400				
3	56	44	400	3	49.29	7.82	H0 is Rejected
4	59	41	400				

Source Field work, 2024 . P>0.05

As presented in Table 4, with a significance level of 0.05 and a degree of freedom (df) of 3, the critical value is determined to be 7.82, while the computed value stands at 49.29. Given that the computed value exceeds the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected. This result indicates a substantial relationship between restructuring efforts and the effective provision of adequate healthcare services in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal three crucial aspects of restructuring in Nigeria. Firstly, there was a significant relationship between restructuring and poverty reduction in Nigeria. Second, there was a significant relationship between restructuring and improved access to education in Nigeria. Thirdly, there exists a significant relationship between restructuring and the provision of adequate health care delivery in Nigeria. These findings no doubt confirm what some scholars have argued for a long time. It is argued that the hallmark of restructuring is to decentralise power and authority to address the multifaceted issues affecting the country. These challenges include man poverty and unemployment, infrastructural decay, failing academic standards, and poor health care delivery, just to mention a few. Adeleke (2020) and Ogurgani & Ojo (2020) have argued that by transferring power and authority from the federal to state and local governments, tiers of governance have greater control over resources and decision-making processes which can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the local communities effectively. This is so because the local governments are often more responsive to their specific challenges and can locate resources, leading to better resource management, especially within the educational sector, to achieve maximum efficiency (Adeleke & Adebayo, 2023). This is even more important as the current situation of Nigeria, where many states struggle with direct constraints that limit their ability to invest in educational infrastructure and resources (World Bank 2021).

Besides, restructuring encourages diversification thereby creating new jobs and resolving unemployment (World Bank, 2023). This is imperative necessity given the fact the Nigeria's monocultural economy since independence has not taken the country out of its socio-economic quagmire. This can enhance competitiveness among states and reduced not only poverty but also improvement in education and health sectors. Adeshina & Ojo (2020), Ogunyemi & Ojo (2023) have also argued that restructuring will provide the opportunity to revise the educational curriculum of Nigeria which presently have failed to arm students with appropriate skills in the contemporary job market.

From the above, it appears few scholars is on their institution rather than governance. While institutional changes may bring about it changes in the socio-economic development. It is doubtful if these changes can occur if the process of governance remains the same. This explains why some scholars have argued that improving governance should take precedence over structural changes (Adebayo & Olufemi 2022).

This will enhance accountability and transparency within the existing framework which ultimately will be more effective in addressing the issues of mismanagement and corruption, which is the substantive core administrative decadence rather than altering the entire structures.

The above exposition suggests that while restructuring holds promises for addressing the systemic issues contributing to poverty failing educational standards, poor health care delivery system, careful consideration must be given to potential drawbacks before embarking on it.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study no doubt reveal that a positive relationship exists between restructuring and socio-economic development which has been explained in this study in terms of poverty reduction, improved education and health care delivery in Nigeria. However, examining these findings reveal a complex interplay between the calling for restructuring and those who feel that the process in practice might exacerbate the tension that exist among the divergent three nationalities, especially when some ethnic groups are seen to have benefited to much at the expense of the other (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2020). This perhaps is part of the reason why the Northern part of the country is not so enthusiastic about the restructuring agenda. This means that restructuring Nigeria need to be cautiously carried out in such a way that the fears from some part of Nigeria should give a second look. Therefore, as already highlighted our emphasis in Nigeria should be on good governance that will be accountable to its citizens, and reduce the most pressing issues of poverty, failing educational standards and health care delivery system once this is achieved within the existing framework, restructuring will be beneficial to all parts of the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings made in this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. The federal government of Nigeria should urgently consider restructuring as a panacea to the myriad socio-economic and political quagmire the nation has been grappling with since the re-establishment of multiparty democracy in Nigeria in 1999. Restructuring's hallmark is that it will provide opportunities for job creation, poverty reduction, adequate health care delivery systems, and improved access to education.
- ii. Beyond restructuring, all levels of governments must ensure that government institutions do the work for which they were created to do and in accordance with the rule of law. This requires the prioritization of the Nigerian citizens in all their policies and programs, so that the citizens will enjoy the dividends of democracy. This is what good governance is all about.
- iii. Both states and local governments must establish a synergy between the government and the citizens in policy formulations to ensure that Nigerians participate in issues that affect their communities. In doing so, the citizens will be more enthusiastic to see that government policy and programmes succeed thereby creating more jobs opportunities that reduce poverty among youths in our local communities. This success will generate autocentric growth and development in the long-run.

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