

Public perception of restructuring as a solution to Nigeria's security challenge: Evidence from Enugu State

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Abstract

Background: For some time now, there have been agitations for the restructuring of Nigeria. Those championing the agitations believe that it holds the key for the different security challenges facing the country.

Objectives: The objective of this study was to ascertain public perception of restructuring as solution to different security challenges facing Nigeria. The general objectives were further broken down into three others objectives from where research questions were derived.

Method: Descriptive survey research design was used for the study with questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The sample size was made up of 385 respondents who were selected through multi-stage sampling technique. The study was conducted in Enugu State, South-East Nigeria.

Results: The result of the study showed that majority of the respondents reported that restructuring holds the key for resolving Nigeria's security challenges. The respondents were of the view that if Nigeria restructures, it will help the country, to a large extent, in addressing its security challenges. The current study has shown that most of the respondents were of the view that restructuring has the propensity to address the security challenges facing Nigeria by correcting imbalance in the country, taking away suspicion among the different groups in Nigeria, resulting to equitable distribution of wealth, resulting to more accountability, reducing ethnic clash and reducing class disparity. Finally, the result of this study has shown that despite the fact that restructuring is important, its implementation may be limited by a number of factors such as selfishness, lack of political will, ethnic considerations, lack of agreement among agitators and constitutional limitations.

Conclusion: It is concluded that restructuring is an important tool for addressing the many security challenges facing Nigeria.

Unique Contribution: This study has highlighted the pathways for addressing the current security challenges facing Nigeria.

Keywords: agitation; restructuring; security challenges; solution; Nigeria

Introduction

For some time now, Nigeria has continued to face different agitations from different groups who are not comfortable with the ways things are happening in the country. Some groups and individuals feel that the current structure of Nigeria is not beneficial to the general masses and that it favours a select few, hence should be restructured. The agitations became more pronounced following the 2015 general election. Before the election, campaigns among political parties seriously hinged on ethnicity and religion. President Mohammadu Buhari who was then the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) is of Hausa/ Fulani extraction and is also seen as having negative sentiment against the South-East Nigeria who are largely Igbo. The APC is also largely perceived as political party for Muslim North.

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) that is regarded as sympathizing with South-East Nigeria featured the then President Goodluck Ebere Jonathan, who is from Bayelsa State. Jonathan was also regarded as having positive sentiment towards the South-East. However, after the election, President Jonathan lost to the current Mohammadu Buhari. This rekindled the suspicion regarding the dislike for South-East region. Gever *et al.* (2019) argues that suspicion is one of the reasons restructuring debate has continued to resurface in Nigeria.

When the results of the election were announced, president Buhari did not win even a single state from South-East Nigeria. The States that make up the South-East include Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo. Even in South-South Nigeria, President Buhari did not win a single state. The states that make up the South-South Nigeria include: Bayelsa, Edo, Rivers, Delta, Cross-River, and Akwa-Ibom. This situation heightened tension among people from the zone who feared that Buhari would marginalize them. The political appointments made by Buhari did not help matters either. His political appointments did not convince Nigerians that he was anything different from the reservations they expressed. The *Punch* editorial of August 1, 2016 captioned 'Buhari's parochial appointments' described Buhari's political appointments as lopsided in favour of the north. Part of the editorial reads:

it is a sad reality of the Nigerian experience that when crisis –political or economic-hits, segments of the populace retreat into ethnic and sectarian cocoons. It is in this combustible mix that Buhari stubbornly presses ahead with appointments that weigh heavily in favour of his Northern regional base.

The above assertion captioned the views of the *Punch*, a Southern based newspaper on the appointments of Buhari and their implications on Nigeria's unity. Groups have at different fora expressed reservations over the manner of appointments made by the Buhari government and warned that it constitutes a threat to Nigeria's unity. The Ohanaeze, an apex socio-cultural group for the promotion of the interest of South- East Nigeria, has consistently released statements pointing to the fact that the Igbos have been marginalized and that such act fuels agitations. One of statements reads:

As long as President Buhari continues to 'live out his speech abroad' that his government will favour those who voted 97% for him against those who voted 3% for him so long will the dissatisfaction and unrest in our polity subsist. There is no oil well anywhere in Northern Nigeria. Four of the five states in the South-east have proven oil resources some of which provide our nation's revenue yet our people are not found fit

to be adequately represented in a key corporate institution like the NNPC (Eze, 2017, para 4).

The submission above has revealed two cardinal issues relevant to the current study. First is the issue of voting pattern and dividend of democracy and second is the issue of agitations as a result of perceived lopsidedness in appointments. These two broad issues are central in a multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria. This is because, those from South-East Nigeria perceive that the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari may not favour them because of the marginal votes he got from the zone during the election. In the second place, they believe that the agitations for the creation of Biafra are fuelled by such lopsidedness in appointments. Whatever is the case, the current agitations have had a significant negative impact on the security of lives and property. It is against this background that the current study examined public perception of restructuring as a solution to Nigeria's security challenges.

Study objectives

The general objective of this study was to determine public perception of restructuring as a solution to Nigeria's security challenges. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To determine public perception of the extent restructuring can address the problem of insecurity in Nigeria.
2. To determine public perception of the ways restructuring can address Nigeria's national security.
3. To ascertain public perception of challenges against the restructuring of Nigeria.
1. of challenges against the restructuring of Nigeria?

Literature Review

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society, comprised of different ethnic nationalities with diverse belief systems, customs and institutions. The exact number of ethnic groups is in contention as there are conflicting figures. Ayatse and Akuva (2013) put the number of ethnic groups in Nigeria at 350 while Ajayi (2005) says the number of ethnic groups in Nigeria is 374. Whatever scholars say about the exact number of ethnic groups in Nigeria, the point is that each group wants to have a sense of belonging. Each group in Nigeria is very sensitive to issues in the country. This partly explains why a wide range of events in the country are interpreted within the lenses of ethnic affiliations.

Ethnic diversities of countries have resulted to different bloody conflicts. This is because each group tries to outsmart the other. There is hardly ethnic trust among the different ethnic groups. Ojie and Ewhrudjakpor (2009) affirm that most of the wars fought in Africa during the last four decades cannot be separated from ethnic diversity. In Africa, ethnicity is treated as an important variable because people utilized ethnicity as a yardstick for measuring serious national issues. For example, Amharas and the Tigreans in Ethiopia fought a civil war against Oromos, and Eritreans due to ethnic differences. A similar situation played out in Djibouti where the Afars and the Issas went to war against each other. The situation is not different in Sudan where there was a violent disagreement involving the 'Arabized' northerners and African Southerners. Even the political environment in African is characterized by ethnicity. This is because ethnic affiliation is made a centre stage during electioneering campaigns. For example

in Sierra Leone, the political contestation in that country is hinged on ethnic rivalry involving the Moslem Temme of the north and the Mende of the South with the powerful and influential majority, the Creoles playing a balancing role. Furthermore, the situation in Congo-Brazzaville is not different as ethnicity has sharply divided the country (Ojie & Ewhrudjakpor, 2009). The point to make here is that ethnic diversity is a serious problem in Africa and this has negatively impacted on its politics as well as relationship among the different people in different countries of the continent. This situation has made Africa volatile to conflicts with corresponding economic implications.

Nigeria had practiced regionalism in the past with regions like the Western Region, Eastern Region, Northern Region and later, Mid-Western region which was created in 1963. According to Ademola (2014), the experience of regionalism in Nigeria suggests that such a system of political administration was not suitable for country vis-à-vis dividends of democracy. Ademola argues that when regions are created and granted political autonomy, less attention is paid to ethnic interest with greater attention to region interest. Region, according to Ademola, is as defined by leaders of dominant ethnic groups while the minority ethnic groups continue to suffer. The point to make here is that there is no perfect system; each system has its peculiarities and imbalances. The most important thing is to ensure that everyone has a sense of belonging.

Nigeria currently operates a federal system with 36 states as the federating units. Going by the current structure, all natural resources found in individual states are exploited by the Federal Government and shared among all the federating units, including the Federal Capital Territory Abuja. Considering the role of fund in governance and by extension, provision of dividends of democracy, revenue allocation has often been central to the debate on the unity of Nigeria. According to Akujuru (2015) revenue allocation and sharing formula is one of the serious issues that generates controversies and agitations. Each region wants to ensure that they get their fair share of the national cake. Where it is perceived that there is an imbalance in the sharing of revenue, it will lead to agitations.

Over the years, Nigeria has struggled to achieve balance in her revenue sharing to avoid agitations. To achieve this, different committees and commissions have been set with a mandate of ensuring that the country gets a revenue allocation formula that is less controversial and agreeable by majority of Nigerians. Examples of some of the committees include: the Hicks-Phillipson Commission (1951); the Binns Commission (1964); the Raisman Commission (1958); Phillipson Commission (1946), the Aboyade Technical Committee (1977); the Chicks Commission (1968); the Dina Interim Committee (1968); the Okigbo Commission (1980), the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (1989) and various military decrees (revisions) particularly 1970, 1971, 1992, etc. It is essential to clarify here that except that of Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission which was established as a legal and permanent entity to deal with fiscal matters on a more regular basis as the need arises, the rest of the committees were temporary (Lukpata, 2013),

Till date, Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission deals with all issues relating to resource allocation as well as salary and wages of Nigerian workers. Yet, agitations for a restructuring of Nigeria has continued to define public discourse. These agitations have become more pronounced during the administrations of president Muhammadu Buhari.

Violent agitation and insecurity in Nigeria

For some time now violent agitations have continued to define the discourse in Nigeria's public space. Gever *et al.* (2019) defines restructuring agitation as the need to reorganize the administration of Nigeria vis-avis the sharing of power and political administration. Gever *et al.* add that restructuring agitation is in reference to the possession of power between the Federal Government of Nigeria as well as other federating units. Agitations in Nigeria are not usually peaceful as some of them are violent, leading to the loss of lives and properties.

In the opinion of Kalejaiye and Alliyu (2013), even though every country has its peculiar challenges, violent agitations have emerged as a serious security problem confronting Nigeria. Researchers (Alao & Egwuonwu 2012; Onuoha 2016) are in agreement that the violent agitation in Niger Delta, for instance, is attributed to the need to have control over the oil deposit in the region. Some people from the region feel that even though the region is producing oil, the area is largely under developed because its resources are used to develop other regions of the country. However, going by the current structure of Nigeria, natural resources such as oil belong to the federal government who exploits and manages it for the benefit of the entire country. This arrangement is generating agitations because the exploration of oil in the area has made the land infertile for farming as well as caused damage to aquatic animals. Consequently, the area has experienced violent activities such as bombing of oil installations, kidnapping of oil workers, among others.

Also, the agitations for the for succession is the primary driver for the Movement for the Actualization for the Sovereign State of Biafra conflict that resulted to the setting of Radio Biafra (Thompson, Ojukwu & Nwaorgu, 2016). The agitation has really become bloody because different people have lost their lives in the process. The group currently operates as Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) with Mazi Nnamdi Kanu as its leader. On several occasions, members of the group have clashed with security operatives resulting to the loss of lives and properties. The group equally makes efforts to implement some of its instructions most of which become violent. A good example here is the sit-at-home order which the group declared to be observed every Monday to mount pressure on the federal government for the release of their leader, Nnamdi Kanu who has been in detention. The *Nation* newspaper a story captured the security situation thus:

There were killings in parts of the Southeast yesterday as residents were forced to stay at home following the call by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Major towns, markets and streets were deserted despite security agencies urging people to go about their normal business. Security agents had a busy day; they clashed in some places with suspected IPOB members who were enforcing the call..... No fewer than 14 persons were feared killed while hoodlums attacked commercial vehicles and residents (*Nation* 2021).

The above words provide explanation regarding the losses experienced as a result of the violent agitations. Also, the Boko Haram sect is agitating to eliminate any form of western education and establish Islamic education as well as create an administration based on Islamic injunctions (Ajibola, 2015). The group feels that western education is bad and should be replaced with Islamic education. The sect has launched series of attacks in some part of Nigeria, kidnapped

different children and women. Public places like schools, churches and markets have been attacks.

When violent agitations take place, they have serious negative impact on the society. This assumption is supported by evidence in literature (e.g., Dunne & Tian 2015; Iyoboyi, 2014) because researchers reported that violent agitations impact negatively on the whole society. Business activities can hardly flourish during violent act. Lives that are lost during such agitations can never be regained. Researchers (e.g., Rindap & Auwal 2014; Majekodunmi 2015) who have examined issues related to the conflict linked to restructuring agitations associate it with the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorate by Fredrick Lord Lugard. Therefore, the literature on agitation in Nigeria is very voluminous and less conflicting. Literature is yet to focus on public perception of restructuring as a solution to Nigeria's security challenges.

Theoretical Framework

This study made use of Immanuel Kant's theory of perception to articulate its argument. Kant propounded the theory in 1902 to explain how perception works. According to Kant, imagination is at the centre of human perception. Kant adds that without imagination, perception cannot take place (Kant, 1902; 1992; 1997; 2002; 2005, 2006, 2012). The argument of Kant was that although advocates empiricism are wrong in their postulation that regarding the dynamics and workings of perception. The argument of the empiricists is that human receptive sensible capacities are responsible for the production of the images people have. However, Kant holds a contrary view because according to him there is something more needed to understand how perception works. That which is needed, in the view of Kant, is the synthetic activity of the imagination. He said imagination; which is an active faculty of the synthesis of the manifold [of sense] in human is responsible for perception. Kant adds further that before imagination can be converted into human image, there has to be a context; which determines whether perception will be positive or negative. For example, the political appointments made by President Muhammadu Buhari must have provided the context for some people to feel that they are marginalized. The imbalance in the number of states across the different geopolitical zones may have also provided the context for people to feel that there is the need for restructuring of Nigeria. The research found this study theory to the current study because it provides the basis for understanding how the general public perceive the importance of restructuring as a solution to the growing insecurity in Nigeria.

Methodology

To conduct this study, the researcher needed to follow systematic approach. Therefore, descriptive survey was utilized to conduct the study. The application of descriptive survey to execute the study was because it is better suited for studies that aim to describe, explain or explore a phenomenon. The researcher carried out the study in Enugu State Nigeria. Enugu is located in South-East Nigeria, one of the areas where agitations are made against the current structure of Nigeria. The population of Enugu State is 4,411,119 (NBS, 2012).

The sample size for the study was 385 respondents who were sampled with the aid of Australian calculator. The researcher combined purposive sampling and simple random sampling

as sampling techniques for the study. Therefore, the researcher made use of purposive sampling technique to select Enugu State as the location for the study. In Enugu State, the researcher drew the sample from Enugu metropolis. The choice of Enugu metropolis was because people in cities are more likely to have better information regarding restructuring than their counterparts in other areas. The questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection for the study. The choice of the questionnaire was because of its ability to generate large volume of data (Ikechukwu-Ilomuanya *et al.*, 2021; Obodo, *et al.*, 2021; Oyeoku, *et al.*, 2021; Talabi *et al.*, 2021; Okpara *et al.*, 2021; Ugwuoke, *et al.*, 2021). The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part paid attention to the demographics of the respondents while the second part paid attention to the psychographics of the sample. The respondents' format for the questionnaire was a four point likert scale. Three communication experts at the University of Nigeria validated the questionnaire. The comments of the experts assisted the researcher in preparing a final draft of the questionnaire copy. The test re-test approach was deployed to determine the reliability of the study. The interval that was used for the retest analysis was two weeks and the reliability analysis yielded an outcome of correlation coefficient of .72. This means that the instrument was reliable. Regarding data analysis, the researcher made use of descriptive statistics like simple percentages. The analysis was done with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The results of the analysis were presented in tables.

Results

The researcher administered a total of 385 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. However, 352 copies representing 91% were filled and returned. The bio-data of the result showed that the sample was 59% male and 41% female. Additionally, the result showed that the mean age of the respondents was 25 years. Concerning religion, the sample was 96% Christians. The result of the study is further presented below:

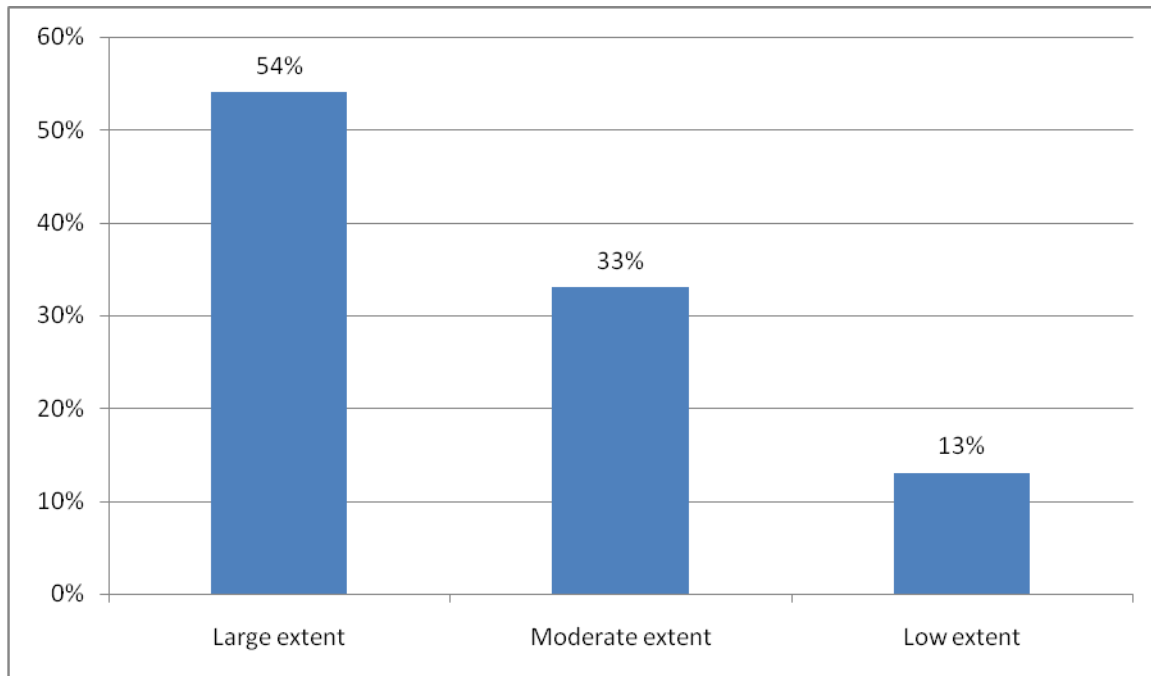


Figure 1 Public perception of the extent restructuring can addressing Nigeria's security challenges

The aim of computing the table above was to determine public perception of the extent restructuring can address the security challenges facing Nigeria. The result of the study showed that more than half of the respondents reported that restructuring can address Nigeria’s security challenges to a large extent, very few of them reported low extent. The implication here is that the respondents regard restructuring as essential for combating the many security challenges facing Nigeria. The researcher further determined how restructuring can address the problem of lingering insecurity in Nigeria and the result is presented below:

Table 1: Public perception of how restructuring can address Nigeria’s insecurity

S/N	Items	X ²	SD	Decision
1	It will correct imbalance	3.2	.45	Accepted
2	It will take away suspicion	2.8	.67	Accepted
3	It will result to equitable distribution of wealth	2.9	.66	Accepted
4	It will result to more accountability	3.2	.43	Accepted
5	It will reduce ethnic clash	2.7	.33	Accepted
6	It will reduce class disparity	3.2	.59	Accepted

In table one above; the researcher determined how restructuring can address the problem of insecurity in Nigeria. The result of the study showed that all the items presented in the table were accepted as the ways restructuring can address the problem of insecurity in Nigeria. This is because the items had mean scores of 2.5 and above, which is the benchmark for accepting or rejecting items. To ascertain public perception of challenges against the restructuring of Nigeria, the following table was computed:

Table II: Public perception of challenges to restructuring in Nigeria

S/N	Items	X ²	SD	Decision
1	Selfishness	3.2	.43	Accepted
2	Lack of political will	2.7	.27	Accepted
3	Ethnic considerations	2.6	.36	Accepted
4	Lack of agreement among agitators	3.1	.76	Accepted
5	Constitutional limitations	3.2	.58	Accepted

The essence of Table 2 above was to determine the challenges to the restructuring of Nigeria. The result of the analysis showed that all the five items presented were accepted as ways of addressing the lingering disputes. All the items tested in the study had mean scores of 2.5 and above which is the benchmark for accepting or rejecting items.

Discussion of Findings

The objective of this study was to ascertain public perception of restructuring as solution to different security challenges facing Nigeria. The general objectives were further broken down into three others objectives. The researchers examined 385 respondents from Enugu State and found that majority of the respondents reported that restructuring holds the key to addressing Nigeria’s security challenges. The respondents were of the view that if Nigeria is restructured, it will help the country to a large extent in addressing its security challenges. This current study extends previous ones (Gever, *et al.*, 2019; Alao & Egwuonwu 2012) on restructuring. For example Gever *et al.* (2019) who is among the first researchers to look at issues related to restructuring only paid attention to newspaper coverage. Gever *et al.* did not link restructuring to the current challenges facing Nigeria. However, the current study has filled this gap by extending argument on restructuring to include public perception on how restructuring can address the security challenges currently facing Nigeria.

Additionally, the current study has shown that most of the respondents were of the view that restructuring has the propensity to address the security challenges facing Nigeria by correcting imbalance in the country, taking away suspicion among the different groups in Nigeria, resulting to equitable distribution of wealth, resulting to more accountability, reducing ethnic clash and reducing class disparity. The current study has extended previous ones (Onuoha 2016; Thompson, Ojukwu & Nwaorgu, 2016) that have examined issues related to the security challenges in Nigeria. Most of these studies did not look at how restructuring can serve as a

solution to the economic challenges facing Nigeria. Therefore, the current study has extended arguments regarding the centrality of restructuring in addressing the security challenges facing Nigeria.

Finally, the result of this study has shown that despite the fact that restructuring is important, its implementation may be limited by a number of factors such as selfishness, lack of political will, ethnic considerations, lack of agreement among agitators and constitutional limitations. This aspects of the study has shown that even though the public perceive restructuring as important to Nigeria's security issues, its implementation will be limited. This result also extends previous studies (Dunne & Tian 2015; Iyoboyi, 2014) that highlight solutions to the current security issues in Nigeria without pointing out why some of the solutions do not work. Political leaders in Nigeria are very selfish and do not have the interest of the masses at heart. They mainly think of themselves as such any change in the current structure which does not favour them will not be interested. Political leaders in Nigeria fear unemployment even more than fresh graduates; they will not want to support any change that does not favour them.

Conclusion/ recommendations

This study concludes that one of the ways to address the current security challenges that are facing Nigeria is through restructuring. There is the need to restructure Nigeria in a manner that addresses the growing insecurity in Nigeria. The country is currently facing too many security challenges that have negatively affected economic and social fabric of the country. For a country that is classified by the World Bank as a low income country, there is the need to come up with ways of addressing the current security challenges. Based on this result, the following recommendations are made:

1. More individuals and groups should mount pressure on the government and other relevant authorities in Nigeria on the need to restructure the country.
2. The media which are regarded as the voice of the voiceless should plan and execute advocacy messages on the need to restructure the country.
3. Other researchers should also investigate the moderating role of religion and ethnicity in public assessment of issues related to restructuring.

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