Knowledge and support for political restructuring among youths in Nigeria: Are there ethnic and religious differences?

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Abstract: Agitations for political restructuring have come from virtually all age groups, socio-ethnic and political configurations in Nigeria. However, little or nothing is known about the ethnic and religious differences in the entire agitations especially among the youths. This study examined ethnic and religious differences in the knowledge and support for political restructuring among the youths in Nigeria. Participants were 575 youths (372 males, 180 females, M = 25.62, SD = 5.51) drawn from Nigeria’s six geopolitical zones. Data were collected using questionnaires assessing knowledge and support for political restructuring. One-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data. Results showed that youths from minority ethnic groups reported higher knowledge and support for political restructuring. For the various religious groups, Muslims have more knowledge and support for political restructuring. Relying on the issue-specific motivator model, the study highlighted the implications of these findings for research and policy.

Subjects: African Studies; Sociology & Social Policy; Religion

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Political restructuring has the potentialities to drastically change the course of political history in Nigeria. Hence, it is not only important to know how much the youths know about political restructuring, but also know if ethnic and religious affiliations matter in their knowledge and support for it in Nigeria. This is what this study has done. It has shown based on the sampled participants, that youths from minority ethnic groups reported higher knowledge and support for political restructuring. For the various religious groups, Muslims have more knowledge and support for political restructuring. Relying on the issue-specific motivator model, the study highlighted the implications of these findings for research and policy.
Keywords: knowledge; support; political restructuring; youths; ethnic and religious differences; issue-specific motivator model

1. Introduction

Debates and agitations for political restructuring have continued to gain momentum in Nigeria since the current democratic dispensation. Scholars have blamed the rising agitations on the faulty foundation of the Nigerian state (Abutudu, 2010; Adejumobi, 2010; Ugwueze, 2020, 2019a; Udombana, 2017), deepening repressive regimes (Agboje, 2010; El-Rufai, 2017), economic distress (Moghulu, 2018; Oladavid, 2018; Soludo, 2018), and socio-political, religious and ethnic marginalization (Abutudu, 2010; Jega, 1996), among others. Despite the increasing agitations, no empirical effort has been made to ascertain the views of young people towards the movement. As important population category, young people are critical stakeholders in any democratic process involving public opinion.

Essentially, young people under the age of 25 constitute a fifth of the world’s population (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2013; UNDP & UNDESA, n.d.) and are found more in underdeveloped and developing countries (Das Gupta et al., 2014). In 2015, for instance, of a total population of about 1.2 billion people in Africa, an estimated 541 million (45.1%) were those between the ages of 18 and 45 (Das Gupta et al., 2014) and one-third of the population are between 15 and 35 (Goremusandu, 2017; Mandela Institute for Development Studies [MINDS], 2016). In Nigeria, an estimated 78.03% of the population is below 40 (World Meter, 2020). This category of the population constitutes the creative force, a dynamic source of innovations, and has catalyzed notable changes in political systems across the globe; the recent one being the Arab Spring. As a result, there have been increased interests in processes of youth political participation and civic engagement among social scientists (Pachi et al., 2014) with many revealing very low levels of electoral participation and political interest among youths (Franklin, 2002; IDEA, 1999; Pachi et al., 2014; Youniss et al., 2002). Youths have rather been found to be more involved in unorthodox and less institutionalized forms of participation such as protesting, boycotting/buyocotting, volunteering and using art, new technologies and social networks to express convictions, emotions and views on current public affairs (O’Toole, 2015; Pachi et al., 2014; Van Heelsum, 2002; Zukin et al., 2006).

Given that political participation is underpinned by political knowledge (McAllister, 2016), scholars have specifically examined the level of political knowledge among youths with findings varying across countries and issues. For instance, Milner (2007) found young Canadians’ political knowledge to be low – only slightly higher than their American counterparts. Similarly, Machacek (n.d) found among youths in European Union (EU) and Slovakia that civic knowledge is high in Finland, followed by Italy and Slovakia. Germany, the United Kingdom, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Belgium, Portugal, Switzerland, Bulgaria and Romania were below international average. Among young Americans, including African Americans and Latino youths, it was found that political knowledge varied across issues. For instance, on some topics such as presidential candidates’ position on some campaign issues, some young people were knowledgeable. However, on other topics such as the federal government’s expenses on foreign aids and social security, most of the young people were not knowledgeable (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement [CIRCLE], 2013). Scholars have also examined the place of the internet, social media and civic education in the enhancement of political knowledge among youths (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018; McAllister, 2016; Pontes et al., 2019; Xenos et al., 2014).

However, not much attention has been paid to the ethnic and religious differences in political knowledge among youths. This is despite the fact that some ethnic and religious values and orientations are capable of determining youths’ level of interest in political concepts and events. Such orientations are capable of inducing social and political actions especially among the youths. This therefore justifies the focus of the present study which explored the ethnic and religious differences in the knowledge and support for political restructuring among youths in Nigeria.
2. Ethnic/racial differences in political participation

Studies have documented ethnic/racial differences with respect to political participation in both conventional (voting and other forms of participation) and non-conventional (turning up for rallies) forms of participation. The major findings of these studies have been that minority groups tend to be less likely to vote than majority groups (Arvizu & Garcia, 1996; Conway, 2000; Diaz, 1996; Holbrook et al., 2015; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Verba et al., 1993). This prevents the views and preferences of minorities from being adequately represented in government (Verba et al., 1993).

Explanations for these uneven levels of participation have been tied to factors such as lower socio-economic status (Arvizu & Garcia, 1996; Huyser et al., 2016; Tate, 1991; Verba et al., 1995), elite mobilization strategies (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1992) neighbourhood contexts (Alex-Assensoh & Assensoh, 2001; Cohen & Dawson, 1993; Huckfeldt, 1979), discriminatory laws (Timpone, 1998), psychological alienation (Schildkraut, 2000; Shingles, 1981; Stokes, 2003) and lack of civic or political skills (Brady et al., 1995; Mettler, 2002).

Other set of studies have however found that ethnic differences in participation vary across issues. This is based on the issue-specific motivator model. According to this model, the extent to which members of a racial or ethnic group act to express their opinions more or less than members of other racial or ethnic groups depend on the issue about which they are expressing opinions as well as the value/importance placed on such issue (Converse, 1964; Han, 2009; Holbrook et al., 2015; Howe & Krosnick, 2016; Krosnick, 1990; Verba et al., 1993). For instance, when a group has interest in, or finds a political event to be relevant either to its core values or survival, its full identification with, or participation in such event becomes extremely likely (Boninger et al., 1995; Campbell, 2002; Mangum, 2008). Again, a group may be more or less motivated to participate and express its opinion about an issue/concept/event as a result of the political climate surrounding that issue/concept/event. Specifically, a group may be motivated to participate by either the threat of policy change in an unfavorable direction or the opportunity for policy change in a positive direction (Holbrook et al., 2015; Miller & Krosnick, 2004; Miller et al., 2002). In all, the issue-specific motivator model suggests that the level of awareness or knowledge and engagement in a political event/issue/concept among a group could be determined by the level of interest/importance such group places on the event/issue/concept or the political climate surrounding them.

Relying on this model, this study explored the ethnic and religious differences in the knowledge and support for political restructuring among youths in Nigeria. Political restructuring refers to the constitutionally driven re-ordering of the political system to devolve power in line with the basic principles of federalism. It is not only one of the currently most popular concepts in the Nigerian political space (Soludo, 2018), but also a movement that promises to ensure socio-political and economic autonomy of the federating units (that is, states, geopolitical zones or regions as the case may be) in the country. It is predicated on the fact that the country practices a centralized system of government deemed to be unsuitable for a multi-ethnic and religiously diverse entity like Nigeria. For instance, Nigeria has about 374 ethnic groups (Nnoli, 2008) with a variety of customs, traditions, languages and dialects (Uwechue, 1971). Of these groups, Hausa-Fulani (29%), Yoruba (21%) and Igbo (18%) are of the majority and constitute 68% of the national population. All the other ethnicities constitute different degrees of “minority” status. There are “large minorities” like the Ijaw (10%), Kanuri (4%), Ibibio (3.5%), and the Tiv (2.5%).

These make Nigeria a theater of ethnic squabbles that has majorly been over political and economic resources, which some minority ethnic groups feel marginalized and deprived. This squabble is further complicated by religion especially Islam and Christianity whose adherents are largely distributed along ethnic lines, thereby affirming the position that religion thrives in Nigeria to accentuate regional and ethnic identities (Nwaoga et al., 2014). With a focus on the youth, this study therefore sought to know the differences among these ethnic and religious groups with respect to the knowledge and support for political restructuring in Nigeria.
3. The antecedents of the call for political restructuring in Nigeria

Since Nigeria became a federation in 1954 through the Lyttleton Constitution, there has been agitation for inclusion by mostly the minority ethnic groups. The adoption of federalism within the colonial framework was to suit the pluralistic and heterogeneous nature of the Nigerian society (Elaigwu, n.d). Thus, Nigeria was divided into western, eastern, and northern regions. These regions were vested with some political and financial autonomy which was evidenced in the existence of regional houses of representatives and civil service commissions, among others. This political arrangement was also retained with few modifications in 1960 when Nigeria gained independence. The increasing agitations for minority inclusion resulted in the creation of the Midwestern region on 9 August 1963 by an Act of Parliament (Omoigui, 2002). This brought the number of regions in Nigeria to four and they thrived and developed on self-sustenance (Oladesu, 2016) with less resources-induced problems and conflicts in the country (Nche, 2012). However, the system was not exercised from the conflict and scramble for power and the attendant corruption that dominated the political space within the period (Ogbeidi, 2012). This largely explains why the military struck on 15 January 1966 (see Ademoyega, 1981).

Following the military intervention in Nigeria politics in 1966, the four regional governments were dissolved, and a unitary system of government introduced through the Unification Decree no. 34 of 24 May 1966 by General Aguiyi Ironsi who became the new military Head of State.

The Unification Decree of General Aguiyi Ironsi not only worsened the agitation for inclusion among the minority ethnic groups, it also amplified suspicion among the major ethnic groups especially against the Igbo-dominated eastern region. The attendant unification of the civil service, which was hitherto operated at the regional levels, largely pitched the north against the East and Aguiyi Ironsi’s failure to free Chief Obafemi Awolowo from prison increased the discord between the West and the East (Ugwuez, 2019b). This left the eastern region as a common enemy and cleared the ground for the second military coup in 1966. The killing of Aguiyi Ironsi in the counter coup of July 1966, the pogrom against the Igbo, the creation of states, the civil war (1967–1970), and the militarization of governance conduced to increase the persistent demand and agitation for resource control and return to balanced federalism in Nigeria (Akpanuko & Efi, 2013; Anyadike, 2013; Ikeji, 2011; Ugwuez, 2019a).

This was evidenced in the persistent call for a Sovereign National Conference under the regime of General Sani Abacha by the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) whose leader was late Chief Anthony Enahoro (Odoshimokhe, 2013; Oladesu, 2016). A conference was eventually held in 1994/1995 and led to the division of the country into six geopolitical zones of south-south, south-east, south-west, north-east, north-central and north-west (Enoghalase, 2013). Yet, a “true federalism”,1 which was a cardinal recommendation of the conference was never implemented. This increased the agitations against military rule and a yearning desire for return to democracy.

The transition to democracy in 1999 buzzed with activity (Uke, 2003, p. 389) but failed to significantly change what Soludo (2018) called “unitary federalism” that was entrenched in Nigeria. For instance, the federal government currently controls all the resources in Nigeria and shares same using a formula that benefits it more while starving other tiers of government such as the state and local government. As such, the federal government gets 52.68% monthly share of the country’s revenue while the 36 states and 774 local governments are left with 47.32% (that is, 26.72% for states and 20.60% for local governments) (Lukpata, 2013; Onuigbo & Eme, 2015).

This explains why there have been several calls for political restructuring as the current centralist structure has been described as defective and impediment to development in the country (Adeniran, 2017). This call was further reinforced in the national conference held in 2014 under the Goodluck Jonathan’s administration. Central to the recommendations in the conference was political restructuring in the form of creation of 19 more states and adjustment in the revenue allocation formula to enable equity in Nigeria (Owete, 2017). Increased feeling of marginalization in Nigeria under the President Muhammadu Buhari-led administration has further worsened the agitations for political restructuring with some segments of the society angling for secession (Ugwuez, 2019b), resource control (Moghulu, 2018; Soludo, 2018) and balanced federalism (Ugwuez, 2019a).
Hence, the call for political restructuring has recently come from almost all socio-cultural groups in Nigeria, including the Igbo, Yoruba, and a section of Hausa-Fulani (Soludo, 2018) as well as some notable statesmen in the North (see Alike & Ezigbo, 2017) East (see Ogummade et al., 2017) West (Ajayi, 2017) and South (Ezigbo, 2017; Olumide, 2017). Political restructuring has also been supported by leaders under the auspices of the Middle Belt Forum (MBF) (Yakubu, 2017). These notwithstanding, there is little or no information on the position of the youths regarding the political restructuring in Nigeria. The focus of previous studies have rather ranged from the conceptualization of political restructuring (Yaqub, 2016), political economy of restructuring (Soludo, 2018), federalism and resource control (Aibieyi & Osemwota, 2006; Ekuri & Etim, 2017; Ngozi & Kupoluyi, 2017; Okolo & Okiemute, 2014), and opportunities inherent in restructuring Nigeria politically (Ezeani, 2018; Ugwuze, 2019a; Obidimma & Obidimma, 2015; Okonkwu, 2015).

4. Method

4.1. Participants and procedure
This methodology section is an adaptation from another study on gender differences in the awareness, knowledge and support for political restructuring among youths in Nigeria (Nche, 2019). The study involved 575 youths drawn from six states (Cross River, n = 98, Enugu, n = 99, Ogun, n = 98, Kogi, n = 94, Taraba, n = 89, and Sokoto, n = 97, states) in Nigeria. These states were randomly selected from each of the six geopolitical zone that make up the country through a balloting technique in which all states from each zone had equal chances of being selected. This however did not apply to the northeast due to security challenges in the zone. Hence, Taraba state was purposively selected due to the relative absence of security challenges in the state. The researchers obtained an ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the University of Nigeria, upon satisfaction with the content of the research instrument and informed consent form. Questionnaires were distributed among students in Universities and other tertiary institutions as well as youth Corps members in the respective states. Youth corps members were recruited from different venues of Community Development Service (CDS) meetings of the National Youth Corp members in these states. The recruitment of individual participants for the study was based on convenience sampling technique. This technique is a type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in a study. To this end, the researchers recruited participants for the study wherever they could find them and typically wherever was convenient. Most of the participants were males (66.9%) and single (87.3%). Participants age ranged between 17 and 49 (M = 25.62, SD = 5.51). Regarding ethnic identities, 19.7% indicated that they were Hausa/Fulani, 35.2% identified as Igbos, 21.7% identified as Yorubas, and 23.5% indicated that they were from other minority ethnic groups. Considering their religious subscriptions, 52.3% of the respondents identified as Christians, 43.8% as Muslims, while 4% indicated that they were traditional worshippers. More than half of the participants (53.2%) attended higher institutions.

4.2. Measures
Two scales namely; the Knowledge of Political Restructuring Scale (KPRS) and the Support for Political Restructuring Scale (SPRS) were developed by the researchers. In an attempt to measure the knowledge of political restructuring, the 8-item KPRS focused on the dominant feature or idea in the body of literature regarding what political restructuring in Nigeria actually entails. The dominant idea in the opinions expressed by political elites which are published in periodicals (that is, print and online newspapers/media) were also considered. The general opinion is that Nigeria has not been operating a federal system of government or “true federalism”. This is evidenced in the power distribution imbalance contained in the Second Schedule of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) where 68 items in the Exclusive List of responsibilities are completely assigned to the federal or central government, in addition to the right to also legislate on items listed in the Concurrent List (which contains 30 items only) alongside the 36 state governments in the country. As already demonstrated, the federal government currently gets the larger share of the monthly revenue allocation. Hence, the
dominant idea regarding what political restructuring entails is the devolution of power among federating units/regions or states in Nigeria. The items measuring knowledge of political restructuring in Nigeria were therefore built around this idea. This formed the basis on which the knowledge of political restructuring among the youths was assessed in this study. Sampled items from the KPRS included: Political restructuring entails "true federalism"; Political restructuring entails the devolution of powers in Nigeria; Political restructuring will reduce the over-dependence of states on the Federal government in Nigeria. Participants responded to these items on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating to what extent they agree, from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The second item was scored in reversed order. Independent factor analysis for KPRS suggested that the scale fit a single factor structure. It yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.82.

The SPRS is also an 8-item scale used in measuring support for political restructuring among youths in Nigeria. The term “support” is in this study conceptualized as “agitation,” or “demand” or “call” for political restructuring. The items in the scale are structured in a positive direction in support of political restructuring except for items 2, 5, and 8 which were negative and as such reverse-scored. Sampled items were: Nigeria should be politically restructured; Nigeria is not due for political restructuring; Nigeria does not practice “true federalism”. These items were scored on 5-point response format, indicating to what extent participants agree, from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Independent factor analysis for SPRS suggested that the scale fit a single factor structure and it yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.81.

4.3. Statistical analysis
Descriptive statistics were used to assess for response patterns across the demographic characteristics of the sample. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compute for group differences in knowledge of and support for political restructuring. It should be noted that knowledge of and support for political restructuring yielded continuous total scores.

5. Results
In Table 1, the mean scores of the various ethnic groups on knowledge of political restructuring were as follows: 19.42 (Hausa), 19.07 (Igbo), 19.90 (Yoruba), and 23.92 (other minority groups). On support for political restructuring, the mean scores were 20.21 (Hausa), 18.41 (Igbo), 19.11 (Yoruba), and 24.68 (other minority ethnic groups).

In Table 2, the mean scores of the various religious groups on knowledge of political restructuring were as follows: 23.09 (Muslim), 18.32 (Christian), and 16.00 (Traditionalist). On agitation for political restructuring, the mean scores were 23.97 (Muslim), 17.44 (Christian), and 16.14 (Traditionalist).

Table 3 shows that there was a significant difference in knowledge of political restructuring for the ethnic groups, $F(3, 571) = 18.14, p < .001$. Post-hoc tests showed that youths from the minority ethnic groups had higher knowledge of political restructuring ($M = 23.44, SD = 7.50$), compared to those who were of Igbo ($M = 19.07, SD = 6.14$), Hausa ($M = 19.42, SD = 5.19$), and Yoruba ethnic groups ($M = 19.90, SD = 5.94$). There were no significant differences in knowledge of political restructuring among Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba participants. There was also a significant difference in support for political restructuring, $F(3, 571) = 27.34, p < .001$. Post-hoc tests showed that youths from the minority ethnic groups reported higher support for political restructuring ($M = 24.68, SD = 8.07$), compared to those who were of Igbo ($M = 18.41, SD = 6.32$), Hausa ($M = 20.21, SD = 5.77$), and Yoruba ethnic groups ($M = 19.11, SD = 5.41$). There were no significant differences in support for political restructuring among Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba participants.

Table 4 shows that there was a significant difference in knowledge of political restructuring among the religious groups, $F(3, 571) = 44.89, p < .001$. Post-hoc tests showed that youths who were Muslims reported higher knowledge of political restructuring ($M = 23.09, SD = 7.17$), compared
| Table 1. Descriptive statistics for knowledge of political restructuring and support for political restructuring by various ethnic youth groups |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Variables                  | Mean            | Std. Deviation  | Std. Error      | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean |
|                            |                 |                 |                 | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| **Knowledge of Political Restructuring** |                 |                 |                 |             |             |
| Hausa                      | 19.42           | 5.19            | .49             | 18.45       | 20.39       |
| Igbo                       | 19.07           | 6.14            | .43             | 18.23       | 19.91       |
| Yoruba                     | 19.90           | 5.94            | .53             | 18.85       | 20.96       |
| Others                     | 23.92           | 7.50            | .65             | 22.63       | 25.20       |
| Total                      | 20.44           | 6.55            | .27             | 19.91       | 20.99       |
| **Support for Political Restructuring** |                 |                 |                 |             |             |
| Hausa                      | 20.21           | 5.77            | .55             | 19.12       | 21.28       |
| Igbo                       | 18.41           | 6.32            | .44             | 17.54       | 19.28       |
| Yoruba                     | 19.11           | 5.41            | .48             | 18.15       | 20.07       |
| Others                     | 24.68           | 8.07            | .70             | 23.30       | 26.07       |
| Total                      | 20.37           | 6.93            | .29             | 19.80       | 20.93       |

| Table 2. Descriptive statistics for knowledge of and support for political restructuring by various religious youth groups |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Variables                  | Mean            | Std. Deviation  | Std. Error      | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean |
|                            |                 |                 |                 | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| **Knowledge of Political Restructuring** |                 |                 |                 |             |             |
| Muslim                     | 23.09           | 7.17            | .65             | 22.21       | 23.97       |
| Christian                  | 18.32           | 5.09            | .29             | 17.75       | 18.89       |
| Traditionalist             | 16.00           | 3.16            | 1.19            | 13.08       | 18.92       |
| Total                      | 20.44           | 6.55            | .27             | 19.90       | 20.98       |
| **Support for Political Restructuring** |                 |                 |                 |             |             |
| Muslim                     | 23.97           | 7.45            | .46             | 23.05       | 24.88       |
| Christian                  | 17.44           | 4.75            | .27             | 16.91       | 17.97       |
| Traditionalist             | 16.14           | 5.05            | 1.91            | 11.47       | 20.81       |
| Total                      | 20.37           | 6.93            | .29             | 19.80       | 20.93       |

| Table 3. One-way ANOVA results for ethnic group differences in knowledge and support for political restructuring |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Variables                  | Sum of Squares | Df              | Mean Square     | F               | Sig. |
| **Knowledge of Political Restructuring** |                 |                 |                 |                 |     |
| Between Groups             | 2143.50         | 3               | 714.50          | 18.14           | .000 |
| Within Groups              | 2454.11         | 571             | 39.39           |                 |     |
| Total                      | 24597.60        | 574             |                 |                 |     |
| **Support for Political Restructuring** |                 |                 |                 |                 |     |
| Between Groups             | 3460.10         | 3               | 1153.368        | 27.34           | .000 |
| Within Groups              | 24087.20        | 571             | 42.184          |                 |     |
| Total                      | 27547.30        | 574             |                 |                 |     |
to Christians ($M = 18.32, SD = 5.09$), and adherents of African Traditional Religion ($M = 16.00, SD = 3.16$). There was no significant difference between Christians and adherents of African Traditional Religion in knowledge of political restructuring. There was also a significant difference in support for political restructuring among the religious groups, $F(3, 571) = 81.68, p < .001$. Youths who were Muslims reported higher support for political restructuring ($M = 23.97, SD = 7.45$), compared to those who were Christians ($M = 17.44, SD = 4.75$), and adherents of African Traditional Religion ($M = 16.14, SD = 5.05$). There was no significant difference between Christians and adherents of African Traditional Religion in the support for political restructuring.

6. Implications and conclusions
The study has shown that there are ethnic differences in both knowledge and support for political restructuring among young people. Youths from minority ethnic groups were found to be more knowledgeable and supportive of political restructuring than those of other ethnic groups in the study. This is consistent with the positions of Naanen (1995) and Osaghae (2001) who maintained that much of the calls for change in the structural relations between the centre and periphery have come from the minority ethnic groups. This can be explained by the issue specific motivator model. Minority groups all over Nigeria have been suffering and protesting age-long problems of cultural domination, political and economic marginalization, territorial encroachment and natural resource exploitation and deprivation by the dominant ethnic groups in the country. These communities especially in the Niger Delta and Middle Belt have had serious unaddressed grievances against the Nigerian state. For instance, in the Niger-Delta, the bulk of crude oil (Nigeria’s main source of revenue) is derived from their land, but the people still live in a seriously challenged environment with less political opportunities (see Urowayino, 2018).

To this end, the demands for equity and justice in the allocation of political space and natural resources from these minorities and marginalized groups have all made for a consistent and perennial stream of agitations for political restructuring (Abutudu, 2010). These agitations which in some cases have been violent, especially for the Niger-Delta minority groups, are predicated on the belief that political restructuring would grant them full control over the mineral resources in their region (see Adetunberu & Bello, 2018; Urowayino, 2018). In fact, the Niger Delta youths have reportedly threatened to attack oil vessels and shut down flow stations if Nigeria is not restructured to grant full resource control rights to federating units (see Ebiri et al., 2018). This reinforces the finding that, in comparison to majority populations, members of ethnic minorities are generally more likely to use contentious forms of political action to achieve or promote minority interests (Just, 2017). In all, the major motivator for the minority groups with respect to political restructuring is the prospect of achieving some level of sociopolitical and economic autonomy devoid of the domineering and oppressive presence and interference of the majority ethnic groups in the

| Variables                                | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F     | Sig. |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|------|
| Knowledge of Political Restructuring      |                |    |             |       |      |
| Between Groups                           | 3341.83        | 2  | 1670.91     | 44.89 | .000 |
| Within Groups                            | 21255.78       | 571| 37.23       |       |      |
| Total                                     | 24597.60       | 573|             |       |      |
| Support for Political Restructuring       |                |    |             |       |      |
| Between Groups                           | 6119.50        | 2  | 3059.75     | 81.68 | .000 |
| Within Groups                            | 21427.80       | 572| 37.46       |       |      |
| Total                                     | 27547.30       | 574|             |       |      |
country. This effectively explains why the minorities were found to be more knowledgeable and supportive of political restructuring than other ethnic groups in the study.

Religion was also significant in the knowledge and support for political restructuring of Nigeria as the young Muslim participants were found to know and support political restructuring more than Christians and traditionalists in the study. This again, could be explained by the issue-specific motivator model. Generally, Muslims believe in the institution of Islamic community (which is called Umma in Islamic parlance). The Umma consists of all those who adhere to the religion of Islam (Marilyn & Malika, 2009). As a concept, it is applied both at the global sense as in an organization of all Muslims all over the world (that is, The Muslim or Islamic world), and at the specific or local sense which refers to the specific concentration or organized group of Muslims living in a particular settlement within an ethno-religious pluralistic society. In whichever sense, it paints a picture of a place where there is a majority of Muslim population operating under full sway of Islamic laws and principles with little or no interference from non-adherents. This could be where the motivation for the knowledge and support for political restructuring lies. The young Muslim participants might have been motivated by the belief that restructuring could grant them an autonomous federating units/region that could be perceived as an Islamic community and ruled fully through Islamic laws and tenets with no fear of interference from the central government or other federating units in the country. For instance, the introduction of the sharia law courts in a number of northern states in the past did not only attract oppositions from non-Muslims in the country especially residents in these states, but the jurisdictions of these courts have been impacted greatly by the concurrent existence of English courts in these states (Teacher, 2013). This situation might have appeared undesirable to some Muslim youths in the country especially the participants in this study.

Also, the reason why young Muslim participants were found to be more knowledgeable and supportive of political restructuring may be because of the fact that Muslims tend to be more politically-minded and conscious than Christians (Chapman, 2015). This can be explained both historically and theoretically. Historically, the founder of Islam, Muhammad was both prophet and statesman (Watt, 1975) whose political leadership started in Medina. By 732 CE, a hundred years after death of the Prophet, a vast Islamic empire stretched from Morocco and Spain in the West to the borders of China and India in the East (Chapman, 2015). It is from these historical events that the Islamic theological disposition evolved- a disposition which views religion and politics as inextricable spheres. Today, Islamic religious leaders such as Imam, Caliph or Emir are believed to also have political powers (Sulaiman, 1987). For instance, Pew Research (2013) has shown that majority of Muslim population in southeast Asia (79%), South Asia (69%), and the Middle East and North Africa (65%) say religious leaders should have at least some influence over political matters. This is in contrast with views expressed by many church leaders in Nigeria, who, on inquiry on the political status of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), reportedly insisted that CAN is not a political organization: that is, it is neither a political party nor politically partisan (Enwerem, 1995). This could largely explain why young Muslims knew and supported political restructuring more than others in the study.

Finally, the intuitive nature of the findings of the study, in which higher knowledge of political restructuring corresponds with higher support/agitation for political restructuring, is worth attention. This pattern reinforces the scholarly positions that knowledgeable individuals are more likely to participate in politics more frequently (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996), to have a more in-depth understanding of the policy choices offered to them, and to be better informed about policy and electoral choices (Andersen et al., 2005; Singh & Roy, 2014).

In all, these findings have a policy implication. The findings suggest that young participants from minority groups and young Muslims are profoundly interested in a politically restructured Nigeria. Although their interest could be informed by some parochial ethnic and religious inclinations, a successful political restructuring in Nigeria in tandem with the principles of federalism may likely go a long way in reducing the rate of ethnic and religious squabbles and conflicts in the country.
Also, such restructuring has the potential to ensure even development across federating units. Federalism, as a system, has several advantages some of which are protection of minority interests from abuse by the majority (Lijphart, 1999), better government services (Olson, 1969), and the existence of need-specific government policies and regulations. The system particularly fosters a higher level of political participation and control even for the minority groups by creating multiple channels of decision making. Yet, creating political space or multiple channels of decision making does not necessarily guarantee equitable distribution of resources among ethnic groups.

Hence, the federal government needs to restructure the country in a manner that will allow some degree of resource control rights to enable minority groups who are already disadvantaged, to develop at an appreciable pace. For instance, for over 50 years of crude oil and gas exploration in the Niger-Delta (which is a classic minority case), which has provided estimated earnings of over USD400 billion and USD600 billion (Amnesty International, 2009), there is no discernible positive impact on the development of host communities in the region (Aaron, 2015; Nche, 2020; Nche et al., 2019). This is despite the unbearable environmental damage, described by Amnesty International (2009) as “a human rights tragedy” which the residents are faced with on daily basis. Aduluoju and Okwechime (2016) have also described these developmental and environmental issues in the Niger Delta as human security threats. According to Aaron (2015), the situation in the region can be attributed to a range of obnoxious petroleum development laws and policies, part of which rest oil mineral rights in the Federal Government and not oil-producing communities/states. Yet, the formula for sharing oil revenue in the country has, under successive administrations, been unfavourable to these communities/states. These are some of the issues the government, especially the Federal Government needs to squarely address through political restructuring in the country.

This study has some limitations. First, as a cross-sectional study, the findings of the study are not free from common method bias. Second, the study used a convenience sampling technique; hence generalization of findings should be done with caution. Despite these shortcomings, the study is a worthy enterprise being the first survey to investigate the ethnic and religious differences in the knowledge and support for political restructuring in Nigeria.

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Note
1. This is what Ugwueze (2019a) referred to as balanced federalism, which is a political restructuring that is based on relative autonomy of the constituent units, devolution of power and entrenchment of production-oriented resource control.

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