

State Creation and Economic Growth in Nigeria: Evaluating the Projected Socioeconomic Benefits of Anioma State for Local and National Development

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ABSTRACT

This study titled "State Creation and Economic Growth in Nigeria: Evaluating the Projected Socioeconomic Benefits of Anioma State for Local and National Development" investigates the relationship between political restructuring through state creation and economic advancement, using the proposed Anioma State as a case study. This study set to examine how state creation influences local economic development, public service delivery, equitable resource distribution, and administrative efficiency in the Anioma region. The study was anchored on the Structural Functionalism Theory by Émile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, where descriptive research design was adopted. Data were collected using structured questionnaire and interviews were carried out among 1.8 million people within nine Local Government Areas in Anioma. A stratified random sampling technique was applied with a sample size of approximately 400, derived using Taro Yamane's formula. Statistical percentage tools were employed for data interpretation. Our findings revealed that 78% of respondents believe that state creation would boost local economic development, while 81% agreed it would improve public service delivery. About 76% affirmed that equitable resource allocation would enhance infrastructure, and 84% supported that administrative efficiency in the new state would lead to employment and empowerment. The study concluded that the creation of Anioma State holds significant potential for promoting local economic growth and balanced national development. It recommends that policymakers pursue the creation of Anioma State, adopt transparent resource allocation frameworks, institutionalize decentralized governance structures and integrate youth empowerment and employment schemes into the proposed state's administrative setup.

Keywords: State creation, Economic growth, Political restructuring, Local development, Public service delivery, Resource distribution, Administrative efficiency and Decentralized governance.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The creation of new states in Nigeria has long been a subject of debate, most especially regarding its potential to promote broad economic growth and tackle developmental imbalances across regions. Advocates of state creation argue that it enhances grassroots governance, ensures equitable distribution of resources, and enhances local economic development (Ake, 2021; Chonjnicki, 2020). The proposed Anioma State, which will be carved out from the present Delta State, is often cited as a case with strong historical, cultural, and economic justifications. It is believed that such restructuring could boost infrastructural development, improve service delivery, and foster greater participation in governance, thereby aligning with the broader goals of national development (Ikpi, 2017; Agu, 2018). However, concerns persist about the financial viability of new states, especially given Nigeria's high cost of governance and the uneasy tension it places on national revenue (Adewole & Osabuahien, 2017; Okeke & Eme, 2015). While studies have linked decentralization with

enhanced socioeconomic performance (Fritz, 2020; Abalaka, 2023), others caution that without accountable and efficient institutions, state creation may merely replicate inefficiencies and soar governance costs (Bhattacharya, 2018; Ewetan & Urhie, 2019). Thus, evaluating the projected socioeconomic benefits of Anioma State becomes vital in understanding whether such a political restructuring will genuinely support both local and national economic growth.

The potential benefits of state creation have been raised about the economic implications, particularly regarding increased administrative costs. Adewole and Osabuahien (2017) highlight the growing burden of governance in Nigeria, arguing that the proliferation of new states often results in bloated bureaucracies and inefficiencies. Similarly, Agu (2018) notes that the high cost of governance, if not strategically managed, can undermine developmental goals by diverting resources from critical sectors such as education, health, and infrastructure. Nevertheless, proponents of Anioma State argue that nearness of government to the people will promote prompt responsive governance and local economic initiatives, especially in agriculture, commerce, and small-scale industries. These potential socioeconomic benefits, if effectively harnessed, could contribute to broader national development.

Furthermore, socio-economic development is deeply tied to good governance, equitable distribution of resources, and institutional accountability. As Chonjnicki (2020) and Bhattacharya (2018) opined that, sustainable development requires a multidimensional approach which includes political inclusion, economic empowerment, and social justice. The Anioma region, with its rich natural and human resources, has long argued for structural reforms that would allow for more tailored and effective economic policies. According to Ewetan and Urhie (2019), insecurity and underdevelopment are often symptoms of exclusionary governance, which state creation can help address if guided by sound economic planning. Therefore, evaluating the characterised socioeconomic benefits of Anioma State is essential not only for assessing local development potential but also for understanding the broader dynamics of state creation and its role in Nigeria's pursuit of balanced and inclusive economic growth.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's long history of agitations for new state creation aimed at equitable representation and economic development, regions like Anioma currently part of Delta State remain unrecognized as autonomous entities. Anioma continues to experience perceived marginalization in socio-economic investments, governance, and resource distribution, despite sustained calls for its statehood. Advocates argue that state creation would enhance economic infrastructure, inclusive governance, and grassroots development (Abalaka, 2023; Sulaiman, 2023). However, Delta State itself struggles with high governance costs and uneven infrastructural development, limiting the potential for balanced growth across its regions (Adewole & Osabuahien, 2017). These disparities have intensified demands for Anioma's autonomy, but the absence of concrete policy frameworks and outcomes continues to stall socio-economic advancement in the area.

Efforts by political actors, civil society, and local advocacy groups have yet to translate into meaningful governmental action, largely hindered by bureaucratic bottlenecks and a lack of constitutional reforms. While democracy is heralded as a path to equitable development (Ake, 2021), its institutions in Nigeria have yet to deliver on this promise, especially concerning decentralization. Issues like high governance costs, corruption, and entrenched political interests often drown out calls for inclusivity and reform (Lawan, 2018; Agu, 2018). Although scholars have emphasized the role of good governance and decentralization in fostering economic growth (Bhattacharya, 2018; Fritz, 2020), there remains a gap in research on how Anioma's state creation could drive both national development and local revitalization. If left unaddressed, continued neglect of marginalized regions like Anioma could deepen social unrest, widen economic disparities, and hinder the formulation of inclusive national policies. Decisively evaluating the developmental potential of new states is, therefore, indispensable to bridging economic and democratic inequalities in Nigeria.

Purpose/Objectives of the Study

The study aim at evaluating state creation and economic growth in Nigeria and its benefits on socioeconomic development of proposed Anioma state, where following objective will guide the study: