



The Impact of Financial Liberalization on Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth in Nigeria

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Date of Submission: 13-06-2025

Date of Acceptance: 27-06-2025

Abstract

Financial liberalization has been a key component of economic reform programs in many developing countries, including Nigeria. However, the impact of financial liberalization on poverty reduction and economic growth in Nigeria is not well understood. This study uses a time series analysis to examine the impact of financial liberalization on poverty reduction and economic growth in Nigeria from 1980 to 2020. The results show that financial liberalization has a positive impact on economic growth, but a negative impact on poverty reduction.

Keywords: Financial Liberalization, Economic Growth, Poverty and Poverty Reduction

I. Introduction

Financial liberalization has been a key component of economic reform programs in many developing countries, including Nigeria (World Bank, 2019). The goal of financial liberalization is to increase economic efficiency and promote economic growth by removing restrictions on financial markets and institutions (Khan, 2002). However, the impact of financial liberalization on poverty reduction and economic growth in Nigeria is not well understood.

Although, scholars who advocated for financial liberalization argued that, financial liberalization would lead to a drop in the cost of debt and equity through integration of segmented markets. More importantly, they argued that, liberalization would result in an increase of stock liquidity. This implies that increased liquidity leads to

further development of the underlying market as both local and foreign investors are assured of getting in and out of a position without much difficulty. Furthermore, the advocates argued that through financial liberalization, foreign investors pressure local institutions to adhere to international standards, can improve local corporate governance and reduce the division between internal and external finance (Bekaert, Harvey & Lundblad, 2004; Henry, 2004; Levine & Zervos 1996) Nigerian government is said to be pro-liberalization and as such there have been series of reforms implemented both in the banking sector and financial market to ensure there is adequate growth in investment and savings needed for economic growth. For example, banking sector in Nigeria has undergone different reforms since the implementation of banking ordinance in 1952 and to strengthen the private sector by the government, there was implementation of financial liberalization policy in 1986 as part of the Structural Adjustment Programme and adoption of this programme led to extinction of financial repressive policy in the economy (Obamuyi, 2010; Akin gunola, Adeleke, Badejo & Salami. 2013). Hence, this study acknowledged the fact that, there have been several studies on the relationship between financial liberalization and economic growth. However, the study observed that many studies did not use adequate proxies to represent financial liberalization. Studies were found mixing up proxies for financial development and financial deepening to represent financial liberalization, for example; Nwadiubu, Sergius and Onwuka (2014), Sulaiman, Oke and Azeez (2012) and Qazi and Shahiba (2012).



013) employed M^2/GDP which is a measure of financial deepening and development. In addition, Akingunola, et al.

(2013) also used ratio of liabilities to GDP to represent financial liberalization which as a matter of fact is a measure for financial development. However, since financial liberalization focuses on credit, interest rate, investment and easy access to financial services, this study therefore employed savings interest rate, lending interest rate, credit to private sector, private investment as proxies for financial liberalization. As a consequence, this study examined effects of financial liberalization on economic growth in Nigeria over a temporal period 1986 to 2018

Statement of the problem

Nigeria, prior to liberalization of the financial sector, had a repressed financial sector in which the government and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), restricted and controlled the activities of the financial sector. However, following the adoption of SAP, Nigeria liberalized her economy in August 1987. This policy initiative commenced with the liberalization of interest rates. Apart from the liberalization of interest rates, the reform also involved promotion of market-based system of credit allocation. Financial liberalization according to theory is meant to foster economic growth through increase in savings via an increase in real deposit rate and increase in private investment in high priority sectors, but how this policy has contributed the growth of the Nigerian economy remains an empirical question. Against this background therefore, the basic thrust of this paper is to empirically investigate the impact of financial liberalization on the performance of the Nigerian economy using the McKinnon–Shaw model. Specifically, the study investigates the Impact of Financial Liberalization on Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth in Nigeria

Objectives of the Study

In light of the core problem necessitating this research, this research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the Impact of Financial Liberalization on Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth in Nigeria
2. To justify if the regulation of Financial Liberalization will lead to the Reduction of Poverty and increase in Economic Growth in Nigeria

Research Questions

Essentially, from the above objectives highlighted, the key research questions posed to the researcher include:

1. What is the Impact of Financial Liberalization on Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth in Nigeria
2. Will the regulation of Financial Liberalization led to the Reduction of Poverty and increase in Economic Growth in Nigeria

Research hypotheses

Essentially, from the above questions highlighted, the key research hypotheses are pointed:

1. The Financial Liberalization does not have any impact on Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth in Nigeria
2. The regulation of Financial Liberalization does not lead to the Reduction of Poverty and increase in Economic Growth in Nigeria

II. Literature Review

The literature on the impact of financial liberalization on poverty reduction and economic growth is extensive. Studies have shown that financial liberalization can lead to increased economic growth and poverty reduction, but the impact is dependent on the specific policies implemented (Khan, 2002; World Bank, 2019). A study by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) found that financial liberalization can lead to increased economic growth and poverty reduction in developing countries, but the impact is dependent on the specific policies implemented (IMF, 2018).

Financial Liberalization

Liberalization is seen as the “removal of controls”, that is when government and/or authorities remove whatever restrictions and controls that have been previously placed on the financial sector of the economy, it is called financial liberalization. Financial liberalization became popularized in early 1970s due to the seminal work of McKinnon (1973) and Shaw (1973) since then, both developing and developed countries of the world have subscribed to it. They proposed that economic growth can be achieved when investment is encouraged and savings increased through financial liberalization

Other authors also gave different definitions of financial liberalization. Johnston and Sundararajan (1999) defined financial liberalization as a set of policy and reforms designed to deregulate and change the operation of financial system and its structure with the view to achieving appropriate regulatory framework. According to Obamiyi (2010), financial liberalization can be achieved in



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formssuchas"deregulatinginterestrates",eliminatingo
rreducingcreditcontrols,allowingfreeentryintothe
bankingsector,commercialbanksautonomy,allowing
privateownershipofbanks,andreducingcontrolof
international capital flows.

AuerbachandSiddiki(2004)declarethatfinancial
liberalizationistheremovalofasetofrestrictionsinthe
financialsectorinordertoalignitwiththatofthedevelope
deconomies.Threepincipaltypesoffinancial
liberalizationhavebeengiven.Thefirsttypeisexplained
underdomesticfinancialsectorreformssuchas
privatizationandincreasesincreditextensionto
thepivate
sector.Thesecondisstockmarketliberalizationwhichca
n occurwhencountriesopenupitsstockmarketstoforeign
investors,atthesametime allowingdomestic
firms"accesstointernationalfinancialmarketsandtheth
irdis

liberalizationofthecapitalaccount.Thisdescribesa
conditioninwhichspecificexchangeratefortransaction
s
ofcapitalaccountarel loosened(Bekaert&Harvey,2003;
Loots,2003).Itcanalsobe explainedwheredomestic
firmsarepermittedtoborrowfundsfromabroad(Schmu
kler&Vesperoni,2006),andwhereserverequirement
sare lowered(Kaminskyand Schmukler,2008: 259).

JegadeandMokulolu(2004)notedthatbeforethe
financialsectorofNigeriaconomywasliberalized,the
countrythroughgovernmentpoliciesandtheCBNhada
firmcontrolofeveryofitsfinancialactivities.After
liberalization,followingtheintroductionofSAPinAugu
st

1987,Nigeriareleasedthecontrolofinterestrates.Credit
allocationwaspromotedandencouragedtobemarket-
based.Thisencouragedcompetitionandefficiency.The
motivationbehindtheadoptionofSAPwastheneedto
strengthen theeconomyforglobalcompetitiveness.Ikhi
deandAlawode(2001)notedthat,thefirstreformwhich
wastheinterestratel liberalizationwasimplementedinor
derto give banksthe freedomtochargemarket-
basedloanrates.

Hence, McKinnon–Shaw (1973) viewed financial
liberalization as

- ✓ Market-determined interest rates;
- ✓ Greater ease of entry into the banking sector to encourage competition;
- ✓ The elimination of directed credit programmes;
- ✓ Reduced fiscal dependence of the state on credit from the banking system (to allow for greater expansion of credit to the private sector);
- ✓ The integration of formal and informal markets;

✓ A movement towards equilibrium exchange rates and, eventually, flexible exchange rate regimes with open capital accounts (Serieux, 2008).

prerequisites for successful financial liberalization

However, Fry (1995) identified five prerequisites for successful financial liberalization:

- ✓ Adequate prudential and supervision of commercial banks, implying some minimal levels of accounting and legal infrastructure
- ✓ A reasonable degree of price stability
- ✓ Fiscal discipline taking the form of a sustainable government borrowing requirement that avoids inflationary effects
- ✓ Profit-maximizing, competitive behaviour by the commercial banks
- ✓ A tax system that does not impose discriminatory explicit or implicit taxes on financial intermediation. This suggests that financial liberalization crucially depends on the assumption of perfect information and perfect competition (Arestis and Demetriades, 1999).

✓

Economic growth theories

Economic growth being one of the macroeconomic goals of any country has studies that has a wide range of years, yet there has not been a unified thought on how it is accounted for.

Harrod–Domar model Harrod (1939) and Domar (1946)

Harrod–Domar model Harrod (1939) and Domar (1946) viewed development as product of the real sector development. Their model is used to explain economic growth rate in terms of the level of savings and productivity of capital especially in economies with large and rapidly growing population. The principal strategy for development according to the Harrod–Domar model is mobilization of saving and generation of investment to accelerate economic growth. In this model, economic growth rate (g) is viewed as direct function of savings ratio (s) and an inverse function of the capital-output ratio (r).

Thus $g = s / k$

According to this model, they are three types of growth: warranted growth (rate of growth at which producers would be compensated with what they are doing i.e., that satisfies the profit taste), actual growth (this is the actual rate an economy grows) and natural rate of growth (this is the rate of growth at full employment which is determined and allowed by the increase in population and rate of



technological progress). The model depicts that an economy does not find full employment and stable growth rates naturally. It concludes that while savings and investment is a necessary condition for accelerated economic growth, it is not a sufficient condition. However, like the neo classical model, while savings is the driver of the economy, it fails to explain what determines savings as it is treated as an exogenous variable.

Endogenous growth theory

The limitation of the neoclassical growth model and the Harrod– Domar growth model was improved upon by the endogenous growth model developed in the 1980s which emerged primarily as an attempt to encompass the sources of technological progress and hence of sustained productivity growth within the general equilibrium framework of neoclassical growth theory (Ogujiuba and Adeniyi, 2005). It holds that economic growth is primarily the result of endogenous and not exogenous factors. It holds that investment in human capital, innovation, and knowledge are significant contributors to economic growth. The endogenous growth model is mostly due to Romer (1986) who observed the classical and neoclassical theories as an over simplification of what is really a complex process. The endogenous growth model holds that investment in human capital, innovation and knowledge are significant determinants of economic growth. In addition to this, the model focuses on positive externalities and spillover effects of a knowledge-based economy which can lead to economic growth.

The model can be written as: $Y = A (R) f(R_j K_j L_j)$

Where Y = Output growth

K_j = Stock of physical and human capital

R = Aggregate stock of knowledge

L_j = Stock of labour R_j =

Stock of research and development expenditures A country with initial higher level of K, experiences a higher rate of growth as human capital has increasing returns to scale, leading to a higher level of growth of capital income. The rate of growth depends on the type of capital a country invests in.

III. Methodology

This study uses a time series analysis to examine the impact of financial liberalization on poverty reduction and economic growth in Nigeria from 1980 to 2020. The study uses annual data on financial liberalization, economic growth, and poverty reduction. The financial liberalization variable is measured using the financial liberalization index developed by Abiad et al.

(2010). The economic growth variable is measured using the GDP growth rate. The poverty reduction variable is measured using the poverty headcount ratio.

Based on the theory proposed in this study by McKinnon-Shaw hypothesis (1973) and endogenous growth theory, this study adopted Cobb Douglas production

function for model specification. However, measurement for economic growth for this study is real GDP, financial liberalization was proxied by savings deposit rate, lending rate, exchange rate, credit to private sector while ratio of private investment

to GDP was used as

control variable. Annual time series data spanning 1980 to 2020 were sourced from CBN Statistical Bulletins and CBN Annual Reports of various editions. Therefore, to specify the model for the study, Cobb Douglas production function is used and it states that, economic growth is a function of capital, labour and technology. This is stated as $Y = f(A L^\beta K^\alpha)$

Where Y is the total output in a year, L is Labour, K is capital input, A = total factor productivity while α and β are the output elasticities of capital and labor, respectively. These values are constants determined by available technology. However, this model is therefore expanded to incorporate other factors that can increase the total outputs such as financial liberalization. Hence, the functional model is stated as $Y = f(L, K, FL)$

in an expanded functional form, the study therefore incorporates financial liberalization proxies such as saving deposit rates, lending rates, exchange rates, foreign portfolio investment, domestic credit to ratio of private investment to GDP as control variable while and employed real GDP per capita as proxy for economic growth. The model is specified as follows $GDP = f(SDR, LDR, EXR, FPI, CPS, RPIG)$

Estimation Technique

The study employed ADF unit root test for the stationarity of the variables after which ARDL bound test and dynamic test were estimated. Breusch Pagan and serial

correlation test were used to test for the serial correlation and heteroscedasticity problems while normality test was done using Jarque-Bera test.

IV. Results

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Philip Perron Unit Root Test

Whenever a time-series analysis is done, testing if the variables suffer from problems of unit root is usually the starting point. The reason for this is to show the direction for the analysis to follow. For this study, Philip Perron unit



root test was used. The result is presented in Table 1, it revealed that, variables are integrated of difference order 1. As it is shown, LGDP, LDR, LEXR have no unit root at level, this means these variables are stationary and it can be used without differencing. However, LSDR, LCPS and RPIG have unit root at level, meaning they are non-

stationary series. The study further tested for unit root using their first difference level and it was found that, the series became stationary at first difference. Given that there are mixed of integration levels, the result therefore points to the use of Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) as the appropriate method of analysis.

Variables	PP Unit Root Test Intercept)		PP @ First Difference		Integration level
	T-Statistic	Probability	T-Statistic	Probability	
LGDP	-3.3342	0.0231			I(0)
LSDR	-1.0453	0.7124	-5.4342	0.0001	I(0)
LDR	-5.0423	0.0142			I(0)
LEXR	-2.9223	0.0423			I(0)
LCPS	-1.5523	0.4342	-3.8324	0.0052	I(0)
RPIG	-1.1233	0.6795	-4.3457	0.0058	I(0)

Table 1:- Summary of ARDL Bound Test for Cointegration

Author's Computation using E-views 9, 2024

Effect of financial liberalization on economic growth
 In examining the effect of financial liberalization on economic growth in Nigeria, the study employed vector error correction mechanism (VECM). The first step of this approach is the

lag order selection that would be appropriate for the estimation. The result of the lag order selection from VAR environment is presented in Table 2. The result revealed that, estimation would be best effected using Akaike Information criteria at lag order 2 as it gives the least value. Hence, the VECM is estimated using lag 2.

Lag	LogL	LA	FPE	AJC	SC	
0	-18.74532	NA	0.291234	1.598235	1.8763543	-1.74537*
1	39.16543	89.66345*	0.007243	-2.072576	-1.748334	-1.93443
2	41.62654	3.708653	0.006154*	-2.169553*	-1.799243*	

Table 2:- Lag Order Selection

Author's Computation using E-views 9, 2024

Estimating vector error correction mechanism required that series must be cointegrated. This is evidence from the ARDL bound test which confirmed an existence of long run relationship between financial liberalization and economic growth. The lag selection has been done through Akaike information thereby selecting lag 2 for the estimation. Hence, the result of the VECM as presented in Table 4 revealed that, the error correction mechanism of -11.12% is rightly signed and highly significant as the p-value of 0.0397 is below 5% level of significant. This implies that the speed of adjustment would be 11% annually. The coefficients of variable in the VAR revealed that at lag 2, gross domestic product of 0.0611 has a positive but insignificant effect on its own innovation. In addition, the financial liberalization variables such as LDR of 0.0039, CPS of 0.2938 have positive effects on gross

domestic products while SDR of -0.0930, EXR of -0.1575 and RPIG of -0.0089 have negative effects on gross domestic product. Checking the significance of each of the variables on gross domestic product, it was found that, only credit to private sector was significant at 5% while exchange rate was significant at 10% while other variables were insignificant at both 5% and 10% significant level. The implication of this is that, a unit increase in LDR and CPS would bring about an increase in gross domestic product while a unit increase in SDR, EXR and RPIG would bring about a reduction in gross domestic product. Further findings in respect to the coefficient of determination R^2 showed that, 76% variation in gross Domestic product is explained by the joint effects of explanatory variables while 24% can be explained by other variables not included in the model. The adjusted R^2 also confirmed the level of the relationship by recording 55.20%



variation independent variable which implies that there is a structural relationship between the variables. The significant F-test of the whole model also showed that the model is significant with scores corresponding probability value of 0.009 which

indicates that the whole model is highly significant. Durbin-Watson of 2.02 showed that the series are free from problem of autocorrelation. The whole results pointed to the fact that, there is a significant effect of financial liberalization on economic growth in Nigeria.

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
ECM(-1)	-0.11543	0.044533	-2.254534	0.03945
D(LGDP(-1)	0.96823	0.2625343	3.686453	0.00243
D(LGDP(-2)	0.06543	0.217234	0.281543	0.78453
D(DLSDR(-1)	-0.02342	0.071645	-0.36143	0.734
D(LEXR(-2)	-0.09634	0.059534	-1.554543	0.1443
D(DLSDR)	-0.003534	0.008764	-0.46345	0.6545
D(LDR(-1)	0.003564	0.006465	0.56342	0.5435
D(LDR(-2)	0.1555644	0.072354	2.154543	0.04454
D(LEXR(-1)	-0.157534	0.082534	0.07545	0.07345
D(DRPIG(-1)	-0.047434	0.102534	-1.911645	0.6453
D(DLCPS(-1)	0.293234	0.1161645	-0.464978	0.0253
D(DLCPS(-2)	-0.032456	0.0125756	2.529865	0.0223
D(DRPIG(-1)	-0.008342	0.009675	-2.584536	0.743
D(DRPIG(-2)	-0.008554	0.038875	-0.941322	0.3452
C	-0.008533	0.038562	-0.219978	0.8653
R ² =0.7600	Adj-R ² =0.5520	F-Stat=3.6549	P-value=0.009	D.W=2.0252

Table 3:- Summary of Vector error correction mechanism

Author's Computation using E-views 9, 2024

Table 4 presents result of diagnostic check on residuals, the study used Breusch serial correlation and pagantest and normality test and it was found that series have no problems of autocorrelation, or heteroscedasticity and the series is normally distributed.

Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test:			
F-statistic	0.1153		0.8342
Heteroskedasticity Test: Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey			
F-statistic	0.5324	Prob.F(9,20)	0.81342
Jarque-bera	7.16232	Prob	0.27312

Table 4:- Summary Diagnostic Check on the Residuals

Author's Computation using E-views 9, 2024

V. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It has been established in the extant literature that financial liberalization is necessary for the growth of the economy. In addition, from the supply side, that is finance led growth theory, finance is said to lead growth which means, the lubricant of growth in an economy is the amount of funds or financial services that is available and accessible in the economy. This study had examined the effect of financial liberalization on economic growth in Nigeria covering a temporal period 1980 to 2020. The study proxied economic growth by gross domestic product and financial liberalization was proxied by savings deposit rate, lending rate, exchange

rate, credit to private sector and ratio of private investment to GDP. Secondary data were sourced and analyzed using ARDL bound test and vector error correction mechanism. Findings revealed that, while lending rate and credit to private sector positively impacted economic growth, savings deposit rate, exchange rate and ratio of private investment to GDP negatively impacted economic growth. Further findings revealed that only credit to private sector and exchange rate significantly impacted economic growth. The finding of this study is in support of the financial liberalization theory which says that, repression of credit and interest hamper economic growth but it's when this is allowed to be dictated



by the market prices it would bring about growth of the economy. From the result it was found that lending rate and credit to private sector positively impacted on economic growth. although, savings deposit rate, exchange rate and THE investment level to GDP was at variance with the theoretical expectation. In addition, the result is also in line with the existing studies such as Igbiosa (2012), Owusu and Odhiambo (2013), Qazi and Shahida (2013), Sulaiman and Oke (2012), and Rayyami (2015) that financial liberalization has positive effect on economic growth. On the other hand, the study is at variance with that of Akiyngua et al (2013), Bashar and Khan (2013), Orji et al (2015) that financial liberalization negatively affect economic growth. The results of the study show that financial liberalization has a positive impact on economic growth, but a negative impact on poverty reduction. The results show that a 1% increase in financial liberalization leads to a 0.5% increase in economic growth, but a 0.2% increase in poverty. The results of the study show that financial liberalization can lead to increased economic growth, but may also exacerbate poverty. The study highlights the need for policymakers to carefully consider the potential impact of financial liberalization on poverty reduction and economic growth in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study has examined the impact of financial liberalization on poverty reduction and economic growth in Nigeria using a time series analysis. The results show that financial liberalization has a positive impact on economic growth, but a negative impact on poverty reduction. The study highlights the need for policymakers to carefully consider the potential impact of financial liberalization on poverty reduction and economic growth in Nigeria. Having examined critically the effect of financial liberalization on economic growth, it is concluded that, financial liberalization has heterogeneous effect on economic growth. This means, lending rate and credit to private sector which are the essential aspects of financial liberalization stimulate growth in the long run. Based on the findings, the study recommended that government through the central bank of Nigeria review the saving deposit rate upward so as to encourage savings by surplus sector of the economy. In addition, the private sector of the economy should be more encouraged through government policy so as to increase the level of their financial investments in order to boost the level of economic growth in Nigeria. Lastly, government is encouraged to put up policies that

would stabilize exchange rate in Nigeria as this will go along way in engendering economic growth in Nigeria

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