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Sustainable development, generational justice and insecurity in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined sustainable development, generational justice and insecurity in Nigeria. The paper argues that sustainable development can appreciably influence generational justice and insecurity in Nigeria. Thus, the paper establishes a nexus among sustainable development, generational justice and insecurity in Nigeria. Frustration-Aggression theory was used as an analytical construct and the paper relied on secondary sources of data. The main objective of this paper is to find out how sustainable development has impacted on generational justice and insecurity in Nigeria. The major findings, among others, of this paper is that lip service is paid to sustainable development in Nigeria and as a consequence, generational justice is perverted and insecurity has become the order of the day in Nigeria. The paper recommends that environmental policies and laws should be strictly enforced, institutions and agencies for the protection of the environment should be strengthened and the faulty distributive mechanism for the distribution of state resources should be corrected. These measures if put in place can facilitate sustainable development which in turn can dispense generational justice and stem the dangerous tide of insecurity not only in the present generation but also in the generations yet unborn in Nigeria.

Keywords: Sustainable Development; Generational Justice; Insecurity; Frustration-Aggression; Faulty Distributive Mechanism

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1. Introduction

The environment contains the natural resource base upon which human life depends. The exploitation, reproduction and distribution of the natural resource base is a reflection of the prevalent values and norms in a society. Thus, aside from the natural resource base, the values and norms that guide human behavior are also essential components of the environment. The sustainability of the natural resource base is a function of the behavioural impact on the natural resource base. It follows that non-natural capital such as man-made and financial capital, cultural, social and human capital can influence the way the natural capital is exploited, reproduced and distributed. In as much as it is important to apply the precaution principle in the exploitation of the natural resources, it is also necessary that what is produced is fairly and equitably distributed not only within the present generation but also future generation. This means that generational justice which is anchored on equality and fairness can guarantee just and egalitarian society devoid of acrimony, bitterness, rancor and insecurity. It is against this backdrop that the paper establishes a nexus among sustainable development, generational justice and insecurity in Nigeria.

2. Conceptual clarification

2.1. Sustainable Development

The persuasive message of sustainable development seems to be encapsulated in the views of Paul Harrison when he said that “The time is near when every child will ask its parents, what did you do in the environment war, mum and dad? Were you one of those who helped to destroy my future? Or were you one of those who helped to save it” (Thiele, 1999). This statement by Paul Harrison does not only convey a sense of responsibility for sustainable lifestyle by the present generation but also, perforce, demands pragmatic measures should be taken by the present generation to protect the environment for future generation. Aside from economics and social indices, the environment is also a strong pillar of sustainable development. The need to explore and exploit the resource base of the environment without compromising the ability of the environment to support life in the future generation, generally speaking, explains sustainable development.

Sustainability is therefore a term that should characterize development. It simply means development today, and in the future. According to (Thiele, 1999), “sustainability simply refers to the capacity of a practice, relation, or process to be carried on indefinitely without undermining the environmental conditions of its viability” Thiele (1999) also noted that to live sustainably is to maintain the integrity of the environment such that the opportunities for future generations to live well are not diminished. Sustainability is about preserving the quality and diversity of life over time.

It should be noted that the activities of man aimed at ensuring his survival have ostensibly caused distortions in the ecosystem and the biodiversity of the natural environment. Thus, the more the activities of man affect his natural environment, the more the reduction in the carrying capacity of the earth in meeting the needs of not only the present generation but also the future generation. It follows that in carrying out his (man)

activities on the environment, the natural resources must be protected in such a manner that can guarantee their sustainability in meeting the needs of the present and future generations. Sustainable development was used by Brundtland Commission which coined what has become the most often quoted definition of sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. It ties together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social challenges facing humanity (Stivers, 1976:187).

However, it should be noted that sustainable development does not focus solely on environmental issues. The United Nations 2005 World Summit Outcome Document refers to the “interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars” of sustainable development as economic development, social development and environmental protection. In addition, indigenous people have argued through various international fora such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the convention on Biological Diversity, that there are four pillars of sustainable development, the fourth being cultural. This fact was elaborated by the universal declaration on cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2001) when it observed that “cultural diversity is as necessary for human kind as biodiversity is for nature. It becomes one of the roots of development understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence.”

At the realm of economic sustainability, agenda 21 clearly identified information, integration and participation as key building blocks to help countries achieve development that recognizes these interdependent pillars. It emphasizes that in sustainable development, everyone is a user and provider of information. It stresses need to change from old sector-centered ways of doing business to new approaches that involve cross-sectorial co-ordination and the integration of environmental processes. Furthermore, agenda 21 emphasizes that broad public participation in decision-making is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving sustainable development. In the views of Hasna, (2007:47-57)

Sustainability is a process which tells of the development of all aspects of human life affecting sustenance. It means resolving the conflict between the various competing goals, and involves the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality and social equity.

From the foregoing, it is crystal clear that sustainable development is an eclectic concept given the wide array of issues that fall under its umbrella. Given the variegated nature of sustainable development, there is the need for environmental policy to focus not just on green development but also emphasis should be placed on the economic, social and cultural contexts within which environment finds expression. It should be reiterated that sustainable development according to Brundtland commission (WCED, 1987) report, is the development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (OECD, 2007). The main thrust of this report is that there is an inextricable relationship among social, economic and environmental objectives which should be complementary and interdependent in the development process. In other words, the Brundtland Commission report established a nexus between environment and development.

The emphasis is not just on green lifestyles and their sustainability but also important are the values and norms that are essential component of sustainable development. The values and norms mould and reproduce necessary and ancillary green lifestyles and policies which when demonstrated and implemented can guarantee the achievement of sustainable development. Whether the values and norms are positive or negative, they form the rubrics of the culture of the people and reflect the psychological disposition and the behavioral pattern of the people (Jaycox, 1992). Apart from the physical environment, its vegetation, biodiversity and interaction, the culture of the people is also part of the environment. The main assumption of behaviorism is that you can understand the efficacy of the state and its institutions, agencies and parastatals when you cognize the behaviour of those who occupy the institutions, agencies and parastatals of the state.

The behaviour of the people and indeed their leaders is a reflection of the prevalent values and norms in the environment. The values and norms are the precipitates of the culture of the people and they find expression in the political, social and economic dimensions of the society. It follows that in order to appreciate and achieve sustainable development, the general behavioural pattern of the people encapsulated in the values and norms should be considered. Whereas the environment appears to be the main pillar of sustainable development, its social and economic paraphernalia cannot be treated in isolation. There is therefore the need for an integrated approach for sustainable development. This will be based on negotiation which will depend on such factors as peace, and social life, prevailing economic interest, political systems, institutional arrangements and cultural norms (OECD, 2007). These factors become more relevant to sustainable development when viewed from the prism of democracy which is couched in good governance.

2.2. Generational justice

The concept generational justice is made of two words- Generation and Justice. Generation which is a derivative from the Latin word, "generatio" means "procreation" or "procreative capacity". The word generation has been used in different ways. Firstly, "generation" means age group; in which it is referred to the young, middle and older generation. Secondly, the word "generation" is used to signify the entirety of the people living today. Thirdly, "generation" in the field of sociology refers to a group of people whose attitude and orientation are homogenous. According to Tremmel (2005) people who have often been socialized by similar crucial experience and mark a specific epoch belong to the same generation. There is a sense of a similar concernment caused by a historical or social situation that makes neighbouring age groups belong to one generation. Consequently, those people feel paradoxically close to each other even when they do not know each other. (Tremmel, 2005).

This collective identity as one "generation" can emerge despite the fact of different origin, religion or even ethnicity (Tremmel, 2005). Finally, "generation" can also mean "familial" which means the smallest unit. Thus, familial generations refer to the member of the lineage. (Tremmel, 2005). It is expedient to note that generation is a continuum. This means that a new generation does not need to wait until the older generation passes or fritters away. There is therefore a generational coexistence between the old and new generation. The old generation adopts the new generation through socialization and the old generation preserves resources for the survival of the new generation. There is therefore the transfer of values and norms and resources from the

old generation to the new generation. In other words, the old generation lays the foundation for the survival of the new generation.

On the other hand justice means differently to different people. For instance, Aristotle believes that justice can be dispensed when equals are treated equally and unequals treated unequally. For Karl Marx, there can be peace and justice in society when the two classes and the state wither away. According to Thompson (2010)

Justice is about how benefits, burdens, responsibilities and entitlements should be distributed among members of a society-or among people of the world. It is about the right people have, and what they owe to those whom they have harmed or could harm.

In the legal perspective, justice means the enforcement of the laws of the land without fear or favour. It means that the rule of law with all its principles such as equality before the law, impartiality of the law, fundamental human rights and the due process must be upheld in society. In this context justice means equity and fairness. The ability of a people or individual to exercise their rights and freedom without infringing on the rights and freedom of other people. This is in tandem with a popular maxim which says that “a person or a peoples’ right or freedom ends where the right and the freedom of other people begins”. Justice also means when old generation transfers positive values and norms to, and preserves adequate resources for the new generation.

Generational justice therefore means the ability of the old generation to exercise their rights and freedom, explore and exploit the natural resource base without compromising the ability of future generation to also do the same. It also means the ability of the old generation to lay a solid foundation for the future generation by inculcating in them through effective means of socialization, the right values and norms. For (Tremmel, 2005), generational justice means all elements of a collective legacy which are transferred from one generation to the other. These elements according to (Tremmel, 2005) include not only the ecological base on which life depends, but also the infrastructure, the physical and educational capital, the savings and debts, the jobs and social institutions, the fact of whether or not children are subject to corporal punishment within their families.

Elements of collective legacy can also be depicted as the totality of capital (natural, man-made, social, cultural and human capital) which is transferred from one generation to another (Tremmel, 2005). The underlying word for generational justice is equality. This means that generations are not only seen to be equal but should also be treated equally. This means that no generation should be deliberately favoured or disadvantaged. Furthermore, not only should one generation not be disadvantaged over another, but arguably an improvement of the lot of future generations is an ethically necessary aim. Generations to date have experienced economic growth and increasing affluence, justice requires that this remains possible for future generations (Tremmel, 2005). Again, for (Tremmel, 2005), generational justice is attained when the opportunities for succeeding generations to satisfy their needs are at least as much as those of the generation wielding power today. In his words, (Tremmel, 2005) noted that

In ecological terms, a society can only be considered generationally just if it is ecologically sustainable, i.e. if it maintains its natural capital. Renewable energy resources should only be used

at a rate in which they can be renewed. Non-renewable resources need to be used as least as possible so that succeeding generations have the opportunity to create substitutes for them. The biological diversity of species and eco-systems must not be reduced. Air, water and soil should only be contaminated with polluting substances at a rate in which they can in turn rid themselves off this pollution.

To corroborate the views of (Tremmel, 2005), Thompson (2010) observed that

A society is intergenerationally just when each generation does its fair share to enable members of succeeding generations, both inside and outside its borders, to satisfy their needs, to avoid serious harm and to have the opportunity to enjoy things of value.

Aside from ecological issues, generational justice can be dispensed in other facets of the society. For instance, according to Tremmel (2005), with regard to fiscal policy, a generationally justice policy would be one under which the state at least on average and in the long run does not spend more money than it generates in revenues. The share of the state's revenue which is given out for debt serving should not rise in the long term. If today's ruling generation carries out a fiscal policy which uses an increased share of the state's revenue in such a way that a future generation then needs to repay with interest, it is taking away an element of this future generations' freedom.

Lumer (2006) noted that generational justice can be achieved when there is considerable support for the development of the poorest countries, the containment of the other anthropogenous greenhouse effect, and the reduction of youth unemployment. It is pertinent to note that for generational justice to be dispensed, then sustainable development must be achieved. Again is the fact that sustainable development is not only about ecological issues but it is also about the values and norms which influence the behavior of the people and by extension the political, economic and social dimensions of the society. Thus, it can be hypothetically stated that the more sustainable development is achieved, the more generational justice is dispensed for the survival of the future generation.

3. Theoretical framework-frustration-aggression theory

The Frustration-Aggression (F-A) theory simply states that frustration leads to aggressive behavior. According to Dollard et al., (1939) as cited in Dennen (2005), "aggression is always a consequence of frustration". The frustration-aggression theory was propagated in 1939 by John Dollard, Leonard Doob, Ncal Miller, O.H Mowrer and Robert Sears who were associates at the Yale University. Frustration sets in as encumbrances that impede goal attainment. The inability to achieve a goal invokes sense of frustration and the consequence is aggression.

Every man is driven by the innate desire to survive and live a decent and fulfilled life. But when the sources of survival are threatened or frustrated, man does anything humanly possible to survive. Thus, frustration can lead to aggressive behavior like violence, insurgency electoral violence, conflict, militancy, agitation for secession, perpetration of social vices such as armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution and indeed general

insecurity. However, it should be noted that the F-A theory has been criticized by some scholars on the ground that not all frustrations can lead to aggression. (Dennen, 2005; see also Bandura 1973 as cited in Berkowitz, 1989). On the other hand, Baron (1977) as cited in Berkowwtz (1989) barriers to goals attainment would produce aggressive reactions only when they were unexpected. Also in the words of Berkowitz (1989),

Frustration are aversive events and generate aggressive indignations only to extent that they produce negative affect. An unanticipated failure to obtain an attractive goal is more unpleasant than an expected failure, and it is the greater displeasure in the former case that gives rise to the stronger instigation to aggression. Similarly, the thwarted person's appraisals and attributions presumably determine how bad they feel at not getting what they had wanted so that they are most aggressively inclined when they experience strong negative effects.

In as much as it is not the intention of this paper to join this debate, it is important the paper also considers the objective conditions that gave rise to frustrations which in turn led to aggression. Ecologically, the environment can also exhibit aggressive conditions when it is frustrated. The frustration can be seen in the form of excessive, indiscriminate and reckless exploration and exploitation of the natural resources. This unsustainable lifestyle is reinforced by unfriendly environmental practices such as bush burning, deforestation, over grazing, gas flaring, industrial pollution, oil spillage, indiscriminate dumping of refuse and the blocking of water ways. The result is that the environment becomes aggressive in what looks like reprisal attack which manifest in environmental perturbations such as flood, drought, erosion, pollution of water and air, greenhouse effect and the depletion of ozone layer and insecurity. The prevalence of decadent and hostile values and norms in a society can be frustrating which leads to insecurity. Insecurity in turn can scuttle the achievement of sustainable development and the inability to achieve sustainable development can regrettably pervert generational justice.

4. Insecurity in Nigeria

Every responsible and responsive government must in addition to other basic functions protect lives and property. The responsibility and responsiveness of the government in protecting lives and property is in consonance with the Aristotelian teleology in which the state epitomizes and underscores civility necessary for decent, secured and fulfilled lives of the citizens. Insecurity poses a threat to, or questions the moral sanctity and reification of the state. Insecurity is a condition whereby lives and property of the citizens are in danger. It creates fear and uncertainty and subjects the citizens to excruciating emotional and psychological trauma. Insecurity is harmful and can emanate from politico-strategic, socio-economic or ecological issues; for instance. Political instability, poverty environmental degradation, lack of access to education, discrimination on the basis of gender, diseases and unemployment. (Ajodo-Adebanjoko and Okorie, 2014).

Insecurity appears to be a perennial problem in Nigeria as hardly any day passes without incidents of insecurity in Nigeria. In fact the twin brother of Nigerians is insecurity. There are objective conditions that have made Nigeria and indeed Nigerians to be susceptible to insecurity. The plurality of the Nigerian state

exacerbated by the fissiparous policies and gimmicks of the erstwhile colonial masters induced the labour which unfortunately led to the delivery of the premature baby called Nigeria. The 1914 amalgamation of the ethnic groups which can be rightly referred to as 'marriage of inconvenience' served as the womb through which the premature baby called Nigeria was born. Ever since independence in 1960, Nigeria has been in "incubator" struggling to survive. The ethnic formation of political parties (AG, NPC, NCNC), the politicization of the military, the Nigerian civil war, the massacre of the Ibos in the north and the consequent reprisal attacks of the northern by the Ibos, the lopsided appointments into federal government institutions, agencies and parastatals, especially with regard to the so-called kitchen cabinet members, the quit notice given to the Ibos by the Arewa youths to leave the north on or before 1st October, 2017, unbridled hate speeches and campaign of calumny, reinforce ethnicity and fan the embers of discord and insecurity in Nigeria.

The exploitative, repressive and oppressive tendencies of the colonial state were replicated and institutionalized by the post-colonial state in Nigeria. The political elites who were and still intoxicated with power engaged in primitive accumulation as they saw and are still seeing the state and its apparatus as veritable means of amassing wealth. Corruption with impunity became the order of the day and ascendancy to power became a do-or-die affair. Consequently, the electoral system is marred with electoral irregularities with the concomitant devastating electoral violence (Oddih, 2007). Corruption which is a manifestation of a faulty distributive mechanism places more of the state resources in the hands of the elites while the majority of the people are marginalized and wallow in seemingly abysmal poverty and utter neglect. Thus, corruption robs the people the sense of belonging and replaces it with senses of disenchantment, apathy and mistrust capable of igniting aggressive behavior which can lead to insecurity. The paltry minimum wage paid to Nigerian workers and the delay in the payment of workers and pensioners as and when due; whereas, the political elites are paid fat salaries and pension regularly is not only discriminatory but also exploitative. The massacre in Odi, Bayelsa state, Umuechem and the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his Ogoni kinsmen in Rivers State by the agents of Nigerian state explain clearly the repressive and oppressive nature of the Nigerian state. The memories of these ugly incidents can never be forgotten easily and they reinforce aggressive behavior and insecurity.

Furthermore, the long years of military interregnum seems to have militarized the political system in Nigeria to the effect that might seems to be right. Militancy emerged in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria as a result of the refusal of the Nigerian state to address the palpable injustice meted on the people of Niger Delta. Although the amnesty granted to the militants was a temporary palliative measure to douse tension in the Niger Delta, its reverberating application and interpretation seem to corroborate the fact that might is right. Thus, rather than abate violence, it appears to serve as a springboard for more aggressive and violent behavior not only in the Niger Delta region but also in the nooks and crannies of Nigeria.

The pseudo federalism practised by the Nigerian state is also an objective condition for aggressive behavior and insecurity in Nigeria. Federalism demands, inter alia, that the component units should have a sense of belonging and that the units, regions or states that own resources should control their resources and pay royalties to the central government. But this is not the case in Nigeria. The federal government is now the 'biggest brother' that shares revenue to the other tiers of government (state and local government). The implication is that it scuttles the autonomy of the other tiers of government and concentrates power at the

centre, thus, making the Nigerian state unitary in the garb of federalism. In the first republic when agriculture was the main stay of the Nigerian economy and agricultural produce were produced from the three major ethnic groups-Ibo, Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba, they controlled their resources and merely paid royalties to the central government. Unfortunately, when oil became the mainstay of the Nigerian economy which is found in commercial quality in the minority Niger Delta region, the federal government hijacked the oil and its proceeds through the obnoxious land use decree (now land use act) and created the so-called distributable pool account. The appeal for resource control by the people of Niger Delta region fell on the deaf ears of the federal government and this degenerated into militancy and insecurity. The secessionist movement of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the utter neglect and marginalization of some ethnic groups are clear indications that Nigerian federation is sitting on a key of gunpowder which can detonate any time.

Ecologically, the excessive and indiscriminate exploration and exploitation of natural resources coupled with unfriendly environmental practices, distorts the eco-system and whittles down the carrying capacity of the earth to support life. The perennial problem of flood, desert encroachment, gully erosion, water and air pollution are not only sources of food insecurity but also destroys the fauna and flora. The movement of the displaced persons to secured areas as a result of the natural disasters exerts much pressure on the resources in their new environment. This in a way explains the violent clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and the indigenes of their new environment. The objective conditions of the Nigerian state have given rise to corruption, oppression, marginalization, injustice and environmental disasters (see Adegami, 2013, Olukayode and Urhie, 2014; Onifade, Imhonopi and Urim, 2013; Oladiran, 2014; Eme and Onyishi, 2011; and Ewetan and Urhie, 2014). which form breeding ground for insecurity in Nigeria.

5. Conclusion and recommendation

It is evident from the foregoing that insecurity is the bane of Nigeria. Consequently, an insecure country like Nigeria cannot achieve sustainable development and in turn generational justice would be perverted. In order to enhance security in Nigeria, the structural imbalance or defects in the Nigerian federation should be restructured. In order to give a sense of belonging to the component units. In addition, public offices should be made less attractive and democratic institutions and culture should be strengthened and repositioned. Wonah (2010) has argued that it is not enough to have democratic institutions but most importantly is for the people to imbibe and demonstrate democratic culture. It is also important that the mindset of Nigerians be restructured through value reorientation programmes, institutions and agencies.

Thus, 'the change begins with you' campaign of the federal government should be intensive and extensive. Furthermore, environmental laws and policies should be strictly enforced and environmental institutions should be reinvigorated. There is the need for the people to participate in the formulation and implementation of environmental policies (Wonah 2017) in order to achieve sustainable development. It is an undistorted belief that if these measures are considered and implemented, Nigeria will not only be a secured society but also achieve sustainable development thereby dispensing generational justice.

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