

**COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACTS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLES OF
RESEARCHERS IN NIGERIA**

**¹OLANIPEKUN Shola Sunday, ²GARUBA Ismaila Ayinde, and ³ABDULMUMINI
Yekeen**

**¹General Studies Education Department, Kwara State College of Education (Tech.),
Lafiagi Kwara State, Nigeria**

²Agric Science Education Department, Kwara State College of Education (Tech.), Lafiagi

**³Department of Educational Foundations, Kwara State College of Education (Tech.),
Lafiagi**

¹Corresponding Author: sholexofafrica@gmail.com

Abstract

COVID-19, as a pandemic, is impacting institutions around the world. Its scope and economic dimensions mean that it poses a major threat towards achieving the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this regard, this paper discussed how the coronavirus pandemic have impacted the SDGs and affected their implementation. These impacts are felt through economic recession, the number of people thrown into poverty, increase in the rate of unemployment, national health risk among others. It is in line with these points that this study set out to examine sustainable development issues in Nigeria, COVID-19 and its impacts on sustainable development, since many nations seem to be falling behind in meeting the SDGs' targets. This paper further discussed the roles of researchers in achieving sustainable development in the COVID-19 era. One of these roles was that researchers should investigate the economic impacts of the pandemic in order to find out how to overcome the negative economic impacts of the virus. Also, African researchers and scholars must not over rely on the coronavirus vaccine from the West. There is no way African society will be developed by foreign researchers with their foreign thought system. It was concluded that the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable development in Nigeria had negative socio-economic consequences for the country.

Keywords: COVID-19, Impacts, Sustainable Development, Researchers and Roles

Introduction

Sustainable development has been defined in many ways by different scholars but the most commonly and frequently quoted definition is from **Our Common Future**, also known as the Brundtland Report. The definition was coined in an effort to link the issues of economic development and environmental stability by emphasizing on the importance of intergenerational equity. From the report, it means the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations General Assembly, 1987). This concept of sustainable development according to Emas (2015) aims to maintain economic advancement and progress while protecting the long-term value of the environment. This provides the framework for the integration of environment policies and development strategies.

From the above, the concept of conserving resources for future generation is one of the major features that distinguish sustainable development policy from traditional environment policy which also seeks to internalise the externalities of environmental degradation (Obilom, Ucha and Goshwe, 2019). To this extent, the overall goal of sustainable development is to integrate and focus on social, economic and environmental factor which is to achieve long-term stability of the economy and environment. This is only achievable through the integration and socio-economic and environment concerns throughout the decision making process across the globe since the goals and targets of sustainable development goals (SDGs) are universal.

However, achieving sustainable development has been more challenging due to the eruption of COVID-19 “insurgency”. Though COVID-19 has created some opportunities but, there are signs that the impacts of COVID-19 on the global economy will be more intense and long-lasting than those felt during the 2008–2009 global

financial crises (Behraves and Rocha, 2020). In other words, these impacts pose a serious threat to the development prospects of less industrialised nations and to the realization of the UN SDGs by 2030.

Sustainable Development Issues in Nigeria

Nigeria, like other African countries, is endowed with huge human and natural resources as well as great cultural, ecological and economic diversity. However, the country still struggles with much developmental issues. This has been the nature of development in many parts of Africa since the continent has remained retarded, poor and lagged behind other regions in the world (Mohammad, 2012). Sir leaf and Radelet (2008) noted that the past three decades have been disastrous for most African countries (Nigeria inclusive) because they continue to be bogged by poverty whereas its counterpart in development rating, such as Asia, recorded the fastest growth rates and reductions in poverty in the history of the world.

In view of the above, one major issue, among others, that engenders sustainable development in Nigeria is critical poverty. This occurs when the citizens are suffering from economic deprivation and inadequate resources based on denial of choices and opportunities which is a violation of human dignity (UN, 2010). This is happening because Nigeria's per capital income is drastically low despite the nation's endowment with crude oil and solid minerals. This makes Nigerian to wallow in abject penury (Aremu, 2020). To this extent, Ayadike, Emeh and Ukah (2012) posited that Nigeria is one of the poorest countries in the world and has one of the highest rates of unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa. In essence, poverty is a social dimension that is central to the concept of sustainable development. It deserves attention in its own right. This is because where a nation is ecologically rich but a large numbers of its people live

in poverty or is suffering from poverty of mind, such a nation is definitely not sustainable.

Bad or inept leadership constitutes major obstacle, not only to Nigeria but, to Africa's development. The discourse on the delicate future of Nigeria is strictly connected to the failure of leadership (Joseph, David and Kikelomo, 2016). Commenting on the experience of the Nigerian nation, the renowned novelist, Chinua Achebe (1984), insisted that the root cause of the Nigerian predicament should be laid squarely at the foot of bad leadership. This Achebe further argues in "The trouble with Nigeria" when this novelist reiterated that nothing is wrong with the Nigerian land, climate, water and air or anything else. According to this renowned writer, the Nigeria's problem is the inability of its leaders to rise to their responsibility. In a word, the leadership of the country has failed to provide the kind of leadership which is needed to improve the lot of the masses. In support of this, Prah (2009) further argued that:

The African post-colonial elites have consistently failed to provide the sort of leadership which is needed to improve the quality of life of the teeming masses of African humanity. Contestation for resources and recourse to ethnic mobilization instead of clear ideological positioning reduces politics to egotistical grandstanding and philosophically barren personally rivalries. This has been the stock-in-trade of our political elite; power at all cost in the absence of sanctions has spawned a culture of impunity and the absence of political hygiene (13-14).

Another huge hindrance to sustainable development is corruption such as greed due to poor moral fibre among the political leaders who embezzle and misappropriate public funds. They engage in cheating, bribery, forgery, impersonation, rigging, hoarding of voters' cards, multiple voters' registration, etc. which all have constituted a huge impediment to development in Nigeria (Dagaci 2009). Corruption is one of the greatest

threats to development. It is a social problem which hampers development and robs people of the chances for any significant economic growth as well as social advancement (Okeyim, Ejue and Ekanem 2013).

Sustainable development has also been preached with little achievement in Nigeria due to violence of various forms such as political violence, ethnic and religious violence and youth violence among others. To be sure, political violence negates peaceful coexistence, law and order. It militates against the consolidation of democracy and social coexistence. This in turn impact on the social and economic well being of the nation and creates imbalances in social relations (Theophilus, Nnorom and Targba, 2013). In other words, violence and especially political violence does not only represent a disturbance movement to the political equilibrium and peaceful co-existence of the system but also retard national development by also destroying political culture of such country.

Furthermore, goal four of the seventeen SDGs centers on education. This goal emphasised on inclusive equitable quality education which promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. This goal also underlines that improving the quality of education as well as the quantity is essential to sustainable development. Unfortunately, Nigeria's education system is burdened with a series of problems which have been threatening the quality of its education system. To be sure, it has been observed that no budgetary allocation for education has reached 25% in any year as against the recommended global standards of 26% (UNESCO, 2005). With this, Nigeria has not been appropriating adequate fund for the provision of quality education. As such, the country is grooming its human resource workforce under unacceptable teaching and learning environments. The consequence of this on national development is grievous as the products of the

countries educational systems will offer what they gained from exposure to education that lacks quality (Ekpo, 2014).

In summary, one can affirm from the above that concept of sustainable development in Nigeria is an illusion (Williams and Shehu, 2019). This is because the country is overwhelmed by problems such as critical poverty, inept leadership, corruption, security challenges, the problem of providing quality education due to inadequate funding, poor moral values, political and ethno-religious violence since according to Matlou (2009) many African nations have failed to unite being torn apart by ethnic and other conflicts which are all factors hindering sustainable development. Yet, the will and ability to deal with these germane issues are not visible due to the institutionalisation of corruption, low political will and weak institutional capacities.

COVID-19 and Its Impacts on Sustainable Development: the Nigerian Experience

After spreading through East Asia, Europe and North America in early 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic started affecting countries in Africa and Latin America. With the largest population in Sub-Saharan Africa and trade links within Africa and the rest of the world, it seemed inevitable that the pandemic would eventually reach Nigeria. In late February 2020, Nigeria recorded the subcontinent's first confirmed case, after which it began to spread through Lagos, Ogun and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) area of Abuja (Onyekwena and Mma, 2020). The sudden onset of the pandemic imposed significant sustainable economic costs on Nigeria's population (Andam, Edeh and Thurlow, 2020). These are felt through economic recession, the high number of people thrown into poverty and hunger, public health risk, and lockdown of schools completely among others.

Sequel to the above, economic crises are often caused by market failure, external trade and price shocks, political instability and civil unrest among others. Although

economic recession is not new to Nigeria but no one could have thought that crises in public health could ignite an economic crisis. According to Ozili (2020) what made the 2020 economic crisis different in Nigeria was that most economic agents, who could have helped to revive the economy, were unable to engage in economic activities due to fear of contracting the COVID-19 disease. Also, economic agents did not engage in economic activities when the government imposed and enforced its social distancing rules and movement lockdown in Abuja, Lagos and Ogun states on the 30th March of 2020. To this extent, the pandemic affected Nigeria Gross Domestic Production (GDP) as seen in the table below:

Table 1 The actual 2019 and projected 2020 aggregates real GDP/growth rates

	ACTUAL 2019 REAL GDP		PROJECTED 2020 REAL GDP	
	Value (₦ Million)	Growth Rate	Value (₦ Million)	Growth Rate
Quarter 1	16,384,063.26	2.08	16,769,469.09	2.35
Quarter 2	16,892,756.91	2.12	16,951,139.99	0.35
Quarter 3	18,459,494.59	2.28	16,760,748.54	-9.20
Quarter 4	19,488,576.88	2.55	18,260,026.88	-6.30
Annualized	71, 224,891.64	2.27	68,741,384.50	-3.49

Adapted from Olusanya and Ahamuefula (2020)

As seen from the table 1, the first quarter of the year 2020 as a result of the outbreak of the virus is said to birth the drastic decrease from 2.35 to 0.35 in the second quarter and unanimously from 0.35 to -9.20 in the third quarter and to fourth quarter in -6.3. This shows the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy.

Due to economic recession, the pandemic pushed people into extreme poverty which does not only mean the inability to have access to material resources, but include lack of access to education, health services, inability to take part in the process of education making and exposure to external circumstance (Ka'oje, 2020). About 5 million Nigerians are projected to be pushed into poverty because of COVID-19 and due to associated mobility restrictions and lockdown measures (World Bank, 2020a; IMF, 2020). Disruptions in domestic economic activities and international food markets also affect food security of Nigerian households due to COVID-19. National and state-level restrictions and lockdowns affected food transportation within the country, with clear implications on food supply and, consequently, on food prices. This is expected to generate significant repercussions on food scarcity, particularly in poorer and vulnerable urban households (Ericksen et al., 2010). This has made citizens to barely feed as compared to the pre-pandemic outbreak.

The failing in the Nigeria's public health sector made it difficult for Nigeria to cope with the fast-spreading of the virus, given the weak state of the health care system. Local drug manufacturers could not manufacture drugs that could temporarily suppress coronavirus in infected patients because most of the active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) used to manufacture suppressant drugs could no longer be imported because China had shut down its factories and closed its borders to control the coronavirus pandemic that was ravaging China at the time (Ozili, 2020). Many clinical activities were reduced or halted in order to control COVID-19 transmission (Ajisegiri, Odusanya and Jishi, 2020). More so, there were numerous complaints about the shortages of personal protective equipment and ventilators needed to combat COVID-19 (World Economic Forum, 2020). This is further compounded with reported COVID-19

infection among healthcare workers as a result of occupational exposures (Abu-bashal, 2020).

COVID-19 crisis also has an untold impact on education. This, Nigeria witnessed through indefinite and irregular lock-downs throughout the country. During this period, almost all students throughout all levels of educational learning had no access to teaching and learning. This further exposed the cracks in the country's education system due to inadequate digital technologies and infrastructures which could have been used to facilitate mobile and digital learning during the crisis. Although some institutions of learning claimed to have moved to online learning but, the reality is that online learning will be easier for those with internet access and will exclude large groups of disadvantaged learners, especially those in rural areas who may have no access to electricity, smart-phones, and availability of internet. To this extent, it is safe to argue that rural learners are deprived of useful information and education which are essential for self-development during the COVID-19 crisis. This proposition is succinctly supported by Dube (2020) as reiterated in the excerpt below that:

COVID-19 and the implementation of online learning have magnified the challenges faced by rural learners. Rural learners are deprived of useful information, education and skills, which are essential for community development, self-development and the fight against COVID-19... "rural schools certainly have problems peculiar to them; predicaments which require systemic effort ... Rural areas already face tremendous barriers to high learner attainment and operate in less than favourable policy environments (140)".

From the foregoing, it is evident that the pandemic jeopardised the achievement of the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. Yet, researchers have crucial roles to play in achieving sustainable development during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The next section of this research examines these crucial

roles.

Researchers' Roles in Achieving Sustainable Development in the COVID-19 Era

COVID-19 has posed a severe threat to global economy, healthy lives and well being of millions of people around the world. In the words of Pan and Zhang (2020), it is a global pandemic that shares the facets of complexity, uncertainty, and evaluation that characterise grand challenges, and overcoming such a global pandemic will require concerted research and sustained contributions from researchers. This is because it is not debatable that development of any nation depends on research. Furthermore, Research and development are complimentary in achieving growth in economy, knowledge advancement, better methods and reliable decision making (Offor, 2017).

Researchers should respond rapidly and effectively to such an emerging pathogen. A key issue for researchers is to help policy makers understand the pathophysiology and historical picture of the virus. Researchers should encourage individuals to practice everyday prevention measures, such as frequent hand washing, and covering coughs and sneezes. They should also investigate the potential economic impacts of COVID-19 on local and global financial markets through the impact of mitigating measures in order to suggest solution(s) as to how to overcome the negative economic impacts of the crisis. Despite progress made by western researchers and scientists, Nigerian and indeed, African scholars must not over rely on the coronavirus vaccine from the West. There is no way African society will be developed by foreign researchers with their foreign thought system.

Conclusions

This research was on sustainable development in the COVID-19 era. It discussed some sustainable development issues in Nigeria as it pertained to bad leadership, political violence, and quality education among others. It further discussed the impacts

of COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable development in Nigeria through the lockdown restrictions which had negative socioeconomic consequences for the country as experienced through economic recession, extreme poverty and hunger among others. More importantly, this research discussed Nigerian and African researchers' roles in achieving sustainable development in the COVID-19 era.

Recommendations

1. Researchers and educationists should work on curriculum modification procedures that could enhance sustainable development especially during pandemic or disaster periods.
2. We must be ready to address the problem of bad leadership, corruption, poverty and bad policies because these factors are directly and indirectly the banes of underdevelopment in Nigeria, and indeed, Africa.

References

- Achebe, C. (1984). "The trouble with Nigeria". Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Abu-bashal, D. (2020). Nigeria: 113 health careworkers infected with COVID-19. Retrieved from:<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/nigeria-113-healthcare-workers-infected-with-covid-19/1825398>.
- Ajisehiri, W.S., Odusanya, O.O., & Jishi, R. (2020). COVID-19 outbreak situation in Nigeria and the need for effective engagement of community health workers for epidemic response. *Global BioSecurity*, 1 (4), 1-10.
- Andam, K., Edeh, H., & Thurlow, J. (2020). Impacts of COVID-19 on food system and poverty in Nigeria. Retrieved from www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PMC7550085

- Anyadike, N., Emeh, I.E., &Ukah, F.O. (2012). Entrepreneurship development and employment generation in Nigeria: Problems and prospects. *Universal Journal of Education and General Studies*, 1 (4), 88-102.
- Aremu, M.A. (2020). Discourse strategies in Obasanjo's appeal letter to former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan. *Kalangu Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 1 (1), 37-47.
- Behraves, N. & Rocha, E.W. (2020). Interim Global Economic Forecast; IHS Markit: London, United Kingdom.
- Dagaci, A.M. (2009). Democracy and the leadership question: a redefinition in the Nigerian context. *Lapai International Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 2, (2), 16-28.
- Dube, B. (2020). Rural online learning in the context of COVID-19 in South Africa: evoking an inclusive education approach. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Education Research*, 10 (2), 135-157.
- Ekpo, C. (2014). Quality education: bedrock for national development in Nigeria: the way forward for Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net>
- Emas, R. (2015). The concept of sustainable development: definition and defining principles. Florida, United State of America, United Nations Publishers.
- Ericksen, P. J., Bohle, H. G., Stewart, B. (2010). Vulnerability and resilience of food systems. *Food Security and Global Environmental Change*. Earth scan, London & Washington DC: 67-77.
- IMF.(2020). Nigeria: request for purchase under the rapid financing instrument. *International Monetary Fund Country Report*, No. 20/142, Washington, D.C. 20090.
- Joseph, K.O., David, I. & Kikelomo, E.I. (2016). Good governance and leadership: pathway to sustainable national development in Nigeria. *Journal of Public Administrative and Governance*, 6 (1), 35-50.
- Ka'oje, R.M. (2020). Feminization of poverty in Northern Nigeria in Bawa, A.B. & Abubakar, Y. (Eds.) *Woman and History in Northern Nigeria, Nigeria*, Aboki Publishers.
- Matlou, M.P. (2009). Advancing and integrating African values, ethnics and norms in the interest of Africans and the African diaspora, Nigeria, Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization.
- Mohammad, K.I. (2012). Challenges of sustainable development in Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258338070>
- Obilom, J.E.C., Ucha, M.L. & Goshwe, S.A. (2019). Religion education: a panacea for

- control of crimes and promotion of sustainable development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Arts Education*, 1 (2), 96-105.
- Offor, E.I.D. (2017). Towards strengthening the types and design of research for national development. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Research Development*, 26 (1), 36-39.
- Okeyim, M.O., Ejue, J.B., & Ekanem, S.A. (2013). Governance and corruption in Nigeria: a philo-psychological analysis. *Net Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(2), 24-32.
- Olusanya, E. O & Ahamuefula, E. O (2020). COVID-19 and the Nigeria economy: analyses of impacts and growth projections. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342439011_COVID19_and_the_Nigeria_Economy_Analyses_of_Impacts_and_Growth_Projection
- Onyekwena, C., Mma, A. (2020). Understanding the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the Nigeria economy. Retrieved from www.brrokings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2020/04/08/understaning-the-impact-of-the-covid-19-outbreak-on-the-nigeria-economy
- Ozili, P.K. (2020). Covid-19 pandemic and economic crisis: The Nigerian experience and structural causes. Munich Personal REPEC Archive.
- Pan, S.L. & Zhang, S. (2020). Fighting COVID-19 pandemic to tackling sustainable development goals: an opportunity for responsible information systems research. *International Journal of Information Management*, 55, 1-7.
- Prah, K.K. (2009). African languages, African development and African unity. Nigeria, Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization.
- Sirleaf E.J & Radelet S. (2008). 'The good news out of Africa: democracy, stability, and the renewal of growth and development' (Centre for Global Development 2008) p.1
- Theophilus, A.T., Nnorom, K. C. & Targba, A. (2013). Political violence and its effects on social development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3 (17), 261-266.
- United Nations General Assembly. (1987). *Report of the world commission on environment and development: Our common future*. Oslo, Norway: United Nations General Assembly, Development and International Co-operation: Environment.
- United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (2010). *Combating poverty and inequality: structural change, social policy and politics*. Geneva.
- Williams, P. W. & Shehu, K. (2019). The effect of gender stereotypes among language speakers in college of education Akwanga, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. *University of Jos Journal of Arts Education*, 2 (1), 241-253.

World Economic Forum. COVID-19 in Africa: insights from our 23 April WHO media briefing[Internet]. World Economic Forum. 2020 [cited2020 Apr 25]. Available from:<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/covid19-in-africa-our-media-briefing-with-who>.

World Bank.(2020a). The impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) on global poverty: Why Sub-Saharan Africa might be the region hardest hit. Data Blog.<https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/impact-COVID-19-coronavirus-globalpoverty-why-sub-saharan-africa-might-be-region-hardest>.