



RESEARCH ARTICLE

PERCEPTION OF AIFUE LECTURERS ON THE NEED FOR RETHINKING VALUES AND PRIORITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

JOSEPHINE CHIKODI ANYIKA ¹, HAPPINESS OZIOMA UGBO ²

¹ Department of Social Studies and Civic Education, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Nigeria; ² Department of Educational Technology, Imo State University, Owerri,

ABSTRACT

The growing complexities of development challenges in Nigeria have intensified the need to rethink societal values and priorities in addressing issues of national security, economic growth, and environmental protection for sustainable development. This study examined the need for rethinking values and priorities societal issues for sustainable development: A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 54 lecturers in Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri. The entire population was used as the sample for the study using simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a researcher-developed rating scale titled *need for rethinking values and priorities societal issues for sustainable development Rating Scale (NRVPSISDRS)*. Arithmetic mean was used to answer the research questions. The finding indicate that: a stable and secure environment is essential for the successful attainment of sustainable development goals in the country. Integrating economic advancement with environmental sustainability is essential for achieving long-term national development.

Keywords: Sustainable development, national security, economic growth, environmental protection, societal values.

Corresponding Author

Josephine Chikodi Anyika

Email Address: jossyanyika@gmail.com Telephone Number: +2348063431945

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is a development approach that focuses on meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept gained global recognition following the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987, which emphasized the importance of balancing economic growth, environmental protection, and social well-being in development processes. Sustainable development is a multidimensional concept that integrates three core pillars: economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability (United Nations, 2020).

Economic sustainability involves the efficient use of resources to ensure long-term economic growth without causing environmental degradation. Social sustainability focuses on improving the quality of life, promoting equity, social justice, and access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Environmental sustainability, on the other hand, emphasizes the conservation and responsible management of natural resources to prevent environmental depletion and degradation (Adeyemi, 2020).

The idea of sustainable development has become a central theme in global development policies and educational reforms across the world. International organizations such as the United Nations have played a key role in promoting sustainable development through initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to address global challenges including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice by the year 2030.

Nigeria is currently confronted with the complex challenge of achieving sustainable development while balancing national security, economic growth, and environmental protection. The increasing rate of insecurity, environmental degradation, unemployment, and uneven economic development reflects a persistent misalignment in societal values and developmental priorities. Despite various policy interventions, greater emphasis has often been placed on short-term economic gains and security responses with limited attention to environmental sustainability and social well-being. This imbalance has contributed to resource depletion, climate-related challenges, and social instability, thereby undermining long-term national development efforts.

Moreover, the pursuit of economic growth without adequate environmental safeguards has resulted in ecological degradation, which further threatens livelihoods and exacerbates insecurity in many parts of the country. As emphasized by the United Nations Sustainable Development framework, there is a growing need for societies to rethink their values and priorities in order to promote integrated development that simultaneously addresses security concerns, economic advancement, and environmental sustainability. Therefore, the failure to appropriately realign societal values towards sustainable practices poses a significant problem to Nigeria's quest for balanced and inclusive development.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the need for rethinking values and priorities societal issues for sustainable development: balancing security, economic growth, and environmental protection in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:



1. Determine extent does national security influence sustainable development in Nigeria.
2. Examine how economic growth and environmental protection affect sustainable development in Nigeria.

1.2. Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

1. To what extent does national security influence sustainable development in Nigeria?
2. How does economic growth and environmental protection affect sustainable development in Nigeria?

2.0. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conceptual Framework

Sustainable development

In Nigeria, sustainable development is particularly relevant due to the challenges of rapid population growth, environmental degradation, unemployment, and inadequate infrastructure. Educational institutions, especially secondary schools, play a vital role in promoting sustainable development by training students to become productive members of society who are conscious of their environmental responsibilities (Ogunleye, 2021). Teachers and school principals are therefore expected to adopt effective management and instructional strategies that will enhance sustainable development through quality education delivery. Sustainable development is essential for achieving long-term societal progress and environmental stability. It requires collective efforts from governments, institutions, educators, and individuals to ensure that development initiatives are carried out in a manner that safeguards the well-being of both present and future generations.

Sustainable development has become a central concern for developing nations striving to achieve long-term economic prosperity while maintaining environmental integrity and social stability. In Nigeria, development priorities often revolve around national security and economic growth, with limited attention given to environmental sustainability. This imbalance in societal values and priorities has contributed to numerous environmental challenges such as pollution, deforestation, and climate-related disasters (UNESCO, 2021). The concept of sustainable development as promoted by the United Nations emphasizes the need for integrated policies that balance economic, social, and environmental goals (United Nations Environment Programme, 2020).

However, in many developing countries including Nigeria, policy frameworks tend to prioritize economic growth and security concerns over environmental protection. Traditional development models have often emphasized economic growth at the expense of social equity and environmental protection, leading to issues such as poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and resource depletion. Consequently, there is an urgent need to rethink societal values in ways that promote responsible consumption, social justice, environmental stewardship, and long-term well-being.

Rethinking Values

Rethinking values refers to the process of critically examining and reassessing one's beliefs, principles, and standards of behavior in response to changing circumstances, experiences, or societal



needs. It involves reflecting on existing values to determine their relevance and effectiveness in guiding personal and social actions. Rethinking values helps individuals and societies adapt to new challenges, promote ethical conduct, and make decisions that support personal growth and collective well-being. In education, it encourages learners to develop positive attitudes, moral responsibility, and sound judgment.

Rethinking societal priorities involves placing greater emphasis on human development, quality education, environmental conservation, and inclusive economic growth rather than focusing solely on material wealth and industrial expansion. Institutions such as the United Nations advocate for value reorientation through frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which encourage societies to adopt ethical practices that ensure intergenerational equity and sustainable resource management (World Bank, 2023).

In the educational context particularly on need for rethinking values and priorities societal issues for sustainable development schools play a vital role in fostering new values and attitudes that support sustainable living. Teachers and school leaders can help learners develop critical thinking skills, environmental awareness, and social responsibility needed to address societal issues such as climate change, unemployment, conflict, and inequality (Ogunleye, 2021). This value reorientation is essential for preparing individuals who are capable of making informed decisions that balance economic advancement with environmental sustainability and social cohesion.

Ultimately, sustainable development cannot be achieved without transforming the mindset of individuals and communities toward sustainability-driven behaviours. By rethinking societal values and priorities, communities can adopt more sustainable lifestyles and contribute meaningfully to national development goals while preserving resources for future generations. Through the need for rethinking values and priorities societal issues for sustainable development, balancing security, economic growth, and environmental protection in Nigeria can be achieved.

National Security

National Security for Sustainable Development refers to the protection of a nation's people, resources, institutions, and environment in a manner that promotes long-term economic growth, social stability, and environmental sustainability. A secure nation provides a peaceful atmosphere for investment, education, healthcare, and infrastructure development, which are essential for sustainable development. Therefore, national security serves as a foundation for achieving continuous progress and improving the quality of life of citizens. United Nations (2022) described National security as the protection of a nation's territorial integrity, sovereignty, citizens, and critical institutions from internal and external threats such as terrorism, crime, political instability, and economic disruption.

It encompasses military defense, intelligence gathering, economic stability, cyber security, and social cohesion aimed at ensuring the safety and well-being of the state and its people. Effective national security promotes peace, stability, and sustainable development by safeguarding lives, property, and national interests. In Nigeria, security challenges have necessitated increased investment in defense and surveillance infrastructure, often at the expense of environmental initiatives and economic growth.



Economic Growth

Economic growth involves the increase in a country's productive capacity and overall output of goods and services. World Bank (2023) described Economic growth as the sustained increase in a country's production of goods and services over a specific period, typically measured by the rise in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It reflects an improvement in a nation's economic performance and is often associated with increased employment opportunities, higher income levels, improved infrastructure, and better standards of living for citizens.

Economic Growth for Sustainable Development refers to the continuous increase in a country's production of goods and services in a way that improves living standards while preserving resources for future generations. It promotes job creation, poverty reduction, and economic stability without causing environmental degradation. Sustainable economic growth ensures that present needs are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. While economic growth is essential for poverty reduction and improved living standards, growth driven by extractive industries such as oil and gas exploration often leads to environmental degradation. with this act, there is need for environmental protection.

Environmental protection

Environmental protection entails the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources to prevent ecological imbalance. It is a critical component of sustainable development as it ensures the availability of resources for future generations. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (2020), Environmental protection refers to the preservation and conservation of natural resources and ecosystems in order to prevent environmental degradation and ensure sustainable use for present and future generations. It involves practices such as pollution control, waste management, biodiversity conservation, and the responsible use of land, water, and energy resources to maintain ecological balance and support sustainable development.

Akinwale (2019) environmental Protection for Sustainable Development refers to the responsible use and management of natural resources to prevent environmental degradation while supporting long-term development. It involves practices such as pollution control, conservation of biodiversity, afforestation, and sustainable resource use. Environmental protection ensures that ecosystems remain healthy and productive, thereby supporting human well-being and meeting the needs of both present and future generations. Rethinking these priorities is essential for achieving a balanced approach to national development that supports economic advancement, ensures security, and promotes societal values.

Societal values are the shared beliefs, norms, and principles that guide the behavior of individuals within a society. They determine what is considered right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable, and help maintain social order and harmony. Examples include honesty, respect, cooperation, justice, and responsibility. Societal values shape culture, influence decision-making, and promote peaceful coexistence and development within a community.

Adeyemi (2020) explained that societal values for sustainable development are the shared principles and beliefs that promote responsible behavior toward people, the environment, and future generations. These values include honesty, accountability, and respect for human rights, environmental



responsibility, and social justice. They encourage individuals and institutions to make decisions that balance economic growth, social well-being, and environmental protection. Strong societal values help create cooperation, reduce conflict, and support long-term sustainable development in society.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Two relevant theories that explain the need for rethinking values and priorities for sustainable development are the Brundtland Sustainable Development Theory and the Schwartz Theory of Basic Human Values.

Brundtland Sustainable Development Theory

The Brundtland Sustainable Development Theory was developed by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) under the leadership of Gro Harlem Brundtland in 1987. The main aim of the theory is to promote development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Its importance lies in highlighting the balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection. It is highly relevant to rethinking values and priorities because it encourages societies to shift from short-term profit-oriented values to long-term sustainability, responsibility, and intergenerational justice.

Schwartz Theory of Basic Human Values

The Schwartz Theory of Basic Human Values was proposed by Shalom H. Schwartz in 1992. The aim of the theory is to identify universal human values that influence attitudes and behavior across cultures, such as benevolence, universalism, achievement, and security. Its importance is that it explains how values guide decision-making and social behavior. It is relevant to sustainable development because it emphasizes the need to prioritize values like environmental concern, social justice, and cooperation over selfish or materialistic values, thereby supporting a shift in mindset necessary for sustainable development.

3.0. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 54 lecturers in Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri. The entire population was used as the sample for the study using simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a researcher-developed rating scale titled *need for rethinking values and priorities societal issues for sustainable development Rating Scale (NRVPSISDRS)*. Arithmetic mean was used to answer the research questions.

4.0. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does national security influence sustainable development in Nigeria?

**Table 1:** Descriptive Analysis of the Extent National Security Influence Sustainable Development

S/N	Item Statements	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Decision
1	The level of national security in Nigeria determines the extent to which sustainable development initiatives can be effectively implemented across various sectors of the economy.	3.52	Accepted
2	Persistent insecurity negatively affects economic activities and environmental sustainability efforts required for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.	3.24	Accepted
3	Improvement in national security enhances social stability and promotes sustainable utilization of resources necessary for long-term national development.	3.38	Accepted
Grand Mean		3.38	

Source: Authors' Analysis (2025).

Table 1 presents the mean responses of lecturers on the extent to which national security influences sustainable development in Nigeria. The results indicate that all the item statements recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, showing general agreement among the respondents. Specifically, item 1 with a mean score of 3.52 was accepted, indicating that lecturers agreed that the level of national security in Nigeria determines the extent to which sustainable development initiatives can be effectively implemented across various sectors of the economy. Item 2 with a mean score of 3.24 was also accepted, suggesting that persistent insecurity negatively affects economic activities and environmental sustainability efforts required for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

Similarly, item 3 with a mean score of 3.38 was accepted, implying that improvement in national security enhances social stability and promotes the sustainable utilization of resources necessary for long-term national development. The grand mean score of 3.38 further confirms that lecturers generally agreed that national security significantly influences sustainable development in Nigeria. This implies that a stable and secure environment is essential for the successful attainment of sustainable development goals in the country.

Research Question 2: How does economic growth and environmental protection affect sustainable development in Nigeria?

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of the How Economic Growth and Environmental Protection Affect Sustainable Development in Nigeria

S/N	Item Statements	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Decision
4	Sustainable economic growth that promotes employment and income generation significantly enhances the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria.	3.21	Accepted
5	Environmental protection measures, such as pollution control and conservation of natural resources, positively influence long-term sustainable development in Nigeria.	3.47	Accepted
6	Failure to balance economic growth with environmental protection undermines sustainable development efforts in Nigeria	3.36	Accepted
Grand Mean		3.35	

Source: Authors' Analysis (2025).



Table 2 shows the mean responses of lecturers on how economic growth and environmental protection affect sustainable development in Nigeria. The results reveal that all the item statements had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that the respondents agreed with the statements. Item 4 with a mean score of 3.21 was accepted, which implies that sustainable economic growth that promotes employment and income generation significantly enhances the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria. Item 5 had a mean score of 3.47 and was also accepted, indicating that environmental protection measures such as pollution control and conservation of natural resources positively influence long-term sustainable development in Nigeria.

Furthermore, item 6 with a mean score of 3.36 was accepted, suggesting that failure to balance economic growth with environmental protection undermines sustainable development efforts in Nigeria. The grand mean of 3.35 indicates that lecturers generally agreed that both economic growth and environmental protection play significant roles in promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. This implies that integrating economic advancement with environmental sustainability is essential for achieving long-term national development. The implication of the highlighted finding is that a stable and secure environment is essential for the successful attainment of sustainable development goals in the country. Also, integrating economic advancement with environmental sustainability is essential for achieving long-term national development.

4.2. Discussion

The study indicates that a stable and secure environment is essential for the successful attainment of sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. This finding aligns with existing literature which emphasizes that insecurity—such as terrorism, armed conflict, and crime—undermines economic activities, disrupts social order, and weakens institutional capacity (United Nations, 2022). Lecturers' responses, reflected in a grand mean of 3.38, demonstrate a strong consensus that without adequate security, efforts to implement sustainable development initiatives across sectors are significantly hampered. This supports the argument that national security forms the foundation for development, as it ensures social stability, protects human and material resources, and creates conducive environment for investment and growth. In the Nigerian context, persistent insecurity in various regions has limited effective implementation of development policies, highlighting the necessity of prioritizing security as part of the sustainable development agenda.

The study underscores that integrating economic advancement with environmental sustainability is essential for achieving long-term national development. The grand mean of 3.35 for lecturers' responses indicates agreement that sustainable economic growth—when coupled with environmental protection measures such as pollution control, natural resource conservation, and responsible industrialization—positively contributes to achieving sustainable development goals. This finding is consistent with the views of the United Nations Environment Programme (2022), which emphasizes that neglecting environmental considerations in pursuit of rapid economic growth can result in resource depletion, ecological degradation, and long-term developmental setbacks.

In Nigeria, industrial expansion and urbanization without corresponding environmental safeguards have led to challenges such as deforestation, soil erosion, and air and water pollution, which threaten the sustainability of national development efforts. Therefore, balancing economic growth with



environmental stewardship is not only necessary for maintaining ecological integrity but also for ensuring that economic gains are sustainable for future generations.

5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

The study has shown that sustainable development in Nigeria is significantly influenced by two critical factors: national security and the integration of economic growth with environmental sustainability. A stable and secure environment provides the foundation for effective implementation of development initiatives, protects resources, and fosters social stability. At the same time, sustainable economic growth that respects environmental limits ensures long-term national development and prevents ecological degradation. Therefore, achieving sustainable development in Nigeria requires a holistic approach that addresses security concerns, promotes inclusive economic growth, and safeguards the environment for present and future generations.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen National Security:** The Nigerian government should enhance security measures, including effective policing, intelligence gathering, and conflict resolution strategies, to create a stable environment conducive to development initiatives.
2. **Promote Sustainable Economic Policies:** Policymakers should implement economic strategies that prioritize job creation, equitable growth, and responsible industrialization, ensuring that development benefits all segments of society.
3. **Enforce Environmental Protection Measures:** Environmental laws and regulations should be strictly enforced, including pollution control, natural resource conservation, and sustainable land use practices, to balance economic growth with ecological sustainability.
4. **Integrate Development Planning:** Development programs should adopt an integrated approach, considering security, economic, and environmental factors simultaneously to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) effectively.
5. **Public Awareness and Education:** Citizens should be educated on the importance of environmental conservation and responsible economic practices, fostering a culture of sustainability that supports national development objectives.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that no conflict of interest exist in this manuscript.



Artificial Intelligent Statement/ Declaration

The authors declare that Artificial Intelligent technologies such as Open AI ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot were used as guides for grammar corrections and language checks, and concept development in the course of writing this manuscript.

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