

Acta  
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ADMINISTRATIO

## Poverty and Environmental Safety in Nigeria: A Sustainable Development Perspective

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**Abstract:** The level of safety in a country is a yardstick for its potential growth and sustainable development. If the environment is not safe, there will be no viable economic activity going on and thus the level of poverty and inequality in such an environment will be high. Amidst of the unsafe environment, there is usually some group of people benefiting from such a political economy scenario. Such a group will therefore wish to continue to benefit from such an environment at the expense of the larger society thereby creating deeper poverty gaps. The question this paper seeks to answer is: to what extent is Nigeria's environment safe for sustainable development to take place as a recipe for developing countries? The relative deprivation theory is used to establish the fact that deprivation of the people in an environment leads to inequality and poverty. This deprivation hinders rapid socioeconomic and political activities to take place by creating an unsafe political economy environment which as well affects sustainable development. Data from Afrobarometer database on Nigeria were examined, analysed and interpreted. The paper concludes that making the environment more secure for economic activities reduces poverty and inequality. The study recommends that an equitable distribution of

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income should be enforced first to the immediate environment whose land was usurp and then to the other federating units also.

**Keywords:** Administration; Development; Poverty; Relative Deprivation and Safety

## Introduction

The level of safety in a country is a yardstick for its potential development and whether its development will be sustained rapidly, slowly or never. If the environment is not safe, there will be no viable economic activity going on and thus the level of poverty and inequality in such environment will be high. A country bewailed by urban violence, political mishap, economic conundrum, geographical disputations and social anarchy will definitely have an environment unproductive for development and the rate of poverty persistence will be higher. In fact, an unsafe environment will never be the destination of investors (Aluko, 2021). Furthermore, the international credit rating will fall while poverty will abound in such environment (Aluko, 2015).

Amidst the unsafe environment, there is usually some group of people benefiting from such political economy scenario. Government officials, private investors, policy brokers and social workers are usually at the helm of affairs in such a political economy environment benefiting from both the blame and gain of the unsafe environment and such group will therefore wish to continue to benefit from such environment at the expense of the larger society thereby creating deeper poverty gaps (Aluko, 2020a). No doubt, governments of countries of the world do send out relief materials, economic bail out and cash reserves to environments bewailed with humanitarian crises, health hazards and environmental degradation.

However, the crises which actually should be mitigated within weeks will elongate to many years due to some light fingers benefiting from the foreign and domestic largess and taking advantage of the unsafe environment (Aluko, 2020b). This makes the crises to prolong and assumed so many dimensions which could not easily be quenched by little resources. The administrators of such unsafe crises-ridden environments get richer at the expense of the general populace. This is the political economy of poverty which is hard to quench except the perpetrators are brought to book and severely monitored as immediate as possible.

The political economy of poverty affects adversely the sustainable development of an environment (Aluko, 2017a). Whenever a crisis elongates in an environment and

it appears that it has defiled all political, economic and social measures, a microscopic view of it will reveal that there are some international sympathiser who has collaborated with local administrators to get gains out of such environmental melees as epidemic health crises, internal insurrection, external aggression and social vices. The wealth of such environment will be diverted and concentrated to few peoples' hand. This will lead to increase poverty, increase dependence on the few rich in the environment who actually have a hidden mission in the political economy of poverty, increase in unsafe and insecurity environment and finally, this will cumulate into no sustainability in the environment's development (Ema 2015; Broman & Robèrt 2017; Aluko, 2017a).

The question this paper seeks answer to is; to what extent is Nigeria's environment safe for sustainable development to take place as a recipe for developing countries? Nigeria is one of the key countries in Africa with the largest black population in the world. The country is has vast natural and human resources but remains a developing country. The development has not been sustained over the years due to environmental safety for viable economic activities. The administrators had relatively deprived the country from its development status thereby entrenching poverty in the society (Oyedele & Aluko, 2018). Relative deprivation theory is used to establish the fact that deprivation of the basic needs from the people in an environment leads to large gap between the rich and the poor, inequality among groups and poverty line widens. This deprivation hinders rapid socioeconomic and political activities to take place by creating an unsafe political economy environment which as well affects sustainable development. Data from Afrobarometer database on Nigeria were examined, analysed and interpreted.

### **Environmental Safety and the Political Economy of Poverty**

A safe environment will promote good and healthy living, shared prosperity and safe investments atmosphere. Generally, the socioeconomic life of such area will improve. An unsafe environment will breed a poor economy, no or low productivity and poverty (Aremu and Aluko, 2017). This unsafe environment breeding poverty and poorly sustained development is viewed as such inherent challenges as health epidemic and environmental hazard, terrorism and militants agitations, internally displaced people, farmer and herdsman clashes, ethno religious crises and political violence. Any country that is affect with such unsafe environmental will result into poverty if the situation is not properly controlled. Therefore, there is a need for

environmental safety so as to ensure sustainable development and reduced poverty streak (Clark, Tomich, Van Noordwijk, Guston, Catacutan, Dickson and McNie 2016; Chang, Zuo, Zhao, Soebarto, Zillante & Gan, 2017).

Health epidemic and hazards environment are occasional environmental challenges that has it political economy of poverty that hinders sustainable development. The world health organization has several agencies which are meant to monitor disease outbreak and epidemic in the world due to unsafe environment. Several countries have faced unprecedented epidemic outbreak which has led to an endemic situation because the political will by administrator to curtail the menace is low. The money allocated for curtailing such endemic outbreak is usually diverted to other places (Blaikie, 2016; Aluko, 2020b). This act of mismanagement of resources usually led to rapid spread of the disease and more death record. The major factor which aids the persistence of the epidemic is due to the largess and gains which some government officials will usurp or some other stakeholder such as health organizations who has drugs to sell and laboratory experiment to confirm from such outbreak. This will linger the havoc of poverty on the environment due to incapacitation of the people to do economic activities and it will adversely affect sustainable development.

Terrorism outbreak in an environment is another serious challenge on the safety of the environmental and it has poverty political economy dimension that hinders sustainable development. Terrorist groups in most cases do have their set goals or objectives. These might be centred on political motives, economic motives and ethnic sentimental or religious bigotry. Their most targets are to cease power from the government and to have an environment which will be captured as their territory. The soft targets of such groups are both the set of people who are not supporting their ideology and environmental infrastructures such as schools and hospitals, installations such as electricity and telecommunication. This environmental menace will be easily quenched if the key stakeholders have the political will combat it. However, Tyner, and Rice (2016) opined that the political economic of violence will favour the suppliers and manufacturers of arms and military hard or software, military budget drafting committee for the crisis and individual militant groups that has negotiations to do with the government. These groups of actors may like crises to linger due to the largess they are deriving from it (Balcells & Stanton, 2020). But the environment will be seriously impoverished and all administration, production and distribution of economic activities will stop.

Internally displaced people are potential environmental safety issues that have it poverty political economy that hinders sustainable development. They are usually displaced due to urban violence or natural disasters. Their housing, feeding, clothing and security projects solely lies on the government and other international donor agencies such as United Nations Habitat, United Nations Refugee commission among other voluntary associations (Salawu & Aluko, 2018). With these huge interventions from the collaborative approach of the government and other donor agencies, such environmental crises should be resolve within a short period but in many cases the rehabilitation lingers due to sabotage in the effects of government and other private sectors activities (Strezov, Evans & Evans, 2016). Government officials will have special intervention funds to dispense, emergency budget on internally displaced persons, award of contract to build houses, cook food, supply of food and other relief materials while the private business will be the supplier of such essential needs. This situation will cripple the socio economic life of the displaced persons as they will be restricted to the allotted camp and they will daily become poorer at the mercy of a few rich government-private individuals having negative effects on the sustainable development of the region.

Farmer and herdsmen crises, ethno religious crises and political-electoral violence are regular environmental challenges in many developing countries that have poverty political economy dimensions and negative consequences on the sustainable development of the country (Aluko, 2017b). Every society facing such crises will have no peace to develop the country. The economic and political resources which are meant to boost the economy will be channelled to resolving crises which should not emanate for any reason. However, such crises might persist in many developing countries due to a few groups that are making a living out of violence practices (Rezk, 2016). There are individual warriors fomenting troubles and they are known to the government authority therefore they are often hired when needed to distort the public from accountability and truth of the government officials (Aluko, 2020a).

Sustainable development cannot be achieved in any environment of crises, nepotism, favouritism, ethicised, patron client partnership, egocentric and prejudiced. The rate of poverty growth in such an environment will be seen as alarming while the government officials will be seen busy but not quenching the fire of such crises. The political economy of political and economic mishap is at the detriment of the masses. The few collaborators will keep fuelling the fire of the crises underneath so as to sustain their personal gains for a longer period and the entire environment will be walling in abject poverty (Sovacool, Tan-Mullins, Ockwell, and Newell 2017;

Srinivasan, 2017). Crises outbreak might not be totally prevent from the onset in any environment but it can be quickly quenched before it assumed radical and global dimensions. Therefore, sustainable development in such environment can be achieved if the government actually have the political will to develop the economy without relative depriving a group or an environment at the expense of others and without fear or favour of persons.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Relative Deprivation Theory**

Relative Deprivation is a theory that was born out of feelings and perceptions of individuals and groups concerning the right of existence and equal treatment in an environment. It was first articulated by Stouffer and his group (Stouffer et al, 1949) to explain feelings of satisfaction and perceptions of one's position in the army. Runciman (1966) gave the basic components of relative deprivation theory which is centered on two dimensions, magnitude and degree. Magnitude is the participative extent while degree is the emotional intensity with which deprivation is felt. He stated that a person is relatively deprived of any valued object when four conditions are present. These include lack of something, others have it, he wants get it and he acquires the necessary criteria for it. For example, a person does not have 'X', he sees other people having 'X'. Now the person wants 'X' and he thinks that he should have 'X' because he has the necessary qualities and abilities to possess 'X'.

The main premise of relative deprivation theory is that people generally experience dissatisfaction and resentment when their own outcomes do not match the outcomes of other people with whom they compare themselves (Gurr, 1970; Cook, Crosby & Hennigan, 1977; Aluko, 2016a). Thus, the emergence of deprivation feelings is the result of comparative judgments, rather than being determined by an objective outcome. Relative deprivation theory refers to any perceived discrepancy between people's expectations and their capabilities to fulfill those expectations. The wider the gap is, the wider the intensity of the violence and aggression (Crosby 1976; Walker and Smith, 2002; Aremu & Aluko 2016).

Asoke (2011) and Aluko (2016b) opined that an individual experiences deprivation only when he thinks that it is not feasible to obtain a particular object at a time. Deprivation also exists when the perceived feasibility is high but the actual getting it is low thereby leading into poverty, depression or other coping strategy. Gurr

(1971) also opined that the discrepancy between the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ of value satisfaction creates agitation that disposes men to violence. The existence of frustration always leads to some form of violence while the intensity of relative deprivation varies strongly with the degree of discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities. Therefore, the greater the intensity of deprivation in an environment or to an individual, the greater the magnitude of violence such community or individual will foment.

Nigeria is an environment that has relative deprivation features with high poverty level and inequality that exists between the governed and the government. Therefore, safety of lives and property will be in jeopardy and there will be violence due to the deprivation of the people of their basic rights. Unfavorable public policy is another subtle relative deprivation tool used by public administrators that creates unfavorable environment for equal growth and development. Relative deprived gap will be widen if the political economy of poverty is allowed to thrive in an environment and the resultant effect will be a reduction in the extent to which sustainable development can be attained.

### **Research Methodology**

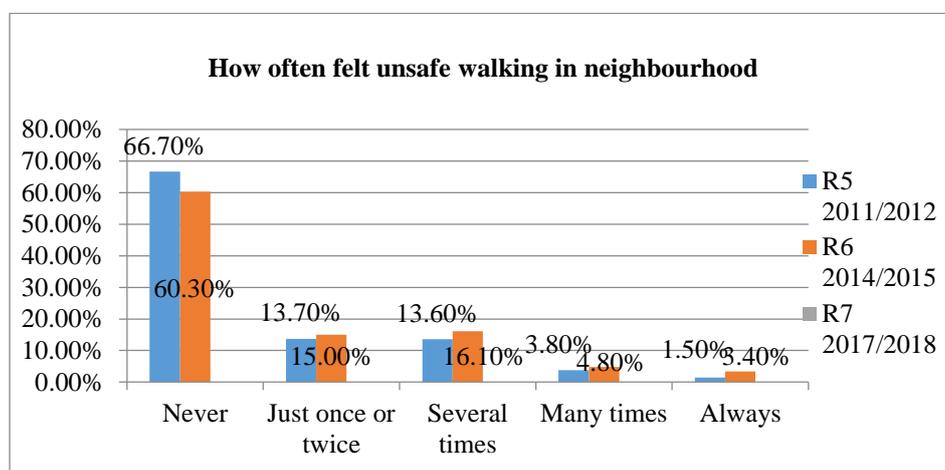
The methodology adopted uncovers the perception of Nigerians on the political economic nature of their environment. Secondary data collected in Afrobarometer time series database were used. It is further validated, analysed and interpreted using evidence from existing research findings. It gives the perception of the people on the extent of safety their environment is. This gives a lee way to present the extent of sustainable development which can be achieved in such area. The total sample size of the data is two-thousand four hundred (2,400) participants in each round across the country. The data were collected from 2011 to 2018. Descriptive statistics such as simple percentage, ratio and graphical illustrations are used to analyze the result. This research is appropriate as it reflect the true mind set of Nigeria populace on the level of the sustainable development in the area of the political economic nature of their environmental.

**Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation**

**Table 1. How Often Felt Unsafe Walking in Neighbourhood**

How often felt unsafe walking in neighbourhood	R5 2011/2012	R6 2014/2015	R7 2017/2018
Never	66.70%	60.30%	66.5%
Just once or twice	13.70%	15.00%	16.0%
Several times	13.60%	16.10%	10.7%
Many times	3.80%	4.80%	4.3%
Always	1.50%	3.40%	2.5%

Source: Afrobarometer 2020



**Figure 1. How Often Felt Unsafe Walking in Neighbourhood**

This data shows the extent of safety in Nigeria’s environments. It gives answers to the question of the extent of safety of Nigeria’s environment for sustainable development. It is observed that in 2011-2012 about sixty seven percent (67%) of Nigerians says their environment is never unsafe to live, trade and interact with one another. This assertion slightly falls in 2014-2015 when about sixty percent (60%) of Nigerians still believes that their environment is never unsafe to them in term of survival, security and general livelihood. Similar assertion of never felt unsafe was sustained in 2017-2018. This implies that about thirty six percent (36%) of the entire population have felt unsafe at one time or the other in their environment due to some environmental challenge which might have erupted and this had affected their chance of survival, security and general livelihood and sustainable development.

In 2011-2012, it is observed that about fourteen percent (14%) of Nigerians says they felt unsafe to live, trade and interact with one another in their environment just once

or twice. This assertion slightly increases with one percent (1%) in 2014-2015 when about fifteen percent (15%) of Nigerians as well remarked that they felt unsafe to live, trade and interact with one another in their environment just once or twice. This as well increased with one percent (1%) in 2017-2018 when about fifteen percent (16%) of Nigerian that have felt unsafe in the country. This implies that the level of safety is decreasing gradually the rate of insecurity is increasing in arithmetic rate in the Nigerian environment. If the incidents that warrants the community to felt unsafe just once or twice is not curtailed as instantaneous as possible, then the issues leading to the unsafe environment can increase sporadically jeopardising the possibility of sustaining the development in the environment.

In 2011-2012, another eighteen percent (18%) of Nigerians a combination of several times and many times, says they felt unsafe to live, trade and interact with one another in their environment. This assertion marginally increases with three percent (3%) in 2014-2015 when about twenty one percent (21%) of Nigerians, a combination of several times and many times, remarked that they felt unsafe to live, trade and interact with one another in their environment. In 2017-2018, this figure dropped to fifteen percent (15%). This reduction is due to the hope in the country during the electioneering period where promises to secure the country were made by prospective candidates (Aluko, 2020c). In general, this implies that the level of insecurity is increasing gradually and the tendency to invest for a long term effect is decreasing due to the rate of increase in terrorism, kidnapping and communal conflicts in the Nigerian environment. If the incidents that warrants the community to felt unsafe in a several times and many times reportage is not curtailed as instantaneous as possible, then the community is at risk of a state of lawlessness, anarchy and civil unrest. This will in turn lead to increase in poverty and sustainable development plan will be unattainable.

In 2011-2012, two percent (2%) of Nigerians says they always feel unsafe to live, trade and interact with one another in their environment. This assertion also slightly increases with one percent (1%) in 2014-2015 when about three percent (3%) of Nigerians remarked that they are always unsafe to live, trade and interact with one another in their environment. This percentage remains three percent (3%) in 2017-2018. If the percentage of the always unsafe in the environment is high, then the entire environment is in war zone. This implies that the level of insecurity is very high and there is no possibility to trade and interact in such war or urban crises situation. If the incidents that warrants the community to always fell unsafe is not curtailed as instantaneous as possible, then the community is right within the state of

lawlessness, anarchy and civil unrest. This will as well increase incidents of political economy of poverty and sustainable development plan will as well be unattainable.

The environmental safety of Nigeria is gradually reducing due to the increase in poverty among the citizen. This depicted safety is as a result of bad governance, mal administrations and various levels of corruptions that results into terrorism such as Boko Haram, Islamic State of West Africa and Fulani militia among others. This environmental safety depiction leading into poverty and poor or no sustainable development is also applicable to many developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East and generally developing and few developed countries (Tyner, and Rice 2016; Rezk, 2016). The basic facilities to make life comfortable are unavailable or not sufficient to cater for the entire population so the few available ones are quickly worn out. In environment where the rule of law and constitutionalism is not upheld, then a rapid degeneration into anarchy and urban violence is inevitable (Aluko, 2019). Sustainable development can be achieved in an environment that reduces the poverty gap among the population.

## **Conclusion**

Environmental safety is the hall mark of economic growth and sustainable development. It will also promote good and healthy living, shared prosperity and safety in investments and a safe haven for all. A country with safe environment will generally earn a long, peaceful and blissful socioeconomic life span which will enhance its favourable interaction with other countries. An unsafe environment will definitely breed an uncertain and unhealthy atmosphere for both local and foreign investors to thrive. This will lead to no or low productivity and increase in poverty level. Eventually, this will result into a poor and stunted socio-political growth, series of rapid economic recession or collapsed economy and a failed state.

Several conditions can result into unsafe environment breeding poverty and a poorly sustained development as viewed in this paper. These include challenges such as health epidemic and environmental hazard, terrorism and militants agitations, internally displaced people management, political and economy corruption, farmer and herdsmen clashes, ethno religious crises and political violence. Any country that is affect with such unsafe environmental will result into economic hardship and prevailing poverty if the situation is not properly controlled. All of these challenges are the direct offshoot of bad governance and poor public administration. Therefore, there is a need for good governance and responsive public administration so as to

guarantee a safe environment, reduced poverty streak and ensure sustainable development.

Relative deprivation is also a major cause of situations that leads to unsafe environment for both national and international collaborations. The environment which enhances favouritism and inequitable distribution of economic wealth among the populace will lead to agitations and urban violence in the long run. The ill affected set of people will protest the situation in either a peaceful manner or in a violent manner. The longer it takes the government to settle the affected environment will further endanger the risk of wide spread of violence or national disaster. In such a situation, both the local and foreign investors will have to relocate away from such environment to another peaceful place. This action will negatively affect the standard of living in such country and increase the poverty rate which will in turn reduce the rate of sustainable development

Therefore, it is pertinent for government and other stakeholders to be fair to all federating units, ethnic groups; religious alignments that make up the country or the environment by ensuring an equitable distribution of income and national development programs which will circulate and positively affect all the groups in the country. Also, for justice and equity to be ensure, government and other stakeholder in an environment should consider first of all the immediate care for the environment whose land was usurp due to economic activities for proper compensation with developmental infrastructures and then such consideration can be extended to the other federating units making up the environment. This measure will reduce exploitation tension, relative deprivation and violence tendency in such environments. This will make the entire environment to be secured for more investment, economic growth, reduced poverty and inequality and ultimately more the achievement of sustainable development.

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