



Perception of Undergraduate Students on the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Active engagement of youth in sustainable development is central to achieving stable society by the target dates and to avert the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development. This study was carried out to assess the perception of university students on attainment of the sustainable development goals in Nigerian. The study adopted descriptive research design of survey type. One hundred and twenty-two (122) students of Olabisi Onabanjo University were randomly selected from four faculties. The instruments employed for the study was sustainable development goals attainment questionnaire (SDGA) with reliability of 0.67 using CRONBACH coefficient alpha. Data collected were analysed using simple percentage, standard deviation and T-test analysis. Two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using T-test Analysis. Descriptive statistics showed poor performance in the areas of poverty reduction, health and wellbeing. However the inferential statistics revealed no significant difference in the perception of youths on the attainment of the SDGs based on sex while the second hypothesis revealed significance difference in their perception according to faculties. The study suggested active involvement of youth, harmonization of existing agencies and proper funding of ministries.

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INTRODUCTION

What culminated to the Sustainable Development movement today was the first international conference, held at Stockholm, Sweden in 1972. The conference was called the UN conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) and it dealt with

a rather small set of issues that were most directly related to the human environment (Adil & Cutler, 2003). A great deal for widespread environment education was first mentioned in the UNESCO's Tbilisi Declaration of 1978 (Anna, Kalle, Jari & Veijo, 2008). The notion of Sustainable Development was

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enunciated in an international forum for the first time in the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN, 1980). The normative definition for the concept of Sustainable Development was first put forward by the Brundtland committee as “development which meets the need of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own need” (cited in Houstsonen, 2004). This gained international recognition when it was embodied in the Brundtland Report, Our Common Future published in 1987 (Houstsonen, 2004).

Further discussions on the concepts of Sustainable Development were held in connection with the Rio Summit, the UN Conference on Education and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The conference saw the publication of the Rio Declaration incorporating the principles of Sustainable Development and Agenda 21. The Rio summit sought to radically expand the global agenda by moving well beyond the merely environmental focus and seeking to establish environment and development as the central policy making frame work (Adil & Cutler, 2003). By 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa, the concept of Sustainable Development which had already assumed salience at Rio gained further centrality not only by being incorporated into the summit’s title, but also by becoming the key motivator of the expanded Johannesburg Agenda. The summit was the most recent of a series of attempt to deal holistically with the global environmental issues by

holding high profile, multi – issue policy summit.

According to Davis (2006), there are those who question the whole Sustainable Development concept, Davis cited Stephen R–Doners and John W. Handmerto stated that “The apparent ease with which these (contradictions) can be classified should not be allowed to hide the fact that, within each, there exists many levels and tensions”. Dover and Handmer argue that sustainable development discussion to date has been more rhetoric than an honest attempt to deal will facts and number. They admit humans can live with logical inconsistencies and still work towards solution. It is also noted that the magnitude of the problems of environment and development can be overwhelming enough let alone when matched with the magnitude of the cultural and political obstacles to change. The concepts and ideas that make up sustainable development are both too profound and insurmountable to overcome that the word sustainable is used in too many situations today and confuses a lot of people (e.g. sustainable growth, sustainable economies, and sustainable agriculture), that is, everything is sustainable. Sustainable Development is also seen by critics to be a movement that is more ethereal than concrete.

From the above it must be noted that the criticisms are against one aspect of the sustainable development or the other and not against Sustainable Development really. Rather the



comments are to move the discussion forward by applying critical thinking to the problems inherent in the idea of Sustainable Development.

In 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), also known as Rio+20, was held as a 20-year follow up to UNCED. Colombia proposed the idea of the SDGs at a preparation event for Rio+20 held in Indonesia in July 2011. In September 2011, this idea was picked up by the United Nations Department of Public Information 64th NGO Conference in Bonn, Germany. The outcome document proposed 17 sustainable development goals and associated targets. In the run-up to Rio+20 there was much discussion about the idea of the SDGs. At the Rio+20 Conference, a resolution known as "The Future We Want" was reached by member states. Among the key themes agreed on were poverty eradication, energy, water and sanitation, health, and human settlement. The Rio+20 outcome document mentioned that the OWG [Open Working Group] will decide on its methods of work, including developing modalities to ensure the full involvement of relevant stakeholders and expertise from civil society, Indigenous Peoples, the scientific community and the United Nations system in its work, in order to provide a diversity of perspectives and experience.

In January 2013, the 30-member UN General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable

Development Goals was established to identify specific goals for the SDGs. The Open Working Group (OWG) was tasked with preparing a proposal on the SDGs for consideration during the 68th session of the General Assembly.

The SDGs were developed to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which ended in 2015. The gaps and shortcomings of MDG Goal 8 (To develop a global partnership for development) led to identifying a problematic "donor-recipient" relationship. Instead, the new SDGs favor collective action by all countries.

The SDGs build on the principles agreed upon in Resolution A/RES/66/288, entitled "The Future We Want". On 25 September 2015, the 193 countries of the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Development Agenda titled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". This agenda has 92 paragraphs. Paragraph 59 outlines the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the associated 169 targets and 232 indicators.

There are 169 targets for the 17 goals. Each target has between 1 and 3 indicators used to measure progress toward reaching the targets. In total, there are 232 approved indicators that will measure compliance. The United Nations Development Programme has been asked to provide easy to understand lists of targets, facts and figures for each of the 17 SDGs. The 17 goals include ending poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality



education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Gender equality, availability of clean water and sanitation affordable and clean energy, sustainable economic growth, building resilient infrastructure and industry, reduce income inequality among sustainable cities and communities. Others include sustainable consumption and production, combat climate change, sustainable oceans, seas, and marine, protection of terrestrial ecosystem, promotion of peace, justice and strong institution and strengthening the means of implementation and revitalization of the global partnership for sustainable development

Oleribe (2016) mentioned that Nigeria failed in attainment of many millennial goals as a result of variety of reasons like bureaucracy, poor resource management in the healthcare system, sequential health workers industrial actions, Boko-Haram insurgency in the north and kidnapping among others while Wikipedia (2020) revealed that using global index of Sustainable Development Goals, Nigeria was ranked 159 out of 162 nations scoring 9.06%, very low in hunger and 17.15% in health. Omofonmwan (2008) listed Nigerias' most pressing environmental problems like water contamination, deforestation et.c. In order to respond to these problem the Nigerian government has introduced programmes, formulated policies and set strategies. However, these programmes were largely unimplemented (Ogunyemi, 2005; Ogunyemi & Ifegbesan, 2011).

According to Sustainable Development Solution Network (2018) youths are seen as torch bearer, a constituency to be engaged and to be heard. The youths are needed to be engaged and educated on how to take action on all the goals and not just passive bystanders. Educating the young ones on SDGs makes them aware of the global challenges, to resolve the world's problem. The next generation needs to know what these are, there are also needs to instill passion and drive to make them agent of change and then show them avenue to pursue. Hence this study focused on the perception of the university students, youth on the attainment the attainment of SDGs in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Sustainable development, according to the United Nations (UN), is the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystems services upon which the economy and society depends. The desirable end result of this is a state of society where living conditions and resource use continue to meet human needs without undermining the integrity and stability of the natural systems. Sustainable development is that development that meets our present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

To achieve these goals the federal government has put up several



agencies, ministries public and private partnership. However, the components that will work together, to produce sustainable development are economic development, social development and environmental projection. These must be conceptualized together, planned together and implemented together by a government to achieve the desired results. So, sustainable development in a way has a moral dimension that demands a great sense of responsibility from the leader (government) and the follower (citizen). On the other hand active engagement of the youth is central to achieving sustainable inclusive and stable society. Hence, this study investigated the perception of the university students on attainment or otherwise of the sustainable development goals in Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were raised and tested in the study:

- HO₁ There is no significant difference in the perception of university undergraduates on attainment of SDGs according to gender
HO₂ There is no significant difference in the perception of university undergraduates on attainment of SDGs according to faculty

METHODOLOGY

The design for this study is a descriptive survey research design which seeks to investigate the Sustainable Developmental Goals in Nigeria. The population of the study comprises of Students of Olabisi

Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Random sampling technique was used to select respondents from different faculties. One hundred and twenty-two (122) students were chosen faculties; education, social sciences, management science, law and arts. The instrument used in the study was questionnaire titled "Sustainable Developmental Goals in Nigeria". The questionnaire was structured by the researcher from the key statements raised as research questions. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part A contained the personal data of the respondent, while part B contained seventeen sustainable development goals while part C contained perceived obstacles to sustainable development goals. The instrument is built on a four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA)- 4 points, Agree (A) – 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1 point. The content validity of the test instrument, content validity was done by four lecturers in the department of arts and social sciences education. Test-retest reliability method was employed for this study, where 10 students who are not part of this study were given the questionnaire to fill and after two weeks the questionnaire was re-administered to the same set of students. The result coefficient was 0.67.

The administration of the questionnaire to the respondents was done by research assistant. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, simple



percentage, mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistics was used to answer the research hypotheses

raised in the study using statistical package for social sciences version 25.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic characteristic of the respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	5.8	47.5
Female	64	52.5
TOTAL	Total	100

Table 1 above shows that majority of the students are female which constitute 52.5% of the study while 47.5% are male

Table2: Frequency and Percentage of Students according to Faculty

Faculty	Frequency	Percentage
Education	44	36.1
Social Sciences	38	31.1
Law	27	22.1
Arts	13	10.7
Total	122	100

Table 2 shows that majority of the students are in the faculty of education, they constitute 36.1%, Faculty of Social Sciences 31.1%, Law 22.1% and Arts 10.7%

Table 3: Descriptive statistics showing the response of the students

S/N	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	SD	Decision
1	The government has ended poverty	24 (19.7%)	63 (51.6%)	24 (19.7%)	11 (9.0%)	2.1803	.85296	Disagree
2	Created zero hunger	23 (18.9%)	76 (62.3%)	22 (18.0%)	1 (8.0%)	2.0082	.85296	Disagree
3	Good health and wellbeing	23 (18.9%)	60 (49.2%)	32 (26.8%)	7 (5.7%)	2.1885	.80630	Disagree
4	Quality education	6 (4.9%)	47 (38.5%)	51 (41.8%)	18 (14.8%)	2.6639	.78846	Agree
5	Gender equality	25 (20.5%)	57 (46.7%)	35 (28.7%)	5 (4.1%)	2.1639	.79628	Disagree



S/N	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	SD	Decision
6	Provision of clean water/sanitation	18 (14.8%)	54 (44.3%)	38 (31.1%)	12 (9.8%)	2.3607	.85394	Disagree
7	Affordable and clean environment	19 (15.6%)	54 (44.3%)	49 (40.2)	0 (0%)	2.2459	.70782	Disagree
8	Decent employment and economic growth	22 (18.0%)	58 (47.5%)	42 (34.4%)	0 (0%)	2.1639	.70840	Disagree
9	Industrial and infrastructural development	10 (8.2%)	41 (33.6%)	59 (48.4%)	12 (9.8%)	2.5984	.77843	Agree
10	Reduced inequality	19 (15.6%)	83 (68.0%)	20 (16.4%)	0 (0%)	3.0082	.56767	Disagree
11	Sustainable community	0 (0%)	74 (60.7%)	48 (39.3%)	0 (0%)	2.3934	.49053	Disagree
12	Responsible consumption and production	15 (12.3%)	52 (42.6%)	46 (37.4%)	9 (7.4%)	2.4016	.79938	Disagree
13	Successfully acted on climate change	6 (4.9%)	35 (28.7%)	78 (63.9%)	3 (2.5%)	2.6393	.61745	Agree
14	Protection of life below water	8 (6.6%)	44 (36.1%)	63 (51.6%)	7 (5.7%)	2.5656	.70403	Agree
15	Protection of life on land	7 (5.7%)	43 (35.2%)	66 (54.1%)	6 (4.9%)	2.5820	.67836	Agree
16	Improvement in peace, justice and institution	9 (7.4%)	77 (63.1%)	32 (26.2%)	4 (3.3%)	2.2541	.63716	Disagree
17	Partnership with other to mitigate climate change	16 (13.1%)	23 (18.9)	72 (59.0%)	11 (9.0%)	2.6393	.82387	Agree

The result in table 2, the descriptive statistics above revealed that majority of the students disagree that government has been able to end

poverty with 51.6% disagree, 62.3% disagree that, the on creation of zero hunger of students on the assessment of sustainable development goals by



the federal government. 49.2% disagree on good health and wellbeing of Nigerians, 41.8% agree on quality education, while 46.7% disagree on gender equality. The table also revealed that 44.3% disagree on the provision of clean water and sanitation, 47.5% disagree on employment and economic development, and 48.4% agree on achieving industrial and infrastructural development, 68% disagree on attaining reduced inequality. 60.7% disagree on sustainable community, 42.6% disagree

on responsible consumption and production while 63.9% accepted that the government has taken action on climate change. Furthermore, the table revealed 51.6% agree that lives below water are protected, 54.1% agree that lives on land are protected, 63.2% disagree that there is improvement in peace, justice and institution. Finally, 59% agreed that there is partnership with others to achieve sustainable development goals.

Table 4: T-Test Analysis showing the Assessment of the respondents according to sex

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Dev.	t	df
Male	58	44.4483	2.83569	-.666	120
Female	64	44.8438	3.63064		

Table 3 revealed that the value of t-calculated (-.666) is less than the value of T-tabulated (.502) given 120 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the value of t-calculated is less than the value of t-

tabulated, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the perception of the university students between male and female on the attainment of sustainable development goals.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance showing differences between faculties and assessment of sustainable development goals

Faculty	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	42.317	14	3.023		
Within Groups	80.019	107	.748	4.042	.000
Total	122.336	121			

Table 5 above revealed that the value of F-calculated (4.042) is higher than the value of F- tabulated (.000) given 107 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the value of F-calculated is greater than F-

tabulated the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. This means there is significance difference in the perception of the university students on the attainment of sustainable development goals according to faculty.

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on the results obtained from this study, the major findings were summarized as follows:

- i. The result revealed no significant difference in the perception of the university students on the attainment of SDGs in Nigeria according to sex.
- ii. There was significant difference in the perception of the students on the attainment of the SDGs according to faculty
- iii. The descriptive statistics revealed that the level of achievement of sustainable development goals is very low. Meanwhile, extreme poverty and hunger have not been totally eradicated in Nigeria.
- iv. Both male and female respondents of this study perceived that the level of achievement of sustainable development goals is very low and that they have only been able to achieve to some extent quality education, industrial development, action on climate change, protection of life on water and on land and finally, partnership with others to achieve SDGs.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The descriptive results revealed lowest mean score of 2.0082 recorded in creating zero hunger while the highest mean score 3.0082 was

recorded in reducing inequality. The result showed the inability of the federal government to provide food for people and to reduce the gap between the poor and the rich.

The result of the first hypothesis revealed no significant difference in the perception of the university students on the attainment of Nigeria on the SDGs, this is against the finding of Tuncer (2008) who conducted study on environmental education in Turkey. The result revealed significant difference in the perception of university students based on sex. The non-significance could have been as a result same level of understanding or awareness between the male and female youths in the university

The second hypothesis revealed significant difference in the perception of university students on the SDGs according to faculty. The implication of this is that the perception of students on the attainment of Nigeria on the goals of sustainable development are not the same across the faculties. The course of study of students could have been responsible for the perception differences. This result corroborate the finding of Tuncer (2008) who recorded significant difference in the attitude of university students to environmental education according the faculty. The study of Zamora-Polo (2019) though revealed low level of awareness of university students on SDGs, also recorded significant difference in on the attainment of sustainable development according to faculty.



CONCLUSION

Underlying the success of SDGs globally, the United Nations see youths as central to the attainment goals, youths are seen as great thinkers, innovative and drivers of change and their involvement is vital. Apart from women 2030 project being implemented by 52 countries of the world including Nigeria. Unfortunately Nigeria failed to attain the Millennial Development Goals, just like many African countries. Hence there is need for government and relevant bodies to intensify efforts towards SDGs. In this regard the federal government must put in place mechanism to ensure hitch free implementation with already established office of the special assistant to the president on SDGs, committees on SDGs in the two legislative chambers, inter-ministerial committee on SDGs to guide the coordination with the ministries and private sector advisory group on SDGs and civil society strategy group. The issue of funding is central to SDGs, there is need to increase the funding, apart from this there is also need for right attitude and strategy to be deployed by both the bureaucrats and the political leaders in implementing SDGs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Need to take deliberate actions on the participation or involvement of the youths, ensuring inclusive growth and diversification of the economy.

Another way out is to return to development planning era with appropriate implementation strategies; short, medium and long-term. There is need to harmonise all existing sectorial programmes into a single implementable plan given that the economy is presently in a sorry state, immediate action is to declare economic state of action. The attainment of sustainable economic development requires a sustainable economic development strategy. To this end, Nigeria needs to construct a dynamic equilibrium economy.

More effort should be made by the government to enforce environmental regulations through a stronger environmental administration. The use of market based instruments, which can be used to regulate pollution behavior with a lesser cost should be given greater attention while instead of heavy reliance on command and control approach to pollution control. Better efforts to ensure policy coordination in environmental and trade goals should be made. Renewable energy products should be made available while more conscious efforts should be made to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Technology policies that will encourage cost effective green innovations instead of merely prescribing specific green technologies to be adopted by individuals should be promoted. Policies focusing on specific activities with significant co-occurring benefits which can lead to sustainable economic development, improved job creation, energy security and environmental



protection should be pursued. Business models should be built into the sustainable economic development strategy so as to make payment for necessary expenses easier

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