Religion, Society, Culture and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract
This study examined the impact of Religion, Society and Culture on the Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria. In other to achieve the thrust of the study, prominence was given to the structures and ecology of the Nigeria's religious, societal and cultural institutions and their roles in advocating for the good virtues of life amongst the Nigerian populace towards achieving a better sustainable socio-economic development. The paper discovered amongst others that; - there is apparently a nexus between religion, society, culture and sustainable development and thus, recommended that;- though the religious bodies in Nigeria are doing their best in inculcating on the basic societal norms that has positively re-shapened the minds of the Nigerian Youths in the past decades, a lot still need to be done especially in the area of social media where their presence is conspicuously absent.
Keywords: Religion, Society, Culture, Sustainable Development.

INTRODCUTION

The position of religion, society and culture cannot be undermined in the struggle for a sustainable socio-economic development by any country in the world. The society is a product of the people's culture and religion. Thus, the people's responses, either to welcome or reject any developmental policy of the government is to an extent a reflection of the kind of culture and religion they practice.

The position of the Nigerian state in respect to meeting up with the world in the quest for socio-economic development has been greatly hampered by over underrating of the relevant roles of culture and religion. This has actually agitated the minds of scholars and intellectuals in various conferences, fore, symposiums etc. It is pertinent however, to emphasize that the heterogeneous nature of Nigeria which many scholars have attributed to, as the bane for our inability to meet up in terms of development is really not the case. There is no country in the world that is not made up of heterogeneity, either in religion, culture and otherwise.

However, it has become clear to most Nigerians that the mere possession of abundant natural resources does not in itself ensure or bring about development. Neither has the numerous economic master plans initiated in Nigeria made a fundamental difference to the sustainable socio-economic well being of the average Nigerian citizen (Nkom, 2008).

The above position indicates that the significance of human factor brings us to the domain of attitudes, the orientation, and the values that are required outside the abundant natural resources to drive forward, the required basic sustainable developments in the lives of the citizens. The inability to properly harness this, underlines the exigencies to understand the roles of religion, society and culture as it relates to the sustainable socio-economic developments and bridge the gap that has existed thus far.

The paper therefore, examines the roles of religion, society and culture in sustainable development in Nigeria. It begins with the clarification of the concepts; - religion, society, culture and sustainable development. It draws attention to the imperativeness of Religion, Society, and Culture on Sustainable Development in Nigeria and highlights their salient challenges and prospects.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION
Religion

Intellectuals have greatly attempted to come to a conclusion as to what could stand as an acceptable definition of religion but this has been an exercise in futility. Scholars have defined this concept in different dimensions with each according to his perception. This as it were is a usual intellectual struggle in the field of humanities, social sciences and other similar disciplines alike. In our contemporary society today, we have numerous religions, with each struggling to dominate the other in terms of principles and practices. For example we have the Ogboni Confraternity religion, Eckanker religion, Confraternity of the Sea Dogs religion, Islamic religion and of course the most prominent which is the Christian religion. All these religious bodies are always at logger-heads as to which is more righteous or purified in the area of their norms and practices.

However, the argument of the paper is not to join in the usual arguments for the practicability or principles of these religions. The aim here is to holistically examine the extent to which these religious practices have helped in fostering the socio-economic development of the country through the opinions of the various scholars.

Pamu (2012), while writing on the role of Christian religion in sustainable development of a nation, noted that writers has continued to discuss the problems of religion in a manner that belittles the role and place of religion in sustainable development. He attributed this problem to the inability of an agreement of what really religion stands for.

Also, Idowu (1973) observed that it is difficult to provide a satisfactory definition of religion citing Leubas attempts to define religion which yielded forty-eight definitions and H. Fielding Halls which produced twenty definitions. However, for the essentiality of this paper, a working definition of religion is pertinent.

Finiran (1983), simply defines religion as being concerned with the ultimate values which are ends-in-themselves and pertain to life as a whole. He further stated that, it is a symbol of unity, it is an embodiment of human sciences and most essentially, it deals with the development of human person.

Thus, the available literatures shows that the struggle for a definite definition of religion is one that is still on a long academic and intellectual voyage.

Society
Sharma (2009), defines society as a system of human relations on the basis of which, people are united. These relations can be of many types. To him, society is a sum of mans conditions and the related roles. He went further to say, that it also a functional system in which the various parts constituting of the society, relates to each other and also to the entire society for their fixed jobs and roles.

Indian Sociology Association (2009) stressed that society is a system in which people accomplish their jobs and this system lasts for a longtime in individual's life. This means that people keep on dying and new ones keep on taking birth but society keeps running ceaselessly, though the membership of people does change.

The above definition points out the fact that the society is the "opium" of religions as Aristotle said. It involves mans interactions between one another.

Culture
Culture in its simplest definition is the people's way of life. It is the particular methods the people within a particular race or traditions leave their life. It is often said that despite what one does, he cannot isolate himself from the culture of the environment where he is born and bred.

Nkom (2008), while writing on culture as an instrument for sustainable development in Nigeria, broadly defined culture;

> *"to encompass the world view of the people, the cognitive process which structure the thinking and mindset of the people, the linguistic forms through which they communicate or express their ideas, the aesthetic manifestation of their feelings and creativity in art, music, dance and other aesthetic forms; the behavioral patterns which shape their actions; and the patterns of social structure which govern their ways interacting with individuals, groups and people both within and outside their society".*

The expression however emphasizes the fact that culture in essence is man and man is culture. Everything man does is usually culture driven.

Sustainable Development
Development as it were is an improvement of qualitative transportation of skills. Rodney (1990) describes it as an increased skill and capacity for greater freedom and creative self-discipline, responsibility and temporal possessions.

Tade (1992), points out that; sustainable development seeks to meet the need and aspiration of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future. It is a process in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investment, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are

in harmony and enhance both current and the future potentials to meet the human needs and aspirations.

Sustainable development is like any other conventional economic imperative, presupposes joining the maximization of economic production with social (minimizing current and future human suffering) and ecological (protecting the ecosphere) imperative (Wackeronage & Rees, 1996).

Nevertheless, the argument therein, is to examine the position of these variables as explained above, to the enhancement of the sustainable socio-economic development of the Nigeria state.

Effects of Religion, Society, and Culture in Sustainable Development of Nigeria
A people's religion, society and culture are among the most invaluable resources on which they use to draw in the process of development. They provide the basis for a development which is at once meaningful and sustainable. In fact, we make bold to say that, development is not possible without an enabling religious, societal and cultural foundation.

An understanding of the relationship between religion, society and culture and development is important in sensitizing both scholars, and policy-makers the dangers of treating these issues as if they are intangible in the struggle for sustainable economic development.

Pamu (2012), noted that religion performs critical functions by providing values and ideals in sustaining development process. He went further to say that, it has a dialectical relationship with sustainable development process, acting as an element of social control and stability.

However, the position of Pamu affirms the fact that through congregational assemblies, seminars, workshops, meetings, communiqués etc. the religious bodies admonish her members on the true virtues of life and steady obedience to the developmental policies of the government.

Facts available are deeply rooted to the fact that developmental issues and policies emanated from the ancient religious doctrines and teachings. For example, the various religions in the world today vis-à-vis Nigeria do not encourage the members to be anti-development. From a Christian's point of view, the early missionaries were able to bring the people together through charitable and health services, and education. These charitable health services and education moved hand in hand with the spreading of religious faith even up to date.

Society on the other hand play a major role. Parma (2012), while writing on the concept of society, observed that the society is very important [in sustainable development] in various ways such as listed and explained below;
- The Growth of self
- Satisfaction of Instincts.
- Basics of Progress.
- Basis of Personality Development.

The Growth of Self: This according to Parmu, is associated with the fact that the society develop the feeling of self because with help of this the person learn the characteristics of society and work accordingly and become a social animal and that in itself, is development.

Satisfaction of Instincts: Satisfaction of instincts is essential for physical and mental development of man but the society has one characteristic to provide opportunities for satisfaction of instincts using legal means. The instincts are indentified as; security of child; - self-demonstration; sexual behavior and humbleness.

Basis of Progress: This emphasizes the fact that the society is not only grounds for basic instincts but also the main basis for his progress and development. Society is a powerful means to remove the conflicts arising from nature and developing adjustability with circumstances with the help of which, social life becomes easier. On the basis of this, society is considered the main basis of human sustainable development.

Basis of Personality Development: Personality means not only physical attraction but, it's a name of the organization of organized characteristics -dynamic physical mental or oral and social characteristics, which is developed as the result of day to day interactions with other persons (Diver, 2012). We found that, society has power, which gives legal form to an individual, creates institutions, develops culture, and provides favorable atmosphere to the civilization of man [sustainable development].

Culture, similarly, has positive effects on the sustainable development in Nigeria. This position is supported by the simple notion that the *"… foundation for the growth of any nation lies in the cultural heritage of its people…"* Development, regardless of how it is defined, ultimately entails an attempt to build a "better society (Nkom, 2008).

Salim (1994) while delivering an opening remark at a World Bank International Conference on Culture and Development in Africa, stressed that " a people does not fully commit itself to a development undertaking unless that undertaking corresponds to its deeply felt needs. In other words, people should in a position to decline the means and motivation for their development from their own cultural roots".

Also, Nkom (2012) developed what he called "a culture centered strategy of development". To him, culture is a living product of a society's history. It embodies the skills and technical achievement of a people.

Inadequacies of Religion, Society and Culture in Sustainable Development in Nigeria
Religions as it were, have made tremendous contribution towards sustainable development through her teachings and preaching's. The issues that are emphasized as inadequacies here are basically the areas where religion, society and culture despite its contributions are in lack.

Firstly, the world today is increasingly becoming a global village. Religion as it were, is lacking her presence in the area of social networks such as facebook, twitter, wi-chatts etc. The social networks, in recent times has greatly accounted for the basis or platform in which most public awareness and sensitizations are propagated. In recent times, most of the violence that has occurred in Europe, America, Arabs etc. were actually a product of the social networks .The recent "#Bringbackourgirls" campaign in Nigeria is a more current example. The mobilization and sensitizations over the "bring back our girls" started majorly from Facebook and Twitter. The whole world within weeks became aware of the happenings in the Nigerian polity and that is the major effect of social media.

Secondly, the society on her case is a product of corruption. Corrupt practices have been the brain for the decay in the societal developments. The people as it is, knows the right thing to do in other to live alright. There is a linkage between a society's degree of transparency and its rate of development (Rosita, 2013). The fact here is that the problem of the society lies in the society itself.

Thirdly, Culture in Nigeria is still practiced as it were in the premodial era. The customs and norms are by now supposed to be turned around in such a way that they could actually be serving as the drive factor for sustainable development. Except few festivals in Nigeria such as Argungu in Sokoto State, New Yam in South Eastern States and Eyo Festival in South Western States, there are "a thousand and one" other festivals and traditions that could foster development and attract even foreign investors to the country. All that is required for this is a careful research in other to identify this and judiciously harness it.

Recommendations
From the above issues discussed, we make the following recommendations;
The religious bodies should do more to continuing their good works towards ensuring that the good attitudes are being taught. The Christian religion, Islamic religion and the confraternities in their entirety should encourage their members to doing the right thing. The area of the social networks, they should advance towards that direction so as to ensure that youths are taught the proper virtues.

The government on their own should work towards curbing the incidence of corruption that has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigeria;

Culturally bound avenues must be explored and all hands must be on deck to promote and enforce culture of probity and accountability in public life. The government should initiate a robust funding for an empirical and theoretical research into the various cultures within the heterogeneous cycles in Nigeria with the view to identifying areas of importance.

Conclusion
The importance of the paper therefore, is that religion, society and culture are amongst the most invaluable variables for sustainable development. The relationship between the variables is such that any attempt to divorce them from the process of development is an exercise in futility. It follows that every strategy for sustainable development should involve clearly defined religious, societal and cultural components. In Nigeria, there has

been a tendency not only to underrate the place these variables (religion, society and culture) but also to over-emphasize the religious and cultural differences among the people at the expense of those shared historical and cultural elements which Nigerians have in common that would better put Nigeria on the right path of development.

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