

# **Civil Servants' Perception of Moral Decadence and Sustainable Economic Development in South-East Nigeria**

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## **A b s t r a c t**

**T**his paper investigated civil servants of South-East Nigeria perception of the extent to which moral decadence impeded sustainable economic development. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Three research questions guided the study. 532 civil servants participated in the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire on corrupt practices, violent crimes and social injustice as chosen variables of moral decadence. The reliability of the instrument was established at 0.6 using Cronbach Alpha. Mean, frequency distribution and simple bar chart were used for data analysis. The results of the frequency distribution reveal that a total of 72.92% of the respondents (44.65% SA and 28.27% A) agreed that corrupt practices impeded sustainable economic development. 58.83% (29.79% SA and 29.04% A) agreed that violent crimes hamper sustainable economic development, while a total of 52.34% (21.99% SA and 30.35% A) agreed that social injustice hinder sustainable economic development. The study thus concluded that moral decadent variables: corrupt practices, violent crimes and social justice impeded sustainable economic development in Nigeria. Based on the results of the findings, the study proposed as a panacea, an integral human development which promotes character formation in virtue-building and encourages the integration of the economic, moral, spiritual, social and political dimensions of development.

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**Keywords:** *Economic, Development, Moral, Integral, Human, Sustainable*

## **Background to the Study**

The move towards economic diversification in Africa is meant to assist African nations to strengthen their external economy's balance sheet by building up reserves for foreign exchange and reducing market fluctuations (UNDP Report, 2004). The major objective of economic diversification is to ensure sustainable economic development capable of meeting the needs and aspirations of the people and the society at large. In Nigeria, the government carries the burden of its economic development through a body of its employees called civil servants who are responsible for planning, decision taking and implementation of policies in government ministries and departments. Civil servants constitute a formidable workforce in Nigeria at the federal, state and local government levels. Therefore, their services and perception of facts are key factors in measuring the state of affairs concerning the sustainable economic development of the nation.

In the past three decades, Nigeria as a nation with approximately 184 million inhabitants, making 47% of West Africa (World bank Data, 2017), has been beset with myriads of challenges which threaten its political, social, economic and moral well-being. The failure of Nigeria to develop its economy to meet the needs and aspirations of its teeming population without

Compromising those of the future generations may not be unconnected with neglect of absolute moral values that guide human well-being. This is moral decadence. Moral decadence could be attributed to a decline in the integral human development that promotes virtuous character building of persons and advocates holistic integration of the social, political, economic and moral dimensions of development. Although moral decadence can be manifested in a varied unethical behaviour, the study has identified three pivotal forms as its core representations: corrupt practices, violent crimes and social injustice.

## **Statement of Problem**

Studies have shown that moral decadence exists in Nigeria. The situation has accrued over a period of time and affects all sectors of the society. Although Nigeria is rich in human and natural resources, the nation has suffered from persons whose unethical behaviour impedes sustainable economic development. Civil servants constitute a significant workforce in Nigeria through whom the government advances and carries out policies for the sustainable economic development of the nation. As government employees, they are direct beneficiaries of sustainable economic development and fall easy prey of underdevelopment. Yet, there is little or no study with regards to civil servants' perception of how moral decadence jeopardizes sustainable economic development in country.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study is to investigate civil servants' perception of how moral decadence impedes sustainable economic development in Nigeria. Focusing on the three moral decadence sub-variables: corrupt practices, violent crimes and social injustice, the study set out specifically:

1. To ascertain the perception of civil servants of South-East Nigeria on the extent to which corrupt practices impede sustainable economic development in the country.

2. To determine how much violent crimes jeopardize sustainable economic development based on civil servants' perception.
3. To establish the extent to which social injustice hinder sustainable economic development from the civil servants' perception.
4. To propose the integral human development as a panacea

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is civil servants' perception of the extent to which corrupt practices impede sustainable economic development in Nigeria?
2. What is civil servants' perception of the extent to which violent crimes hamper sustainable economic development in Nigeria?
3. What is civil servants' perception of the extent to which social injustice hinder sustainable economic development in Nigeria?

### **Conceptual Elucidation**

#### **Civil Servant**

In Nigeria, the word civil servant refers to a body of government employees at the federal, state and local government levels. Civil servants are government workers distinct from the police, the military, and career partisan politicians. They are a significant workforce and form one the important organs through whom the government carries out the bulk of the burden of economic and social development of the nation. The Nigerian civil servants are responsible for planning, giving and implementing policies in government ministries and departments. They are workers in civil service. Civil service in Nigeria owes its origin to the organisation

Established by the British colonial government. It has since undergone some reforms in 1963 (Morgan), 1971 (Adejo), 1994 (Udoji), Dotum (1988) and Ayida (1995). It was, however, the 1979 Constitution that put the Nigeria civil service on an American model.

#### **Perception**

The term perception has its root in the Latin word perception which can be used to refer to the ability to organise, identify and interpret sensory information in order to represent and understand the environment better. It is the awareness of something through the senses and the ability to interpret the information for greater clarity and understanding. It is the way something is understood and interpreted. In this study, perception is used to refer to the way civil servants understand and interpret how moral decadence impedes sustainable economic development.

#### **Moral Decadence**

The concept moral decadence is etymologically composed of two words: moral, an adjective related to the noun morality; and decadence, a noun which conveys the idea of a state of progressive debasement, deterioration, decay or degeneration from a higher standard. It is a corrosive and systematic decline, decay or debasement from the standard of universal moral principles or values. In this study, moral decadence has been identified to take three pivotal forms: corrupt practices, violent crimes, and social injustice.

### **Corrupt Practices**

According to World bank definition, "a corrupt practice is the offering, giving, receiving or soliciting, directly or indirectly, anything of value to influence improperly the actions of another"

(<http://www.worldbank.org/en/about/unit/integrity-vice-presidency/what-is-fraud-andcorruption>)

### **Violent Crimes**

Violent crimes refer to criminal activities committed with a high level of violence and aggression.

### **Social Injustice**

Social injustice is the unjust denial or deprivation of human rights to persons or groups of persons. Furthermore, it denotes the prevention of persons, cultural or social groups from access to or from the meaningful contribution to the common good.

### **Integral Human Development**

The concept of integral human development focuses on the idea that human dignity and well-being are expressed not only through economic activity and flourishing, but also through a proper human relationship with, and obligations to family, community, and the entire humanity. It emphasizes the importance of effective and ethically sound responses to the numerous forms of underdevelopment that threaten human well-being around the world. It underscores the necessity of the promotion of moral values and principles and encourages the formation of persons in virtue-building.

It was in 1967 that Pope Paul VI introduced the concept of integral in his encyclical: *On the Development of Peoples (Populorum Progressio no. 14)* when he wrote: "Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic, it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man." In 1987 John Paul II in: *On Social Concern (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis)* explained that: "In this pursuit of Integral Human

Development we can also do much with the members of other religions. Collaboration in the development of the whole person and of every human being is, in fact, a duty of all towards all, and must be shared by the four parts of the world: East and West, North and South." According to Pope Francis, integral human development means incorporating different peoples in a solidarity that promotes fairness in the distribution of the earth's resources in such ways that the dramatic inequality between those who have too much and those who have nothing would cease to exist. It is the offering of viable models of social integration where everyone has a contribution to make to the common good of all and no one is excluded from contributing to it. It is the promotion of collaboration among the various essential components of development: the economy, finance, labour, culture, family life and religion in such a way that none is rendered absolute and none is excluded (<https://catholicology.net/blog/pope-francis>).

The integral human development encapsulates, therefore, all dimensions of human well-being. Although it forms a central theme of Catholic social teaching, it is a positive vision of the human flourishing that is nonetheless shared by several other religious, ethical and

humanistic traditions. The term is, indeed, in line with global concept of sustainable human development which has been defined by Gutierrez (2011) as “a development that promotes the integral development of each and every human person today without compromising the integral human development of people of tomorrow.”

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Sustainable Economic Development**

Sustainable economic development is an emerging concept in economic studies developed in the works of scholars like Barbier (2006). The concept falls within the global trend towards sustainable development. According to UN Documents (A/42/427, 1986):

Sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development; the institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potentials to meet human needs and aspirations.

A sustainable economic development is, therefore, one that is conducive to employment creation, generates income, ensures equity in income distribution, brings about a permanent reduction in poverty and is also environmental friendly (Barbier, 2006). A situation where there exists mass unemployment, inequity in income distribution and widespread poverty is vulnerable to crisis and the prospects of a sustainable economy are very questionable.

### **Morality and Moral Decadence**

In the academic discourse, the study of morality could be discussed from two broad perspectives. First, morality can be used "descriptively to refer to certain codes of conduct put forward by a society or a group (such as religion), or accepted by an individual for her behaviour" (Gert & Gert, 2016). Theorists, like Kohlberg (1971), who approach the study of morality overtly or covertly from the descriptive perspective, deny that there is any universal morality that applies to all human beings. This gives room to relativism in moral discourse. This is the approach often adopted by social scientists.

Secondly, morality can also be used normatively to refer to "a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons" (Gert & Gert, 2016). Furthermore, morality in the normative sense refers to a code of conduct that would be accepted by anyone who meets certain intellectual and volitional conditions, conditions which always include being a rational being or a moral agent" (Gert & Gert, 2016). This is the context in which one could understand Hobbes (1996:11) definition of morality as a "declaration of rules and beliefs that are considered absolute guides for human behaviour." Viewed from this perspective, Timemin (2013) asserts that morality derives its authority and authenticity from a trans-human reference. In other words, the normative understanding of morality acknowledges that there is a metaphysical reference in moral discourse. This study adopts the normative approach to moral understanding.

Furthermore, Hannon (1992) asserts that morality is the art of right relationship with each other and with the world around us. In moral discourse, relationship is considered a fundamental feature of human being. This is because morality is founded on the human capacity to know and to choose rightly or wrongly in the art of relating to other people and to

the world around us. The "rightness" or "wrongness" of the choice is measured against the absolute moral values that guide human beings. This is where the idea of decadence comes in to play.

When the choice of individuals or an entire society consistently deviates from and contradicts the absolute moral values that guide the society, the individuals or the entire society are set on the slippery path of moral decadence. This may manifest itself in various forms of corruption and fraudulent practices, violent crimes, social injustice and many other manners of unethical behaviour. Moral decadence, therefore, expresses a situation in which individuals and perhaps an entire society could be said to be degenerating downhill the ladder of morality.

Timehin (2013) asserts that Nigeria as a nation has, in an unprecedented manner, entered the downhill rush on the ladder of morality. Ogbeyi (2012) contends that corruption is the single most important factor responsible for the failure of governance and lack of socio-economic development in Nigeria. The research of Ewetan (2014) on *Insecurity and Socioeconomic Development in Nigeria* reveals that violent crime is a major factor affecting socio-economic development of the nation. The study of Moon, (n.d.) *Nigeria: The Persistence of Underdevelopment and Imperative for Change*, discloses that Nigerian citizens, part of whom the civil servants form a sizeable proportion, are exposed to inequity in income distribution, gender disparity, low literacy rate and low life expectancy. This is a situation contrary to sustainable economic development. The study of Sulaiman (2008) portrays that Nigeria as a nation is blessed with abundant human and natural resources. It is the sixth largest exporter of petroleum in the world. Yet Nigerian citizens suffer from widespread poverty and mass unemployment due to social injustice.

In the light of the above, the challenges relating to the development of peoples and society cannot be treated in isolation. It is for this reason that the study sees it pertinent to set as one of its objectives the proposal of the integral human development as a panacea. The integral human development promotes character formation in virtue-building and encourages the collaboration of the social, political, economic, moral dimensions of development for the well-being of persons and society. In this perspective, economic underdevelopment cannot be treated in isolation because the human person is not simply a homo economics or politicus, the human being is also a homo moralis. The integral human development raises the fundamental truth that because human beings are moral beings, basic questions about economics are also moral questions (Timehin, 2013).

### **Research Design Methodology**

The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative approaches in data collection and analysis. It employed a descriptive survey design to generate the hard data for numerical measurement of civil servants' perception of how moral decadence impeded sustainable economic development. It also obtained information from secondary source data, existing in printed, published and online literature, to generate discussion on the necessity of the integral human development as a panacea.

### **Population Sample and Sampling Technique**

The population of the study comprised of civil servants in three States of the South-East geopolitical region of Nigeria, namely: Enugu, Anambra and Imo. Purposive sampling was used to draw 600 civil servants of senior rank, from grade level 12 upward. The choice of senior rank civil servants is to ensure that the questions are served to those who have had enough work life experience to enable them to respond more efficiently and effectively.

### **Instruments for Data Collection**

The instrument was a questionnaire on corrupt practices, violent crimes and social injustice which the author chose as the three pivotal manifestations of moral decadence that has link with sustainable economic development. Each has been identified with 10 items of the questionnaire structured on four-point scale and divided into three sections. The four-point scale comprised of rubrics as SA strongly agreed = 4 points, A agreed = 3 points, D disagree = 2 points and SD strongly disagree = 1 point. The respondents were expected to tick  $\surd$  on the option that best appeals to them.

### **Administration of the Instrument**

600 copies of the questionnaire were administered directly to the respondents by the researcher with the help of 5 assistants trained in the field. 532 of the 600 distributed were properly completed and returned, giving 87% return rate which could be attributed to persistence and perseverance of the researcher and her assistants in the distribution and collection of the instrument.

### **Validation and Reliability of the Instrument**

The instrument was validated by experts in the field and the reliability was established at 0.6 using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate.

### **Method of Data Analysis:**

Mean, percentage, frequency, and simple bar charts were used for data analyses.

### **Results of Data Analysis**

**Research Question One:** What is civil servants' perception of the extent to which corrupt practices impede sustainable economic development in Nigeria?

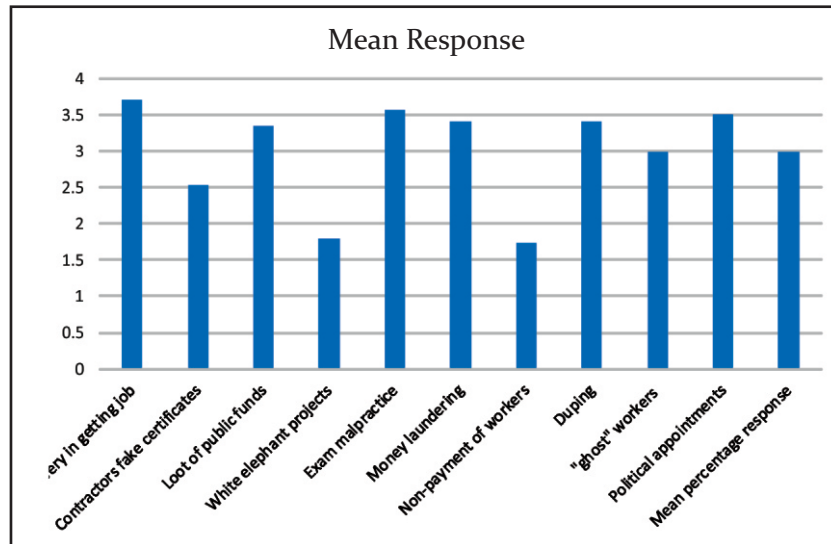
**Table 1: Result of the civil servants' perception of the extent to which corrupt practices impede sustainable economic development in Nigeria**

Questionnaire Items		Mean Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Decision
Bribery prevent the right people from getting the job for which they are competent	532	3.72	396 (74.4%)	122 (22.9%)	14 (2.6%)	0	Strongly Agree
Contractors who fake certificates to obtain contracts do not hamper sustainable development	526	2.54	142 (27.0%)	134 (25.5%)	116 (22.1%)	134 (25.5%)	Strongly Agree
Economic sustainability suffers in Nigeria because public office holders loot public funds for private use	532	3.36	238 (44.7%)	260 (48.9%)	24 (4.5%)	10 (1.9%)	Agree
Award of contracts for white elephant projects does not hamper sustainable economy	520	1.79	44 (8.5%)	62 (11.9%)	158 (39.4%)	256 (49.2%)	Strongly Disagree
Exam malpractice produces unproductive workforce for sustainable economic development	524	3.57	334 (63.7%)	172 (32.8%)	0	18 (3.4%)	Strongly Agree
Money laundering by Nigerian citizens hinders equal distribution of the nation's wealth	528	3.41	298 (56.4%)	158 (29.9%)	64 (12.1%)	8 (1.5%)	Strongly Agree
Political leaders and administrators do not increase the level of poverty when they fail to pay workers	532	1.74	60 (11.3%)	62 (11.7%)	92 (17.3%)	318 (59.8%)	Strongly Disagree
Duping, in the form of the popular "419", discourages foreign investment to Nigeria	532	3.42	308 (57.9%)	176 (33.1%)	10 (1.9%)	38 (7.1%)	Strongly Agree
Public leaders who use public funds to pay "ghost" workers do not contribute to mass employment	516	3.00	244 (47.3%)	120 (23.3%)	62 (12.0%)	90 (17.4%)	Strongly Agree
Political appointments not based on competence and merit is a threat to credible economic output	524	3.52	290 (55.3%)	224 (42.7%)	0	10 (1.9%)	Strongly Agree
<b>Mean percentage response</b>		3.00	44.65%	28.27%	11.19%	15.89%	Strongly Agree

Table 1 addressed the research question one on the extent to which corrupt practices impede sustainable economic development in Nigeria. The frequency distribution and percentage outcome of the respondents strongly agree that bribery in getting jobs, examination malpractices, money laundering, duping in form of "419", "ghost" workers syndrome and lopsided political appointments impede sustainable economic development in Nigeria. However, the respondents rated "agree" to the item suggesting that looting of public funds hampers sustainable economic development. The item on "white elephant projects" received "strongly disagree" to the issue that they do not hamper sustainable economic development,



and "non-payment of salary" was also rated "strongly disagree" to the suggestion that it does not increase the level of poverty. The overall response from the mean scores showed that all the factors impede sustainable economic development in Nigeria.



**Figure 1: Mean responses to the extent of impediment from corrupt practices to sustainable economic development in Nigeria**

The ratings shown on Figure 1 indicated that bribery, exam malpractices, duping and lopsided political appointment have the highest level of impediments to sustainable development in Nigeria.

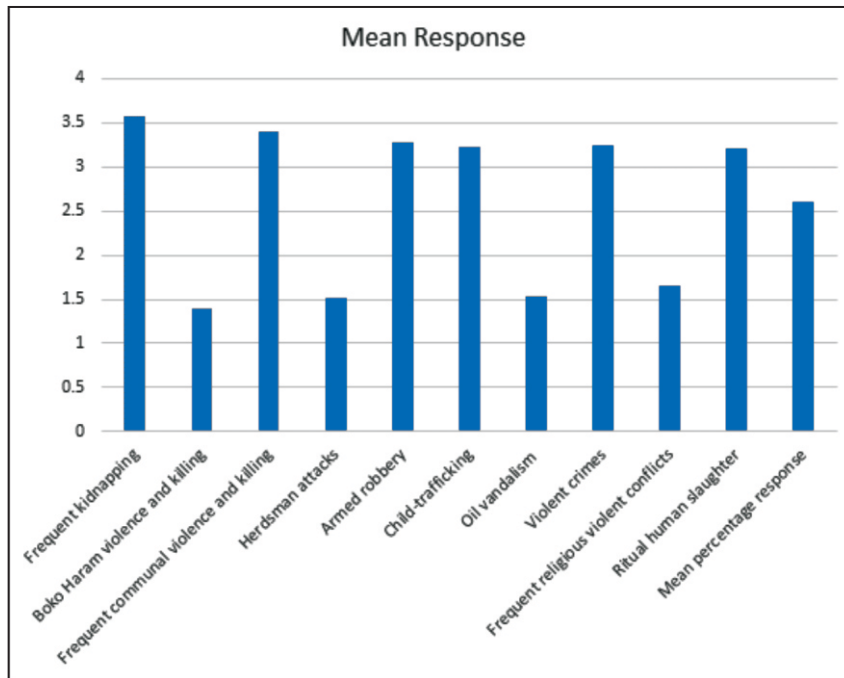
**Research Question Two:** What is civil servants' perception of the extent to which violent crimes hamper sustainable economic development in Nigeria?

**Table 2: Result on the civil servants' perception of the extent to which violent crimes hamper sustainable economic development in Nigeria**

Questionnaire Items	Total Response	Mean Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Decision
Frequent kidnapping instils fear on foreign investors	532	3.57	350 (65.8%)	152 (28.6%)	12 (2.3%)	18 (3.4%)	Strongly Agree
Boko Haram violence and killing do not hamper economic activities	520	1.40	38 (7.3%)	18 (3.5%)	60 (11.5%)	404 (77.7%)	Strongly Disagree
Frequent communal violence and killing across the country robs the nations of its rich human resources	532	3.41	248 (46.6%)	266 (50.0%)	8 (1.5%)	10 (1.9%)	Agree
Herdsmen attacks in many parts of the country do not disrupt the flow of economic activities	524	1.52	36 (6.9%)	4 (0.8%)	156 (29.8%)	328 (62.6%)	Strongly Disagree
Armed robbery disrupts and discourages economic activities	528	3.29	204 (38.6%)	288 (54.5%)	26 (4.9%)	10 (1.9%)	Agree
Child-trafficking robs the nation of its human potentials	532	3.23	184 (43.0%)	298 (56.0%)	40 (7.5%)	10 (1.9%)	Agree
Oil vandalism is not harmful to the economy	532	1.53	42 (7.9%)	4 (0.8%)	150 (28.2%)	336 (63.2%)	Strongly Disagree
Violent crimes hinders the development of tourism in Nigeria	512	3.25	204 (39.8%)	264 (51.6%)	10 (2.0%)	34 (6.6%)	Agree
Frequent religious violent conflicts do not hamper economic activity	522	1.65	8 (1.5%)	42 (8.0%)	232 (44.4%)	240 (46.0%)	Strongly Disagree
Ritual human slaughter hinders sustainable economic development	524	3.22	248 (47.3%)	192 (36.6%)	34 (6.5%)	50 (9.5%)	Strongly Agree
<b>Mean percentage response</b>		2.61	29.79%	29.04%	13.86%	27.31%	Strongly Agree

Table 2 addressed the research question on civil servants' perception of the extent to which violent crimes hamper sustainable economic development in Nigeria. The frequency distribution and percentage outcome showed that violent crimes such as frequent kidnapping and human ritual slaughter are rated "strongly agree" on the extent of their hampering sustainable economic development in Nigeria. Moreover, the respondents chose "agree" to indicate the extent to which they considered that communal violence and killing, armed robbery, child-trafficking, and crimes discouraging tourism hampered sustainable economic development.

These responses show that violent crimes of all sorts can hamper sustainable economic development of a nation. Furthermore, the results reveal that items such as Boko Haram violence and killing, herdsmen attacks, oil vandalism and religious conflicts strongly hamper sustainable economic development. The respondents indicated strongly disagree when they were asked whether these items do not impede sustainable economic development. On the general ratings, the mean response showed that kidnapping constitutes the highest hindrance to sustainable economic development in Nigeria (see Figure 2).



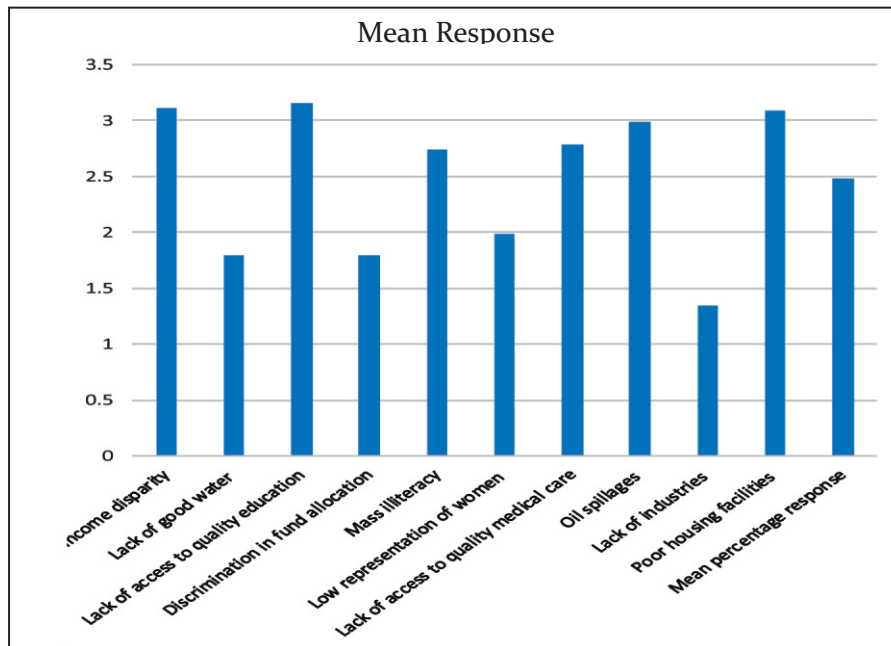
**Figure 2: Mean responses to the extent of hamper from violent crimes to sustainable economic development in Nigeria**

**Research Question Three:** What is civil servants' perception of the extent to which social injustice hinder sustainable economic development in Nigeria?

**Table 3: Results of the civil servants' perception of the extent to which social injustice hinder sustainable economic development in Nigeria**

Questionnaire Items	Total Response	Mean Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Decision
High income disparity between politicians and civil servants is a threat to the nation's economy	532	3.11	228 (42.9%)	200 (37.6%)	40 (7.5%)	64 (12.0%)	Strongly Agree
Lack of good water in rural areas and farmlands does not disrupt economic activities	528	1.79	28 (5.3%)	52 (9.8%)	232 (43.9%)	216 (40.9%)	Disagree
Lack of access to quality education prevents many Nigeria from contributing to the economy	532	3.16	214 (40.2%)	242 (45.5%)	22 (4.1%)	54 (10.2%)	Agree
Discrimination in fund allocation at all levels of the government does not pose problem to sustainable development	516	1.79	24 (4.7%)	40 (7.8%)	254 (49.2%)	198 (38.4%)	Disagree
Mass illiteracy produces mass unemployment	522	2.74	130 (24.9%)	202 (38.7%)	114 (21.8%)	76 (14.6%)	Agree
Low representation of women in political leadership and public offices does not harm sustainable development	532	1.99	16 (3.0%)	142 (26.7%)	198 (37.2%)	176 (33.1%)	Disagree
Lack of access to quality medical care hinders many Nigerians from participating gainfully in economic activities	532	2.79	122 (22.9%)	260 (48.9%)	68 (12.8%)	82 (15.4%)	Agree
Oil spillages which affects the ecosystem increases the level of poverty in the country	532	2.99	148 (27.8%)	278 (52.3%)	56 (10.5%)	50 (9.4%)	Agree
Lack of industries does not affect employment	514	1.34	16 (3.1%)	16 (3.1%)	96 (18.7%)	386 (75.1%)	Strongly Disagree
Poor housing facilities hinders high standard of living	532	3.09	240 (45.1%)	176 (33.1%)	44 (8.3%)	72 (13.5%)	Strongly Agree
<b>Overall percentage response</b>		2.48	21.99%	30.35%	21.40%	26.62%	Agree

Table 3 answered research question three of the study. The frequency and percentage distribution indicated high level of "agrees and strongly agrees" to the items of the questionnaire. The results reveal that high-income disparity, lack of access to quality education, mass illiteracy, lack of access to quality medical care, oil spillages and poor housing facilities hinder sustainable economic development in Nigeria. The overall percentage response indicated "agree". This implies that sustainable economic development is hindered in Nigeria in the face of these factors. The mean response ratings have shown that among the factors, high-income disparity, poor education, oil vandalism and poor housing have high level of hindrance to sustainable economic development in Nigeria.



**Figure 3: Mean responses to the extent of hinder from social injustice to sustainable economic development in Nigeria**

### Discussion

The results of the findings in table 1 reveal that corrupt practices impede sustainable economic development. The extent to which each of the identified items of corrupt practices constitutes major obstacle to sustainable economic development is clearly indicated in figure 1. Bribery, exam malpractice, lopsided appointments, and doping scored very high on the scale. The results agree with similar studies carried out by other scholars. Ogbeidi (2012) has observed that Nigerian leaders, whether military or civilians, have skilfully entrenched corruption and provided a fertile ground as well as an enabling environment for phenomenon to thrive incurably at the expense of national-economic, cultural and political development. Indeed it can be said that corruption as a single moral decadence factor has retarded social development, undermined economic growth, discouraged foreign investments and reduced the resources available for infrastructural development, public service, and poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria (Ogbeidi, 2012).

The results of the findings on civil servants' perception of the extent to which violent crimes and social injustice hamper sustainable economic development in Nigeria are also very revealing. With an overall mean score of 2.61 and 2.48 respectively, violent crimes and social injustice can indeed be considered to constitute an important impediment to sustainable economic development. On the individual items: kidnapping, frequent communal violence and killings, armed robbery, lack of access to quality education, high-income disparity and poor housing facilities were rated among the highest obstacles to achieving sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

The findings confirm other similar scholarly studies. Oloidi (2014) in her studies pointed out that moral degeneration has very disastrous socio-economic implications for Nigeria and its citizens. The 2010 Monitoring Report by UNESCO (2010) ranked Nigeria as one of the poorest twenty countries in the world with about 71 per cent surviving on less than one dollar a day. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2016) put Nigeria Human Development Index (HDI) on the rank of Low Human Development (LHD), positioning Nigeria as 152 out of the 188 countries and territories worldwide that participated in the race. Human development index is a summary measure for assessing a country's long-term progress based on three key dimensions of human development namely: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. Nigeria was unfortunately knocked outside the ranking categories of High Human Development, HHD, and Medium Human Development, MHD, which featured 53 countries in Africa including Gabon, South Africa, Namibia, Ghana, Zambia, Kenya and Botswana.

The results of the findings of this study, undertaken from the perspective of civil servants' perception, have therefore established that moral decadence constitutes a substantial impediment to sustainable economic development in Nigeria. The moral dimension of human development is an indispensable factor that controls the other economic, social, cultural and political aspects. It is for this reason that the author has proposed the integral human development as panacea. The integral human development emphasizes the promotion of moral values and principles like justice, truthfulness, integrity, accountability, and transparency, as well as character formation in virtue-building to militate against such vices as manifested in moral decadence. It also underscores the fact that although peoples and societies have material needs, nevertheless authentic human flourishing and well-being require the development of the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and political dimensions.

As noted by Benedict XVI (2011:110): "Development is impossible without upright men and women, without financiers and politicians whose consciences are finely attuned to the requirements of the common good." In the light of this study, the civil servants' interpretation of how moral decadence impedes sustainable economic development in Nigeria gives a strong signal that there is an urgent need for moral regeneration and the promotion and practice of virtues by Nigerian leaders and citizens for the country to achieve authentic and meaningful economic sustainability to cater for its teeming population.

### **Conclusion**

The study has argued that civil servants in Nigeria form an important workforce whose opinion in the economic development of the nation is crucial. It has produced evidenced-based data to conclude that the prevailing moral decadence in the country has constituted a major stumbling block to sustainable economic development. The ugly situation has prevented Nigerian citizens from enjoying the benefits of the nation's rich human and natural resources. It is for this reason that the study went further to propose the integral human development as panacea. As moral beings, humans have very high capacity to do good or evil, to build or to destroy. The difference is in the choice we make which touches the core of our being and controls the social, political and economic dimensions of development.

## Recommendations

Based on the results of the findings, the study has recommended the followings:

1. The promotion of the integral human development.
2. The integration of moral and ethical studies in the curriculum of all levels of education.
3. A Periodic reward of the practice of virtue in our institutions and public offices.
4. Zero tolerance for corruption.
5. Promotion of discipline in families, schools, and religious organisations.
6. Government, social groups and religious bodies to desist from the culture of over exaggeration of materialism and wealth in our society.

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