

Features and Security in Africa: A Major Concern in Sustainable Development the Place of Languages in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper explores the link between security and sustainable development in Africa, emphasizing the unique challenges that Nigeria faces due to its linguistic diversity. It examines the role; those indigenous languages play in addressing security issues and fostering sustainable development. The paper adopts qualitative approach which deal with contemporary issues in Nigeria. The paper argues that linguistic inclusivity in security frameworks and developmental policies is crucial for creating a conducive environment for sustainable growth. By integrating local languages into governance, education, and conflict resolution, Nigeria can address its diverse population's needs more effectively, thus enhancing security and supporting long-term development goals and promote linguistic research.

Keywords: *Sustainable Development, Security, Linguistic diversity and role of indigenous languages*

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Background to the Study

Security and sustainable development are intricately linked. Without peace and stability, development initiatives are undermined, and without development, security remains fragile. Africa, with its diverse and complex social, political, and economic landscapes, illustrates this relationship starkly. In countries like Nigeria, insecurity has stalled sustainable development efforts, while underdevelopment has fueled insecurity in the country. Nigeria, with over 500 languages spoken across its population, provides a unique context where linguistic diversity intersects with security challenges. Security, according to Nwankwo (2013), means that people should feel safe in their homes, workplaces, places of worship, and communities. According to Asade (2000), these practices are dangerous and antisocial; people of mean and vile character are ridiculed, and evils like corruption, injustice, nepotism, bribery, economic and political sabotage, oppression, colonialism and neocolonialism, dictatorship, racism or colour segregation, intellectual theft, money laundering, malpractice in examinations, cultism, armed robbery, militancy, kidnapping, drug trafficking, human trafficking, election rigging, arson, sectarian crisis, looting, extrajudicial killing, etc. are all called out. "Nigeria is faced with an unprecedented wave of differences but overlapping in security crises – from kidnapping to extremist insurgencies. Violence and criminal activity have affected nearly every region of the nation. According to Awortu (2015), "With every attack, human lives are lost or severely harmed, and faith in democracy and the country is diminishing." This kind of insecurity challenges the foundation of Nigerian society. Frequent kidnappings of schoolchildren from their classrooms and boarding houses are among the recent, frightening threats to the Nigerian citizenry. After thousands of dollars were paid in ransom, many of the more than 1,000 kids who had been kidnapped from their schools since December 2020 were freed. Several of the abductors are known as "bandits" in Nigeria. These thugs burn down homes, kidnap civilians, and raid villages. These attacks are concentrated in the northwest. Since 2012, more than 8,000 people have been killed in Zamfara state alone, and the attacks continue. Following kidnappings at schools in Zamfara and Birnin Gwari, Chukun local government in Kaduna state, and Niger state, where children as young as three years old were taken, hundreds of schools were forced to close. Even though the Northeast is the worst hit with insurgencies effects reverberate through the entire country" (Awortu, 2015:213).

Nigeria's security problems are getting so bad that many people are now searching for a solution. The realization that security plays a significant role in maintaining human existence is what led to this show. Insecurity continues to have an impact on people's well-being in all spheres of their lives, including political, economic, social, religious, and other spheres. As a result, numerous scholars have proposed remedies to Nigeria's security problems (Ayodeji, Olutayo, Abimbola, Saheed 2018; Nweke & Nwuchukwu 202014). Current security issues in Africa, with special reference to Nigeria, include terrorism (such as the resurgence of Boko Haram), militancy (such as the militants of the Niger Delta), Fulani herder killings, poverty, unemployment, and a host of other issues. This has effectively made it necessary for indigenous languages to act as a mediator in resolving Nigeria's insecurity issue in terms of raising awareness or disseminating information about security concerns in any setting we may encounter. With a comprehensive information network, it will attest to the nation's rebranding and shift in attitude. Actually, in order to stop the threat, this article highlights how crucial it is

to share information about security concerns with indigenous languages. Learning at least the three main languages of Nigeria is required here since doing so will improve security by exposing the hidden side of criminals all around the nation. The exclusion of certain linguistic groups from governance, education, and security initiatives has contributed to ethnic tensions, social exclusion, and conflict, which have come a serious concern in Nigeria. This paper poses to examine linguistic diversity and how it can be harnessed to address these security challenges, ultimately to support sustainable development in every aspect of life.

Conceptual Literature

According to Mutiullah (2010) defined security as “a situation without any risk or worries.” Since "security" lacks a clinical definition, it is typically viewed as a controversial notion. Ochoche (1998) emphasizes that security for all entities, organisations, and particularly nations remain a top priority, notwithstanding its definitional flexibility. From security through armaments to security through human development, from territorial security to food, employment, and environmental security, the idea of security has evolved over time to place more emphasis on people's security than just national security (Human Development Report, 2011). Aja, (2009) viewed security in different perspectives which has to do with the orderly existence of things. That is, “a state of protective and subjective environment. Security in the objective sense can be measured by the absence of threat to life, liberty, property and core values.

According to Nnoli, (2006) the subjective level, security measures the absence of fear, anxiety, tension or apprehension of being in danger of losing life, liberty, property and other core values. Similarly, Nnoli (2006) further says that matter how much safety there is in objective terms, unless there is confidence that such safety exists or will exist, there is no security. Even when no safety exists in objective terms, but there is confidence that it exists, then, there is likely to be security at least in the short term. In this case, one may speak of false security. The subjective idea of security brings to fore its ambiguous and elastic meaning. Hence, individuals vary in what constitutes their security as one person's security may be another person's insecurity. Security therefore describes a state of mind not necessarily an objective state of being. The subjective view of security describes how people feel, not whether they are justified in feeling that way. It all depends on the perception that people have of their environment, not necessarily on an objective view of that environment.

According to Aja (2009) opine that, security is not all about the gun as there is also security in bread, social harmony, good health and understanding of political order”. The physical threat to a state, which shows up in disparities in military might, has historically been the primary focus of security concerns. However, in reality, military might alone cannot address all security issues. From a historical and analytical standpoint, security is a comprehensive and all-encompassing concept that encompasses all laws, policies, and institutional arrangements aimed at giving citizens a psychological sense of assurance regarding their internal and external vigilance and freedom from fear of losing their fundamental and treasured values. According to Adedoyin (2014), security is further defined as any action taken to guarantee harmonious coexistence and overall growth. Security includes meeting fundamental human

needs and defending human rights, both of which are essential for changing societal structures.

Concept of Sustainable Development

Despite the broad adoption of the notion of sustainable development, there is currently no universally accepted definition. The Brundtland Commission's definition of "sustainable development," which is development that satisfies current demands without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to satiate their own, is the foundation of the majority of definitions. According to Karpagam (2014), sustainable development is also focused on improving the natural standard of living for the impoverished at the local level. This can be quantified by looking at things like increased access to food, real income, healthcare, education, sanitation, and water supplies.

Pearce (2013) asserts that sustainable development is a vector of desired social goals, including a rise in real income per capita, better health and nutrition, educational attainment, resource accessibility, a more equitable income distribution, and an expansion of fundamental freedom. The willingness and ability of the current generation to find a way to use depleted resources such that future generations, at the very least, would not be left worse off than the current generation is what Wietenberg (2015) defined as sustainable development. Similarly, development is sustainable if it does not jeopardize the demands of future generations (WCED 1987). Development aspires to create sustainable increases in the quality of life for all people's generations. One of the main objectives of development policy is sustainability. In addition to boosting economic growth and providing for basic necessities, raising living standards also aims to improve people's health and educational opportunities, give everyone the opportunity to engage in public life, contribute to environmental sustainability, and foster intergenerational equality. In addition, sustainable development seeks to maximize the overall advantages of economic growth while preserving the stock of all natural and environmental resources (natural, human, and physical) across time.

Sustainable Development and Security in Africa

Sustainable development is not merely an economic goal; it encompasses social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and political stability. Security is a foundational element for achieving sustainable development, especially in Africa where many countries face challenges such as terrorism, ethnic conflicts, political instability, and organized crime (World Bank, 2018). Nigeria, Africa's most crowded country and largest economy, has faced significant security threats over the past decades. The Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, clashes between farmers and herders in the middle belt, and separatist movements in the southeast have all contributed to instability, threatening sustainable development efforts (Ezeibe, 2019). These conflicts are often exacerbated by ethnic and linguistic divisions, complicating efforts to build peace and foster development.

Linguistic Diversity in Nigeria: A Double-Edged Sword

Nigeria's linguistic diversity is both a strength and a challenge. While the country's major languages are Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo control public discourse, hundreds of minority

languages are spoken by millions of people, contributing to Nigeria's rich cultural tapestry. However, this diversity has also been a source of tension, as many linguistic groups feel marginalized by the dominance of major languages and English, the official language (Bamgbose, 2000).

Linguistic Exclusion and Its Implications for Security

Language is a critical component of identity and belonging. When people feel excluded from public life due to linguistic barriers, it can foster resentment and contribute to social unrest. In Nigeria, linguistic exclusion has had significant implications for security, as marginalized groups often feel disconnected from the state. For instance, the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria has partly been fueled by feelings of exclusion among Hausa-speaking communities, who perceive the central government as distant and unresponsive to their needs (Aliyu, 2020). Likewise, in regions where minority languages are predominant, the lack of government services in these languages hinders effective communication, governance, and security efforts. This linguistic disconnect weakens trust between local populations and the government, making it more difficult to address security threats and implement development programs (Olagbaju & Nwaogaidu, 2022).

Harnessing Linguistic Diversity for Sustainable Development

Linguistic diversity, if properly managed, can be an asset in promoting sustainable development. By incorporating local languages into education, governance, and conflict resolution, Nigeria can enhance inclusivity and social cohesion, which are critical for both security and development. Research shows that the use of indigenous dialects in early childhood teaching rallies learning outcomes and fosters a sense of cultural pride (Adegbija, 2004). According to the United Nations (2015), this aligns with Sustainability Goal 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable high-quality education. In addition, multilingualism in governance ensures that more citizens can participate in public life, making policies more responsive to the needs of different linguistic communities. When local languages are used in governance and development programs, it fosters a sense of ownership and engagement among communities, which is essential for sustainable development (Nettle & Romaine, 2000).

The Role of Languages in Security and Conflict Resolution

According to Blench, (2019) language is not just a medium of communication; it is also a tool for peace building. In many of Nigeria's conflict zones, the inability of security forces and government officials to communicate in local languages has hampered conflict resolution efforts. Peace building initiatives that are conducted in local languages are often more successful, as they resonate more deeply with local populations.

Local Languages in Law Enforcement and Security Operations

Security operations in Nigeria's diverse regions would benefit from greater linguistic inclusivity. Law enforcement personnel who understand the local languages and cultures of the areas in which they operate are better equipped to gather intelligence, build trust with local communities, and resolve conflicts peacefully. This has been particularly evident in the fight

against Boko Haram, where the lack of linguistic and cultural understanding has often impeded counterinsurgency efforts (Aliyu, 2020).

Community-Led Security Initiatives

Community-based security initiatives that integrate local languages are more effective in preventing and resolving conflicts. Traditional leaders, who are often fluent in the local languages, play a crucial role in mediating disputes and maintaining peace within their communities. Empowering these leaders and incorporating their linguistic and cultural knowledge into national security frameworks would strengthen Nigeria's overall security strategy (Olagbaju & Nwaogaidu, 2022).

Major Concerns in Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The comprehensive strategy of addressing current demands without sacrificing the capacity of future generations to address their own needs is known as sustainable development. Nigeria, being the most populous country in Africa, faces unique challenges in achieving sustainable development due to a wide range of social, economic, and environmental factors. The major concerns for sustainable development in Nigeria include poverty and inequality, environmental degradation, climate change, energy access, rapid population growth, food security, governance, and infrastructure deficits. Below is a comprehensive discussion of these concerns, with relevant citations and references.

Poverty and Inequality

Poverty remains one of the most significant barriers to sustainable development in Nigeria. More than 40% of Nigerians, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), are below the poverty line, which exacerbates inequality and makes it more difficult to receive essential services like clean water, healthcare, and education. Excessive inequality hinders prospects for fair economic progress and causes social instability (NBS, 2020). According to the World Bank, poverty is worse in rural areas since there is less access to social services and infrastructure (World Bank, 2020).

Environmental Degradation

Environmental degradation, driven by deforestation, desertification, oil pollution, and poor waste management practices, poses a significant threat to Nigeria's natural resources and the livelihoods of its people. The Niger Delta, one of the most polluted regions in the world due to oil spills, has experienced severe environmental damage, leading to loss of biodiversity, water contamination, and health issues for local communities (UNDP, 2019). In northern Nigeria, deforestation and overgrazing contribute to desertification, which threatens agricultural productivity and food security.

Climate Change

Nigeria's dependence on agriculture and natural resources makes it especially susceptible to the effects of climate change. The country has experienced increased temperatures, irregular rainfall patterns, and more frequent extreme weather events, such as floods and droughts. These changes have resulted in declining agricultural yields, water scarcity, and displacement

of communities (Olaniyi et al., 2013). Climate change exacerbates existing vulnerabilities in Nigeria's economy and infrastructure, hindering efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Energy Access and Transition

Nigeria's energy sector is characterized by low access to electricity, especially in rural areas, and heavy reliance on fossil fuels. Despite being a major oil producer, over 85 million Nigerians do not have access to electricity, which affects industrialization, education, and health services (IEA, 2022). The country's over-reliance on oil also poses a challenge to sustainability, as it contributes to environmental degradation and is subject to price volatility in global markets. Transitioning to renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind, is essential for Nigeria to achieve sustainable development, but the transition has been slow due to a lack of infrastructure and investment.

Population Growth and Urbanization

Nigeria's population, estimated to be over 220 million, is growing rapidly, with projections indicating it could reach 400 million by 2050 (United Nations, 2022). This rapid population growth places immense pressure on the country's natural resources, infrastructure, and social services. Urbanization has led to the expansion of cities with insufficient planning, resulting in overcrowded slums, inadequate sanitation, and poor waste management (Akinyemi & Oluwaseun, 2019). The strain on resources makes it difficult for Nigeria to implement sustainable urban development strategies.

Food Security

Agriculture is a key sector in Nigeria, employing over 70% of the rural population (FAO, 2020). However, food insecurity is widespread due to low agricultural productivity, climate change, and inadequate infrastructure for storage and transportation. Nigeria's agricultural sector is predominantly rain-fed, making it vulnerable to climate variability and environmental degradation. The country's reliance on food imports also makes it vulnerable to global market shocks, raising concerns about long-term food security (Eze, 2021).

Governance and Corruption

Weak governance and pervasive corruption are major challenges to sustainable development in Nigeria. Corruption undermines the effectiveness of institutions and diverts resources away from development projects.

Conclusion

Security is a precondition for sustainable development, and addressing Nigeria's security challenges requires a holistic approach that includes linguistic inclusivity. By recognizing the role of languages in governance, education, and conflict resolution, Nigeria can foster greater social cohesion, reduce conflicts, and create a more secure environment for sustainable development. Harnessing the power of Nigeria's linguistic diversity is not just a cultural imperative but a pragmatic

Recommendations

To address the security and sustainable development challenges in Nigeria, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

1. **Integrating Local Languages into Education and Governance:** The Nigerian government should promote multilingual education policies that prioritize indigenous languages in primary education and encourage their use in local governance.
2. **Strengthening Community-Based Security:** Law enforcement agencies should invest in language training for security personnel to enhance communication with local communities. Furthermore, community leaders should be actively involved in peace building and conflict resolution efforts.
3. **Linguistic Inclusivity in Media and Public Discourse:** Public communication campaigns, especially those related to security and development should be delivered in multiple languages to ensure they reach all segments of the population.
4. **Promoting Linguistic Research:** The government should fund linguistic research to document and preserve Nigeria's endangered languages and promote their use in formal and informal settings, contributing to cultural preservation and national unity.

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