



## SOCIAL JUSTICE, PEACE AND SECURITY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### ARTICLE INFORMATION

#### Article history

Received: 12 May 2023  
Revised: 24 June 2023  
Accepted: 14 August 2023

#### Keywords:

Social justice,  
Peace,  
Security,  
Sustainable  
development

### ABS TRACT

*Despite the various developmental plans formulated by the Nigerian government, sustaining the recorded development in the country seems to be a mirage. This research explored the critical need for sustainable national development in Nigeria, with a particular focus on social justice, peace, and security. The paper analyzes the impact of these concepts on sustainable development and employs Herman Daly's theory as the theoretical framework for analysis. The paper discusses strategies for promoting social justice, peace, and security and addresses potential obstacles to their implementation. The conclusion drawn is that social justice, peace, and security are fundamental pillars of sustainable development. These concepts are vital for the advancement of individuals and communities in Nigeria. By providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of promoting social justice, peace, and security, this research paper highlights the importance of these concepts for the country's long-term development. It recommends that the Nigerian government must take proactive measures to ensure that social justice, peace, and security are promoted and sustained for the benefit of its citizens.*

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## 1. Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a comprehensive approach to promoting economic, social, and environmental progress while ensuring that the needs of current generations are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The SDGs consider all aspects of policy formation, planning, and implementation, with a focus on sustainable development. This means taking into account economic, social, and environmental factors to achieve sustainable development. The SDGs are also about promoting social equity, cultural diversity, and human rights, as well as responsible use and management of natural resources. However, to achieve the goals of sustainable development, it is crucial to ensure social justice, peace, and security.

Social justice entails the distribution of resources and opportunities in a manner that provides an equal opportunity for all individuals to achieve their full potential, irrespective of their social status, race, gender, or other individual characteristics. Peace, on the other hand, is the state of tranquillity, and absence of violence or hostility, which facilitates positive relationships, cooperation, and mutual understanding between individuals, groups, communities, or nations.

Security is a measure taken to protect people, organisations, and assets from harm, damage, or unauthorized access. The integration of these concepts is crucial to achieving sustainable development, as the absence of social justice, peace, and security can lead to the breakdown of law and order, resulting in a significant hindrance to sustainable development. Therefore, this paper is based on the following subheadings:

## **2. Concept of Social Justice**

The concept of social justice is approached from multiple disciplines as it encompasses a broad range of perspectives. According to O'Neill (2020), social justice is a political concept that deals with the nature and structure of the state, an economic concept that concerns the equal distribution of goods and services within society, and an ethical concept that is grounded in an ethical framework. It is worth noting that social justice is a complex and multifaceted concept that is created by the government in power. In the case of Africa, many leaders pledged to promote social justice among their citizens by developing their economies, democratizing their political systems, and ensuring the fair distribution of resources and opportunities (Nnani & Muoneke, 2023).

Social justice is a critical component of a just and equitable society that encompasses various disciplines, including philosophy, politics, economics, sociology, and law. At its core, social justice is focused on promoting equality, human rights, and the fair distribution of resources and opportunities (Stivers, Pandey, DeHart-Davis, Hall, Newcomer, Portillo, Sabharwal, Strader & Wright, 2023). This can involve addressing issues of discrimination based on race, gender, or other characteristics, ensuring access to essential services such as education and healthcare, and tackling economic inequality. Achieving social justice requires the collective efforts of individuals, communities, and governments and may require both structural and cultural changes to address systemic biases and inequalities.

Social justice promotes the idea that all members of society should have equal access to resources and opportunities, regardless of their social status, race, gender, or religion. Social justice also emphasises the importance of human rights and the need to protect vulnerable groups from discrimination and injustice. It can lead to policies and practices that reduce inequality, such as progressive taxation, affirmative action, and social welfare programmes.

However, the concept of social justice is often criticized for being too vague and subjective. There is a debate about what constitutes a fair distribution of resources and opportunities and how to achieve it. Some argue that social justice can lead to excessive government intervention

and reduce individual freedoms, while others believe that it is necessary to address systemic injustices in society (Stivers, Pandey, DeHart-Davis, Hall, Newcomer, Portillo, Sabharwal, Strader & Wright, 2023).

### **3. Concept of Peace**

The notion of peace has a complex nature and has been examined across various fields, such as philosophy, political science, psychology, and international relations. In essence, peace denotes a condition of concord and non-violence, both among individuals and groups within and between communities and countries (Gurashi, 2023). According to Mustafa, Jamshed, Nawaz, Arslan, and Ahmad (2023), it entails the absence of conflict and the presence of affirmative relationships based on collaboration, mutual regard, and empathy. Peace can be perceived as a goal and a process that necessitates continuous endeavours to tackle the underlying causes of strife, promote comprehension and dialogue, and establish stable structures and institutions that support peaceful coexistence. Accomplishing peace may entail several approaches, including diplomacy, mediation, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding initiatives. Furthermore, it encompasses addressing issues of inequality, poverty, and injustice, which can contribute to social and political turmoil.

In political science and international relations, peace is commonly studied within the context of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Peace is not solely the absence of violence or war but rather entails a comprehensive understanding of the concept, encompassing social, economic, and environmental dimensions (Bermeo, 2022). According to Galtung's categorization, peace can be classified into two types: negative peace, which refers to the absence of violence and direct conflict, and positive peace, which involves the elimination of structural violence and the creation of a society that advocates for justice and equality (Kassa & Mollaw, 2017). Researchers have also underscored the significance of factors such as social justice, human rights, and equitable distribution of resources in achieving sustainable peace.

In addition to the different levels of peace, there are also different approaches to peacebuilding (Smoljan, 2003). One approach is the top-down approach, which involves working with governments and political leaders to promote peace and stability. This approach is often used in post-conflict situations, where the focus is on rebuilding institutions and establishing a framework for peace. Another approach is the bottom-up approach, which involves working with communities and grassroots organisations to promote peace and address the root causes of

conflict. This approach emphasises the importance of local ownership and participation in peacebuilding processes.

It is important to recognise that peacebuilding is not a linear process, and there are often challenges and setbacks. Some of these challenges include deep-seated grievances and mistrust, limited resources and capacity, and external factors such as geopolitical tensions and economic instability. Therefore, peacebuilding efforts must be adaptive and flexible, taking into account the local context and the evolving dynamics of conflict. Peacebuilding is an essential component of sustainable development and the well-being of individuals and communities. It requires a collaborative and multi-faceted approach, involving various actors such as governments, civil society organisations, and international institutions. By promoting peace and preventing conflicts, we can create a more just and equitable world for all.

#### **4. Concept of Security**

Security can be defined as the state of being safeguarded from harm, danger, or potential threats. In recent years, the importance of security has grown significantly among individuals, communities, and governments worldwide due to the emergence of global threats such as terrorism, cybercrime, climate change, and pandemics. The concept of security encompasses a wide range of dimensions, including physical, economic, political, and social security.

Physical security pertains to the protection of individuals and assets from physical harm or damage (Michael, 2004). This may involve various measures, such as the installation of security cameras, locks, and alarms, as well as the deployment of security personnel and law enforcement agencies.

Economic security refers to the ability of individuals and communities to access and maintain sustainable livelihoods, financial stability, and economic growth (Pakhucha, Sievidova, Romaniuk, Bilousko, Tkachenko, Diadin, & Babko, 2023). Economic security can be achieved through various means, such as job creation, investment in education and training, and social protection programmes.

Political security refers to the stability and effectiveness of political institutions and processes, which are essential for maintaining peace and stability in society. This can include measures such as promoting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, as well as strengthening institutions such as the police and judiciary (Buzan, Waeber, & Wilde, 1998).

Social security refers to the protection of individuals and communities from social risks such as poverty, unemployment, and discrimination. This can include measures such as access to healthcare, education, and social welfare programmes.

## **5. Concept of Sustainable Development**

Sotnikova, Polenova, Mislavskaya, Petrov, and Basova (2019) described sustainable development as a concept that refers to a way of achieving economic, social, and environmental progress while ensuring that the needs of the present generation are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The idea of sustainable development emerged in the 1980s as a response to growing concerns about the negative impacts of economic growth and industrialization on the environment and society. Sustainable development and the SDGs are closely related, as the SDGs provide a framework for promoting sustainable development by setting specific goals and targets. Sustainable development provides the overarching concept and philosophy that underpin the SDGs, and the SDGs provide a concrete way to implement sustainable development at the national and global level.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations (UN) member states in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Halışçelik & Soytaş, 2019). The SDGs are aimed at addressing the world's most pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges, including poverty, hunger, climate change, inequality, and environmental degradation. One of the key benefits of the SDGs is that they provide a framework for all countries to work towards achieving sustainable development. The SDGs cover a wide range of issues, including poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation, and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice, and strong institutions and partnerships for the goals (Paoli & Addeo, 2019). This comprehensive framework ensures that no aspect of sustainable development is left out, and countries can work towards achieving a better future for all. Moreover, the SDGs provide a universal language for sustainable development that can be easily understood by policymakers, stakeholders, and citizens. Another significant aspect of the SDGs is that they promote collaboration and partnerships for sustainable development. Therefore, it calls for partnerships among governments, the private sector, and other stakeholders to work towards achieving sustainable development.

## 6. Approaches to Social Justice for Sustainable Development

There are several different approaches to social justice that have been developed over time. Some of these approaches are discussed below:

1. **Participatory Approaches:** The significance of involving people and communities in the decision-making processes that have an impact on their lives is emphasised by participatory approaches. This method gives marginalised groups the chance to participate in the development process and acknowledges the variety of people's experiences, knowledge, and requirements (Rosenström & Kyllönen, 2007). Participatory approaches are essential for sustainable development because they promote ownership, empowerment, and collective action. Participatory approaches also foster trust, cooperation, and social cohesion, which are critical elements for achieving social justice.
2. **Human Rights Approaches:** Human rights perspectives place a strong emphasis on the necessity of defending and advancing human rights in order to achieve social justice and sustainable development. Human rights approaches recognise the inherent dignity of all individuals and seek to ensure that they have access to basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare, as well as education and participation in the decision-making processes (Haglund, 2019). By focusing on human rights, this approach seeks to address the root causes of poverty, inequality, and social exclusion.
3. **Equity and Redistribution Approaches:** Equity and redistribution approaches recognise that social justice and sustainable development require a fair distribution of resources and opportunities. This approach aims to reduce disparities in income, wealth, and power and ensure that everyone has access to basic needs and opportunities for advancement (Rodriguez & Morrison, 2019). Equity and redistribution approaches are essential for achieving sustainable development goals, particularly in contexts where market forces fail to address poverty and inequality adequately.

## 7. Approaches to Peace for Sustainable Development

There are various approaches to peace that individuals, communities, and governments use to promote peace. Some of the three key approaches to peace are discussed below:

1. **Diplomatic Approach to Peace:** The diplomatic approach to peace involves negotiating and reaching agreements between parties in conflict. Diplomacy involves

the use of dialogue, negotiations, and treaties to resolve disputes peacefully. Diplomacy can be used at the local, national, or international level to address conflicts. It is often used by governments to promote peace and avoid war. Diplomacy can also involve third-party mediation to help parties in conflict reach a resolution.

- 2. Humanitarian Approach to Peace:** The humanitarian approach to peace involves providing assistance to people affected by conflict. Humanitarian organisations provide food, shelter, medical aid, and other essential services to victims of war and violence. The aim is to alleviate the suffering of those affected by conflict and promote peace. Humanitarian organisations also advocate for human rights and work to protect vulnerable groups, such as women and children, during conflict.
- 3. Nonviolent Approach to Peace:** The nonviolent approach to peace involves promoting peace without the use of violence. This approach involves using nonviolent methods such as civil disobedience, peaceful protests, and grassroots movements to bring about change. The nonviolent approach to peace seeks to address the root causes of conflict and promote social justice. It also emphasises the importance of dialogue, reconciliation, and forgiveness in promoting peace.

## **8. Approaches to Security for Sustainable Development**

Some key approaches to security, namely, traditional security, human security, and comprehensive security, are discussed below:

- 1. Traditional Security:** Traditional security refers to the protection of a state's sovereignty and territorial integrity against external threats, such as military aggression, terrorism, and nuclear proliferation (Okolie, 2022). This approach focuses on building up military capabilities, intelligence gathering, and deterrence to prevent or respond to external threats. Traditional security seems to have been the dominant approach to security since the end of World War II. However, this approach has been criticized for its narrow focus on military power and neglect of non-traditional security threats.
- 2. Human Security:** Human security is a people-centred approach to security that emphasises the protection and empowerment of individuals and communities against a wide range of threats, including poverty, environmental degradation, disease, and human rights abuses (Tarai, 2022). This approach recognises that security is not just about protecting states but also about protecting the lives and livelihoods of individuals. Human security seeks to address the root causes of insecurity and promote sustainable

development. However, this approach has been criticised for being too broad and vague, making it difficult to implement in practice.

3. **Comprehensive Security:** Comprehensive security is an approach that combines elements of traditional and human security to address both traditional and non-traditional security threats. This approach acknowledges interconnectedness and requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. Comprehensive security seeks to promote security by addressing a wide range of issues, including military security, economic security, environmental security, and human security. This approach is considered more holistic and adaptable than traditional security and more concrete than human security.

## 9. The Nexus Between Social Justice, Peace, and Security for Sustainable Development

The relationship between social justice, peace, and security is a critical topic in the field of international studies. The interdependence of these concepts has been emphasised in various ways, such as the common slogan "no peace, no development," "no peace, no justice," and "no development, no security" (Helgason, 2016). Furthermore, insecurity and conflict seem to pose significant obstacles to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Thus, the social justice-peace-security-development relationship underscores the importance of understanding the interconnections between justice, peace, security, development, and governance for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Security and development have been considered distinct discourses in international studies, with development focusing on economic growth and well-being and security interpreted in various ways, such as individual, human, and state security (Bhattacharya, 2023). These policy domains address different actors and different types of threats, with development threats requiring long-term solutions and security threats often needing immediate attention.

Social justice is a crucial component in promoting peace and security, as it helps to address the root causes of conflict and instability. Research has shown that societies that are more equal and just are less likely to experience violence and conflict (Wilkinson & Pickett 2018). This is because social justice promotes social cohesion and inclusion, which fosters a sense of belonging and shared responsibility for the welfare of society. Individuals who feel that they are being treated fairly and have access to the resources they need appear to be less likely to engage in violent or criminal behaviour.



On the other hand, peace and security are necessary conditions for promoting social justice. In societies affected by conflict or insecurity, access to basic needs and resources is often disrupted, which exacerbates existing inequalities and deepens social divisions. This can create a vicious cycle of conflict and poverty where individuals are unable to access the resources and opportunities needed to escape poverty and build better lives for themselves and their families (Tollefsen, 2020). Peaceful and secure societies, by contrast, provide the conditions necessary for equitable and just societies to flourish. In addition to promoting social justice, peace and security are essential for promoting sustainable development. When societies are characterised by conflict and insecurity, the resources necessary for economic growth and development are often diverted to military or security purposes rather than being invested in infrastructure, education, or healthcare (Annan, 2004). By contrast, peaceful and secure societies can invest in the resources necessary for long-term economic growth and development, which can promote social justice by providing individuals with opportunities to succeed.

Social justice, peace, and security are interdependent concepts, with each being a necessary component for the realisation of the other. Social justice is crucial for promoting peace and security by addressing the underlying causes of conflict and instability. Peace and security, in turn, provide the conditions necessary for equitable and just societies to flourish and promote sustainable development. By understanding the interconnections between these concepts, policymakers and researchers can work towards creating more peaceful, secure, and just societies that promote sustainable development.

## **10. Strategies for Achieving Social Justice, Peace and Security for Sustainable Development**

Some of the key strategies for achieving social justice, peace, and security for sustainable development are discussed below:

1. **Promoting Human Rights:** One of the most important tactics for attaining social justice, peace, and security is the promotion of human rights. Individuals are handled with respect, equality, and dignity due to human rights. To safeguard human rights, including the rights to food, clean water, healthcare, education, and other necessities, governments, civil society, and international organisations should collaborate.
2. **Addressing Economic Inequalities:** An important barrier to attaining social justice and sustainable development is economic inequality. Governments should adopt inclusive economic growth policies, like progressive taxation and social safety nets, to address

economic inequality. Investments in education and training can also boost employment prospects and lower poverty.

3. **Promoting Gender Equality:** Inequality between the sexes continues to be a major obstacle to social fairness and sustainable development. Governments should enact laws that support women's rights, including equitable compensation, access to education, and control over their reproductive systems, in order to advance gender equality. The issue of gender-based violence and prejudice should also be addressed.
4. **Ensuring Access to Justice:** Promoting societal justice, peace, and security requires that people have access to the legal system. States should make efforts to guarantee that everyone has access to legal assistance and services. The authority of the law should be strengthened, accountability should be encouraged, and corruption should be eliminated.
5. **Strengthening Peacebuilding Efforts:** In order to attain sustainable development, peace and security are required. To support peacebuilding initiatives such as conflict prevention, mediation, and post-conflict reconstruction, governments and civil society should collaborate. Additionally, actions should be taken to support human security, disarm and demobilize armed groups, and address the underlying causes of conflict.

## **11. Threats to Achieving Social Justice, Peace, and Security for Sustainable Development**

Social justice, peace, and security are crucial components of sustainable development, but there are several threats that can hinder their achievement. They include:

1. **Poverty and inequality:** Poverty and inequality are major threats to social justice, peace, and security. These issues lead to a lack of access to resources, education, and healthcare, which can lead to social unrest and conflict.
2. **Political instability:** Political instability, particularly in fragile states, can hinder progress towards social justice, peace, and security. Political instability can lead to conflict, displacement, and a lack of access to basic services such as healthcare and education.
3. **Discrimination and prejudice:** Discrimination and prejudice based on race, gender, sexuality, and other factors can lead to social exclusion and conflict. Addressing these issues is crucial for achieving social justice, peace, and security.

4. **Cybersecurity threats:** Cybersecurity threats such as cyberattacks and data breaches can undermine peace and security by disrupting critical infrastructure and services. Addressing cybersecurity threats is essential to maintaining social stability and preventing conflicts.

## **12. Ways of Addressing the Threats to Social justice, peace and security for sustainable development**

Achieving social justice, peace, and security for sustainable development requires addressing the threats discussed above as well as others that may emerge in the future. These threats require collective action and collaboration at the global level to ensure that progress towards sustainable development is not impeded. The following are ways of addressing the threats:

1. **Addressing poverty and inequality:** To address poverty and inequality, there is a need for policies that promote economic growth, job creation, and access to education and healthcare. Addressing income inequality can also help reduce social unrest and conflict.
2. **Conflict prevention and peacebuilding:** To address political instability and prevent conflict, there is a need for policies that promote conflict prevention and peacebuilding, such as promoting democracy, strengthening institutions, and promoting human rights. Investing in conflict prevention and peacebuilding can also help reduce the human and economic costs of conflict.
3. **Addressing discrimination and prejudice:** To address discrimination and prejudice, there is a need for policies that promote social inclusion and diversity, such as affirmative action and equal opportunity policies. Promoting intergroup contact and dialogue can also help to reduce prejudice and increase social cohesion.
4. **Cybersecurity measures:** To address cybersecurity threats, there is a need for policies that promote cybersecurity measures, such as investing in cybersecurity infrastructure, promoting cybersecurity awareness, and regulating the use of cyberspace.

## **13. Conclusion**

The achievement of social justice, peace, and security is a critical aspect of sustainable development, and there is an interdependent relationship between these goals. To realise sustainable development, it is necessary to address the underlying causes of social injustice, conflict, and insecurity, and this requires collective action from governments, civil society, and

the private sector. Efforts to promote economic growth, job creation, access to education and healthcare, climate change adaptation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, social inclusion and diversity, and cybersecurity measures are vital to achieving these objectives. Achieving these goals is a complex task that requires ongoing research and dialogue to better understand the multifaceted factors contributing to social injustice, conflict, and insecurity. By fostering a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach to these challenges, we can strive towards a more equitable and sustainable future for all, where individuals and communities can thrive and achieve their full potential. Ultimately, achieving social justice, peace, and security is not only a desirable outcome in itself but a prerequisite for sustainable development.

#### **14. Recommendations**

In order to promote social justice, peace, and security for sustainable development, the following recommendations were made:

1. Prevent and resolve conflicts by addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting dialogue and negotiation, and supporting the peaceful resolution of disputes.
2. Governments and other stakeholders should promote human rights, including freedom of expression, assembly, and association, and work to eliminate discrimination and prejudice.
3. Ensuring access to justice for all is a fundamental aspect of social justice, peace, and security.
4. Achieving gender equality is vital to social justice, peace, and security.
5. Promoting economic empowerment for marginalised communities can help reduce poverty, inequality, and social exclusion.

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