

A Festschrift in Honour of  
**ADEGBOYEGA ISAAC AJAYI**

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Issues in  
**Socio-  
Political**  
History of Nigeria

Edited by  
**Victor Osaro Edo**  
**Dolapo Z. Olupayimo**

Foreword by **PROFESSOR OLUTAYO C. ADESINA, FNAL**

# Issues in Socio-Political History of Nigeria

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### Students' Attitude as Correlate of Environmental Sustainability in Some Selected Secondary Schools in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria

#### Introduction

Environmental problems pose serious threats to the well-being of all inhabitants on this planet, in spite of climate change. These threats have attracted attention by researchers across a range of disciplines, from sciences, humanities to social and behavioural sciences. Various authors and scholars of repute have also been able to identify various students' factors that predict environmental sustainability which includes; age, gender, socio-economic status, religion, family income, parents' level of education, parents' occupation, family size, materials availability, terrain, climatic condition, etc. Most environmental experts agree that planet earth has finite number of resources to sustain its inhabitants, but when irresponsible stewardship of the planet occurs, not only does the environment suffer but the people's health is also affected. Sustainability issue arises wherever there is a risk of difficult or irreversible loss of things or qualities of the environment that people value. And whenever there are such risks there is a degree of urgency to take action. Research such as; Robinson (2013); De Lavega (2004); Park (2001); UNEP (1999) have shown large-scale national and global issues on environmental degradation, sustainability, climate change, higher energy costs, water

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and food shortage, poverty, species extinction, and resource depletion and so on, which is becoming more and more evident every day, and the scientific evidence continues to mount up and confound even the most stringent of skeptics.

Modern societies place a high value on economic prosperity. Individuals are continuously exposed to cultural values, which promote the acquisition of wealth and material possessions while abandoning increasing concern about the environmental damage engendered by current levels of consumerism (Robinson, 2013). Yet, it seems that what mankind knows and how they live their lives are increasingly being disconnected from sustainable environmental practices. No one will doubt the fact that our present world is different from the world of the agricultural and the industrial revolution – the pressure on the planet (environment) due to some human activities (unnatural) and some natural activities (flood, earthquake, eruptions) seem to be weighing much on the limited planet that mankind and other living organisms sharing the planet with us are adversely affected by, even the environment itself. With global warming on the increase and species and their habitats on the decrease, chances for ecosystems to adapt naturally are diminishing thus causing many to agree that climate change is one of the greatest threats facing the planet. Much of this environmental degradation is caused by human behaviour (IPCC, 2013). The effects of climate change, along with pollution and the depletion of non-renewable natural resources have given rise to environmental awareness and positive behaviour (Ogueri, 2004).

In the face of environmental crisis, it is believed that mankind must alter its behaviour from contemporary, unsustainable ways to new and more responsible behavioural patterns. But no amount of preaching to the citizenry about the perils of a polluted environment, the dangers of irresponsible disposal of wastes or deforestation and the benefits to mankind of greening the environment will make people act in forestalling environmental degradation unless they are imbued with a deep concern for the common good, a sense of responsibility for maintaining a balanced and healthy ecosystem

and a strong drive to achieve harmony with nature (UNESCO, 2009). A key global challenge in the 21st century is how to address environmental sustainability (UN, 2007). Hence, this calls for new trends, attitude and ideas where all and sundry, both young and old, 'educated' and 'non-educated', privileged and non-privileged would take part in saving the planet from 'total physical collapse' since all life on earth depends on it for survival.

### Statement of the Problem

Environmental crises are prevalent and unprecedented in its magnitude, pace and serenity. Today, world leaders, scientists and academics, politicians, sociologists, psychologist, educationist, philosopher, theologians, etc. in both the developed and the developing countries, express grave concern for environmental issues. The over exploitation of natural ecosystem has caused genetic mutation, loss of biodiversity and extinction of entire species with far reaching consequences. People have turned culvert, gutter and drainage to pits during raining season, while during the dry season excessive bush burning takes over and lots of countless damage is done to the environment. The worsening ecologic crisis has been repeatedly rated as the most urgent issue and one that is not only threatening to the existence of mankind, but to all forms of life on the planet. The future is becoming ever more complex and it is increasingly difficult to safely navigate through the maze of issues that confront mankind. Humanity faces a future of much more costly energy, potentially catastrophic consequences due to climate change, shortages of potable water, the blowback of effects from the vast array of synthetic chemicals developed over the past half-century, and depleted fisheries, etc. (Omoniyi, 2016).

This is occurring in the face of still rapidly increasing numbers of humans and rising per capital consumption and new technologies. This problem has persisted for a long time. Yet, there is dearth of studies on factors that propel environmental sustainability. But studies on students' attitude are relatively low. And it is a well known fact that children of school age are the core of the future of the society.

So for mankind to proffer solution to this requires sufficient awareness, knowledge, skills, and change in behavioural attitudes in order to incorporate appropriate environmental considerations into daily decisions about consumption, lifestyle, care for the environment, and so on. Having observed all these anomalies, it is of paramount importance to examine students' attitude to environmental sustainability.

### Objectives of the study

This study has only two objectives which are:

- (1) To comparatively assess male and female students' attitude to Environmental Sustainability in Ondo West local government area of Ondo State.
- (2) To ascertain if there is any significant difference between public and private school students' attitude to Environmental Sustainability.

### Hypotheses

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students to Environmental Sustainability in Ondo West local government area of Ondo State.

$H_{02}$ : There is no significant difference between the attitude of public and private school students to Environmental Sustainability.

### Conceptual Review

#### *Concept of Environmental sustainability*

The Whistler 2020 (Canada) Sustainable Community Movement describes sustainability as "... a minimum condition for a flourishing planet in the long term". Inherent in this assertion is the proposed responsibility of contemporary society for the quality of life of today's population plus the preservation of resources, the environment, and other ingredients needed for future populations to also experience a good quality of life. It is an important concept

which has its roots in "crisis of development". The World Conservation Strategy (2011) asserts that 'sustainability' primarily sought to protect essential ecological processes, life-support systems and genetic diversity, as well as the sustainable utilisation of natural resources. Most significantly, the strategy explored the links between economic growth and environmental preservation.

It linked poverty, development, the environment and described the dilemma of people in some developing countries destroying natural resources in order to free themselves from starvation and poverty. Sustainability is commonly accepted framework for guiding a wide variety of choices. It suggests that, in the decision making process, societies that have a good quality of life have an obligation to ensure both future societies and contemporary, less well off societies are also able to achieve a standard of living in which their basic needs are met. Environmental sustainability is the maintenance of natural capital for overall growth and development of mankind and the planet earth. Humanity's inability to fit her activities into environmental pattern is changing planetary systems, and fundamentally challenging it. Many of such changes are accompanied by life-threatening hazards which make human beings vulnerable to disasters and tragedies, now and in the future. This new reality, from which there is no escape, must be recognised and managed.

There are steps to achieving Environmental Sustainability. Sustainability statements typically include the motives for change, the results people hope to achieve and activities planned to reach those goals. A full sustainability programme needs to include actions to prevent threats and impact from arising, actions to protect the environment from threats and damage, and restoration to reverse damage already done. The following are six steps to Environmental sustainability; make the commitment, create a structure for supporting environmental sustainability, support and finance environmental sustainability, set goals and measure, report and evaluate change, celebrate and share success, continue to assess and identify new opportunity (American society for healthcare engineering, 2014).

## Rationale for Developing Ethics of Environmental Sustainability

The 21st century environmental crises are vastly different from any other in human history. A social apathy of the gross consequences of un-sustained economic growth supplemented by a narrow and compartmentalised vision has ultimately brought mankind face to face with a crisis of global magnitude (Bartosh, 2011). Particularly challenging is the development and implementation of technology, the vast majority of which has significant potential negative consequences for the health of both people and planet. Sustainability provides many of the answers to how best to treat new technologies and how to change the basis of decision making such that technological benefits far outweigh the risk, for both the short and long term and for present and future societies.

Brundtland report (1987) states that “. . . meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” The responsibility of contemporary society for the quality of life of today's population plus the preservation of resources, the environment and other ingredients needed for future populations to also experience a good quality of life cannot be overemphasised. This is an enormous and daunting task and requires enormous changes in thinking, policy and basic assumptions about the economy for its full implementation. For the present, it would mean that wealthier, more technologically sophisticated societies would have to contribute materially and through a wide range of assistance programmes to increase the wealth of poorer nations, to aid them in developing the capability to provide the basic needs of their population.

For future generations, ethics of sustainability means ensuring the availability of a wide range of resources: natural, cultural, mineral, educational, food, clean air and water, genetic diversity and numerous others that support a good quality of life. Everyone on the Earth has a right to having their needs for food, shelter and clothing met. Present people have an obligation to future generations to provide them an intact and functioning planet in at least as good

state as they received it. The application of the sustainability framework, therefore, requires a better understanding of the ethical concepts which support it. Through a better understanding of the ethics of sustainability, it becomes clear that environmental sustainability is not only needed, but timely.

### The Need for Environmental Education

Environmental Sustainability issues arise whenever there is risk of difficult or irreversible loss of things or qualities of environment that people value. It remains inherently difficult to implement because of its complexity and due to the enormous shifts in thinking that it proposes. And whenever there are such risks there is a degree of urgency to take action. However, the cornerstone of Environment Education is to identify the individual with the environment, as an inseparable and interdependent part of a single entity (Ogunbiyi and Ajiboye, 2009). For human being to be alive is to be part of the environment and to be separated from it invariably means death. Human beings depend on it always and on all sorts of ways, whether in the short or long term, and as such the changes whether 'positive' or 'negative' affect them and they affect the environment. Mankind being the master and controller of the resources from the environment owes much to the health of the environment in that the healthiness of the environment signals their healthiness, both now and in the longtime to come; while the unhealthiness of the environment negatively affects mankind, now and even beyond (Omoniyi, 2016).

Education is seen as playing a key role in remedying such matters. Sustainable living is relatively new to people in the world and to adopt the new pattern will require a significant change in attitudes and practices of many. According to a famous Chinese proverb, "whatever a society seeks to achieve at all, should be thrown into the school system". Virtually all citizens attend one form of schooling or the other; formal, semi-formal or non-formal. Learning plays an important role in internationalising what is learnt, exhibition of attitude and knowledge acquired. There is need to ensure that

an environmental education programme that reflects the importance of ethic for living sustainably, active learning, critical skills, development, action and orientations from ills of the environment and by extension planet earth.

## Literature Review

### *Students' Attitude and Environmental Sustainability*

Attitude is fundamentally important, widely discussed, frequently measured but poorly understood. It is referred to as a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, events, activities, ideas or just about anything in the environment. It is a way of thinking or behaving about somebody or something. It influences environmental sustainability. Environmental Education programme as a component field of Social studies helps to develop positive attitude toward the environment. Many studies like Oyerinde and Ajitoni (2012); Eilam and Trop (2012); Mrema (2008), Ajitoni (2005); Bartosh (2003), etc. have laid credence to children (students) knowledge of and attitude to environmental issues. Imaobong (2003) believe that people's attitudes towards the environment and the type of concern they develop towards the environment, are associated with the degree to which they view themselves as interconnected with nature.

Mrema (2008) believed that attitude consists of and is influenced by three components, namely the subject (a person with a specific attitude); the object (at which the attitude is directed) and the situation (in which the subject and object interact with one another). A change in any of these components can cause the attitude to change. This evaluative response may be expressed as a cognitive tendency (thoughts and ideas about an attitude object like the environment); as an affective tendency (positive or negative feelings towards or about the environment) or a behavioural tendency (action toward the environment) or a combination of two or all three of these psychological tendencies. Attitude develops after an individual has evaluatively responded to the attitude object and is then expressed or manifested in overt cognitive, affective or behavioural responses.

Hines *et al* (1987) conducted a meta-analysis of the relationships between pro-environmental attitudes and behaviour. They viewed 'intention to act' as a determinant of pro-environmental behaviour. 'Intention to act' itself was described as a composite factor, composed of attitudes among other variables. Bamberg and Moser (n.a) repeated the meta-analysis of Hines *et al* on a larger and more up-to-date sample of studies and reached similar results. Such findings led many researchers to perceive attitude acquisition as a 'step along the way' towards acquisition of environmental behaviour.

Students' role in environmental sustainability, attitude they exhibits, daily practices and educational attainment have been studied within different frameworks. Many of it focuses on parents' education, social status, occupation or home background (like; family income, structure-family size, overcrowding ratio, language, activities of the family, and work methods) (Omoniyi, 2016), while other studies looked at it from the teachers' variables (such as teacher's age, experience, education, gender, etc.), school variables (such as environment, structures, buildings, location, etc.), students' variables (such as attitude, self-concept, self-esteem, study habit, interest, etc.) or parents' support (such as achievement motivation of wards, parental attitudes towards education, the aspiration of parents, etc.).

### **Procedure (Design, Sample, Instrument and Data Analysis)**

A descriptive quantitative research design was used to conduct the study on students' attitude as correlate of environmental sustainability in some selected secondary schools in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State. The target population for this study refers to the total number of both public and private secondary schools in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State. It has a density population of 283,672 people (Male: 139,400 Female; 144,272) with thirteen (13) wards (National Population Commission, 2006). There are thirty two (32) government and private secondary schools, which are sparsely situated within the wards. Therefore, the information used for this research was collected from both the public and private senior secondary schools within

the Local Government Area.

Ten (10) secondary schools, five (5) private and five (5) public were selected through stratified random techniques in the study. This was done through the classification of all the 13 wards into two (2) strata. Five (5) secondary schools each were picked at random, making a total of (10) secondary schools within the local government. In each of the randomly selected schools, respondents were selected through simple random technique. On the whole, one hundred (100) students were selected in each school given a total of one thousand (1,000) students. Data collected through the questionnaire survey were demographic attributes of the students and those pertaining to students' attitude to environmental sustainability scale. All responses were analysed using SPSS 21.0 software for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics (means of frequency table distribution and percentages) were used.

### Testing of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students to Environmental Sustainability in Ondo West local government area of Ondo State.

Table 1: Difference between the attitude of male and female students to Environmental Sustainability

Table 1 shows that there was significant difference between the attitude of male and female students to Environmental Sustainability (Crit-t = 1.96, Cal.t = 2.262, df = 998,  $p < .05$  level of significance). The hypothesis is hereby rejected.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Crit-t	Cal-t.	DF	P
Male	467	11.5653	4.5063	1.96	2.262	998	.024
Female	533	12.1895	12.1895				

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between the attitude of public and private school students to Environmental Sustainability.

Table 2: Difference between the attitude of public and private school students to Environmental Sustainability

School Type	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Crit-t	Cal-t.	DF	P
Private	500	13.3580	3.6271	1.96	11.226	998	.000
Public	500	10.4380	4.5466				

Table 2 above showed that there was no significant differences between the attitude of public and private school students to Environmental Sustainability (Crit-t = 1.96, Cal.t = 11.226, df = 998,  $p < .05$  level of significance). The hypothesis is hereby accepted.

### Summary and Conclusion

Environmental Sustainability is a condition of balance, resilience and interconnectedness that allows human society to satisfy its needs, while neither exceeding the capacity of its supporting ecosystems to continue to regenerate the services necessary to meet those needs nor by actions diminishing biological diversity. The concrete challenges of environmental sustainability are at least, heterogeneous and complex as the diversity of human societies and natural ecosystems around the world. Environmentally sustainable practices should be embedded into the operations of education system which must involve educators, children and families in order to be successful. This should entail the ability to continue a defined environmental behaviour indefinitely. Hence, students' role and staunch attitude in environmental sustainability is sacrosanct now than ever before.

### Recommendations

- (i) Students, parents, religious organisations, government agencies, parastatals and ministries can contribute significantly to achieving long-term environmental sustainability by adopting pro-environmental behaviour patterns. The cognitive, motivational and structural factors that threaten environmental

sustainability should be put into consideration, so that pro-environmental behaviours could be facilitated and emerged worldwide.

- (ii) There must be well-funded Environmental education courses in schools and colleges, to raise overall awareness of the environmental sustainability to the public. Such initiatives will pave way for pupils and students to learn basic natural resources and survival information from early age, to ensure that future generations understand the value and importance of environmental quality and vital ethics necessary for attaining sustainable growth and development. This will make them to exhibit positive attitude to environmental sustainability.
- (iii) The advocacy on awareness should not be left in the hands of the government alone. It is also the responsibilities of Ondo West local government community members to raise the bar of campaign.
- (iv) Stakeholders such as home, religious organisations, non-governmental organisations and mass media should play a vital role in promoting Environmental sustainability. Students also are agents of change, they are to ensure that the environment is preserved.

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