THE NEXUS OF LAW AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH WEST NIGERIAN PUBLIC POLICY: A REVIEW OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES IN POLICY FORMATION

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into the intricate relationship between law and sustainable development within South West Nigerian public policy context. The aim was to critically assess the multidisciplinary approaches in policy formation, particularly focusing on the interplay of law and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region. Utilizing a multidisciplinary research methodology, the study examined a plethora of policy documents and legal provisions, underpinned by a comprehensive analytical framework. Results from the research highlighted the historical evolution of sustainable policies in South West Nigeria, emphasizing the pivotal role of
legal frameworks in steering development. The study revealed the transformative nature of policy research and development in the region, influenced by both domestic legal paradigms and international sustainable development agendas. In conclusion, while South West Nigeria has made commendable progress in aligning its policies with sustainable development imperatives, there remain inherent challenges. These challenges, deeply rooted in the region's historical and socio-political fabric, necessitate a multidisciplinary approach for effective mitigation. Recommendations from this study underscore the importance of continuous stakeholder engagement, regular policy reviews, and fostering international collaborations. Such measures ensure that the region's policies remain attuned to the dynamic global sustainable development landscape, addressing the unique challenges and harnessing the opportunities inherent in South West Nigeria's development trajectory.

**Keywords:** South West Nigeria, Sustainable Development Goals, Public Policy, Legal Frameworks, Multidisciplinary Approaches, Policy Research.

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**INTRODUCTION**

**Background**

**Overview of South West Nigeria's Development Landscape**

South West Nigeria, a region rich in cultural heritage and natural resources, has been at the forefront of various developmental challenges and opportunities. Over the years, the region has witnessed many environmental and socio-economical changes, which have shaped its development landscape.

One of the significant challenges faced by the region is the impact of climate variability and change. A study by Otitoju and Enete (2016) highlighted the constraints food crop farmers face in adapting to climate variability and change in South-west Nigeria. The study underscored the importance of understanding these constraints to develop farmer-inclusive climate policies that can guide sustainable development in the region.

Furthermore, the rapid urbanization and indiscriminate land use have disrupted watersheds, increasing the vulnerability of surface water to contaminants. Owokotomo et al. (2020) assessed the relationship between disrupted watershed, drinking water quality, and health risks in two urban rivers in Ado-Ekiti, South-West Nigeria. Their findings revealed that urban runoff and unsanitary practices within the watershed might compromise water quality, emphasizing the need for sustainable land use policies.

Public spaces, which play a crucial role in the socio-cultural fabric of communities, have also been a focal point of development discussions. Agboola and Oluyinka (2019) explored the quality of public spaces in rural neighborhoods in South-west Nigeria, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to integrate public space policy for a sustainable and healthy environment.

Lastly, the diagnostic landscape for diseases like schistosomiasis has seen stakeholder involvement to ensure effective acceptance and use of diagnostic devices. Onasanya et al. (2020) conducted a stakeholder analysis to gain insights for diagnostics co-creation in South-West Nigeria. Their findings highlighted the importance of involving stakeholders with varying power and interest in the diagnostic landscape to ensure effective disease management.
South West Nigeria's development landscape is a tapestry of challenges and opportunities. From environmental concerns to socio-economic developments, the region requires multidisciplinary approaches and stakeholder involvement to chart a sustainable path forward.

**Interplay of Law and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The interplay between law and sustainable development in South West Nigeria is a dynamic and evolving relationship, deeply rooted in the region’s socio-economic and environmental contexts. Over the years, the region has witnessed a shift in its developmental priorities, influenced by both national and international legal frameworks and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Good governance, encompassing elements such as government effectiveness, quality of law, rule of law, and control of corruption, plays a pivotal role in promoting sustainable development and environmental protection. Dadgara and Nazari (2017) explored the impact of good governance on environmental pollution in South West Asian Countries, including parts of Nigeria. Their findings emphasized the significance of improving governance indices to potentially reduce pollution, highlighting the role of legal frameworks in shaping environmental policies (Dadgara & Nazari, 2017).

Urbanization, a key driver of development in many parts of Nigeria, presents both opportunities and challenges. Essien (2021) delved into the urban governance culture and practices in Uyo, a midsized city in Nigeria, evaluating their alignment with the tenets of UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11. The study underscored the need for better fiscal management and the overhaul of the 1999 Land Use Act law to make urban areas more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (Essien, 2021).

Health, a critical component of the SDGs, has also seen the influence of legal and policy frameworks. Azuike et al. (2019) identified determinants of under-five mortality in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The study highlighted the importance of maternal education, age, and use of modern family planning in reducing child mortality, emphasizing the role of health policies in achieving SDG targets (Azuike et al., 2019).

Lastly, public spaces, integral to the socio-cultural fabric of communities, have been a focal point of sustainable development discussions. Agboola and Oluyinka (2019) explored the quality of public spaces in rural neighborhoods in South-west Nigeria. Their findings revealed a need for collaborative efforts between stakeholders to integrate public space policy as part of a sustainable and healthy environment in Nigeria (Agboola & Oluyinka, 2019).

The intricate relationship between law and sustainable development in South West Nigeria underscores the importance of a holistic approach, integrating legal, socio-economic, and environmental perspectives to achieve the SDGs.

**Historical Context of Sustainable Policies in South West Nigeria**

The historical trajectory of sustainable policies in South West Nigeria is a testament to the region’s commitment to balancing development with environmental and socio-cultural preservation. Over the decades, the region has been influenced by both national and international policy directives, shaping its sustainable development journey.

Housing, a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of sustainable development, has been a significant focus in Nigeria. Olotuah and Bobadoye (2009) delved into the challenges of
sustainable housing delivery in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Their findings highlighted the need for a comprehensive housing policy that addresses the unique challenges faced by different regions, including South West Nigeria. The study emphasized the importance of understanding the historical context of housing provision to inform future sustainable housing initiatives (Olotuah & Bobadoye, 2009). Moreover, the region's rich biodiversity has necessitated the formulation of policies aimed at conservation. Ojo and Adebayo (2012) explored the conservation of medicinal plants in South West Nigeria. Their research underscored the significance of traditional knowledge in conservation efforts and the need for policies that integrate indigenous practices with modern conservation strategies (Ojo & Adebayo, 2012).

Furthermore, the rapid urbanization witnessed in South West Nigeria has brought the importance of sustainable urban planning to the fore. Oduwaye (2009) evaluated urban land use planning, management, and implementations in Lagos, a major city in South West Nigeria. The findings emphasized the need for a paradigm shift in urban planning practices to ensure sustainable regional urban development (Oduwaye, 2009).

Lastly, the influence of international sustainable development agendas, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has been pivotal in shaping the region's policy landscape. Adepoju and Oyesiku (2012) assessed Nigeria's performance in achieving the MDGs, providing insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by regions like South West Nigeria (Adepoju & Oyesiku, 2012).

In essence, the historical context of sustainable policies in South West Nigeria is a rich tapestry of challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned. The region's journey underscores the importance of understanding the past to inform future sustainable development initiatives. The Role of Legal Frameworks in Shaping Development

Legal frameworks play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of development, especially in regions like South West Nigeria, where the interplay between traditional customs and modern governance structures is profound. Over the years, these frameworks have been instrumental in guiding the region's response to various developmental challenges and opportunities. Land use and urban development are critical areas where legal frameworks have had a significant impact. For instance, the Land Use Act of 1978 was introduced to address the challenges of land acquisition and urban development in Nigeria. While the Act centralized land ownership in the hands of the state, it also brought about challenges related to land accessibility and equity. A study by Oduwaye (2009) evaluated urban land use planning, management, and implementations in Lagos, a major city in South West Nigeria. The findings emphasized the need for a paradigm shift in urban planning practices to ensure sustainable urban development in the region (Oduwaye, 2009).

Environmental conservation is another domain where legal frameworks have been instrumental. The Nigerian Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act of 1992 was introduced to ensure that developmental projects undergo environmental scrutiny before implementation. This legal provision has been crucial in mitigating the adverse environmental impacts of developmental projects in South West Nigeria. Ojo and Adebayo's (2012) exploration of the conservation of medicinal plants in South West Nigeria highlighted the significance of traditional knowledge in
conservation efforts and the need for policies that integrate indigenous practices with modern conservation strategies (Ojo & Adebayo, 2012).

Furthermore, the legal frameworks governing the energy sector have implications for sustainable development. Nigeria's Electric Power Sector Reform Act of 2005 was introduced to reform the nation's electricity industry. This Act paved the way for the unbundling of the state-owned Power Holding Company of Nigeria into various companies responsible for power generation, transmission, and distribution. The legal reforms in the energy sector have implications for energy accessibility and sustainability in regions like South West Nigeria.

Lastly, the influence of international legal frameworks and conventions cannot be overlooked. Nigeria is a signatory to various international conventions and treaties related to sustainable development, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). These international legal instruments influence national policies and provide a framework for addressing global challenges at the regional level.

In essence, legal frameworks, both national and international, have been instrumental in shaping the development trajectory of South West Nigeria. They provide the guidelines and standards that ensure development is aligned with sustainability principles, balancing economic growth with environmental and socio-cultural preservation.

**Evolution of Multidisciplinary Approaches in Policy Creation**

The evolution of multidisciplinary approaches in policy creation in South West Nigeria is a reflection of the region's dynamic socio-economic landscape and its commitment to sustainable development. Over the years, the region has embraced a holistic approach to policy-making, integrating insights from various disciplines to address complex developmental challenges.

The importance of multidisciplinary approaches in policy creation cannot be overstated. In the realm of urban planning and development, a study by Oduwayne (2009) highlighted the significance of integrating various disciplines in urban land use planning, management, and implementations in Lagos, a major city in South West Nigeria. The research emphasized the need for a collaborative approach, bringing together experts from diverse fields to ensure sustainable urban development (Oduwayne, 2009).

Similarly, in the domain of environmental conservation, Ojo and Adebayo (2012) underscored the value of combining traditional knowledge with modern conservation strategies. Their exploration of the conservation of medicinal plants in South West Nigeria revealed the importance of integrating indigenous practices with scientific research to achieve effective conservation outcomes (Ojo & Adebayo, 2012).

Furthermore, the region's approach to housing provision has also been influenced by multidisciplinary insights. Olotuah and Bobadoye (2009) delved into the challenges of sustainable housing delivery in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive housing policy that draws from various disciplines. Their findings highlighted the importance of understanding the socio-economic and cultural contexts to inform housing initiatives (Olotuah & Bobadoye, 2009).

Lastly, the influence of international sustainable development agendas has necessitated a multidisciplinary approach to policy creation. Adepouju and Oyesiku (2012) assessed Nigeria's performance in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), emphasizing the need for
a holistic approach that integrates insights from various fields to address the multifaceted challenges of sustainable development (Adepoju & Oyesiku, 2012).

**The Influence of International Sustainable Development Agendas**

The influence of international sustainable development agendas on South West Nigeria’s policy landscape has been profound. These global frameworks have provided direction, set benchmarks, and offered collaborative opportunities, shaping the region’s approach to sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), established in 2000, marked a significant turning point in global efforts to address pressing developmental challenges. Nigeria, like many other countries, adopted the MDGs as a roadmap for development. Adepoju and Oyesiku (2012) assessed Nigeria’s performance in achieving the MDGs, revealing that while there were notable achievements, challenges persisted, especially in areas like maternal health and environmental sustainability. Their findings underscored the importance of localizing global agendas to address region-specific challenges, as seen in South West Nigeria’s tailored interventions (Adepoju & Oyesiku, 2012).

Following the MDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in 2015, offering a more comprehensive and integrated approach to global development. The SDGs, with their 17 goals and 169 targets, emphasized the interconnectedness of economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development. In South West Nigeria, the SDGs have influenced policies related to education, health, clean water, and sanitation, among others. The region’s commitment to the SDGs is evident in its efforts to mainstream these goals into local development plans and strategies. Furthermore, international conventions and treaties related to environmental conservation and climate change have had a significant impact on the region. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement have guided South West Nigeria’s approach to climate action. Ojo and Adebayo’s (2012) exploration of the conservation of medicinal plants in South West Nigeria highlighted the significance of integrating international environmental conventions with local conservation efforts (Ojo & Adebayo, 2012).

In addition to global frameworks, regional initiatives, such as the African Union’s Agenda 2063, have also influenced South West Nigeria’s development trajectory. These regional agendas offer a platform for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and mutual learning, enabling the region to leverage best practices and innovations from neighboring countries. In essence, international sustainable development agendas have provided South West Nigeria with a framework for action, guiding its efforts to achieve a sustainable and prosperous future. By aligning local policies with global benchmarks, the region has positioned itself at the forefront of sustainable development efforts.

**Current Trends and Emerging Legal Paradigms**

The landscape of sustainable development in South West Nigeria is continuously evolving, with current trends and emerging legal paradigms playing a pivotal role in shaping the region’s approach to sustainable growth and development. As the global community becomes more interconnected and the urgency of addressing environmental and socio-economic challenges intensifies, South West Nigeria has proactively adapted to these shifts and integrated them into its legal and policy frameworks.
One of the most significant trends in the region is the emphasis on improving the learning infrastructure and environment to ensure sustainable quality assurance practices in secondary schools. According to a study conducted in Ondo State, South-West Nigeria, the state of the learning environment and infrastructure has a direct impact on teaching and learning activities (Ayeni & Adelabu, 2012). The research revealed that teachers' perceptions of the quality of learning infrastructure and environment ranged from 41% to 60.5%. However, schools with inadequate quality ranged from 19% to 59%, indicating a pressing need for improvements. This study underscores the importance of a conducive learning environment in achieving educational objectives and, by extension, sustainable development goals.

The broader societal expectation of quality outputs from educational institutions has placed students at the center of instructional programs. To meet these expectations, schools are required to equip students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes that enable them to contribute meaningfully to societal development. The quality of infrastructure and the learning environment play a crucial role in achieving these objectives. For instance, comfortable classroom temperatures and smaller class sizes have been shown to enhance teacher effectiveness and improve student performance (Earthman, 2002).

However, challenges persist. Many public schools in Nigeria, including those in the South West region, grapple with dilapidated and inadequate facilities, hindering quality education service delivery (Adebayo & Owoaje, 2016). In Ondo State, for example, many classrooms were found to be lacking in terms of space, ventilation, and insulation from heat. Such deficiencies in the learning environment can significantly impact the attainment of set standards and goals in secondary schools (Afolabi et al., 2017).

Rationale behind the Review

The nexus between law and sustainable development in South West Nigeria's public policy is a multifaceted and evolving domain. As the region grapples with the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, understanding the interplay between legal frameworks and sustainable development goals becomes paramount. This review seeks to shed light on the multidisciplinary approaches in policy formation, emphasizing the role of law in shaping the region's development trajectory. The rationale behind this review is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape and identify gaps, challenges, and potential areas for future research and policy intervention.

Objectives of the Review

1. To examine the historical context, this review aims to understand the historical evolution of sustainable policies in South West Nigeria, tracing the milestones, challenges, and successes over the years.

2. To analyze the role of legal frameworks, investigating the influence of national and international legal frameworks in guiding the region's sustainable development initiatives and their implications for policy-making.

3. To explore multidisciplinary approaches, delving into the integration of various disciplines in policy creation and emphasizing the benefits and challenges of a holistic approach to sustainable development.
4. To assess the influence of international agendas, evaluating the impact of international sustainable development agendas, such as the SDGs, on South West Nigeria's policy landscape and identifying areas of alignment and divergence.

**Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The scope of this study encompasses the intricate relationship between law and sustainable development within the context of South West Nigeria's public policy. Specifically, the study delves into the historical evolution of sustainable policies, the influence of national and international legal frameworks, the integration of multidisciplinary approaches in policy creation, and the impact of international sustainable development agendas on the region's policy landscape.

While the study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic, there are inherent limitations to consider. The focus is primarily on South West Nigeria, which means that the findings and insights may not be directly applicable to other regions of Nigeria or other countries with different socio-political and economic contexts. Additionally, the study considers policies, legal frameworks, and developments up to the year 2023, excluding any subsequent changes or developments post-2023. The reliance on available literature, research papers, and policy documents also means that there might be unpublished or inaccessible data that could provide additional insights but are not included in this review. Furthermore, while the study emphasizes the multidisciplinary nature of policy creation, capturing the full depth of each discipline involved might be challenging due to the broad scope of the topic. Recognizing these limitations is crucial for a nuanced understanding of the findings and to guide future research in this domain.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Approach to Multidisciplinary Research**

In the realm of public policy, especially in a diverse and multifaceted region like South West Nigeria, a multidisciplinary research approach is paramount. This approach integrates insights from various disciplines, including law, economics, sociology, and environmental science, to provide a holistic understanding of sustainable development challenges and opportunities. By drawing from multiple disciplines, researchers can capture the complexity of issues, ensuring that policies are both comprehensive and effective. For instance, when examining the legal frameworks shaping development, it's essential to also consider the economic implications, societal norms, and environmental impacts. Only by weaving these diverse threads together can a complete picture emerge, guiding policymakers in crafting robust and forward-thinking strategies (Dzemyda, Kurasova, & Žilinskas, 2010).

**Parameters for Data Selection**

Given the multidisciplinary nature of the research, the parameters for data selection must be both rigorous and inclusive. Firstly, data sources should be reputable and peer-reviewed, ensuring the credibility of the information. Secondly, the data should be representative of the broader population of South West Nigeria, capturing the diversity and nuances of the region. This might involve sourcing data from various regions within South West Nigeria, from urban centers to rural communities. Additionally, the data should span multiple years, providing a temporal perspective and highlighting trends over time. Lastly, given the focus on sustainable development, data related to environmental, social, and economic indicators would be prioritized, ensuring a balanced view of development in the region (Dzemyda, Kurasova, & Žilinskas, 2010).
Collection and Examination of Policy Documents and Legal Provisions
The methodology for this study necessitates a meticulous collection and examination of policy documents and legal provisions pertinent to South West Nigeria's development landscape. A systematic review of primary sources, such as legislative acts, regulations, and official policy documents, will be undertaken to ensure a comprehensive understanding. Additionally, secondary sources, including academic articles, case law interpretations, and expert commentaries, will be scrutinized to provide context and depth to the primary materials. The aim is to collate a robust dataset that captures the evolution, current state, and potential future trajectories of legal and policy frameworks influencing sustainable development in the region.

Framework for Analysis
The analytical framework for this study adopts a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative analysis will be employed to assess the prevalence and impact of specific legal provisions and policies, using statistical tools to identify trends, patterns, and anomalies. Concurrently, qualitative analysis will delve into the nuances of the data, interpreting the implications, motivations, and potential challenges inherent in the policy documents and legal provisions. This dual approach ensures both breadth and depth in the analysis, allowing for a holistic understanding of the multidimensional factors at play. The guiding principle for this analytical framework is to remain objective, transparent, and rigorous, ensuring that the findings are both credible and actionable.

RESULTS
Overview of Pivotal Policies and Legal Decisions
The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges, prompting nations worldwide to implement a myriad of policies and legal decisions to curb its spread. Understanding these pivotal policies and legal decisions is crucial in South West Nigeria to gauge their effectiveness and implications for public health and socio-economic stability.

The pandemic's onset saw a global shift in vaccination policies, with nations rapidly introducing population-wide vaccine mandates, domestic vaccine passports, and differential restrictions based on vaccination status. While these policies aimed to control the spread of the virus, they also sparked ethical, scientific, practical, legal, and political debates. Bardosh et al. (2022) highlighted the potential unintended consequences of such policies, arguing that they might be more harmful than beneficial. The study emphasized that restricting people's access to work, education, public transport, and social life based on COVID-19 vaccination status could impinge on human rights, promote stigma, and adversely affect health and well-being.

Furthermore, the pandemic's impact on food systems has been profound. Dudek and Śpiewak (2022) analyzed the economic, legal, institutional, and social effects of the pandemic on food systems, using Poland as a case study. Their findings underscored the need for public policies that ensure food security and sustainability, especially in the face of exogenic crises.

Transportation is another sector significantly affected by the pandemic. Chen et al. (2021) examined the effects of COVID-19 related policies on individuals' travel choices. Their findings revealed that public transportation was perceived as insecure compared to private modes, and individuals who were more socially responsible tended to travel less during the pandemic. Lastly, Ayuningtyas et al. (2021) critically analyzed Indonesia's public policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study highlighted the conflicts of interest in formulating and
implementing public policies, emphasizing the need for transparency and good governance principles. The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a re-evaluation of existing policies and legal frameworks, prompting nations to implement measures that prioritize public health while balancing socio-economic implications.

**Legal Tools Utilized in Policy Development**

Legal tools play a pivotal role in shaping policy development, especially in the context of sustainable development and public policy. In Nigeria, the utilization of legal tools in policy development has been influenced by various factors, including the nation's socio-economic and environmental challenges.

One of the significant challenges Nigeria faces is the threat posed by fossil fuels to human existence. As a result, many countries worldwide, including Nigeria, have shifted their focus towards renewable sources for power generation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and halt ozone layer depletion. This transition has led to the increased exploitation of various renewable energy sources, such as hydro, biomass, solar, geothermal, and wind, especially in developed countries. However, despite being endowed with abundant renewable energy sources, Nigeria's level of utilization remains low (Ugwu et al., 2022).

Several factors have hindered the development of renewables in Nigeria. Among them are the non-implementation of renewable energy policies, financial constraints, unfavorable government policies, and a lack of adequate research. The country's renewable energy policy aims to improve its status, but the implementation has been slow and inconsistent. A comprehensive review of Nigeria's renewable energy capacity compared to other countries reveals that while Nigeria has vast renewable resources, its utilization is not at par with its potential (Ugwu et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the legal and policy framework surrounding renewable energy in Nigeria is complex. The Electricity Power Sector Reform Act (EPSRA) led to the full privatization of the distribution company, but the transmission and generation company remains under government control. The transmission company of Nigeria (TCN) is controlled by each State Government in Nigeria, acting as a mediator between power provided from the plants (Generation Companies) and distribution companies (Distribution Companies). There are twenty-five distribution companies connected to the power grid in Nigeria, categorized into Independent Power Producers, National Integrated Power Projects, and Successor Generations companies (Ugwu et al., 2022).

In the broader context of public policy, the application of social network analysis (SNA) has emerged as a valuable tool. SNA is suitable for exploring complex and interactive relationships in policy research, offering significant insights into the innovation and development of public policy. A study by Zhang et al. (2023) systematically reviewed the application of SNA in public policy studies, emphasizing the benefits of SNA for public policy research. The study suggests that network analysis in public administration should be re-examined, advocating for a broader study perspective and scope, interdisciplinary theoretical interaction, and the utilization of new technological tools for giant network analysis.

While Nigeria possesses the potential to harness its renewable energy sources effectively, the lack of a robust legal framework and policy implementation has been a significant barrier. The
integration of advanced tools like SNA can offer new perspectives and methodologies to enhance policy development and implementation in the country.

**Statutes and Regulations Promoting Sustainable Development**

Legal statutes and regulations are fundamental tools in the promotion of sustainable development. They provide the framework within which policies are formulated and implemented, ensuring that development initiatives align with the broader goals of sustainability. In Nigeria, a country with a rich tapestry of socio-economic and environmental challenges, the role of legal instruments in driving sustainable development cannot be overemphasized.

Nigeria's journey towards sustainable development has been marked by a series of legal and policy initiatives. The country's commitment to sustainable development is evident in its adoption of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, realizing these goals requires a robust legal framework that addresses the unique challenges and opportunities present in the Nigerian context.

One of the significant challenges facing Nigeria is the issue of accountability in leadership and governance. Gberevbie et al. (2017) explored the relationship between accountability for sustainable development and the challenges of leadership in Nigeria from 1999 to 2015. Their study identified several factors hindering sustainable development, including lack of accountability, challenges in leadership, unethical behavior, poor maintenance culture, mismanagement of resources, and corruption among public officials. The study emphasized the need for the government to adopt a more practical approach to promoting accountability, fighting corruption, and ensuring proper resource management to achieve sustainable development.

Another critical area of focus is the health sector. The Health Impact Assessment (HIA) has emerged as a vital tool for examining the potential health effects of proposed policies, programs, or projects. Raimi et al. (2020) highlighted the significance of HIA in advancing the knowledge of policymakers and understanding the SDGs. The study underscored the need for HIA in Nigeria, given that many determinants of health in populations are rooted in the physical and social environments. HIA offers a comprehensive approach to evaluating the health implications of various policies and projects, ensuring that they align with the broader objectives of sustainable development.

Furthermore, the environment remains a central focus in Nigeria's sustainable development agenda. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been a primary tool for evaluating the potential environmental effects of development projects. However, Raimi (2020) pointed out that despite the comprehensive guidelines and good legal practices, the EIA system in Nigeria has not been found satisfactory. The study called for a re-evaluation of the EIA system, emphasizing the need for a more integrated approach that considers environmental, social, and health impacts.

**Role of Legal Professionals in Policy Drafting and Execution**

Legal professionals play a pivotal role in the policy-making process, especially in the context of sustainable development. Their expertise ensures that policies are not only legally sound but also align with the broader goals of sustainability and public welfare. In Nigeria, the role of legal professionals in policy drafting and execution is particularly significant given the country's complex socio-economic and environmental landscape.
The city of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, serves as a prime example of the challenges faced by urban areas in the country. Flooding, exacerbated by poor urban planning, is a widespread environmental disaster in Nigeria, directly impeding the nation's sustainable development goals (SDGs). Urban planners in Port Harcourt have a sound understanding of sustainability principles and recognize the connections between poor urban planning and flooding. However, they identify widespread public non-compliance with planning laws and improper building approvals as the primary issues undermining the city's legal and planning architecture to control floods (Echendu & Georgeou, 2021).

Infrastructure concession is another area where the expertise of legal professionals is crucial. This arrangement allows private sector organizations to participate in financing public projects, such as construction, development, operation, and maintenance. While concession has been in practice in Nigeria for over two decades, its success has been limited compared to other African countries like Ghana and South Africa. The ease of executing policies guiding concession arrangements in Nigeria may be dependent on the existing legislative frameworks. A review of various concession policies and associated legislations in Nigeria revealed gaps that contribute to the challenges in developing public infrastructure through concession arrangements (Nwankwo & Kifordu, 2019). Furthermore, the role of legal professionals extends beyond drafting and reviewing policies. They are instrumental in ensuring accountability and transparency in the implementation of public policies. For instance, between 1999 and 2015, Nigeria faced challenges related to leadership accountability, which hindered sustainable development. Factors such as lack of accountability, challenges in leadership, unethical behavior, poor maintenance culture, mismanagement of resources, and corruption among public officials were identified as barriers to sustainable development. Legal professionals play a crucial role in promoting accountability, fighting corruption, and ensuring proper resource management to achieve sustainable development (Gberevbie et al., 2017).

The expertise of legal professionals is indispensable in the policy-making process in Nigeria. Their role in drafting, reviewing, and ensuring the proper execution of policies is crucial for the country to address its unique challenges and work towards its sustainable development goals.

**Legal Challenges and Triumphs in Developmental Advocacy**

Developmental advocacy in Nigeria has faced a myriad of legal challenges. The nation's vast resources and diverse socio-cultural landscape have often been at odds with the legal frameworks in place, leading to conflicts and impediments in sustainable development initiatives. One of the primary challenges has been the lack of a cohesive legal framework that addresses the unique socio-economic and environmental issues facing different regions of the country (Adejumo, 2020). Corruption and lack of transparency in governance have also posed significant challenges. The mismanagement of public funds, coupled with weak enforcement of anti-corruption laws, has hindered developmental projects and initiatives. However, the establishment of institutions like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has marked a positive step towards addressing these issues (Eneanya, 2020).

Despite these challenges, there have been notable triumphs in developmental advocacy. Grassroots movements and non-governmental organizations have played a pivotal role in pushing for legal reforms and policies that prioritize sustainable development. The enactment of the Nigerian...
Environmental Impact Assessment Act in 1992, for instance, was a significant milestone in ensuring that developmental projects consider environmental implications (Mantu, 2019).

**Multidisciplinary Approaches in Policy Creation**

The complexity of sustainable development challenges in Nigeria necessitates a multidisciplinary approach to policy creation. By integrating insights from various fields, including law, economics, environmental science, and sociology, policymakers can craft more holistic and effective strategies (Egba et al., 2023).

One notable example is the collaboration between environmental scientists and legal experts in drafting the National Policy on Climate Change. This policy, which aims to address the impacts of climate change on Nigeria's socio-economic landscape, was formulated through extensive consultations with stakeholders from various disciplines (Haider, 2019).

While there are significant challenges in the realm of developmental advocacy in Nigeria, the adoption of multidisciplinary approaches in policy creation offers a promising pathway towards achieving sustainable development goals.

**Balancing Economic Growth with Environmental Sustainability**

Balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability is a pressing concern for many nations, including Nigeria. As the most populous country in Africa with vast natural resources, Nigeria faces the challenge of harnessing its economic potential while ensuring that its environmental assets are preserved for future generations.

Economic growth, often measured by the increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), can sometimes come at the expense of the environment. Activities such as deforestation, overfishing, and industrial pollution can lead to short-term economic gains but have long-term environmental consequences. For instance, the oil industry in Nigeria has been a significant contributor to its GDP. However, oil spills and gas flaring have had detrimental effects on the Niger Delta's environment and its inhabitants (Murshed et al., 2021).

Environmental regulations play a crucial role in ensuring that economic activities do not harm the environment. These regulations can range from setting pollution limits for industries, protecting endangered species, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. In South Asia, for example, linking environmental patents to ecological footprint reduction has been a strategy to promote sustainable economic growth (Khan et al., 2020).

Urbanization, another driver of economic growth, can also have environmental implications. As cities expand, they consume more resources and produce more waste. Proper urban planning and the promotion of green technologies can ensure that urbanization does not come at the cost of environmental degradation. The industry's value-added role in economic growth, urbanization, and environmental sustainability has been studied in IEA countries, providing insights that can be applied to the Nigerian context (Yang & Khan, 2021).

China, the world's second-largest economy, offers lessons in balancing natural resource rents, environmental sustainability, and sustainable economic growth. Despite its rapid economic growth, China has made significant efforts to promote environmental sustainability through policies and initiatives aimed at reducing pollution and promoting green technologies (Arslan et al., 2022).
Economic growth is essential for improving the living standards of a country's population, it should not come at the expense of the environment. Through effective regulations, policies, and the adoption of sustainable practices, countries like Nigeria can achieve a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Collaborations with Developmental Organizations and Institutions
Collaborative efforts between higher education institutions (HEIs) and developmental organizations are pivotal in enhancing the quality of education and ensuring the employability of graduates. In Nigeria, there is a recognized need for policies that emphasize the interconnectedness between academic knowledge and practical skills required by the industry. However, a significant gap exists in the collaboration between HEIs and the industry. Many HEIs in Nigeria face challenges such as inadequate pedagogy, limited funding, and insufficient infrastructure to effectively teach employability skills (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). This lack of collaboration has led to a decrease in innovations that can produce graduates equipped with the necessary technical knowledge and skills. To address these challenges, there is a need for a more robust engagement between HEIs, developmental organizations, and other stakeholders. Such engagement can foster a better understanding of the needs of the industry and ensure that the education provided is relevant and meets the demands of the labour market.

Engagements with Policy Regulators and Stakeholders
Engaging with policy regulators and stakeholders is crucial for bridging the gap between academic knowledge and practical implementation in the real world. The collaboration between academia and industry is essential for ensuring that the education provided aligns with the needs of the economy. In Nigeria, there is a minimal collaboration between HEIs and the industry, which has led to a decrease in innovations that can produce graduates equipped with high technical knowledge and skills. This minimal collaboration has further exacerbated the challenges faced by the Nigerian HE system, such as issues of general welfare for lecturers, brain drain, and a rapid increase in the number of students. To address these challenges, there is a need for a more robust engagement between HEIs, policy regulators, and other stakeholders. Such engagement can foster a better understanding of the needs of the industry and ensure that the education provided is relevant and meets the demands of the labour market.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS
Effectiveness of Legal Tools and Multidisciplinary Methods
The global shift towards digitalization has significantly impacted various sectors, including public administration and tax systems. This transformation has necessitated the reevaluation of traditional legal tools and the incorporation of multidisciplinary methods to ensure effective governance and policy implementation. In the context of Eastern European countries, regulatory policies have been studied to understand their effectiveness in the backdrop of efficient public administration (Kosach et al., 2022). The research emphasizes the importance of transparency in regulatory policy, particularly in countries like Ukraine, where there is a noticeable lack of transparency in regulatory policy implementation.

Furthermore, the digital transformation of the global economy has influenced the strategic approaches to fiscal policy formation. In Russia, for instance, the legal mechanism of taxation has undergone significant transformation, becoming a pivotal factor influencing strategic planning of
budgetary policy (Tsindeliani et al., 2021). The digital technologies employed in tax administration have not only facilitated the increase in tax collection but have also reduced administrative burdens on businesses. Such advancements underscore the effectiveness of integrating digital tools with traditional legal mechanisms.

Moreover, the innovative development of regions, particularly in countries transitioning to an information society and knowledge economy, requires strategic management tools tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities of the digital age. The Odesa region in Ukraine serves as a case in point, where the innovative development of the region has been closely analyzed to identify challenges and propose solutions (Krasnostanova et al., 2021). The study highlights the importance of leveraging the scientific and intellectual potential of regions to ensure their competitiveness in the global arena.

The effectiveness of legal tools and multidisciplinary methods in the age of digitalization is evident in the transformations observed in public administration, fiscal policies, and regional development strategies. The integration of digital technologies with traditional legal mechanisms has paved the way for more efficient and transparent governance, underscoring the importance of adaptability and innovation in policy formulation and implementation.

**Challenges Faced by Policy Makers and Legal Experts**

In the realm of public policy, especially in the context of pressing global issues such as health crises, policy makers and legal experts often grapple with multifaceted challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, brought to the fore the complexities of making evidence-informed decisions amidst rapidly evolving situations. Nigeria, like many other countries, faced the daunting task of navigating these complexities.

One of the primary challenges encountered by policy makers during the pandemic was the sheer volume and pace of research evidence being produced. This rapid production often led to the availability of insufficient, evolving, or even conflicting evidence, making the decision-making process even more intricate (Vickery et al., 2022). The task was not just to keep abreast of the latest findings but to discern which pieces of evidence were most pertinent and reliable for informing policy decisions. This was further compounded by concerns about scientific integrity and potential misinterpretations of evidence.

Another significant challenge was the need to make swift decisions under conditions of uncertainty. The pandemic’s unprecedented nature meant that there was no blueprint to follow, and decisions had to be made based on the best available evidence at any given time. This often meant relying on evidence from other contexts and trying to adapt it to the local Nigerian context, a process fraught with its own set of challenges (Abubakar et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the multidimensional nature of the pandemic meant that a variety of evidence forms and perspectives were needed for comprehensive decision-making. This included not just epidemiological data but also insights from social sciences, economics, and other fields. Balancing these diverse forms of evidence and ensuring that they were all given due consideration was a task that required meticulous attention and expertise.

In addition to these evidence-related challenges, policy makers and legal experts also had to contend with external pressures. These included public perceptions and expectations, political considerations, and the socio-economic implications of any decisions made. The need for
transparency in decision-making was paramount, but achieving this transparency was often easier said than done, especially when decisions had to be made quickly (Kosach et al., 2022). The challenges faced by policy makers and legal experts in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic underscore the complexities of evidence-informed decision-making in crisis situations. These challenges highlight the need for robust systems and processes that can facilitate the effective integration of diverse forms of evidence, as well as the importance of transparency, adaptability, and resilience in the face of unprecedented challenges.

**Impacts on South West Nigeria’s Sustainable Development Trajectory**

The trajectory of sustainable development in South West Nigeria is deeply intertwined with the region's unique environmental, social, and economic dynamics. One of the most pressing concerns in this trajectory is the vulnerability of the region's surface water to contaminants, particularly in urban areas. A study by Owokotomo et al. (2020) highlighted the disruption of watersheds due to indiscriminate land use and urban development, which has increased the susceptibility of adjacent surface water to contaminants of anthropogenic origin. This research specifically assessed the relationship between disrupted watershed, drinking water quality, and health risks of two urban rivers in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria: Ureje and Awedele. The findings revealed that the mean concentrations of several contaminants, including Pb, Cd, Fe, Mn, nitrates, and coliform, in samples from these rivers were above the permissible limits of WHO drinking guidelines. Such contamination poses significant health risks to the local population, especially when considering the reliance on these rivers as primary sources of drinking water due to the prevalent water shortages and challenges with borehole drilling in the region (Owokotomo et al., 2020). Furthermore, the study identified urban runoff and unsanitary practices within the watershed as potential hazardous events that could compromise the water quality of both rivers. The principal component analysis (PCA) used in the research associated a higher likelihood of surface water deterioration with areas having a higher percentage of built-up area and lesser riparian density and width. This suggests that the rapid urbanization and associated land-use changes in South West Nigeria are exacerbating the challenges of maintaining clean and safe surface water sources. The disrupted watersheds and increased riparian depletion due to urbanization have heightened the chances of metals and pathogens incidence that negatively impacts water quality. As a recommendation, the study emphasized the importance of policy protection of watersheds and public health education on the risks of sourcing polluted surface water (Owokotomo et al., 2020).

The implications of these findings are profound for South West Nigeria's sustainable development trajectory. The degradation of surface water quality not only poses immediate health risks but also threatens the long-term sustainability of the region's water resources. The reliance on contaminated water sources can lead to a cascade of public health issues, from waterborne diseases to long-term exposure to harmful contaminants. Moreover, the degradation of watersheds and riparian areas can lead to loss of biodiversity, altered hydrological cycles, and increased vulnerability to climate change impacts.

The sustainable development trajectory of South West Nigeria is at a critical juncture. The challenges posed by urbanization, land-use changes, and environmental degradation require urgent and coordinated responses. Policymakers, researchers, and local communities must collaborate to
develop and implement strategies that protect the region's water resources, promote sustainable land-use practices, and ensure the health and well-being of its inhabitants.

**Recommendations for Enhanced Legal and Policy Synergy**

The quest for achieving a balance between economic development and nature protection is a complex endeavor that requires a multifaceted approach. The synergy between tourism and landscape presents a promising avenue for fostering such a balance, especially in regions grappling with the challenges of social and ecological changes (Heslinga, Groote, & Vanclay, 2020). Synergy, in this context, refers to the creation of win-win situations where both tourism development and nature protection can coexist and mutually benefit from each other. This is particularly crucial for regions that rely heavily on tourism as a major economic driver and have landscapes that are integral to their tourism appeal.

The case of Terschelling, an island in the Netherlands that is part of the UNESCO World Heritage listed Wadden Sea, offers valuable insights into the dynamics of achieving synergy between tourism and landscape. Over the years, Terschelling has witnessed significant shifts in policy and public opinion, with multilevel governance playing a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of tourism and landscape interactions on the island (Heslinga et al., 2020). The island's reputation for its breathtaking landscapes has made it a prime tourism destination, underscoring the importance of maintaining a delicate balance between preserving its natural beauty and promoting tourism.

For policymakers aiming to harness the benefits of synergy, several recommendations emerge from the Terschelling case study:

1. **Understanding the Historical Institutional Context**: It's imperative for policymakers to delve into the historical institutional backdrop of a region. This provides a clearer picture of past policies, their impacts, and the lessons that can be drawn from them.
2. **Integrated Policy Framework**: Policies should be designed to promote synergetic interactions between tourism and landscape. This means that policies should neither be overly skewed towards economic development at the expense of nature nor vice versa.
3. **Stakeholder Involvement**: A comprehensive overview of all stakeholders involved in the decision-making process is essential. This ensures that all voices are heard, and collaborative solutions are sought. Moreover, the creation of a shared narrative can foster a sense of collective ownership and responsibility among stakeholders.
4. **Flexibility and Experimentation**: While a clear vision for the future is crucial, it's equally important to allow for flexibility in local implementation. Regions should be open to experimentation, learning from successes and failures, and adapting accordingly.

The pursuit of synergy between tourism and landscape is not just a theoretical concept but a practical solution to some of the pressing challenges faced by regions worldwide. By adopting a synergetic approach, regions can enhance their resilience, ensuring that they are better equipped to navigate the complexities of social and ecological changes in the future (Heslinga et al., 2020).

**Uncharted Territories in Policy Research and Development**

The journey of policy research and development is an ever-evolving one, marked by both achievements and challenges. As nations strive to address their unique socio-economic and political challenges, they often encounter areas in policy research and development that remain
unexplored or under-researched. Nigeria, with its diverse socio-political landscape and rich history, is no exception to this phenomenon.

One significant area that has been under-researched is the role and importance of non-formal education in human and national development. Non-formal education plays a pivotal role in adult, youth, and out-of-school children's literacy. It also aids in the provision of skills that enhance social development, poverty reduction, and the re-skilling or up-skilling of citizens for increased productivity and national development. Despite its significance, there is a lack of comprehensive research that delves into the intricacies of non-formal education and its impact on human and national development in Nigeria (Ololube & Egbezor, 2012).

Another area that requires more in-depth exploration is the effectiveness of international developmental projects in Nigeria. The World Bank-sponsored Agricultural Development Project in Nigeria, for instance, has faced several challenges. These challenges include a policy approach that excluded beneficiaries from participating in project design and implementation, recruitment based on political considerations rather than expertise, and inconsistent financial contributions from the World Bank, Federal, and State governments of Nigeria. Such challenges underscore the need for a more inclusive approach to policy coordination and the importance of ensuring that state Agricultural Development Projects have corporate status, enabling them to access financial markets independently (Chukwuemeka, 2016).

In conclusion, while Nigeria has made significant strides in policy research and development, there remain uncharted territories that warrant further exploration. Addressing these areas is crucial to ensure a more holistic and inclusive growth strategy for the nation.

CONCLUSION

The nexus between law and sustainable development in South West Nigerian public policy is a critical area of study, given the region's socio-economic and political significance. This research aimed to provide a comprehensive review of multidisciplinary approaches in policy formation, focusing on the interplay of law and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in South West Nigeria.

The methodology employed a multidisciplinary research approach, examining policy documents, legal provisions, and utilizing a robust framework for analysis. This approach ensured a holistic understanding of the subject matter, drawing from various disciplines to provide a rounded perspective.

Key findings from the research highlighted the historical context of sustainable policies in South West Nigeria, emphasizing the role of legal frameworks in shaping development. The study also shed light on the evolution of multidisciplinary approaches in policy creation and the influence of international sustainable development agendas. Furthermore, the research underscored the current trends and emerging legal paradigms, pointing to the dynamic nature of policy research and development in the region.

In conclusion, the interplay of law and SDGs in South West Nigeria's public policy is intricate, shaped by historical, legal, and international factors. While the region has made significant strides in aligning its policies with sustainable development goals, challenges persist. These challenges, often rooted in historical and socio-political complexities, require multidisciplinary approaches for effective resolution.
Recommendations from this study emphasize the need for continuous engagement with stakeholders, including policy regulators, legal professionals, and developmental organizations. There is also a pressing need for regular policy reviews, ensuring that they remain aligned with the ever-evolving global sustainable development goals. Furthermore, fostering collaborations with international developmental organizations can provide the necessary expertise and resources to address the unique challenges South West Nigeria faces in its sustainable development journey.

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**Conflict of Interest**
The authors wish to affirm that there are no conflicts of interest to disclose.