

## THE NIGERIAN ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined environment and social change in Nigeria. Two research questions and two specific objectives were used to guide the study. The study adopted conflict perspective social change as the theoretical framework. The study adopted desk research methodology with a population of 223,804,632 which is 2024 projected population of Nigeria. Data were collected from secondary sources and analysed with content analysis. From secondary data analysed, the study found out that the causes of social change in Nigeria are environmental factors, political factors, etc. Also, it was discovered that the effects of social change in Nigeria in relation to the environment are cultural shifts, political reforms amongst others. The study therefore, recommends that, there should education and awareness on the effects of social change. This can be done by promoting critical thinking, civic engagement, and social responsibility through inclusive education and public awareness campaigns.*

**Keywords:** Nigerian Environment, Social Change.

## **I. Introduction**

### **Background to the Study**

Nigeria is an indivisible entity that was created as a consequence of Lord Lugard's political choice to combine the protectorates in the north and south. There are-250 different ethnic communities in Nigeria. It describes the nation's distinctive cultural diversity. The Yoruba and Igbo populations settled in the south of the nation, while the Hausa populace lives in the northern region. Other minorities are dispersed across the entire nation, in addition to the major tribes and languages listed above. Before the discovery of crude oil in the 1970s, the primary economic activity of the population was agriculture, which produced food and cash crops as well as foreign currency. The great nation of Nigeria, which is also the most populous in the West African region, has experienced a significant change. (Tijani and Edinyang, 2011).

Social change is the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behaviour, social organizations, or value stems. Throughout the historical development of their discipline, sociologists have borrowed models of social change from other academic fields (Turner 2001). In the late 19th century when evolution became the predominant model for understanding biological change, ideas of social change took on an evolutionary cast, and, though other models have refined modern notions of social change, evolution persists as an underlying principle. Other sociological models created analogies between social change and the West's technological progress. In the mid-20th century, anthropologists borrowed from the linguistic theory of structuralism to elaborate an approach to social change called structural functionalism (Turner 2001). This theory postulated the existence of certain basic institutions (including kinship relations and division of labour) that determine social behaviour. Because of their interrelated nature, a change in one institution will affect other institutions.

Social change is a challenge for social scientists. It is a ubiquitous feature of social reality that widely described and explained the evolution of human societies as well as the transformation in the basic components of human society right from the traditional to modern-day societies (Olagbeju 2015). As a matter of fact, human societies have experienced constant alterations in social values, norms, institutions, relationships and stratification as a

result of internal and external forces of social change.

Societal scientists struggle to understand societal change. It is a pervasive aspect of social reality that has been used to characterize and explain the development of human societies as well as the changes in the fundamental elements of human society from traditional to modern societies. (Olagbeju 2015). In actuality, internal and external forces of social change have caused continuous changes in social values, norms, institutions, relationships, and stratification in human societies. The external forces are large-scale occurrences that affected an entire country or a group of nations, such as climate change. Internal factors, on the other hand, are small-scale occurrences that resulted in structural changes within the society that had a significant impact on the social fabric of the community, such as demographic change. Sociologists and social-scientific thinkers will always be interested in social change because of the persistence of internal and external forces, regardless of its conceptual starting point to address it. This is undeniable even in the current era of hyper-differentiation of theories, in which numerous theories are vying for attention and space not so much through direct conflict as through coexistence because the intellectual community can only handle, at best, a small number of the numerous theoretical approaches (Olagbeju 2015). This study examines how social change has shaped the environment in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

If society is to advance its socioeconomic, political, cultural, and technical knowledge, changes are unavoidable. Thus, this explains the degree of social development in Nigeria since its independence in 1960. The future of experience (both pleasant and unpleasant things or events) which awaken his intellectual development either sustain the environment or improve on it. The era of Stone Age is a point of reference). This therefore implies that environment is the major force behind change. In line with this opinion, (Tijani and Edinyang, 2011) believed that the everblowing wind of change that established the existing structural practice and belief systems Man must pursue suitable means of adjustment in order to improve his level of survival and the continuation of his life.

Change is the only constant in life, and it permeates every culture, but it is especially prevalent in those that have a strong desire to meet basic human needs. A sincere, patriotic, and committed leadership produces social transformation. According to (Tijani and Edinyang, 2011), Nigeria has experienced a series of societal changes that have affected the country's various socioeconomic strata. From regions to states, from farms to cities, from agriculture to petrochemicals, and now from the north to the south, there has been a shift in governmental power. The irony is that these developments have not benefited the average person. Since the country's independence, changes have been observed in all facets of Nigerian culture, including politics, the economy, education, and others. Language variations result from social changes. Language incorporates culture and social values, so any shift in the society will have a significant impact on how people live their lives. According to (Olagbeju 2015), social change is any alteration in social relations that affects a society's social framework. On this premise, this study examines the environment and social change in Nigeria. Therefore, the following research questions are formulated to guide the study.

*What factors are responsible for social change in relation to the environment in Nigeria?*

*How does social change affect the environment in Nigeria?*

*What are the possible solutions to avert further effects of social change which could consequently safeguard the environment in Nigeria?*

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to examine how social change has affected the environment and its inhabitants in Nigeria. Thus, the following specific objectives are put forth to guide this study.

*To examine factors responsible for social change in Nigeria.*

*To investigate how social change affects the environment in Nigeria.*

*To examine the possible solutions to avert further effects of social change which could consequently safeguard the environment in Nigeria.*

### **Significance of the Study**

The importance of understanding social change in Nigeria stems largely from the fact that there are unresolved social problems in Nigeria which are occasioned by constant changes in social structure, social relationships and social institutions.

In addition, this study would assist in improving the understanding of the dynamic nature of social change, its driving forces and inevitability in the current global integration of sociocultural, economic and political conditions. The study will help social scientists, academicians, politicians and professional development planners to design better policy interventions and socio-political reforms.

It would also help the Nigerian government, at all levels, to formulate policies that would enhance the efficacy of managing the internal and external forces of change in order to bring about desirable socio- economic development for the populace in the contemporary world. This study will be significance to environmental policy-makers on the importance of taking necessary steps on social change and environmental sustainability. Again, the study will be of great importance to researchers who may be interested in conducting similar study studies.

### **Scope of the Study**

The geographical scope is Nigeria. The content scope of the study is to examine how social change has affected the environment and its inhabitants in Nigeria. The unit scope involves stakeholders, government functionaries, and the citizenry of Nigeria.

### **Operationalization of Concepts**

All concepts used in this study are known English words; thus, there is no need for operationalizing these known concepts.

## **II. Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Framework**

This chapter is focused on the review of related literature with emphasis on conceptual review, theoretical framework, empirical review and an appraisal of review of related literature.

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **The Environment**

Environment is everything that is around us. It can be living or non-living things. It includes physical, chemical and other natural forces. Living things live in their environment. They constantly interact with it and adapt themselves to the conditions in their environment (Johnson, 1997). The natural environment or natural world encompasses all living and non-living things occurring naturally, meaning in this case not artificial. The term is most often applied to Earth or some parts of Earth. This environment encompasses the interaction of all living species, climate, weather and natural resources that affect human survival and economic activity.

#### **Social Change**

It's very difficult to define the word "social change," especially among sociologists. This is due to the fact that the object is a social phenomenon, a social process that frequently has a variety of dimensions and facets and develops at various degrees of generality. Social change is still understood to be an alteration in social structure that is marked by shifts in cultural norms, behavioral codes, social structures, or value systems. To put it another way, social change occurs when there is a profound shift in the social and cultural components that make up a lasting web of connections, reorganizing the way that people interact with one another, with organizations, with communities, and with countries (Tijani and Edinyang, 2011).

Social transformation can be for the better or worse, in fact. Positive social change

denotes desired growth and improvement in all or some societal institutions, including those related to culture, the economy, education, family, international affairs, law, population, politics, and religion, which inevitably improves conditions for both individuals and society (Tijani and Edinyang, 2011).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study utilized conflict theory of Karl Marx in relation to social change. Nowhere is the conflict perspective more clearly explained than in Karl Marx's exposition, especially as it is expressed in his concept of the dialectic. The dialectic presents a moving picture of the world as one that is becoming rather than existing. Marxian dialectical materialism holds that every economic system develops to its highest possible level of effectiveness while also exhibiting internal inconsistencies or flaws that hasten its demise. Marx saw class conflict as the key to comprehending the course of human history because it is an especially potent source of change.

In relating this theory to the present study, according to Marx, all change results from an ongoing struggle between extremes. All progress, whether social, economic, or human, involves resolving existing contradictions and eventually bringing about new ones. The result of the battle between opposing forces is not a compromise (an averaging out of their differences), but rather a completely new creation. Both people and societies change in this way.

### **Review of Related Empirical Literature**

Azorundu et al. (2023) examines the impact of social change on Nigeria's cultural and medical practices. The Nigeria culture is very traditional at its core, and we intend to explore how this traditional culture has had to adapt and make peace with the social changes currently pervading many societies within it, particularly in areas such as medical care where there has been a seismic shift from traditional medical practices to the more Western forms. More specifically, social changes within the Nigeria culture that were considered in this chapter include family life, women health, child care, care for the elderly, and other general cultural and indigenous medical practices. Industrialization, modernization, and urbanization are the social changes that have permeated family and other social structures. The nuclear family arises from the small space and work pressure in the urban areas, and these do not allow individuals to cater well for the babies and the aged and allow for nuclear family arrangement. Also, the influx of the Christianity and Islam has impacted our belief system and even our medical practices.

Ago, (2020) examines social change in Nigeria between 1960 and 2015 using the theoretical stance of some classical and contemporary theories of change. The paper focuses on the interpretation of the process of social change in terms of what makes change happen, the characteristics of change and managing change in a given society. The explanatory research design was employed in explaining the socio-cultural, political and economic dimensions of change in Nigeria. The paper concludes that the dynamics and realities of social change in Nigeria could best be explained and understood through a triangulation of change theories with strong empirical roots in sociology.

Patricia (2019) evaluated the effects of social change and religious conflicts; and the impacts on Nigeria's civil democracy and national integration. The result of spearman rho correlation that the impacts of the effect of religious conflicts at ( $p > 0.01$ ) including: destruction of lives and properties, drain of the economy, drain in manpower development," breach in political processes; emergence of widows and fatherless children, and insecurity of lives and properties on civil democracy and national integration did not differ significantly among religious affiliations, which depicts that both religious affiliations (Christians and Muslims) agree that the effects of religious conflicts have impacts on civil democracy and national integration. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted. The paper recommends that adoption of authentic federalism is inevitable for sustainable democracy and national integration.

### **Appraisal of Review of Related Literature**

The chapter has reviewed related literature such as the concept of environment, social change and also the conflict perspective of social change. Again, the chapter reviewed related empirical literature of Azorundu et al. (2023) amongst others.

### **III. Methodology**

This chapter deals with the method used in carrying out this study.

#### **Research Design**

This study adopted desk research methodology. This is a type of research that is based on the material published in reports and similar documents that are available in public libraries, websites, data obtained from surveys already carried out, etc. The adopted this method because it best fits the phenomena under study.

#### **Area of the Study**

Nigeria, officially the Federal Republic of Nigeria, is a country in West Africa. It is situated between the Sahel to the north and the Gulf of Guinea to the south in the Atlantic Ocean. It covers an area of 923,769 square kilometres (356,669 sq mi), and with a population of over 230 million, it is the most populous country in Africa, and the world's sixth-most populous country. Nigeria borders Niger in the north, Chad in the northeast, Cameroon in the east, and Benin in the west. Nigeria is a federal republic comprising 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, where the capital, Abuja, is located.

The modern state originated with British colonialization in the 19th century, taking its present territorial shape with the merging of the Southern Nigeria Protectorate and the Northern Nigeria Protectorate in 1914. The British set up administrative and legal structures while practising indirect rule through traditional chiefdoms. Nigeria became a formally independent federation on 1 October 1960. It experienced a civil war from 1967 to 1970, followed by a succession of military dictatorships and democratically elected civilian governments until achieving a stable government in the 1999. Nigeria is a multinational state inhabited by more than 250 ethnic groups speaking 500 distinct languages, all identifying with a wide variety of cultures. The three largest ethnic groups are the Hausa in the north, Yoruba in the west and Igbo in the east, together constituting over 60% of the total population. The official language is English, chosen to facilitate linguistic unity at the national level.

Nigeria's economy is the second-largest in Africa, the 39th-largest in the world by nominal GDP, and 27th-largest by PPP. Nigeria is often referred to as the Giant of Africa owing to its large population and economy, and is considered to be an emerging market by the World Bank.

Nigeria is a founding member of the African Union and a member of many international organizations, including the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, NAM. The Economic Community of West African States, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and OPEC. It is also a member of the informal MINT group of countries and is one of the Next Eleven economies.

#### **Population for the Study**

The population of this study is 223,804,632 which is 2024 projected population of Nigeria gotten from Nigeria Population (2024) - Worldometer.

#### **Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

The fact this study relied solely on secondary data, no sample size and sampling techniques were adopted for the study.

#### **Method of Data Collection**

The present study utilized secondary data which was sourced from the internet, books, journals etc.

#### **Validity of Instrument for Data Collection**

The fact this study relied solely on secondary data, there was no need for validity of instrument for data collection.

### **Reliability of Instrument for Data Collection**

The fact this study relied solely on secondary data, there was no need for reliability of instrument for data collection.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The secondary data that were utilized for this study was analysed with content analysis.

## **IV. Data Presentation and Analysis**

This chapter deals with presentation and analysis of data.

### **Data Presentation**

Data for study are presented in secondary form as there was no quantitative data that were collected.

### **Data Analysis Factors are responsible for social change in relation to the environment in Nigeria**

Social change in Nigeria, as in any other country, is influenced by various factors. These include:

#### **Political Factors**

Political changes, such as shifts in government policies, leadership, and governance structures, significantly impact social dynamics. For instance, changes in political power can lead to shifts in social norms, values, and institutions.

#### **Environmental Factors**

Environmental challenges play a crucial role in shaping social change. Climate change, deforestation, desertification, and other ecological issues affect livelihoods, agriculture, food security, and public health. For instance, rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns impact crop yields and water availability, affecting communities across Nigeria.

#### **Technological Advancements**

Technological innovations drive social change by altering communication patterns, economic activities, and access to information. The advent of the internet and mobile technology has transformed how Nigerians interact, work, and learn.

#### **Social Movements and Activism**

Grassroots movements, civil society organizations, and advocacy groups contribute to social change by raising awareness, challenging norms, and advocating for reforms. These movements address issues such as gender equality, human rights, and environmental conservation.

#### **Religious and Cultural Shifts**

Nigeria's religious diversity (with Islam, Christianity, and indigenous beliefs) influences social norms, family structures, and community practices. Religious institutions often play a role in shaping attitudes toward social issues.

#### **Globalization**

Nigeria is part of a globalized world, where ideas, technologies, and cultural influences flow across borders. Globalization impacts everything from fashion trends to economic policies, contributing to social change (Thorntwaite, (2018).

### **Effects of Social Change on the Environment in Nigeria**

Social change in Nigeria can have various effects, including:

#### **Cultural Shifts**

Changes in values, beliefs, and customs, potentially leading to cultural revitalization or homogenization.

**Political Reforms**

Changes in political structures, policies, and power dynamics, potentially leading to democratization or authoritarianism.

**Economic Impacts**

Changes in economic systems, policies, and structures, potentially leading to growth, inequality, or instability.

**Social Mobility**

Changes in social status, education, and employment opportunities, potentially leading to increased social mobility or entrenched inequality.

**Demographic Changes**

Changes in population demographics, potentially leading to shifts in age, gender, or ethnic balances.

**Urbanization**

Changes in population distribution, potentially leading to increased urbanization and changed city dynamics.

**Technological Advancements**

Changes in technology adoption and use, potentially leading to improved communication, education, and economic opportunities.

**Environmental Impacts**

Changes in environmental policies and practices, potentially leading to improved sustainability or increased degradation.

**Healthcare Advancements**

Changes in healthcare access, quality, and policies, potentially leading to improved health outcomes or continued disparities.

**Education Reforms**

Changes in education systems, policies, and access, potentially leading to improved learning outcomes or continued inequality (Thorntwaite. (2018).

These effects can be complex, interconnected, and influenced by various factors, including globalization, colonial legacy, and political instability.

**The Possible Solutions to Avert Further Effects of Social Change which could Consequently Safeguard the Environment in Nigeria**

Addressing social change problems in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach. Some potential solutions include:

*Social Inclusion: Address discrimination, promote diversity, and empower marginalized groups (women, youth, ethnic minorities).*

*Policy Reforms: Implement policies addressing inequality, poverty, and political exclusion, and ensure effective implementation and enforcement.*

*Healthcare and Well-being: Improve access to quality healthcare, address health disparities, and prioritize mental health and well-being.*

*Environmental Sustainability: Address environmental degradation, promote sustainable practices, and ensure responsible resource management.*

*Community Engagement: Foster community-led initiatives, promote social cohesion, and support grassroots movements.*

*Technology and Innovation: Leverage technology to enhance education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, and drive innovation.*

*International Cooperation: Collaborate with international organizations and governments*

*to address global challenges and share best practices.*

*Cultural Revitalization: Preserve and promote Nigerian culture, language, and heritage to strengthen national identity.*

*Legal Frameworks: Strengthen legal frameworks and institutions to protect human rights, ensure justice, and combat corruption.*

*Media and Communication: Promote responsible media practices, address misinformation, and ensure inclusive communication.*

*Civil Society Organizations: Support and empower CSOs to drive social change, hold leaders accountable, and advocate for human rights (Thorntwaite, (2018)).*

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study are related to work of Ago, (2020) which examines social change in Nigeria between 1960 and 2015 using the theoretical stance of some classical and contemporary theories of change. The paper focuses on the interpretation of the process of social change in terms of what makes change happen, the characteristics of change and managing change in a given society. The explanatory research design was employed in explaining the socio-cultural, political and economic dimensions of change in Nigeria.

### **Summary of Discussion of Findings**

From secondary data analysed, the study found out that the causes of social change in Nigeria are environmental factors, political factors, etc. Also, it was discovered that the effects of social change in Nigeria in relation to the environment are cultural shifts, political reforms amongst others.

## **V. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Summary**

The study examined environment and social change in Nigeria. Two research questions and two specific objectives were used to guide the study. The study adopted conflict perspective social change as the theoretical framework. The study adopted desk research methodology with a population of 223,804,632 which is 2024 projected population of Nigeria. Data were collected from secondary sources and analysed with content analysis. From secondary data analysed, the study found out that the causes of social change in Nigeria are environmental factors, political factors, etc. Also, it was discovered that the effects of social change in Nigeria in relation to the environment are cultural shifts, political reforms amongst others.

### **Conclusion**

Nigerian society has witnessed a sequential progression from a traditional society to a modern society with a certain level of advancement in the institutions that make up the social system. To be sure, social, political, economic, religious, educational and family institutions have undergone a series of stages of development and change. The religion practised by Nigerians was formerly traditional religion but it has changed to include Christianity and Islam, and now people with no religion. In addition, the family pattern is getting more nuclear and less extended in Nigeria. This is due to the growing rate of the neo-local mentality among the majority of newly married couples in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

There should education and awareness on the effects of social change. This can be done by promoting critical thinking, civic engagement, and social responsibility through inclusive education and public awareness campaigns.

There should be economic empowerment for all the vulnerable through fostering of inclusive economic growth, supporting entrepreneurship, and creating job opportunities to reduce poverty and inequality and strengthen democratic institutions, by ensuring political representation, and promoting participatory governance which will reduce the influence of social change on the populace.

There should be government accountability by ensuring transparency,

accountability, and responsiveness in governance, and addressing corruption and impunity. Implementing these solutions requires a collaborative effort from government, civil society, private sector, and individuals, with a commitment to inclusive and sustainable development.

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