



Entrepreneurship, Social inclusion and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study looked at the interconnectedness of entrepreneurship and social inclusion on sustainable development of Nigeria. In order to examine the interrelationship, the study adopts a qualitative research design, relying on the systematic literature review methodology to synthesize the body of knowledge already available on the research topic. Systematic searches of scholarly databases, such as PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar, were part of the data collection procedure for this review. Keywords like "social inclusion," "entrepreneurship," and "sustainable development" were used to find pertinent, peer-reviewed research articles in academic journals of repute. We observed that that entrepreneurship and social inclusion fosters sustainable economic development, creates jobs and also alleviate poverty, promote community cooperation which of course serve as a powerful force for addressing societal challenges while pursuing business objectives. The study recommends that the concept of entrepreneurship should be further deepened in all spheres of life. Governmental, non-governmental and private organizations should collectively address the societal issues that hampers the furtherance of entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Social inclusion, Sustainable Development, Nigeria

1. Introduction

The interconnected ideas of entrepreneurship, social inclusion, and sustainable development have a big impact on Nigeria's socioeconomic environment. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. Its diverse culture, abundant resources, and young population offer both potential and problems for long-term, sustainable prosperity. In a country that is struggling with high unemployment and widespread poverty, entrepreneurship has become a vital force for economic growth (Adeleye et al., 2020). Policymakers and stakeholders alike are beginning to appreciate the potential of entrepreneurship to boost economic resilience, encourage innovation, and create jobs. Ensuring that the advantages of economic progress are spread fairly requires social inclusion, which is the process of enhancing the conditions of participation in society for underprivileged

groups. Several groups in Nigeria, such as women, young people, and rural areas, frequently encounter obstacles that restrict their access to markets, resources, and business possibilities. Encouraging an entrepreneurial environment that supports sustainable development requires inclusive policies that give these groups more power (NBS, 2021). Nigeria can capitalize on the potential of varied talents and views by encouraging social inclusion in entrepreneurial efforts as this is crucial for creative solutions to the country urgent problems.

Recognizing the role that entrepreneurship plays in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Nigerian government has put laws and initiatives in place to support small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) (NBS, 2021). Furthermore, Nigeria is seeing a rise in social entrepreneurship as a way to solve urgent social concerns like environmental



sustainability, health care, and education. Social entrepreneurs use creative methods to create economic value while resolving societal issues (Echikson, 2020). In line with the global agenda for sustainable development, these entrepreneurs support the general advancement of their communities and the country as a whole by incorporating social impact into their business strategies (UNDP, 2015). In order to promote social inclusion, social companies that prioritize environmental sustainability, for example, not only address ecological issues but also provide employment possibilities for underserved populations. In this situation, social entrepreneurship becomes a revolutionary strategy that combines social missions with financial gain. It can also, create economic gains and serve as a catalyst for change by offering creative answers to societal issues. This study examines how social inclusion, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development interact as a means of advancing Nigeria. Nigeria can promote a more sustainable and inclusive economy through entrepreneurship.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is that activity which involves the ability to risk and utilize one's available capital, labour or energy and resources for investment, merchandise and creating new thing of value which could benefit the creator and society at large (Ibrahim, 2017). It can simply be defined as the process of starting and managing a business. The dynamics of entrepreneurship in Nigeria are shaped by an interconnected network of cultural, economic, and legal influences which affects the entrepreneurship process, yet, entrepreneurs drive innovation, create jobs, and contribute to national development. According to Agbana & Agbana (2024), Nigerian entrepreneurs must possess resilience and adaptability in order to cope

with difficulties including restricted access to financing, regulatory barriers, and inadequate infrastructure. To enhance the impact of entrepreneurship in the country, stakeholders must implement policies that improve access to capital, reduce bureaucratic constraints, and promote an enabling business environment, thereby providing significant contributions to the country's economic growth.

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is a system that guarantees equal opportunity and strong participation for every individual, regardless of socioeconomic background, gender, ethnicity, disability, or other factors. Social inclusion removes several barriers that may prevent many marginalized groups, including women, youth and persons with disabilities, as well as other disadvantaged groups, from participating in society, particularly in economic activities. In other words, social inclusion is the breaking down barriers that prevent people, especially disadvantaged groups, from accessing education, jobs, and business opportunities. Economic advancement in Nigeria is greatly restricted by social exclusion, especially in rural areas with poor financial, educational, and infrastructure services (NBS, 2021). Because entrepreneurship gives marginalized populations access to economic opportunities, it can be an effective instrument for promoting social inclusion. Programs like skill-acquisition training, gender-focused entrepreneurship schemes, and microfinance initiatives have been successful in bringing under-represented groups into the formal economy. Sustainable economic growth will require inclusive policies that support equitable access to resources, promoting social inclusion in Nigeria through entrepreneurship by promoting economic opportunities to these marginalized groups.



Sustainable Development

Sustainable development involves satisfying the social and economic requirements of the present generation while safeguarding the welfare of future populations through comprehensive preservation of the environment. It is the safeguarding and improving of the social, economic and environmental conditions of a society into the unforeseeable future. Inappropriate management of the environment can have negative effects on the environment, and economic growth for the future generations of Nigeria. Climate change, poor waste management, pollution, and deforestation are some of the environmental and social issues Nigeria faces. Sustainable development can be facilitated by entrepreneurship when companies implement eco-friendly procedures. In light of this, Ilegbinosa & Jumbo (2015) proposed that the creation, expansion, advancement, and development of entrepreneurship have contributed significantly to the growth and sustainable development of numerous nations, especially developing countries like Nigeria.

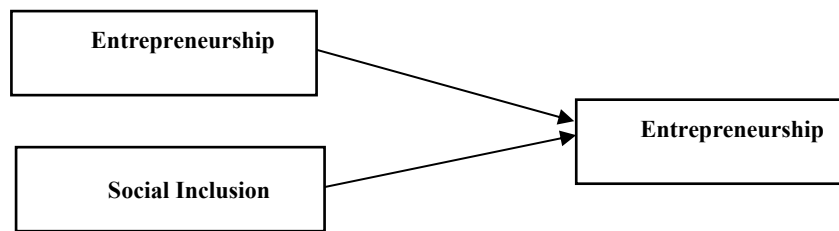
The integration of entrepreneurship with sustainability strategies can substantially improve the resilience of Nigeria's economy to multiple challenges. However, this needs a policy environment that both encourages sustainable business practices and supports entrepreneurs that prioritize ecological and social inclusion, as well as promotes green innovation. That is, for Nigeria to achieve sustainable development, entrepreneurs and other businesses must balance profit-making with social responsibility. An efficient entrepreneurial ecosystem has the ability to create economic opportunities. These opportunities promote social inclusion, by steadily incorporating marginalized groups into the workforce, aids poverty alleviation, financial independence and gender equality in developing countries, including Nigeria.

The link between Entrepreneurship, Social Inclusion, and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Entrepreneurship, social inclusion and sustainable development are interconnected in the socioeconomic environment of Nigeria. Entrepreneurship contributes to this environment by making jobs available to people who need them. It also encourages companies to protect the environment, greatly supporting the sustainable development of the economy. Additionally, entrepreneurial initiatives, many of which focus on social inclusion, help integrate underrepresented groups into the workforce, thereby reducing poverty and promoting financial independence. Ramya et al. (2024) posited that entrepreneurship is a powerful tool for achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. The SDGs cover a wide range of goals, such as reducing poverty, promoting gender equality, combating climate change, and promoting sustainable economic growth. Numerous studies have emphasised how the practice of entrepreneurship in Nigeria might help achieve particular SDGs. Past studies show how microfinance organisations help reduce poverty (SDG 1) by offering financial services to underserved populations. Similarly, by guaranteeing fair salaries and environmental stewardship, fair trade organisations support sustainable production and consumption (SDG 12), as shown by Dacin et al. (2011). Through the implementation of social inclusion and sustainability in its entrepreneurship, Nigeria can encourage long-term economic growth that comprehensively helps everyone and carefully protects environmental resources for the future. This demonstrated diagrammatically below



2.2 Conceptual Framework



Author's Conceptualization (2025)

2.3 Empirical Review

Several studies have sought to investigate the interrelatedness between entrepreneurship, social inclusion and sustainable development. This section provides a review of the empirical literature on the relationships between entrepreneurship, social inclusion and sustainable development. Agbana and Agbana (2024) delved into the intricate dynamics of entrepreneurship development and its profound impact on the nation's economic landscape. Their study evaluated the role of entrepreneurship in fostering sustainable economic growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation. By amalgamating insights from diverse scholarly perspectives and empirical data, they assessed the challenges impeding entrepreneurship in Nigeria. They also explored the nexus between entrepreneurship, sustainable development, and societal well-being by shedding light on the critical importance of innovative, environmentally conscious practices in fostering long-term progress. The research delineates the essential skills and managerial competencies crucial for effective business management, which emphasized the significance of mentorship, networking, and capacity-building initiatives. By investigating how entrepreneurial endeavors can support sustainable development while promoting economic growth and innovation. Ramya et al. (2024) investigated the relationship between social entrepreneurship and the Sustainable

Development Goals. According to the survey, social entrepreneurship has become a potent tool for tackling societal issues and achieving commercial goals. According to the study's critical review of the literature, social entrepreneurship initiatives can successfully address the SDGs through creative business models, cross-sector partnerships, impact measurement and evaluation frameworks, and policy advocacy initiatives. In order to create a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future for everybody, the study found that scholars, practitioners, and policymakers should continue to push for the inclusion of social entrepreneurship in sustainable development agendas.

According to Bamgboye (2024), entrepreneurship in Nigeria is hindered by the obstacles that are inherent in the business environment, which has a negative impact on the country's sustainable development. The study also noted that these obstacles include limited access to credit or capital, as well as inadequate or epileptic power (electricity) supply, among other things, to effectively run businesses. The study concluded that entrepreneurship, in its purest form, has the greatest potential to significantly contribute to the sustainable development of any country, but particularly Nigeria. The government should, on the other hand, create a business environment that is conducive to business success by enacting the necessary policies and regulations. Hafsa et al. (2024) discuss sustainable



development and social entrepreneurship. With a particular emphasis on developing a digital platform for resource sharing, the study examined and evaluated how digital social entrepreneurship contributes to the attainment of sustainable development goals. The study's foundation was the ideas of sustainable development and social entrepreneurship, highlighting their importance in tackling environmental and social issues like inequality and climate change while utilizing digitization to its fullest potential. In order to find out how digital social entrepreneurship affects sustainable development, 134 individuals were analyzed. A structured questionnaire that was dispersed via a non-probability snowball sampling technique was used to gather data. The findings showed that one example of digital social entrepreneurship is the development of a resource-sharing platform. According to their documentation, the platform facilitates the sharing economy, lowers waste, and encourages community collaboration by bringing people and organizations together to share resources, expertise, and information. These factors all help to fulfil a number of sustainable development objectives.

Using a mixed-method research design, Amao-Taiwo et al. (2023) examined the connection between student support services, the development of entrepreneurship skills, and student entrepreneurship in public and private institutions in Lagos and Ogun States. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to choose a sample of 2394 students and 6 directors from among 26,830 final-year undergraduate students and 8 directors of Entrepreneurship Development Centers. One hypothesis and two research questions resulted from the establishment of two objectives. The findings demonstrated a high positive correlation between the development of entrepreneurship abilities and student support, indicating that student support is a key factor in the growth of

entrepreneurship. The study found that student support programs encourage student entrepreneurship in higher education, but that these programs must be tailored to the various needs of student entrepreneurs. Universities should invest in collaborations that will encourage unofficial support through competitions, internships, and seed grants.

Arejiogbe et al. (2023) investigated how poverty reduction and social entrepreneurship affect Nigeria's sustainable development. The main goals of the research were to improve people's lives and promote social, economic, and environmental advancements. The study formulated three hypotheses. Using a purposive sampling technique with 300 copies of structured questionnaires presented to social entrepreneurs. The findings demonstrated that social impact, social value, and social innovation all had an impact on reducing poverty in Nigeria. According to the study's findings, social innovation is essential to enabling people and communities to escape poverty and experience lasting prosperity. It was also suggested that the government should develop policies and initiatives that encourage social innovation, like financial access, business training, and mentorship, in order to foster sustainable social entrepreneurship and reduce poverty in Nigeria.

The study by Ayeni and David (2022) concentrated on entrepreneurial education as a driver of sustainable economic growth in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education, according to Ayeni and David, will provide people the skills they need to be independent and self-sufficient. According to their findings, entrepreneurship continues to be the cornerstone of job creation and overall economic growth because it offers chances to enhance one's quality of life and contribute to society. Ogbo et al. (2019) investigated how social entrepreneurship affected the long-term viability of Nigerian company growth.



They chose a survey approach as the research strategy and focused on small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Nigeria. According to the report, social entrepreneurship in Nigeria has evolved due to a number of variables, including political, economic, sociocultural, cross-border, and technological ones. Additionally, the main obstacles to social entrepreneurship in Nigeria were a lack of government backing, a lack of financial aid, comparative disadvantages to business, a lack of entrepreneurship education, and a shortage of trained labor. They furthered that the current trends in social entrepreneurship in Nigeria were social media and the technology, increase of decentralized micro chances, cross-sector alliances and government drive for an all-inclusive economic growth and development through SME. The study indicated the necessity to empower entrepreneurs from the social perspective which needs to boost the attainment of all-inclusive growth in the economy through SMEs'. This became necessary as the emerging trends in the world over is technology/ICT driven social entrepreneurship which can be enhanced through due government participation Ibrahim (2017) examined how entrepreneurship can help Nigeria achieve sustainable development, noting that while development is a concern of all societies and countries, the current global trend in development is the pursuit of sustainable development, which is a change from focusing on short-term progress for the benefit of the current generation to a more comprehensive, long-term social, educational, economic, political, and environmental transformation for the benefit of future generations. The study came to the conclusion that entrepreneurship can help Nigeria achieve sustainable development if the government and other development agencies are dedicated to helping unemployed youths, as it involves more than just integrating

entrepreneurship training into the curriculum.

Madu and Yusof (2015) discussed social entrepreneurship as a reliable instrument for Nigeria's rural development to be sustainable: a vital agenda for the government emphasized that despite several policy decisions and initiatives over the years to promote socioeconomic development and improve the standard of living for the rural population, Nigeria's rural sub-sector has endured years of neglect and hardship. According to their research, the government should provide road networks, health care facilities, quality education, and jobs to improve the socioeconomic status of rural residents and provide basic amenities. As its focal points work alongside the government to provide these services, the study found that social entrepreneurship is an agent of social transformation and service provision.

The study conducted by Ogunkokoya (2020) examined the relationship between entrepreneurship and sustainable development among a select group of entrepreneurs and small-scale businesses in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State. The study used a survey research design and administered questionnaires to gather data; it concluded that there is a significant relationship between opportunity-based entrepreneurship and sustainable development in Nigeria and that the government has a role to play in promoting entrepreneurship, enhancing pro-poor growth, and reducing poverty through international trade, taxation, government spending, inflation control, infrastructure, education, health, the viability of the legal system, and financial deepening. The study suggested that a combination of excellent knowledge of information and communication technology (ICT) and the development of entrepreneurial skills is another important key to technological and entrepreneurial development.



3. Methodology

In order to examine the interconnectedness between entrepreneurship, social inclusion, and sustainable development, this research adopts a qualitative research design, relying on a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The SLR is particularly suitable for this study as it allows for a structured process of identifying, evaluating and synthesizing the body of knowledge already available on the research topic to draw conceptual linkages. This study approach guarantees the validity and reliability of the results by adhering to specified procedures for data selection and analysis. Systematic searches of scholarly databases, such as PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar, were part of the data collection procedure for this review. Keywords like "social inclusion," "entrepreneurship," and "sustainable development" were used to find pertinent, peer-reviewed research articles in academic journals. I also included studies that specifically examined the relationship between social entrepreneurship, social inclusion, and sustainable development. Also, studies that provided empirical evidence, theoretical frameworks, or conceptual insights to the interrelation between entrepreneurship, social inclusion, and sustainable development were included.

The following were excluded: studies that were not directly related to social inclusion, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development; studies that lacked empirical evidence or theoretical relevance to entrepreneurship, social inclusion, and sustainable development; studies published in languages other than English; and also, studies published that were not reviewed.

4. Results and Discussion

Globally, there are societal issues and urgent needs that are either overlooked or not adequately addressed by governmental, non-governmental (NGOs), and private organizations. Social entrepreneurs, on the

other hand, are people who come up with creative answers to such problems and back them up with creative business plans (Choi & Majumdar, 2014; Lubberink R. 2019). Because they demonstrate the potential for social entrepreneurship that naturally considers both economic growth and social inclusion at the same time which in the long run impact positively to development. Recognizing the role that entrepreneurship plays in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Nigerian government has put laws and initiatives in place to support small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) (NBS, 2021). Furthermore, Nigeria is seeing a rise in social entrepreneurship as a way to solve urgent social concerns like environmental sustainability, health care, and education. This is corroborated by Agbana and Agbana (2024) who delved into the intricate dynamics of entrepreneurship development and its profound impact on the nation's economic landscape. Additionally, they documented how entrepreneurship promotes job creation, poverty alleviation, and sustainable economic progress. According to Ramya et al. (2024), social entrepreneurship has become a potent tool for tackling societal issues while achieving commercial goals. They suggested that researchers, practitioners, and policymakers should encourage the incorporation of social entrepreneurship into sustainable development agendas in order to create a more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive future for everybody.

Bamgboye (2024) observed that entrepreneurship in Nigeria is constrained by the challenges inherent in the business environment, thereby impacting negatively on the sustainable development of the country. It furthered that, that the challenges range from limited access to capital or credit and inadequate or epileptic power (electricity) supply among others to adequately run businesses. Also, Hafsa, et al (2024) documented that by connecting



individuals and organizations for the sharing of materials, skills, and knowledge, the platform fosters the sharing economy, reduces waste, and promotes community cooperation which contribute to the achievement of various sustainable development goals. Arejiogbe et al. (2023) credited that social innovation is fundamental for empowering individuals and communities to lift themselves out of poverty and achieve long-term prosperity. The study furthered that to promote sustainable social entrepreneurship and poverty alleviation in Nigeria, the government can create policies and programs that support social innovation, such as providing access to funding, business training, and mentorship. While, Ayeni & David (2022) posited that entrepreneurship education will equip individuals with skills to be dependent and self-reliant and maintained that, entrepreneurship still remain the bedrock for job creation and general economic development as it provides opportunity to improve quality of life and make contributions to the society.

At the same time, Ogbo et al. (2019) factored that political factors, economic factors, socio-cultural factors, cross country factors and technological factors were the evolution experienced by social enterprise in Nigeria. Also, that education in entrepreneurship, lack of financial assistance, comparative disadvantages to business, lack of government support and lack of skilled manpower were the key challenges in social entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Ibrahim (2017) noted that, development was the concern of all societies and nations, however that the current trend on development world over was the search for sustainable development, which is a shift from concern over immediate progress for the benefit of present generation to a more encompassing, everlasting social, educational, economic, political, and environmental transformation for the

benefit of future generation and placed that entrepreneurship can contribute in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria if government and other development agencies are committed to providing assistance to unemployed youths, as it is not only a matter of incorporating entrepreneurship training into higher school curriculum, but also the requirement of financial aids and loans. Also, Madu, and Yusof, (2015) underscored that Nigerian rural sub-sector has suffered so many years of neglect and deprivations upon array of policy decisions and programs embarked by governments over time to bring socio-economic development and enhance the quality of life of the rural populace. Ogunkokoya, (2020), showed there exist a significant relationship effect of opportunity-based entrepreneurship on sustainable development in Nigeria. Therefore, government has roles to encourage entrepreneurship, enhance pro-poor growth and poverty reduction through international trade, taxation, government expenditure, inflation control, infrastructure, education, health, viability of the legal system, and financial deepening.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study looked at the interconnectedness of entrepreneurship and social inclusion on sustainable development of Nigeria. In order to examine the interrelationship, the research made use of methodical literature review technique. The systematic reviews are well known for their exacting and open methodologies, which enable the thorough synthesis of the body of knowledge already available on a given subject. Systematic searches of scholarly databases, such as PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar, were part of the data collection procedure for this review. Keywords like "social inclusion," "entrepreneurship," and "sustainable development" were used to find pertinent,



peer-reviewed research articles in academic journals of repute. We observed that that entrepreneurship and social inclusion fosters sustainable economic development, creates jobs and also alleviate poverty, promote community cooperation which of course serve as a powerful force for addressing societal challenges while pursuing business objectives. The study recommends that the concept of entrepreneurship should be further deepened in all spheres of life. Governmental, non-governmental and private organizations should collectively address the societal issues that hampers the furtherance of entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

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