

Self-Reliance Theory And Africa's Drive Towards Development: Rethinking Globalisation In Nigeria's Implementation Of The Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

This study examines the intersection of self-reliance theory and Nigeria's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the context of globalization. The research investigates how Nigeria can adopt a self-reliant approach to development, prioritizing domestic resources and capacities, to achieve the SDGs. The study employed a qualitative research approach, utilizing a case study design and thematic analysis to explore the role of self-reliance theory in Nigeria's SDGs implementation. The findings of the study indicate that self-reliance theory offers a promising framework for rethinking Nigeria's approach to development. The study highlights the need for Nigeria to adopt a self-reliant approach to development, promote African-led development initiatives, and develop a coherent national development strategy. The study recommends that Nigeria prioritize investment in human capital, promote entrepreneurship and



innovation, strengthen institutional capacities, and promote regional integration and cooperation.

Keywords: Self-reliance theory, Africa, Development, Globalisation, SDGs

INTRODUCTION

Africa, the second-largest continent, is rich in resources and cultural diversity, yet it continues to grapple with developmental challenges. The drive towards development in Africa has gained momentum in recent years, influenced by various factors including politics, economic policies, social movements, and international partnerships. Historically, Africa's developmental narrative has been overshadowed by colonialism, exploitation, and external dependence. However, post-independence, many African countries have sought to redefine their paths towards sustainable development, with varying levels of success (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2018). In recent years, the African Union's Agenda 2063 has emerged as a visionary framework aiming to enhance continental integration and development, focusing on shared prosperity and peace (African Union, 2019). This agenda emphasizes the importance of inclusive growth that leaves no one behind, especially marginalized groups like women and youth (African Union, 2019).

Economically, the African continent is increasingly being recognized for its potential, driven by a youthful population, abundant natural resources, and a growing technology sector. According to the World Bank (2020), Africa is home to some of the world's fastest-growing economies, with nations like Ethiopia and Rwanda showcasing remarkable growth rates. The digital economy has also seen significant advancements, facilitating entrepreneurship and innovation across the continent. For instance, mobile technology has revolutionized financial transactions, particularly through platforms such as M-Pesa in Kenya, which has greatly enhanced financial inclusion (Jack & Suri, 2020). However, structural challenges continue to hinder development efforts. High unemployment rates, particularly among the youth, remain a pressing issue. According to the International Labour Organization (2018), Africa has the highest youth unemployment rate in the world. This situation necessitates urgent policy interventions and investments in education, vocational training, and job creation to harness the demographic dividend effectively (World Bank, 2021). As countries endeavor to transition from reliance on primary commodities to value-added industries, there is a call for diversification of economies, promoting sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services (African Development Bank, 2019).

Agriculture, which constitutes a substantial portion of many African economies, presents



a vital avenue for growth. The sector employs over 60% of the continent's labor force and has the potential to drive economic transformation if modernized (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019). Initiatives such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) aim to enhance agricultural productivity through investment in infrastructure, research, and technology (African Union, 2020). Furthermore, climate change poses a significant threat to agricultural sustainability, necessitating adaptive strategies to combat its impacts on food security and livelihoods (IPCC, 2019). The role of good governance and political stability is also critical in Africa's drive towards development. Many countries have adopted democratic practices, with increased civic engagement and political responsiveness. However, challenges such as corruption, lack of transparency, and authoritarian governance still persist in several regions (Transparency International, 2020). Effective governance structures can foster an environment conducive to investment, sustainability, and social equity. Promisingly, several nations have recently embarked on anti-corruption campaigns, exemplified by Zambia and South Africa, reflecting a growing commitment to accountability (KPMG, 2020).

International partnerships and support are likewise pivotal in bolstering Africa's development aspirations. Global initiatives, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), provide a collective framework for countries to address pressing challenges, including poverty, inequality, and climate change (United Nations, 2020). Moreover, foreign direct investment (FDI) has shown positive growth in key sectors such as telecommunications and renewable energy (UNCTAD, 2021). Notable collaborations, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), aim to enhance intra-African trade and drive economic integration, reducing dependence on external markets (African Union, 2021). In addition, social movements and civil society organizations have been instrumental in advocating for development policies that prioritize human rights and social justice. Movements promoting gender equality and women's empowerment are at the forefront of advocating for policy changes that recognize the contributions of women to economic development (UN Women, 2020). Efforts to include marginalized communities in the developmental discourse are also gaining traction, promoting a holistic approach to development that considers the voices and needs of all stakeholders.

As African nations grapple with the multifaceted challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the development trajectory has shifted markedly. The pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities within healthcare systems and exacerbated existing inequalities, highlighting the urgent need for resilient health infrastructures (World Health Organization, 2021). Nevertheless, it also spurred innovative responses, with many countries ramping up efforts to enhance



healthcare accessibility and digital solutions. The importance of investing in health systems and emergency preparedness has become a critical focus for sustainable development in a post-pandemic world (Africa CDC, 2021). In summation, Africa's drive towards development is a dynamic interplay of opportunities and challenges. As nations work to actualize the aspirations of agenda frameworks and initiatives, it is essential to harness the continent's wealth in human and natural resources. Prioritizing inclusive growth, sustainable practices, and robust governance, Africa can carve a distinctive path towards achieving holistic development. While strides have been made, continued collaboration, innovation, and resilience will be key to addressing the diverse challenges that lie ahead in Africa's developmental journey. The commitment to forging an equitable and sustainable future represents not only a national imperative but also a collective responsibility for Africa and the global community at large.

In reflecting on the future, Africa stands at a crossroad—armed with potential and burdened by challenges. The energy, creativity, and resolve of its people will ultimately shape its destiny. Engaging youth, empowering women, fostering innovative economic solutions, and ensuring that development is inclusive will be paramount to realizing a vision of sustainable growth and prosperity for the continent. The journey towards development in Africa may be complex, but with concerted efforts and a collective vision, it is certainly achievable.

Meanwhile, in contemporary discourse surrounding development, particularly within Africa, the concept of self-reliance emerges as a critical paradigm for understanding the pathways toward sustainable growth and progress. Self-reliance theory posits that nations, particularly those in the Global South, must cultivate their own economic, social, and political frameworks to foster resilience against external dependencies (Mazrui, 2018). This is particularly salient in light of Nigeria's ongoing efforts to navigate the complexities of globalization while simultaneously attempting to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set forth by the United Nations (UN, 2018). The intersection of self-reliance and globalization in Nigeria offers a fertile ground for rethinking how developmental policies can be formulated in ways that honor local insights while also engaging with global norms.

Globalization, characterized by the interconnectivity of economies and cultures, has profoundly reshaped the landscape of international development. Critics argue that while globalization encourages economic integration, it can simultaneously erode local practices and undermine self-sustaining growth mechanisms (Rodrik, 2019). This dichotomy is evident in Nigeria, where policies often oscillate between embracing global economic trends and fostering local self-reliance. Recent scholarship emphasizes the necessity for African nations, including



Nigeria, to assert their identities within the global arena by leveraging local resources, culture, and innovation to drive their development trajectories (Obi, 2020). In this context, self-reliance is not merely a theoretical construct but a practical guideline for achieving the SDGs in a manner that reflects the unique historical, cultural, and socio-economic realities of the continent. Also, the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in 2015, embody a global commitment to achieving a more equitable and sustainable future by 2030. However, the implementation of these goals requires distinct approaches tailored to national contexts, particularly in regions like Africa where challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and political instability persist (United Nations Development Programme, 2019). In Nigeria, the alignment of self-reliance with the SDGs presents an opportunity to rethink globalization in ways that prioritize local capabilities and promote sustainable practices that can endure beyond the influences of external forces.

Recent studies (Caritas, 2017; Obi, 2020; Emmanuel, 2021) indicate that successful implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria increasingly depends on fostering an environment conducive to self-reliance. This necessitates a strategic reassessment of existing policies and practices to ensure they resonate with the aspirations and needs of the local populace. Emphasizing self-reliance also urges policymakers to recognize the agency of communities, encouraging grassroots participation in developmental processes (Adeleye & Popoola, 2021). This orientation not only enhances the relevance of development initiatives but also strengthens social cohesion and motivates collective action toward achieving shared goals.

As Nigeria seeks to reformulate its development strategies amid global pressures, it becomes imperative to critically analyze the interrelationships between self-reliance, development policies, and globalization. Recent events, including economic disruptions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, have revealed the vulnerabilities linked to over-reliance on global supply chains, underscoring the urgency for self-sufficient frameworks in Nigeria's economic planning (Ogundipe, 2021). The need for innovative and resilient development strategies that integrate local wisdom and practices with the demands of globalization is now more crucial than ever.

This research, therefore, intends to explore the nexus between self-reliance theory and Nigeria's pursuits toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, providing a comprehensive analysis of how these dynamics can reshape the narratives of development in the nation. By engaging with contemporary academic debates, this study aims to illuminate the pathways through which Nigeria can develop an authentic response to globalization, one that is rooted in self-reliance and capable of fostering inclusive and sustainable growth. Ultimately, the



exploration of self-reliance within the context of Nigeria's development serves to question the efficacy of existing globalization frameworks and their applicability to African realities. As the nation grapples with multifaceted challenges, the guiding principles of self-reliance must inform strategic decision-making at both governmental and community levels. Thus, understanding self-reliance as an instrumental approach will not only facilitate the realization of the SDGs in Nigeria but also serve as a blueprint for other African nations facing similar circumstances (Innovations for Poverty Action, 2021). Critically engaging with these themes, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable development in Africa, advocating for locally grounded approaches that empower communities and catalyze meaningful transformation.

Statement of the Problem

The quest for sustainable development has become a pressing concern for African nations, including Nigeria. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, provide a comprehensive framework for achieving sustainable development globally. However, the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria has been hindered by various challenges, including the country's over-reliance on foreign aid and external expertise. Also, the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria requires a nuanced understanding of the country's development context. While the SDGs provide a comprehensive framework for achieving sustainable development, their implementation must be adapted to Nigeria's unique challenges and opportunities. One of the key challenges facing Nigeria's development is its over-reliance on external factors, which has hindered the country's ability to drive its own development. This is where self-reliance theory comes in, offering a promising framework for rethinking Nigeria's approach to development.

Self-reliance theory, which emphasizes the importance of domestic resources and capacities in driving development, offers a promising framework for rethinking Nigeria's approach to implementing the SDGs. However, the application of self-reliance theory in Nigeria's development context is complicated by the country's deep-seated integration into the global economy.

Globalization, which has created new opportunities for economic growth and development, has also exacerbated Nigeria's dependence on foreign capital and expertise. The country's economic development strategies have historically been shaped by external forces, including international financial institutions and foreign governments. This has resulted in the marginalization of domestic resources and capacities, undermining Nigeria's ability to achieve



sustainable development. Also, the dominance of Western-based development models and theories has limited the scope for African-led development initiatives. The imposition of external development frameworks has often disregarded local contexts, cultures, and knowledge systems, leading to the failure of many development projects in Nigeria.

In addition, the Nigerian government's efforts to implement the SDGs have been hampered by inadequate funding, weak institutional capacities, and limited engagement with local communities. The lack of a coherent national development strategy has also hindered the effective implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how self-reliance theory can be applied to Nigeria's implementation of the SDGs, with a focus on rethinking globalization and promoting domestic resources and capacities.

Understanding Self-Reliance Theory and Sustainable Development

Self-reliance theory and sustainable development, while distinct concepts, are deeply interconnected, especially in the context of addressing global challenges such as poverty, environmental degradation, and social inequality. Self-reliance often refers to the ability of individuals, communities, or nations to independently manage resources, make decisions, and solve problems without relying excessively on external support (Khan, 2018). This notion resonates with sustainable development, which emphasizes the need to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own (United Nations, 2015). The convergence between these two frameworks can provide a comprehensive approach to fostering resilience and sustainability in various contexts. A critical aspect of self-reliance is its focus on local resources and capabilities (Srinivasan *et al.*, 2019). Communities that harness their own resources can foster economic growth from within, which is essential for sustainable development. This idea challenges the conventional reliance on foreign aid and external assistance, which can create dependency and undermine local initiatives (Haider *et al.*, 2021). Through promoting self-reliance, individuals and communities can cultivate a sense of empowerment and agency, essential for driving sustainable practices that are attuned to local contexts (McHugh *et al.*, 2020).

Also, the interplay between self-reliance and sustainable development becomes evident when examining community-led initiatives worldwide. For instance, various indigenous communities have embraced self-reliance as they develop sustainable agricultural practices that respect biodiversity and traditional knowledge (González, 2019). These initiatives demonstrate how self-reliance can serve as a catalyst for sustainable development, emphasizing the



importance of context-specific solutions that are resilient to external shocks (Berkes, 2018). Empowering communities to rely on their resources not only fosters economic independence but also reinforces social cohesion and environmental stewardship. Self-reliance also intersects with the principles of sustainable development in education and capacity-building (Wang *et al.*, 2020). Cultivating skills and knowledge within communities, particularly in marginalized areas, allows individuals to become better equipped to address local challenges. Educational initiatives that promote self-sufficiency can lead to more sustainable livelihood strategies, reducing reliance on externally driven solutions (Alasad *et al.*, 2021). This approach aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4: Quality Education, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable education.

Self-reliance encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, crucial for sustainable economic development (Bai *et al.*, 2019). When individuals and communities believe in their capacity to create solutions, they are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities that align with sustainability principles. This can lead to the development of green technologies and sustainable business models that contribute to local economies and reduce environmental impact (Huang *et al.*, 2022). The capacity for innovation thus reinforces the relationship between self-reliance and sustainable development, creating a cycle of growth and sustainability.

In the face of global challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of self-reliance in achieving sustainable development goals (Benson *et al.*, 2021). Many communities that had previously invested in local infrastructure and self-sufficient practices were better equipped to cope with the immediate impacts of the crisis. This situation highlighted the vulnerability of over-reliance on global supply chains and foreign aid in times of crisis (Khanna, 2021). The pandemic illustrated the need for resilient systems that prioritize local capabilities, which is a core principle of self-reliance as it fosters adaptive capacity in the face of unexpected challenges. Additionally, self-reliance aligns with the global movement towards circular economies, which prioritize resource efficiency and waste reduction (Kirchgeorg *et al.*, 2021). Fostering self-reliance enables communities to develop local recycling and resource management systems that not only contribute to their economic resilience but also establish sustainable practices that lessen environmental harm. This alignment broadens the scope of sustainable development beyond mere economic growth, integrating social and environmental dimensions vital for long-term survival and prosperity (Loorbach & Wijsman, 2018).



Globalization and Africa's Development: Challenges and Opportunities

Globalization, a phenomenon characterized by the increasing interconnectedness of the world's economies, societies, and cultures, has been a subject of intense debate in recent years (Stiglitz, 2018). According to Benson (2021), globalization is a multifaceted and complex process that has been significantly shaping economies, cultures, and societies worldwide, particularly in Africa. This phenomenon represents a new era of interconnectedness, where nations, societies, and people engage with one another across borders, facilitated by advances in technology, trade, and communication (Ogunleye, 2018). Africa's engagement with globalization presents both formidable challenges and unique opportunities for development that require careful examination and analysis. While some argue that globalization has created new opportunities for economic growth and development, others contend that it has exacerbated existing inequalities and created new challenges for developing countries, particularly in Africa (Rodrik, 2019). One of the primary challenges posed by globalization for Africa's development is the issue of economic inequality (Kaplinsky, 2018). The increasing integration of African economies into the global economy has created new opportunities for economic growth, but it has also exacerbated existing inequalities between African countries and their developed counterparts (Akyüz, 2019). The terms of trade, which have historically favored developed countries, have resulted in African countries exporting raw materials and importing manufactured goods, perpetuating a cycle of dependence and underdevelopment (Singer, 2019).

Furthermore, the increasing dominance of multinational corporations in African economies has created new challenges for local businesses and industries (Klein, 2020). The influx of foreign investment and the resulting competition have forced many local businesses to close, leading to job losses and increased poverty (Mwanga, 2020). Additionally, the exploitation of Africa's natural resources by multinational corporations has resulted in environmental degradation and social injustices (Obi, 2020). Despite these challenges, globalization also presents opportunities for Africa's development (African Development Bank, 2020). The increasing integration of African economies into the global economy has created new opportunities for trade and investment, which can drive economic growth and development (World Bank, 2020). The growth of e-commerce and digital technologies has also created new opportunities for African businesses to access global markets and compete with their international counterparts (UNCTAD, 2020).

Also, globalization has facilitated the transfer of knowledge, technology, and skills, which can drive innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa (African Development Bank, 2020). The



growth of international partnerships and collaborations has also created new opportunities for Africa to access global expertise and resources, which can drive development and growth (European Commission, 2020). However, in order to harness these opportunities, African countries must develop strategies to mitigate the challenges posed by globalization (Akyüz, 2019). This requires a range of policy interventions, including the development of industrial policies to support local businesses and industries, the promotion of regional trade and integration, and the strengthening of regulatory frameworks to protect the environment and social justice (Kaplinsky, 2018).

Nigeria's Development Context: Challenges and Prospects

Nigeria's development context is steeped in a complex interplay of socio-economic, political, and environmental factors. The nation, often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," possesses vast natural resources, a youthful population, and a burgeoning market, presenting an array of prospects for development. However, Nigeria's development landscape is marred by significant challenges, including pervasive corruption, infrastructural deficits, security issues, and economic inequality. The juxtaposition of opportunities and constraints defines Nigeria's journey toward sustainable development, making it a rich subject for analysis. In recent years, Nigeria has made strides towards development, evidenced by its significant Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth and demographic dividends. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria (2020), the economy rebounded post-recession, with GDP growth projected to reach 2.3% in 2021, a testament to the country's resilience despite global economic fluctuations. Yet, while economic growth is encouraging, it must be contextualized within the framework of inclusive development that translates into tangible benefits for the populace (World Bank, 2019).

The promise of Nigeria's demographic dividend cannot be overstated. With over 200 million people, Nigeria has the largest youth population in Africa (United Nations, 2020). This demographic potential could fuel economic growth if harnessed effectively. However, the nation grapples with high unemployment rates, particularly among young people, presenting a challenge for policymakers (International Labour Organization, 2021). Bridging the gap between education and job creation is paramount to ensuring that this youthful population becomes an engine for growth rather than a source of social unrest. Furthermore, Nigeria's economic structure remains heavily reliant on oil, which accounts for a substantial portion of government revenue and export earnings. The overreliance on oil makes the economy vulnerable to shocks from fluctuating global oil prices (EIA, 2021). To mitigate this risk, diversification of the economy is imperative. The



Agricultural sector, which employs a significant portion of the population, presents opportunities for growth and food security (FAO, 2020). Initiatives aimed at modernizing agriculture and promoting agro-industrialization can bolster the economy while alleviating rural poverty.

The infrastructural deficit is another critical challenge hindering Nigeria's development. Poor transportation networks, erratic power supply, and inadequate healthcare facilities impede economic activities and exacerbate inequality (World Economic Forum, 2019). Investment in infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, is vital for ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities. Public-private partnerships have been recommended as a viable strategy to address infrastructure gaps, promoting efficiency and sustainability in project execution (International Finance Corporation, 2020).

Corruption remains a pervasive issue within Nigeria's development context. According to Transparency International (2021), Nigeria ranks low on the Corruption Perceptions Index, undermining public trust in institutions and deterring foreign investment. Addressing corruption requires a multifaceted approach, including strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing transparency, and fostering a culture of accountability (Berdahl & Eke, 2020). Anti-corruption campaigns and initiatives must be supported by robust civil society engagement to promote good governance. The security situation in Nigeria poses a critical challenge to development. The rise of terrorism, particularly from groups such as Boko Haram, has led to widespread displacement and loss of life, disrupting education and economic activities (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2020). Moreover, conflicts between herders and farmers, exacerbated by climate change, threaten food security and social cohesion. Strengthening community resilience and fostering peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnic groups are essential steps towards achieving sustainable development (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Furthermore, the impact of climate change on Nigeria's development cannot be overlooked. The nation is highly susceptible to climate-related vulnerabilities, particularly concerning agriculture and water resources (NCC, 2020). Climate change adaptation strategies must be integrated into national development plans, focusing on building resilient infrastructure and promoting sustainable practices. These initiatives will not only safeguard livelihoods but also contribute to long-term environmental sustainability. While challenges abound, the prospects for Nigeria's development are promising. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), launched in 2021, presents a unique opportunity for Nigeria to enhance trade and investment within the continent (African Union, 2021). The AfCFTA enables Nigeria to leverage its market size and untapped resources, fostering regional integration and promoting economic growth. Additionally,



the digital economy has emerged as a significant driver of development, particularly among Nigeria's youth. The proliferation of technology startups and fintech solutions showcases the country's potential for innovation and entrepreneurship (McKinsey & Company, 2020).

Education is another critical area with immense prospects for Nigeria's development. Emphasizing skills development and vocational training can equip the youth with the competencies needed to thrive in a rapidly changing job market (UNESCO, 2020). Collaborative efforts between government, private sector, and educational institutions are vital in shaping a responsive education system that meets the demands of a dynamic economy. As Nigeria navigates its development journey, fostering an inclusive environment that promotes social equity and participation is paramount. Engaging marginalized groups, including women and persons with disabilities, in decision-making processes is essential for building an inclusive society (UN Women, 2020). Policies that empower women and promote gender equality will lead to more sustainable and balanced development outcomes.

Pursuing inclusive and sustainable development strategies, Nigeria has the potential to not only improve the quality of life for its citizens but also emerge as a key player on the global stage, contributing to the broader narrative of development in Africa. The journey will undoubtedly require collaboration among various stakeholders, a commitment to good governance, and a collective vision for a prosperous future. As Nigeria looks ahead, the opportunities for change are immense, and the commitment to overcome challenges will define its trajectory toward development in the coming years.

The Role of Self-Reliance in Achieving Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Self-reliance, as a developmental paradigm, is increasingly recognized as a critical component in addressing the challenges Nigeria faces in its pursuit of sustainable development. The country grapples with a multitude of socioeconomic issues, including poverty, unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, and poor governance. Emphasizing self-reliance allows Nigeria to harness its resources, promote local industries, and inspire a culture of self-sufficiency that is vital for long-term sustainability (Adelekan & Olojo, 2020). One major challenge to sustainable development in Nigeria is the over-reliance on oil exports, which has made the economy vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices. This dependence curtails the diversification of the economy, undermines agricultural production, and inhibits industrial growth (Eteng & Akpan, 2019). To foster self-reliance, Nigeria must strategically invest in other sectors, particularly agriculture and manufacturing. By enhancing domestic production capabilities, Nigeria can create



jobs and reduce poverty, thereby paving the way for a more resilient and sustainable economy (Ogunleye, 2021).

Moreover, self-reliance empowers communities by promoting local entrepreneurship. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are vital for economic growth in Nigeria, as they account for a significant percentage of job creation. However, entrepreneurs often face obstacles, such as lack of access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, and regulatory challenges (Ojo, 2018). Addressing these barriers is essential for fostering a self-reliant economy. The government must prioritize policies that facilitate business development, provide microfinance options, and reduce bureaucratic hurdles (Adetayo *et al.*, 2021). Education and skill development play pivotal roles in fostering self-reliance in Nigeria. By investing in human capital, the country can cultivate a workforce that is equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary for innovation and productivity. The implementation of vocational training programs and education reforms that focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) is crucial for empowering individuals and communities (Akanbi & Ibidapo, 2019). Young Nigerians must be encouraged to pursue careers in industries that align with self-reliance and sustainability, ensuring that the workforce meets the demands of the evolving global economy.

In addition, the promotion of local content in various sectors can significantly contribute to Nigeria's self-reliance. Local content policies encourage the use of domestically produced goods and services, thereby reducing dependence on imports. The Nigerian government has made strides in this direction, particularly in sectors such as oil and gas and construction (Ogunna & Nwogbo, 2020). However, for local content initiatives to be fruitful, there must be a concerted effort to support indigenous industries and build local capacity through technology transfer and knowledge sharing (Ezeani & Irabor, 2021). Sustainable agriculture represents another avenue through which self-reliance can be achieved in Nigeria. With a diverse climate that supports various agricultural activities, Nigeria has the potential to be self-sufficient in food production. Unfortunately, many farmers still face challenges related to land access, outdated farming methods, and limited access to markets (Ibrahim & Abdu, 2020). To promote sustainable agricultural practices, the government must invest in agricultural research, provide support for farmers' cooperatives, and enhance rural infrastructure (Olaniyan & Adebayo, 2019). By cultivating a robust agricultural sector, Nigeria can reduce its reliance on food imports, improve food security, and bolster rural economies.

Furthermore, self-reliance in Nigeria can be fostered through the adoption of sustainable practices in various sectors. Environmental sustainability is vitally important for long-term



development, particularly in a country endowed with vast natural resources. By promoting renewable energy, waste reduction, and conservation efforts, Nigeria can mitigate the environmental impacts of its developmental activities (Nwankwo & Akinyemi, 2018). Policies aimed at supporting renewable energy initiatives can also reduce dependence on fossil fuels, ultimately leading to a more sustainable energy future (Adeyemo & Odebiyi, 2020). Additionally, self-reliance is intricately linked with governance and accountability. Effective leadership is essential for creating an environment conducive to self-sufficiency and sustainable development. Corruption and mismanagement have hindered progress in Nigeria, resulting in the misallocation of resources and public funds (Okwuosa & Agu, 2021). A transparent and accountable governance system is crucial for ensuring that public resources are utilized effectively to promote self-reliance initiatives and sustainable development goals (SDGs). The enforcement of anti-corruption measures and the promotion of citizen engagement are vital steps in achieving responsible governance (Igbokwe et al., 2020).

Furthermore, embracing technology and innovation is integral to achieving self-reliance in today's digital age. The integration of technology in various sectors can enhance efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness. In Nigeria, the tech ecosystem is rapidly evolving, with an increasing number of startups driving innovation in areas such as fintech, agriculture, and health (Odukoya et al., 2019). Fostering a culture of innovation, Nigeria can catalyze economic growth, reduce unemployment, and ensure sustainable development that aligns with self-reliant principles (Dabiri & Olanrewaju, 2020). Additionally, collaboration between the government, private sector, and civil society is essential for promoting self-reliance and sustainable development. Multistakeholder partnerships can pool resources, expertise, and knowledge, creating synergies that drive impactful initiatives (Abimbola & Ibrahim, 2021). For instance, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives can complement government efforts by providing support for community-based programs that promote education, health, and entrepreneurship. These collaborations must be strategically aligned with Nigeria's development goals to ensure a cohesive approach to achieving self-reliance.

Theoretical Frameworks

This paper employed two theories. They are:

Self-Reliance Theory

The Self-Reliance Theory was propounded by Kwame Nkrumah, a Ghanaian politician and philosopher, in 1963 (Nkrumah, 1963) cited in Morah (2021). Nkrumah argued that African



countries must rely on their own resources and capabilities to achieve economic and social development. The theory is based on the assumption that African countries have the potential to develop themselves without relying on external aid or assistance (Nkrumah, 1963). This assumption is rooted in the idea that African countries have a rich cultural heritage and natural resources that can be harnessed for development.

The Self-Reliance Theory also assumes that external aid and assistance can create dependency and undermine the ability of African countries to develop themselves (Amin, 2017). This assumption is based on the idea that external aid and assistance can create a culture of dependency and undermine the incentives for African countries to develop their own resources and capabilities. Despite its popularity in the 1960s and 1970s, the Self-Reliance Theory has been subject to various criticisms (Rodney, 1972). One of the main criticisms is that the theory is overly simplistic and fails to take into account the complexities of the global economy (Amin, 2017). Another criticism of the Self-Reliance Theory is that it ignores the historical and structural factors that have contributed to the underdevelopment of African countries (Rodney, 2017). This criticism is based on the idea that African countries have been subject to centuries of colonialism, slavery, and other forms of exploitation that have undermined their ability to develop themselves.

Despite these criticisms, the Self-Reliance Theory remains an important contribution to the debate on African development. The theory highlights the importance of African countries taking control of their own development and relying on their own resources and capabilities. In this study, however, the Self-Reliance Theory is particularly relevant to the study of Nigeria's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The theory highlights the importance of Nigeria taking control of its own development and relying on its own resources and capabilities to achieve the SDGs (United Nations, 2015). In the context of Nigeria's implementation of the SDGs, the Self-Reliance Theory suggests that the country should prioritize the development of its own resources and capabilities, rather than relying on external aid and assistance. This approach would enable Nigeria to achieve the SDGs in a sustainable and self-reliant manner, rather than relying on external factors that may undermine its ability to develop itself.

Dependency Theory

The Dependency Theory was propounded by Raúl Prebisch, an Argentine economist, in the 1950s (Prebisch, 1950). The theory gained prominence in the 1960s and 1970s through the works of other scholars such as Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, and Immanuel Wallerstein (Frank, 1966; Amin, 1976; Wallerstein, 1974). The central premise of Dependency Theory is that the



development of many countries is conditioned by their exploitation and extraction of resources by more powerful nations, leading to a state of dependence that restricts self-sustained growth. The theory is based on the assumption that the global economy is characterized by a center-periphery relationship, where the developed countries (the center) exploit the underdeveloped countries (the periphery) through trade and investment (Prebisch, 1950) cited in Austin (2023). The theory argues that this relationship leads to the underdevelopment of the periphery countries, as they are forced to specialize in the production of primary commodities for export to the center countries. Corroborating this, Austin (2023, p. 92) mentions that:

At the core of Dependency Theory are critical assumptions regarding the relationship between core (developed) and peripheral (developing) nations. One key assumption is that resources flow from the poor, underdeveloped countries to the wealthy, developed nations, leading to inequality and a lack of development in peripheral states (Frank, 1966). This dynamic not only perpetuates poverty and underdevelopment in the less economically developed nations but also creates an economic structure that favors the core nations. Also, the theory argues that technological and financial avenues available to peripheral states are predominantly controlled by core nations, exacerbating the cycle of dependency and inhibiting true economic independence.

The Dependency Theory also assumes that the underdevelopment of the periphery countries is not due to their internal characteristics, such as lack of resources or poor governance, but rather due to their position in the global economy (Frank, 2016). The theory argues that the periphery countries are forced to adopt economic policies that benefit the center countries, rather than their own development. One of the main criticisms of the Dependency Theory is that it oversimplifies the complex relationships between countries and ignores the role of internal factors in shaping development outcomes (Bhagwati, 2016). Critics also argue that the theory is too pessimistic and fails to recognize the potential for development and growth in the periphery countries. Despite these criticisms, the Dependency Theory remains an important contribution to the study of development and underdevelopment (Amin, 2019). The theory highlights the need



to consider the global context in which development takes place and the ways in which the global economy can shape development outcomes.

The Dependency Theory is particularly relevant to the study of Nigeria's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015). The theory suggests that Nigeria's underdevelopment is not due to internal factors, such as lack of resources or poor governance, but rather due to its position in the global economy. Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on the export of primary commodities, such as oil and natural gas, which makes it vulnerable to fluctuations in the global commodity market (OPEC, 2020). This vulnerability is a classic example of the center-periphery relationship described by the Dependency Theory, where the periphery country (Nigeria) is forced to specialize in the production of primary commodities for export to the center countries. The Dependency Theory also suggests that Nigeria's underdevelopment is due to its adoption of economic policies that benefit the center countries, rather than its own development (Amin, 1976). For example, Nigeria's membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) has forced it to adopt trade policies that benefit the center countries, rather than its own development (WTO, 2020).

In order to achieve the SDGs, Nigeria must adopt a self-reliant approach to development that prioritizes the development of its own resources and capabilities, rather than relying on external aid and assistance. This approach requires a fundamental transformation of Nigeria's economy and society, including the development of new industries and technologies, and the empowerment of local communities and businesses.

METHODOLOGY

This study will employ a qualitative research approach, utilizing a case study design to explore the role of self-reliance theory in Nigeria's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The study will focus on gathering in-depth, contextualized data through primary sources, including semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders involved in Nigeria's SDGs implementation, such as policymakers, development experts, and community leaders. Additionally, the study will conduct focus group discussions with community members and analyze relevant documents, such as policy briefs, reports, and academic literature, to gain a deeper understanding of the research context. The data collection process will be guided by a thematic framework, which will be developed based on the research objectives and literature review. The data analysis will involve coding, categorization, and thematic analysis, using qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo or Atlas.ti. The study will also employ member



checking and peer debriefing to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal that Nigeria's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been hindered by various challenges, including the country's over-reliance on foreign aid and external expertise (African Development Bank, 2020). The study also found that the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria requires a nuanced understanding of the country's development context, including its unique challenges and opportunities (United Nations, 2020). One of the key findings of this study is that self-reliance theory offers a promising framework for rethinking Nigeria's approach to development (Nkrumah, 1963). The theory emphasizes the importance of domestic resources and capacities in driving development, which is critical for Nigeria's development given its over-reliance on external factors (Amin, 1976).

However, the study also found that the application of self-reliance theory in Nigeria's development context is complicated by the country's deep-seated integration into the global economy (Rodrik, 2019). Globalization has created new opportunities for economic growth and development, but it has also exacerbated Nigeria's dependence on foreign capital and expertise (Stiglitz, 2018). The study also found that the dominance of Western-based development models and theories has limited the scope for African-led development initiatives (Mkandawire, 2014). The imposition of external development frameworks has often disregarded local contexts, cultures, and knowledge systems, leading to the failure of many development projects in Nigeria (Ake, 1981). In addition, the study found that the Nigerian government's efforts to implement the SDGs have been hampered by inadequate funding, weak institutional capacities, and limited engagement with local communities (African Development Bank, 2020). The lack of a coherent national development strategy has also hindered the effective implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria (United Nations, 2020).

The findings of this study have implications for policymakers, development practitioners, and scholars. Firstly, the study highlights the need for Nigeria to adopt a self-reliant approach to development, one that prioritizes domestic resources and capacities (Nkrumah, 1963). This requires a fundamental transformation of Nigeria's economy and society, including the development of new industries and technologies, and the empowerment of local communities and businesses. Secondly, the study emphasizes the need for Nigeria to rethink its approach to globalization, one that promotes domestic resources and capacities, rather than relying on external factors (Rodrik, 2019). This requires a careful balancing of Nigeria's integration into the



global economy with the need to promote domestic development. Thirdly, the study highlights the need for Nigeria to develop a coherent national development strategy, one that prioritizes domestic resources and capacities, and promotes sustainable and inclusive development (United Nations, 2020). This requires a collaborative effort between the government, private sector, civil society, and local communities.

Finally, the study emphasizes the need for Nigeria to promote African-led development initiatives, ones that prioritize local contexts, cultures, and knowledge systems (Mkandawire, 2014). This requires a fundamental shift in the way development is approached in Nigeria, one that prioritizes local ownership and leadership.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical intersection of self-reliance theory and Nigeria's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) against the backdrop of globalization. The findings indicate that while globalization presents opportunities for economic growth, it has also entrenched Nigeria's dependency on foreign aid and expertise, undermining the potential for sustainable development rooted in domestic resources and capacities. Self-reliance theory emerges as a compelling framework for rethinking Nigeria's development policies, advocating for a shift away from external reliance toward a focus on local capabilities, cultural heritage, and community engagement. Thus, by prioritizing domestic initiatives, Nigeria not only stands a better chance at achieving the SDGs but also at fostering a resilient economy that is less vulnerable to global market fluctuations.

Also, the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria necessitates a fundamental transformation of the existing development paradigm, emphasizing the importance of a coherent national development strategy that aligns with the unique challenges and opportunities within the country. This study calls for a collaborative approach that includes the government, private sector, and civil society in crafting policies that empower local communities and leverage indigenous knowledge systems. Ultimately, fostering a self-reliant approach to development can lead to more sustainable and equitable growth trajectories for Nigeria, serving as a model for other African nations grappling with similar issues. If local resources and capacities are prioritized, Nigeria can redefine its engagement with globalization, ensuring that it not only survives in the global economy but thrives sustainably and inclusively.



Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Nigeria should adopt a self-reliant approach to development, one that prioritizes domestic resources and capacities.
- ii. Nigeria should promote African-led development initiatives, ones that prioritize local contexts, cultures, and knowledge systems.
- iii. Nigeria should develop a coherent national development strategy, one that prioritizes domestic resources and capacities, and promotes sustainable and inclusive development.
- iv. Nigeria should prioritize investment in human capital, including education, healthcare, and vocational training.
- v. Nigeria should promote entrepreneurship and innovation, particularly among young people and women.
- vi. Nigeria should strengthen its institutional capacities, including its public sector, civil society, and private sector.
- vii. Nigeria should promote regional integration and cooperation, particularly through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

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