

Exploring the Anthropocentric Attitude of Nigerians to Climate Change: Implications for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

The far-reaching consequences of climate change; a global phenomenon are more profound in developing countries like Nigeria, where climate-related disasters are becoming more frequent and severe. Despite the growing awareness of climate change and its impact on the environment, Nigerians continue to exhibit an anthropocentric attitude, which undermines the efforts to mitigate and adapt to the challenges posed by climate change. This study is a critical examination of the anthropocentric attitude of Nigerians to climate change and its implications for sustainable development. The findings indicate that Nigerians exhibit an anthropocentric attitude to climate change, which is reflected in their behaviours, beliefs, and values. For instance, Nigerians tend to prioritize economic development over environmental sustainability, resulting in increased greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation. Additionally, Nigerians tend to view climate change as a problem that affects only distant and future generations, rather than a current and urgent challenge that requires immediate action. The implications of the anthropocentric attitude of Nigerians to climate change include increased vulnerability to climate-related disasters, loss of biodiversity, food insecurity, and decreased human well-being. The anthropocentric attitude of Nigerians to climate change is a manifestation of a broader societal problem of unsustainable development, characterized by a disregard for the environment, resource depletion, and social inequality. The analytical, historical and evaluative methods were employed in this study to conclude that there is a need for a paradigm shift towards climate change that involves a reorientation of the attitudes, beliefs, and values of Nigerians towards the environment which can be achieved through a combination of education, public awareness campaigns, and policy interventions that promote sustainable development practices is paramount.

Key words: Climate change, Anthropocentric, Attitude, Sustainable development, and Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Climate change stands as one of the prevalent global challenges of the 21st century with significant impacts on environmental stability, economic resilience and human welfare. This phenomenon, driven primarily by anthropogenic factors such as: greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel use, deforestation, and unsustainable agricultural practices. Climate change has resulted in changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels, and extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves. Its impact is more profound in developing countries like Nigeria, where climate-related disasters are becoming more frequent and severe.

Despite the mounting evidence of climate change's impact on natural and human systems, a substantial number of the Nigerian populace continues to exhibit an anthropocentric or human-centred attitude towards the environment. This undermines the efforts to mitigate and adapt to the challenges posed by climate change. This perspective (anthropocentrism), which prioritises economic gain and human utility over ecological sustainability, has contributed to unsustainable practices such as extensive resource exploitation, deforestation, and pollution. As a result, Nigeria faces significant environmental degradation which includes biodiversity loss, soil erosion and increases vulnerability to climate-related challenges.

This study examines the anthropocentric attitudes of Nigerians towards climate change and their implications

for attaining sustainable development goals. Using analytical, historical and evaluative approaches, it explores the cultural and economic factors that reinforce this anthropocentric mindset and hinder efficient climate action. This study underscores the need for a paradigm shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism in order to promote a culture of environmental stewardship, resilience and sustainable development within the Nigerian climate. In recommending solutions, this study emphasises public education, policy interventions, and aligning with the global climate initiatives as crucial steps towards maintaining a more sustainable and climate-resilient society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In *The Republic*, Plato (2007) privileges humanity over other creatures on earth based on their endowment with the faculty of reason. Humans are blessed with three faculties; the desiring, the spirited and the rational corresponding respectively to the three classes of people found in the city; commercial, auxiliary and decision making (Plato, 2007). The individual thus is wise in the same way as the city when he employs the service of the faculty of reason in his decision making (Plato, 2007). The animals only enjoyed the faculties of desiring and spirited that make them wish to have their food and also fight for their survival in their natural habitat. The above privileging of humans over other creatures is at the background of anthropocentrism and especially the despotic disposition of humans towards nature. This rational superiority has greatly shaped the philosophers from the days of Plato and Homer towards assuming moral superiority traditionally of human beings over nonhuman animals, plants and Nature in general.

In *Politics*, Aristotle (1932) identified a hierarchy of moral priority among humans, animals and the plants. The plants exist for the sake of animals and other animals for the good of man (Aristotle, 1932). The tamed animals, man uses for food and other services while he uses the wild ones for food, clothing and the production of other instruments (Aristotle, 1932). Thus, since nature makes nothing in vain, she has made every other thing on earth for the sake of man (Aristotle, 1932). This categorization privileges man because of the acquisition of the faculty of reason above only the sensibility that places the animals especially the higher mammals above the plants and the inanimate things that exist in the world. The above view of Aristotle is also upheld in his work on ethics where he regards the slaves, animals, plants and things as subordinates to the human beings in the society. This idea of Aristotle supports the anthropocentric disposition of some philosophers that distinguish and divide humanity and other members of the community of nature and projects the humankind to dominate and use nature at their whims and caprices. Passmore would judge this notion of Aristotle as despotic that renders the humans to imposing themselves on the other members of the natural community and judging them valuable to the extent, they satisfy their wants and needs only.

In *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas (1956) opines that, rational creatures are governed for their own sakes, while others are governed in subordination to them. This is due to the view that anything which is moved only by another being has the formal character of an instrument while that which acts out of its own volition has essential character of a principal agent (Aquinas, 1956). The value that any instrument has is the one ascribed to it by the principal agent. The intellectual creatures are controlled by God as objects of care for their own sakes whereas other creatures are subordinate to the rational creatures. The intellectual creatures are free in all their acts and other creatures all serve at the free caprices of the intellectual beings. Only the intellectual creatures that are required in the universe for their own sake; and others are for the sake of the intellectual creatures.

In *Novum Organum*, Bacon (2000) maintains that humanity should not simply observe and admire nature, but rather actively manipulate and control it for their own benefit. He insists that nature should be commanded and must not be obeyed by humans (Bacon, 2000) but they must first understand the laws and workings of nature in order to control it. Humans have a duty to improve upon nature, hence we are not to imagine or suppose, but to discover, the virtues and the powers of nature, and apply them to the uses of life (Bacon, 2000). In other words, humans should seek to use their knowledge of nature to create new technologies and inventions that can improve their lives. Bacon's view on man's attitude towards nature can be characterized as one of active engagement and control, rather than passive observation and admiration whereby human intervention in shaping and improving the natural world is prominent. Man should strive to understand and control nature in order to achieve his own goals, rather than simply admiring it for its own sake.

In trying to espouse on the nature of man's dominion over nature, Descartes (2009) in his work *The Principles of Philosophy* maintains that the knowledge of the nature and the operational sequences of natural elements like fire, water, the stars, heavens, and all other bodies that environ us must be employed by human beings since it would render us, the masters and possessors of nature. He opines that every finite existence except the human mind that is identified with a consciousness is a mere machine of which men can manipulate without scruples (Passmore, 1974). Thus, he proclaims that there is nothing created from which we cannot derive some use (Descartes, 2009). Gaining the knowledge of nature and other finite things in the environment of man makes him to freely make use of nature which was not created only to serve him but which is constituted as to be potentially useful to him, thus, all in the nature are left at his disposal. As nature's governor, man should attempt to make the world a better place by virtue of their acquisition of rationality. This philosophical exhortation of Rene Descartes can be regarded as the charter of the industrial revolution and despotic attitude to nature that scientists without ecological conscience equip themselves with.

In the *Lectures on Ethics*, Kant (1997) specifically in the section titled "Of Duties to Humans to Animals and Spirits" outlines our obligations to beings that are above us and beneath us. He enumerates first of all our duties to animals, then to the spirits and finally to the inanimate creatures in the world. Animals exist only as means not for their own sake but for man who is the end of the existence. They have no self-consciousness and thus are not aware of the existence and essence. We have no immediate duty towards them but our duty towards them are indirect duties to humanity (Kant, 1997). We do not become cruel in our treatment of animals for that would dispose us towards treating other humans the same. If for instance a dog served its masters faithfully for a long time and is now old; the master should reward it by looking after it to the end so that he would not damage the kindly and humane qualities in himself which he ought to exercise in virtue of his duties to mankind (Kant, 1997). A person who displays cruelty towards animals will in no less measure do the same to other persons. There is no need therefore to destroy animals without any reason for such can be transferred to another man when such a person derives pleasure in ending lives.

In his *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel (1970) argues that nature is not perfect and that it had flaws that needed to be corrected. This is evident in his words "nature is not perfect; rather, it is a process of becoming, of overcoming its own imperfections, of correcting its own errors and moving towards a higher level of development" (Hegel, 1970). Thus, human beings have a responsibility of improving nature through their own creative activities since nature is an object of scientific inquiry. Nature is not simply a passive object to be dominated by human beings, but rather an active force that has its own inherent rationality and purpose (Hegel, 1970). He believes that human beings should strive to understand and appreciate the natural world, rather than seeking to control and dominate it only. Man knows of nature's own infinity, the indomitability of its own will, thus, he opposes his will to the whole of nature, annihilates it and derides all its forces with which it acts upon him (Martin, 2021). Confronting these, he fights them by recourse to means that he takes from nature and turns against nature itself. Hegel also argues that human beings have a responsibility to care for nature and to ensure that it is not destroyed or degraded. Hegel opines that "man has the duty to preserve and maintain the earth and its creatures, as a trust committed to him" (Hegel, 1991). He believes that human beings have a moral obligation to protect the environment and to ensure that it remains healthy and sustainable. In all, Hegel's view of man's attitude towards nature is one of respect, responsibility, and a recognition of the inherent value of the natural world.

In the essay titled "Assessing the level of awareness and attitude of Nigerians towards climate change: A case study of Enugu State", Okafor (2019) investigated on the level of awareness and attitude of Nigerians towards climate change in Enugu State. Using a survey method, the author collected data from 350 respondents and analysed the data using descriptive statistics. The findings reveal that the level of awareness of climate change is relatively high among the respondents, but their attitude towards taking actions to mitigate climate change is relatively low. The study also identified the major factors that contribute to the low attitude of Nigerians towards climate change, such as lack of education, poverty, and lack of government support. This study provides valuable insights into the current state of Nigerians' attitude towards climate change in Enugu State, and highlights the need for more education and support from the government to promote positive action towards mitigating climate change.

In the work "Perception of Climate Change and its impact on Agricultural Production among Rural Farmers in

Nigeria”, Ezeoha *et al* (2020) investigated on the perception of climate change and its impact on agricultural production among rural farmers in Nigeria. Using a questionnaire survey method, the authors collected data from two hundred and sixty rural farmers in Anambra State and analysed the data using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The findings reveal that the majority of the respondents perceive climate change as a real and serious problem that has adverse effects on agricultural production. The study also found that the impact of climate change on agricultural production varies depending on the type of crop and farming practice. The authors suggested that there is a need for more education and support for rural farmers to adapt to the challenges of climate change and to promote sustainable agricultural practices. This study provided valuable insights into the perception of climate change among rural farmers in Nigeria and highlights the urgent need for action to mitigate its impact on agriculture.

DISCUSSION

The climate is the composite or generally prevailing weather conditions of a region; as temperature, air, pressure, humidity, precipitation and sunshine, cloudiness, and winds throughout the year averaged over a series of years (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/climate>). When there are alterations, disturbances, and foreign materials in the atmosphere, the climatic conditions will be affected and from thence we can experience changes in the climate, hence, the reigning phrase of the century; climate change. In this section of the study, the notions of the Climate change, the anthropocentric attitude of Nigerians towards the Climate change and its implication to sustainable development will be enquired into.

Climate Change

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns (<https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change>). These shifts can be natural when they come from variations in the solar cycle and manmade due to burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas by human beings and their other activities. These human acts generate the greenhouse gas emissions that wrap the earth like a blanket and traps the heat rays from the sun and in the end raise the earth's temperature that will cause variations in the climatic conditions of the earth. Carbon dioxide and methane are the major greenhouse gases that cause the climate change. Apart from burning of fossil fuels the following are other activities of human beings that contributes to the rise in the earth's temperature: deforestation, landfills used for garbage disposal, smoke and gases from large scale factories and industries, agricultural activities et cetera all constitute major emitters of carbon dioxide and methane to the atmosphere. These processes and activities of humans cause the climate change that we all now suffer currently. The earth is becoming warmer and the timing and the processes of the climatic conditions are differing from their normal and usual courses.

Climate change has become a global issue as it affects every country and continent. Its negative impacts are causing economic disruptions and affecting the lives of people, communities, and nations at present and in the future. Climate change is manifested in various ways such as changing weather patterns, increasing sea levels, great atmospheric warming and extreme and irregular weather events. Human activities, particularly greenhouse gas emissions, are driving climate change, and they have reached historic levels. Failure to act on climate change will result in a projected increase in the world's average surface temperature by over 3 degrees Celsius this century, with some regions experiencing even more warming. Unfortunately, the most vulnerable and impoverished individuals are disproportionately impacted by climate change. The human causes that worsen this condition like lifestyles, production, consumption, deforestation, and combustion of fossil fuel needed to be evaluated in order to curb the sources and the effects of the climate change. Though natural factors like volcanic activities, variations in the earth's orbit, the solar cycle et cetera also constitute in the climate change but the activities of human beings are the major causes. This is so because the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides, and others) released into the atmosphere are mainly as a result of human activities (Francis, 2015). The reduction in the availability of natural resources like drinking water, annihilation of some animals and plants species, fluctuations in the sphere of the natural energy, decline in agricultural production, wild fires, depletion of the earth's biodiversity are some of the resultant consequences of the climate change.

The worst impact of the Climate Change is felt by the developing countries of the world who have limited

experiences and resources to combat the climatic outcomes of this threat. The developed countries are at the helm of the causing agents when analysing the culminative causes of the climate change yet places in Africa and other developing countries suffer most of the effects. The following are some of the climate change-related disasters in Africa; droughts, flooding, heatwaves, reduced food production, reduced economic output, increased poverty, species extinction, ecosystems disruption, increased diseases, increased water and energy insecurity, loss of natural and cultural heritage, and compound extreme events harming human settlements and critical infrastructure (Trisos *et al*, 2022). The climate change effects are also prevalent in other developing countries in other continents like Asia and South America. The suffering of all these developing countries resulting from the climate change should be of global concern because they have contributed the least to the global cumulative emissions, which are driving the climate crisis and its increasing severe effects. North America and Europe have contributed 62% of carbon dioxide emissions since the industrial revolution whereas Africa has contributed only 3% (Ritchie, 2019). The ultimate reduction of the emissions should be the goal of the global world.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations are a call for action by all countries: poor, rich and middle-income to promote prosperity while protecting the planet (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>). They acknowledge that eradicating poverty necessitates an approach that integrates strategies for fostering economic progress and catering to diverse social demands such as education, healthcare, social safety nets, employment prospects, while simultaneously tackling climate change and safeguarding the environment. Among the seventeen goals mapped out to be achieved by the United Nations before 2030, Climate Action is the thirteenth. This goal connects with other sixteen goals because of its importance since it constitutes one of the primary challenges of the human race at the moment. These are the targets of the Goal thirteen (Climate Action) of the SDGs:

To strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries. Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning. Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning. Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible. Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change>).

Researches, conferences, and studies have been ongoing in the quest of arriving at remedies to this nightmare of the entire world. Since 1995 in Berlin there have been annual conferences hosted by the United Nations on the climate change christened the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of which the 27th one was concluded in Egypt from 6th to 20th November, 2022. In his address, the United Nations Secretary-General; Antonio Guterres insists that more actions need to be performed by all to drastically reduce emissions because the world still needs a giant leap on climate ambition and climate justice. To support the developing countries that experience the bulk of the climate change impacts, there was a historic decision to establish and operationalize a loss and damage fund. The fund aims to provide financial assistance to nations most vulnerable and disturbed by the unavoidable effects of climate change like the rising sea levels, prolonged heatwaves, crop failures et cetera. This decision is in fulfilment of the decisions of the 21st Conference of the Parties in Paris, France, 2015 that finances should be provided to the developing countries to mitigate climate change, strengthen resilience and enhance abilities to adapt to climate impacts (<https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/paris-agreement>). It was also concluded that a substantial reduction of global greenhouse emissions should be pursued and the commitments of countries to the climate change course reviewed after every five years.

The 2022 reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change paints a dark picture of the future of life on earth as characterized by the collapse of the ecosystem, extinction of species and climatic hazards like heatwaves and floods which can cause physical and mental problems to humans and increase their morbidity

and mortality (Atwoli *et al.*, 2022). This is so because the effects of the climate change on the environment and the humankind are not only physical but also biological, social, psychological, and otherwise. Climatic effects are so adverse that we are all called to climate action which is a task for all of us because it concerns us all and no one can do it all alone but we can do it together. This is why the world has united in the course of curbing the actions and processes that emit the gases that are detrimental to our climate. This constitutes the thirteenth goal of the Sixteen 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations; tackling of climate change and its impact where the major target is to limit global temperature rise to below two degrees Celsius. This goal highlights the implementation of the Paris agreement as essential for the achievement of the global task of combatting climate change by providing a roadmap for climate actions that will reduce emissions and build climate resilience.

Among the global efforts made and proposed towards the resolution of the climate change in the recent times is geoengineering. This is the deliberate large-scale schemes that manipulate environmental processes like earth's oceans, soils, and the atmosphere in an attempt to counteract the effects of climate change usually temporarily (<https://www.geoengineeringmonitor.org/what-is-geoengineering/>). These processes include; solar radiation management which is the attempt to reflect sunlight back into the space, spraying tonnes of sulphates into the stratosphere, modifying clouds, plants, and ice to make them reflect more sunlight; carbon dioxide removal which is the use of biological and mechanical methods to suck carbon out of the atmosphere on a massive scale; and earth radiation management which is the offsetting of the negative effects of climate change by allowing heat to escape into the atmosphere for example by thinning cirrus clouds. Geoengineering though seems pleasant in proposal but is a false solution the climate crisis for it seeks only to address the effects of the climate change while ignoring the root causes of the trauma. The techniques have not been proven satisfactorily; hence, they are considered as speculations and could as well have massive adverse and unpredictable impacts on the environment. If the above proposals are tried and become successful, it would trigger yet another brand of human arrogance and domination of nature (Palmer *et al.*, 2014). It would as well dethrone the attribute of naturalness of which is at the base of environmental ethics. Finally, geoengineering in its different techniques would raise a lot of ethical concerns, issues and unlikely effects on the other members of our ecological community.

Manifestations of the Anthropocentric Attitude of Nigerians to Climate Change

Anthropocentrism refers to the belief that human beings are the centre of the universe and that all other beings exist to serve human interests (Taylor, 1986). In the context of climate change, anthropocentrism can manifest as a disregard for the environment, a prioritization of economic development over environmental sustainability, and a failure to recognize the urgency of the climate crisis. The Nigerian population has a long history of anthropocentrism evident in the country's socio-economic and political structures. Nigerians prioritize economic development, selfish interests and politics over environmental conservation, and this has contributed to the deterioration of the country's ecosystem. The impact of climate change is felt in Nigeria through various forms of environmental degradation, including deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, and flooding. The following are the manifestations of the anthropocentric attitude towards Climate change by Nigerians.

Disregard for the Environment: Nigerians exhibit a disregard for the environment, which is reflected in their behaviours, beliefs, and values. For instance, Nigerians tend to engage in unsustainable practices such as deforestation, illegal mining, and waste disposal, which contribute to environmental degradation and climate change (Adewale, 2019). The lack of concern for the environment is also evident in the disregard for environmental regulations and the inadequate enforcement of environmental laws (Ojo, 2013). Also, the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrialization are the primary human activities that contribute to climate change in Nigeria. The country is heavily dependent on fossil fuels such as oil and gas for energy, which release significant amounts of Green House Gases (GHGs) into the atmosphere. One of the major causes of climate change in Nigeria is the burning of fossil fuels. Nigeria is the largest oil-producing country in Africa, and its economy is heavily dependent on oil revenue. The country's oil and gas industry is responsible for 65% of its greenhouse gas emissions. Despite this, the Nigerian government has been slow to implement policies to reduce carbon emissions. Nigeria's energy sector is heavily reliant on fossil fuels, with only 11% of its energy coming from renewable sources (Adedipe, and Adegbulugbe), 2017. This dependence on fossil fuels has contributed significantly to Nigeria's carbon footprint and has made it challenging for the country to meet

its commitments under the 2015 Paris Agreement. Deforestation, which is driven by the need for agricultural land and the production of timber, reduces the amount of carbon dioxide that can be absorbed by forests, leading to an increase in GHGs in the atmosphere. In Nigeria, deforestation has been a major issue for several decades, as the country has experienced one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world (Adefolalu, 2019). Agricultural expansion, logging for timber, and fuelwood extraction are the main factors responsible for deforestation in Nigeria. The consequences of this have been the depletion of forest resources in Nigeria, leading to soil erosion, reduced biodiversity, and a decline in the availability of both timber and non-timber forest products. Furthermore, deforestation has played a role in climate change as it emits carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The act of felling trees without immediate replacements is costing Nigerians a lot with regard to Climate action because it exposes the environment to the consequences of climate change. Despite efforts by the Nigerian government to combat deforestation through policies and programs, such as reforestation and afforestation initiatives, their success has been impeded by challenges such as insufficient funding and enforcement. Industrialization, which is driven by the need for economic growth, results in a lot of activities that go against the dictates of environmental conservation. All the indices above point to the fact that Nigerians have no regard for their environment and are always ready to welcome any negative consequence of Nature as much as they can without going all out to remedy the causative factors. The consequence of this disregard is the exacerbation of the negative impacts of climate change on the environment and human life.

Prioritization of Economic Development over Environmental Sustainability: Nigerians tend to prioritize economic development over environmental sustainability, resulting in increased greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation. Economic development in Nigeria is primarily driven by the extractive industries, such as oil and gas, mining, and logging, which have a significant impact on the environment (Adegbite and Adekoya, 2017). The government's focus on economic growth has led to policies that favour economic development at the expense of environmental sustainability. For example, the government has been slow to adopt renewable energy technologies, such as solar and wind power, and has continued to subsidize fossil fuel consumption (Onwuka, 2019). As a result, Nigeria is one of the largest greenhouse gas emitters in Africa, contributing to global climate change. The quest to achieve economic prowess overrides the need to sustain the environment and reduce the impact of Climate change by taking necessary actions.

Failure to Recognize the Urgency of the Climate Crisis: Nigerians tend to view climate change as a problem that affects only distant and future generations, rather than a current and urgent challenge that requires immediate action. This attitude is evident in the lack of awareness and preparedness for climate-related disasters, such as flooding and droughts (Iwoha and Onudugo, 2019). The failure to recognize the urgency of the climate crisis also manifests in the inadequate response to the effects of climate change, such as food insecurity and loss of biodiversity. The lack of action is attributed to the belief that climate change is a problem that affects only developed countries, and Nigeria is not responsible for its mitigation and adaptation (Oludayo *et al*, 2020). For instance, Oluwadare and Adejuwon (2018) found that there is a generally low level of awareness and understanding of climate change among the Nigerian population. Similarly, Adedeji and Fagbenle (2017) reported that while there is some recognition of the problem of climate change, there is a lack of political will and policy implementation to address it in Nigeria. There is this complacent attitude showcased by many Nigerians when they notice climatic alterations as phenomena that should naturally take care of themselves. This shows the anthropocentric gait that human beings are above the Nature and can always get away with their abuse of natural conditions and processes.

Consumption Pattern: The anthropocentric attitude of Nigerians towards climate change is also evident in their consumption patterns. Nigerians have a high demand for consumer goods, including electronics, cars, and other luxury items that contribute significantly to carbon emissions. Nigerians are also known for their love of comfort that refrigerators and air conditioners provide without considering the carbon that they emit which consequently contribute to the continual depletion of the ozone layer. As ozone layer depletes, it emits harmful ultra violet radiation harmful to living organisms, and increases the risk of skin cancer and other harmful effects on human health. With the knowledge of the Green House Gases that are detrimental to the health of the ecosystem, many nations of the world now go for products that are eco-friendly. The consumption pattern of many Nigerians is seemingly selfish without much consideration of the harms the products they use cause the environment. Once, the products do not cause immediate harm to the consumers then there would be no cause for alarm. This is why there are a lot of used plastic bottles, cellophanes, and such objects improperly

disposed in the streets and water bodies of Nigeria.

Civilisation without Ecological Conscience: Ecological conscience is the disposition of humans allowing themselves to bridge the gap between their illusions of separateness from and superiority over what they have come to think as ‘nature’, and to recognize that they are not only tied to nature, but that they are nature (Disch, 1970). It is a disposition that accentuates the fact that human life is an integral functioning component of natural processes and as such, human beings are not separate from the rest of the natural world. In the wake of the exploits and achievements of science and technology, human beings plunged into civilising the world. In Nigeria, people cut down trees without replanting for housing and trade purposes, sand-fill water bodies to erect buildings, drill boreholes and mine some natural resources deposited in the lithosphere recklessly without employing the professional services of the geologists. All these are in bids to civilise the world but they do these without ecological conscience that embellishes one with the ecological wisdom that aids in understanding and addressing the conflicts between viable ecosystems and modern concepts such as private property, capitalism, excessive consumption, and resource depletion, which are inconsistent with a healthy civilization. Man will then understand that there is no natural right to exterminate a form of life; that one is not entitled to desecrate earth, air, water or space merely because he happens to own, control or occupy some portion of it; and that the fact of legality in a human court cannot remove ecological crimes from having planetary implications for all mankind (Disch, 1970). Prudence then should be the watch word of human beings in civilising the earth for our own ultimate good and safety. Thus, civilization becomes a social formation, consistent with the repair and ongoing renewal of Earth’s life in all its abundance, beauty and ecological diversity and instituting entirely new modes of praxis that integrate economic production with ecological functionality (Mathews, 2020). Bearing in mind that any alteration of the processes of Nature comes with its nemesis will tame the anthropocentric attitude of Nigerians towards the environment.

Anthropocentric Attitude to Climate Change in Nigeria and Its Implication to Sustainable Development

The anthropocentric attitude towards climate change in Nigeria has implications for sustainable development. Sustainable development is a development approach that seeks to balance economic, social, and environmental considerations (United Nations’ General Assembly). The anthropocentric attitude towards climate change in Nigeria has led to an unsustainable development path that neglects environmental protection and sustainability. This has resulted in negative impacts on the environment and society, such as environmental degradation, soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, displacement of communities due to flooding and desertification, loss of biodiversity, food insecurity, and decreased human well.

Nigeria has experienced changes in temperature, rainfall patterns, and sea level rise. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2021), the average temperature in Nigeria has increased by 1.1°C since the pre-industrial era, and it is projected to increase by an additional 1.4°C by the end of the 21st century. The increase in temperature has led to more frequent heatwaves and a reduction in agricultural productivity. The country has also experienced changes in rainfall patterns, with some regions experiencing more intense and frequent rainfall events while others experience droughts. The changes in rainfall patterns have led to flooding, crop failure, and a decrease in the availability of freshwater resources. Nigeria's coastal regions have also experienced sea level rise, leading to the erosion of beaches and the loss of land. These changes in the climatic conditions of Nigeria constitute nuisance to the sustainable development of the nation since these conditions that are important to planning and execution of plans and policies by individuals and the government fluctuate and are indeterminable.

Environmental degradation refers to the process by which natural ecosystems are damaged, leading to soil erosion, deforestation, and desertification, which, in turn, has led to a decline in agricultural productivity. This is often caused by human activities such as overgrazing, logging, and unsustainable land use practices common with Nigerians. Soil erosion occurs when the topsoil is washed away by water or blown away by wind, resulting in the loss of vital nutrients that plants need to grow. This can lead to decreased agricultural productivity, as crops may not have the necessary nutrients to thrive. Deforestation is the removal of trees and other vegetation from an area, often for the purpose of clearing land for agriculture or development. This can lead to a loss of habitat for animals and a decline in biodiversity, as well as soil erosion and decreased agricultural productivity. Desertification occurs when land that was once fertile becomes increasingly arid and

unable to support vegetation. This can be caused by a variety of factors, including overgrazing, climate change, and unsustainable land use practices. Desertification can lead to a decline in agricultural productivity, as well as the displacement of people and wildlife. The combination of soil erosion, deforestation, and desertification can have a significant impact on agricultural productivity, ultimately affecting food security and the livelihoods of millions of people around the world.

Impacts of climate change also includes flooding and drought, displacing millions of people, sinking them into poverty and hunger, denying them access to basic services, such as health and education, expanding inequalities, stifling economic growth and even causing conflict. For example, the recurring floods and droughts in Nigeria have resulted in the displacement of thousands of people, loss of lives, and damage to infrastructure (Nnaji et al, 2019). During the 2022 flood that occurred in the riverine states of Nigeria, a lot of people were displaced, agricultural and other activities where the citizens sustain their families from were suspended, educational activities and other developmental activities were grounded.

The loss of biodiversity in Nigeria has been a significant concern for both scientists and policymakers due to its negative impacts on ecosystem services. Biodiversity loss has contributed to the degradation of ecosystem services such as water regulation, carbon sequestration, and nutrient cycling (Olaniyi, Adeniyi and Adeyemo, 2020). As a result, this has adversely affected the Nigerian ecosystem, leading to soil erosion, reduced water quality, and increased carbon emissions. The loss of animal and plant species in Nigeria is primarily attributed to habitat destruction and climate change, which have been identified as the most significant drivers of biodiversity loss (Olaniyi, Adeniyi and Adeyemo, 2020). These factors have led to the decline in populations of many important species, including medicinal plants, which play a crucial role in traditional medicine and are an essential source of income for many rural communities (Ajibesin *et al*, 2021) The loss of biodiversity in Nigeria poses a severe threat to the country's food security, as many of the species that are facing extinction are critical for food production and medicinal purposes (Osemeobo *et al*, 2020). For example, the loss of pollinators such as bees and butterflies, which are essential for crop production, can lead to a significant reduction in food production (Owens *et al*, 2020). The loss of biodiversity in Nigeria is a significant environmental challenge that has negative consequences for ecosystem services, food security, and human health. Therefore, it is crucial to implement effective conservation measures and policies to protect and restore biodiversity in Nigeria.

In furtherance, food insecurity is a persistent problem in Nigeria and is further compounded by the effects of climate change. The country has experienced various climatic changes that have led to crop failure, water scarcity, and food shortages (Akande *et al*, 2020). Climate change has resulted in an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as droughts, floods, and heatwaves, which have adversely affected agricultural production in the country (Adegboyega et al, 2021). According to a report by the United Nations Development Programme, the effects of climate change are responsible for the growing levels of food insecurity in Nigeria. The report highlights that the decline in agricultural productivity due to climate change has led to an increase in food prices, which has made it difficult for many households to afford nutritious food. Climate change has resulted in the loss of natural resources such as forests, fisheries, and wildlife, which are crucial sources of food and livelihoods for many people in Nigeria. The impacts of climate change are not limited to agricultural production but also affect food processing and storage systems. The lack of reliable power supply in Nigeria has led to the widespread use of traditional food preservation methods, such as sun-drying and smoking, which are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (Akande *et al*, 2020). For instance, high humidity levels caused by climate change have resulted in increased fungal contamination of dried fish, a popular source of protein in Nigeria. Food insecurity remains a significant challenge in Nigeria, exacerbated by the effects of climate change. Climate change impacts agricultural production, food prices, and food processing and storage systems, leading to reduced access to nutritious food for many households. Therefore, there is a need for concerted efforts to address the impacts of climate change with regard to food security in Nigeria.

To achieve sustainable development in Nigeria, it is important to shift towards an ecocentric approach that prioritizes environmental protection and sustainability. According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". In Nigeria, the environment has been severely degraded due to a combination of factors, including deforestation, oil exploration, and unsustainable

land use practices (Oduwaye and Olanrewaju, 2019). This has led to a range of environmental problems, including soil erosion, desertification, and climate change. To address these challenges and promote sustainable development, it is necessary to shift towards renewable energy sources such as solar and wind energy. This is because these sources of energy are clean, abundant, and do not produce harmful emissions that contribute to climate change (Odionye *et al*, 2019). The adoption of renewable energy sources can lead to job creation and economic growth. To promote environmental protection and sustainability, the government must implement policies and programs that support afforestation, reforestation, and waste management programs. These programs can help to restore degraded landscapes, reduce carbon emissions, and improve air and water quality. For example, afforestation and reforestation programs can help to increase forest cover, which can improve soil fertility, reduce soil erosion, and provide habitat for wildlife. Waste management programs can help to reduce the amount of waste that ends up in landfills, promote recycling and composting, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Uyigue and Agho, 2007). The anthropocentric attitude towards climate change in Nigeria has led to the destruction of natural resources, high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and unsustainable development. To achieve sustainable development, there is a need to shift towards an ecocentric approach that considers the environment as an essential component of development. This will require a change in attitudes towards climate change and the adoption of sustainable development practices that balance economic, social, and environmental considerations.

Remedies to the Anthropocentric Attitude of Nigerians to Climate Change

Climate change is a global phenomenon with significant environmental and socio-economic implications. It is primarily caused by human activities, and Nigeria is not exempted from contributing to climate change due to the anthropocentric attitude of Nigerians. The remedies to the anthropocentric attitude of Nigerians to climate change that has implications to sustainable development within this section of the study are discussed under three stances; the general approach, the attitudinal approach and the recommended actions of the United Nations.

The general approach of combating the anthropocentric attitude of Nigerians to climate change constitute in recommendations like education and awareness campaigns that would douse the careless and selfish inclinations in Nigerians. Education can help individuals understand the environmental implications of their actions and promote sustainable practices that mitigate climate change (Kasumu, 2016). The Nigerian government can also develop and implement educational programs that promote environmental sustainability in schools and communities. Another remedy is the adoption of green technologies and practices that reduce carbon emissions. For instance, the use of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydro can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The adoption of energy-efficient appliances and buildings that can reduce energy consumption and minimize carbon footprints should be encouraged in Nigeria. Policies and regulations that promote environmental sustainability should be developed and implemented. The Nigerian government can implement laws that limit deforestation, promote afforestation, and encourage the use of renewable energy sources that support the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices that can reduce carbon emissions from agricultural activities. Also, collaborative efforts among individuals, communities, governments, and other stakeholders are essential to mitigate the effects of anthropocentric attitudes towards climate change. Kasumu (2017) also suggests that community-based programs such as tree planting, recycling, and waste management initiatives can help to reduce carbon emissions and promote environmental sustainability. The implementation of these remedies can promote sustainable development in Nigeria and mitigate the negative effects of climate change.

The attitudinal approach to the anthropocentric attitude of Nigerians to climate change constitutes in the reorientation of the attitudes, beliefs, and values of Nigerians towards the environment. The anthropocentric attitude which propels one to be despotic to Nature should be expunged by the Nigerians to let in the attitudes of stewardship and co-operation with Nature. this attitudinal change is important for Nigerians because it will douse their anthropocentric tendencies and make the accept that they are part of the natural community and should not be placed over other beings both animate and inanimate since all the creatures are both intrinsically and instrumentally important. This will enable them to react in ways that will combat the effects of the climate change and in the long run ensure sustainable development among Nigerians. Our relationship with nature should not one of domination and control, but of stewardship and responsibility, and it is up to us to ensure a sustainable future for all (McKibben, 2019). Men as stewards and trustees of God to nature are endowed with an inalienable duty and concern for the entire environment including all there is and all lifeforms in the present

and the future tenses. This duty and concern make them responsible in managing the environment appropriately to enable its sustainability. Again, man's role as a steward to nature intertwines with man's duty of perfecting nature by co-operating with her. Nature from its etymology *nascere* meaning 'to be born' or 'to come into being' suggests the imperfectability of nature that renders it available to be perfected by the activities of man. Man in a bid to perform this task requires the skill of mastery that perfects nature. This skill should not be adopted by man to enslave, destroy, or taunt nature. The way artists treat their materials with respect, tenderness and care should be the same way man should treat nature as a potential being. The onus lies on man to make the potential being an actual being by co-operating with her in all ramifications.

Another comprehensive way of alienating the anthropocentric attitude of Nigerians to climate change is by the adoption of the ten actions recommended by the United Nations (2023) to tackle the climate crisis. Firstly, Nigerians should save energy at homes by lowering their heating and cooling and switching to energy-efficient appliances. Secondly, walking, biking, or taking public transport to reduce burning of fossil fuels and other greenhouse gas emissions. Again, Nigerians should eat more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds, and less meat and dairy, to significantly lower their environmental impact. In general, the production of plant-based foods generates fewer greenhouse gas emissions and utilizes less energy, land, and water. By transitioning from a mixed to a vegetarian diet, an individual could potentially decrease their carbon footprint by as much as 500 kilograms of CO₂e annually (or up to 900 kilograms for a vegan diet). They can consider their travels and choose only the means of transportation that contribute less to the GHGs emissions. They should throw away less food since food rots in a landfill produce methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that also contribute in depleting the ozone layer. Adopting the principle of reduce, reuse, repair and recycle in their commodities consumption pattern. They should change their homes' sources of energy to renewable ones where possible such as wind and solar which can reduce carbon footprint by up to 1.5 tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (CO₂e) per year. The Nigerian government should plan on how to put in place provisions that would enable Nigerians to Switch from diesel or gas-powered cars to electric vehicles which can reduce one's carbon footprint by up to 2 tons of CO₂e per year. Nigerians should make their money count by choosing products and services from companies who use resources responsibly and are committed to cutting their gas emissions and waste. Finally, Nigerians are employed to speak up and get others to join them in taking action. This is one of the quickest and most effective ways to make a difference in the task of climate action. They should talk to their neighbours, colleagues, friends, and family. Let business owners know their support bold changes. Appeals should be made to their local and national leaders to act now. Climate action is a task for all of us because it concerns all. No one can do it all alone, but all can do it together.

It is pertinent at this point to note that there are factors in Nigeria that would ground the efforts of many in consciously being participatory in the climate action goal. Illiteracy, poverty, lack of good governmental policies and principles are some of the factors. For instance, the populace of rural communities that have good understanding of climate change and its impacts on their livelihoods, lack the necessary resources and infrastructure to adapt to the changing climate. Though the condition of the nation is not totally conducive for this fight, citizens can take actions within their reach to contribute in the global climate action to mitigate the climate change.

RESULTS

The indifferent disposition of Nigerians towards the imminent fall outs of the changes in the climatic conditions of the country is birthed by their anthropocentric attitude towards the environment. This attitude is despotic and tends to place human beings in a privileged position that makes them see themselves as not part of Nature and more important than other members of the eco-community. Nigerians queuing into this trend expose themselves to the consequences of the climate change that hinders their sustainable development. The ecocentric approach that prioritizes environmental protection and sustainability by insisting on the importance of all the beings in the ecosystem as members or parts of the whole; human beings inclusive. This will enthrone the attitudes of stewardship and co-operation with nature that would help Nigerians to adopt values, change their biases and ideals that make them indifferent to the teeming effects of the climate change like floods, drought, food insecurity, rise in temperature and sea levels *et cetera*. Three basic remedies that would mitigate the effects of climate change for the sake of maintaining sustainable development in Nigeria are:

educating and campaigning to create awareness that would douse the careless and selfish inclinations of Nigerians towards the environment: a change in the anthropocentric attitude of Nigerians to climate change which constitutes in the reorientation of the attitudes, beliefs, and values of Nigerians towards the environment; and the adoption of the ten actions recommended by the United Nations in tackling the climate crisis.

CONCLUSION

The pervasive anthropocentric attitude of the Nigerian society is a significant barrier in addressing the menace of climate change and achieving sustainable development. This study has highlighted how prioritising human needs over ecological well-being not only exacerbates environmental degradation but also deepens Nigeria's vulnerability to climate-related issues that include: food insecurity, biodiversity loss, and social inequality. Shifting from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric stance is not merely a philosophical change but a practical necessity for ensuring the long-term sustainability of Nigeria's development.

To combat these challenges efficiently, it is paramount to reshape public attitudes and policies towards a balanced approach that values environmental stewardship as an integral component of economic progress. This can be achieved through comprehensive education programs, stricter environmental policies, and promoting green technologies, each supported by a concerted effort from the government, civil society, and individual communities. By embedding these practices into the framework of Nigerian society, the country can move towards a development model that harmonises human progress with ecological resilience.

As Nigeria confronts the impacts of climate change, adopting attitudes of stewardship and cooperation with nature will be essential. This paradigm shift will not only aid Nigeria in meeting the demands of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but will also help create a healthier, more resilient environment for future generations. It is therefore only through this integrated approach can Nigeria ensure that its development trajectory is sustainable, inclusive and reflective of a commitment to the planet that sustains all life.

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