Socioeconomic Impediments of Development in Africa: A case of Nigeria

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Abstract

The rise of individualism in Africa appears to stem from a sense of despondency linked to the failure of various policy initiatives to enhance communal welfare, highlighting the importance of socio-economic development. This study investigates the socio-economic barriers to development in Nigeria. Utilizing the Chi-square technique, data were analyzed from a survey based on questionnaires distributed among selected units using a multistage random sampling method. The findings of the study indicate that dependency mentality, despondency, and a survivalist culture all have effect on development. Notably, while despondency and the survivalist culture show significant effects, the dependency mentality's effect was found to be negligible. This research contributes to existing literature by pinpointing key socio-economic barriers to development which encompass a range of other factors, establishing the connection between social and economic obstacles to development and making finding effective solutions easier. As a result, the study advocates for the implementation of re-orientation programs as part of localized, result-oriented development strategies aimed at effectively addressing the pressing economic challenges facing the nation, while also transforming public mindset.

Keywords: Socio-economic, Development, Nigeria
JEL Classification codes: D80, E31, I32

INTRODUCTION

Developing nations often seem to be hesitant about making progress, especially in the world's poorest regions. The slow pace of development, combined with a latent resistance to positive change amid unethical behaviors, and a tendency to repeat unsuccessful policy choices highlight the intricate social dynamics that contribute to Africa's developmental issues. These socio-economic challenges often manifest in three key ways: (i) a continual fall for the deception of both local and international adversaries—this includes local saboteurs, organized crime rings, Bretton Woods Institutions, and predatory nations that hinder local economic growth, often perpetuating an imperialist or dependency mentality; (ii) a pervasive disbelief in the possibility of national improvement, which fosters a sense of despondence; and (iii) an inclination to pursue better living standards through selfish and unscrupulous means, often described as individualistic culture (Davies & Wali., 2020; Sonntag, 2001).

The economies of many African countries struggle relentlessly to enhance their performance levels. This dire economic situation means that many residents are primarily focused on survival. A significant portion of the population grapples to meet basic needs due to low incomes, while governments also struggle with limited resources and seem uncertain about how to address these pressing issues.

Economic development is not just a vague concept; it often feels out of reach. The ambiguity surrounding the term stems from the numerous components involved, making the goal of achieving a high level of development all the more challenging. Policymakers in developing countries often distribute resources in a scattered manner rather than implementing focused, strategic initiatives to drive progress. This approach, which aligns with popular views found in several significant foreign texts, has proven to be ineffective Todaro & Smith, 2011).

One clear sign of the shortcomings of widely accepted economic policy advice is the struggle faced by many developing countries in maintaining stable exchange rates for their currencies. The threat of currency depreciation not only hampers government efforts toward development but also worsens poverty levels. When currency values drop, the progress achieved through development initiatives can easily evaporate. If exchange rates remained steady, a modest increase in wages would translate directly into higher real income. However, when the value of a domestic currency is continuously declining, even a nominal income increase does not guarantee an improvement in real income.

The tendency to prioritize sentiment over merit in the public sectors of many African countries underscores the complex socio-economic challenges that contribute to developmental issues. Another dimension of this situation is the continued adherence to the recommendations from international institutions and foreign economic experts by the government of countries in Africa, whose advice may not always resonate with the region's realities or produce the desired results.

While earlier studies have identified various socio-economic barriers to development, this study identifies three significant socio-economic obstacles that encompass all other challenges. This focused perspective sheds light on the root causes of both socio-economic and economic hindrances to improving economic development, paving the way for more effective solutions (Corrigan, 2009; Davies & Wali, 2020; Itumo, 2017; Umeghalu, 2024)

This study broadly attempts to identify the key obstacles hindering economic development in Nigeria, with a focus on their socio-economic nature. By pinpointing the root causes of these hurdles, the study aims to facilitate the search for effective solutions. Specifically, the study will explore the effect of dependency mentality, individualistic culture, and despondency on economic development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Issues

Dependency Mentality: From the perspectives of social and interpersonal dynamics, dependency refers to a scenario in which an individual, group, or society relies on external resources, support, or guidance. A dependency mentality embodies a mindset that suggests one cannot thrive without outside assistance. At the national level, this mentality is often prevalent in technology-challenged societies that lean heavily on more technologically advanced nations for a significant portion of their needs, whether obtained through imports, knowledge and technology transfers, or foreign aid (Sonntag, 2001).

Despondency: This term describes a state of unhappiness devoid of hope or motivation. It encapsulates a profound sense of dissatisfaction fueled by struggles, often accompanied by the belief that one cannot prevail. Despondency is notably common among people in underdeveloped nations, largely due to the pervasive belief that the economic challenges they face have resisted all attempts at resolution, whether through local or international efforts. Consequently, there is a mindset that their plight is beyond salvation (Sonntag, 2001).

Individualistic Culture: Individualistic culture is defined by the principle of individualism, where emphasis is placed on the individual over the group. In such cultures, people are driven by personal preferences and perspectives, perceiving each other as loosely connected within a diverse community that includes different races, ethnicities, languages, and cultures. Individualism arises from despondency and is intensified by nepotism. When collective efforts to enhance communal welfare repeatedly fail, people begin to lose hope and prioritize personal interests over those of the group. This situation worsens when the advancement of a minority is normalized at the expense of the majority (Rhee et al., 1995; Yoo et al., 2011).

STYLIZED FACTS

Concept of Development and Vague Development Efforts in Africa

Economic development across Africa has faced significant obstacles, leaving many countries struggling to reach a high level of advancement. Despite the intentions of policymakers to tackle these hurdles, the continent, rich in resources, continues to grapple with underdevelopment. This situation emerges partly because many policymakers fail to distinguish between the broad notion of development and the specific strategies required for achieving substantial growth. While the idea of development seeks to address its inherent complexities, development strategies aim to create practical ways to achieve significant progress within a reasonable timeframe (Terzungwe & Ogba, 2021).

Economic development encompasses two primary perspectives: the traditional and modern concepts. The traditional perspective holds that economic development occurs only when the growth rate of a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) surpasses its population growth rate. Given the recognized significance of economic growth in fostering development, the two concepts have often been considered synonymous. A rise in GDP growth outpacing population growth suggests an increase in per capita GDP, indicating a potential boost in average real income. However, an uptick in per capita GDP does not necessarily reflect an equitable increase in real income levels among the population; a rising GDP can coexist with stagnant income levels for the majority. This challenge of inequality has led to the emergence of the modern concept of economic development (Ogbonna & Uma, 2018).

The quest for a clearer and more comprehensive definition of economic development has complicated the idea itself and, regrettably, has rendered many development initiatives ineffective. Recent development efforts, shaped by the modern understanding of development, often overlook the significance of real income in the economic development process. Initially, real income was considered equally important alongside the other two fundamental dimensions of development—health and education. However, recent strategies seem to prioritize enhancements in various aspects of development, such as healthcare, education, social infrastructure, and security, while sidelining the crucial role of real income.

When it comes to planning development initiatives, real income often does not get the attention it deserves. This trend has gained traction in recent years, and many governments in developing nations continue to follow this path, even though it has not shown much effectiveness. We cannot overlook the vital role that real income plays in enhancing economic wellbeing; after all, the welfare of the population is directly linked to their income levels. Taxes, a critical source of government revenue, heavily depend on what citizens earn. When incomes are low, affording basic necessities becomes a struggle, which in turn limits the government's ability to fund essential development projects due to the revenue shortages caused by widespread poverty.

The prevailing understanding of development and the policies created to achieve it are notably flawed, influenced extensively by developed nations and international development organizations. This dependence on foreign perspectives stifles originality and innovation in many developing countries. Furthermore, educational systems in these regions often dissuade independent thought that deviates from the views of foreign academics, particularly those associated with prestigious global universities (Sonntag, 2001).

One of the critical oversights is the neglect of real income, even though it plays a crucial role in the economic development process. Governments in low-income countries often hesitate to raise minimum wage levels, despite evidence that higher wages can effectively boost real income. Left to market forces, the labor market rarely manages to allocate fair wages without government intervention. Many low-income countries, even amidst rising inflation and falling local currencies, seldom raise their minimum wage rates. For instance, nations like Burkina Faso, Burundi, and Malawi have seen minimal changes to their minimum wages over the past decade, with rates lingering around USD $30 per month—some of the lowest in the world.

An especially concerning practice is the agreement between labor leaders and the Nigerian government to adjust the minimum wage every five years. Over time, these agreements have seen the real value of the approved minimum wage decline since the inception of the fourth republic. The minimum wage set at N70, 000 in July 2024, equivalent to USD $45, is substantially lower than those approved in 2019 and 2011, which were $87 and $115, respectively. In contrast, higher-income countries, which already boast minimum wages of around USD $1500 and above, tend to approve increases more frequently than many African nations. Over the past decade, countries like Luxembourg and Australia have regularly raised their minimum wages, outpacing most African counterparts (World Bank, 2023).

Is Development Perpetually Unattainable for Developing Countries

It seems reasonable to think that if poorer nations begin to successfully apply established development policies, they could reach significant levels of advancement in a relatively brief time. However, the pervasive sense of despair in these countries raises serious concerns. While many developing nations have grappled with the pursuit of higher development for an extended period, it remains uncertain whether they will ever fully overcome this barrier.

The existence of potential solutions suggests that these challenges can indeed be addressed. Nonetheless, the complex interconnections among various factors that adversely affect one another imply that achieving a high level of development may still be an aspiration rather than a reality. This perspective aligns with Nurkse's vicious cycle of poverty theory, which in its simplest form states that "a country is poor because it is poor." This notion indicates that nations in such a predicament face extremely limited prospects for growth. However, a more nuanced interpretation of the theory identifies low income as a significant obstacle to economic development, demonstrating that any impoverished nation could become prosperous if the root issues are effectively addressed (Obute, 2021).

A high level of development could indeed be attainable if a country successfully implements proven development strategies, assuming all other factors remain constant. While it may be necessary to tailor these initiatives to fit the specific needs of the countries involved, notable advancements in economic progress can be expected when the policies are executed effectively.

The larger challenge, however, lies in the ability to develop and implement results-driven development policies. This suggests that socio-economic barriers to progress often overshadow mere economic difficulties. In other words, even the best policies require individuals with the right character and mindset to succeed (Rhee et al., 1995).

In light of these observations, it seems logical to conclude that the challenge of achieving high levels of development is significantly influenced by the mindset of both leadership and the general population in these nations. In this context, "mindset" refers to the criteria that people use to evaluate their leaders' performances. It also encompasses how leaders assess those they appoint to critical political roles and their subsequent treatment if they do not meet expectations. Moreover, this mindset shapes the leaders' vision, informs their selection of advisors, dictates their roles, and sets benchmarks for evaluating their effectiveness (Abayomi & Ologunwa, 2021).

Many policymakers in underdeveloped countries have instilled a belief that reaching advanced levels of development is an overwhelming challenge, one that must be approached gradually over a long, uncertain timeline. This assertion is often backed by examples of how long it took certain developed nations to reach their current status. While these examples are based on truth, what is equally true is that some countries that have recently achieved developed status did so in much shorter periods than those in the past. Nations like Singapore and South Korea, have reached developed status significantly faster than countries like the United States and Great Britain, which took decades to achieve similar levels.

Importantly, with the implementation of effective policies, economic development can indeed occur relatively quickly. Complaints implying otherwise may reveal a lack of faith in the potential for poorer nations to advance swiftly. It is worth noting that instances of rapid development among less affluent countries are not unheard of, yet prevailing notions about achieving this goal have often failed to produce results. This disconnect, coupled with a lack of creativity, has fostered a sense of hopelessness among policymakers and the populace alike.

This defeatist mindset has sadly captivated many individuals in underdeveloped countries, leading them to believe that achieving development would require a miracle. Consequently, they often chase improved well-being through personal, rather than collective efforts, which ultimately benefits a privileged few while neglecting the broader population (Yoo et al., 2011). .

Despondency and Development Conundrum in Africa: Is it a Challenge of Economic Disposition or a Socio-economic Defect?

Several theories relate closely to the arguments presented in this study. A widely recognized summary of the vicious cycle of poverty theory by Nurkse asserts that “a country is poor because it is poor." This implies that impoverished nations struggle to improve their circumstances. However, a more nuanced interpretation highlights low income as a significant barrier to economic development. This evidence suggests that any nation grappling with poverty could achieve development if the underlying challenges are effectively addressed (Onwuka, 2011).

The dependency theory, which posits that some nations prosper at the expense of others, resonates with the concept of Pareto optimality. In this context, dependency encompasses not just the tendency of developed nations to exploit their power for further wealth at the expense of developing countries, but also the pronounced reliance of poorer nations on their more developed counterparts for economic, educational, technological, and infrastructural progress. Game theory examines how the interactions and choices of economic agents lead to outcomes that may not necessarily reflect any agent's intentions. This framework offers insight into the rising prevalence of a survivalist mindset, where individual pursuits for improved wellbeing overshadow collective progress due to pervasive uncertainty and despair about communal advancement (Ferraro, 2008; Sonntag, 2001).

Empirical research focusing on the socio-economic hurdles to development is limited; most of the studies emphasize corruption as a critical social impediment. Another set of studies sought to uncover factors obstructing socio-economic development. Corrigan (2009) investigated the barriers to development in Africa by analyzing reports from six African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) countries. The findings revealed a shared set of socio-economic development issues, although the severity varied. The study concluded that significant barriers to development persist across Africa, arising from unstable economies, survivalist cultures, cultural and traditional practices, skill shortages, corruption, and a lack of political will.

The economic frameworks of impoverished developing countries, particularly those in Africa, are marked by wage rigidity, preventing swift and timely adjustments to the minimum wage. However, these structures are not set in stone; it is possible to restructure them to facilitate easier wage adjustments. The lack of progress in many impoverished countries stems from sociological factors more than economic ones. The pathways to wealth for disadvantaged countries are seldom accessible; the knowledge that should be readily available often remains obscured, both in literature and educational systems. Consequently, the transition from poverty to prosperity in these nations is infrequent. Many developing countries seldom engage in independent research that contests prevalent views held by their counterparts in wealthier nations. The lack of innovation among scholars and policymakers in these regions has left them inadvertently dependent on the intellectual frameworks provided by developed countries and the influences of foreign governments (Abdulkareem et al., 2022; Obute, 2021).

Given this context, it is crucial for leadership in developing nations to turn their focus inward and craft development plans that originate locally. By fostering fair, rewarding, and effective platforms, they can encourage homegrown contributions from scholars. This approach is vital since imported strategies have consistently failed to deliver results, and local researchers have yet to present effective solutions. As a result, leadership may become disillusioned regarding their countries' progress, leading to the misuse of their authority. In an attempt to safeguard their personal interests and those of their families and allies, they may resort to misappropriating public funds instead of improving conditions for the wider population (Corrigan, 2009).

The practice of resorting to self-serving strategies to navigate the challenges faced by developing nations has become widespread, often sacrificing the well-being of the majority. It is regrettable that even those in positions of privilege who aim to act ethically find it difficult to carry out their responsibilities without compromising their values. The dominance of an individualistic culture in pursuing economic development suggests that efforts to enhance the quality of life for the broader populace are likely to be hindered by individuals within various segments of society (Schultz & Davis, 2024).

Is there a Conspiracy to Keep Africa Permanently Underdeveloped?

Economic and diplomatic relationships between nations typically hinge on anticipated benefits rather than emotional connections or populist ideals. Countries often break ties with those that no longer align with their interests and seek out new partnerships that promise better outcomes, while simultaneously collaborating with allies to mitigate the perceived threats from other nations.

Though this might appear ruthless, it reflects the expectations of effective leadership. The dynamics are clear: one nation's advancement often comes at the expense of another. This mirrors the rationale behind the concept of Pareto Optimality. Despite being rich in natural resources, Africa's global trade participation stood at a mere 3% as of 2023. Many African nations depend on mono-product economies, heavily relying on the export of one or two primary commodities without adding significant value. The financial returns from these exports pale in comparison to the value of the finished products derived from these raw materials (Itumo, 2017; Umeghalu et al., 2019).

Upon closer inspection, this troubling pattern reveals that in a competitive environment, larger firms tend to dominate, especially on a global scale. Major multinational corporations are vigilant and do not allow smaller competitors to threaten their market shares without a fight. Likewise, the shift towards producing and exporting finished goods rather than raw materials is taken seriously by these large entities, as it could jeopardize their revenue streams. With substantial influence and abundant resources, these multinational firms take measures to sustain their dominance. One key strategy involves lobbying their governments to adopt governance tools that align with their interests. When tackling the challenge of turning raw materials into finished goods, resource-rich African countries can greatly benefit from forming partnerships with multinational firms. Such collaborations have the potential to align the interests of both parties, allowing these countries to make significant strides toward their economic goals (Schultz & Davis, 2024; Yoo et al., 2011).

It's important to recognize that while multinational corporations and the governments of developed countries often face criticism for stifling the economic progress of poorer nations, this perspective does not tell the whole story. The responsibility also rests with the leadership in African and other developing countries. The current low wages and poor living standards for workers, particularly in primary commodity sectors like mining, agriculture, and plantations, reflect failures that go beyond corporate influence. Governments in these nations have played a role in perpetuating these circumstances.

With minimum wages hovering around $50 a month, a lack of effective justice systems to safeguard the rights of the impoverished, dysfunctional educational frameworks, inadequate health care, and almost nonexistent social infrastructure, the dire living conditions faced by workers in various sectors are largely a result of political negligence and insufficient institutional oversight (Shimawua, 2021).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

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Ajie and Wokekoro (2012) conducted a study aimed at addressing the escalating issue of corruption and its effects on national development. They sought to explore how corruption impacts sustainable economic growth and development in Nigeria. Utilizing the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) technique, the researchers analyzed data primarily sourced from secondary sources. Their findings indicated that systemic corruption in Nigeria is driven by several factors, including weak governmental institutions, an unjust legal system, lack of transparency, widespread poverty, political misconduct, and the ineffective functioning of anti-corruption agencies.

Similarly, Nageri et al. (2013) investigated the ramifications of corruption on Nigeria's economic development. Employing the OLS regression method, they analyzed secondary data obtained from the World Bank. Their results highlighted a negative correlation between the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) and economic development in Nigeria, showing that corruption distinctly hinders both economic growth and overall development in the country.

In another study, Terzungwe and Salaudeen (2017) assessed the impact of the Nigerian state on the nation's socio-economic development, particularly during the Fourth Republic from 1999 to 2015. Using the social contract theory as a framework, they examined secondary data and identified various obstacles to Nigeria's efforts in improving socio-economic conditions. These included the over-centralization of government, lingering colonial influences, political instability, a mono-product economy, and a lack of political will among politicians.

Itumo (2017) undertook a thorough investigation into the dire economic circumstances faced by Africans within the continent, utilizing secondary data for the study. The findings revealed that the chronic poor economic performance in Africa is primarily due to human factors rather than geographical location or resource scarcity. Ogbonna and Uma (2018) conducted an interesting study which examined the conflicts and tensions tied to governance, corruption, and sustainable economic development in resource-rich countries like Nigeria. Their findings highlighted a troubling increase in corruption, driven by greed and a negative perception of governance in the region.

In a related effort, Dobreva (2019) explored the myriad of challenges hindering economic development today, emphasizing how perceptions in the 21st century differ substantially from those in earlier times. This study delved into the ongoing issues faced by both developed and developing economies, outlining critical obstacles to growth such as corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, inadequate infrastructure, and a rising population. Davies et al. (2020) scrutinized the political conditions in Africa, positing that these factors are among the greatest barriers to the continent's development. By referencing Modernization theory, Dependency theory, and Limiting factors theory, they sought to illuminate the various hindrances stemming from historical issues such as imperialism, slave trade, colonialism, and ongoing challenges like political instability and poverty.

Abayomi and Ologunwa (2021) expressed concern that, despite Nigeria's wealth of human and natural resources, endemic corruption remains a substantial barrier to sustainable national development. Ranking 148 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index in 2017 starkly illustrates the country's profound corruption issues. The study also identified the negative impact of misguided advice from well-meaning but often misinformed international experts, which has further complicated the country's development landscape. Ultimately, the review of various growth and development theories reinforced the notion that corruption is a primary obstacle to achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

Terzungwe and Ogba (2021) explored the issue of corruption and its implications for advancing sustainable development goals in Nigeria. Since the establishment of democracy in Nigeria's fourth republic, there has been an urgent quest for solutions to the significant developmental challenges facing the nation. Among these challenges, corruption has proven to be particularly stubborn, evading numerous eradication attempts. By employing a Structural Functional approach, their study highlights how corruption has largely impeded efforts to achieve sustainable development goals in Nigeria. The data was gathered via secondary sources, and the findings indicate that without addressing corruption, Nigeria is unlikely to fulfill the ambitious objectives outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals.

In a similar vein, Shimawua (2021) examined the socioeconomic and cultural obstacles to effective development administration in Nigeria. This study relied on well-documented secondary sources to gather relevant data. A qualitative analysis was employed, utilizing thematic, analytical, and explanatory techniques to interpret the information. The results suggest that development administration has gained traction recently as a means to tackle the developmental needs of many Third World nations, which continue to lag in their progress. However, this practice faces several challenges, including statism and rent-seeking behavior, a mono-cultural economic policy, the Dutch disease, misguided trade policies, limited entrepreneurial success, a corrupt financial system, and a pervasive culture of violence— all of which pose significant barriers to effective development administration in Nigeria.

Additionally, Obute (2021) investigated the underlying factors contributing to the socio-economic challenges hindering sustainable development in Nigeria. The study examined how these inherent challenges create a cascade of additional socio-economic issues that restrict the nation's progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. It analyzed factors related to human development and social inclusion through various indicators, employing descriptive and analytical techniques alongside time series data, while also considering the impact of government policies and programs in mitigating humanitarian crises. The research pinpointed corruption as the central issue fueling these socio-economic challenges, which in turn fosters an environment of impunity.

Abdulkareem et al. (2022) investigated the impact of socio-economic factors, including poverty alleviation and social inclusion, on sustainable development in Nigeria from 1970 to 2019. To analyze the study's variables, they utilized a Vector Error Correction Model (VECM). The results indicate that economic factors, specifically GDP per capita and the ratio of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to GDP, along with two social determinants, life expectancy and school enrollment, positively influence sustainable development. Conversely, two other social determinants, the poverty gap and the percentage of women in parliament, as well as environmental factors like CO2 emissions and natural resource endowment, were shown to negatively affect sustainable development in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Framework

The foundation of this research is based on both Dependency and Game theories. Dependency theory posits that Western nations have perpetuated the underdevelopment of poorer countries by trapping them in a cycle of dependency. It suggests that foreign influence plays a significant role in hindering the progress of these nations, whether through coercive measures or persuasive tactics. In contrast, game theory focuses on how the decisions of economic agents, when interacting, lead to outcomes that may not reflect the preferences of any individual agent, shedding light on the survivalist mindset prevalent among people in underdeveloped nations.

The success of a country's development is influenced by the attitudes of its citizens towards that development. This means that well-crafted policies can fail if they are executed poorly or by individuals who lack the right mindset. The challenge lies in ensuring that effective policies are formulated and implemented by the right people with a constructive attitude. Attitude is greatly shaped by the perceptions individuals hold about their circumstances. Similar to many other African nations, Nigeria’s advancement is hindered by three prevalent sociological challenges: a dependency mentality, a sense of despondency, and a survivalist mindset.

Design/ Sampling Technique

The study adopted a survey design, utilizing questionnaires for data collection. The research focused on Nigeria and aimed to gather insights from the average Nigerian citizen. Two categories were established for sampling units: professional economists and informed laypersons in one group, and general laypersons in the other. A multistage sampling technique was applied to select the states, local government areas (LGAs), and specific units of study. Nigeria’s 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) were stratified into six geopolitical zones: Northeast, Northwest, North-central, Southeast, Southwest, and South-south.

At the first stage of the study, one state from each geopolitical zone was chosen randomly, resulting in the selection of Bauchi, Jigawa, Plateau, Anambra, Ondo, and Rivers states. In the second stage, three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were identified. The three LGAs were chosen randomly from the basket of LGAs who met the requirement of having at least one tertiary education institution and/or government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). The LGAs included in the study are Maiduguri, Biu, Chibok, Dutse, Kazaure, Hadejia, Jos South, Jos North, Bokkos, Awka South, Anambra East, Ihiala, Akure South, Okitipupa, Owo, Port Harcourt, Obi/Akpor, and Ikwerre. In the third stage, adults aged twenty and older were intentionally selected from academia, government, and the private sector. Cochran's formula was used in choosing the optimal sample size since the population under consideration is infinite, hence, a sample size of 384 was deemed adequate for the study. The data collected were statistically analyzed using SPSS, and Chi-square along with analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were employed to assess the hypotheses.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND ANALYSES OF FINDINGS

Demographic Features of Respondents

This section outlines the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including their age range, educational qualifications, and marital status. This information is essential to ensure that the sample accurately reflects the distribution characteristics of the broader population from which it was drawn.

Table 2: Age of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	19 and below	30	8.2	8.2	8.2
	20-30	90	24.7	24.7	32.9
	31-60	220	60.3	60.3	93.2
	61 and above	25	6.8	6.8	100.0
	Total	365	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

Table 2 illustrates that a portion of the respondents were relatively young, with 8.2% aged 19 or younger, 24.7% between 20-30, a significant 60.3% falling in the 31-60 age range, and 6.8% aged 61 or older. The predominant group was the 31-60 age bracket, making up over half of the respondents.

Table 3: Gender of the Respondent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	208	57.0	57.0	57.0
	Female	157	43.0	43.0	100.0
	Total	365	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

In Table 3, the gender distribution is presented, revealing that 208 respondents identified as male while 157 identified as female. This data indicates a higher number of male respondents compared to their female counterparts.

Table 4: Education Background

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Undergraduate	83	22.7	22.7	22.7
	Graduate	101	27.7	27.7	50.4
	Postgraduate	181	49.6	49.6	100.0
	Total	365	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

Table 4 breaks down the educational qualifications of the respondents: 83 were undergraduates (22.7%), 101 were graduates (27.7%), and 181 were postgraduates (49.6%). The findings show that most respondents held higher educational credentials, particularly at the postgraduate level.

Table 5: Occupation of the Respondent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Applicant	51	14.0	14.0	14.0
	Private Sector	99	27.1	27.1	41.1
	Civil Servant	162	44.4	44.4	85.5
	Trader	53	14.5	14.5	100.0
	Total	365	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

Occupational data is provided in Table 5, revealing that 51 respondents (14%) were job seekers, 99 (27.1%) were employed in the private sector, 162 (44.4%) worked as civil servants, and 53 (14.5%) were engaged in trading. The majority identified as civil servants, followed by those in the private sector.

Cronbach's Alpha

Concerning reliability, Cronbach's alpha (α) is commonly utilized to evaluate the reliability of measurement scales involving multiple items (Peter, 1979). A total of fifteen questions were posed to the respondents, categorized into their respective sections. The summarized results of Cronbach's alpha can be found in Table 5.

Table 6: Summary Result of the Cronbach's Alpha

S/N	Variable Description	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
1	The effect of dependency mentality on economic development in Nigeria	0.778	05
2	The effect of despondency on economic development in Nigeria	0.824	05
3	The effect of survivalist mentality on economic development in Nigeria	0.709	05

Researcher's Computation using SPSS 25.0

Table 6 presents the summarized results for Cronbach's alpha across the three-section questionnaire, which explored variables such as dependency mentality, despondency, and survivalist culture. All variables boast alpha coefficients exceeding the recommended minimum value of 0.70, as outlined by Santos (1999). This demonstrates a high level of internal consistency among the items, affirming that the reliability of the variables assessed for internal control measures is deemed satisfactory.

Presentation and Analysis of Research Questions

In this section, we will present the research questions and engage in a detailed discussion of each one. To align with the study's goals, we scored the response options of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). This scoring involved combining the responses of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed into one category, and those who strongly agreed and agreed into another category.

When analyzing respondent responses, it is crucial to acknowledge the neutral responses, as they indicate neither agreement nor disagreement. Scores from those who strongly disagree or disagree suggest a strong negative effect, while agree and strongly agree scores imply a weaker effect. The neutral responses point to a moderate effect. A strong effect is indicated when the mean falls between 2.5 and 5.00, whereas a weak effect is represented by a mean falling between 0 and 1.99. A moderate effect is shown by a mean falling within 2.00 and 2.49. Additionally, since the overall mean value is 30, an average acceptable mean falls at 15. Therefore, an overall mean value of 15 or above indicates a strong effect.

Table 7: What is the effect of dependency mentality on economic development in Nigeria?

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Mean	S.D
1	There are Nigerians with the ability to make Nigeria a developed country?	2.7%	9.6%	13.7%	41.1%	32.9%	3.92	1.05
2	Nigeria needs no support from foreigners to become developed?	4.1%	21.9%	13.7%	31.8%	28.5%	3.59	1.23
3	The World Bank and IMF provide advices that do not improve Nigeria's development?	6.3%	74.8%	18.9%	0.0%	0.0%	2.13	.49
4	Research findings of foreign scholars do not improve Nigeria's development?	0.0%	39.5%	32.9%	27.7%	0.0%	2.88	.81
5	Foreign aid does not improve Nigeria's development?	8.2%	23.6%	1.4%	27.4%	39.5%	3.66	1.41
Overall Mean and Standard Deviation							16.18	4.99

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

The survey findings reveal that only a small portion of participants strongly believe that some individuals in Nigeria can contribute to the nation's development, while a larger segment expressed disagreement with this notion. When it comes to the idea of Nigeria achieving development without foreign assistance, the majority of respondents were either in disagreement or held strong negative views. Additionally, a significant number agreed that the guidance from the World Bank and IMF has not yielded positive outcomes for Nigeria's growth.

Specifically, 39.5% of those surveyed agreed that insights from international scholars have not aided Nigeria's development. Meanwhile, 32.9% remained neutral, and 27.7% disagreed. There was also a notable 39.5% who firmly disagreed with the statement that foreign aid enhances Nigeria's development, while 27.4% disagreed, 8.2% strongly agreed, 23.6% agreed, and a mere 1.4% stayed neutral. The average response for all statements, with the exception of the third, surpassed the acceptable mean of 2.5. The overall mean value of 16.18 which exceeds the acceptable overall mean criterion of 15, confirms that a dependency mentality strongly affects Nigeria's economic development.

Table 8: What is the effect of despondency on economic development in Nigeria?

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Mean	S.D
1	Nigeria can become developed like the developed countries in the foreseeable future?	2.5%	13.4%	14.0%	43.8%	26.3%	3.78	1.06
2	The Nigerian Naira is capable of only appreciating and being stable without depreciating drastically?	19.7%	26.3%	7.9%	26.3%	19.7%	3.00	1.45
3	Nigeria can achieve uninterrupted power supply?	0.0%	0.0%	34.2%	39.5%	26.3%	3.92	.78
4	Nigerians can enjoy quality health care services as obtainable in developed countries?	4.1%	7.4%	7.4%	39.5%	41.6%	4.07	1.07
5	Nigerians can have earnings as high as obtainable in high income countries?	6.6%	13.2%	1.4%	35.1%	43.8%	3.96	1.25
6	Not all Nigerians are extremely corrupt?	0.5%	1.6%	4.1%	66.3%	27.4%	4.18	.63
Overall Mean and Standard Deviation							**22.91**	**6.24**

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

The survey results about Nigeria's potential for development compared to developed countries are as follows: (i) For the first statement, only 2.5% of respondents strongly agreed, while 13.4% agreed. A notable 14.0% remained neutral, yet a combined total of 70.1% either disagreed (43.8%) or strongly disagreed (26.3%), indicating a general sentiment of disapproval. (ii) The second statement garnered more favorable responses, with 19.7% strongly agreeing and 26.3% agreeing. However, 7.9% were neutral, and 43.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed, highlighting a nuanced perspective on the sentiment. (iii) The third statement drew no agreements at all. A significant 34.2% remained neutral, but a considerable portion, 39.5%, disagreed with the idea of Nigeria achieving an uninterrupted power supply, alongside 26.3% who strongly disagreed.

In terms of the potential for higher earnings comparable to high-income countries, only 6.6% strongly agreed, and 13.2% agreed. A mere 1.4% were neutral, while a majority—35.1% disagreed and a striking 43.8% strongly disagreed, suggesting skepticism about Nigeria reaching higher income levels. Regarding corruption, just 0.5% strongly agreed that not all Nigerians are extremely corrupt, and only 1.6% agreed. The majority, 66.3%, disagreed, and 27.4% strongly disagreed, pointing to a prevalent opinion that corruption is widespread among Nigerians. The analysis of mean values indicates that all indicators exceed a mean of 2.5. With an overall mean value of

22.91, which significantly surpasses the acceptable threshold of 15, it can be concluded that the impact of despondency on economic development in Nigeria is quite substantial.

Table 9: What is the effect of survivalist culture on economic development in Nigeria?

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Mean	S.D
1	Not all Nigerians are extremely corrupt.	0.5%	1.6%	4.1%	66.3%	27.4%	4.18	.63
2	There are Nigerians that are not corrupt and can fix the country.	2.5%	1.9%	3.6%	53.2%	38.9%	4.24	.82
3	As an occupier of a privileged position you will not misappropriate public fund.	6.0%	1.9%	13.2%	65.8%	13.2%	3.78	.91
4	When opportune to misappropriate public fund you will take only small amount even when more is at your disposal.	6.6%	32.6%	33.2%	21.1%	6.6%	2.88	1.03
5	When opportune to misappropriate public fund you will take the amount that will be sufficient to take care of future generations.	32.9%	38.9%	8.5%	19.7%	0.0%	2.15	1.09
Overall Mean and Standard Deviation							**17.23**	**4.48**

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

The first set of responses indicates that 0.5% of participants strongly agreed, 1.6% agreed, 4.1% remained neutral, 66.3% disagreed, and 27.4% strongly disagreed. This highlights that the majority of respondents fall into the categories of disagreeing and strongly disagreeing. Moving to the second statement, 2.5% strongly agreed, 1.9% agreed, 3.6% were neutral, 53.2% disagreed, and 39.9% strongly disagreed. The higher numbers of those who disagreed and strongly disagreed suggest a consensus that corruption is prevalent among Nigerians and that it poses a challenge to improving the country.

The third statement saw 6.0% of respondents strongly agreeing, 1.9% disagreeing, 13.2% remaining neutral, 65.8% disagreeing, and 13.2% strongly disagreeing. This indicates a belief that individuals in key positions of power are likely to mismanage funds when given the opportunity. For the fourth statement, 6.6% strongly agreed, 32.6% agreed, 33.2% were neutral, 21.1% disagreed, and 6.6% strongly disagreed. Additionally, 32.9% strongly agreed that if given the chance to misuse public funds, they would take enough to secure wealth for future generations, while 38.9% agreed. Only 8.5% remained neutral, and 19.7% disagreed, with none strongly disagreeing.

An analysis of the mean values shows that only the fifth statement fell below the 2.5% threshold, while the others exceeded it. The overall mean value stood at 17.23%, which surpasses the acceptable threshold of 15. Consequently, these findings suggest that a survivalist culture significantly impacts economic development in Nigeria.

4.4. Testing of Hypotheses

For testing the hypotheses related to this study, a significance level of 0.05 is utilized. This approach dictates that the null hypothesis will be rejected if the chi-square probability value is significant at this level; if not, the null hypothesis will be accepted.

Hypothesis One

What is the effect of dependency mentality on economic development in Nigeria?

Table 10: Test of Hypothesis 1

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Positive Response	196	182.5	13.5
Negative Response	169	182.5	-13.5
Total	365		

Test Statistics

	Dresponse
Chi-Square	1.997[a]
Df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.158

Source: SPSS Version 25

H_0: Dependency mentality is not statistically significant with economic development in Nigeria.

H_1: Dependency mentality is statistically significant with economic development in Nigeria.

The chi-square test conducted for the first hypothesis produced a chi-square statistic of 1.997 with 1 degree of freedom, resulting in a p-value of .158. This outcome provides strong evidence in support of the null hypothesis, indicating that dependency mentality does not have significant impact on economic development in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

What is the effect of despondency on economic development in Nigeria?

Table 11: Test of Hypothesis 2

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Positive Response	273	182.5	90.5
Negative Response	92	182.5	-90.5
Total	365		

Test Statistics

	DepRes
Chi-Square	89.756[a]
Df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Source: SPSS Version 25

H_0: Despondency is not statistically significant with economic development in Nigeria.

H_1: Despondency is statistically significant with economic development in Nigeria.

The chi-square test conducted here produced a chi-square statistic of 89.756, with 1 degree of freedom, resulting in a p-value of 0.000. This strongly contradicts the null hypothesis, indicating that despondency significantly affects economic development in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three

What is the effect of survivalist culture on economic development in Nigeria?

Table 12: Test of Hypothesis 3

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Positive Response	251	182.5	68.5
Negative Response	114	182.5	-68.5
Total	365		

Test Statistics

	SurRes
Chi-Square	51.422[a]
Df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Source: SPSS Version 25

H_0: Survivalist culture is not statistically significant with economic development in Nigeria.

H_1: Survivalist culture is statistically significant with economic development in Nigeria.

The chi-square test performed for this hypothesis revealed a chi-square statistic of 51.422, with 1 degree of freedom, resulting in a p-value of 0.000. This provides compelling evidence against the null hypothesis, indicating that the survivalist culture has a significant effect on economic development in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

This study attempted to identify the key socioeconomic factors hindering economic development, especially given that decades of governmental policies have not produced the expected results. This situation highlights that the economic development process is intricately tied to socio-economic aspects. Focusing on Nigeria as a case study, we employed a multi-stage random sampling method to select states, local government areas (LGAs), institutions, and specific units for our research. SPSS was used to analyze the data of the study collected through questionnaire, while Chi-square along with analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were employed to assess the hypotheses. We identified three critical socio-economic barriers contributing to broader developmental issues: dependency mentality, despondency, and a survivalist culture. Recognizing these categories simplifies the search for effective solutions. Our findings revealed that while despondency and survivalist culture significantly affect development, dependency mentality does not have a substantial effect.We recommend integrating re-orientation programs into national development plans to instill a sense of faith in the country and promote respect for societal values. Additionally, these development strategies should be crafted by innovative local researchers who possess a forward-thinking mindset—one that firmly believes that developing nations can achieve significant progress if appropriately tailored development plans are implemented to address their unique economic challenges effectively.

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