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**REVISITING THE UTILITY OF SOCIOLOGY  
TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*The importance of Sociology as an academic discipline transcends mere theoretical orientations. Sociology plays a pivotal role in developing critical thinking, which influences citizens' involvement in sustainable development. Sociological imagination enables the Sociologist to interrogate the social dynamics that shape experiences, opportunities and social realities. It also provides pragmatic solutions to germane social problems hence the need to examine the relevance of Sociology to sustainable national development. This paper examines the utility of Sociology to the improvement of human condition which ultimately promotes sustainable development. The lived experiences of fifty Sociology graduates are examined in order to establish their contributions to development. Structural-functionalism and Social Exchange theories are adopted as theoretical tools. Sociology has the potentials to improve living conditions and address Nigeria's developmental challenges which will promote citizens' quality of life and sustainable national development. The paper recommends the need to make Sociology more viable and visible by encouraging the active involvement of its graduates in policy formulation, programme development and national development.*

Keywords: Sociology, Utility, Development, Relevance, Sociological Imagination

**Introduction**

Sociology, in particular, has an extraordinary mandate as far as academic disciplines go: to conjure up social life. Conjuring is a particular form of calling up and calling out the forces that make

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things what they are in order to fix and transform a troubling situation. (Gordon, 1997:22).

In keeping with the usual view, the goal of Sociology is to uncover the most deeply buried structures of the different social worlds that make up the social universe, as well as the “mechanisms” that tend to ensure their reproduction or transformation (Bourdieu, 1996:1).

The above quotes underscore the importance of Sociology to social transformation and national development. Sociology is the study of “the bases of social membership” (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000:333). It studies what it means to be a member of a particular society through critical analysis of different social connections and structures that make every society distinct. Sociology offers the opportunity to use sociological imagination which is a veritable tool in addressing personal troubles and social issues. This enables people to look beyond their everyday life as the main predictor of their outcomes in life and encourage the need to see the entire society, where individuals live, as potential predictors of happenings around them. The capacity to understand the interplay between self and the world, the individual and the society is the main objective of sociological imagination. Thus, the ability to relate daily activities that people engage in to the local, national and global issues that invariably affect their life outcomes is pivotal to a proper understanding of what individuals need to do to improve their quality of life and promote socio-economic development. Thus, the failure to connect these social issues to personal lives incapacitates such individuals to see how these issues affect them and determine if a change is required. Sociology helps by creating awareness about social issues and their meanings, which have implications for human condition and national development (Germov & Poole, 2004).

The purpose of Sociology is to assist the individual and the society to discover these issues and understand the interplay between the major stakeholders as they aspire to bring about a new social reality. Thus, Sociology and her graduates are critical to sustainable national development. This article has six sections: section one covers the introductory aspects (introduction, statement of the problem and objectives of the study). Section two focuses on the

literature review while the third section covers the theoretical underpinnings and the fourth section discusses the research methods. The fifth section discusses the major findings while the sixth section focuses on conclusions, recommendations and policy suggestions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Sociology is the study of human social life and the interaction between social units and the people. Sociology studies individuals and groups as they are influenced by their social environment and the choices that people make in terms of how they think, act or behave, which are often in consonance with social and cultural expectations. This indicates that Sociology has insights and ideas about the social world that may not be otherwise available (Giddens, 2013). The discipline helps individuals to understand their world and social relationships, which are essential to promoting both personal growth and human development. Sociology can change people's perspective of the world around them and such knowledge helps them to transform their human condition. It uses systematic methods to carry out its empirical investigation and engage in critical analysis of social issues which greatly enhances the policies and programmes aimed at improving people's lives and boosting national development. This is aptly captured by Gerth & Mills (1946:147) when they say that the major goal of Sociology is to reveal and explain "inconvenient facts". These facts exert profound influence on the individuals and social institutions that are linked to development.

Sociological imagination is critical to national development because it equips people with critical thinking needed to understand their lived experiences and relate their situations to social issues that can promote sustainable development. Societies where sociological imagination is not in use lag behind and become plagued with social vices that threaten development. Even where social vices and problems exist, Sociology has the techniques, theories and methods to effectively address these issues and bring the society to a state of social equilibrium and progress. Apart from the social movement that birthed the independence of Nigeria and the pockets of civil movements that mounted pressure on the ruling class to concede some measure of 'welfare' packages to the masses, there is limited opportunity for active engagement of Nigerians in the country's affairs, which can cascade into improved well-

being and development. In recent times, attempts akin to using sociological imagination to address specific developmental challenges in Nigeria include the mass movement against military regime, the mass protest against the increase in the pump price of petrol (PMS) in 2012 and the #ENDSARS protest in October, 2020.

The source of Nigeria's development challenges is not far-fetched. It can be linked to failure to avail herself of the enormous benefits inherent in adopting sociological imagination to address development problems. This lacuna necessitates the need to interrogate these questions. What is the utility of Sociology to national development? How can sociological imagination be used to enhance everyday life and national development? What roles can Sociologists play in national development? How can Sociology graduates promote sustainable development? These questions among others are the focus of this paper.

### **Objectives of the Paper**

The main objective of the paper is to interrogate the utility of Sociology to national development in Nigeria.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Interrogate the relevance of the sociological imagination to everyday life.
2. Examine the utility of Sociology to the improvement of the well-being of Nigerians.
3. Discuss the contributions of Sociology graduates to national development in Nigeria.
4. Examine the relevance of Sociology to national development.

### **Literature Review**

Sociology has its roots in social change processes. Sociology developed as a quest to understand social change and its impact on the individual and the society. The early founding fathers of Sociology were disturbed by societal changes and sought for ways of ameliorating the social problems. Wright-Mills (2000) adopted the sociological imagination (the ability to situate personal problems within a well-informed social framework) to address the challenges in the social milieu (Mills, 1959).

In the same vein, Mills (2000:5) proposed that

What people need...is a quality of mind that will help them to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves. It is this quality...what may be called sociological imagination.

Sociological imagination assists the individual to step outside their limited, self-centric and personal view of the world to embrace a wider perspective to cope with the social world. This wider perspective helps people to see the social events and structures that influence their attitude, behaviours, and culture. Sociology is relevant to national development because Nigeria is faced with similar socio-economic challenges that Sociologists addressed in the past. Nigeria's enormous development problems can be largely addressed through the use of sociological imagination. The use of induction merely begins the process of studying the world by Sociologists, which is followed by the collection of empirical data to evaluate the social world using scientific methods. The findings and outcomes of such exercise will bring about social transformation and socio-economic development.

### **Development and National Development**

Development generally connotes continuous transformation and improvement in the quality of life of people in a particular society. This is similar to the biological sciences in which growing organisms pass through series of ordered, planned and inevitable stages until they arrive at the highest levels of complexity and development. Comte believed that Sociology has the potentials to improve the human condition and direct human society on the path of development (Giddens, 2013).

To Smelser (1968:138), development involves “a contrapuntal interplay between differentiation (which is divisive of established society), and integration (which unites differentiated structures on a new basis)”. Thus, development means gradual, qualitative and quantitative transformation in structure and functions seen in the passage from less to more differentiated social forms, which occurs through processes of ever changing and complex

specialisation and interdependence among functional units. As the society develops or gets transformed, it incorporates certain 'adaptive features' which enhance its capacity to survive and advance in its environment (Germov & Poole, 2004).

To some scholars like Myron Weiner (1966), the definition of development should transcend any focus on the character of the society but rather, emphasis should be on the character of individuals. He canvassed his point further by saying, “although there are differences among social scientists as to how values and attitudes can be changed, it is possible to speak of one school of thought that believes that attitudinal and value changes are prerequisites to creating a modern society, economy and political system” (Weiner, 1966:9). The most important predictor of development is the presence of distinctive factors that propel development, namely, value orientation. It involves changing the values, attitudes and disposition of men so that they can adapt and promote modern society. The driving impetus is the emphasis on value-normative complexes, which is in tandem with the thesis of Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 1958).

Another approach to development is the psychological theories of development. McClelland (1967) concentrated on the primacy of ideas in society, which was captured thus, “This is just one more piece of evidence to support the growing conviction among social scientists that it is values, motives or psychological forces that determine ultimately the rate of economic and social development...The American Society suggests that ideas are in fact more important in shaping history than purely materialistic arrangements” (McClelland, 1963:17). The import of this perspective is that the larger the number of the critical mass of people who are 'infected' with the strategic psychological impetus for development, the greater the economic growth and development of the country. This optimism is predicated on the belief that once there is a 'Will', there will always be a 'Way' and the motivation to develop and achieve the desired social transformation is largely rooted in people and their culture. The impetus known as 'n-achievement (the need for achievement)' once identified in people's thoughts affects the way and manner in which behaviours and activities are discharged. When applied to national entities, McClelland opined that, “....a country that was high in n-Ach level in

its children's texts around 1925 was more likely to develop rapidly from 1929 to 1950 than one that was low in n-Ach in 1925. The same result was obtained when 1950 n-Ach levels were related to rates of economic development in the late nineteen-fifties”.

He further prescribed series of psychological ingredients required for societal development. These include a sense of collective responsibility and feelings of superiority to others. Specifically, there are different definitions of development, which also inform the forms that development takes.

First, there is the economic transformation that is seen in terms of maintaining sustained and rapid increases in the National product and conquest of core sectors such as manufacturing, which gives the country a measure of autonomy for future growth (Furtado, 1964). Second, development involves social transformation in terms of a more egalitarian distribution of income and resources by ensuring that there is a widespread access to 'social goods' that can improve the living conditions of the people such as health, education, adequate housing, political participation, and access to recreational facilities. Third, development involves cultural transformation in which efforts are made to reaffirm national identity and traditions that transcend feelings of second-class nationality and subordination to any external force or power. This sense of identity and nationalism births patriotism in citizens in such a way that ideas and programmes are developed that can transform the situations of the people and the society. National identity drives self-reliance and sufficiency that are germane to sustainable national development. Thus, the roles of culture and citizens' participation in development cannot be over-emphasised.

### **Sociological Perspectives and the Challenges of National Development**

From these perspectives, the contributions of Sociology to national development can be established. Nigeria should embrace indigenous development models which are simple, authentic and provide original solutions to peculiar problems of the country. This is contrary to the use of imported, expensive and complex development strategies that undermines the importance of innovative approach to development that is rooted in people's culture. The success of the Asian Tigers cannot be separated from their citizens' pivotal roles in development. Sociology highlights the importance of

state actors and non-state actors in promoting development which invariably improves the lives and situations of the citizens. Different State interventions (through policy and programme development) are employed to sustain development. Concerted efforts should be made to enhance economic growth, social redistribution and cultural transformation through deliberate State policies and programmes. This development model is premised on the fact that development does not just happen, it is planned. Hence, accelerated economic growth or socio-cultural transformation is always preceded by deliberate policies and programmes. State resources should be used to bridge the gaps between the social reality and the ideal society with the aim of improving citizens' lived experiences and wellbeing in the country.

Thus, National development involves a country's ability to achieve overall, comprehensive, rapid, and holistic progress evident in improved living conditions of its citizens. It has also been described as the delivery of services to people with the aim of achieving positive outcomes such as security, welfare of citizens and improved positive image of the country in the comity of nations (Elaigwu, 2013). Development is a multi-dimensional and people-centred process of change that can improve people's quality of life. This is central to sociological discourse because it is interested in examining people's lived experiences that require urgent State interventions. Nigeria is fraught with myriad of social problems ranging from insecurity, unemployment to infrastructural deficit and political crises among others. These challenges have implications for development and there is a clear indication that Sociology can deal with the issues and set Nigeria on the path of economic growth and development. Sociology can address development challenges by studying social problems, acquiring accurate knowledge and proffering appropriate strategies that will bring about viable solutions to development challenges. Sociologists can furnish policymakers and government agencies with information and ideas that can inform policy thrust and boost national development. The evidence-based feedback will assist in setting developmental agenda, managing resources judiciously and improving the quality of life of Nigerians (Germov & Poole, 2004).

Once the utility of Sociology is explored, Nigeria's challenges can be addressed. For instance, Nigeria's dependence on oil and the operation of a

mono-product economy can be interrogated. Oil boom coincided with reckless abandonment of agriculture, which was then the main stay of the country's economy. This marked the beginning of one of the major problems in Nigeria till date. Ideally, abundant oil wealth should be a blessing but this has transformed to a 'curse' because the country neglects the extractive industries and manufacturing sector, which could have provided job opportunities for the teeming unemployed youth and graduates. The effects of this neglect manifest in pervasive poverty, underdevelopment, impunity and corruption. Corruption is the bane of Nigeria's development. According to Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, 2018), a global corruption watchdog, Nigeria has steadily been ranked low in its corruption Perception Index. Nigeria is ranked 144 out of 180 countries with a score 27/100. There are cases of corruption and abuse of office without conviction and judgment that will serve as deterrence. Sociology can study the sources of social problems, proffer solutions and suggest ways of managing resources and promoting national development. The utility of Sociology to national development is discussed in the next section.

### **The Utility of Sociology to National Development**

The role of Sociology in promoting national development is enormous, bearing in mind its tools, techniques, strategies, and methods that can address diverse social problems. Any explanation of and solution to social problems must go beyond emphasising personal problems to a focus on larger social and cultural forces which provide better explanatory tools. According to Ryan (1976), the reduction of social problems such as divorce, unemployment, and poverty to personal failings is inadequate because it fails to see the social problems as structural problems in the larger society. Sociology provides the alternative approach that focuses on the social system rather than individuals. Since National development is predicated on sustaining continuous improvement in the living conditions of Nigerians, social environment can be examined to explain social and public issues preparatory to their solutions. Thus, the use of sociological knowledge can promote social reforms and transformation in Nigeria. The quest to transform the society through Sociology transcends mere knowledge to in-depth analysis of social issues in order to achieve social change and development (Burawoy, 2005). Applied Sociology is a clear demonstration of the utility of Sociology.

According to Anthony Giddens (1993:1-2),

Sociological thinking is a vital help to self-understanding, which in turn can be focused back upon an improved understanding of the social world. Studying Sociology should be a liberating experience; Sociology enlarges our sympathies and imagination, opens up new perspectives on the sources of our own behaviour, and creates an awareness of cultural settings different from our own.

Sociology is pivotal today because of its multi-dimensional roles in society aimed at studying social behaviours and improving human condition through innovative social engineering.

Below are some specific roles of Sociology in society:

- Sociology equips man with basic understanding of the human society, how it works and how social relationships can be modified by circumstances or social peculiarities.
- Sociological knowledge broadens people's perspectives and enriches the lens through which they view the world they live in thereby broadening their scope and chances in life.
- Sociology enhances proper understanding of human relationships by recognising cultural diversity without recourse to ethnocentrism and extremism.
- Since society and culture are dynamic and rapidly changing, Sociology instills in people the critical thinking that understands the society and navigates through socio-cultural challenges with minimal disagreements or conflicts.
- Crime perspectives: Sociology helps governments to handle the challenge of crimes and delinquency by embracing rehabilitation rather than punishment.
- Conflict Management: Inter-communal, inter-religious and international conflicts can be reduced with proper understanding of cultural diversity and public awareness about inter-group dynamics and conflict management.

- Social planning: Sociology helps in understanding the peculiarities of different societies and how they are all linked, which helps in policy formulation, planning and programme development.
- Enlightenment: Sociology teaches human beings to be open-minded in order to learn from other cultures. Critical thinking allows the individual and the society to keep improving and adopting international best practices.

### **Contributions of Sociologists to Nigerian Development**

The contributions of Sociologists to National development are numerous and widespread. Sociologists make tangible contributions to development in Nigeria. These include:

1. Education: many Sociologists are trained instructors and Professors in higher institutions and other levels of learning. With critical thinking, they impart lives and improve the world.
2. Research and Advocacy: Applied Sociology is demonstrated through intervention in everyday life of the people. Sociologists are involved in research and advocacy that promote social welfare and national development.
3. Social Planning: Sociologists encourage active engagement of citizens in the design of policies and programmes that affect their lives and communities.
4. Agenda setting: Sociologists are actively involved in charting new directions for the society based on accurate assessment of specific needs of the society and its peculiarities.
5. Public engagement/Advocacy: Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association (NASA), as a member of the civil society, plays a major role in promoting development.
6. Security: Sociologists are employed in different security agencies and outfits in Nigeria. Nigeria's former Inspector General of Police (IGP), Musiliu Smith is a Sociologist! Sociologists have contributed to the security of life and property in Nigeria.
7. Foreign Affairs/International Relations: Sociologists who serve Nigeria in different capacities in foreign missions use their training in Sociology to discharge their assignments creditably.

8. Culture Ambassadors: Culture and Sociology are intricately linked. Sociologists appreciate the role of culture in development and use it as a tool to galvanise people's interest and support for development. They promote cultural renaissance through the auspices of traditional institutions and relevant State ministries and agencies.
9. Custodians of social norms: Sociology appreciates culture which makes its graduates more than qualified to serve as custodians and defenders of the Nigerian culture and heritage.
10. Peace and conflict resolution: Sociology empowers people to manage conflicts and disagreements inherent in group settings. Inter-group dynamics and challenges can be resolved through its unique strategies of maintaining law and social order.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

#### **Structural – functionalist theory**

The structural-functionalist theory is rooted in the works of Sociologists such as Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim. Function is the first relevant concept, which means the roles or consequences attributed to any action. This can either be manifest or latent (Matcha, 1997). Manifest function is an overt or expected result while latent function is unexpected consequence. For example, the involvement of Sociologists in national development will make them to contribute their quota to national development, which is better promoted when all hands are on deck. So, Sociologists should be actively involved in policy formulation and national development. Latent function, on the other hand, is the covert or unexpected consequences of any action. The unintended consequences of not involving Sociologists in development include lingering social problems, social malaise and negative attitude of Nigerians toward Sociology and her graduates. Some Nigerian leaders including a former President have spoken of Sociology and her graduates in condescending manner, wondering why people go to the University to study Sociology! The second concept in structural-functionalism is structure, which means "the interrelationship of roles at various levels of organisation" (Matcha, 1997:48). Generally, the roles and the relationships among the constituent parts are examined in order to ensure social equilibrium. National development will occur if Sociologists are given opportunity to make tangible

contributions to address Nigeria's development challenges. Development begins by encouraging the involvement of citizens, empowering them to be proactive and get actively involved in development.

If Sociologists are allowed to discharge their functions and duties as expected, then national development will be achieved.

### **Conflict theory**

Conflict theory, as a Marxist perspective, criticises the functionalist perspective about consensus and social order. First, it argues that conflicts and antagonism are also essential features of social relationships. Conflict theory questions the notion of functional unity of structural-functionalism as not only being myopic but a far cry from reality, even though it appears logical. Second, that the relationships between constituent parts are not always functional, harmonious and aimed at achieving meaningful development, sometimes, social relationships may end up in conflicts (Odetola & Ademola, 1990). It is not uncommon for major stakeholders to disagree on the best means of addressing developmental challenges.

### **Social Exchange Theory**

The second theory is the social exchange theory, traced to the works of George Homans (1961) and Peter Blau (1964). It looks at social behaviour as an exchange of resources (tangible or intangible), which are often assessed based on cost and benefits (Homans, 1961). The relationship between citizens and their country can also involve cost-benefit analysis in which the nation invests in her citizens through education with the hope of reaping dividends of such investments in due time. The Nigerian State prides itself in providing 'free education' to its citizens up to tertiary level. This should pave the way for the citizens to make tangible contributions toward the development of their country. Most Sociologists are willing to contribute their quota to Nigeria's development, but, this desire is often frustrated because of lack of opportunity to make contributions. Social exchange theory deals with the anticipated rewards associated with social relationships. The reason for seemingly less harmonious relationship between the Nigerian State and Sociologists can be linked to Sociologists being judged as having no tangible resource to offer in the course of social exchange. Some Nigerian leaders have even questioned

the relevance of Sociology as a course of study because of ignorance about the course and its utility. This negative attitude undermines the utility of sociological imagination in addressing developmental issues in Nigeria. Amaike (2009) identified three underlying assumptions of social exchange. First, interacting actors exchange resources which may not be material and often times unequal. Second, exchanges will continue only, if on the long run, the benefits are greater than costs in the absence of better alternatives. Third, exchanges are governed by norms of reciprocity, that is, it is expected that when someone gives something (expectation), that something of equal or of more value will be given in return (exchange). Clearly, sociological imagination is a critical resource that will not only promote the well-being of Nigerians but also enhance Sociologists' contributions to national development. With the valuable resources that sociological imagination provides, Sociologists' interaction with policymakers and development experts will promote national development. Social exchange has been criticised for its central concepts, costs and rewards, which are not clearly defined. It is challenging to make a distinction between what people value or what they perceive as rewarding, and how they behave. Rewards, values, and actions are used loosely, even though they are interrelated. Critics opine that people may not be as self-interested as social exchange theory assumes. Social exchange theory fails to understand the importance of altruism and group dynamics because of its emphasis on fulfillment of individual needs.

### **Methods**

This is an exploratory study aimed at establishing the utility of Sociology to national development in Nigeria. It adopted the use of structured interview and secondary data as its data collection strategies. The research covered an assessment of fifty (50) Sociology graduates from Nigerian universities in order to underscore the importance of Sociology degrees to their contributions to their communities and the nation at large. The 50th Anniversary programme of the Department of Sociology, University of Lagos, Nigeria provided the needed impetus to examine the contributions of its products and other Sociology graduates to national development in Nigeria. Fifty (50) purposely selected Sociology graduates from eight (8) universities across five geo-political zones in Nigeria were studied in terms of their contributions to national development. South West has more concentration of universities that

were represented in the study population. The respondents included both male and female Sociologists from different age groups, socio-economic status and generations or cohorts. Specifically, there were 33 male Sociologists and 17 female Sociologists. Most respondents graduated at least ten years before the survey in 2017 and thus were privileged to assess the relevance of Sociology to their everyday life and their contributions to national development through their chosen professions and career paths.

The study primarily examined the contributions of these fifty graduates irrespective of the nature of degrees (Bachelor, Masters or Doctorate) and their contributions to national development.

**Table 1: The distribution of Sociologists and their institutions/geo-political zones**

SN	Name of Institution	Number of Sociology Graduates	Geo-political zones
1.	University of Lagos	13 (8 men & 5 women)	South West
2.	University of Ibadan	6 (4 men & 2 women)	South West
3.	Lagos State University, Ojo	6 (4 men & 2 women)	South West
4.	University of Jos	5 (3men & 2 women)	North Central
5.	University of Nigeria, Nsukka	5 (3 men & 2 women)	South East
6.	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	5 (4 men & 1 woman)	North West
7.	Bayero University, Kano	5 (4 men & 1 woman)	North West
8.	University of Calabar	5 (3 men & 2 women)	South South

**Field work, 2017**

**Discussion of Major Findings**

Sociology is relevant to national development because the sociological imagination has been used by its graduates to address myriad of social problems confronting Nigeria. Sociologists as Social Engineers have contributed immensely to the development of Nigeria and continue to contribute their quota to the development of the country at different levels starting from the family unit to the community and the nation at large.

With respect to the objectives of the paper, the following findings are established:

**1. The relevance of Sociological imagination to everyday life**

Sociology has affected the daily life and architecture of the Nigerian society in many ways. From the maintenance of culture and traditions of the people to the maintenance of peace and social order in the society, Sociological imagination has been helpful in assisting Nigerians in their everyday life. Sociologists have been involved in the inculcation of social values, norms and traditions that are helpful in maintaining peace and social order. The use of critical thinking has been pivotal in decision-making for the individual, the family and the society at large. The success recorded in everyday life by overcoming challenges and social problems can be linked to the use of critical assessment of situations before deciding on the best options based on cost-benefits analysis. Sociology graduates especially those in leadership positions have clearly utilised their training in Sociology to discharge their functions and roles creditably thus performing better than their contemporaries without such sociological imagination (UNILAG Sociology @ 50 Programme, 2017). Overwhelming majority of participants opined that sociological imagination has been useful in their day to day activities and they considered it a vital tool in human relations and conflict resolution. Most resounding successes recorded at the peak of their careers were traced to the discipline and critical thinking that a degree in Sociology instilled in its graduates. This underscores the importance of the sociological imagination to everyday life of the individual, the family and the society at large.

**2. The utility of Sociology to the improvement of the well-being of Nigerians**

The utility of Sociology to the improvement of the living conditions and socio-economic well-being of Nigerians are evident in the lives of the purposely selected Sociologists who reported high levels of satisfaction based on the success of their careers and chosen professions. Some of these participants were engaged in research/advocacy, education/teaching and security/politics among others, which have provided them the opportunity to improve the living conditions of their families and communities. The importance of Sociology in improving human condition can be deduced from the quality of life of the participants who were members of the middle class, and a few actually belonged to the upper class. They did not just improve their lives and family welfare but they were also pivotal in providing ideas, policies

and programmes to appropriate State agencies and non-state actors that improved human condition. These Sociology graduates successfully execute welfare programmes, empowerment schemes, scholarship programmes, and development projects in their communities/States and engage in national assignments. Sociologists who are researchers/scholars have the opportunity of passing research feedback to the appropriate quarters, which inform policies and programme development aimed at ameliorating the living condition of Nigerians. Some of the participants have NGOs (Non-Government Organisations) and foundations, which are actively involved in public awareness/education and programme development aimed at improving the lives of Nigerians. Health Matters and Action Health Incorporated are two examples where research drives evidence-based advocacy and interventions. Without equivocation, all participants unanimously agreed that Sociology provided them with adequate knowledge, skills and expertise considered to be veritable tools in their quest for improved human condition and sustainable livelihoods.

**3. The contributions of Sociology and its graduates to national development in Nigeria**

If Nigerians' life situations improve, this will boost human condition and national development. Similarly, critical assessment of secondary data (research projects and publications of Sociology department) indicates that Sociologists have been active in the pursuit of national development through policy suggestions, programme development and advocacy for different social populations. The training of Sociologists with critical thinking and capacity to make informed decisions is one of the major contributions of Sociology to development. The availability of this robust human resource as social capital has greatly improved Nigeria's preparation for take-off and quest for development. This means that Sociology is pivotal to national development through its contributions in equipping Nigerians to deal with development challenges and develop sustainable development blueprint to address the obstacles to development through critical thinking and adoption of innovative and indigenous development models.

### **Conclusion**

Although Sociology has been taught in many Universities in Nigeria for more than five decades, the relevance of Sociology to everyday life and national development is often less understood. Sociology is important to national development because its valuable skills and methods can proffer appropriate solutions to boost national development. Based on the importance of Sociology to sustainable national development, the Department of Sociology in various tertiary institutions in Nigeria should embark on aggressive campaigns and mobilisation of Nigerians, especially students, to disabuse their minds against erroneous impressions and create awareness about the utility of Sociology to national development. Major stakeholders (students, parents, the Ministry of Education and the National Universities Commission [NUC] among others) should encourage the use of sociological imagination to address some of Nigeria's development challenges through research and advocacy. Sociology is a viable discipline that can help all Nigerians to appreciate the nature of social problems, proffer solutions and improve their living conditions, and build strong social capital that can promote national development.

### **Recommendations and Policy Suggestions**

- Sociologists should engage in rigorous campaign to make Sociology more viable, visible and vibrant as a profession through active involvement of its graduates in programme development and national development. Government, at different levels, should see Sociologists as partners in progress and encourage their involvement in development process.
- Sociology should be incorporated into secondary school curriculum to enhance students' appreciation of the benefits inherent in adopting the sociological imagination to deal with everyday life challenges and social problems.
- Nigerians should embrace the sociological imagination to solve their peculiar social problems and developmental challenges. For instance, Nigeria's educational systems can be investigated to promote proper planning and judicious utilisation of resources. The nexus between education and development will be clearly established to guide policy formulation and programme development.

- Governments should encourage Sociologists and their professional bodies to develop indigenous development models that can address challenges of underdevelopment in the country. Sociology has both the skills and methods to interrogate social challenges confronting the country and proffer time-tested solutions.
- Sociology should transcend mere theorising to embrace public or applied Sociology, which is more relevant to Nigeria's contexts. Academic Sociology needs the interventionist perspective in order to impact lives and contribute meaningfully to national development.
- Sociologists must desist from adopting the 'Ostrich' attitude by engaging relevant State and non-state agents in their quest to challenge the status quo and develop formidable alternative strategies to address development problems in Nigeria.

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