

Medical Welfare Services and Sustainable Development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated Social Welfare Services and Sustainable Development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the aim of the study, hypothesis was formulated based on sub- independent variables of the study: provision of medical assistance programmes. Literature review was carried out in line with the variable of the study. The social provisional theory was used as the theoretical framework in the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The multi –stage sampling techniques involving purposive, simple random and proportional sampling techniques was adopted to select 400 respondents for the study. Instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis was used to test the hypothesis. Result of the statistical analysis showed that the provision of medical assistance programmes, significantly influence sustainable development in Southern Senatorial Districts of Cross River State, Nigeria. Base on the result, it was recommended that social workers should assists clients by providing counselling, case management, advocacy and other services that support individuals and families in overcoming barriers to medical assistance in the study area.

Keywords: Medical services, Sustainable Development, Welfare Services

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Development is a global call to action to end poverty, protect the earth's environment and climate, and ensure that people everywhere can enjoy peace and prosperity. The constancy of the natural capital stock is a sine-qua-non for sustainable development in any country. This means that current decision should not hinder the prospects for maintaining or improving the future stock of capital. The concept of sustainable development has been diversely understood and is constantly evolving making it difficult to earn a particular definition (McKeown, 2022). It is becoming a global concept due to the encompassing nature of socio-economic problems of Nigeria. Economic remittance, climate change, politics and social institutional structures all over the world are interconnected and hence have become a concern for all. Sustainable development was developed out of concern for the future of humanity due to the shift in the interaction between man and the

environment (Cornelius-Ukpepi, Kalu & Domike, 2017). To achieve a sustainable development, a clear knowledge of the constraints within the society and the requirements to remove the constraints should be known (Mebrafu, 2018). Since sustainable development looks beyond the wellbeing of the present generation into the future, it requires that citizens in recent time must be alert to the various social welfare services. Therefore, when there is absence of social welfare services, the idea of sustainable development becomes a mirage.

Social welfare encompasses a wide range of activities and services which focus on the provision of palliatives, education, medical and financial support to enhance poverty reduction (Atkisson, 2019). The main goal of social welfare policies is to provide a safety net to those who need support due to situations such as poverty, unemployment, poor health, disability or other circumstances that requires assistance. These programmes ensures that every member of the society can maintain the minimum standard of living and dignity that society feels they should have and that their essential needs are met (Ering, 2015). Labour and Ekaterina (2020), stated that mankind is able to influence the future through the choice of the optimum route of development. In this regard, the understanding of personal aspects of life and functioning mechanisms is required in addition to the understanding of differences between the social and natural dynamics. That is why the philosophical understandings of sustainable development by means of social welfare is one of the approaches to a study of regularities of the social life and development. According to Keyes (2018), the model of the social and practical orientation is the basis of the analysis of relationship between social welfare services and sustainable development globally.

The issue of sustainable development has become a major concern in Nigeria as social welfare activities are poorly funded. The social welfare services in the areas of healthcare, financial support and social security are unavailable to majority of those who need them. This has posed a threat to public health in the face of dwindling economy occasioned by poor budgetary and funding of the sector (Mebratu, 2018). The social welfare services are parts of Sustainable Development Goals, as individual members of the society need some level of assistance either due to their disposition or because of the environment they find themselves. They require some social welfare packages to enable them cope with social problems that arise from daily activities and social conditions. Therefore, the need to examine the social welfare services becomes paramount. It is for this reason that this research was carried out to investigate Medical Welfare Services and Sustainable Development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Sustainable development is a goal that Countries all over the World have been striving to achieve by instituting plans and actions to improve the way things are done. It calls for constant efforts to initiate programmes and execute them for the overall interest of people (Aniefiok & Etim, 2017). The responsibilities of executing these sustainable development goals predominantly lies with various countries. Nigerian governments in particular, seem not to have been actively responded to the demands of the Sustainable Development Goals due to poor welfare programmes which have manifested in poor social security, poor healthcare, and low financial support. These social welfare services may be connected with challenges of sustainable development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. However, successful government in Cross River State over the years have undertaken numerous development approaches in many areas such as the Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme by Senator Liyel Imoke as governor, free maternal and infant care, the Ayade Care, Social Security, Health Insurance Policy and cash assistance programmes. Meanwhile, despite these extensive efforts put in place by the authorities, no significant results have been achieved. The

question on the lips of many Cross Riverians is; to what extent does the provision of medical welfare services promotes sustainable development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State? It is against this backdrop that this work was carried out to ascertain whether social welfare services influence sustainable development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Research Question

1. How does the provision of Medical Welfare services influence sustainable development in terms of improve health outcome in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria?

Objective of the Study

1. To examine how the provision of medical Welfare Services influences sustainable development in terms of improve health outcome in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis

Ho: Provision of Medical Welfare Services does not significantly influence sustainable development in southern senatorial district of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Concept of social welfare and Sustainable Development

The concept of social welfare is viewed as an organized provision of medical care, and financial assistance among other packages for the poor, vulnerable and needy. Social welfare is about the people, their communities and institutions in the society including taking action to provide certain minimum standards of living. It is generally about helping people facing contingencies. Dolgoff & Stulik (2017), considered Social Welfare services as consisted of actions and procedures especially on the part of governments and institutions striving to promote the basic wellbeing of individuals and the society. According to Duhim (2010), social welfare system involves network of programmes created to assist a Country's citizens at various stages of their lives. The system usually arises from the efforts of the government or Organizations to provide social welfare. Currently, social welfare services are provided by volunteers, Non-profit Organizations and Governmental Agencies. Social welfare encompasses help provided to persons in need, activities and resources to enhance or promote the wellbeing of individuals, families and the larger society, and broad efforts to eliminate or reduce the incidence of social problem (Ikpe, 2023).

Among other definition of sustainable development is the one provided in the Brundtland Report in Ndukwe (2020), that, it is our common future which generated the agenda for discussion about the symbiotic relationship between growth and protection of the environment. The report stated that sustainable development is economic development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 2017). This implies that we must not carelessly, greedily and recklessly exploit the available resources in order not to stifle the present tempo of development as well as compromise meeting the needs of future generations. This sustainable development is about promoting equitable and balanced development in education, health, social security and financial support (Atkissan, 2019). It is a comprehensive process of involving complex

relationships among various aspects of the society including population growth, improvement in education, health care, among others.

The concept of sustainable development has been diversely understood and is constantly evolving making it difficult to earn a particular definition, and has become a global concept due to the encompassing nature of socioeconomic problems of this century. Sustainable development was developed out of concern for the future of humanity due to the shift in the interaction between man and the environment (Cornelius-Ukpepi, Kalu and Domike, 2017). Since sustainable development looks beyond the wellbeing of the present generation into the future, it requires that citizens in recent time must be alert to the various social welfare service. Therefore, when there is absence of social welfare services, the idea of sustainable development becomes a mirage.

Medical Welfare Services and Sustainable Development

Medical Welfare Services refers to the various types of medical care, support and management provided to individuals, families and communities to maintain, restore or improve their physical and mental health (Livia, 2014). These encompasses preventive care such as vaccinations and screenings, diagnosis services such as lab tests, therapeutic services such as medication, therapy, rehabilitative services such as physical and occupational therapies and palliative care such as pain management and end-of life care (World Health Organization, 2020). However, the primary objective of medical assistance has been to promote health and wellbeing of individuals, prevent illness and injury, diagnose and treat disease, rehabilitate and restore function and provide palliative care (National institute of Health, 2022). Effective medical assistance requires access to quality of care, patient safety, efficiency and effectiveness, and patient-centered care (Jones & Bartlett,2013).

The World Bank (2020), reported that medical assistance plays a crucial role in sustainable development by improving medical outcomes, enhancing quality of life, increasing productivity, reducing poverty and supporting economic growth. The world Bank emphasized on the importance of healthcare services in achieving sustainable development. They considered universal healthcare coverage a vital mechanism for improving health and welfare as well as driving economic growth and sustainable development. Their report on ‘Universal Health Coverage for inclusive and sustainable Development’ highlights the goals of universal health coverage, which include ensuring access to quality health services, safeguarding against public health risks and protecting against financial hardship due to medical expenses. The world bank has conducted in-depth studies on countries that have achieved universal health coverage, including Japan, Brazil, Ethiopia, France and others. These studies provide valuable lessons to countries aspiring to achieve universal health coverage (Jones & Bartlett,2013). For instance, Japan’s experience with universal health coverage has shown that a well-designed health care system can contribute to economic growth and social stability; similarly, Ethiopia’s Health Extensive programme demonstrated the effectiveness of community-based approaches in improving health outcomes.

The relationship between medical Welfare Services and sustainable development is very complex. In the view of Keyes and Barlet (2023), provision of medical welfare programmes is critical in promoting sustainable economic development in Nigeria. Medical care is an important aspect of development. It belongs to the basic needs every development strategy tries to meet (Igbal, 2014). Ensuring the health and wellbeing of all is essential to poverty eradication efforts and achieving sustainable development, contributing to economic growth in the communities (Abonor, Bassey, & Obue, 2024). Health is also an inalienable human right according to the universal declaration of human rights, as good health allows people to reach their full potential, children to be better, able to

learn, workers to be more productive and parents to care for their children better (Porritt, 2015). Walter (2019), reported that although global health has improved significantly in recent decades, their benefit has not been shared even among the nations. Several hundred million people across the globe continue to go without basic health care services especially in rural areas and in most impoverished communities. In line with this, Archibong, Ogana, Edet, and Enambe (2023), reported that the ever-rising socioeconomic costs of healthcare are limited or complete lack of supportive public financing in Nigeria as a major challenge to the attainment of the sustainable development goals recently adopted to reduce poverty and improve the wellbeing of the citizenry.

Spicker (2015), reported that, the effort of governments in sponsoring short term free medical welfare packages for the citizens in Nigeria has been highly recommended. This medical mission provides an immediate and direct relief to residents in most rural places in Nigeria. It was discovered that, over the years, the growing imbalance between the supply and the demand for healthcare services have presumed the national healthcare system, increasing medical expenditure on the ageing population, the long waiting times or the struggles to cope due to the chronic and degenerative diseases are some of the problems of the healthcare systems in Nigeria (Forte & Salome, 2018). To achieve sustainable development largely depends on the provision of medical assistance to the people (Barro 2023). Effective medical assistance forms the backbone of health interventions. Accessibility, quality, capacity organization availability of human and physical resources, and equity in the provision of medical welfare services are essential for a healthcare system to deliver desired outcome.

Theoretical Framework

Social Provisional Theory

The major proponents of this theory are Richard Titmuss and Ryan in 1963. The basic assumption of this theoretical perspective is that the society is complex and experiences change constantly. The proponents of the theory believe that as integral part of society, the resources individuals need to solve their problems, be they personal, group or community problems must be provided for by the social system. This theory emphasis on the rights of society members especially as it pertains to equality of access to the resources and opportunities society has to offer. The social provisional theory attaches particular importance to the responsiveness of the community and relevant social institutions to the numerous personal and social problems, especially as they affect individuals in the society generally, and the less privileged in particular (Etuk, 2015).

The theory has implication to this present study on medical social welfare services and sustainable development. The theory lay more emphasis on the responsiveness of the social institutions and government in providing the welfare needs of the individual members of the society. Such needs as medical care, cash assistance programmes, and others, are welfare services provided by the government for the enhancement of individual wellbeing. The social workers working with this theory must be skilled and have experience in working with institution networks and organisational structures like public welfare and social security systems (Siporin, 2015 cited in Etuk (2015). The theory also emphasizes on the availability of social resources and provisions by various agencies on social welfare services for sustainable development.

The social provisional theory has been criticized on the ground that it over-emphasized on the role and responsibility of the society for the provision of individual needs without considering the role of the individuals in the provision of these social welfare services for the enhancement of their social functioning. However, despite the shortcoming of the theory, it is adopted for this study

due to its in-dept explanations for authority concerned to be held accountable for the welfare of individuals in the society, using resources (common wealth) available in the community.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The descriptive nature of this study justifies the use of the descriptive survey research design.

Area of Study

The area of study was Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State spans from the coastal area of the Atlantic Ocean through the fresh water swamp of Akpabuyo, Calabar Municipality, Bakassi and Odukpani Local Government Areas with its mangrove vegetation through the thick gigantic virgin forest of Akamkpa (Cross River State Government, 2020). The Efiks, Efuts, Quas Ejagha and Ekos are the dominant cultural groups that occupied the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Administratively, there are seven local government areas in southern senatorial district of Cross River State. These are Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Biase, Calabar Municipality, Calabar south and Odukpani. The capital of Cross River State is located at Calabar specifically in Calabar metropolis of the state. Predominantly, the people of the southern senatorial district are mostly farmers, traders, artisan and few in the civil service. Christianity is the major religion of the people of Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Population of the Study

The targeted population consists of 75,000 residents between 18 and 65 years old selected from Calabar South, Calabar Municipality and Bakassi Local Government Areas in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Table showing the population of the selected Local Government Areas in Cross River State, Nigeria

S/N	Local Government Areas	Male	Female	Total
1.	Bakassi	8825	7210	16035
2.	Calabar South	15960	12755	28715
3.	Calabar Municipality	19620	10630	30250
	Total	44405	30595	75000

Source: Field work, 2025

Sample Size

The sample size adopted for this study was 400 respondents randomly selected from each of the local government areas involved in the study. The selection of the respondents was as a result of the variation of the population in each of the selected local government area in the study area. The study adopted the Taro Yamane sample size determinant formular which state thus;

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{75000}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$1+75000(0.05)^2$$

$$n = \frac{75000}{1+75000(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{75000}{1+187.5}$$

$$n = \frac{75000}{188.5}$$

$$n = 397.8$$

$$n = 400$$

Sampling Technique

The researcher adopted a multi-stage sampling technique (purposive, simple random and proportional sampling techniques) for the study. The selection of the three Local Government Areas (Calabar Municipal, Calabar South, and Bakassi) was based on the researcher's interest and the observant of the phenomenon being investigated. Two Council wards were selected from each of the local government area.

Instrument of Data Collection

The main instrument of data collection for this study was structured questionnaire. It was categorized into two sections. A4 point Likert type scale which include strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree options was used to measure respondents' responses.

Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis was done by testing the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance with appropriate degrees of freedom. Data collected were properly checked to make sure all items were responded to thereafter they were edited, coded and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis (ixy).

DATA PRESENTATION AND DESCRIPTION

Table 2: Demographic project of respondents

Variable	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	220	55
Female	180	45
Total	400	100
Age		
Below 20 years	66	16.5
20-24 years	84	21.0
25-29 years	96	24.0
30 years and above	154	38.5
Total	400	100

Level of education

No formal education	12	3.0
Primary education	38	9.5
Secondary education	128	32.0
Tertiary education	222	55.5
Total	400	100

Marital status

Single	146	36.5
Married	204	51.0
Divorced/separated	34	8.5
Widow/widower	16	4.0
Total	400	100

Occupation

Farming	66	16.5
Civil service	138	34.5
Self employed	88	22.0
Unemployed	74	18.5
Others	34	8.5
Total	400	100

Source: Field work 2025

From table 2, the demographic profile of respondents is indicated. It is observed that 55 percent (N=220) of respondents are male while 45 percent (N=180) of respondents are female. This implies that the majority of respondents are male. Responses on level of educational level showed that 3 percent (N=12) of respondents had no formal education, 9.5 percent (N=38) of respondent had primary education; 32 percent (N=128) of respondents had obtained secondary education while 55.5 percent (N=222) of respondents had obtained tertiary education. from the above description, it implies that the majority of sample population had obtained tertiary education.

Finally, the responses on occupational status shared that 16.5 percent (N=66) of respondents were farmers; 34.5 percent (N=138) of respondents were civil servant ;22 percent (N=88) of respondents were self-employed; 18.5 percent (N=74) of respondents were unemployed while 8.5 percent (N=34) of respondent were others from diverse occupations. From the above description, it means that the majority of respondents were civil servants.

Table 3: Responses on provision of medical welfare services and sustainable development (N=400)

S/N	ITEM	SA (%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)
11.	Free health care services by government or non-governmental agencies enhance community well being.	193 (48.3%)	159 (39.7%)	26 (6.5%)	22 (5.5%)
12.	There is provision of maternity through primary healthcare by government or non-government agencies.	201 (50.3%)	133 (33.2%)	47 (11.8%)	19 (4.7%)
13.	Health insurance scheme engender capital formation among working class.	207 (51.8%)	129 (32.2%)	37 (9.3%)	27 (6.7%)
14.	Free medical care for the aged enhance their socio-economic condition	197 (49.3%)	134 (33.5%)	42 (10.5%)	27 (6.7%)
15.	Increase access to health care services improve the wellbeing of resident in the community.	194 (48.5%)	152 (38%)	39 (9.8%)	15 (3.7%)

Sources: field data, 2024

From table 3, the respondents' responses on provision of medical assistance programmes and sustainable development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State is indicated. Responses on question 11 shows that 48.3 percent (N=193) of respondents strongly agreed that free healthcare services by government or non-governmental agencies enhance community well-being; 39.7 percent (N=159) of respondents agreed; 6.5 percent (N=26) of respondents disagreed while 5.5 percent (N=22) of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement. Responses on question 12 shows that 50.3 percent (N=201) of respondents strongly agreed that there is provision of maternity care, through primary healthcare by government or non-governmental agencies in their area; 33.2 percent (N=133) of respondents agreed 11.8 percent (N=47) of respondents disagreed while 4.7 percent (N=19) of respondents strongly disagreed with this assertion.

Responses on question 13 shows that 51.8 percent (N=207) of respondents strongly agreed that health insurance scheme engender capital formation among working class in their area 32.2 percent (N=129) of respondents agreed; 9.3 percent (N=37) of respondents disagreed while 6.7 percent (N=27) of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

The responses on question 14 shows that 49.3 percent (N=197) of respondents strongly agreed that free medical care for the aged engender their socio-economic condition, 33.5 percent (N=134) of respondents agreed; 10.5 percent (N=42) of respondent disagreed while 6.7 percent (N=27) of respondents strongly disagreed with this assertion. Finally, the responses on question 15 shows that 48.5 percent (N=194) of respondents strongly agreed that there is increase access to healthcare services; 9.8 percent (N=39) of respondents disagreed while 3.7 percent (N=15) of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement

Test of Hypothesis

The Hypothesis states that provision of medical welfare services does not significantly affect sustainable development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The independent variable is the provision of medical welfare services while the dependent variable is sustainable development. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis was considered most appropriate to test the hypothesis. The result of the analysis is as presented on table 4 below.

Table 4: Pearson product-moment correlation analysis of the effect of provision of Medical Assistance Programmes on Sustainable Development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State (N=400)

Variable	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal
Provision of medical assistance programmes (x2)	1526	5845	5827	0.671
Sustainable development (Y)	1525	5822		

Significant at $p < 0.05$, $df = 398$, $\text{crit-r} = 0.113$

The result in table 4 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.671 was found to be greater than the critical r-value of 0.113 needed at 0.05 level of significance, with 398 degrees of freedom. With this result the null hypothesis is rejected, this therefore, implied that the provision of medical welfare services significantly related to sustainable development in the study area. the availability of basic medical services promotes sustainable development in southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria

Discussion of Findings

Result of the hypothesis revealed that there is a significant influence of provision of medical welfare programmes on sustainable development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings of this hypothesis is in line with the views of Archibong, Ogana,, Edet and Enambe (2023) who reported that the ever rising socioeconomic costs of healthcare are limited or complete lack of supportive public financing in Nigeria as a major challenge to the attainment of the sustainable development goals recently adopted to reduce poverty and improve the wellbeing of the citizenry. The findings of this hypothesis also agreed with Almed, Alhassan, and Alshmmari (2017), that healthcare services is crucial for sustainable human development both as inalienable human rights and also essential contributor to the economic growth of society. It is a good summative measure of the progress of nations in achieving sustainable development, contributing to national development through productive employment,

reduced expenditure to illness, care and greater social cohesion. The findings of this hypothesis affirm the earlier studies of Barro (2023), that stressed that in achieving sustainable development largely depends on the provision of medical assistance to the people.

Summary

The main thrust of this study was to investigate social welfare services and sustainable development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the objective of this study, a null hypothesis was formulated based on the identified variable in the study namely, provision of medical welfare programmes. It was hypothesized that the provision of medical welfare programme has no significant relationship with sustainable development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Literature review and theoretical frameworks were carried out accordingly. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The multi-stage sampling technique involving the purposive, simple random and proportional sampling techniques was adapted at appropriate stages to select 400 respondents for the study. the questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis (rxy) was adopted to test the hypothesis at 0,05 level of significance. The result of the statistical analysis revealed that the provision of medical welfare programme, significantly relates to sustainable development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The statistical analysis has affirmed the argument in the body of this work that social welfare service correlate with sustainable development in southern senatorial district of Cross River State, Nigeria. Therefore, sustainable development is a normative concept which embraces social, ecological and economic dimension of conservation and change. The social welfare service in terms of provision of medical assistance significantly promotes sustainable socio-economic development in both rural and urban communities and it is essential for sustainable development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Social workers should assist client by providing counseling, Case management, advocacy and other services that support individuals and families in overcoming barriers to health and social support services. This kind of support can lead to more equitable and sustainable society, working towards achieving the aim of sustainable development.
2. The government of cross River State should provide medical assistance services to the residents of the area. This will go a long way to promoting sustainable development in the area.

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