Strategies for sustaining social justice and sustainable development in Nigeria

David Eganoyemi Aghonebarin [a1], Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria, david.tolo@aaua.edu.ng, daviddoublej@yahoo.com

Moshood Ayinde Hassan [b], Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria, moshood.hassan@aaua.edu.ng

Akinjide Aboluwodi [c], Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria, akinjide.aboluwodi@aaua.edu.ng

Abstract

This study investigates social injustice and its implications for sustainable development, addressing a notable gap in the application of Critical Theory to contemporary societal challenges. Existing research often highlights structural inequalities, yet limited attention has been given to the philosophical underpinnings that perpetuate systemic exploitation and hinder equitable development. The objective of the study is to examine the mechanisms of social injustice and propose ethical and policy-oriented interventions informed by critical theory. A qualitative methodology was employed, utilizing an expository approach grounded in extensive library research. Analytical and prescriptive philosophical techniques were applied to interpret the causes and consequences of social injustice. The findings indicate that leadership practices driven by self-interest and neglect of public welfare exacerbate inequality, while societal indifference undermines collective moral responsibility. The study emphasizes that social injustice poses a serious threat to societal progress and underscores the need for legal accountability, public sensitization, and the promotion of ethical values. By fostering fairness, equity, and moral consciousness, societies can enhance social justice and support sustainable development.

Keywords: Critical theory; ethics; leadership; social justice; sustainable development.

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* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: David Eganoyemi Aghonebarin, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria
E-mail address: david.tolo@aaua.edu.ng

1. INTRODUCTION

Every human society has a system of justice that was instituted to protect every individual, including convicted citizens who violate the rules and regulations of such society. This type of system, according to the Nigerian Baptist Convention (2022), provides a fair justice procedure to help maintain laws and order in society, ensuring that none of its citizens suffer unnecessarily. However, it looks as if the justice system has failed many times, which has left many people, especially the poor, suffering. As such, one may want to agree with the submission in the document of the Nigerian Baptist Convention that such failure has manifested itself in inequalities and social class distinction. As could be observed, it may not be fallacious to argue that corrupt practices are part of the major challenges Nigeria is facing today. This is also corroborated by Ugwu (2020) when he avows that one of the major injustices that is constantly practiced in Nigeria is corruption. Reduction of moral values and poor leadership styles, too, may be tools that have brought about social injustice, considering the happenings in society. This situation has probably arisen from the failure of some people holding leadership positions with the aim of controlling the instincts and emotions of the masses.

In a society where class distinction and inequalities are practiced, the people's thought is often manipulated by the oppressors. When this happens, the oppressed poor masses may be constrained from reflecting or thinking critically about the corrupt practices going on in society. In this kind of situation, the oppressors would use the weakness of the masses to expropriate the resources of the society with little or no consideration for the well-being of the masses. This is where the interests of the oppressors are in conflict with the interests of the masses.

In certain countries of the world, one may not be able to deny that there is a noticeable gap between the rich and the poor. Someone either falls within the circle of the very rich or within the circle of the very poor. Supporting this idea, Chinedu et al. (n.d.) contend that one of the obvious problems of society is class distinction. He argues that the main groups are the very poor, while a few individuals are those who are massively rich. A good leader is supposed to be concerned with the empowerment and protection of the interests of the masses always (Javed & Zhao, 2025). The oppressive group, probably, always acts in the contrary. The oppressive group takes advantage of the ignorance of the poor masses to exploit them and enrich their own pocket. That is, the oppressive group oppresses and manipulates the thoughts of the poor masses to make it difficult for them to think critically and query the dominance of the oppressive group in society.

The current situation in Nigeria may be a semblance of what Paulo Freire observed in Brazil during the Great Depression in the 60s. In furtherance, Markoff (1990) believes that the great depression was the time when Brazil experienced economic problems. It was a period during which the Brazilian Government formulated some policies that affected the means of production. Given the foregoing, Markoff and Baretta explain that several exploitations, manipulations, discriminations, and injustices occurred, and this made the poor masses suffer. What Nigerian society experiences at the moment may not be different from that of Brazil. It could be argued that some of the members do not really care about their fellow human beings. As a result of this, Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2019) observe that class distinction, favoritism, and discrimination, among others, have become rampant in Nigeria. They report further that cases of expropriating public funds among those in the corridors of power in Nigeria are not uncommon, as some people see leadership as a means of serving themselves rather than serving the masses.

1.1. Purpose of study

Therefore, this study attempts a critical examination of strategies for maintaining social justice and sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper intends to analyze social injustice in Nigeria and critical theory. It concludes that critical theory can contribute to current debates on social how to achieve social justice and maintain a good leadership role in Nigeria.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design to examine social injustice in Nigeria and explore the applicability of Critical Theory (Frankfurt School of Thought) as a framework for promoting sustainable development. A library-based research approach was adopted, with data drawn from secondary sources including books, journal articles, newspapers, reports, and reputable online publications.

The study utilized expository and analytical techniques to examine the concept, types, causes, and consequences of social injustice in Nigeria. Expository analysis was used to present detailed descriptions of social injustices such as discrimination, corruption, inequality, and electoral anomalies, while analytical techniques allowed for the critical evaluation of the underlying causes and effects of these phenomena.

In addition, the research applied prescriptive philosophical reasoning to recommend strategies for promoting social justice and sustainable development. The Critical Theory framework informed the analysis by emphasizing the identification of domination, exploitation, and manipulation of thought within society. Through this theoretical lens, the study examined contradictions in social, political, and economic structures that perpetuate injustice, and proposed normative solutions based on principles of equity, fairness, and moral development.

Overall, the methodology focused on the interpretation and synthesis of existing knowledge to provide a critical understanding of social injustice in Nigeria and suggest practical interventions grounded in ethical and philosophical reasoning.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Social injustice and the Nigerian society

Social injustice can be explained as a state of unfairness or injustice of the society in its divisions of rewards and burdens, and other incidental inequalities that may lead to the suffering of the masses in the society. In the opinion of Ronald (2016), social injustice occurs when there are seen and unseen unfair practices within a society that promote inequality and hinder social advancement. However, social injustice may be varied, depending on the perceptions of persons and societies. For some societies, it involves the distribution of advantages and disadvantages when citizens are not given equal rights. For some, it involves repressing individuals' ability to be fruitful for themselves and society. Farooq (2015) avers that social injustices are unfair practices that are being carried out in society. To him, it may be a form of discrimination, homophobia (that is, the injustice towards the bisexual or transgender), and ageism (that is, a situation where people or a certain group of people are discriminated against based on their age).

It could be argued that in a nation where social injustice is practiced, the masses are likely denied their human rights. This idea aligns with one of the reports of The Honor Society Magazine (2016), as it is recorded that social injustice can be described as a situation in which the dominant population has much control over the resources of the community. However, this dominant population denies the masses of their human rights due to their relative position in the structure of power. It opines further that social injustice is the way in which unjust actions are done in society. This usually occurs when the equals are treated unequally, and the unequal is treated equally.

It is assumed that social injustice does not occur suddenly; it occurs when some policies are formulated in an attempt to favor the privileged individuals. Pachamama Alliance (2019) reports that social injustice issues occur in relation to practically any aspect of society where inequality can arise as a result of unjust prejudices or policies. Given the foregoing, Pachamama Alliance (2019) opines that social injustice issues can be delineated into Inter-social Treatment (IT) and Unequal Government Regulation (UGR). Inter-social treatment may be safely explained as the treatment of a group of other people based on personally held biases and prejudices. These prejudices usually manifest in sociological categories, such as race, gender, age, mental or physical ability, religion, education, sexual orientation, and nationality.

The Unequal Government Regulation, as assumed, may be laws and regulations that purposefully or otherwise create conditions that obstruct, limit, or deny some individuals access to the same opportunities and community resources the privileged enjoy in society. Ashley (2019) and Kumar & Mohanty (2025) point out that these opportunities could be in the form of sound education, health care, environmental laws, transportation, government benefits, and employment opportunities, just to mention a few.

Any government that fails to fight against the above-identified immoral acts may likely put its people into a state of hopelessness. This is where people are likely not to have the opportunity to decide what they want; rather, choices are made for them. This seems to have become the usual practice in some African countries, including Nigeria. It may not be possible for any society that is used to this IT and UGR system of government to achieve a sustainable developmental goal in the society as a result of discrimination.

Observation has shown that the gap between the rich and the poor is wide. Either an individual is very rich or very poor. Meanwhile, in those days, we used to have the upper class, middle class, and lower class. A good leader is supposed to revive and empower the poor whenever they are in poverty, but they probably oppress and manipulate the thoughts of the poor masses to disallow them from thinking critically. The oppressive group may use ignorance or the lack of critical thinking of the poor masses to exploit and enrich their pocket.

The explanation above may likely be the current situation of the Nigerian society. It looks like some leaders do not care about the resources of society. Those in the corridors of power are probably careless whether people embezzle public funds or not. Some incidents that occurred just recently would probably make one believe that whenever someone embezzles public funds, once such an individual joins the ruling party, they become unshakable and their sins are forgiven. And more so, the ruling party in Nigeria seems not to accept blame for its failure. That is, the government blames the past administration for its failures. Meanwhile, a government that has ruled the country for years should be capable enough to correct the abnormalities of the past. However, the reverse is the case in Nigeria. The best thing the government could do is probably to shift blame to previous leaders over their failures. Just because some people want to be relevant or a boss boy, they continue to say the opposite. Just because the majority of the political leaders want to remain in power, they seem to intentionally impoverish the poor. It looks as if some leaders withdrew all the benefits the poor are entitled to and later gave them a little token during elections so as to make the masses forget their pains for a while. Many electorates are likely to trade their conscience and pay little attention to the impending suffering and pain for another four to eight years. This habit among the Yorubas in Nigeria is popularly referred to as *dibo ki o sebe* (vote and cook stew). The masses could no longer express their views, while in the developed countries, the citizens could question the government without being arrested, penalized, or punished. Many of the leaders seem to equate themselves with God once they become political office holders, such as chairman, senator, governor, minister, or president.

In Makinde's (2020) report, he contends that in 2018, Nigeria was ranked 157th among other countries fighting against social injustice on the United Nations Development Program. He expressed his displeasure by avowing that it is not befitting for Africa's largest economy, as Nigeria appears to struggle with social inequalities, exploitation, bribery, and corruption, which are not due to lack of resources but persistent misappropriation and ill-use of resources. Makinde believes that misappropriation and ill-use of resources are always strengthened by thought manipulation, poor political will, and weak policies. He claims that the effects of this selfish interest would be felt on education, health care, accommodation, and many other things that have to do with the well-being of individuals. Unfortunately, the political elites may find it difficult to relate to the struggles of an average Nigerian, as long as they and their families continue to patronize developed countries for maximum satisfaction and fair living. In the same spirit, Gbadamasi (2022) also corroborates Makinde's (2020) view, when he contends that some leaders in Nigeria have become looters, and the country appears to be in a situation where minimum wage can no longer keep pace with the price of foodstuffs due to social injustice. He avers further that the common man could no longer afford common things as a result of the misappropriation of public funds. He also opines that the judiciary has experienced a lot of setbacks as a result of corrupt practices. From the look of things, this may not

be far-fetched as the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) continues to uncover looted funds by some leaders. For instance, in one of its editorial columns, *Sahara Reporters* (2023) reports that the EFCC recovered thirty-seven billion naira (N37 billion) that was traced to thirty-eight bank accounts under the watch of the ex-president, Muhammadu Buhari, in the year 2023. Another instance is the four hundred and forty-five thousand dollars ($445,000) and three billion naira (₦3bn) that were recovered under the ex-minister of Humanitarian Affairs by the same Nigerian anticorruption body, as reported by Sanusi (2024) in the *Punch Newspaper*.

In one of his studies, Amunnadi (2021) avers that the Nigerian citizens are living in an age of growing threats to peace, a tragic increase of poverty, and physically imposed suffering driven by the expanding coast of violence, corruption, and oppression. He argues further that despite all these things happening in a country (Nigeria) that has law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and other agencies that can query the actions and inactions of the oppressors have remained silent as punishment is only meted out on a few individuals perpetrating social injustice in Nigeria.

Social injustice is a moral unfairness or inequality in the distribution of a society's rewards or burdens. According to Bufacchi (2012), social injustice is an arbitrary inequality, disregard for basic needs and poverty by political office holders, and a lack of meritocracy. That is, injustice can occur in a society where there are inequalities and where some leaders exhibit a nonchalant attitude towards the basic needs of every individual. Social injustice is the unfair distribution of societal resources, opportunities, and responsibilities, subjugation of any form, and anything that stops people from exercising self-determination and realizing their full potential. Social injustice could be seen as unfair treatment. A country that fails to maintain law and order, as it could be observed in Nigeria, may never experience social freedom, a stable economy, standard politics, and above all, peace (Miar, 2025). Social injustice in Nigeria may have caused the citizens to lose confidence and trust in the Nigerian government. It must be noted that if the government refuses to take the necessary measures to curb injustice, Nigerian society will probably become a failed society.

According to Amunnadi (2021), it looks as if there is global abuse of social justice and human rights, which is now posing unavoidable and extensive challenges to all humankind in Nigeria. In this spirit, Amunnadi (2021) states that Nigeria has become a nation where leaders place personal interest above national interest. The society seems to have become a place where corrupt leadership is seen as the norm rather than a misnomer. In his submission, political power in Nigeria is not employed to serve the fundamental human rights of the masses, but rather, for their sustained impoverishment politically, socially, and economically. Some political office holders may see no reason why they should commit themselves to the services of society. The majority of them appear to have been overwhelmed with power, thereby abandoning their responsibilities due to selfish interest and a nonchalant attitude.

A typical example of selfish interest and a nonchalant attitude on the part of the government is the incessant interruption of formal education in Nigeria due to unfulfilled promises by the federal government. The students suffer academically from this over the years. This may likely be the reason some of the learners engage in robbery, prostitution, kidnapping, human trafficking, internet fraud, money ritual, and the like. The truth is that if there is continuous interruption in the formal system of education, it may lead to total paralysis of education in Nigeria.

In one of his studies, Oko (2020) expresses his displeasure concerning the injustice going on in Nigeria when he opines that the injustice practiced in Nigeria is at an alarming height. Oko (2020) avers that some individuals are beginning to feel uncomfortable with the negative implications of social injustice that seems to be dominant in every society. He explains further that the manner in which the Nigerian federal government spends national resources at the expense of the generality of the Nigerian population is not a welcoming idea. He states that if eighty-five percent (85%) of Nigeria's resources are consumed by only 1% of Nigeria's population, as reported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) a few years ago, then it is unfair and disheartening. If Oko's (2020) claim

is correct, that means social injustice has probably eaten deep into the administration of the government, which needs serious attention at the moment.

3.2. Types of social injustice

Social injustice takes different forms. Whenever there are social injustices in society, they could be introduced through three types, and this is in line with Bufacchi's (2012) theory on social injustice. Therefore, types of social injustice are disempowerment, inappropriate distribution of benefits, exclusion, or marginalization.

i.   Disempowerment is the type of social injustice that exposes and exploits individuals' vulnerabilities. Victims of this injustice are disempowered by injustice and therefore excluded from the distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation.

ii.   Inappropriate distribution of benefits is the type of injustice that arises as a result of improper distribution of benefits. When benefits are not distributed accordingly, injustice may occur. For example, it will be an act of injustice when people from a particular region benefit from things that are provided for the general populace, while others who are not privileged are boycotted.

iii.   Exclusion and marginalization could be regarded as another type of social injustice that occurs when some individuals are excluded from the actions and legal policies that are to benefit the welfare of the whole society. It could be inform of excluding people from sharing of power or other social benefits.

3.3. Causes of social injustice

The Law of Cause and Effect makes it clear that there is always a cause to everything that happens to man (Rieser, 1940; Moore, 2019). In this regard, it could be defended that things do not just happen on their own. An action must have taken place before leading to another happening. In most cases, whatever actions take place in human society are usually caused by human beings (Open College, 2022). That is, social injustice cannot just occur without human influence or efforts. Therefore, some possible causes of social injustice are ignorance, discrimination, racism, fear, loss of values, electoral anomalies, lack of political ideology, and ageism.

Ignorance is one of the problems in human society. Ignorance simply means a lack of knowledge that could be useful for the day-to-day activities of every individual. According to Walker (2016), ignorance is the enemy that restricts every individual from making use of their power or privilege to achieve social freedom. In one of his arguments, Ansarian (2022) states that an ignorant person, who lacks the necessary epistemology or education, may get involved in social injustices. If such an individual holds a position of authority, he may think of himself and not bother about his fellow human beings. Apart from lacking the necessary education, on the side of the ignorant person, their thoughts can simply be manipulated by the oppressive group. Ansarian (2022) may be right in his opinion, as Nigeria appears to witness many setbacks due to ignorance. A typical example of this is probably when many citizens decide not to fight for the right course but prefer to collect money and gifts during elections. Another instance is that some individuals indulge in cybercrimes while hurting their fellow humans in an effort to enjoy luxury, while there seems not to be any strict punishment meted up to the perpetrators.

Those who indulge in ignorance are probably those who are controlled by their appetite. It may be safe to argue that their irrational parts are often controlled by their emotions, as postulated. Therefore, Stumpf (2003) claims that for a society to achieve social justice, the people need to overcome ignorance to become moral. That is, their ignorance must be replaced with knowledge because knowledge is virtue. For there to be social justice, education is very important. If the citizens wish to replace ignorance with knowledge, they must first be aware that they are in a state of ignorance; hence, they must be enlightened. Not only should the individuals be enlightened, but their minds should be tailored towards *knowledge of the good*.

Even though some organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), advocate equal rights and opportunities globally, discrimination remains a

debatable issue, just as it is in Nigeria today. Discrimination could be an act of treating an individual or a particular group of people as less important than others. In their argument, Fibbi et al. (2021) contend that discrimination is the unequal treatment of the same individuals placed in the same situation but varying by one or several characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, race, and many other categorical statuses. According to Fibbi et al. (2021), discrimination is defined as the unequal treatment of otherwise similar individuals due to their attributed membership in an underprivileged group. Considering their argument, out of the numerous ways discrimination seems to be introduced into society/organizations, they have been able to identify three major contributors to discrimination. Discrimination can be instigated through: (i) religion, (ii) social background, and (iii) educational background. This appears to be the situation in Nigerian society. For example, a person who refuses to employ a certified, skilled, and qualified person for a particular appointment just because the person seeking the job is not from a particular social background or religion may be practicing discrimination.

Racism is another possible cause of social injustice. It could be safe to opine that racism is an illegal and unethical means of claiming advantage over another. It is mostly used to create disparities between two people, between two or more groups of people in society, as purported by Stone and Evans (2022). Racism may occur when people face discrimination because of their race. Frequently, racism is based on a practice in which generalizations are made about some groups of people.

It may be correct for one to argue that Fear is also an instrument of social injustice. For example, when a less powerful group is scared of a stronger force or power that happens to be the enemy of the powerless group, oppression may begin to occur, and it may definitely have negative effects on the powerless group. For the fear of being attacked by the stronger force, the powerless force may dare not challenge the oppressive group. On the other hand, some political rulers who enjoy formidable positions may likely create fear in the minds of the people by threatening to punish, harm, arrest, and even kill whoever wants to challenge or stop them from accumulating wealth or resources for themselves. In view of this, other people who wish to bring positive changes to society may halt any action that could lead to societal change or freedom. This is probably a semblance of the Nigerian society, as people are being threatened with severe punishment. The opinion above is also corroborated by Ansarian (2022) when he declares that many citizens who probably criticize the government are being silenced by stringent judgment by the judiciary and military forces.

Loss of values is also an instrument used against the masses. Values here simply mean morality. Morality has to do with *rightness* and *wrongness*. According to Oko (2020), negative values such as expropriation of state resources and gaining power by all possible means appear to have brought insincerity, dishonesty, greed, unfairness, hatred, and many more. It looks as if many people in Nigeria are deviating from the path of positive values, as some incidents and happenings by some individuals have proven this to be true.

It could be argued that one of the injustices that could lead to the downfall of any society is electoral anomalies. Electoral anomalies are malpractices or manipulations that damage the credibility of any election. Elections in Nigeria are assumed to have some irregularities, thereby creating social injustice. Elections in Nigeria are believed not to allow the electorate to vote for the right candidates, except for candidates who support the regime. Money appears to be the major priority during elections in Nigeria (Jost et al., 2009). It is no longer news that people give and collect gifts and money to vote and win elections in Nigeria. Bochsler et al. (2018) opine that elections should go beyond the counting of ballot papers. Elections are supposed to be free and fair. Elections that are not free and fair are not worth valuing, and such should not be encouraged. Electoral laws should not just be made, but rather, they should be enforced so as to ensure morality in the election process in Nigeria.

Lack of political ideology may be viewed as a set of principles, social movement, doctrines, ethical ideas, and beliefs that a political party lays down so as to function effectively. Jost et al. (2009) explain that political ideologies interpret and define the world as it is through assumptions or declarations about human nature, historical events, present realities, and future possibilities, and to envisage the world as it should be, specifying acceptable means of attaining economic, social, and political ideals. It is assumed that Nigeria runs commercialized politics and

godfatherism. This may have brought about poverty or a lack of political ideologies. Jost et al. (2009) claim that there will be social injustice whenever the most influential and powerful person among the people in a particular party, for various reasons, appoints those who are very loyal to him to represent the party, whether at the local, state, or federal levels. In most cases, it looks like the competencies of these people are not considered, and the majority of them are not qualified. On the other hand, since they find themselves in a position of authority they are less qualified for, they fail to maintain law and order to satisfy their godfather, who appoints them over the citizens. Observation has shown that this type of leader, under the cabals, gives in to whatever they say, thereby creating a lot of social injustice to other people, as this seems to be the general practice in Nigerian society. Any political party that lacks ideology may not care about the well-being of the citizens, but rather, to enrich members' pockets, and this is probably the reason Nigerian politicians migrate from one political party to another whenever their party fails to emerge as the winner.

Another possible cause of social injustice is ageism. It is prejudice or discrimination against individuals based on their age, as argued by Iversen et al. (2009). This could mean that some people may not be favored or treated like others because of age differences. Such individuals are sometimes neglected when it comes to services, opportunities, and privileges, among others, in society. In the opinion of Bytheway (2005), ageism is usually ascribed to older individuals, but ageism can also affect young people negatively. Holding a leadership position before the age of fifty (50) years could be difficult, if not impossible, in Nigeria. Whereas young people from other countries are being allowed to hold leadership roles. Leo Varadkar was thirty-eight years old when he became the prime minister of Ireland. Emmanuel Macron was thirty-nine years old when he became the president of France. Hardly will this happen in any of the African countries, especially in Nigeria. It may be assumed that Nigeria is a nation where young adults are seen as unskilled, untrustworthy, irresponsible, and less productive (Oko, 2020). Treating Nigerian youths like this seems to have contributed to a lot of setbacks in terms of positive development. As a result of this, ageism should be discouraged in Nigerian society in order to allow positive development.

3.4. Critical theory as a strategic approach to social justice

Critical Theory (also known as the Frankfurt School of Thought) is a philosophical school of thought that advocates the questioning of power, domination, exploitation, political demand, and struggle for a just society. It not only studies and questions domination and exploitation in society, but it also assists the learners to be aware of thought manipulation. It makes the learners aware that societies' education policies serve their own political, social, and economic aims, and as a result of this, learners must not fall for it. In supporting this claim, Higgs (2020) avers that it could be seen as a form of manipulation of learners to become what society wants them to become, and by so doing, the unique abilities of every learner are ignored. In light of this, Fuchs (2015) believes that critical theory is a constructive critique of society. For Fuchs, ontology, epistemology, and praxeology are regarded as strands of critical theory. Ontology is a theory of being, as contended by Smith (2003). It deals with the question of how reality is organized and developed. Epistemology, according to Knight et al. (2014), "is the philosophical study of what knowledge is, and what it means for someone to know something. According to Knight et al. (2014), it involves questions regarding the nature of truth. Epistemology comprises the nature of justification and types of knowledge. Praxeology is the study of human action, especially political action and ethics, as claimed by Fuchs (2015). Praxis, according to Sabarich (2014), is a synthesis of reflection and action. That is, it is a reflection and action upon the world to transform it. This suggests that praxis means the use of a theory in a practical way. It involves the development of critical consciousness combined with social actions (Sabarich, 2014). Given the foregoing, this aspect of critical theory is to increase and regulate human activities in society. The essence of this is to support man's positive capacities, such as striving for freedom and cooperation. It maintains a stress on the importance of a better world. Its philosophy reflects realities, potentials, and limits of struggles (Fuchs, 2015).

In his analysis, Fuchs (2015) posits that critical theory studies society in a dialectical way. A way of doing this is by analyzing political practices, the economy of the state, domination, exploitation, and ideologies. The philosophical strategies inherent in this theory may be the strategies Nigerian society needs at present, as

domination, exploitation, manipulation of thoughts, and discrimination, among others, appear to be the order of the day. Critical theory uses dialectical reasoning as a method of analysis: The dialectical method identifies contradictions. It could be argued that contradictions are the basic building blocks of all dialectics. Dialectics tries to show how modern society and human actions are shaped by contradictions. Contradictions result in the circumstance that society is dynamic and that capitalism assures the continuity of domination and exploitation by changing the way these phenomena are organized (Komolafe, 2018). In other words, this suggests that domination and exploitation are key strategies of capitalism, and this is against humanity.

It is a normative approach that is based on the judgment that domination is a problem as it is in Nigeria today; hence, a society that is free of domination is needed. In view of this, the question of what it means to be critical is of high importance for political communication. All contemporary political communication is, in a specific way, critical because it consists of speech acts that normally question the political opinions and practices of certain actors. Critical theory analyses how capital accumulation, surplus value exploitation, and the transformation of aspects of society into commodities work and what the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production are (Fuchs, 2015). This is the theory that should be applied in a country like Nigeria, where all forms of anomalies are probably the order of the day. It should be applied to where some privileged individuals see serviceable positions as a means of exploiting the resources of society.

It looks as if the majority of Nigerians see leadership as a means of securing a job opportunity. They may have seen it as a lucrative business. By so doing, they engage in a force struggle with their opponents in an attempt to have their way. Many of these people engage in this struggle not because they wish to serve the people, but to enrich their pockets, exploit, and oppress the masses for their selfish interests. This is all the more reason the Frankfurt School of Thought intends to capture the prevailing injustices in society with the aim of maintaining laws and order. However, this school of thought may not work well if the citizens of a particular country decide to remain gullible and myopic. Social injustice may remain unfightable and unachievable, as argued by Gbadamasi (2022). Going by Gbadamasi's (2022) position, every individual must first of all be enlightened, so that his/her thought would not be manipulated nor trade his/her conscience for a token or perishable goods.

In a motion to support the Frankfurt School of thought, Corradetti (2012) contends that one of the basic functions of critical theory is to create a distinction between true interests and false interests. This is to ensure that the citizens are fighting for *a just and reasonable course*. A just and reasonable course here could be equity, fairness, justice, and a society free from domination and dehumanization. As can be seen above, this is what Critical theory stands for. It wants to show that a good life for all is possible and that domination and exploitation, as averted by Fuchs (2015), alienate humans from achieving such a society. This could be analyzed in Corradetti's (2012) argument when he declares that the critical theory strategy is to deconstruct alienation, domination, and exploitation. Critical theory also makes demands for a self-determined, participatory, and just democracy. Critical theory is connected to struggles for a just and fair society. This also corroborates Obafemi Awolowo's (as cited in Aboluwodi, 2008) philosophical idea when he purports that the essence of governance is to bring about social justice, equity, and fairness in society. He submits that political office holders should not be controlled by appetitive desires and tendencies. This is all the more reason that the struggles for a *just* society must be an intellectual dimension of struggles. Critical theory provides a self-understanding of a society's struggles and wishes (Crossman, 2019). Critical theory can also help to explain the causes, conditions, potentials, and limits of struggles.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the above analysis and argument, it could be inferred that ignorance, discrimination, racism, fear, electoral abnormalities, lack of political ideologies, and loss of values are likely the causes of social injustice in Nigeria. The paper discovered that the Nigerian system of education seems to have given room for certification to secure job opportunities. Whereas an individual who aspires to serve or lead the people must be developed mentally and physically through the education he receives. A person who lacks mental magnitude will definitely be controlled by negative emotions such as selfishness, pugnacity, fury, anger, hatred, aggression, and pride,

which amount to a lack of self-discipline and a lack of self-control. This may be the reason why the interests of some leaders in Nigeria conflict with the interests of the masses, thereby expropriating the resources of the society to their own advantage. Therefore, if social injustice is to be reduced to the barest minimum, critical theory, which is the educational theory that develops the mind so as to become aware of the injustice in society, must be encouraged for sustainable development in Nigeria.

To tackle social injustice in Nigeria, there should be awareness of the dangers social injustice can cause to the development of society. Therefore, education that allows critical thinking and social consciousness should be geared towards the development of every citizen. Moral and character education should not only be added to the school curriculum, but Ministries of Education, in collaboration with the school authorities, should enforce its usefulness. Policy makers and stakeholders must begin to recognize that inequality, racism, ethnicity, discrimination, and loss of values are dangerous to the development of any society. They can also affect the political system and the economic growth of a particular society. In view of this, the judiciary system must be strengthened to effectively tackle corruption with transparency and accountability. Those who hold leadership positions and other members of society who commit any atrocity should be punished under the law with the intention to serve as a deterrent to members of society. Every individual must abhor partiality and bribery so as to embrace moral values. Parents represent the first agent of socialization. They should be encouraged to instill moral discipline in their children. This might be one of the strategies for maintaining social justice and sustainable development in Nigeria.

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