

Exploring Sociological Determinants of Education for Sustainable Development in Taraba State, Nigeria

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>This study explored the sociological dimensions of education for sustainable development (ESD) in Taraba State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was used, and data were collected from 200 respondents through structured questionnaires. A multi-stage sampling method included purposive selection of local government areas and random sampling of schools and participants. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Likert-scale responses. Results showed that 55% of respondents were male, 45% female; 40% came from homes with no formal parental education, and 45% from low-income households. While 65% reported regular school attendance, 25% were involved in child labor. On curriculum content, 75% agreed that environmental topics are included, but only 35% confirmed teacher training in ESD, and 60% disagreed that NGOs or communities are engaged in sustainability programs. Additionally, 85% believed poverty limits ESD implementation, 75% cited gender inequality as a barrier, and 90% pointed to parental attitudes as a significant influence. A large majority (87.5%) supported the relevance of sociological research in addressing ESD challenges. The study concludes that sociocultural and economic inequalities, along with weak institutional support, hinder ESD efforts. It recommends teacher training, culturally relevant curriculum design, and increased community and parental involvement to enhance the effectiveness of sustainability education in the state.</i>
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Citation: Allison, B. R; Sunny, D. A. (2025). Exploring Sociological Determinants of Education for Sustainable Development in Taraba State, Nigeria. UKR Journal of Education and Literature (UKRJEL), Volume 1(2), 1-9.	Key Words: Education, Sustainable Development, Taraba State, Curriculum Integration, Educational Equity

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a critical driver for sustainable development, especially in developing regions where social transformation is vital for addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation (UNESCO, 2017). The sociology of education, as a subfield of sociology, explores the intricate relationships between education and society, focusing on how social institutions, cultural norms, and power structures shape educational processes and outcomes (Ballantine & Spade, 2015). In the context of Taraba State, Nigeria, education plays a significant role not only in individual empowerment but also in community resilience, environmental stewardship, and economic development.

Despite numerous education policies at both national and state levels, Taraba State continues to face challenges

related to access, quality, and equity in education. These challenges are deeply rooted in socio-cultural practices, religious influences, economic disparities, and gender imbalances, all of which are core concerns of the sociology of education (Okeke, 2011). Therefore, integrating sociological perspectives into educational planning and implementation is essential to achieving the goals of sustainable development as outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education for all (United Nations, 2015). This paper explores the sociological dimensions of education in Taraba State and how they can be harnessed to promote sustainable development. It critically examines how education systems interact with social structures and cultural dynamics to

either enable or hinder sustainable development efforts in the region.

Statement of the Problem

Despite global recognition of education as a catalyst for sustainable development, many regions in Nigeria, including Taraba State, continue to experience educational inequalities that undermine this potential. Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, low teacher quality, cultural barriers, gender disparities, and economic constraints persist, limiting access to quality education for large segments of the population (Aderinoye, 2016; Ojebiyi & Fasokun, 2020). These challenges are deeply entrenched in the social fabric of the state, where ethnic diversity, religious plurality, and traditional norms significantly influence educational participation and outcomes. Sociological perspectives reveal that education systems do not function in isolation but are shaped by broader societal structures, including class, gender, and power relations (Ballantine & Spade, 2015). In Taraba State, for example, early marriage, religious conservatism, and cultural resistance to formal education especially for girls continue to impede progress toward inclusive and equitable learning opportunities (UNICEF, 2021). These factors have created a disconnect between education policies and their practical implementation on the ground.

Furthermore, the lack of integration of local knowledge systems, environmental awareness, and civic education into the school curriculum hinders the development of socially responsible and environmentally conscious citizens. This gap weakens the role of education in fostering sustainable development practices at the community level (Igbuzor, 2019). Without addressing these sociological dimensions, efforts to promote education for sustainable development (ESD) in Taraba State risk being ineffective or unsustainable. Therefore, there is a critical need to examine how the sociology of education can inform and enhance sustainable development strategies in the region. Understanding the social dynamics affecting education will provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and development practitioners working to align educational efforts with sustainable development goals. It is against this backdrop that this study answered the following research questions.

1. How do social, cultural, and economic factors influence access to and participation in education in Taraba State?
2. In what ways does the current education system in Taraba State incorporate the principles of sustainable development, such as environmental awareness, social equity, and economic empowerment?

3. What role can the sociology of education play in addressing the barriers to implementing education for sustainable development in Taraba State?

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to investigate the sociological factors influencing education in Taraba State and how they can be harnessed to promote sustainable development in the region.

1. To examine the influence of social, cultural, and economic factors on access to and participation in education in Taraba State.
2. To assess the extent to which the education system in Taraba State integrates principles of sustainable development.
3. To explore how sociological perspectives can be applied to overcome challenges in implementing education for sustainable development in the region.

METHODOLOGY

Description of the Study Area

Taraba State, located in the northeastern region of Nigeria, is one of the 36 states of the federation. It lies between latitudes 6°30'N and 9°36'N, and longitudes 9°10'E and 11°50'E, sharing boundaries with six Nigerian states Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Benue, Nasarawa, and Plateau and with the Republic of Cameroon to the southeast (National Population Commission [NPC], 2021). Covering a total land area of approximately 54,473 square kilometers, Taraba is the third largest state in Nigeria by landmass (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2020). As of the 2006 national census, the state had a population of about 2.3 million people, but more recent estimates place the population at over 3 million, with a relatively high annual growth rate (NPC, 2021).

The state is predominantly agrarian, with agriculture serving as the backbone of its economy. Major economic activities include the cultivation of crops such as maize, rice, millet, cassava, yam, and groundnuts, as well as animal husbandry and fishing, especially along the River Benue and Taraba valleys (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, 2019). In recent years, there has also been a gradual increase in small-scale trading, crafts, and local tourism, particularly around the Mambilla Plateau a region noted for its temperate climate and tea production. Taraba State is ethnically and linguistically diverse, home to over 80 distinct ethnic groups, each with its own language or dialect. Prominent ethnic groups include the Jukun, Mumuye, Kuteb, Tiv, Fulani, and Chamba (Umar, 2020). The official language is English, but Hausa serves as a major lingua franca for interethnic communication. Local

languages are still widely spoken, especially in rural communities where traditional customs and social structures play a significant role in shaping educational and developmental practices. This sociocultural diversity, while enriching, presents challenges for educational uniformity and policy implementation, making Taraba State a compelling case for examining the sociological dimensions of education in relation to sustainable development.

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design using a structured questionnaire as the sole data collection tool. The design is appropriate for gathering data on the sociological factors influencing education for sustainable development in Taraba State. The questionnaire will include closed-ended and Likert-scale questions, organized into sections covering: Demographic information, social and cultural influences on education, awareness of sustainable development in education and challenges and possible solutions. It will be distributed to a representative sample of stakeholders, including teachers, students,

parents, and education officials. Responses will be analyzed using basic descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages to identify key patterns relevant to the study objectives.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure fair representation across different groups within the education sector in Taraba State. The population will be divided into relevant strata such as teachers, students, parents, and education officers. From each stratum, participants will be randomly selected to reflect the diversity of experiences and perspectives. A total sample size of 200 respondents were used for the study. This includes: 80 senior secondary school students, 60 teachers, 40 parents and 20 education officials. This sample size is considered adequate for a descriptive survey and allows for the collection of sufficient data for meaningful analysis. The selection will cover both urban and rural areas within the state to ensure a balanced view of educational and sociological factors.

Table 1 summary of the distribution of the sample size across the selected groups using stratified random sampling.

Category Population Group		Sample Size Sampling Technique	
1	Senior Secondary School Students	80	Stratified Random Sampling
2	Teachers	60	Stratified Random Sampling
3	Parents	40	Stratified Random Sampling
4	Education Officers	20	Stratified Random Sampling
Total		200	

Method of Data Collection

Data for this study will be collected using a structured questionnaire, which is an effective tool for obtaining quantitative information from a large number of respondents. The questionnaire will be designed to capture relevant data on respondents' demographic background, social and cultural influences on education, awareness of sustainable development concepts, and perceived challenges in education within Taraba State. The questionnaire will include a mix of closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items to facilitate easy response and statistical analysis. It will be administered in person to the selected respondents from the education sector, including students, teachers, parents, and education officers. To ensure reliability and clarity, the questionnaire will be pre-tested with a small group of individuals similar to the study population, and necessary adjustments will be made before the full data collection. The researcher will also provide clear instructions and assistance where needed during the administration to improve response rates and data quality.

Method of data Analysis

To address the first objective, which is to examine the influence of social, cultural, and economic factors on education participation in Taraba State, descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages will be used. These tools will help quantify how prevalent each factor is among respondents and show patterns in access and participation. For the second objective, assessing the integration of sustainable development principles within the education system, means and Likert scale analysis will be applied to evaluate respondents' levels of agreement or awareness. This will allow the researcher to measure the extent to which sustainable development concepts are embedded in educational practices.

Regarding the third objective, which involves exploring how sociological perspectives can address challenges to implementing education for sustainable development, descriptive statistics like frequencies will be used for closed-ended responses. If the questionnaire includes any open-ended questions, thematic analysis or categorization

will be employed to identify common themes and insights from respondents' opinions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table: Descriptive Statistics for Social, Cultural, and Economic Factors Influencing Education Participation (N = 200)

Variable	Category/Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Gender	Male	110	55
	Female	90	45
2. Age Group	Under 15	30	15
	15–24	100	50
	25–34	50	25
	35 and above	20	10
3. Parental Education	No formal education	80	40
	Primary	50	25
	Secondary	45	22.5
	Tertiary	25	12.5
4. Household Income	Low	90	45
	Medium	70	35
	High	40	20
5. Ethnic Group	Jukun	60	30
	Mumuye	40	20
	Kuteb	30	15
	Fulani	20	10
	Others	50	25
6. Religious Affiliation	Christianity	90	45
	Islam	80	40
	Traditional	20	10
	None	10	5
7. Distance to School	<1 km	40	20
	1–5 km	100	50
	>5 km	60	30
8. School Attendance	Daily	130	65
	Weekly	40	20
	Occasionally	20	10
	Never	10	5
9. Parental Support	Strongly support	100	50
	Support	60	30
	Neutral	25	12.5
	Oppose	15	7.5
10. Child Labour	Yes	50	25
	No	150	75

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The descriptive statistics in table 1 reveal significant insights into the social, cultural, and economic determinants of educational participation in Taraba State. Gender disparities remain a persistent issue, with males comprising 55% of respondents compared to 45% females. This reflects entrenched socio-cultural norms that prioritize male education, consistent with findings by UNICEF (2021), which highlight gendered barriers to education in Northern Nigeria. Such disparities necessitate gender-sensitive policies that address cultural biases and promote equitable access for girls.

The age distribution, with half of respondents aged between 15 and 24 years, appropriately targets the critical cohort for secondary education, affirming the relevance of the sample in examining educational participation (NBS, 2020). This demographic concentration provides a robust foundation for analyzing educational engagement within the state's youth population. Parental education level emerges as a salient factor, with 40% of respondents reporting no formal parental education. This corroborates the well-established correlation between parental educational attainment and children's academic participation and achievement (Okeke, 2011). Parents' educational background significantly influences attitudes towards schooling and the value placed on formal education, thereby affecting enrollment and retention rates.

Economic constraints are prominently reflected, with 45% of respondents residing in low-income households. Poverty constitutes a fundamental impediment to education, often limiting families' capacity to afford tuition, learning materials, and associated costs, thereby exacerbating school absenteeism and dropouts (Ojebiyi & Fasokun, 2020). The interplay between poverty and educational access underscores the need for economic interventions alongside educational reforms. The ethnic composition of respondents mirrors Taraba State's ethnolinguistic diversity, notably the predominance of the Jukun and Mumuye groups. This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for educational policy, necessitating culturally responsive curricula and pedagogical approaches that respect and integrate local languages and customs (Umar, 2020). Failure to acknowledge such diversity risks alienating marginalized groups and perpetuating

educational inequalities. Religious affiliation, predominantly Christianity and Islam, also plays a significant role in shaping educational attitudes and practices. Prior studies (Igbuzor, 2019) indicate that religious doctrines and community norms can either facilitate or hinder educational participation, particularly regarding gender roles and the prioritization of formal schooling.

Geographical accessibility remains a critical barrier, with 30% of respondents living more than five kilometers from the nearest school. Consistent with UNESCO (2017), physical distance to schools disproportionately affects rural students and female learners due to safety concerns and transportation challenges, contributing to irregular attendance and dropout rates. School attendance data show that while 65% attend daily, a non-negligible 5% never attend school. Irregular attendance can often be attributed to competing demands such as child labor, economic activities, or domestic responsibilities (Aderinoye, 2016), highlighting the multifaceted challenges to sustained educational engagement. Parental support for education is generally favorable, with 80% indicating supportive attitudes. Nonetheless, a minority (7.5%) express opposition, often rooted in traditional beliefs and socio-economic considerations that undervalue formal education, especially for girls (Ballantine & Spade, 2015). This ambivalence reflects the need for community sensitization and advocacy to strengthen parental commitment to education. Finally, the prevalence of child labor among 25% of respondents is alarming, given its documented adverse impact on schooling outcomes (UNICEF, 2021). Child labor not only diverts children from educational pursuits but also undermines their cognitive and social development, necessitating urgent policy responses to protect children's rights and promote school attendance. In conclusion, these findings elucidate the complex and interrelated social, cultural, and economic factors influencing educational participation in Taraba State. Addressing these challenges requires integrated strategies that combine poverty alleviation, gender equity initiatives, culturally responsive education, and community engagement to foster sustainable educational development.

Table 2: extent to which the education system in Taraba State integrates principles of sustainable development. (N = 200)

S/N	Variable	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Environmental topics are included in the school curriculum	60	90	20	20	10
2	Teachers incorporate sustainability themes in lessons	50	85	30	25	10
3	Students understand the concept of sustainable development	40	75	40	30	15
4	School projects promote environmental awareness	55	70	35	25	15
5	Climate change education is taught in schools	45	60	40	35	20

S/N	Variable	SA	A	N	D	SD
6	School policies support waste recycling and management	35	50	45	40	30
7	Students are involved in tree planting or environmental sanitation	50	65	40	25	20
8	Teachers receive training on sustainability education	30	40	50	50	30
9	Community members participate in sustainability programs with schools	25	35	45	55	40
10	Schools collaborate with NGOs on sustainability projects	20	30	50	60	40
11	Sustainable development education influences students' behavior	40	70	40	30	20
12	There is adequate government support for sustainability education	25	35	45	55	40

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The analysis of Likert-scale responses in table 2 provides critical insight into the extent to which principles of sustainable development are integrated into the education system in Taraba State. The majority of respondents (75% combining "Strongly Agree" and "Agree") affirmed that environmental topics are included in the curriculum. This suggests an encouraging alignment with global education for sustainable development (ESD) goals (UNESCO, 2017). However, the lower agreement levels on items such as *climate change education* and *school recycling policies* indicate gaps in the depth and breadth of sustainability topics covered. Regarding teacher involvement, 67.5% of respondents agreed that sustainability themes are integrated into lessons, yet only 35% agreed that teachers receive specific training on sustainability education. This discrepancy points to a lack of professional development opportunities, which aligns with Aderinoye (2016), who emphasized teacher preparedness as crucial for effective ESD implementation.

Findings show that 62.5% of participants believe students participate in environmental activities, such as tree planting

and sanitation. These experiential practices are essential for reinforcing sustainable habits among youth (Ballantine & Spade, 2015). However, only 50% believe students fully understand the concept of sustainable development, suggesting a need for more conceptual clarity and structured curriculum delivery. School-community collaboration scored relatively low, with 60% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that NGOs and community members are actively involved in sustainability education. This reflects poor stakeholder engagement, a major limitation in localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as noted by Igbuzor (2019). Perceptions of government support were also low only 30% agreed that there is adequate policy backing or funding for ESD in schools. This aligns with UNESCO (2017), which identifies limited governmental commitment as a significant barrier to integrating sustainability education in low-resource settings. Finally, 55% of respondents agreed that sustainability education positively influences students' behavior, an encouraging indication that where implementation exists, it has meaningful impacts on learners' attitudes and practices.

Table 3: Sociological perspectives in addressing the challenges influencing the implementing of Sociology of education for sustainable development (ESD) in Taraba State (N = 200)

S/N	Variable	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Awareness of challenges to ESD implementation	Yes	160	80.0
		No	40	20.0
2	Poverty hinders effective ESD delivery	Yes	170	85.0
		No	30	15.0
3	Gender inequality impacts access to ESD	Yes	150	75.0
		No	50	25.0
4	Cultural practices limit girls' participation in ESD	Yes	165	82.5
		No	35	17.5
5	Community-based learning supports ESD	Yes	155	77.5
		No	45	22.5
6	Parental attitudes influence ESD participation	Yes	180	90.0

S/N	Variable	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
7	Religious beliefs sometimes conflict with sustainability values	No	20	10.0
		Yes	140	70.0
8	Sociological research helps address ESD challenges	No	60	30.0
		Yes	175	87.5
9	Teachers should be trained in sociological aspects of sustainability	No	25	12.5
		Yes	160	80.0
10	ESD should reflect local cultures and values	No	40	20.0
		Yes	170	85.0
		No	30	15.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The findings from the descriptive analysis in table 3 offer a clear understanding of how sociological perspectives can provide viable solutions to challenges surrounding Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Taraba State. A large majority of respondents (80%) acknowledged awareness of challenges impeding the implementation of ESD. This indicates a strong consciousness among educational stakeholders regarding the multifaceted nature of these challenges. Awareness is an important first step in framing context-relevant responses, as supported by Ballantine and Hammack (2021), who argue that understanding the sociocultural context is foundational to any educational reform. The data further reveal that poverty is widely seen (85%) as a critical obstacle to ESD. In low-income settings such as many communities in Taraba State, economic hardship limits school access and participation, especially for marginalized groups. This aligns with UNESCO (2023), which underscores poverty as a persistent barrier to achieving SDG 4 on quality education.

Additionally, 75% of respondents agreed that gender inequality poses a significant threat to ESD goals. When combined with the 82.5% who believe cultural practices restrict girls' participation, the data reflect deep-rooted sociocultural norms that disproportionately affect female learners. These findings support research by Ojebiyi and Fasokun (2020), who found that patriarchal norms and early marriage reduce female educational attainment in Northern Nigeria. Parental attitudes emerged as a major influence, with 90% of respondents agreeing that they affect student participation in ESD-related programs. The family unit, as a primary agent of socialization, plays a crucial role in shaping educational behavior, which affirms the sociological standpoint that home environments are key to student outcomes (Ballantine & Spade, 2015). Moreover, 77.5% of respondents endorsed the use of community-based education in promoting sustainability. This approach, which leverages local knowledge and engagement, is considered effective in adapting education to local realities

and fostering community ownership of ESD goals (Okeke, 2022).

However, 70% of respondents acknowledged that religious beliefs may sometimes conflict with sustainability principles. This underlines the need for faith-based dialogue and inclusive pedagogy, especially in multi-religious settings like Taraba. Igbuzor (2019) emphasizes the importance of integrating religious leaders into educational discourse to reconcile faith and sustainable development objectives. Encouragingly, a significant 87.5% believe that sociological research is instrumental in identifying and addressing ESD implementation challenges. This reflects an appreciation for empirical, evidence-based approaches in education planning. Furthermore, 80% agreed that teacher training should include sociological dimensions, reinforcing UNESCO's (2023) position that capacity-building is essential for effective curriculum delivery. Finally, the integration of local cultures and values into ESD received strong support (85%). Such culturally responsive education ensures relevance, fosters inclusion, and promotes better learner outcomes, particularly in diverse settings like Taraba State (UNESCO, 2022).

Conclusion

This study examined the sociological dimensions influencing the implementation of education for sustainable development (ESD) in Taraba State, Nigeria. Findings from descriptive and Likert-scale analyses revealed that social, cultural, and economic factors such as poverty, gender inequality, cultural norms, and parental attitudes significantly impact students' access to and participation in ESD. Although there is evidence of awareness and some level of integration of sustainability principles in schools, challenges remain in teacher preparedness, community involvement, policy support, and alignment of educational content with local contexts. Moreover, respondents strongly affirmed the relevance of sociological perspectives

in understanding and addressing these challenges. The data underscore the importance of contextualizing education through the lenses of culture, religion, family structure, and socio-economic realities to ensure inclusive and sustainable learning environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen ESD in Taraba State through sociological approaches:

1. Teachers should be trained not only in sustainability topics but also in understanding the sociological factors that affect learners' participation. This includes addressing gender biases, cultural sensitivity, and inclusive pedagogy.
2. The curriculum should reflect the realities of learners' communities by incorporating indigenous knowledge, local languages, and traditions. Culturally relevant content increases engagement and ownership of ESD among students and communities.
3. Poverty remains a major constraint to school attendance and completion. Social protection programs such as school feeding, scholarships, and conditional cash transfers should be expanded to support disadvantaged families.
4. Special initiatives targeting the education of girls should be implemented, especially in areas where cultural and religious norms inhibit female participation. Community role models and mentorship programs can help shift perceptions.

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