VOL. 13 NO. 6,
AUGUST, 2026
E-ISSN 3027-1401
P-ISSN 3026-9148

African Scholar Publications & Research International
www.africanscholarpub.com

Journal of Arts and Sociological Research (JASR)

Beyond Theoretical and Philosophical Debates: The Imperatives of Dependency Theory and Appreciating the Development Quagmire in Africa

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.70382/ajasr.v13i6.0135

Abstract
This study delves into the practical implications of Dependency Theory in addressing Africa's development challenges, moving beyond theoretical and philosophical debates to explore the tangible imperatives that arise from this critical perspective. Dependency Theory highlights the unequal power dynamics between developed and developing countries, emphasizing how patterns of economic exploitation and unequal exchange perpetuate underdevelopment in Africa. By considering the development quagmire in Africa, characterized by historical legacies, structural constraints, and external influences, this study underscores the urgency of adopting a Dependency Theory lens to inform development strategies on the continent. Through a nuanced analysis of Dependency Theory's insights, this study seeks to illuminate the importance of prioritizing self-reliance, reducing external dependence, and fostering inclusive development approaches in Africa. By bridging theory and practice, this study aims to contribute to a more informed and effective discourse on addressing Africa's development challenges within the context of Dependency Theory.

Key Words: Theoretical, Philosophical, Imperatives, Dependency Theory, Development, Africa

Introduction
Dependency theory is a critical framework that seeks to explain the economic disparities and underdevelopment in the Global South, particularly in Africa. It posits that the underdevelopment of these regions is a direct result of their historical and ongoing dependence on the Global North for resources, technology, and markets. This theory challenges the traditional modernization theory that argues that development is a linear process that all countries can achieve through industrialization and economic growth. Thus, examining dependency theory in the context of African development is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it provides

a more nuanced understanding of the complex factors that contribute to underdevelopment in the region, moving beyond simplistic explanations that blame internal factors such as corruption or lack of good governance. By highlighting the role of external forces in perpetuating underdevelopment, dependency theory calls for a reevaluation of the global economic system and the power dynamics that disadvantage African countries.

Furthermore, by understanding the ways in which African countries are integrated into the global economy as suppliers of raw materials and cheap labor, policymakers and scholars can begin to address the structural inequalities that perpetuate poverty and underdevelopment. This analysis can inform more effective development strategies that prioritize local needs and resources, rather than relying on external aid or neoliberal policies that may further entrench dependency. Therefore, examining dependency theory in the context of African development is essential for challenging the dominant paradigms that have shaped the discourse around development in the region. By acknowledging the historical and ongoing legacies of colonialism and exploitation, policymakers and scholars can work towards more sustainable and equitable development outcomes for the continent.

Understanding Dependency Theory

Dependency theory is a critical perspective in development studies that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s to explain the underdevelopment of countries in the Global South, particularly in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The theory posits that the economic development of these countries is hindered by their structural dependency on more developed countries, known as the "core" nations. This dependency is rooted in the historical legacy of colonialism, where colonial powers exploited resources and labor from their colonies to fuel their own industrialization and economic growth.

According to Frank (1966), one of the key proponents of dependency theory, the global economic system is characterized by unequal power relations that perpetuate underdevelopment in the periphery. The core countries dominate the economic system, controlling finance, technology, and markets, while the periphery countries are relegated to producing raw materials and cheap labor for the benefit of the core countries. This unequal exchange of resources results in a continuous transfer of wealth from the periphery to the core, further entrenching the underdevelopment of the peripheral countries.

Historical Context and Key Proponents: Dependency theory emerged in response to the limitations of modernization theory, which failed to account for the persistent underdevelopment and poverty in countries of the Global South. Raul Prebisch, an Argentine economist, and Hans Singer, a British economist, were early proponents of dependency theory in the 1950s, highlighting the unequal terms of trade between industrialized and non-industrialized countries. Andre Gunder Frank, a leading figure in dependency theory, expanded on these ideas in his 1966 book "The Development of Underdevelopment," arguing that the global economic system was designed to benefit the core countries at the expense of the periphery.

Core Concepts in Dependency Theory: Core-Periphery Relations: According to Wallerstein (1974), core-periphery relations refer to the hierarchical structure of the global economic system, where the core countries dominate and exploit the peripheral countries for their own benefit. The core countries have advanced industries and technologies, while the periphery countries are relegated to supplying raw materials and agricultural products to the core, perpetuating their dependence and underdevelopment.

Unequal Exchange: According to Emmanuel (1972), unequal exchange refers to the unequal terms of trade between core and periphery countries, where the value of raw materials and labor exported by peripheral countries is significantly lower than the value of manufactured goods imported from the core

countries. This results in a continuous drain of wealth from the periphery to the core, exacerbating the economic disparities between the two groups of nations.

In sum, dependency theory provides a critical lens through which to understand the structural inequalities and power dynamics that underlie global economic relationships. By highlighting the exploitative nature of core-periphery relations and unequal exchange, dependency theory challenges traditional development paradigms and calls for a reevaluation of the current global economic system to promote more equitable and sustainable development outcomes.

Development Quagmire in Africa

Africa has faced numerous development challenges throughout its history, stemming from a combination of colonial legacies, economic vulnerabilities, political instability, and social complexities. The continent's history of colonization by European powers in the 19th and 20th centuries has had lasting effects on its development trajectory. Colonial rulers exploited Africa's natural resources, disrupted traditional economies, and implemented systems that favored the extraction of raw materials for the benefit of the colonizers. After gaining independence in the mid-20th century, many African countries struggled to achieve economic growth and social development. The legacy of colonialism, including arbitrary borders, ethnic divisions, and unequal power structures, hindered efforts to build strong national identities and effective governance systems. Additionally, the continent's reliance on primary commodities for export, volatile global markets, and external debt burdens further exacerbated its development challenges.

Over the decades, Africa has faced issues such as poverty, inequality, corruption, armed conflicts, disease outbreaks, and environmental degradation, which have impeded progress in key areas such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and industrialization. These challenges have been exacerbated by external factors such as climate change, global economic shifts, and geopolitical conflicts, further complicating the development landscape in Africa.

Factors Contributing to the Development Quagmire in Africa

Economic Factors: One of the key economic factors contributing to the development quagmire in Africa is the continent's dependency on primary commodities for export, which makes it vulnerable to fluctuations in global commodity prices (Nwabunike, 2020). This reliance on a narrow range of exports limits economic diversification, industrialization, and job creation, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and underdevelopment.

Social Factors: Social factors such as high levels of poverty, inequality, and limited access to quality education and healthcare also contribute to the development challenges in Africa (Haas, 2019). Persistent poverty reduces the ability of individuals and communities to invest in human capital and productive activities, while inequality exacerbates social tensions and undermines social cohesion.

Political Factors: Political instability, weak governance systems, corruption, and lack of accountability are major political factors that hinder development in Africa (Herbst, 2000). Limited political stability and entrenched systems of patronage impede efforts to implement effective development policies, promote economic growth, and address social needs. Corruption erodes public trust in government institutions and undermines efforts to combat poverty and inequality.

Thus, the development challenges in Africa are multifaceted and deeply ingrained, stemming from a complex interplay of historical, economic, social, and political factors. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and multidimensional approach that addresses structural inequalities,

promotes good governance, fosters economic diversification, and invests in human capital and sustainable development initiatives.

Application of Dependency Theory to African Development

Dependency theory is a theoretical framework that suggests that underdevelopment in developing countries, such as those in Africa, is a result of their economic and political relationships with more developed countries. According to dependency theory, developing countries are not able to achieve sustainable development due to their dependency on more industrialized nations for capital, technology, and markets. In the context of Africa, dependency theory can help explain the continent's development struggles by highlighting the historical legacy of colonialism, which resulted in the extraction of resources and the imposition of economic structures that continue to benefit former colonial powers (Amin, 1976). This legacy has left many African countries with export-oriented economies focused on primary commodities, leading to vulnerability to global market fluctuations and limited opportunities for industrialization and economic diversification.

Africa's continued reliance on foreign aid and investment from Western countries and international financial institutions has perpetuated a cycle of dependency, where African nations are often forced to comply with external conditions and agendas that may not necessarily align with their own development priorities (Frank, 1966). This unequal power dynamic contributes to the perpetuation of underdevelopment, limited sovereignty, and persistent inequalities within African societies. Dependency theory therefore, provides a critical lens through which to understand the structural roots of Africa's development struggles and highlights the need for a more equitable and self-reliant approach to development that prioritizes local needs, capacities, and resources.

Case Studies Demonstrating Dependency Relationship in Africa

Case Study 1: Nigeria's Oil Dependency: Nigeria's economy is heavily reliant on oil exports, with over 90% of its export earnings coming from crude oil (Nwokeji, 2017). This dependency on oil has made Nigeria vulnerable to global oil price fluctuations, leading to economic instability and hindering efforts to diversify the economy. Additionally, the extraction and export of oil have resulted in environmental degradation, social conflicts, and political corruption, further perpetuating Nigeria's dependency on oil revenues.

Case Study 2: Zambia's Copper Dependency: Zambia is one of the world's top copper producers, with copper accounting for over 70% of its export earnings (Brooks, 2019). The country's dependency on copper exports has exposed it to volatility in global copper prices, leading to economic vulnerability and limited opportunities for economic diversification. Moreover, Zambia's reliance on foreign mining companies for investment and technology has resulted in limited local beneficiation and value addition in the copper sector, reinforcing its dependency on external actors.

The above case studies illustrate how the dependency relationship between African countries and external actors, including former colonial powers, multinational corporations, and international financial institutions, contributes to Africa's development struggles by perpetuating economic vulnerabilities, limited diversification, and unequal power dynamics.

Criticisms and Debates

While dependency theory has provided valuable insights into the structural factors shaping underdevelopment in Africa and other developing regions, it has also faced several critiques and debates. One criticism of dependency theory is that it tends to oversimplify complex development

processes by placing too much emphasis on external factors, such as colonialism and global capitalism, while overlooking internal dynamics and agency within developing countries (Sachs, 1992). Critics argue that this narrow focus can lead to a deterministic view of underdevelopment that undervalues the role of domestic policies, institutions, and actors in shaping development outcomes. Another critique of dependency theory is its perceived Euro centrism and lack of attention to cultural and historical specificities in different regions of the Global South (Escobar, 1995). Critics argue that the theory's focus on Western domination and exploitation may overlook the diversity of experiences and strategies for development within countries in Africa and other regions.

There are also debates within the development discourse about the relevance of dependency theory in the contemporary global context, given the changing dynamics of globalization, international trade, and development finance (Peet, 2009). Some scholars argue that dependency theory may not fully capture the complexities of today's interconnected world and the diverse paths to development that countries in Africa and other developing regions may pursue.

Alternative Views on Development in Africa to Dependency Theory

One alternative view to dependency theory is the capability approach, developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, which emphasizes the importance of enhancing individuals' capabilities and freedoms as the ultimate goal of development (Sen, 1999). This approach focuses on expanding people's choices and opportunities by addressing multidimensional forms of deprivation, such as poverty, inequality, and social exclusion, in Africa and beyond. Another alternative perspective is the bottom-up approach to development, which emphasizes community-driven initiatives, participatory decision-making, and local empowerment (Chambers, 1997). This approach highlights the importance of grassroots mobilization, local knowledge, and social solidarity in promoting sustainable development in Africa by prioritizing the needs and aspirations of marginalized communities.

Additionally, the concept of sustainable development, as articulated in the Brundtland Report (1987), emphasizes the interconnectedness of economic, social, and environmental factors in promoting long-term prosperity and well-being in Africa. This approach calls for integrated policies that balance economic growth with environmental conservation and social equity to ensure inclusive and sustainable development outcomes. These alternative views on development in Africa offer new perspectives and strategies that complement and challenge the insights of dependency theory, highlighting the importance of human capabilities, community empowerment, and sustainability in shaping development pathways in the region.

Policy Implication and Recommendations

Addressing dependency and promoting sustainable development in Africa requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the complex and interconnected factors shaping underdevelopment in the region. Some strategies to consider include:

- Diversifying the economy: One key strategy is to reduce dependency on a single commodity or sector by diversifying the economy. This can involve promoting industrialization, investing in agriculture, and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises to create jobs and new sources of revenue.
- Strengthening governance and institutions: Improving governance, reducing corruption, and enhancing the rule of law are crucial for creating an enabling environment for sustainable development. Building strong institutions that are accountable, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the population is essential for promoting inclusive growth and development.

- Investing in human capital: Enhancing access to quality education, healthcare, and social services is vital for building human capital in Africa. By investing in people's skills, knowledge, and health, countries can foster innovation, productivity, and inclusive development.
- Promoting sustainable natural resource management: Given Africa's rich natural resources, promoting sustainable and equitable management of resources is critical for long-term development. This can involve promoting sustainable agriculture practices, protecting biodiversity, and mitigating the impacts of climate change.
- Fostering regional integration and cooperation: Enhancing regional trade, infrastructure development, and cooperation can create new opportunities for economic growth and development in Africa. By breaking down barriers to trade and investment, countries can harness economies of scale and promote regional development.

Policy Implications for Government, NGOs and International Institutions on Dependency

Government, NGOs, and international institutions play crucial roles in addressing dependency and promoting sustainable development in Africa. Some policy implications for each actor include:

Government: Governments in Africa can prioritize policies that promote economic diversification, support small and medium-sized enterprises, and invest in human capital to reduce dependency and promote sustainable development (Ndikumana & Boyce, 2018). Enhancing governance and combating corruption are essential for creating an enabling environment for sustainable development (UNDP, 2019). Implementing policies that support sustainable natural resource management, such as promoting renewable energy and sustainable agriculture practices, can help countries mitigate the impacts of resource dependency (World Bank, 2020).

NGOs: NGOs can support community-driven development initiatives, promote local empowerment and participatory decision-making, and advocate for the rights of marginalized groups to address dependency and promote inclusive development (Fowler, 2000). Collaborating with local partners, sharing knowledge and resources, and mobilizing grassroots movements can strengthen the capacity of communities to address the root causes of dependency and work towards sustainable development (Edwards, 2014).

International Institutions: International institutions can provide financial support, technical assistance, and capacity-building to help countries in Africa reduce dependency, promote sustainable development, and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (World Bank, 2021). Promoting international cooperation, supporting regional integration efforts, and advocating for fair trade and investment practices can create a more conducive environment for sustainable development in Africa (IMF, 2021). Collaborating with governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders to address structural barriers to development, such as inequality, poverty, and climate change, can help international institutions contribute to more equitable and sustainable development outcomes in Africa (UN, 2020). By implementing these policy implications, governments, NGOs, and international institutions can work together to address dependency and promote sustainable development in Africa, fostering inclusive growth, poverty reduction, and environmental sustainability in the region.

Role of International Relations

Global power dynamics play a significant role in shaping the development trajectory of African countries. One key concept often used to explain this relationship is dependency theory, which suggests that the international system is structured in a way that perpetuates the economic and political dominance of developed nations over less developed countries. According to dependency theory,

African countries are locked in a cycle of underdevelopment and dependency on the global North due to historical and ongoing exploitation of their resources, markets, and labor by more powerful nations. African economies are often heavily reliant on exporting raw materials, which makes them vulnerable to fluctuations in global commodity prices and leaves them exposed to exploitation by multinational corporations. Additionally, the legacy of colonialism has left many African countries with weak institutions, limited infrastructure, and high levels of debt, further exacerbating their dependency on external actors for support and investment.

Furthermore, global power dynamics also impact African development through institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, which often impose structural adjustment programs on African countries in exchange for financial assistance. These programs are often criticized for prioritizing the interests of Western countries over the needs of African populations and perpetuating unequal power dynamics between the global North and South. In order to break free from this cycle of dependency, African countries must work towards diversifying their economies, building strong institutions, and fostering regional cooperation. By reducing their reliance on external actors and promoting sustainable development strategies, African countries can begin to assert more agencies in shaping their own development trajectories.

Importance of International Cooperation and Solidarity in Addressing the Development Quagmire

International cooperation and solidarity are crucial in addressing the development challenges facing Africa. As argued by Heywood (2017), global issues such as poverty, inequality, and climate change require collective action and collaboration among nations to achieve meaningful progress. By working together, countries can pool resources, share knowledge, and coordinate efforts to address common challenges and achieve shared goals. According to Nye (2002), international cooperation is essential in promoting peace and security, fostering economic development, and addressing transnational threats such as terrorism and pandemics. By building partnerships and alliances, countries can leverage their collective strengths and resources to tackle complex issues that no single country can solve alone.

In the context of African development, international cooperation is vital in providing financial assistance, technical expertise, and capacity building support to help countries overcome barriers to growth and development. As highlighted by Sachs (2015), partnerships with international organizations, donor countries, and non-governmental organizations can help African countries access resources and expertise that can accelerate their development progress. Furthermore, solidarity among nations is important in promoting equity, justice, and inclusivity in the global development agenda. As emphasized by Moyo (2009), a spirit of solidarity among countries can help ensure that no nation is left behind in the quest for sustainable development and that the benefits of progress are shared equitably among all people.

Thus, international cooperation and solidarity are essential in addressing the development quagmire in Africa. By working together and supporting each other, countries can overcome challenges, achieve shared goals, and build a brighter future for all.

Future Prospects and Challenges

In the 21st century, there are several potential pathways for African development that can lead to sustainable growth and prosperity. Some of these pathways include:

- Economic Diversification: African countries can focus on diversifying their economies beyond traditional sectors like agriculture and mining. By investing in industries such as technology,

manufacturing, and services, African nations can create new sources of growth, employment, and innovation.

- Infrastructure Development: Improving infrastructure, such as roads, ports, energy, and telecommunications, is crucial for boosting productivity and enhancing connectivity within and beyond Africa. Investing in infrastructure can attract private investment, stimulate economic activity, and facilitate trade and regional integration.
- Human Capital Development: Investing in education, healthcare, and skills training is essential for building a skilled workforce and unlocking the potential of Africa's young population. By providing quality education and healthcare services, African countries can improve productivity, promote innovation, and reduce poverty and inequality.
- Sustainable Development: Embracing sustainable development practices, such as renewable energy, conservation of natural resources, and climate resilience, is a key to ensuring long-term growth and environmental sustainability. By adopting green technologies and policies, African countries can promote sustainable development while mitigating the impacts of climate change.
- Regional Integration: Strengthening regional integration through trade agreements, infrastructure projects, and harmonized policies can enhance economic cooperation, boost intra-African trade, and create a more unified and competitive market. Regional integration can also foster peace and stability by promoting cross-border cooperation and collaboration.

By pursuing these pathways for development, African countries can unlock their full potential and achieve sustainable growth and development in the 21st century.

Key Challenges to Overcome for Sustainable Progress in Africa

Despite the potential pathways for development, Africa faces several key challenges that must be addressed to ensure sustainable progress. Some of these challenges include:

- Political Instability: Political instability, corruption, and weak governance in many African countries hinder development efforts and create barriers to progress. Strengthening democratic institutions, promoting good governance, and combating corruption are crucial for fostering stability and promoting development.
- Poverty and Inequality: High levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment remain significant challenges in Africa. Addressing poverty and inequality requires targeted policies to promote inclusive growth, improve access to basic services, and create opportunities for marginalized populations.
- Conflict and Security: Persistent conflicts, terrorism, and violence in certain regions of Africa undermine development efforts and pose significant security challenges. Addressing conflict and security threats requires proactive peace-building efforts, conflict resolution mechanisms, and investment in security and stability.
- Infrastructure Deficits: Inadequate infrastructure, such as poor roads, limited access to electricity, and insufficient water and sanitation facilities, hinders economic development and reduces productivity. Addressing infrastructure deficits requires investment in infrastructure projects, public-private partnerships, and innovative financing mechanisms.
- Climate Change: Africa is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including droughts, floods, and extreme weather events. Adaptation and mitigation measures, such as sustainable land management, renewable energy, and climate-resilient infrastructure, are essential for building resilience and addressing climate risks.

By addressing these key challenges and implementing targeted interventions, African countries can overcome barriers to sustainable progress and achieve inclusive and equitable development in the 21st century.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has shed light on the critical imperatives of Dependency Theory in addressing the development quagmire in Africa. By moving beyond theoretical and philosophical debates, and focusing on practical implications, it has become evident that Dependency Theory offers valuable insights into the structural inequalities and power dynamics that perpetuate underdevelopment on the continent. The analysis has underscored the importance of recognizing the historical legacies, external influences, and structural constraints that shape Africa's development landscape, emphasizing the need for self-reliance, reduced external dependence, and inclusive development strategies. By appreciating the nuances of Dependency Theory and its relevance to Africa's development context, policymakers, scholars, and development practitioners can leverage this perspective to craft more effective and sustainable development solutions. Emphasizing the imperative of addressing unequal power relations, fostering local capacity-building, and promoting equitable trade relationships, Dependency Theory provides a framework for understanding and addressing the root causes of Africa's development challenges.

As Africa navigates its path towards sustainable development and economic prosperity, embracing the imperatives of Dependency Theory can help guide policy interventions that prioritize autonomy, resilience, and inclusive growth. By integrating these insights into development agendas and forging partnerships based on mutual benefit and solidarity, African countries can strive towards overcoming the development quagmire and forging a path towards a more equitable and prosperous future for all. Therefore, recognizing the imperatives of dependency theory and addressing the development quagmire in Africa demands a holistic approach that integrates historical context, structural analyses, and policy interventions to foster self-determination, resilience, and prosperity on the continent.

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