SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The research paper examines sustainable human development by addressing its definitions and nature. It delves into key challenges such as governance, economic violence, corruption, terrorism, and various forms of security including human, political, economic, food, health, and environmental. It also analyzes challenges like deforestation, climate change, pollution, groundwater depletion, low literacy, poor health, and extreme poverty. The study concludes by summarizing the discussed sustainable development challenges.

KEYWORDS: *Governance, Literacy, Health, Poverty, Climate Change*

JEL Classification: G3, I20, I1, I3, Q54

INTRODUCTION

During the 1950s and 1960s, development theories prioritized economic growth and Gross National Product (GNP). In the 1970s, due to rising poverty, governments shifted to a basic needs approach. This approach failed due to the selfishness of the privileged few and the helplessness of the deprived. The 1980s saw environmental degradation, debt, and disparities. In the 1990s, a focus on sustainable human development emerged, emphasizing income distribution, health, education, environment, and freedom.

Sustainable development promotes replicable consumption models respecting environmental limits. It entails economic, social, and ecological balance through policies in various sectors. Sustainability requires national balance, shifting resources from military and inefficiency to human investment and eco-friendly technology. Internationally, it demands equitable cooperation for a safe world, necessitating reforms in the global economic order.

Human development, integral to sustainability, expands individual and collective capabilities, aligning with Sen's *capability approach*. UNDP defines human development as expanding opportunities, notably for health, education, and decent living. Its pillars include equity, sustainability, productivity, and empowerment, considering economic growth while prioritizing quality, distribution, and long-term viability.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Shefali and Meeta (2017) attempted to understand the shift from MDGs to SDGs, implementation of SDGs and its challenges in India. The study found that achieving the SDGs in a country like India is a challenging task. The SDGs are a direction and a vision for India to achieve sustainability. There is a need to identify priorities, have locally relevant and people-centric development policies and build strong partnerships. The government also needs to have a focused plan for tracking and evaluating impact and scaling up successful interventions.

Fukuda-Parr et al. (2014) highlighted the effects of MDGs and targets. It includes the empirical effects on policy priorities and normative effects on development discourses on human rights, principles and priorities of human development. The researcher found that indicators were poorly selected and contributed to distorting effects which varied considerably from one goal to another and led to unintended consequences in diverting attention in reshaping development thinking. The study underscores poverty reduction and well-being as urgent global 21st-century priorities.

Fukuda-Parr (2011) highlights the capability approach's pivotal role in challenging structural adjustment and Washington Consensus, shaping the MDGs new consensus. The study explores Sen's capability and human

development influence on evolving international development policies, emphasizing the normative aspect and adoption of capability approach ideas in prioritizing poverty.

David (2010) focused on results-based management and human development in shaping the MDGs. Researcher identifies the MDGs had only limited impact on policies and actions. The Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) of MDGs were overseen by the IMF and the World Bank. The research work suggested introducing internal "Arrogance Reduction Strategies" to transform their control-oriented cultures through IMF and World Bank and it concludes the idea of human development is past its sell-by date.

Osmani (2007) contends that a well-designed employment policy can enhance MDG attainment, emphasizing poverty reduction, job creation, income growth, gender empowerment, and environmental sustainability for human development. The study outlines key pathways backed by empirical evidence. However, the suggested employment-human development connections are preliminary and require further empirical research for validation and robustness.

SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: NATURE AND DEFINITIONS

Human development as defined in the UNDP's HDR as the enlargement of the range of people's choices. It is an extension of the basic needs approach. The concept of the basic needs approach reminds that the objective of the development effort is to provide all human beings the opportunity for a full life. Since some basic interpretations are in terms of commodity bundles or specific needs, human development is trying to get away from this. Human development goes beyond basic needs in the sense that it is concerned with all human beings irrespective of the poor and rich within a nation-state and among nation-states.

The concept of Sustainable Human Development (SHD) is that development which lasts forever. It may be possible that those who enjoy the fruits of development present may be at the cost of making future generations worse-off by degrading the earth's finite resources and the environment. The general principle of sustainable development adopted by the World Commission on Environment and Development (Our Common Future 1987) is that "Current generations should meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Sustainable human development and environmental sustainability are two components of sustainable development. According to Hasegawa (2001) "SHD creates an environment in which human security is guaranteed and individual human beings can develop their full potential and lead a life of dignity and freedom. It is the process of improving practical needs and strategic interests to all members of a community with the intent of providing complete physical, mental and social well-being (Austin, A.H, 1998).

According to Jolly (1991), SHD means protecting our children's well-being with an integrated, human approach to the environment. Speth wrote in the Foreword to the 1994 HDR that SHD is a development that only generates economic growth but distributes its benefits equitably; that regenerates the environment rather than destroying it: that empowers people rather than marginalizing them. It gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities, and provides for their participation in decisions affecting them. It is a development that is pro-poor, pro-jobs, pro-democracy, pro-women and pro-children.

Each of these definitions of sustainable human development brings different dimensions of human development goals to the forefront. Environmental sustainability is not the focal point of so-called sustainable human development. Most in the human development paradigm see sustainability as just another dimension of the human development goals, whereas the sustainability paradigm considers that as the core issue for our future existence.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Human development and sustainable development share a close yet distinct relationship. A key contrast lies in the fact that advancing human development might demand increased resource utilization, while ensuring sustainability could necessitate resource restraint. However, both concepts emphasize capabilities, skills, and capacities, converging on the notion that development empowers people. They converge on crucial tenets, including:
1. *Expansive Education:* Education empowers individuals to lead informed and self-determined lives.
2. *Multidimensional Development:* Recognizing diverse facets of development, acknowledging the significance of income as a determining factor.
3. *Freedom and Choices:* Human development stresses the necessity of freedom and choices for fulfilling needs and desires. This aligns with sustainable development's goal of providing non-declining utility indefinitely.
4. *Productive Education and Health:* Education and health are productive instruments, valuable and desirable in their own right.

5. *Essential Sustainability:* The sustainability discourse underscores the importance of what should be sustained, alongside methods for sustaining it.
6. *Human-Centered Approach:* Human development emphasizes real people with autonomy and choices, distinguishing them from mere recipients of welfare.

To this end, there is no tension between human development and sustainable development; both are based on the universalism of life claims. If human development is about enabling people to lead long, healthy, educated and fulfilling lives, then sustainable human development is about making sure that future generations can do the same. But in some sense adding 'sustainable' as a prefix is superfluous, since human development without being sustainable cannot be true human development.

Factors Affecting Human Development

With the expiration of the MDGs, which guided global development until 2015, the international community is presently formulating SDGs spanning 2016-2030. Notable global challenges to sustainable development encompass poverty, unemployment, climate change, conflict, humanitarian aid, fostering inclusive and peaceful societies, strengthening governance institutions, and upholding the rule of law. While human development and sustainability have traditionally been treated separately in literature, numerous studies have established their interconnectedness. After exploring the conceptual ties between human development and sustainability, this section underscores the core issues and obstacles encountered in the pursuit of sustainable human development.

Low Literacy Rate

Education stands as a fundamental and vital development component, acting as a transformative force for societal, economic, and political inclusion, facilitating the lasting integration of marginalized individuals. Serving as a potent societal investment, it yields positive externalities and synergies that enhance overall well-being. Despite progress, female literacy rates remain behind due to disparities linked to gender, caste, and income, evident in both urban and rural settings. Notably, increased female literacy correlates with lowered fertility, infant, and child mortality rates, and the reverse relationship holds true.

Extreme Poverty

In developing nations, poverty emerges as the central impediment to progress. The majority reside in rural areas and rely heavily on agriculture for income. A profound connection exists between poverty and the environment, particularly in economies reliant on natural resources. Necessities drive locals to activities like tree felling for fuel, wildlife hunting (with potential extinction consequences), and unsustainable farming practices. These actions address immediate needs but cast long-term consequences onto future generations.

Poor Health

The developments in the health sector are confined only to urban areas; moreover, the status of income also determines the access to it. Life expectancy levels have gone up but infant mortality is increasing. The provision of health care facilities is closely related to economic growth and social wellbeing; better health of an individual enables him/her to reduce the production losses thereby contributing to higher levels of productivity. This has a direct influence on the resources and avoids unnecessary expenditures, which can be diverted towards ensuring better living standards. The community health centres are responsible for ensuring the rural health care facilities but they are often under-staffed or comprise the staffs that are unwilling to work in rural areas and they lack the necessary medical equipment and infrastructure facilities to extend health care.

Human Security

The 21st century security landscape is shaped by transnational challenges rooted in poverty, inequality, environmental issues, and more. These interconnected threats, like pandemics, migration, and conflicts, affect individuals' well-being amid global stability. Prioritizing human security over traditional national security is increasingly crucial, focusing on political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects of well-being and stability.

Challenges to Sustainable Human Development

There are numerous challenges to sustainable development in India. While many of these problems are caused due to the insensitive use of natural resources. This deterioration of the environment has a direct impact on the life of individuals, affecting the longevity of life, which in turn, affects the development process on the

whole. The degraded soil, depleted aquifers, diminishing forest cover, deteriorating urban environment and destroyed eco-systems can scarcely support better living standards and quality of life in the future.

Rapid population growth is expected to exacerbate these pressures, although it is people's consumption levels that matter more than their mere numbers. Over 95% of the estimated increase of two billion people over the next twenty years will live in the developing world. The challenges are both natural and man-made and are enumerated as below:

Deforestation and Desertification
Forest resources in both India and worldwide are facing an imminent and alarming increase in depletion rates. Various entities, including individuals, corporations, and government agencies, are contributing to this concerning issue. Unfortunately, the pursuit of development projects has led to widespread tree felling, disregarding the principles of sustainable development and hindering human progress. Among the gravest consequences of deforestation is the significant loss of biodiversity. The destruction of forests not only results in the extinction of endangered animal species but also eliminates numerous plant varieties that hold great medicinal potential. Furthermore, this phenomenon significantly contributes to the exacerbation of global warming.

Effects of Climate Change
The drastic changes in the climatic variations resulted in poor health conditions of human beings and earth resources. These have also spilled dire consequences on the social and environmental aspects of society. The increasing temperature levels and the carbon emissions had severe effects like crop failures, increasing droughts, scarcity of food supply, contagious diseases, degradation of the environment, increasing floods and so on. Lack of disaster management methods and systematic marginalization of local communities in policy formulations have increased the vulnerabilities to natural and man-made disasters.

Increasing Pollution
The significant deterioration of air quality stands widely acknowledged as a prominent contributor to pollution, particularly within urban locales. The origins of air pollution encompass industrial emissions, indoor contaminants, and vehicular exhaust. Urban regions bear the brunt of pollution due to the concentration of industries emitting smoke and various chemical substances into the atmosphere. The escalation in vehicle sales has reached unprecedented levels, culminating in extensive traffic congestions. Consequently, this has engendered a host of severe health risks such as asthma, respiratory ailments, hearing impairments and more.

Ground Water Depletion and Pollution
Persistent water scarcity and inefficient usage pose avoidable crises. Safe drinking water access is urgent, with untreated contaminants and sewage discharge in urban centres. Diminishing groundwater worsens the national water shortage, prompting water harvesting mandates in some cities.

Environmental Degradation
The degradation of the environment is leading to heightened resource depletion and pollution across nations, exerting increasing pressure on the integrity of water, soil, and air. The ways in which communities produce and consume goods, coupled with the impact of global climate change, pose inquiries into whether the Earth's natural resource foundation can persistently nourish and support a burgeoning, predominantly urban population.

Governance
Governance for human development enhances individual capacities and choices. The state's role involves creating a favorable environment through political, legal, and economic means, promoting capabilities and private initiative. Inclusive, equitable, and participatory approaches are vital, engaging various bodies to achieve these goals. Governance for sustainable development integrates economics and environment, aiming for quality of life and social equity. It upholds citizens' right to develop while prioritizing the environment. Essential prerequisites encompass democracy, fairness, interdependence, responsibility, and accountability, shaping effective policies and programs for societal betterment.

Corruption
Corruption, a global issue, often remains unchallenged despite our awareness. Money wields significant influence, deeply ingraining corruption into our systems. Striving for honesty seems daunting amidst the prevailing corruption, leading to resorting to violence to achieve goals. Poor planning compounds corruption,

exacerbating social inequality, which may culminate in violent revolutions. Corruption plays a pivotal role in human trafficking, serving as a catalyst and sustaining the illicit trade. Its presence before, during, and after trafficking perpetuates exploitation and provides safe havens for ill-gotten gains. This connection remains underexplored. Inhibiting sustainable development, corruption robs future generations of resources. It thrives in underdeveloped regions, often linked to limited public services and education. This disparity fosters ignorance of rights and empowers corrupt actors.

Terrorism

Terrorism represents a distinct form of political violence, primarily aimed at instilling fear within a population. While political violence may or may not intend to evoke fear, it can involve actions such as assassinations, insurrections, or violent protests to challenge authority. Typically, terrorists justify their actions based on both practical considerations and the belief that unintended harm to innocents may be less than that caused by conventional warfare. They may view targeted citizens as collectively responsible for oppression and reject political obligations to an oppressive or unrecognized state. Compared to other countries, India faces a wide range of terrorist groups.

Terrorism found in India includes Islamic terrorism, separatist terrorism and left-wing terrorism. India is one of the countries most affected by terrorism. According to the State Department of the United States about 2% of global terror fatalities while it accounts for 17.5% of the global population. India continues to face a number of terror attacks from Islamic groups in Kashmir, Sikh separatists in Punjab and secessionist groups in Assam. The regions with long term terrorist activities have been Jammu and Kashmir, East-central and South-central India (Naxalism) and the "seven sister states". The Naxalites operate in 60 districts in India, mainly in Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Andra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

Economic Violence

Economic violence stems from unequal production relationships, yielding consequences like poverty, unfair hiring, inadequate healthcare, joblessness, and wage disparities. Unjust economic power dynamics enable privileged groups to exploit others, resulting in poverty, hunger, and malnutrition among the marginalized. Wealth inequalities sow conflict and violence, evident in class struggles and global disparities. Neoliberal policies like NAFTA, IMF, World Bank, and G-8 can exacerbate economic violence.

India's Challenges for Achieving SDGs

India faces several challenges in achieving the SDGs, which are a set of global targets aimed at addressing various social, economic, and environmental issues. Some of the key challenges for India in achieving the SDGs include:

Poverty and Inequality: Despite significant economic growth, India still grapples with high levels of poverty and income inequality. Ensuring that economic progress benefits all segments of society remains a challenge.

Healthcare and Nutrition: Access to quality healthcare and adequate nutrition for all citizens is a persistent challenge. Maternal and child mortality rates, malnutrition, and the burden of communicable diseases need to be addressed.

Education: While India has made strides in improving literacy rates, challenges persist in providing quality education, especially in rural and marginalized areas.

Water and Sanitation: Ensuring clean and accessible water supply, as well as proper sanitation facilities, remains a challenge, particularly in rural areas.

Gender Equality: Achieving gender equality and empowering women is crucial for India's development. Challenges include addressing gender-based violence, ensuring equal opportunities, and enhancing women's participation in decision-making.

Climate Change: As one of the world's most vulnerable countries to climate change, India must work to mitigate its impact and adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Employment and Decent Work: Providing decent employment opportunities for the growing workforce, particularly youth, is essential for sustainable development.

Inclusive Development: Ensuring that marginalized groups, including tribal communities and people with disabilities, benefit from development efforts is crucial for achieving the SDGs.

Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive policy measures, effective governance, and strong partnerships among government, civil society, private sector, and international organizations. In discussions both at the national and international levels regarding the SDGs, the welfare and livelihoods of impoverished and indigenous communities are significantly reliant on access to shared resources like forests, water bodies, and grazing lands, which unfortunately receive insufficient attention. When juxtaposed with India, Brazil has

demonstrated a more astute understanding of SDG-related challenges and has put forth substantial recommendations, thereby establishing a leadership role that India could have aspired to attain.

In this context, India had the opportunity to propose that sustainability and human development are not inherently contradictory, but rather mutually enhancing, with the potential for quantifiable harmony. A pertinent illustration is found in the Human Development Index of 2011, wherein developmental parameters encompassing education, health, gender parity, and economic well-being were harmonized with ecological footprint computations, resulting in a unified assessment framework.

CONCLUSION

Effectively addressing the challenge of sustainable human development (SHD) requires recognizing interconnectedness among individual concerns, livelihoods, and especially the vulnerable. The notion of substituting vital resources with future technology is increasingly insufficient given the risks to human existence. SHD, though important, falls short in guiding us through complex ecological, scientific, societal, and moral dilemmas. The slogan of SHD has often been superficial, masking real solutions for environmental protection and expanding human freedom. A comprehensive understanding of ecological constraints is crucial. Sustainable development is feasible through concerted efforts, including education, environmental awareness, green GDP growth, and strategic government investments. However, global dedication is essential, potentially requiring a major wake-up call to avoid irreversible consequences.

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