The Sustainable Development Goals and Global Risk Society:

A Sociological Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

The new millennium has been characterised by unprecedented advancements in human civilization vis-à-vis tension of impending doom (risk). Great progress has been made from risk as a phenomenon of human existence. Starting from the booming business opportunities that have grown around the reality of paying for insurances of properties, assets, and even that of life. Insurance policies have become a norm and lifeline today or a pre-requisite for many to engage in business, education, travel, own properties, or even be eligible for certain job opportunities. In order to protect their populations from the danger of terrorism, states increasingly limit civil rights and liberties, with the result that in the end, the open free society may be abolished, but the terrorist threat is by no means averted. Global risk society encompasses various social, economic, political, religious, environmental, and gender-related issues that have continued to heighten social stability creating more and more scenarios of uncertainty and risk. This study, therefore, is a sociological evaluation of the SDGs as a panacea for the global risk society. The study findings reveal that the SDG framework can become a scorecard through which nations of the world could help evaluate their individual and collective efforts towards ameliorating the challenges and difficulties encountered by their people which will help reduce the economic tensions that have triggered most of the scenarios of global risk society. The study findings show that 85% of displaced persons globally are hosted by developing countries. The causes of the displacement revolve around persecution, armed conflict, violence, human rights violation, unemployment, climate change endangering many communities in the Sahel in Africa, and rising sea levels in other parts of the world. The global risk society is as a result of the inability of various nations and states to achieve a certain level of development to guarantee a stable society. Thus, these social, economic, and infrastructural deficiencies account for most of the global issues of displacement leading to modernity of a risk society. The study concludes that since the SDGs are the global framework aimed at addressing most of these needs, it is possible that once these goals are achieved, there is a possibility for a stable society with less risk. Based on the findings, the study recommends the need for the United Nation to constantly supervise and review the process of engaging the public at every stage of the implementation of the SDG programme.

KEYWORDS

Functionalist theory, global risk society, millennium development goals, sociological evaluation, and sustainable development goals

INTRODUCTION

The fact is that no species has ever had such wholesale control over everything on earth, living or dead, as we now have. That lays upon us, whether we like it or not, an awesome responsibility. In our hands now lies not only our own future, but that of all other living creatures with whom we share the earth (Attenborough, 2020)

The history of the world can also be described as the history of the world's experience of conflicts, starvation, social and ethnic inequalities, environmental and natural disasters that have created various social, economic, political, religious and technological advancements and policies. There has been a revolution in the understanding and application of the concept of risk. The new millennium has been characterised by both unprecedented advancements in human civilization vis-à-vis tension of an impending doom (risk). In recent times, these risks scenarios were ushered in by the *Al-Qaeda* terrorist attack that brought down the Twin Tower on Tuesday September 11th, 2001 leading to the Iraq war and the birth of series of global terror networks(Kean, Hamilton & Rhodes, 2007). This was further compounded by the global financial crisis of 2008 that affected almost every nation on earth creating financial hardship that seem quite unique because of its scale and global intensity (Nelson &Katzenstein, 2014). The year 2020 has been full of stories that continues to threaten human existence on earth starting from the Australian wildfires, the nuclear war threat between Trump and Kim Jong Um and the coronavirus pandemic have left so much to be desired that we tend to have more questions than answers. The pandemic has become the last stroll that we can conveniently describe the first 20 years of the millennium as 'the millennium of risk'. This is because at every turn of a decade, humanity is greeted with very dire and unprecedented situation that undermines human efforts and everything seem to spin out of our control (McCann & Matenga, 2020).

Stevenson (2010) describes risk as a situation involving exposure to danger or a situation with possibilities that something unpleasant or unwelcome will happen. Great progress and advancement have been made from risk as a phenomenon of human existence. Starting from the booming business opportunities that have grown around the reality of paying for insurances of properties, assets and even that of life. Insurance policies have become a norm and lifeline today or a pre-requisite for many to engage in business, education, travel, own properties or even be eligible for certain job opportunities. The modern world has benefitted in diverse and unimaginable ways from seemingly dire and life-threatening situations. It was Paul Crutzen who in the year 2000 at a conference in America announced that we are now in a new age, the age of the Anthropocene (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000). An age in which scholars have continued to argue that all that is plaguing our society is as a result of human activities (Moore, 2015). Central to the Anthropocene proposition is the claim that we haveleft the benign era of the Holocene–when human civilizations have developed and thrived–and entered a much more unpredictable and dangerous time when humanity is undermining the planetary life-support systems upon which it depends (Lovbrand, Beck, Chilvers, Forsyth, Hedren, Hulme, Lidskog&Vasileiadou, 2015). Giddens (2013) talking about modernity observed that the modern age comes with opportunities as well as risk. Beck (2002) driving this idea further acknowledge that we live in a risk society and most of which are risks that our modern civilization has created.

The United Nation Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2015) unfolded in 2015 a 15-year plan tagged Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals were to serve as a continuation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (IPCC, 2015). These 17 SDGs became a framework and a guiding compass through which the world can advance development in various sphere of life and in every part of the world in a sustainable manner. These goals were to be achieved in a sustainable manner, meaning without destroying the possibility of future generations being able to achieve same with ease. Stewart Lockie commenting on this said, to be fair, sustainable development is to meet our needs in ways that do not under-mine the ability of either ourselves or other people to do the same, now or in the future, and that this does make pragmatic and moral sense (Lockie, 2016). This study therefore is a sociological evaluation of the SDGs as a panacea for the global risk society. The uncertainty here is; can we guarantee a future by just achieving the SDGs? Are these SDGs an attainable height for the world or a utopic fairy-tale? Is it a collective understanding that all people on earth are faced by an impending doom or risks and the need for cooperation? The apocalyptic scenario of global risk society is it some climate change alarmist approach or can we say with certainty that other communities of the world share this view and nurse same fear about the climate and the world at large?

Conceptual Clarification

Global Risk Society

A risk society can be described as the way in which modern society organizes itself in response to risk. The term is closely associated with several key writers on modernity, and in particular Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1995). Risk is often differentiated between three different axes of conflict in global risk society. The first axis is that of *ecological* conflicts, which are by their very essence global. The second is *global financial* crises, which, in a first stage, can be individualized and nationalized. And the third, which suddenly broke upon us on September 11th, is the threat of transnational terror networks, which empowers governments and states into militarization of international borders on security grounds. This has provoked the production of weapon of mass destructions and the advancement of nuclear technology whose waste has been an issue of great concern to the survival of the world and biodiversity (Rhodes, 1995; Holdstock& Barnaby, 2003). Two sets of implications are drawn: first, there are the political dynamics of global risk society. In an age where trust and faith in God, class and progress have largely disappeared, humanity's common fear has proved the last - ambivalent - resource for making new bonds. Second, the methodological nationalism that preoccupies the sociological imagination has to be overcome and a `methodological cosmopolitism' has to be created (Becks, 2002). Beck (2009) in another light posed the rhetorical question, can we know the future we face? The answer of course is, no, we cannot; yet we must act "as if" we do. Prevailing circumstances of the present world requires knowledge of the future to govern it. But the future in many ways is unknowable, and uncertainty invariably is a basic condition of human knowledge and existence. This creates a paradox: how to provide certainty and security through knowledge of the future in the face of uncertainty as a basic condition of human knowledge (Beck, 2009). Risk therefore is said to be global because it is affecting almost every part of the world. These risks are multifaceted and multi-dimensional. These risks could be happening in one part of

the globe but have almost an equal effect on the other part of the world. This is as a result of global travel and the force of globalization (McCormack, Anderson, Jamie & David, 2018).

Risk Society and Governance

The modern society has become a risk society in the sense that it is increasingly occupied with debating, preventing and managing risks that it itself has produced (Beck, 2013). Though many will object, but it is indicative rather of a hysteria and politics of fear instigated and aggravated by the mass media (Power, Scheyt, Soin&Sahlin, 2009). Beck (2002) in discussing modernity, expresses concern in which he described the modern form of civilization as third modernity which is characterised by risk and making our world a global risk society. A risk society in which camps for displaced persons have become almost an intrinsic part of this modernity because people are constantly displaced deliberately or consequentially (Halilovich, 2017). In December 2018, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) which is considered one of the key organisations on global peace had a crisis in which the US Secretary of State declared that the United States would withdraw from the 1979 agreement which was aimed at arms control known as "the Dual Track decision" with the Soviet Union (Lunn & Williams, 2019;Washington & Cook, 2011). The US affirms that Russia could save the treaty by coming into compliance within those six months, but the prospects for a successful solution to save the treaty are dim (Lunn *et al*, 2019). Thes*e* are some of the indicators of how shaky and fragile the world peace might be at the moment.

According to Franklin (1998) to understand risk society, we must begin to think in a new way about the world we live in, this is because we have all become acutely aware of how it feels to live in this risk society and these risks have presented themselves to us globally. Gray (1998) in his article *nature bites back,* observed that we now face a reality of global warming that has continued to create multiple ecological risk for the world. Ekberg (2007) in offering a review and exploration of the parameters of the risk society observed that the theoretical works of German sociologist Ulrich Beck and British sociologist Anthony Giddens have continued to acknowledge that we are living in a second, reflexive age of modernity, or risk society, which is characterized by an omnipresence of low probability, high consequence technological risks. Ekberg (2007) therefore thinks that the theorists of the risk society have succeeded in raising important questions for reflection and for future research. This has also caused an emergence of a risk ethics, the development of a collective risk identity and the formation of communities united by an increasing vulnerability to risk (Ekberg, 2007). This could be one of the reasons for the United Nations conception of a global agenda aimed at confronting the global risk challenges (UN, 2005). The global risk society theory therefore points to a reconfiguration in the way risk is identified, evaluated, communicated, and governed. This expands the traditional concept of risk understood as the sum of the probability of an adverse event and the magnitude of the consequences, to include the subjective perception of risk, the inter-subjective communication of risk and the social experience of living in a risk environment. The theorists of the risk society more importantly have succeeded in pointing out that it is not just health and the environment that is at risk, but in addition, the fundamental socio-political values of liberty, equality, justice, rights and democracy are now at risk as well (Ekberg, 2007;Hatuel-Radoshitzky, Heistein, Bernes, Brozus, Greco, Sasnal& Caballero-Anthony, 2020). The recent happening in the Capitol Hill in America points to that fact and exposes the social and political dimensions of our collective

vulnerability to take for granted values (Conklin, 2021). This understanding becomes a very fertile ground to articulate the 17 sustainable development goals with an intent for global corporation towards overcoming these risks that have become unprecedented and global (Hatuel-Radoshitzky*et al*, 2020).

The narrative of risk is a narrative of irony. This narrative deals with the involuntary satire, the optimistic futility, with which the highly developed institutions of modern society – science, state, business and military – attempt to anticipate what cannot be anticipated. The more emphatically the existence of global risk society is denied, the more easily it can become a reality (Beck, 2009). The ignorance of the globalization of risk increases the globalization of risk (Hatuel-Radoshitzky*et al*, 2020). The bitter varieties of this risk irony are virtually endless and among them is the fact, that, in order to protect their populations from the danger of terrorism, states increasingly limit civil rights and liberties, with the result that in the end the open, free society may be abolished, but the terrorist threat is by no means averted (Beck, 2013). The dark irony here is that, while very general risk-induced doubts in the benevolence of the promises of governments to protect their citizens lead to criticisms of the inefficiency of scholarly and state authorities.

Being at risk is the way of being and ruling in the world of modernity and this have been the human condition at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Heng&McDonagh, 2009). The experience of global risks is an occurrence of abrupt and fully conscious confrontation with the apparently no excluded other. Global risks tear down national boundaries and jumble together the native with the foreign (Beck, 2013). The distant other is becoming the inclusive other – not through mobility but through risk. Everyday life is becoming cosmopolitan: human beings must find the meaning of life in the exchange with others and no longer in the encounter with like. To the extent that risk is experienced as omnipresent, there are only three possible reactions: *denial*, *apathy,* or *transformation*. The first is largely inscribed in modern culture, the second resembles post-modern nihilism, and the third is the 'cosmopolitan moment' of global risk society (Power, Scheyt, Soin&Sahlin, 2009).

Climate change and the risk society

Climate change as defined by the IPCC (2013), refers to any identifiable change in climate over time, "whether due to natural variability or because of human activities (Warren, 2016). Since the 1930s when talk on climate change became issues of the public domain(Lewandowsky, Oreskes, Risbey, Newell & Smithson, 2015), the concern has always been that climate change will alter lifestyles and create an atmosphere of struggle between species which could lead gradually but surely to mass extinctions of species and humanity (Baden & Geddes, 2018). The year 2004 is however considered by many as the year climate change discussions became a mainstream topic of national, regional and global policy discourse (Lewandowsky *et al,* 2015). From this point, publications emerged reminding the world that we were heading towards a dangerous tipping points of ecological destruction (global risk society) due to global warming and escalating Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG). As much as there was a growing concern on the reality of climate change and climate related issues, there was and has continued to be a notable degree of climate change sceptics and in recent years people like Donald Trump, the United State president who even pulled out from the Paris climate agreement (Kramer & Michalowski, 2012; Tollefson, 2017).

Sir David Attenborough (2019) one of the great advocates for climate mitigation in one of his many speeches highlighted some of the burning issues on climate change in which he acknowledges the urgency

and how catastrophic the end might be if nothing is done about our changing climate. Al Gore (2006) a onetime Democratic candidate in the 2008 presidential elections in the United States of America in his book '*The Inconvenient Truth'* acknowledged the same reality that humanity was heading for a very difficult and devastating society full of environmental risk and uncertainty. Attenborough (2019) opined that we should never forget Charles Darwin's astonishing understanding of the natural world and 'the theory of evolution by natural selection'. Darwin's theory revealed that all species have evolved over time to best exploit the conditions in which they live. These conditions are not simply those of geography and climate, but also their relationship to other lives that live alongside them. From the delicate co-dependences of bees and orchids, to the dramatic connection between cheetah and gazelle, all life on Earth is both product and contributor to its place in space and time. This complex web of life of which we are a part has been millennia in the making (Attenborough, 2019). These connections of species can break, and these breakages have led to five major extinctions in our planet and we are right now in the midst of the Earth's sixth mass extinction (Baden *et al*, 2018). It is on the basis of these breakages that, 96% of the mass of mammals on our planet today are made up of us and the livestock that we have domesticated. Only 4% is everything else (Attenborough, 2019). 70% of all birds are now domesticated poultry mostly chickens and turkey. Nature once determined how we survive, now we determine how nature survives and this is greatly the impacts of our growing population and our consumption habits which directly threatens our future (Attenborough, 2019). This is a clear indication of the level and magnitude of the global risk we now face together with biodiversity. Do we have any chance of undoing this harm we might have created by ourselves for ourselves? Where does the SDGs stand in this seemingly helpless scenario?

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

It is a common and presumed believe that humanity is in the centre of nature. This primordial position places on us a privilege and at the same time an enormous responsibility. The United Nation was founded in 1945 after the World War II. It is currently made up of 193 member states. It is an organisation in which member states engage in deliberations on global issues, expressing their views on the nature of the challenges facing the world. This has made the UN a good avenue for states to find areas of agreement and solve global issues like security, climate change, development, human rights, disarmament, terrorism, humanitarian and health emergencies, gender equality, governance, food production and economy (UN, 2020). On the 1st January 2016, the United Nations officially recognising this responsibility, and started the implementation of its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Lockie, 2016). The agreement document emphatically stated that sustainable development is geared towards the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, combating inequality within and among countries, preserving the planet, creating sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusion that are linked to each other and are interdependent (UN, 2015). This plan was tagged the Sustainable Development Goals with 17 goals and 169 associated targets that were to supersede, and expand on the Millennium Development Goals (Lockie, 2016). These goals were to stimulate action over the next 15 years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet (UN, 2015). There is a good sign however that these SDGs are increasingly being referred to in policy documents as Global Goals, while they remain the intergovernmental commitments. The SDGs have also rapidly gained attraction and acceptance among

a broad range of actors beyond the 193 UN member states who unanimously endorsed them, such as public policy bodies, NGOs and many public sector and private sector organizations (Bebbington&Unerman, 2018). From the academic perspective, insights on individual SDGs, adoption of the SDG framework do provide both an opportunity and need for research in this area to advance, refocus and become more impactful on the entire society.

The SDGs are an example of policies cascading from earlier policy initiatives known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs were originally developed by the OCED in 1996 and were later adopted by the UN after several years of study and review in the year 2000. This became the world's first development programme embracing both the developed, developing and underdeveloped nations (McArthur, 2014). The eight MDGs from which the SDGs framework was developed were to, eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and encourage global partnerships for development (UN, MDGs, 2020). These seven points agenda were further developed to address global issues that were plaguing the global risk society of today.

The 17 SDGs

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Goal 15. Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (UN, 2015; Madeley, 2015).

These goals were articulated with the hope that every state, community, and people will localize them and articulate within the sphere of their own reality. Bebbington*et al* (2018) observed that one defining difference between SDGs and MDGs is the opening up of MDG 7 into more detailed elements (namely, water, energy, climate change, oceans and terrestrial ecosystems), reflecting the functioning of the biosphere and its contribution to human development. Bebbington*et al* (2018), also went further to argue that since the MDGs were developed, knowledge about ecosystem integrity has highlighted that the stability of ecosystems has deteriorated such that there may be "large-scale, abrupt, and potentially irreversible changes" on the horizon (Griggs *et al*, 2014).

SDGs as Panacea for The Global Risk society

In broad terms, the concept of sustainable development is an attempt to combine growing concerns about a range of environmental issues with socio-economic issues (Hopwood, Mellor & O'Brien, 2005). This means that the 17 SDG framework can become a scorecard through which nations of the world could help evaluate their individual and collective efforts towards ameliorating the challenges and difficulties encountered by their people. This effort will help reduce the economic tensions that have triggered most of the scenarios of global risk society.

When we talk about global risk society, we are not only talking about global political tensions that have bedevilled the world but much more, we are looking at the various social, economic, political, religious, and environmental and gender related issues that have continued to heighten social stability, creating more and more scenarios of uncertainty and risk. The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR, 2020) reported that at the moment there are at least 79.5 million people displaced globally and 26 million of these people are refugees while the asylum seekers, resettled people, and internally displaced people account for the remaining figure. According to this report, 85% of these displaced persons are hosted by developing countries (UNHCR, 2020). Factors responsible for these staggering figures of displacement revolves around persecution, armed conflict, violence, human rights violation, unemployment, climate

change endangering many communities in the Sahel in Africa and rising sea levels in other parts of the world (UNHCR, 2020).

Ban Ki-moon in his opening remark at the United Nations climate change conference in Bali, Indonesia, December 2007, observed that science is very clear about the reality that climate change is happening (UNFCCC, 2007). The impact is real and most importantly, this is the time to act. At the CoP21, Paris, December 12, 2015 Ban Ki-moon observed that 'The Paris Agreement is a monumental triumph for people and our planet'. This is because it sets the stage for progress in ending poverty, strengthening peace and ensuring a life of dignity and opportunity for all. This means that this was an agreement aimed at reducing or taking away major drivers of global risk from the society. This concern was later echoed by Antonio Guterres (UNHCR, 2018) when he said that climate change is the defining issue of our time and we are at a defining moment of change, if we do not change our course by 2020, we risk crossing the point of no return on climate change, with disastrous consequences for people across the planet and the natural systems that sustain them. In this light, he laid emphasis on global cooperation and unity towards a common goal. While receiving the jab of the COVID-19 vaccine AnthonioGuterres restated this concern when he opined that, we must get to work to make sure the vaccine is available to everyone, everywhere. Our world can only get ahead of the virus in one way…In solidarity, none of us are safe until all of us are safe (UNICEF, 2021).

From the foregoing it is practically possible to say that global risk society in the first place is precipitated by the fact that various nations and states have not been able to achieve a certain level of development to guarantee a stable society. These social, economic and infrastructural deficiencies account for most of the global issues of displacement leading to a modernity of a risk society. Since the SDGs are the global framework aimed at addressing most of these needs, it is possible that once these goals are achieved, there is a possibility for a stable society with less risk. This is because climate related problems are just a tipping point of other social and economic problems that might have been ignored for a long time making the effect of climate change more intense on society and nations (Campbell-Lendrum&Corvalan,2007). Griggs *et al* (2014) argue however that without economic, technological and societal transformation, the potential for large-scale humanitarian crises is significant and could undermine any gains made by meeting the MDGs and SDGs. These concerns also indicate how the SDGs can be linked back to the core motivation of the 1972 Stockholm Conference: developing a framework that can integrate human development and ecological integrity (Griggs *et al,* 2014).

The United Nations' Programs of action underpin the SDGs, with a measurement and performance framework consisting of 169 targets and 232 indicators in total (UN, 2016). As a result of this programme, the SDGs have the potential to become the guiding vision for governmental, corporate and civil society action for a shared and lasting prosperity (Hajer*et al*, 2015). This has made the SDGs to be described as the next era of human development that is transformational (Caprani, 2016). Through this transformation the society might begin to experience social and political stability which has been one of the major causes of global displacement and risk society. The SDGs for the first time in the history of the world is that developmental framework that can serve as a common compass in guiding all the leaders of the world

towards a common end. This is because the 193 UN members States have made a commitment towards achieving the SDGs by 2030 (United Nations, 2016).

Even though the global public policy-making apparatus has coalesced around the SDGs, they are not without their critics, albeit that these critiques are not fully developed in the academic literature given the recent arrival of the SDGs to the policy stage. There are two areas where we might expect to see concerns emerge, namely in the execution of the goals and in the ideological commitments inherent in the goals. These critiques can be predicted as they are also the grounds on which the MDGs and the idea of sustainable development have been critiqued in the past. Governance and execution concerns emerge from a number of sources including linkages of SDGs to existing governance processes. Kim (2016) explores how the SDGs mesh with international law; the placing of agency at a state level which is subject to ongoing contestation given globalization, and the technologies of control and accountability that might be fit for purpose to guide and evaluate actions taken to achieve the SDGs (Biermann *et al*, 2017). At the core of ideological concerns is the extent to which the SDGs reinforce or challenge a neo-liberal, eurocentric agenda (Bebbington&Unerman, 2018). In this context, there are longstanding debates that challenge the possibilities for continued economic growth; contest notions of development; and which explore the impact of class, gender and race on life experiences along with consideration of the impact of past and present colonization.

None of these problems are resolvable and do not negate the SDGs. Rather, it is relevant to note that despite the enthusiasm for the SDGs, their pursuit will raise points of contestation. What is suggested in their formulation, however, is that we are in a new time where "human activity is pushing crucial global ecosystem functions past a dangerous threshold, beyond which the earth might well encounter abrupt, highly non-linear, and potentially devastating outcomes for human wellbeing and life in general" (Sachs, 2012, p. 2207). As such, and despite the issues alluded to above, inaction is not an option.

While a list of goals provides an indication of the aspects that are considered important, it does not illuminate how these goals might relate to one another, nor the underlying drivers of the impacts that the SDGs seek to address There is, however, a recognition that the SDGs "are integrated, that is each goal incorporates social, economic and environmental dimensions" (Griggs *et al*, 2014) and by this corporation, achieving any of the goals implies an attainment of other goals and invariably creates room to pull in on others. In essence whatever way the argument might be about the SDGs, it is obvious that these goals were so well planned that achieving any of the 17 goals could kick start smooth path towards achieving all others which eventually will lead to eroding the world of the various economic, social, moral, human and environmental risks that have created a global society of risk.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the functionalist theory. The functionalist theory was developed by a French sociologist Emile Durkheim in the late 19th century and the theory is also known as structural functionalism (Durkheim, 2013). The functionalist perspective sees society as an organism or a complex system of parts whose parts work or function together to promote solidarity and stability (Ogunbameru, 2013). This approach looks at society through a macro-level orientation and broadly focuses on the social structures that shape society as a whole. Since global risk society is not limited by national or regional

borders, the approach must also embrace such a holistic and widely covered perimeter. The United Nations and its global SDG framework best suits the problem and the approach. This theory therefore sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements, namely: norms, customs, traditions, and institutions. The concern here is global risk society and the institutions are the 193 member states that have acknowledged this concern and have appended their signature with an intent for mitigation. The SDGs becomes an institutional framework and a global perimeter through which the risk society can be evaluated and approached.

A common analogy of functionalism, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents the various institutional parts of society as "organs" that work toward the proper functioning of the "body" as a whole (Levin, 2018). Functionalism is basic to Durkheim's understanding of society which to a great extent shaped his sociology (Field & Taylor, 1998). Like other functionalists, Durkheim focused on the problem of order and the positive effects of social institutions, explaining their existence in terms of their functionally necessary contributions (Ogunbameru, 2013). As a pioneer, Durkheim grappled with many of the basic problems posed by this perspective. He derived more than one explanation linking existence and necessity. The most distinctive, and yet widely ignored, aspect of his approach is the implicit argument that as a powerful, self-conscious entity controlling the behaviour of its individual members, society can perpetuate the social conditions of its own existence through the institutions and agents she has established. This idea is of great interest to this study. This is because until society understand that we are responsible for the risk society we have created and are ready to change and harness our human and material resources towards mitigation, this might not be an easy path. This can only be possible when the various agents and institutions of the society attend to their goals and responsibility in a sustainable manner. This is the call the United Nations seeks to establish through her SDG framework and plan (UN, 2015).

Thus, functionalism conceptualises society as a system of interacting parts that promote stability or transformation through their interactions. This conceptual approach suggests that, to understand social systems, we must look at the parts of the system that substantiate particular activities and their interrelations (Chilcott, 1998). Hence, some of the overarching core (and most useful) assumptions underpinning structural functionalism include the following:

i. Society consists of both structures and functions that are interconnected and interdependent, and ultimately focused on maintaining or mediating societal equilibrium and necessary transformation (Dale *et al*, 2013).

ii. Social systems consist of both structures and functions that are necessary for the ongoing health or survival of that system (Chilcott, 1998).

iii. Structures exist to meet the functional needs of a system (Merton, 1949).

iv. Systemic functionality (i.e., how parts of the system work) across and within structures serves to reinforce and maintain the stability of the system's structures in the context of an ever-changing, complex, and unpredictable system.

The ambitions of the SDGs are to transform the current aid architecture and promote environmental, economic and social well-being on a global scale. The United Nations with its leading role with the SDGs framework, acknowledges the various ways through which the world has become a risk society and have proffered these goals as a path through which the world can navigate out of these risks. By recommending deliberative public engagement as a means of localizing the SDGs, makes the SDGs global reality and at the same time local, that is, having global strategy with local implementation. This gives the United Nation a global and local relevance (UNHCR, 2013). Howard and Wheeler (2015) thinks that the process of how this new global framework for sustainable development has been designed is unique in terms of the extent of opportunities for people's participation. Since these goals demand collective contribution of resources by all, there must also be an equitable standard of disbursing these resources in such a way that regions and nations that have suffered a huge social and environmental consequences for no fault of theirs are compensated in some kind of a way either by contributing less or granted some level of priority in the mitigation acts (McCann *et al*, 2020). This cannot be achieved by just depending on documented paperwork. The United Nation as an institution must also play a leading role in its supervision and constant review of the process engaging the public at every stage of the implementation of the SDG programme (Howard *et al*, 2015).

The United Nations since its creation has played leading role in harmonizing global peace, economic growth of nations and the world at large (Basu, 2004). This leading role was the force that led the United Nations towards the SDGs adoption in 2015 (UN, 2015). The United Nation therefore sees itself as an integrating element of the modern society that must always play a leading role in creating paths of commonality for nations of the world. This mean that she should always serve as a watchdog and whistle blower that alert nations of the world of what path could be good for all as she did after the WW II (Basu,2004). This leading role places on the United Nations from a functionalist perspective a duty and responsibility to spearhead the implementation of the SDG framework if the 2030 target is to be achieved. The United Nations must therefore be holistic and embracing creating opportunities for every state and community to contribute her quota towards ameliorating the global risk and at the same time benefit from the mitigation plan and resources.

Conclusion

This study has looked at the Sociological evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Global Risk Society. The study observed that since the creation of the United Nations as an institution charged with global concerns, the UN as a body or institution in the world, have continued to play a leading role in resolving so many problems plaguing the world. This leading role might continue to exist so long as the world continues to experience difficulties and problems in every phase of her history and evolution. The SDGs are just one of the ways humanity must come together to confront a common enemy. Until there is a collective recognition that we are at war with a borderless enemy that has continued to manifest itself through the social, economic, religious, political, ethnic, racial and environmental catastrophes that have continued to make our society a global risk society and collectively come together towards mitigation through a United Nation established framework that is both holistic and humane for all, we might never find a better society for ourselves and people after us.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations;

i. By way of function, the SDGs must become a framework and scorecard by which nations must evaluate their developmental plan and what path that development is leading. This means that SDG framework must be localized across nations of the world.

ii. Since United Nations was established as a forum for social, cultural, religious, security and human equality, the United Nations' SDGs must therefore at all time and at all level of human society sought to attend that singular goal of saving the world of these social menace.

iii. New arrival to our common home (earth), must be schooled and educated on these concerns and strategy makingit an ongoing and a sustainable plan. This means that education for sustainable development (ESD) must be part of the education system of the 193 member states.

iv. The United Nation must not turn the deaf ear and ignore national concerns of memberstates in the guise of avoiding interference into the national affairs of nations. This is because these internal affairs of nations that seem negligible are the tiny drops that creates the tsunami of global risk society.

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