

UTILITARIANISM AS A FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria is confronted with a multitude of grave environmental issues, ranging from deforestation and oil spills to air pollution and biodiversity loss. To solve these problems, this paper investigates the possibilities of utilitarian ethics, highlighting the significance of striking a balance between ecological preservation and human needs. The paper employs the descriptive and analytical approaches and shows how classical, preference and rule utilitarianism can be applied to the formulation of environmental policy through philosophical analysis. Through the promotion of sustainability, intergenerational responsibility, and general well-being, utilitarian principles can guide decision-making, as demonstrated by case studies of environmental deterioration in Nigeria. The paper concludes by supporting a utilitarian approach that integrates stakeholder preferences and ethical sustainability in policymaking, while also considering the greatest good for the greatest number across current and future generations, by analyzing both short-term economic gains and long-term environmental impacts.

Keywords: Utilitarianism, Nigeria, Environmental Ethics, Philosophy.

Introduction

Environmental challenges in Nigeria have reached critical levels, threatening both ecological systems and human well-being. These issues span a wide range of problems, from deforestation and oil spills to biodiversity loss and desertification. As noted in the literature, "Nigeria's environment has been plagued by a myriad of problems, ranging from deforestation, oil spillage, gas flaring, loss of biodiversity, desertification, soil erosion, and flooding, to mention but a few" (Oluduro & Gaskiya, 2014, p. 72). The severity and breadth of these environmental issues necessitate urgent attention and effective solutions. The environmental degradation in Nigeria is not merely a matter of ecological concern but also raises profound ethical questions about our responsibility towards nature and future generations. The ethical dimension of this crisis is deeply rooted in human actions and decisions. Note that: "the ethical dimension of the environmental crisis in Nigeria is rooted in the fact that human actions and decisions have led to the destruction of the environment, which in turn affects human well-being and the entire ecosystem" (Ogbonnaya, 2011, p. 201). This approach emphasizes that there is

a best way of looking at the situation such that even the extricating decisions attain optimal results.

Due to these difficulties, this paper suggests that utilitarian ethics provides practical and moral solutions to environmental issues, particularly in Nigeria. Utilitarianism as a principle holds the highest interest of the many. As defined in the philosophical literature, "Utilitarianism is the view that the morally right action is the action that produces the most good" (Driver, 2014, p. 3). When applied to environmental ethics, this principle can provide valuable guidance in balancing human needs with ecological preservation.

This paper's focus is on investigating how various utilitarian ideologies can influence and direct environmental decision-making in Nigeria. It is crucial to remember that "Utilitarianism comes in many varieties... These varieties of utilitarianism contain quite different claims" (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2021, para. By examining various approaches within utilitarian thought, including classical, preference, and rule utilitarianism, we can observe how every framework handles moral judgment calls and the assessment of deeds according to their results. Bentham and Mill's writings serve as the foundation for classical utilitarianism, which seeks to maximize utility or total happiness and frequently measures it using quantitative evaluations. Contrarily, preference utilitarianism emphasizes the significance of personal preferences and wishes and contends that moral behavior should try to maximize the fulfillment of these preferences. By promoting obedience to rules that typically promote the greatest good rather than evaluating each action in isolation, rule utilitarianism presents an alternative viewpoint. We can gain a deeper understanding of utilitarian thought's subtleties and complexities, as well as how they influence ethical reasoning in environmental decision-making, by investigating these various perspectives.

The purpose of this research is to provide a more sophisticated understanding of the effective application of utilitarian ethics to Nigerian environmental policy and practice. This study uses a philosophical analytical approach as its methodology, fusing theoretical analysis with real-world application. Beaney (2018) explains that "Philosophical analysis has dominated philosophy in English-speaking countries for the last century, and it remains the most widely accepted conception of philosophical method" (p. 1). This approach allows for a rigorous examination of utilitarian principles and their potential applications to environmental challenges. Additionally, the study incorporates case studies of specific environmental issues in Nigeria to illustrate the practical implications of utilitarian ethics. This combination of theoretical analysis and practical application aligns with what Rosenberg (2000) describes as "a naturalistic approach to philosophical problems" (p. 4), which seeks to ground philosophical inquiry in real-world contexts and empirical evidence. Through this philosophical and practical approach, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on environmental ethics and provide actionable insights for policymakers, environmental advocates, and other

stakeholders involved in addressing Nigeria's pressing environmental challenges.

An Overview of Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is a consequentialist ethical theory that judges the morality of actions based on their outcomes. Fundamentally, utilitarianism holds that the decision that results in the greatest good for the largest number of people is the most morally right one. As Bentham (1789) famously stated, "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure, it is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do" (p.1). Utilitarianism encompasses several variants, each offering a distinct approach to ethical decision-making. Act Utilitarianism evaluates the morality of an action based on its consequences in a specific situation. Mill (1861) explained this concept when he said, "The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness" (p. 7). Rule Utilitarianism, on the other hand, focuses on establishing rules that, when followed; tend to produce the greatest good.

Hooker (2000) articulates this approach by stating, "An act is wrong if and only if it is forbidden by the code of rules whose internalization by the overwhelming majority of everyone everywhere in each new generation has maximum expected value in terms of well-being" (p. 32). Preference Utilitarianism considers the satisfaction of individual preferences as the measure of utility. Singer (1993) explains this variant thus, "The best consequences, impartially considered, are those that satisfy the preferences of those affected, except where these preferences, if satisfied, would lead to the thwarting of other preferences" (p. 94). Central to utilitarian thought is the concept of the utilitarian calculus, proposed by Bentham to provide a structure for evaluating the consequences of actions. (Bentham, 1789) outlined seven factors to consider: "Intensity, duration, certainty or uncertainty, propinquity or remoteness, fecundity, purity, and extent" (p. 29). This calculus aims to quantify the pleasure or pain resulting from an action, considering these various dimensions.

Utilitarianism offers a valuable framework for addressing environmental challenges by focusing on the overall well-being of all affected parties. As Jamieson (2008) notes, "Environmental problems are fundamentally problems about how to produce the best consequences, thus, since utilitarianism is a consequentialist moral theory, it is natural to think that it would be uniquely well-suited to address such problems" (p. 165). However, while utilitarianism offers a straightforward framework for evaluating actions based on their outcomes, applying it to environmental issues can be challenging. This is because environmental consequences often involve complex, long-term impacts that are difficult to quantify and compare.

Moreover, utilitarian calculations may sometimes overlook the intrinsic value of nature or the rights of non-human entities, which could lead to morally questionable decisions despite aiming for the greatest overall good. Thus, while utilitarianism provides valuable insights, it must be carefully adapted to the intricacies of environmental ethics to ensure that it promotes truly beneficial outcomes. In the context of Nigeria's environmental issues, utilitarianism can guide decision-making by evaluating the long-term consequences of environmental policies on human well-being and ecosystem health, considering the interests of future generations in current environmental decisions, and balancing economic development with environmental preservation to maximize overall societal benefit. With its methodical approach to assessing decisions based on their effects, utilitarian ethics offers a strong framework for tackling environmental issues. The main ideas of utilitarianism will be examined in this section along with how they apply to environmental ethics in Nigeria.

Classical Utilitarianism, as developed by philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, centers on the Greatest Happiness Principle. Mill articulates this core tenet of utilitarianism that, "The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness" (Mill, 1861). This principle provides a clear criterion for moral decision-making, which can be applied to environmental issues by considering the overall well-being of all affected parties. The consequentialist nature of utilitarianism is particularly relevant to environmental ethics. Sinnott-Armstrong (2003, p. 413) explains the fundamental aspect of consequentialism as "Consequentialism is the view that normative properties depend only on consequences". In the context of Nigeria's environmental challenges, this approach encourages a thorough examination of the long-term effects of environmental policies and practices, rather than focusing solely on short-term gains or adherence to rigid rules.

Contemporary utilitarianism has expanded the concept of utility to include non-human entities, recognizing the intrinsic value of animals and ecosystems. Singer argues for this expanded moral consideration: "If a being suffers, there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration" (Singer, 2009, p. 8). This expanded view of moral consideration is particularly relevant to Nigeria's rich biodiversity and complex ecosystems, emphasizing the need to consider the welfare of non-human life in environmental decision-making.

Intergenerational equity is another crucial aspect of utilitarian thinking in environmental ethics. Page asserts the importance of considering future generations: "The core idea of intergenerational equity is that future persons have a valid claim to be treated in accordance with standards of fairness" (Page, 2007, p. 226). This principle emphasizes the moral need to think about how our actions may affect future generations in the long run. This is especially important while dealing with Nigeria's environmental problems,

which can have long-term effects. From this ethical structure, we can create a comprehensive framework for solving Nigeria's environmental concerns by embracing major utilitarian ethics principles such as the Greatest Happiness Principle, consequentialism, and extended utility and intergenerational equality. This method provides for a more comprehensive assessment of environmental laws and practices, taking into account both immediate and long-term repercussions for all parties involved, including humans, animals, ecosystems, and future generations.

Environmental Issues in Nigeria

Nigeria faces a myriad of environmental challenges that pose significant threats to both its ecological systems and human well-being. This section provides an overview of the major environmental problems plaguing the country and their impact on vulnerable communities. Nigeria's forests are rapidly disappearing due to unsustainable logging practices, agricultural expansion, and urbanization. As Omofonmwan and Osa-Edoh (2008) note, "The rate of deforestation in Nigeria is about 3.5% per annum, which is one of the highest rates of forest loss in the world" (p. 244). This deforestation contributes to desertification, particularly in the northern regions of the country. The authors further explain, that "Desertification affects about 50% of Nigeria's land mass, with serious consequences for food security and rural livelihoods" (Omofonmwan & Osa-Edoh, 2008, p. 245). The Niger Delta region, Nigeria's oil-producing hub, has suffered extensive environmental degradation due to frequent oil spills and inadequate cleanup efforts. Kadafa (2012) highlights the severity of this issue. "Oil spillage has a major impact on the ecosystem into which it is released and may constitute serious health hazards for humans, ranging from contamination of water bodies to destruction of farmland and marine life" (p. 38). This pollution has devastating effects on local communities, destroying livelihoods and causing severe health problems.

Rapid urbanization and industrialization have led to significant air pollution in Nigeria's major cities. Obanya et al. (2018) points out that "The air quality in most Nigerian cities falls below WHO standards, with high concentrations of particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen oxides, primarily due to vehicular emissions, industrial activities, and the widespread use of generators" (p. 2). This poor air quality contributes to respiratory diseases and other health issues, particularly among urban dwellers. Improper waste management is a growing concern in Nigeria's urban centers. Nnaji (2015) observes, "The current waste management situation in Nigeria is characterized by inefficient collection methods, insufficient coverage of the collection system and improper disposal" (p. 107). This inadequate waste management leads to pollution of water bodies and soil, exacerbating health risks and environmental degradation. Moreover, these environmental issues collectively contribute to biodiversity loss. Ogbeide et al. (2017) warns,

"Nigeria's rich biodiversity is under threat from habitat destruction, pollution, and overexploitation, with many species facing the risk of extinction" (p. 15).

The environmental challenges in Nigeria disproportionately affect vulnerable communities, exacerbating existing social and economic inequalities. Ajero et al. (2010) emphasize this disparity thus, "The poor and marginalized communities in Nigeria bear the brunt of environmental degradation, suffering from reduced access to clean water, arable land, and forest resources, which are essential for their livelihoods and well-being" (p. 62). These communities often lack the resources to adapt to or mitigate the effects of environmental degradation, leading to a cycle of poverty and environmental vulnerability. This further suggests the need for an integrated and ethically driven development of measures. It is therefore necessary to develop a comprehensive strategy that takes the needs of all interested parties, even the most vulnerable populations, into consideration.

Utilitarianism as a Tool for Solving Environmental Degradation

This section examines the application of various forms of utilitarianism in tackling Nigeria's environmental issues, providing a sophisticated framework for decision-making and the development of policies.

Act Utilitarianism and Immediate Policy Actions: Act utilitarianism evaluates the morality of individual actions based on their immediate consequences. In the context of Nigeria's environmental issues, this approach can be applied to specific actions such as oil extraction. Adeyemo (2008) illustrates this dilemma "The economic benefits of oil extraction in the Niger Delta must be weighed against the immediate environmental harm caused by oil spills and gas flaring. While oil revenue contributes significantly to Nigeria's economy, the environmental degradation affects local communities' health and livelihoods" (p. 167). This perspective highlights the importance of considering both short-term benefits and long-term environmental costs in decision-making processes.

Rule Utilitarianism and Environmental Policy Frameworks: Rule utilitarianism focuses on establishing general rules that, when followed, tend to promote the greatest good. Obi (2010) argues for the adoption of broad environmental laws". Implementing comprehensive environmental policies, such as stringent emissions limits and conservation rules, can create a framework that promotes collective well-being over time. These rules, while potentially limiting short-term economic gains, ensure long-term environmental and social benefits for Nigeria" (p. 223). This approach emphasizes the need for consistent environmental policies that benefit society in the long term, even when short-term gains seem appealing.

Preference Utilitarianism and Stakeholder Engagement: Preference utilitarianism considers the satisfaction of individual preferences as the

measure of utility. Ajayi and Ikporukpo (2005) highlight the importance of stakeholder engagement. Effective environmental management in Nigeria requires balancing the preferences of local communities, industries, and environmental groups. Incorporating indigenous knowledge and preferences into environmental decisions can lead to more sustainable and socially acceptable outcomes. This methodology highlights the significance of inclusive decision-making processes that take into account the varied interests of stakeholders, with the objective of achieving results that are advantageous to the wider community.

Utility Maximization and Sustainability: The concept of utility maximization in utilitarianism aligns closely with the principles of sustainability. Nwagbara et al. (2012) emphasize this connection that "Long-term sustainability is key to maximizing happiness for both present and future generations in Nigeria; environmentally sustainable practices, such as renewable energy adoption and sustainable agriculture, promote greater well-being for all, in contrast to short-sighted exploitation of resources" (p. 318). This perspective highlights how sustainable environmental practices can lead to greater overall utility by preserving resources and ecosystems for future generations.

The application of various utilitarian frameworks to Nigeria's environmental problems enables policymakers and other relevant stakeholders to craft a wider-reaching, better-founded ethics-based decision-making process. The pluralist utilitarian approach developed here enables consideration of near- and far-term outcomes, interests of stakeholders, and sustainability principles in terms of the most critical current environmental concerns in Nigeria.

Ethical Dilemmas and Trade-Offs

Economic Development vs. Environmental Protection: Utilitarianism is a consequentialist ethical theory that provides the means of weighing moral trade-offs between short-term economic gains and long-term environmental harm in Nigeria, of which this dilemma is notably captured within the oil industry context. John Stuart Mill, a prominent utilitarian philosopher, argued that actions should be judged by their consequences, stating that "Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness" (Mill, 1863, p. 14). Applying this principle to Nigeria's environmental challenges requires a careful analysis of both the economic benefits and environmental costs of resource extraction. The utilitarian approach necessitates a comprehensive assessment of the benefits and harms involved in Nigeria's reliance on natural resource extraction, particularly oil. As Afinotan and Ojakorotu (2009) notes "The discovery of oil in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria in 1956 has brought huge revenues to the country, accounting for over 90% of export earnings" (p. 191). This economic benefit must be weighed against the environmental degradation caused by oil extraction. However, the long-term environmental consequences of these activities are severe. Kadafa (2012) observes, "Oil spills

in Nigeria have been a regular occurrence, and the resultant degradation of the surrounding environment has caused significant tension between the people living in the region and the multinational oil companies operating there" (p. 38). By looking at the consequential harm in accordance with the utilitarian outlook, one can ascertain that the harm done to the environment could be greater than the economic gain, chiefly if long-term circumstances are slapped cheek by jowl with immediate ones.

Utilitarian theory in the light of the environmental challenges facing Nigeria demands a delicately balanced examination of overall happiness or well-being produced by the oil industry. It is unquestionable that the extraction of oil has enormous economic importance, generating more than 90% of export earnings, but the long-term environmental consequences brought about by oil spills and degradation should be weighed against these gains. For a utilitarian, the moral imperative involves ensuring overall happiness is maximized; clearly, aggregate harm from environmental degradation may outweigh economic benefits. The utilitarian resolution of this dilemma, then, will focus on those policies that further the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

This means a gradual shift from dependence on oil through investment in renewable energy sources, diversification of the economy to reduce vulnerability to environmental degradation. Through this process, Nigeria will be in an even better position to cut down the long-term environmental cost while still realizing short-run economic gains. This approach agrees with John Stuart Mill's principle that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness. In utilitarian terms, benefits and harms are to be distributed in a balancing act within the oil industry in Nigeria. Whereas economic gains are confined within the government and multinational corporations, the environmental costs are heavy on the host local communities.

Utilitarian solutions would want policies of compensation that try to ensure equitable redistribution of benefits so as not to unduly affect host communities suffering from environmental damage. What finally and ultimately a utilitarian view underlines is the fact that an action derives its moral worth from its consequences. In this case, it is without a doubt that environmental protection and sustainable development will lead to more overall happiness in Nigeria compared to continuing its oil extraction. With a balancing act of economic and environmental policies, Nigeria can ensure sustainability in the future, fitting completely with the utilitarian principle of maximum overall well-being.

Cost-Benefit Analyses of Policy Decisions: Tools for determining which environmental policies have the biggest overall benefits are provided by utilitarian ethics. Nigerian environmental policy decisions can benefit from the application of cost-benefit analysis, a fundamental utilitarian tool.

Modern utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer argues that the environment should be included in our moral compass. He says, "If we are prepared to take the interests of all sentient beings into account, we will have a much broader view of what we ought to do than we would if we were to consider only human interests" (Singer, 1993, p. 277). This viewpoint encourages decision-makers to take non-human animal welfare and ecosystem health into account. Human welfare and environmental health must be balanced when implementing cost-benefit analysis to environmental policies in Nigeria. This need for balance is highlighted by Akpan and Akpabio (2009), "Environmental sustainability and poverty reduction are the greatest challenges facing Nigeria today. Unfortunately, these two challenges are linked in a vicious cycle" (p. 675). The goal of a utilitarian environmental policy in Nigeria would be to maximize well-being overall while taking human and environmental factors into account. Orimoogunje et al. (2009) suggest that policies that support sustainable development may be part of this. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Utilitarianism provides a strong grounding for cost-benefit analysis in environmental policy decisions in Nigeria. If Peter Singer's extended circle of moral consideration were to be taken up, then policymakers would take the interests of all sentient beings, both ecosystems and non-human animals, into their cost-benefit calculations. Such an expanded view makes for much more thorough policy option comparisons. This, within a utilitarian cost-benefit analysis context, would be weighed against economic development in Nigeria, with the various environmental costs associated with pollution, deforestation, and climate change. For instance, in evaluating a new infrastructure project, policymakers would have to weigh not only the economic benefits but also the potential harm to local ecosystems and communities. This could include quantifying the value of preserved natural habitats, clean air and water, and long-term climate stability.

Utilitarian policymakers would aim at sustainable development, striking a balance between human needs and environmental sustainability. Such would involve investment in renewable energy, eco-friendly infrastructure, and sustainable agriculture. In regard to the interest of the future generation, as emphasized by Orimoogunje et al. (2009), it is prudent that policymakers ensure short-term gains do not compromise the long-term health of the environment. In instances where environmental and human needs conflict, utilitarianism recommends that policymakers select an alternative that produces overall happiness for the greatest number. For example, imagine that a policy intended to preserve a crucial wildlife sanctuary also opens jobs and stimulates regional economic growth. Its overall utility would be higher than one focused on short-term resource extraction. Finally, a utilitarian environmental policy approach in Nigeria would recognize that human and environmental well-being is intertwined. From this perspective, cost-benefit

analysis can allow a policymaker to establish policy that promotes the greatest happiness for the greatest number, involving a more sustainable future for all.

Challenges in Applying Utilitarian Ethics to Environmental Issues: While utilitarian ethics holds a good deal of promise for addressing environmental challenges, its practice is not without difficulty. Perhaps chief among these relates to the quantification of environmental value.

As O'Neill (1992) identifies "The problem is not simply that we lack the relevant empirical information about the consequences of our actions for the non-human world, but that we lack an adequate theory of value for the non-human" (p. 119). This difficulty in assigning value to environmental goods can complicate utilitarian calculations, potentially leading to an undervaluation of natural resources and ecosystems. Another challenge lies in the temporal dimension of environmental issues. Utilitarianism traditionally focuses on maximizing happiness or well-being in the present, but environmental challenges often involve long-term consequences. Parfit (1984) addresses this issue, "How much do effects on future generations matter? On one view, they matter just as much as effects on those now living, on another view, they matter less" (p. 356). This temporal aspect adds complexity to utilitarian calculations, requiring careful consideration of how to weigh present benefits against future harms or benefits.

Intergenerational Responsibility

Utilitarianism, in its consideration of the greatest good for the greatest number, necessarily extends its moral calculus to include future generations. This concept is particularly relevant when addressing environmental challenges in Nigeria, where current actions have long-lasting impacts. Philosopher Parfit (1984, p. 362), in his seminal work on population ethics, emphasizes the moral significance of our actions on future people "If we destroy the Earth's environment, we would be harming all future people. This harm would be very great. And it might affect many billions of people. The objection to such an act would be very strong". This perspective underscores the utilitarian obligation to consider the well-being of future generations when making environmental decisions in Nigeria. In the Nigerian context, this principle is especially pertinent given the country's heavy reliance on natural resources.

Ogunba (2016) notes, "Nigeria's development has been and still is dependent on the exploitation of its abundant natural resources... however, the rate of exploitation of these resources raises the question of whether anything would be left for future generations" (p. 156). This observation highlights the tension between current economic needs and the rights of future Nigerians to inherit a livable environment. The utilitarian approach to intergenerational responsibility requires a careful balancing act. As Ekeli (2004) argues, "From a utilitarian point of view, the interests of future people should be given equal consideration to the interests of present people" (p. 428). This equal

consideration principle poses challenges for policymakers in Nigeria, where immediate economic pressures often overshadow long-term environmental concerns.

Sustainability as an Ethical Imperative:

Sustainability, viewed through a utilitarian lens, becomes not just an environmental strategy but an ethical imperative. Sustainable practices align with utilitarian principles by aiming to maximize well-being across generations. Philosopher Toby Ord articulates the utilitarian case for sustainability. "Sustainability is about ensuring that humanity has a long and flourishing future, this aligns well with utilitarianism's focus on impartially maximizing the well-being of all (Ord, 2020, p. 231). In the Nigerian context, this principle calls for a reevaluation of current environmental policies and practices. Ajayi and Ikporukpo (2005) emphasize the importance of sustainable practices in Nigeria's oil industry, "Sustainable development in the Nigerian petroleum industry requires the integration of environmental concerns into development policies and practices to ensure that the needs of the present generation are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 94). This perspective aligns closely with utilitarian ethics, as it seeks to balance current economic needs with the welfare of future generations.

The implementation of sustainable practices in Nigeria faces significant challenges. As Olorunfemi and Raheem (2008) point out that "The challenge of sustainable development in Nigeria is compounded by poverty, rapid population growth and the exploitation of natural resources" (p. 342). From a utilitarian standpoint, addressing these challenges requires policies that not only protect the environment but also promote economic development and poverty reduction, thereby maximizing overall well-being across generations. The concept of "weak" versus "strong" sustainability also has implications for utilitarian calculations. Neumayer (2013) explains that "Weak sustainability holds that natural capital is substitutable with other forms of capital, while strong sustainability insists that certain forms of natural capital are non-substitutable" (p. 23). A utilitarian approach to sustainability in Nigeria might favor "strong sustainability" for critical environmental resources, recognizing their irreplaceable value to future generations. Utilitarianism provides a robust ethical framework for addressing intergenerational responsibility in Nigeria's environmental challenges. It calls for careful consideration of future generations' well-being and positions sustainability as a moral imperative, aligning environmental protection with the utilitarian goal of maximizing overall welfare across time.

Conclusion

When utilitarian ethics is applied to Nigeria's environmental issues, it offers a solid framework for achieving the nation's goal of striking a balance between ecological preservation and economic development. As we have seen, several

interpretations of utilitarianism offer valuable perspectives on the moral issues and pragmatic strategies needed to address Nigeria's environmental challenges. Therefore, Nigeria must balance short-term economic gains against long-term environmental and social costs. This is in line with the classical utilitarian approach, which emphasizes overall well-being. The Nigerian economy is heavily dependent on the oil sector. However, exploitation of oil and gas resources has resulted in severe environmental degradation. This observation highlights the critical need for a utilitarian approach that considers the welfare of both present and future Nigerians.

One's understanding of ethics is further broadened by Singer's enlarged utilitarianism, which takes into account the interests of all sentient beings. This viewpoint is especially pertinent in the Nigerian context, where animals and various ecosystems are also impacted by environmental degradation, in addition to human communities. Guidelines for developing and implementing policies are also provided by the utilitarian framework. Policymakers can create broad environmental recommendations that would benefit Nigerian society and the environment most if they were generally implemented by taking a rule utilitarian approach. In addition, act utilitarianism can guide particular initiatives and actions, providing flexibility in tackling current environmental issues while maintaining focus on long-term objectives.

Nigeria may chart a course towards sustainable development that really optimizes the welfare of its entire population, both current and prospective, by incorporating utilitarian ethical reasoning into environmental decision-making. Under the tenet of the greatest benefit for the greatest number, this strategy advocates for a careful balancing of ecological imperatives with economic necessities. It requires decision-makers and individuals to be aware of the long-term effects of their choices and to exhibit a commitment to environmental stewardship and intergenerational equality. Only through such a comprehensive and ethically grounded approach can Nigeria hope to address its pressing environmental challenges while securing a prosperous and sustainable future for generations to come.

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