

# Review of: "Donald Davidson's Theory of Action in Relation to Responsibility: Addressing Crisis of Social Development in Africa"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Dear authors, I have read your paper entitled **'Donald Davidson's Theory of Action in Relation to Responsibility: Addressing Crisis of Social Development in Africa'** with the utmost interest. Below, I highlight my critics and comments.

**Authors' argument:** Although Davidson does not engage in the discussion on Africa's development, the attendant crisis, and whether Africans are even people capable of human actions, this paper argues using Davidson's standard story of action that Africa and indeed the agents that constitute its geographical territory are to be blamed, held responsible for the woes that have befallen the continent and its failures as far as development is concerned.

## My comments and critics:

Donald Davidson's Theory of Action primarily focuses on the philosophical understanding of individual agency and intentionality. While it may not directly apply to economic and social development in the same way it does to individual actions, certain aspects of his theory could potentially be adapted or considered within the context of development. However, there are limitations to doing so:

## Possible Applications:

1. **Collective Action:** Davidson's emphasis on the interplay between belief, desire, and intention could be explored in the context of collective action for development. Understanding how individuals collectively form intentions and pursue goals could shed light on community-led development initiatives or government-led development initiatives.
2. **Shared Intentions:** Davidson's concept of shared intentions might be relevant to understanding cooperation and collaboration among individuals and groups working towards economic and social development in the case of Nigeria to some extent.

Besides these possible applications, there are serious limitations to this theory. First of all, it does not take into account the complexity of systems and institutions that are established to guarantee development broadly speaking, be it social or economic. More importantly, development be it economic or social development involves complex systems with numerous interacting factors, institutions, and stakeholders. Consequently, Davidson's theory cannot, by any means, adequately address these complexities. Nevertheless, addressing these complex issues could be done rationally through the lens of

institution-based theories. In this regard, the authors could support their arguments by exposing the weaknesses in the normative, regulative, and economic institutions that hinder the development of Africa.

**A critical analysis of development across Africa cannot ignore** structural issues such as quality education, good governance, inequality, power dynamics, and institutional frameworks. Each of these structural issues has a great incidence on the others. However, Davidson's focus on the individual agency cannot fully account for these broader structural influences.

The authors mentioned that: “the agents that constitute its geographical territory are to be blamed, held responsible for the woes that have befallen the continent and its failures as far as development is concerned.” This statement is somehow too superficial. This is because the institutional settings of most African countries are based on the colonial era dominated by prejudice, exploitation, and so on. Development cannot be achieved within such an institutional setting. Therefore, putting all the blame for the underdevelopment of Africa on “the agents (I think you wanted to say leaders) that constitute its geographic territory cannot be fully supported. More importantly, the authors did not account for external forces that hinder the development of Africa.

However, there are possible ways to reorient the underlying arguments that support the objective of the study. Here are some paths:

- The self-serving interest of agents (leaders) makes it impossible to build strong institutions to support the social (education and healthcare) and economic development of the African nations.
- Lack of political will along with the self-serving interest of African leaders undermine the development of the continent.
- The lack of political courage to stand against external actors who only seek their self-serving interests across Africa constitutes a major obstacle to the development of the continent.
- The lack of interest and courage among the agents or leaders to curb rampant corruption within governments and institutions results in limited access to quality education and weak Infrastructure.

And the list goes on!

I suggest that the author(s) emphasize more on an “argumentative research method”.

I hope my comments will help.

Regards