

**PEOPLE'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS:
IMPLICATIONS ON SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT**

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Abstract

Lifestyle and socio-economic status are all-encompassing. Human actions, attitudes and behaviours are enshrined in their socio-economic condition. The proliferation of environmental problems that have become a great concern the world over cannot but have socio-economic undertone. This paper therefore examines the influence of socio-economic condition on people's environmental knowledge, attitudes and practices. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. A total of 200 participants comprising male and female from both high and low density areas in Ibadan South-west constituted sample for the study. The study was guided by one research question and two hypotheses while questionnaire containing 20 items was the instrument used in generating data from respondents. The data collected were analysed using frequency percentages ranking order Spearman's Rho correlation and Analysis of variance (ANOVA). The study revealed among others that people's socio-economic state, such as poverty, educational level, housing and neighbourhood environment influenced environmental sustainability in the city. Thus, it was recommended among others that environmental intervention programmes must take into consideration people's socio-economic condition.

Keywords: Socio-economic status, Environmental degradation, Environmental quality, Sustainable environment

Introduction

The environment is changing fast, and it is hard to ignore. Natural resources are dwindling, air quality is worsening, climates are shifting, and ecosystems are struggling. Human activities like deforestation, pollution, and unsustainable agriculture are disrupting ecosystems, depleting resources, and altering climates (Borgen, 2021). The impact of human behaviour on the environment is evident globally, highlighting the need for sustainable practices. The threats to our environment are real, and awareness is growing (Wahab & Ajitoni, 2019).

Nigeria, like other nations, faces various environmental challenges, including water scarcity, land degradation, inundation, soil erosion, forest destruction, industrial contamination, urban waste, and cross-border smuggling of toxic substances. The country's environmental health issues differ depending on regional socio-economic progress, even varying between towns and villages. As industrial activities rise, so do respiratory diseases and cancer risks (Oladokun & Ogundare, 2022).

Ibadan's growth is explosive, and it's struggling to keep up with waste management. The city's 2026 population is estimated at around 4,293,160 people (World Population Review, 2026). Open dumping is causing environmental chaos – polluting rivers, clogging drains, and harming public health (Omoleke, 2018). The survey's findings paint a grim picture – poor maintenance, proximity to pollution sources, and unsanitary practices are contaminating water sources. No wonder water-borne diseases are a major concern in these areas (Omoleke, 2018; Ochieng, et. al., 2021). Air pollution, contaminated water, and poor sanitation take a huge toll on people's health, especially in vulnerable communities (Gbadamosi, 2023). Ibadan has experienced floods of varying severity, resulting in loss of life and property damage. Research indicates that contributing factors include: years of waste disposal leading to pond siltation and blockages of natural watercourses, intense precipitation, reservoir failure, and rapid unplanned urbanization (Fafioye & John-Dewole, 2018; Wahab & Ajitoni, 2019 & Gbadamosi, 2023).

Despite a series of laudable environmental measures into improving the quality of the environment, the environment is still taking a hit and progress is slow. To be specific, the city has been struggling with solid waste maintenance for ages. This might not be unconnected with the fact that some root causes of the said menace are yet to be identified. The high level of poverty and illiteracy, poor housing conditions and its neighbourhood environment are connected to the current environmental practices in Nigeria and Ibadan to be precise (Coker, et. al., 2015; Babalola, Akinola & Okhale, 2016; Fafioye & John-Dewole, 2018). Sadik (2021:69), the former Executive Director of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said “much of the environmental degradation witnessed today is mostly due to two categories of individuals: the wealthiest billion and the poorest billion. The poor, especially in developing nations, often depend on natural resources for survival, making them vulnerable to environmental degradation. In desperation, they may exploit their surroundings, contributing to issues like deforestation and soil degradation (Borgen, 2021).

On the contrary, some studies have shown that middle and high income people deteriorate the environment more than low-income people. Danida (2022), for instance, asserts that urban poor communities tend to rely on minimal non-renewable resources. They often reside in homes built with recycled materials and rely on public transport, cycling, or walking, contributing to lower per-capita resource consumption. Similarly, Anon (2024) observes that low-income communities tend to have a smaller carbon footprint, yet they're often hit hardest by environmental issues. Meanwhile, wealthier individuals contribute more to emissions. This imbalance highlights the need for policies that address consumption patterns and promote sustainable practices across income levels.

Research suggests that education level impacts environmental awareness, attitudes, and behaviours. The 2018 World Values Survey found that respondents with tertiary education prioritized environmental protection over economic growth more than those with lower education

levels. Similarly, Fafioye and John-Dewole (2018) linked educational background to waste management issues in Ibadan. Education can empower individuals to adopt eco-friendly habits and reconsider harmful behaviours. For a person to admit to the fact that if he destroys the environment, he destroys himself, he must have listened to an enlightenment programme on environment.

The link between poverty, education, and environmental impact is clear. Limited access to family planning and education can lead to larger families, straining resources and exacerbating environmental degradation. Educated households tend to make more environmentally conscious choices, like using cleaner water methods. This goes a long way in preventing or reducing environmental related diseases such as diarrhea, typhoid, cholera, among others. In contrast, Isiogun (2022) found that level of education has no significant effect on respondents' environment-related activities. His finding shows there's a slight difference between literates and non-literates' environmental practices.

Furthermore, research has shown that people's socio-economic status mostly determines their housing condition and where the houses would be located (Oladokun & Ogundare 2022; Wahab, 2023; Ayanwale, 2024; Bolu-Steve & Sanni, 2019). It is discovered that low-income earners with little or no education live in high density areas characterized by lack of drinking water and other sanitation facilities. Residential areas in urban zones often reflect socio-economic disparities, influencing environmental behaviours. High-density areas typically lack basic amenities, leading to poor waste management practices, while low-density areas with better infrastructure see more environmentally conscious behaviours. Fafioye and John-Dewole (2018) note that residents in planned areas exhibit more proactive environmental attitudes compared to those in unplanned areas, where improper waste disposal contributes to issues like pollution and flooding. On the strength of the foregoing, socio-economic status is tangent to human behaviours and actions. It is therefore imperative to study the impact of such on environment. Based on this observation,

this study looks into the influence of people's socio-economic status on sustainable environment. The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of people's socio-economic status on sustainable environment and how improved socio-economic status of people can be a panacea to environmental degradation, especially in Ibadan. The specific objectives are to:

- i. find out the extent to which poverty is linked with environmental degradation;
- ii. examine significant relationship between people's education and their engagement in sustainable environmental practices; and
- iii. determine significant influence of housing condition and neighbourhood environment on environmental quality.

Research Question

In the light of the foregoing, a research question was generated to guide this study:

To what extent is poverty linked with environmental degradation?

Hypotheses

H₀1: There will be no significant relationship between people's education and their engagement in sustainable environmental practices?

H₀2: There will be no significant influence of housing conditions and neighbourhood environment on environmental quality?

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This study was carried out within Ibadan South West local government area of Oyo state. Population consisted of all the residents of Ibadan South West local government area of Oyo state. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 200 residents (male and female) in the selected local government area (high-density and low-density areas). A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was made up of two (2) sections. Section A focused on the personal data of the respondents while Section B was designed to

elicit responses on the topic of the study. The questionnaire contained 20 structured items which were rated on a 4-point Likert scale of: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The instrument was subjected to both face and content validity before its administration. The validated questionnaire was tested for reliability on 20 residents in Akinyele local government area of Oyo state. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha and 0.81 was obtained. Data collected were analysed through frequency, percentages, Spearman's Rho correlation and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Results

The data collected on the study were subjected to analysis based on one research question raised and two hypotheses formulated for the study. The results are presented as follows:

Research Question 1: To what extent is poverty linked with environmental degradation?

Table 1: Analysis of extent to which poverty is linked with environmental degradation

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
1.	Due to poor or lack of toilet facility, the poor mostly defecate in the nearby bush, open ground, uncompleted or dilapidated buildings.	48	24	1st
2.	Environmental related diseases such as cholera, diarrhea, etc are prevalent among the poor	30	15	3rd
3.	High-income people largely dispose their refuse either on open ground, river or inside gutter	04	02	8th
4.	Poor people mostly use wood for domestic cooking	37	18.5	2nd
5.	The poor engage the services of refuse trucks for collection and disposal of their refuse	08	04	7th
6.	Mostly, the poor are agents of environmental damage	28	14	4th
7.	Burning of refuse is a common practice	20	10	6th

among the poor			
8. The poor are mostly apprehended for violating environmental laws by dumping refuse on the median and road sides	25	12.5	5th
Total	200	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 1 shows the linkage between poverty and environmental degradation. The item “Due to the poor or lack of toilet facility, the poor mostly defecate in the nearby bush, open ground, uncompleted or dilapidated building” has the highest percentage (24%) followed by the fact that poor people mostly use wood for domestic cooking (18.5%), it was also discovered that environmental related diseases such as cholera, diarrhea, and so on are prevalent among the poor (15%), mostly the poor are agents of environmental damage (14%), it was also found that the poor mostly violate environmental laws (12.5%), also, burning of refuse is a common practice among the poor (10%), most respondents were not favourably disposed to items 5 and 3 as they have the last two lowest percentages (04% and 02%) respectively.

H₀₁: There will be no significant relationship between people's level of education and their engagement in sustainable environmental practices.

Table 2: Spearman’s Rho Correlation analysis of relationship between people's level of education and their engagement in sustainable environmental practices

Variables	N	$\sum d^2$	r_s Value	p-value	Decision on H ₀₁
Level of Education	200				
Sustainable Practices	200	4,166	0.80	0.001	Reject

Source: Field Survey, 2025. *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Table 2 indicates the results of statistical analysis of null hypothesis one which reveals that there is highly significant relationship between

people's educational background and their commitment to environmental sustainability. The test yielded a Spearman's Rank Correlation coefficient (r_s Value) of 0.83 with a p-value of 0.000, which falls well below the standard 0.05 significance threshold. Hence, the Null Hypothesis is rejected.

H_02 : There will be no significant influence of housing conditions and neighbourhood environment on environmental quality.

Table 3: ANOVA results of housing conditions and neighbourhood environment on environmental quality

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F_{crit}</i>
Between Groups	119.4173	5	23.883	18.453	0.002	2.220
Within Groups	680.8920	138	0.4912	6		
		6	64			
		139				
Total	800.3096	1				

Source: Field Survey, 2025. *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Table 3 indicates that F-value is 48.62 and the p-calculated is 0.002, which is less than (<) the typical significance level of 0.05. This result indicates that the physical and demographic characteristics of a neighbourhood significantly dictate the quality of the local environment.

Discussions

This study has provided answer to a research question raised for the study. The study found that there was a linkage between poverty and environmental degradation. The poor have been found vulnerable to environmental degradation due to their desperation in sourcing for livelihood in the environment. This disposition shows that poverty is strongly linked with environmental degradation. The result is in the order of the extent of the linkage. This finding is in line with the views such as Fafioye & John-Dewole, (2018); Sadik (2021); Borgen (2021); among others.

In research hypothesis one which states that there will be no significant relationship between people's education and sustainable environmental practices was rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between people's education and their engagement in sustainable environmental practices was rejected. The data specifically supports the premise that education effectively raises consciousness and concern regarding environmental issues. This heightened awareness allows individuals to reassess and reduce their involvement in environmentally harmful practices. This is as a result of a very strong positive correlation, meaning that as levels of formal education increase, there is a corresponding and measurable rise in pro-environmental behaviour. This finding corroborates the findings of Borgen (2021); Fafioye and John-Dewole (2018); WVS (2018), to mention few. Their findings establish the fact that education has significant influence on the environment.

The research hypothesis two which states that there will be no significant influence of housing condition and neighbourhood environment on environmental quality was rejected. This indicates that there is a strong significant influence of housing condition and neighbourhood environment on environmental quality. Specifically, the data items highlight that inhabitants in high-density areas often suffer from limited access to clean air and potable water. The analysis confirms that environmental health diseases are more likely to break out in these high-density regions due to a critical lack of adequate sanitation infrastructure. The result reveals a strong connection between urban density and waste management challenges. In high-density areas, solid waste disposal, pollution, and flooding are prevalent issues because refuse trucks often cannot access houses that do not face the road directly. As a result, residents in these areas frequently dispose of refuse in open grounds, uncompleted buildings, or gutters. This finding is rooted in studies such as Fafioye and John-Dewole (2018), Bolu-Steve and Sanni (2019); among others. They are of the consensus that differences in people's residential areas explain their varied reactions to the environment.

Conclusion

This study has proved the fact that environmental problems in the society has socio-economic undertone especially in Ibadan South-West local government area of Oyo state. The socio-economic factors such as poverty, little or no education, housing condition and quality of neighbourhood environment have been discovered pertinent in influencing environmental knowledge, attitudes, and practices among the people in the study area. Poverty, as one of the independent variables of the study has been found to be strongly linked with environmental degradation. Education was also discovered having significant influence on the environment and environmental issues. More so, housing condition and neighbourhood environment have strong influence on environmental quality.

Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing, it is imperative that attention be given to socio-economic issues as they relate to the quality of the environment. By this, intervention programmes to be carried out must take into consideration people's socio-economic condition and the areas where environmental problems are prevalent. The urban poor in high-density areas lack access to basic environmental infrastructure, necessitating government and institutional support. Raising hygiene awareness through mass media and local channels is crucial. This could include health and environmental education programs targeting residents, especially in high-density zones. Strict enforcement of development control and sanitary laws can improve residential environments. Slum areas need renewal through participatory strategies and sustainable management. Governments can promote environmental responsibility through initiatives like "cleanest residential area" competitions and awards. The planning of urban areas is highly essential. When cities prioritize green spaces, waste management, and eco-friendly infrastructure, everyone benefits.

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