

PREVALENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ABUSE AMONG TRADERS AT ADOLOR JUNCTION, BENIN CITY, EDO STATE

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Abstract

This study was designed to determine the prevalence of environmental abuse at Adolor Junction in Ugbowo, Benin City. In order to achieve the purpose of the study, three research questions were raised and answered. The descriptive survey research was adopted for the study. The sample for the study consisted of sixty-eight (68) traders comprising twenty-eight (28) lock-up shops owners and forty (40) roadside traders at Adolor Junction. The census sampling technique was used for sample selection and in all, (28) lock-up shops owners and forty (40) roadside traders were selected. The instrument for data collection was an interview schedule. The instrument was validated using the face and content approach while the elements of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability were used to determine the trustworthiness of the instrument. Transcriptions from the interview sessions were reproduced and reported. Findings from the study revealed that Adolor junction traders have a poor perception of environmental abuse, the traders possessed an average level of knowledge about safe environmental practices and that the prevalence of environmental abuse was as a result of irregularity of government appointed waste carriers, high cost of private waste collectors, increase in the number of road side traders and lack of punitive measures on offenders as well as absence of properly built or designated area as a market. Hence, it was recommended that community education programme should be designed by community development agents to conscientise traders on the need and importance of safe and healthy environment both for them and their customers. Also, community development agencies should adopt community education programme to help traders improve their level of knowledge on environmental issues and make deliberate effort to ensure their trading environment is friendly and well-kept. Government should also critically investigate the reason behind the inconsistency of public waste collectors with a view to making them more effective.

Keywords: *Prevalence, Environmental Abuse, Community Education*

Introduction

The environment refers to total surroundings of an individual. This can be made up of both living and non-living organisms. The environment plays so

many roles virtually in all spheres of human endeavours, including health, economic, social, physical and psychological. In other words, abandonment, abuse and mismanagement of the environment can be very harmful to those who reside within it. The environment is considered to be of great importance, especially, with particular emphasis to development. This has made it practically impossible to ignore or underestimate the environment. It is obvious that the environment is very critical to commercial, agricultural, tourism, technological growth and advancement of the society. It is also the physical surrounding and a key element in the growth and survival natural habitats. It is based on these reasons amongst others, that issues relating directly or indirectly to the environment have continued to attract global attention and assumed a dominant position in academic gatherings and other public fora. This explains why continuous efforts are being devoted to sensitise people on the need to be deliberate about cleanliness and environmental care.

Nigeria has for long been involved in dealing with the issue of environment and ensuring that people are adequately instructed on how to protect and manage their environment. However, this dedication did not come to limelight until the issue of dumping of toxic waste in Koko port in 1988. It was this issue that led to the creation of Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA), Federal Ministry of Environment and other relevant agencies, with the mandate to tackle issues affecting environmental abuse and mismanagement in Nigeria such as flooding, bush burning, environmental pollution, depletion of

ozone layer, sanitation, desertification, erosion, deforestation and soil conservation (Ityavyar & Tyav, 2013).

Human beings have for a long time been involved with actions and activities such that are detrimental to the environment. Such activities include, but not limited to industrial, agricultural and the ever-increasing urbanization process, security and terrorist activities. These have been found to directly and/or indirectly pollute the environment. This situation is vividly captured by Ityavyar and Tyav, (2013) who posited that there is a significant relationship between population growth and the level of pressure on the environment, especially, in the wake of improved technologies. Environmental abuse and pollution have significant effects and are dangerous to the health of people and the lives of other living organisms. According to Erhabor (2016), the interactions of humans in the society which are evident in various anti-social and anti-environmental acts like poaching, overgrazing, deforestation, land degradation, unplanned urban development, indiscriminate dumping of refuse, gas flaring, noise, amongst others, result in extraordinary mark on the environmental landscape in the country. This scenario captured above is a typical example of the situation at Adolor Junction.

Adolor Junction is one the major bus-stops between University of Benin Main gate and Uselu Market. It comes immediately after University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH). By distance, it is about 450 meters from University of Benin, Ugbowo, Campus. Adolor junction is characterized by various forms of trading activities including lock-up shops

businesses, road side trading and hawking. During the day, one is bound to experience free flow of both vehicular and human movement in the area because business activities are restricted to lock-up shops. During the evenings, especially, between the hours of 5.00pm and 9.00pm, traders practically take over both sides of the roads, thereby causing traffic congestion and slow pace of human movement.

In fact, one would not be wrong to say that these traders have turned the area to regular evening market. Ordinarily, their trading activities would not have attracted so much attention to the researchers, were it not for the way and manner with which these traders abuse their environment. This is evident in the indiscriminate dumping of refuse like corn pills, corn curbs, orange peels, banana peels, plantain stems, nylon, papers and other non-degradable materials on the road and drainages which block water channels and consequently resulting to flooding whenever it rains. There is, therefore, the need to investigate this, using a community-based approach such as community education.

Community education has long been known for its role in ensuring self-confidence, self-respect and personal independence. It is also important in promoting human rights and achieving social equality in the society and community at large. Community education is a key factor in encouraging, motivating and stimulating community members to become active participants in community activities, find or generate employment, increase their incomes and improve their standard of living. Fletcher cited in Hanachor, and Olumati (2012) viewed community education as a process of

commitment to the education and leisure of all ages through local participation in setting priority, sharing resources and the study of circumstance. In other words, through active participation in community programmes as promoted by community education, individuals attain indepth understanding of events and activities within their immediate environment and the society at large. This implies that community education enables an individual to become conversant with the norms and values of the society.

One interesting issue about community education is that it does not place much emphasis on the formal education system rather attention is focused on the informal and non-formal aspects which take place at home and other social institutions. Besides, it also acknowledges that personal development and growth occurs through a series of learning process, which results in development of physical, intellectual and moral capacities and enables the individuals to become very productive and function effectively in his immediate community and the society at large.

Community education enables increased socialization, entrenches communal spirit and advances mutual respect for one another. The ultimate goal of community education is to develop team spirit among community members which will enhance their ability to work together to identify their individual and collective challenges and seek solutions to these problems. This explains why the Canadian Association for Community Education cited in Hanachor, and Olumati (2012) remarked that Community Education is a process whereby learning is used for individual, community and global

betterment, characterized by the active involvement of people of all ages, the use of learning resources within the community and research activities to advance positive changes in the community.

The inherent potential of community education in proffering solutions to community challenges such as environmental abuse makes it a veritable tool for explaining the consequences of human action on their environment and by extension on themselves. This is because this approach entails the involvement and participation of community people in the step-by-step teaching and learning process that will enable them to identify their challenges and proffer solutions to them, using local and familiar means. However, to properly direct the focus of any community education programme or endeavour, it is important to understand the fact and details of the challenge which it is directed at solving. It is in the light of this that this paper seeks to determine cause of prevalence of environmental abuse among traders at Adolor junction

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, stakeholders around Adolor environment have been complaining of the area. Environmental abusive practices are growing at Adolor junction at a very alarming rate. The reality in this area is that virtually all available spaces have been covered with one form of refuse or the other, carelessly dumped and unattended. The dimension it has taken depicts a total disregard for the environment and its consequences upon groups and individuals, young and old. This is despite the litany of laws and policies directed at preserving the environment and subsequently protecting

the health and lives of people. This situation portrays a seemingly poor perception of environmental abuse and high level of ignorance among the traders concerning the need and benefits of safe environment. There is, therefore, an urgent need to provide empirical data on the reality of these issues and also the find out the reasons behind the prevalence of environmental abuse at Adolor junction with a view to sensitizing the traders through community education. This is the main problem of the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the perception of Adolor junction's traders on environmental abuse in the area?
2. What is the traders' level of knowledge about safe environmental practices?
3. What is the cause of the prevalence of anti-environmental activities at Adolor junction?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine the cause of the prevalence of environmental abuse at Adolor junction. Specifically, this study seeks to:

1. find out the perception of Adolor junction's traders on environmental abuse in their area,
2. ascertain the traders' level of knowledge about safe environmental practices, and
3. explore the causes of the prevalence of anti-environmental activities at Adolor junction.

Methodology

Research Design

The descriptive survey research was adopted for the study. This is due to the

fact that the study is a fact finding and survey design is beneficial in a study such as this.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of sixty-eight (68) traders, comprising twenty-eight (28) lock-up shops owners and forty (40) roadside traders at Adolor Junction.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study comprised sixty-eight (68) traders which included twenty-eight (28) lock-up shops owners and forty (40) roadside traders at Adolor Junction. The census sampling technique was used for sample selection.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection is an interview schedule. This is due to literacy level and the nature of the activities of these traders which portrayed them to be very busy with their business and may not be willing to read and answer a questionnaire.

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was validated using the face and content approach. In this vein, draft copies of the instrument were given to experts in community development, environmental and health education, and measurement and evaluation in the University of Benin. Their suggestions were noted in the production of the final copy of the instrument.

Reliability of the Study

To ensure the accuracy of the information and credibility of this study, the interview schedule was triangulated. To ascertain the trustworthiness of the data, the elements of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability were introduced. To this end, therefore, the researchers compared findings from this study with

available literature on the same subject matter.

Findings were discussed with traders as a way of cross-checking the information gathered in order to ascertain conformability. Peer briefing was also used to enable corroboration and sharing of thoughts and observations with some of the traders who are interested in the subject under study. This is so as to enable credibility or worthiness of consideration by others.

This process allowed for triangulation of the information collected and brought experiences of others regarding the similarities, differences and realities of other respondents to bear during analyses. The issue of transferability is, however, left to those who will be interested in applying the findings of this research and thesis wherever and whenever.

Administration of the Instrument

The researchers and a team of five research assistants administered the instrument on the respondents. To enable speedy and effective data collection, the research group was divided into groups of three personnel each. One of the personnel served as a lead interviewer, while the other two personnel served as a note-taker and an audio-recorder respectively.

Method of Data Analyses

Transcripts from the interview session were reproduced and reported to serve as support for the main research questions.

Results

Research Question One: What is the perception of Adolor junction's traders on environmental abuse in their area?

Summary of Interview Session on the Perception of Adolor Junction's Traders on Environmental Abuse

In relation to the perception of traders on environmental abuse, interaction with the traders revealed that the people did not consider their anti-environmental activities to be a source of concern or worry. In other words, they really downplayed and presented it as an issue of no consequence, indicating a poor perception of environmental abuse. In fact, the words of Chief Peter Uzoma, a shop owner, captured this situation vividly. According to him, *"Many of the traders are in the habit of burning refuse after sweeping because it is very expensive to dispose waste through private waste collectors"*. Mrs Eunice Odigie also stated that *"since we don't have place to pour the refuse after sweeping, some of us come out at night to pour them into the gutter."*

Research Question Two: What is the traders' level of knowledge about safe environmental practices?

Summary of Interview Session on Traders' Level of Knowledge about Safe Environmental Practices at Adolor Junction

Interaction with the traders on their knowledge about environmental practices revealed an average level of knowledge about safe environmental practices. Some of the traders indicated a preference for burning of refuse while others either would not sweep or pour their waste into the drainage system after sweeping. This probably stemmed from the belief that it is not their job to sweep the street and that sweeping it at all is being charitable enough. For instance, Mr Felix Udoh, a shop owner stated that *"I am more*

concerned about my shop than anywhere else, so any place outside my shop is not my business." Similarly, Mr. Chukwuka Anum, a road side trader said, *"there is nothing wrong with my environment and even it is dirty, it is not my job to clean it."* Also, in the words of Mama Precious, a road side trader, *"I can't also use my money to pay waste carriers after helping to sweep the area; that is why I sometime sweep them into the gutter."*

Research Question Three: What is the cause of the prevalence of anti-environmental activities at Adolor junction?

Summary of Interview Session on Prevalence of Environmental Abuse at Adolor Junction

The discussion with the traders bordering on the cause of the prevalence of anti-environmental activities in the area has indicated that the major causes of the prevalence of environmental abuse were ineffectiveness of government appointed waste carriers, high cost of private waste collectors, increase in the number of road side traders and lack of punitive measures on offenders. The traders also raised the issue of absence of properly built or designated area as a market environment which would help them to properly organize their waste disposal process.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study have exposed important facts about the prevalence of environmental abuse by traders at Adolor junction.

In the first place, findings indicated that Adolor junction traders have a poor perception of environmental abuse. This finding corroborates that of Ugwu (2013)

who reported that many traders and hawkers are guilty of environmental abuse through carelessly disposing waste from their shops and stalls. Osagie (2014) also reported that many traders considered it normal for people to dispose waste indiscriminately even in the presence of waste bins.

It was also seen that the traders possessed an average level of knowledge about safe environmental practices. In line with this finding, Osagie (2014) advocated that there is need to help traders to fully understand, not only the consequence of an unkept environment, but the benefits and ways of keeping a safe environment.

Findings also showed that the prevalence of environmental abuse is as a result of irregularity of government appointed waste carriers, high cost of private waste collectors, increase in the number of road side traders and lack of punitive measures on offenders as well as absence of properly built or designated area as a market. In support of this finding, Ityavyar and Tyav, (2013) stated that the cost of dealing with private waste collectors have doubled, especially with the absence of government owned waste collectors. He added that punishment should be meted out on traders who dispose waste inappropriately. However, this finding negates that of Ibobor (2012) who reported that there is no significant difference between the environment of road side traders and those in a constructed market in terms of environmental abuse.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Environmental abuse is, no doubt, dangerous to human life and living. It has both long and short term effect, not only on the traders, but also their customers. This study has provided empirical

evidence on the issue of prevalence of environmental abuse at Adolor junction beginning with the fact that the traders have poor perception of environmental abuse and an average level of knowledge about safe environmental practices. The prevalence of environmental abuse was as a result of the irregularity of government waste collectors which probably necessitated the involvement of private waste collectors who are also expensive to deal with as well as absence of market structure. There is also ignorance, which is an important factor contributing to environmental abuse. In other words, providing the traders with adequate knowledge on consequences of environmental abuse and safe environmental practices will reduce the menace in the area. Based on this, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Community education programme should be designed by community development agents to conscientize traders and their customers on the need and importance of safe and healthy environment.
2. Community development agencies should adopt community education programme to help traders improve their level of knowledge on environmental issues and also make deliberate effort to ensure their trading environment is friendly and well kept.
3. Government should critically investigate the reason behind the inconsistency of public waste collectors with a view to making them more effective. The need for a well-structured market area is also emphasized and will not be out place if government considers it as a necessity.

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