

The Factors That Influence the Environmental Sanitation on People's Health in Nigeria

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Abstract: *Environment and the factors that are associated with it are the root causes of many epidemic diseases both in the developed and developing nations. Environmental health problems arise from population pressure on housing, poor environmental sanitation, coupled with lack of safe drink water and housing facilities. Over the years, environmental factor has become a major problem in Africa. This development has the potential to destroy the natural Environment in which human and natural resources in the nation inhabit. The status of the local natural environment is important in the development process, since poor and marginalized households lacks the resources needed to reduce the negative effects of a degraded environment. A damaged natural environment as a result of waste will hit the most vulnerable groups of society the hardest environment. In This topic we will look at the factors that influence the environmental sanitation on people's health in Nigeria which will ensure the right to sanitation involves explicit requirements in terms of accessibility, affordability, availability, quality and acceptability in the nation.*

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I. Introduction

A pleasant environment that promotes healthful living and is hazard free is a fundamental right of every human being. However, deposition of faecal matter near homes, contamination of sources of drinking water, poorly designed sewage system, dumping of refuse and sweeping into the gutters, defecating and disposing of faeces by the street corners and waterways and selling of food stuffs and cooked food by the road side are all unwholesome practices that pose potential risk to the development of diseases. Washing of hands after defecation and before preparing food is of particular importance in reducing disease transmission, Poor housing also contributes to poor environment health and its consequent input in the health of the Nigerians. Measures for the prevention of disease mostly consist of providing clean water and proper sanitation to populations who do not yet have access to basic services of environmental sanitation; Health education and good food hygiene are equally important (Ekong 2015). Environmental Sanitation is defined as the principles and practice of effecting healthful and hygienic conditions in the environment to promote public health and welfare, improve quality of life and ensure a sustainable environment. Poor sanitary conditions of our environment provide a good breeding ground for disease causing organisms (pathogens). This situation leads to the spread of disease especially in tropical areas like Nigeria. Some of the tropical diseases that have become difficult to control due to filthy conditions of our environment are malaria, cholera, diarrhea, ascariis, lower respiratory infections and unintentional injuries. In some adults and children under the age of five, one third of all disease is caused by the environmental factors such as unsafe water and air pollution, (WHO 2012). In Nigeria, environmental sanitation is an often misconstrued subject matter. It is usually understood as an exercise rather than a practice, Daramola, (2015). Environmental conditions in many areas threaten to reverse the gains made in public health over the last several decades” Every human should have a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature, (Ayres 2000). According to national environmental standards and regulations enforcement agency (2011), Inappropriate and inadequate regulations for the protection of our environment constitute a major challenge to socio-economic development. NESREA has developed the twenty four (24) Environmental Regulations which have been published in the Federal Republic Official Gazette and are now in force. Among The Regulations are: the National Environmental Sanitation and Wastes Control Regulations, 2009. S. I. No. 28. The purpose of this Regulation is to provide the legal framework for the adoption of sustainable and environment friendly practices in environmental sanitation and waste management to minimize pollution. Most public health problems are as a result of environmental sanitation problems such as poor housing condition, inadequate sanitation, insufficient or contaminated water, and smoky cooking fuels (basher 2002).

II. Environmental Health Problems

The conditions of modern way of life have created many problems relating to man's environment. There are three Sub-factors of environment which affect the human health, namely physical factors, biological

factors and social factors. Examples of physical factors are, weather, climate, housing, soil, and food supply, air (clean or polluted) etc. Examples of biological factors were given as germs, insects, rodents, plants, animals and even human beings. We will however focus attention on the following problems areas in our environment.

General sanitation problem: It is expected that when the environmental sanitation standards of a city improves, there will be upliftment in the living condition and health security for the inhabitants. Thus, there will be progress in the quality and visual of the environment at large thereby making it habitable (Owoeye, 2013). According to Ibadan Study Series (1983), Sanitation problems refer to conditions in our environment which affect our health especially those which have to do with dirt and infections. If we look around us in our cities, towns and villages, we see several conditions which encourage dirt and the spread of infections. We seem so helpless about what to do yet this condition do exist simply because of our individual's habits and actions. It may be suggested that most Nigerians are not adequately educated about health to know that our environment is what we make of it, and that government expects us to play our own part in keeping it healthy even while we look up to them to govern for leadership.

Sewage and Refuse Disposal: Inadequate collection and improper disposal of environmental wastes facilitates multiplication of pathogens causing diseases like cholera and diarrhea and provides good breeding site for disease vectors like mosquitoes (malaria), flies (diarrhea) and rodents (Abul 2010). Dumpsites are good sources of environmental sanitation (polluting soil, ground and surface water) due to the fact that they usually contain almost all types of pollutants from the initial collection sources (Kassenga & Mbuligwe 2009). Proper environmental waste disposal is a big problem in urban cities and more so in developing countries. The intensity of the waste management problem increases with increased population due to the increased human activities and the solid wastes to be removed for disposal. Industries and urban management systems generate massive amount of wastes and most often dumping them in open fields posing a serious detrimental effects on the environment (Safiuddin et al 2010). waste disposal and Collection In ideal situation, waste are collected from the source of generation and taken to disposal sites but in Nigeria, waste are dumped off by horst generators before they are collected and disposed off by sanitation agencies. The waste storage and collection receptacles used at generation site are old bucket, basket, cartons, plastic bag/containers tin/can in most cases. Waste are collected and disposed off in open dumps, drainage channels and few designated collection centers, from these orthodox and unorthodox collection centers, waste are packed and transported using tippers vehicles, wheel barrows and few specialized cover topped environmental sanitation vehicles, to crude form of sanitary landfills usually large open pit (mine ponds in some cases) and set ablaze (Mshelia, 2015).

2.1 Attitude towards Environmental Sanitation

According to Adelakun (2003), promotion of environmental sanitation quality depends on how households and community see themselves in relation to their environment. It is the ways people perceive the environment that they will treat it. And it is the way the environment is treated that it will in turn support life. He believes that illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and greediness are some of the major contribution of environmental degradation because each influence peoples behaviour and attitudes towards the environment. A community that is ignorant of their action on the environment will likely have wrong perception about the effect of that on their health. A community that understands the link between a healthy environment and good health can save money and avoidable agonies. Noibi (1992) states that environmental deterioration had arisen to a large extent because peoples are not aware of the implications of their actions, He further asserts that a person's level of ignorance of the environment can be said to be positively related to the degree of (his/her) damage to the environment. the way a person perceives the environment reflects his or her previous experience, education, lifestyle and interest. Despite the low level of formal education most especially in the villages, various communities managed the waste generated properly. In the past, people lived in harmony with their environment and they enjoyed good health. There were few medical experts, if any, in many towns and villages. They had dumping sites for refuse far away from the hearts of the village where people live, and they occasionally burnt these sites. Human wastes at the center of the city were regarded as sacrilege. People immediately removed carcasses of animal from the village any time there was one. Trees were planted to provide fresh air and shades for relaxation. Community's sources of water guarded against pollution (Purdom and Anderson, 1983).

Practice of Environmental Sanitation

In the words of Wright (1997) there are various hygiene of the communities, basic knowledge, skills and human behaviors as well as social and cultural factors concerning health, life – styles and environmental awareness. These include:

1. Household cleanliness (Kitchen, bathroom cleanliness, etc)
2. Personal hygiene (washing, dressing, eating etc)

3. Community cleanliness (waste collection, common places, etc)

Strategies to Improve Environmental Sanitation

According to Essien (2002), strategies to improve environmental sanitation the following:

1. Sanitation needs to be addressed as a whole including improvement of facilities, environmental conditions and behavioral change.
2. Sanitation programmes should be demand based and the community should be fully involved in the process. High risk group should be identified for better targeting of funds and efforts.
3. Sanitation should be a component of other health promoting or disease control programmes.
4. Awareness needs to be raised and sanitation set as a priority in national and local government and also in the population at large. Systems have to be sustainable cost sharing and cost recovery need to be addressed carefully.

Environmental Factors

The key to human health lies largely in his environment. In fact, much of human illness can be traced to adverse environmental factors such as water, soil and air pollution, poor housing conditions, presence of animal reservoir and insect vectors of diseases which pose threats to human health. Often, man is responsible for the pollution of his Environment through urbanization, industrialization and other human activities. According to the National Sanitation Foundation of USA, the word sanitation is defined as a way of life that is expressed in the clean home, farm, business, neighborhoods and community. Park (2011). In developing countries, the main diseases of the environment are diarrheal disease, lower respiratory infections, unintentional injuries, and malaria. In children under the age of five, one third of all disease is caused by the environmental factors such as unsafe water and air pollution. WHO (2010).

Environmental Sanitation Hazards

According to WHO (1971), the term solid waste refers to refuse from human habitation accept sewage primarily ashes, rubbish and garbage. Refuse also accumulates from industrial establishments. Ashes are now of minor importance in household wastes of many cities due to use of oil gas from the heating of dwelling Ogundele (1985). Garbage is the refuse resulting from the preparation of cooking and serving of food. Rubbish includes household and business refuse not classified as garbage or ashes (rags, paper, wood, glass metals and plastics). Tawfiq Ladan (1999) noted that garbage can be disposed by burying it at designated locations on the site or removing it from the site. Open dumping of garbage onsite should be avoided if garbage has to be dumped; it should be dumped far from the displaced people. The ashes should be covered with a layer of soil after each burning. The safe disposal of all medical waste requires particular attention. Needless and scalpels are especially dangerous. Medical waste must be lightly controlled. It should be collected transported, and disposed of separately. Medical waste should always be turned without delay. This should be done in an incinerator to ensure a hot complete burning. Designated areas where medical garbage and/or ashes to bury should be located far from dwellings and fenced to restrict access.

III. Summary

In this chapter, the related literatures to The Factors That Influence the Environmental Sanitation on People's Health in Nigeria were reviewed. Environmental Sanitation involves the control of adequate cleanness of environment, sewage (human waste) and refuse disposal; protection of food we eat, housing and the control of insects rodents and pollution. These control functions constitute a major aspect of the environmental sanitation programme, the responsibility for such controls rest with each member of every household nationwide.

IV. Conclusion

Although many countries face major challenges in maintaining the gains made in reducing mortality or in achieving further reductions among the individuals, current knowledge provides a good basis for the design and implementation of effective interventions. Given that a number of behavioral factors have a very significant influence on health and longevity, public health authorities have the responsibilities of promoting those behaviour that are most likely to enhance the chances of households for a long and healthy life. The means to do so exist, but the will to intervene must be strengthened.

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