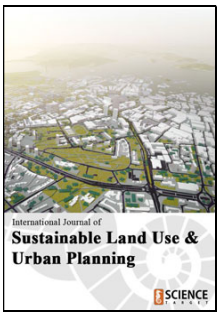
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Examining the Lagos Green Initiative: A Case Study of Kosofe Local Government

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Abstract. Environmental sustainability is a global agenda that aligns with Millennium Development Goal seven. In line with this global agenda, Nigeria scaled up her priorities to ensure meeting this goal by putting in place useful machinery. The creation of parks and the greening of Lagos was one of such actions. This study examines the government's initiative for and the citizenry's attitude towards environmental sustainability.

The study utilized a qualitative method to obtain information from key informants, opinion leaders, and program coordinators who were identified; while a cross-sectional descriptive survey was utilized to obtain quantitative data through the distribution of questionnaires among residents of Kosofe Local Government of Lagos after cluster sampling. Computed coded data was analyzed into frequencies and descriptive statistics using SPSS version 16.

The findings showed the mean age of the respondents was ± 30. A key informant interview revealed a commitment to sustaining the initiative, and community involvement was a key to sustenance. Data from respondents revealed that 60% of the community members support the green initiative, while 70% of respondents identified willingness to contribute to the green Lagos initiative. Overall, respondents felt the initiative had a positive effect on their health. Therefore, this initiative is worthwhile and should be replicated elsewhere. There is a need for focused strategies to harness full community involvement in order to meet the vision of the initiative.

Keywords. *Lagos, greening, Lagos government, Nigeria, mega cities*

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Introduction

Man depends on the environment for survival, and the environment also depends on man for sustenance. The relationship between man and his environment is the determinant of health. As a result of man's continuous actions and activities, the environment has prospered and it has also been degraded. The degradation of the environment has led to climate change, ozone depletion, global warming, and many other drastic changes. All the effects of environmental degradation listed threaten the health of community members by causing air pollution, extreme heat, infectious diseases, drought, flooding, and extreme weather.

The environmental sustainability of MDG 7 shows the importance of the environment to man. Following the footsteps of the Millennium Development Goals, the African Union came up with the Great Green Wall of the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative, also known as the Great Green Wall. The Great Green Wall is a planned project to plant a wall of trees across Africa at the southern edge of the Sahara desert as a means to prevent desertification (FAO, 2012). Many developed countries such as Johannesburg and Rio de Janeiro and developing countries are also adopting the Green Initiative as a means to sustain their environment. However, Adeagbo, (2013) noted that the situation in Nigeria with respect to the problems addressed by the Millennium Development Goal 7 is terrible. It was reported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) that the country's natural resources, some of which make up the country's

national assets, are seriously jeopardized (UNDP, 2012).

The Nigerian government was, until recently, unobservant of the weight of the issue and needed to attend to the challenges objectively.

Sustainability initiates and maintains the conditions in which humans and nature can co-exist in productive harmony and also fulfil the social and economic development requirements of present and future generations (USEPA, 2014).

In line with global thinking on making life better by attempting to achieve the goals and targets of goal 7, the Lagos State Government Ministry of the Environment, which is the body in charge of managing all that concerns the environment of Lagos State, adopted the Green Initiative by creating an agency, Lagos State Parks and Gardens Agency (LASPARK), which has programs that support the initiative in order to sustain the environment. Programs include the climate change summit, school advocacy program, world environment day, walk for nature, and the tree planting program.

Since a thorough enough impact evaluation has not been done, especially regarding the community's views on the program, this study was carried out to evaluate the efforts made by the ministry of environment towards sustaining the environment and how these efforts impact the perception of health of Lagosians. Hopefully the findings will inform the state on areas for improvement so it can move closer to achieving its mission of fostering a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for the wellbeing of the citizenry through the application of best practices in environmental management.

Theoretical Underpinning of the Study

This study was based on the Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) which proposes that dependence and collaboration are to be seen as key characteristics of member firms in a supply chain, which strives to increase their performance gains (Pfeffer and Salancik's, 1978 (cited in Hillman et al, 2009). One of its assumptions is that the environment is needed for organizations to survive since it holds both scarce and valued resources. In this study, the people are the valued resources (primary beneficiaries) who in turn use the raw resources, such as parks, either directly or indirectly and can pose a threat to the survival of the "green" initiative. If the people do not buy in to such a project, ongoing efforts will be seriously jeopardized. On the other hand, if the community does buy in, the project may be better sustained. Therefore, it is necessary to obtain pertinent information not just from the organization's point of view but also from the users, which may help drive the efforts and clear all doubts regarding the continuity of the project. Additionally, better communication will be built, which will build trust and further enhance success.

Material and Methods

The descriptive cross-sectional survey and qualitative data collection took place at Kosofe Local Government area, Ministry of Health, and LASPARK in Lagos state. Lagos State is an administrative division of Nigeria located in the southwestern part of the country with a population of 21 million, according to the Lagos State government, and an area of 1,342 sq. miles (3,475 km2).

Kosofe is one of the 20 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Lagos state. It was created on the 27th of November 1980. Kosofe is located at the northern part of Lagos state and is surrounded by three local governments – Ikeja, Ikorodu, and Shomolu. It has a population of 934,614 (Census, 2006).

Due to its location, this area has been prone to dumping of refuse, abuse, and misuse. It is now the site of one of the major government interventions in providing a green environment to improve environment aesthetics of the mega city.

The study population consisted of shop owners, motor park residents, and customers who were available at the time of data collection. The cluster sampling technique was employed in selecting clusters of shopping complexes and motor parks.

To obtain a small representative sample for the study, the Yao Yamane Formula was applied. Thereafter, attrition was calculated. Following computation, the sample size was 444. A random sampling technique was utilized to select respondents in the shopping complexes and motor parks in the area.

Data was collected using a semi–structured close ended questionnaire. The content of the questionnaire was constructed and modified to ensure validity. The instrument also went through measures of internal consistency with the use of Cronbach alpha coefficient analysis to confirm its reliability. In this study, the alpha Cronbach coefficients were 0.531, 0.464, and 0.708 for knowledge, perceived benefits, and attitude of respondents.

The data collected was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 16 and analyzed into descriptive statistics. Qualitative data from focused interviews was recorded and thereafter thematically analyzed.

Results

Table 1 shows the demographic distribution of respondents. The majority, making up 286 (64.4%) of respondents, were male, and the rest 158 (35.6%) were females. One hundred and eighty-five respondents were between the ages of 36 – 45 years (41.7%), 73 were between 46 years and above (16.4%). Two hundred and thirty-seven (53.4%) had obtained tertiary certificates, while 125 (28.0%) had secondary education. Furthermore, 182 (42%) were business-oriented, 68 (15.3) were corporately employed, 75 (16%) were civil servants, and 68 (15.3) were traders, while 51 (11.4%) were artisans.

Table 2 represents the knowledge and awareness concerning the green initiative. Three hundred and eighty-six had never heard about greening the environment, 214 (48.5%) thought it meant planting trees, while 185 (41.4) thought it meant making the atmosphere green. Others (45; 10.1%) felt it was about painting the road green. Three hundred and eighty-one (85.8%) were aware of the environmental problems. Among those noted were improper waste dumping, 211 (47.5%); air pollution, 180 (40.5%); and dirty roads, 53 (12.0%).

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of respondents

	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-25	81	18.2
	26-35	105	23.7
	36-45	185	41.7
	46-Above	73	16.4
Gender	Male	286	64.4
	Female	158	35.6
Level of education	No formal education	2	0.5
	Primary education	78	17.6
	Secondary education	125	28.0
	Tertiary education	237	53.4
	Others (dropouts)	2	0.5
Occupation	Trader	68	15.3
	Artisan	51	11.4
	Business	182	42.0
	Corporately employed	68	15.3
	Civil servant	75	16.0

Table 2

Knowledge and awareness concerning the green initiative

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Knowledge about green initiative	Yes	386	87
	No	58	13
Meaning of greening the environment	Planting trees	214	48.5
	Making the atmosphere green	185	41.4
	Planting the road green	45	10.1
Awareness on environmental challenges	Improper waste dumping	211	47.5
	Air pollution	180	40.5
	Dirty roads	53	12.0
Knowledge on the green program	Yes	375	84.5
	No	69	15.5
Awareness of the existence of LASPARK	Yes	230	51.8
	No	214	48.2

Table 3

Perceived benefits of the greening initiative

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Area cooler than before the parks were created	Strongly agree	170	38.3
	Agree	101	22.7
	Disagree	100	22.5
	Strongly disagree	73	16.5
Parks have made community feel safer	Strongly agree	120	27
	Agree	182	41
	Disagree	100	22.5
	Strongly disagree	42	9.5
Improper waste dumping reduced	Strongly agree	195	43.9
	Agree	183	41.3
	Disagree	28	6.3
	Strongly disagree	38	8.5
Reduction of flooding	Strongly agree	172	38.7
	Agree	209	47.1
	Disagree	50	11.3
	Strongly disagree	13	2.9
Reduction of air pollution	Strongly agree	232	52.3
	Agree	55	12.4
	Disagree	120	27.0
	Strongly disagree	37	8.3
Improvement in the weather	Strongly agree	163	36.7
	Agree	188	42.3
	Disagree	65	14.7
	Strongly disagree	28	6.3

Three hundred and seventy-five (84.5%) were aware of a greening program, and 264 (59.5%) knew which agency was designated for such a task.

Table 3 shows the perceived benefits of the greening initiative. One hundred and seventy (38.3%) agreed that the air was cooler following the initiative, while 73 (16.5%) did not agree. Also, 182 respondents (41%) agreed that the parks have made the community feel safer, while 42 (9.5%) people strongly disagreed that the parks made the community feel safer. Furthermore, 195 (43.9%) strongly agreed that the issue of improper waste dumping had been reduced in their community, while 38 (6.3%) disagreed that the issue of improper waste dumping had been reduced in the community. Two hundred and nine (47.1%) agreed that there had been less flooding, while 13 (2.9%) strongly disagreed. Finally, 232 (52.3%) people strongly agreed that air pollution had been reduced in the Kosofe community, while 37 (8.3%) strongly disagreed.

Table 4 shows the attitude of respondents towards the greening initiative. Three hundred and four (68.5%) felt the parks were an important element, 338 (76.1%) indicated support for the creation of parks, 375 (84.5) supported continuity, 333 (75%) felt the need to contribute to the vision through planting trees, 253 (57%) properly disposing of refuse, and 186 (41.9%) supported cutting trees, 5 (1.1%). When asked if the parks were being utilized, 308 (69.4%) said they made use of them, while 136 (30.6%) did not.

Further findings revealed that both the Ministry of Environment and the lead green agency, LASPARK are partners in a bid to recreate the Lagos environment and restore its past glory. They have been doing this through various avenues such as recycling, greening, sewage treatment, tree planting, and landscaping. One major means of sustaining programs has been through policy-program integration, inclusion of vision into school curricula, public awareness campaigns, and educating artisans on citizens' responsibilities. Major challenges still faced are low compliance of industries on waste management, land reclamation, abuse of natural wetlands, vandalism of infrastructure, capital, ease of obtaining available lands, and the increasing need for training to confront emerging environmental issues.

Table 4

Attitude of respondents towards the government's greening program

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The parks are an important part of your community	Yes	304	68.5
	No	140	31.5
Do you support the creation of parks in your community?	Yes	338	76.1
	No	106	23.9
Should the government continue the Greening program?	Yes	375	84.5
	No	69	15.5
There is the need to contribute to the Green Initiative program	Yes	333	75
	No	111	25
How can you contribute to the Green Initiative program?	Planting a tree in your own environment	253	57
	Cutting down trees		
	Properly disposing of my refuse	5	1.1
		186	41.9
Do you make use of parks in your community?	Yes	308	69.4
	No	136	30.6

Discussion and Conclusion

Demographic data revealed that the majority had either obtained a tertiary or secondary education. This shows that the level of literacy is high in this population, which may have accounted for respondents' knowledge on greening and awareness of the existence of the state's program. There was also a wide variation of occupations, from white-collar jobs to manual labor. This distribution of varied occupations may serve as an indicator for occupation-specific training needs on greening contribution. It was also clear from the findings that community members are aware of services provided to them by the government on greening and are willing to contribute to the success of the initiative.

Findings that revealed benefits such as cooler air, improved safety, and improved climatic conditions all agree with the purpose of a green initiative.

Overall, the respondents demonstrated a highly positive attitude towards the green initiative and were ready to play their role, including making use of the available parks to further strengthen their support.

A report from the Lagos State Parks and Gardens agency (LASPARK) stated that the Green Initiative was implemented in Lagos State in order to restore the state to its past glory as a beautiful state and to tackle environmental issues.

From these results, it can be concluded that the Green Initiative has solved the improper waste disposal issue, created better drainage systems, reduced air pollution in the Kosofe community, and indeed enhanced the general wellbeing.

LASPARK and the Ministry of Environment have also made great strides and are committed to sustaining this initiative by passing laws ensuring that:

- Thirty percent (30%) of all buildings are green, i.e. decorated with plants
- Tenement's are beautified
- Those desiring to fell trees seek permission with the promise of planting five in its place

The Lagos state Green Initiative is an effective program in Lagos state. It is people-oriented and should be encouraged and accepted by everyone. Recent reports from Lagos state hold more promise of the sustainability of this initiative as the current government has called for public-private partnerships to build parks and gardens (Asomba, 2015). In addition, there is still a need to redesign the program to make it more community-based so people are involved in its sustenance.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby provided:

- Further research should be done on the Green Initiative in other local governments.
- A policy effectiveness assessment should be carried out concerning environmental sustainability.
- Frequent follow-up should be carried out in the community to ensure the sustenance of the Green Initiative, and the reports should be documented.
- The media should help create awareness on the importance of sustaining the environment.

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