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Environmental and Socioeconomic Determinants of Health in Nigeria: A Community Perspective

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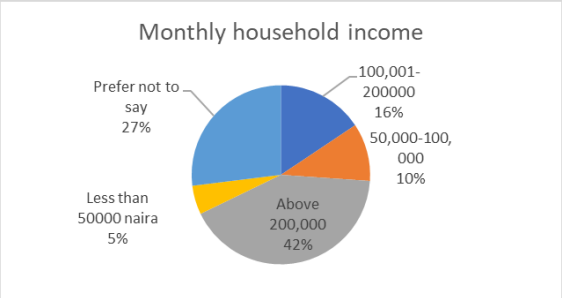
Abstract- ***Health in Nigeria is closely tied to the environment and people's access to resources. I spoke with 115 residents across urban, semi-urban, and rural areas to understand how pollution and poverty affect their daily lives. The survey revealed that air and noise pollution are common and affect both physical and mental health, with poorer communities feeling the effects the most. While many felt the government isn't doing enough, there was strong support for local and youth-led initiatives. These issues reflect broader global patterns highlighted by the WHO and UN, showing that environmental health challenges are both local and worldwide.***

I. INTRODUCTION

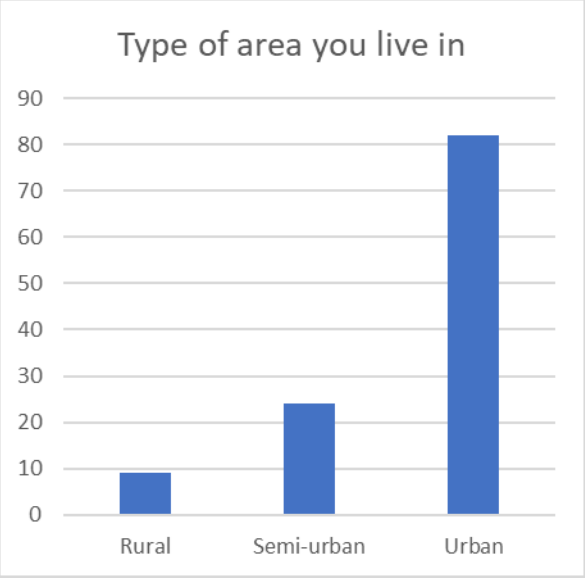
Growing up in Nigeria, I've noticed how the place you live and the resources you have shape your health. In busy urban areas, pollution—both in the air and noise—feels unavoidable. People in lower-income neighborhoods often live close to industrial zones or areas where trash is burned regularly, and that can't be healthy. I wanted to understand how these environmental and social factors really affect people, so I decided to talk directly with residents.

Globally, the UN and WHO have highlighted that air pollution contributes to millions of premature deaths every year, and low-income communities are hit hardest. I was curious to see how this played out in Nigerian communities.

II. METHODOLOGY



I surveyed 115 people, with almost an even split between men and women. Most were aged 30–39, and the majority lived in urban areas. About 72% were employed, but income levels varied widely—from under ₦50,000 to above ₦200,000 per month. I asked about their exposure to air and noise pollution, any health effects they experienced, and their opinions on government action and community solutions. The goal was to capture both the numbers and the stories behind them.



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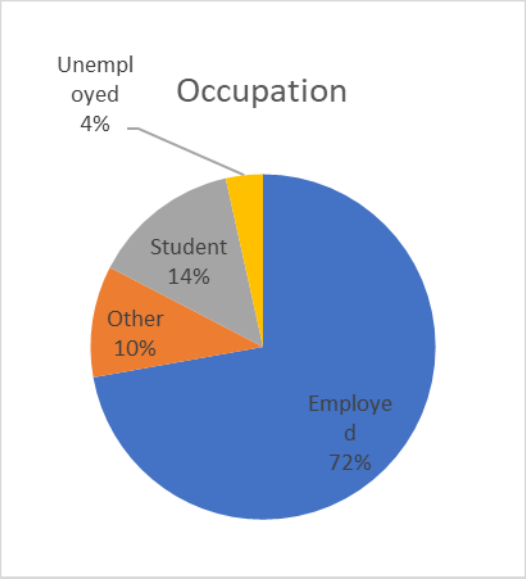
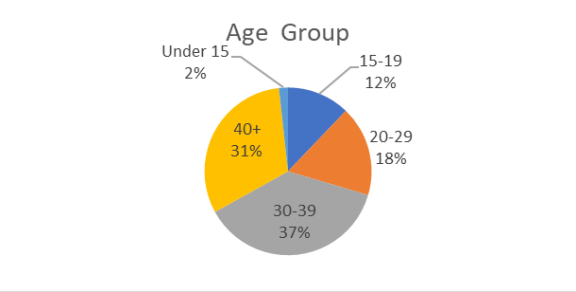
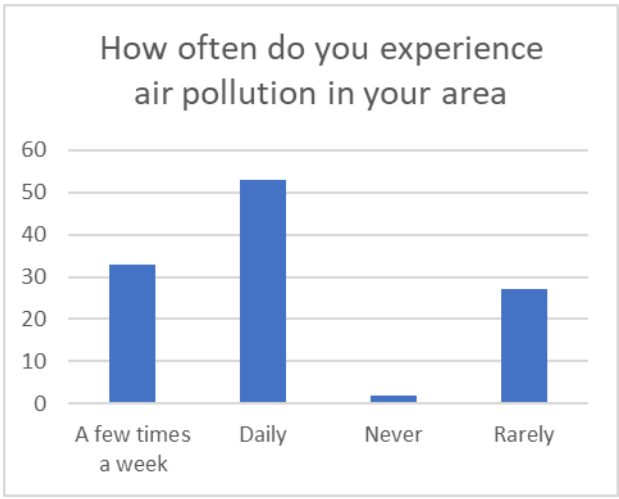




III. FINDINGS

Air Pollution:

Air pollution is everywhere. Nearly half of the respondents said they experience it every day, from car exhaust, trash burning, industrial smoke, or even cooking with firewood. Half of the people reported symptoms like coughing, shortness of breath, headaches, or irritated eyes—and many had more than one symptom at a time.



It's striking when you compare this to WHO standards. Safe air levels are supposed to be very low, but many cities in Nigeria regularly exceed them by a large margin. Globally, cities in India, China, and Brazil face similar challenges, showing that this isn't just a local issue—it's part of a worldwide problem.

IV. NOISE POLLUTION

Noise is another major problem. About half of the people rated it as extremely stressful. Poor sleep, difficulty concentrating, and stress-related headaches were common. Around one in five people had all three symptoms. Hearing their stories, it was clear that noise affects not just rest but work, school, and mental health. WHO research also shows that chronic noise exposure is linked to serious health issues worldwide.

V. SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS

Many participants (83%) said that poorer communities are hit the hardest by pollution. Families living near industrial zones, unable to afford proper waste disposal, or lacking access to healthcare are especially vulnerable. This mirrors what the UN reports globally: low-income populations bear the brunt of environmental hazards, and it's often a cycle that's hard to break.

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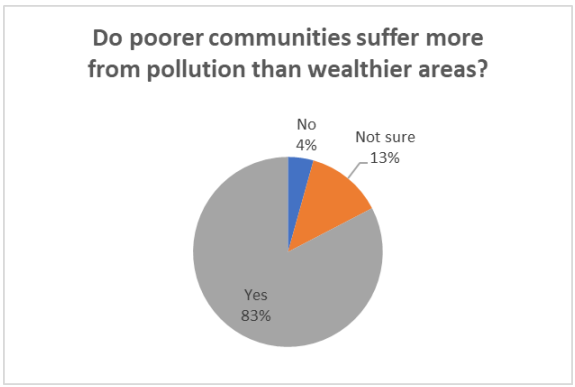
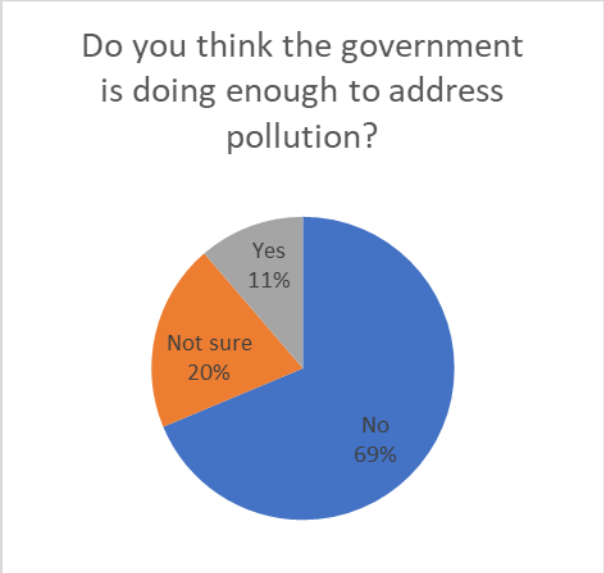
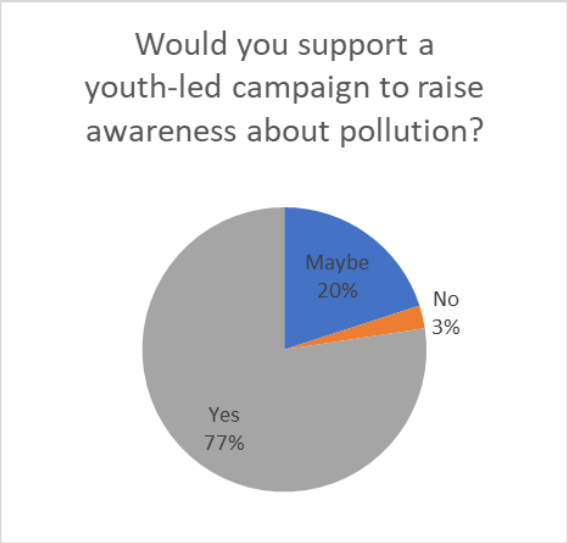


VI. COMMUNITY VIEWS AND SOLUTIONS

Many participants were frustrated with government efforts—69% felt not enough was being done. But there was also hope. Around 77% supported youth-led campaigns and local initiatives like planting trees, banning open trash burning, and improving waste management. These ideas match the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). Listening to the community, I could see that local action and youth involvement could really make a difference.





VII. DISCUSSION

From talking to residents, it became clear that health isn't just about hospitals or medicine—it's about where you live and what's in your environment. Daily exposure to pollution, combined with limited resources, takes a real toll on people's physical and mental well-being. Globally, air pollution alone is responsible for millions of premature deaths, emphasizing that the stakes are high.

What impressed me most was the willingness of the community to act. People want change. They have ideas and energy to improve their neighborhoods if given the tools and support. This shows that while policies and infrastructure matter, local engagement is just as critical.

CONCLUSION

Environmental health in Nigeria is a shared responsibility. Poverty makes pollution worse, but communities themselves are a powerful source of solutions. From what I observed, combining government action, education, infrastructure improvements, and grassroots initiatives—especially youth-led ones—could make a real difference.

Globally, these issues are mirrored in other countries facing urban pollution, showing that what happens in Nigeria is part of a larger challenge. By listening to communities, acting locally, and keeping global

standards in mind, we can work toward safer, healthier, and more equitable environments—for Nigeria and the world.

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