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Anthropological and Legal Dimensions to Mitigating Land Degradation in the Peri-Urban Interface of Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract

Land degradation poses a significant threat to the environment and livelihoods in peri-urban interfaces, where urban and rural landscapes converge. In Ibadan, Nigeria, this phenomenon is particularly pronounced, leading to the loss of arable land, biodiversity, and ecosystem services. This study utilized a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively explore the anthropology and legal dimensions in mitigating land degradation in the peri-urban interface of the study area. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data provided a more holistic understanding of the topic. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants. Through a combination of ethnographic research, interviews, and field observations, the study uncovers local beliefs, social structures, and customary land management practices that impact land degradation processes. Bottom-up approach through community participation and engagement are essential in implementing effective mitigation measures, as local knowledge and traditions are often crucial in restoring degraded lands. The findings established that, flooding, incessant sand lifting, uncontrolled developments, and

indiscriminate waste disposal remains reoccurring environmental and health challenges in the studied peri-urban communities. By utilizing anthropological understandings, the research explores the intricate interplay between human activities, cultural practices, and legal perspectives in addressing environmental consequences in this region. The effectiveness of existing legal frameworks in promoting land stewardship and conservation efforts among communities in the peri-urban interface was examined. This study highlights the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in addressing land degradation, emphasizing the collaboration between anthropologists, legal practitioners, environmental scientists, policymakers, and local communities. The study contributes to the development of integrated strategies for mitigating land degradation and promoting sustainable solutions that not only conserve the environment but also support the well-being and resilience of peri-urban communities in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Keywords: Cultural Practices, Environmental Restoration, Legal Pluralism, and Peri-Urbanization

Introduction

Mitigating land degradation in the peri-urban interface, poses a significant challenge that requires a multifaceted approach integrating anthropological and legal dimensions. (Imbrenda, 2021). The peri-urban interface, where urban and rural areas intersect, is particularly vulnerable to land degradation due to various factors such as population growth, rapid urbanization, unsustainable land use practices, resulting in soil degradation, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and inadequate regulatory frameworks that influence human interactions with the environment. (Seifollahi-Aghmiuni, 2022), (Coluzzi, 2022).

The phenomenon, when viewed from an anthropological perspective, understanding the cultural beliefs, practices, and land tenure systems of the local communities in the peri-urban interface is crucial for effective land degradation mitigation strategies. (Ng'ombe, 2014). Anthropological studies can provide valuable insights into how traditional knowledge and practices can be leveraged to promote sustainable land management practices. (Rajendran, 2024). By involving local communities in the decision-making process and incorporating their traditional knowledge, interventions are more likely to be culturally acceptable and sustainable in the long term. (Dadashpoor, 2019).

Furthermore, the dynamics of land ownership, access, and use are central to

addressing land degradation in peri-urban interfaces. Anthropological studies reveal power dynamics within communities, as well as conflicts over land rights and resource allocation. (Adam, 2020). By understanding these social structures, interventions from policymakers and planners can be tailored to address specific challenges and leverage existing social structures that take into account, the needs, and perspectives of all stakeholders to promote sustainable land management.

Moreover, the impact of globalization and modernization on land use practices in peri-urban areas cannot be overlooked. (Bhanye, 2024). Rapid urbanization and the expansion of commercial agriculture often result in the intensification of land degradation processes. This research work would shed light on how global economic forces intersect with local practices, leading to unsustainable land management practices.

On the legal front, a review of existing land-use laws, regulations, and policies in Nigeria is essential to identify gaps and inconsistencies that may hinder effective land degradation mitigation efforts in the peri-urban interface of Ibadan. The decision in Nigerian Supreme Court ruling in (Jalla vs. Shell International Trading and Shipping Company , 1994) confirms that legal frameworks play a critical role in defining land rights, land use planning, and enforcement mechanisms, all of which are essential for sustainable land management. (Bako, 2023).

Legal reforms are necessary to strengthen land tenure security, clarify land use rights, and establish mechanisms for addressing land conflicts and enforcing land-use regulations. Strengthening the capacity of local institutions responsible for land management and enforcement is also crucial to ensure effective implementation of legal frameworks. (Akinmoladun, 2007).

Moreover, legal mechanisms can be used to incentivize sustainable land management practices and penalize land degradation activities. By integrating environmental considerations into land-use planning and development regulations, legal frameworks can promote sustainable land use practices and discourage activities that contribute to land degradation. (Harari, 2023).

In the context of Ibadan, Nigeria, a city experiencing rapid urban growth, anthropological dimensions are essential for designing interventions that promote sustainable land management in the peri-urban interface. (Olayide, 2021). By working closely with local communities, this research can facilitate participatory approaches to land use planning, incorporating traditional knowledge systems and ensuring community ownership of conservation initiatives.

Addressing land degradation in the peri-urban interface of Ibadan, Nigeria, requires a multifaceted approach that considers the complex anthropological dimensions at play. By integrating local knowledge, social dynamics, and global influences into land management strategies, policymakers can create sustainable solutions that support both environmental conservation and community well-being. (Budnukaeku, 2021).

Collaboration between anthropologists, legal experts, policymakers, and local communities is essential to develop holistic and context-specific solutions to mitigate land degradation in the peri-urban interface of Ibadan, Nigeria. By integrating anthropological insights into the cultural dynamics of land management and legal reforms to strengthen land governance systems, sustainable land management practices can be promoted to ensure the long-term environmental health and socio-economic wellbeing of the peri-urban communities. (Biot, 1995).

Literature Review

Land degradation, a global environmental issue, is particularly significant in peri-urban interfaces where the rapid expansion of urban areas encroaches upon agricultural land. (Mahata, 2021). This phenomenon poses serious challenges to sustainable land management and food security. It is a pressing issue that intersects both anthropological and legal dimensions. (World Health Organization, 2020). In exploring the various approaches and challenges to address land degradation in peri-urban areas, a focus on how anthropological insights and legal frameworks can contribute to effective mitigation strategies is desirable. (Adenle, 2022).

Anthropological research plays a critical role in understanding the cultural, social, and economic dynamics that contribute to land degradation in peri-urban settlements. (Macaulay, 2014). By exploring local knowledge systems, traditional practices, and community perceptions, anthropologists can provide insights into the underlying causes of land degradation and identify culturally appropriate solutions. (Mani, 2021). In a study on a peri-urban settlement in India, it was highlighted how traditional farming practices and land use patterns had been disrupted by urban expansion, leading to increased soil erosion and degradation. (Singh, 2020). By engaging with community members and incorporating indigenous knowledge systems, the researchers were able to develop sustainable land management practices that were socially and culturally acceptable. (Lopez, 2024).

In a similar study on peri-urban settlements in Africa, the importance of community participation and empowerment in addressing land degradation were emphasized. (van Haren, 2019). By involving local residents in decision-making processes and integrating their perspectives into land management strategies, the researchers were able to foster sustainable practices that aligned with local values and traditions. (Santini, 2022). (Abdulai, 2021).

Legal frameworks at the national and international levels play a crucial role in guiding land use planning and management in peri-urban areas. By establishing regulations, incentives, and enforcement mechanisms, legal frameworks can help prevent land degradation and promote sustainable development in peri-urban settlements. (Krawchenko, 2023).

The need for strong legal frameworks governing land use in peri-urban areas across different countries were emphasized, highlighting the diversity of approaches and the need for greater harmonization. (Babalola, 2024). Countries with strong legal protections for land rights and environmental conservation tended to have lower rates of land degradation in peri-urban settlements. (Telaky, 2018).

Furthermore, the role of property rights and land tenure systems in mitigating land degradation in peri-urban areas must be explored. (Holden, 2014). The secure land tenure rights could incentivize sustainable land management practices and prevent encroachment by developers, thereby reducing land degradation and promoting environmental conservation. (Kuusaana, 2022).

Despite the potential contributions of anthropological insights and legal frameworks, mitigating land degradation in peri-urban settlements comes with several challenges. Limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, competing land uses, and rapid urbanization pose significant obstacles to sustainable land management in peri-urban areas. (Adewoyin, 2024). Also lack of coordination between different stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities, and private developers, is a major barrier to effective land degradation mitigation in peri-urban settlements. (Karki, 2023).

The need for multi-stakeholder collaboration and participatory decision-making processes is desirable to address these challenges. The importance of integrating scientific knowledge with local perspectives in developing sustainable land management strategies requires combining anthropological insights, legal frameworks, and scientific research, policymakers and practitioners who can design holistic approaches that address the complex drivers of land degradation in peri-urban settlements. (Liu, 2023).

Traditional beliefs, land tenure systems, and cultural practices shape the way individuals interact with their environment. (Zhang, 2023). In (Okeke vs, State of Nigeria, 2022), the Supreme Court recognizes the cultural norms and beliefs influence on land management decisions in Nigeria. The court held that the government decision to allow logging in the sacred forest was unlawful and orders immediate cessation of logging activities. The rationale behind the court pronouncement was to prevent activities leading to unsustainable practices such as deforestation and overgrazing. Understanding these socio-cultural dynamics is essential for developing context-specific interventions that promote sustainable land management practices. (Bwalya, 2023).

Community participation is essential for effective land degradation mitigation strategies in peri-urban interfaces. (Stringer, 2007). Anthropological research emphasizes the importance of involving local communities in decision-making processes regarding land use and management. Communities are more likely to adopt

and sustain land conservation practices when they are actively engaged in the planning and implementation of interventions. (Vidoka, 2019). Anthropologists play a key role in facilitating participatory processes that empower communities to take ownership of sustainable land management initiatives.

Indigenous knowledge systems offer valuable insights into sustainable land management practices in peri-urban areas. Innovative strategies employed by local communities to combat land degradation highlighted how indigenous knowledge of soil conservation techniques and crop rotation practices has proven effective in restoring degraded lands. (Akalibey, 2024). By integrating indigenous knowledge systems with modern scientific approaches, anthropologists can help develop holistic land management solutions that are both culturally appropriate and ecologically sustainable. (Endaylalu, 2024).

Addressing land degradation in peri-urban settlements requires a multidimensional approach that combines anthropological insights with robust legal frameworks. By understanding the cultural, social, and economic dynamics of peri-urban areas and implementing regulations that promote sustainable land management practices, policymakers and practitioners can mitigate land degradation and ensure the long-term environmental sustainability of these rapidly urbanizing regions. Collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and local communities is essential for developing effective strategies that balance environmental conservation with social and economic development in peri-urban settlements. (Spyra, 2021).

Methodology

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively explore the anthropological and legal dimensions in mitigating land degradation in the peri-urban interface of the study area. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data provided a more holistic understanding of the topic.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who have knowledge and experience related to land degradation in the study area. The sample size, involving 346 respondents was administered on the residents of the selected settlement clusters – Eleyele, Adetokun, Alafara and Ologuneru, all within the peri-urban interfaces of Ibadan North West and Ido local government areas, respectively. The survey instrument revealed a 94% return rate representing 325 returned and 21 unreturned. This sample size was determined based on the saturation of data, aiming for a diverse range of participants including residents, community members, local authorities, researchers, and policymakers.

Qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and researchers' observation to capture the perspectives, beliefs, and practices of the local communities regarding land degradation and mitigation strategies. As earlier

stated, quantitative data – surveys/questionnaire was administered to gather quantitative data on land use patterns, vegetation cover, soil erosion rates, and other relevant metrics.

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights from the qualitative data collected, while statistical analysis techniques, namely regression analysis and geographic information system (GIS) mapping, were utilized to analyze the quantitative data and identify correlations between variables.

Prior informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the study. Respect for cultural norms and practices was prioritized during data collection and interpretation to ensure the ethical conduct of the research. Also engaging with local communities, stakeholders, and relevant organizations was taken as integral aspect to the research process. Their input and involvement helped in co-creating knowledge and solutions that are contextually relevant and sustainable. Collaborating with local anthropologists and researchers enhanced the cultural sensitivity and validity of the study findings.

Integration of Anthropological Approaches, such as cultural ecology, political ecology, and participatory approaches, facilitated a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics influencing land degradation and mitigation practices in the periurban interface. By incorporating emic (insider) perspectives alongside etic (outsider) viewpoints, the research strive to capture the complexity of human-environment interactions in the study area. Time and resource constraints limited the scope of the study and the depth of data collection. The complex and dynamic nature of anthropological research in the field presented challenges in data interpretation and analysis.

Discussion

Basically, the research variables used in determining the drivers and types of land degradation in the study area are those generated from the reconnaissance inspections and participants respondent interviews and interpretation. From the research findings, major land degradation variables within the study area includes, continuous sand lifting activities, indiscriminate refuse disposal, unplanned and uncontrolled developments that affects flow of natural rivers and streams.

Table 4.1 summarizes the different land degradation perceived by residents in the peri-urban communities. In terms of flooding, majority (49.1%) of the respondents were indifferent while 18.2% were rarely affected by flood occurrence in recent years. Furthermore, about 33.0% of the respondents in the study area agreed to being affected by flood; but, on different scale. With this finding, it was established that, flooding remains a reoccurring environmental and health challenge in the peri-urban communities in recent years. It is important to note that some of the factors

contributing to flooding in the study area is associated with the rapid/uncontrolled development activities and the encroachment of setbacks of water-bodies in the community.

Table 4.1: Residents' Perceived Land Degradation in the Study Area

Affected by Flooding in Recent years	Residential communities				Total
	Eleyele	Adetokun	Alafara	Ologuneru	
	Freq. (%)	*Freq. (%)*	*Freq. (%)*	*Freq. (%)*	*Freq. (%)*
Rarely	13 (18.6)	24 (16.2)	19 (22.1)	7 (16.7)	63 (18.2)
Slightly	10 (14.3)	27 (18.2)	16 (18.6)	4 (9.5)	57 (16.5)
Neutral	38 (54.3)	77 (52.0)	30 (34.9)	25 (59.5)	170 (49.1)
Strongly	7 (10.0)	17 (11.5)	17 (19.8)	3 (7.1)	44 (12.7)
Very strongly	2 (2.9)	3 (2.0)	4 (4.7)	3 (7.1)	12 (3.5)
Total	**70 (100.0)**	**148 100.0)**	**86 (100.0)**	**42 (100.0)**	**346 (100.0)**

Source: Authors' Fieldwork 2023

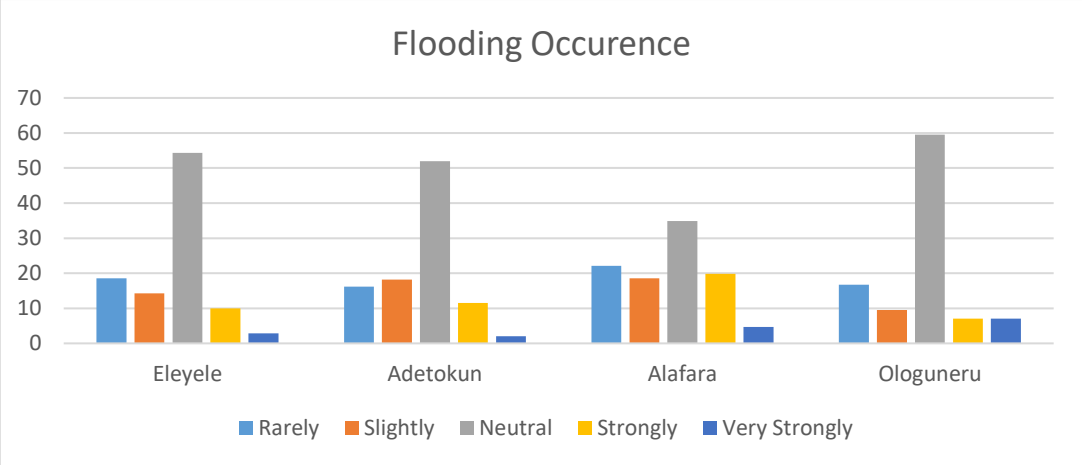


Figure 4.1 Flooding Occurrence in the study areas Source: Fieldwork 2023
Source: Authors' Fieldwork 2023

Table 4.2: Residents' Perceived Land Degradation in the Study Area

Satisfaction with soil/sand lifting activities	Residential communities				Total
	Eleyele	Adetokun	Alafara	Ologuneru	
	Freq. (%)	*Freq. (%)*	*Freq. (%)*	*Freq. (%)*	*Freq. (%)*
Rarely	19 (27.1)	21 (14.2)	21 (24.4)	3 (7.1)	64 (18.5)
Slightly	18 (25.7)	49 933.1)	18 (20.9)	10 (23.8)	95 (27.5)
Neutral	24 (34.3)	46 (31.1)	28 (32.6)	15 (35.7)	113 (32.7)
Strongly	7 (10.0)	19 (12.8)	17 (19.8)	9 (21.4)	52 (15.0)
Very strongly	2 (2.9)	13 (8.8)	2 (2.3)	5 (11.9)	22 (6.4)
Total	**70 (100.0)**	**148(100.0)**	**86 (100.0)**	**42 (100.0)**	**346 (100.0)**

Source: Authors' Fieldwork 2023

In similar manner, majority of the respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (neutral) with the process of soil/sand lifting in the study area. As observed from Table 4.20, 32.7% of the sampled respondents had an indifferent perception regarding the process of soil lifting activity in the study area. On the other hand, 21.4% of the respondents were observed to be satisfied while 27.5% were slightly satisfied. Respondents who were rarely satisfied accounted for 18.5% only. The proportion of respondents who were rarely satisfied was further observed to be higher in Eleyele community (27.1) compared to the other sampled communities of Alafara (24.4%), Adetokun (14.2%) and Ologuneru (7.1%).

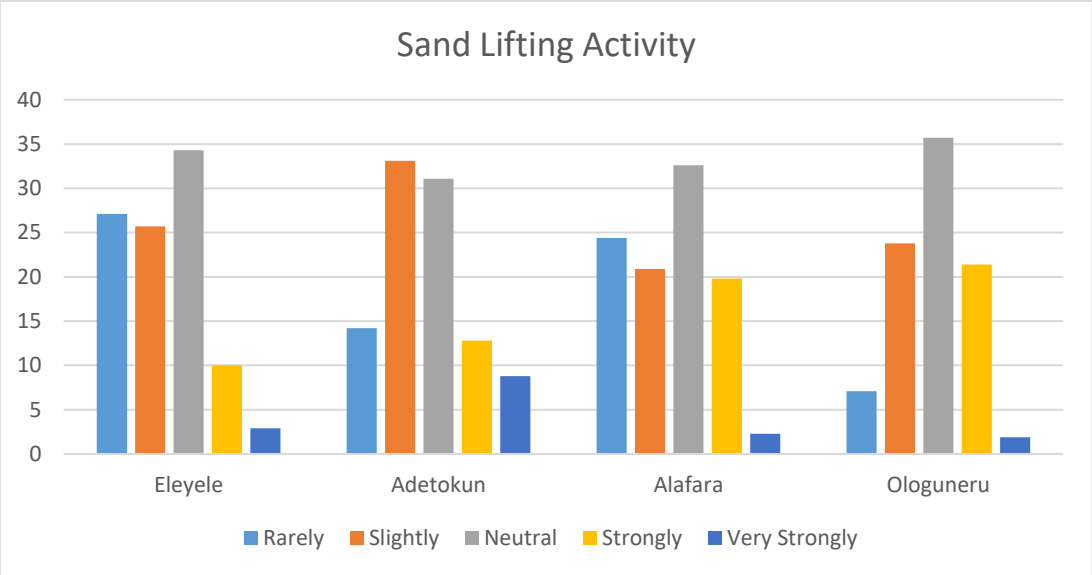


Figure 4.2 Sand Lifting Activities in the Study Area
Source: Fieldwork 2023



Figure 4.3: Sand lifting Activities in the Study Area
Source: Authors' Fieldwork 2023



Figure 4.4: Sand Lifting Activities Degrading the Built-up Upper Houses in the Study Area
Source: Authors' Fieldwork 2023

Another type of land degradation experienced by respondents in the study was associated with the increase in volume of waste generated and the indiscriminate disposal of waste. As observed, 86.1% of the respondents perceived that there was an increase in the volume of waste generated in the study area. However, in terms of waste disposal, less than a quarter (24.0%) of the respondents observed a proper method of disposing waste.

Table 4.3: Residents' Perceived Land Degradation in the Study Area

Increased Waste Production	Residential communities				Total
	Eleyele	Adetokun	Alafara	Ologuneru	
	Freq. (%)	*Freq. (%)*	*Freq. (%)*	*Freq. (%)*	*Freq. (%)*
Rarely	6 (8.6)	25 (16.9)	7 (8.1)	2 (4.8)	40 (11.6)
Slightly	31 (44.3)	52 (35.1)	36 (41.9)	14 (33.3)	133 (38.4)
Neutral	3 (4.3)	3 (2.0)	1 (1.2)	1 (2.4)	8 (2.3)
Strongly	23 (32.9)	60 (40.5)	35 (40.7)	22 (52.4)	140 (40.5)
Very strongly	7 (10.0)	8 (5.4)	7 (8.1)	3 (7.1)	25 (7.2)
Total	**70 (100.0)**	**148 100.0)**	**86 (100.0)**	**42 (100.0)**	**346 (100.0)**

Source: Authors' Fieldwork 2023

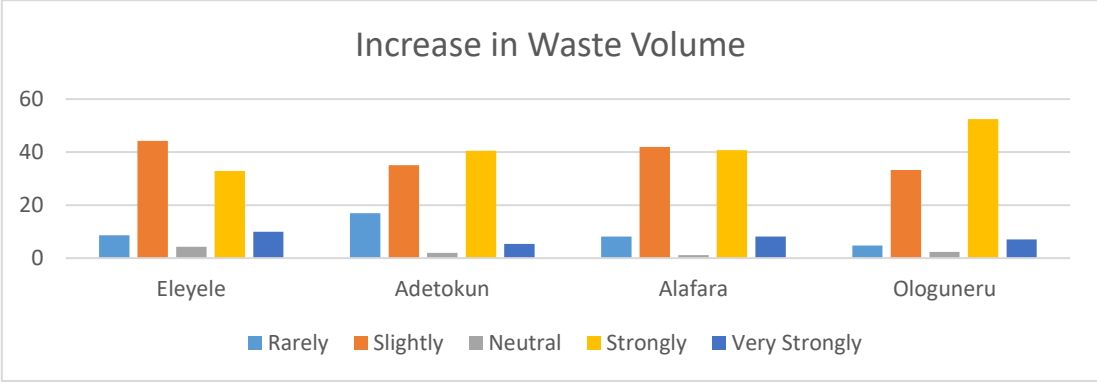


Figure 4.5 Increase in Waste Volume in the Study area
Source: Fieldwork 2023

Closely associated with increase in waste generation by the respondents is the indiscriminate refuse disposal in the study area which is one of the major causes of flooding and as well as reduction in volume of water in the natural streams and rivers in the study area. The below pie chart in figure 4.53 indicates the level of indiscriminate waste disposal from one location to the other. The respondents in agreement to a slightly are well over 50% followed by those in agreement with rarely indiscriminate disposal of waste at over 30% while the least was those that feels very strongly about the issue.

Table 4.4: Residents' Perceived Land Degradation in the Study Area

Indiscriminate Refuse Disposal	**Residential communities**				**Total**
	Eleyele	**Adetokun**	**Alafara**	**Ologuneru**	
	Freq. (%)	*Freq. (%)*	*Freq. (%)*	*Freq. (%)*	*Freq. (%)*
Rarely	17 (24.3)	25 (16.9)	29 (33.7)	12 (28.6)	83 (24.0)
Slightly	20 (28.6)	58 (39.2)	26 (30.2)	22 (52.4)	126 (36.4)
Neutral	12 (17.1)	21 (14.2)	7 (8.1)	2 (4.8)	42 (12.1)
Strongly	19 (27.1)	40 (27.0)	21 (24.4)	6 (14.3)	86 (24.9)
Very strongly	2 (2.9)	4 (2.7)	3 (3.5)	-	9 (2.6)
Total	**70 (100.0)**	**148 100.0)**	**86 (100.0)**	**42 (100.0)**	**346 (100.0)**

Source: Authors' Fieldwork 2023

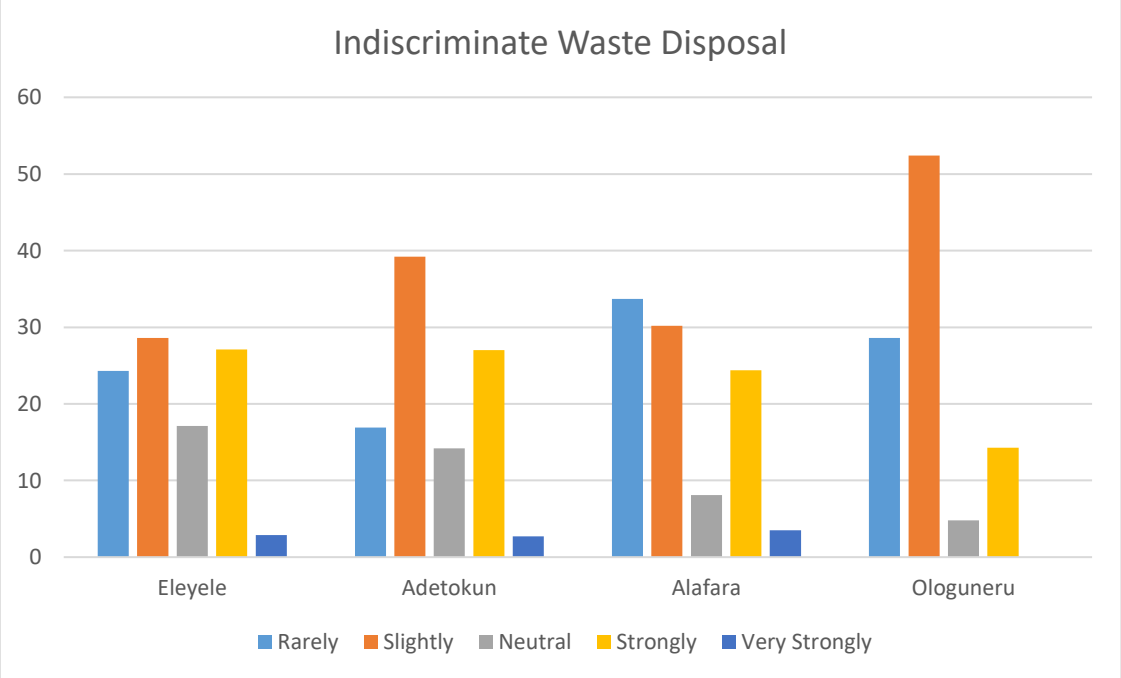


Figure 4.6 Indiscriminate Waste Disposal in the Study Area
Source: Fieldwork 2023



Figure 4.7.Indiscriminate Refuse Dump along Main Ido Road, Ologuneru
Source: Fieldwork 2023

Conclusion

As earlier stated, understanding the anthropological and legal dimensions is crucial in effectively mitigating land degradation in the peri-urban interface. By incorporating the knowledge and practices of local communities, and providing a viable legal framework, a sustainable land management strategies that align with the cultural beliefs and socio-economic realities of the people living in these areas will be achieved. (Griffiths, 2024). Collaboration between anthropologists, policymakers, and local stakeholders is quite essential to ensure that interventions are contextually appropriate and inclusive.

Addressing land degradation at the periurban interface requires a multi-faceted approach that integrates both anthropological and legal dimensions. Legal frameworks play a crucial role in regulating land use and protecting natural resources. By combining these two dimensions, a more holistic approach to mitigating land degradation can be achieved, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the periurban interface in the study area. It is important for stakeholders to work together, incorporating local perspectives and legal mechanisms to create effective policies and initiatives that promote environmental conservation and community well-being in the face of urban expansion and land degradation. (Azadi, 2023).

Anthropological factors such as cultural values, social norms, and economic activities significantly influence land use practices and degradation in the peri-urban interface

while legal frameworks and policies governing land use are often inadequate, inconsistent, or poorly enforced, exacerbating land degradation. As a result, effective mitigation of land degradation requires an approach that addresses the interplay between anthropological and legal factors. (Grinker, 2019).

Community engagement, education, and participation are crucial in developing and implementing sustainable land use practices. Strengthening legal frameworks and policies, ensuring effective enforcement, and promoting collaborative governance can also help mitigate land degradation.

As part of recommendations in this study, there is need to integrate anthropological insights into policy-making and land use planning, develop and implement context-specific legal frameworks and policies. Fostering community engagement and education on sustainable land use practices and promotion of governance and inter-agency coordination is desirable. Lastly, to conduct regular monitoring and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of mitigation strategies. (Ahmad, 2023).

By recognizing the interconnectedness between human behavior, land use practices, and environmental outcomes, we can foster holistic approaches that promote environmental sustainability and community resilience in peri-urban spaces. It is imperative to prioritize community engagement, cultural sensitivity, and participatory approaches in addressing land degradation challenges, ultimately fostering sustainable development and enhancing the well-being of both people and the environment in peri-urban areas of Ibadan, Nigeria.

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