



# Environment and health disparities in urban communities: Focus on Eti Osa, Nigeria



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## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates environment and health differentials in three contiguous communities in the Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria. This paper considers the effects of socio-economic status as a determinant of urban health outcomes. Issues examined include housing and environmental conditions as well as socio-economic characteristics such as age, gender, income and household size. Furthermore, health seeking behaviour was investigated and these include expenditure on health as well as health and nutritional habits. Data collection was by simple random sampling on household heads in the study area which comprised Obalende, Dolphin Estate and Ikoyi – low, medium and high income neighbourhoods respectively. Data analysis was by simple descriptive statistics as well as analysis of variance. The study discovered that household access to safe water ranged from 86% in Dolphin Estate, 71% in Ikoyi to 28% in Obalende hence the perceived high incidence of sanitation ailments there. It was also discovered that there were significant variations in nutritional habits across the three communities. The study concluded by suggesting strategies for addressing identified disparities and these include health advocacy as well as environmental sanitation.

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## Introduction

Literature avers that the quality of the built and natural environment influences the health of neighbourhoods and residents (Diez Roux & Mair, 2010; Evans, 1997; Harper & Lynch, 2007; Hutson & Wilson, 2011; Mijanovich & Dillman, 2001). The social environment has also been found to be associated with neighbourhood and residents health (Barile, 2010; Browning & Cagney, 2003; McNeill, Kreuter, & Subramanian, 2006). These two scenarios are especially true in cities where the health status of individuals can vary widely depending on the neighbourhood, or metropolitan area in which they reside (Fitzpatrick & LaGory, 2000; Lawanson & Fadare, 2013).

Inequalities in health in urban settings reflect, to a great extent, inequities in economic, social and living

conditions (Marmot, 2006, World Health Organization, 2011). According to Pieterse (2010), marked inequalities characterise the contemporary African city. Kessides (2005) described statistically significant gaps between the access of the poor and non-poor to urban infrastructure and social services, with the typical situation in many Nigeria cities showing sharp socio-spatial segregation. The rich reside in picturesque gated communities and Government Reservation Areas, while the poor are confined to the slums and squatter settlements, largely unserved by basic infrastructure and social facilities (Katsina, 2012). Many of these settlements are located contiguously such as Ikeja GRA and Onigbongbo in Lagos, Warri GRA and Okere in Delta, Asokoro and Koroduma Village in Abuja.

Studies on socio-economic status and health in Africa include those of Adedoyin and Watts (1989) who investigated urban health conditions in Ilorin slums; Egunjobi and Olatubara (2002) who studied environmental health conditions in traditional communities in Ibadan; Agbola, Nwokoro, and Kassim (2007) who analysed housing conditions and health status of urban slums in Ibadan; and Zulu et al. (2012) who sought to

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determine the relationships between poverty and health dynamics in Nairobi's slums. These studies have all shown strong evidence of a direct relationship between the human environment and health. However, they have focused mainly on poor neighbourhoods; hence a gap exists on intra-urban differentials in health outcomes. Lawanson and Fadare (2013) studied intra-urban environmental health variations in some communities in Lagos metropolis and focused primarily on the interface between governance structures and health outcomes, hence an investigation of social and health seeking behaviour across residential neighbourhood densities will be a significant contribution to the literature on environmental health dynamics in developing countries. This study will therefore perform a comparative assessment of local socio-environmental conditions in order to determine if marked differences in health behaviour and environmental patterns exist when communities are delineated on socio-economic basis. Since urban communities in Nigeria are mainly segregated on income status basis; it is imperative that the magnitude of health disparity among low, medium and high income neighbourhoods be investigated, in order to determine the effects of these on urban planning and community health management. Studying socio-economic status and health status at a disaggregated neighbourhood level will also enable the development of case-specific solutions for identified challenges because as Haghdooost (2012) opined, differences in the health status of people within different socio-economic groups illustrate the impact of socio-economic status on health.

This paper will therefore begin with an overview of literature relating to socio-environmental disparities and urban health outcomes, and proceed with an em-

pirical investigation of this phenomenon in Eti Osa Local Government Area of Lagos Metropolis.

## The study area

The study is set in Ikoyi/Obalende Local Council Development Area of Eti-Osa local government Area, on the south eastern axis of the Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria. The study area is located on longitude 6°27'N and latitude 3°26'E, with a total land area of 124.10 km<sup>2</sup> and waterbodies making up 145 km<sup>2</sup>, and is about 3 m above sea level. Its boundaries are the Lagos Lagoon to the north, the Three Cowries Creek to the South and the Macgregor Canal to the East (see Fig. 1). Eti Osa has a population of 287,785 people and a population density of 818/km<sup>2</sup> (National Population Commission, 2006). The local government is an admix of residential, commercial and institutional land uses. In fact, the Federal Secretariat was located in Ikoyi before Nigeria's capital was moved to Abuja.

The study area comprises Ikoyi, Dolphin Estate and Obalende Communities respectively (see Fig. 2).

Ikoyi is a high income neighbourhood, developed during the colonial era as a residential community exclusively for the British colonialists and other expatriates. It is touted as the most expensive real estate in Africa and its morphology is changing from that of single family residences on large garden plots to high rise luxury apartment buildings. Dolphin Estate is a medium income residential estate which was constructed on sand-filled land in 1987 as the first set of pre-fabricated buildings in Nigeria. It caters to the middle class in 882 four bedroom duplexes and 576 two and three bedroom flats laid out in a concentric fashion of interconnected avenues. The low income community of Obalende is made of twenty five streets



Fig. 1. Map of Lagos State showing Eti Osa. Lagos Metropolis showing Eti Osa: <http://maps.google.co.uk/maps?q=Lagos,+NIGERIA+MAP&ll=6.518637,3.192902&spn=0.979637,1.229095&hnear=Lagos,+Nigeria&gl=uk&t=m&z=10>. Source: Google Map, 2013.

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