

Original Research Paper

Waste or Wealth' the Cultural Crux Behind Scavenging in Urban Kano State, Nigeria

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The paper explores the cultural issues pertaining marginal means of living by some segment of people. Cultural stereotyping of Scavengers was evaluated as the main aim of the study. The objectives of the study include, among others the identification of the major variables that characterized the occupation. The level of satisfaction of the Scavengers was also envisaged. Peoples' responses were sought on the activities of scavenging. Lastly, recommendations were proposed based on the findings of the study. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative data while capturing the ages, incomes, weights and so on as quantitative data, while preferences, satisfaction and choices are held as qualitative data. Purposive sampling was employed in capturing the Dumpsites or Waste-dumping points as well as the market points where the relics are sold. Peoples interviewed described the occupation as derogatory and even sub-human due to the unhygienic nature of the occupation. It was discovered that the principal actors in the scavenging are mostly illiterate youths who indulge in wayward living style. The livelihood under scavenging has a negative social stigma and culturally, people considered scavengers as mentally ill or semi-lunatics. However, the study discovered a huge gain in the scavenging and the actors are showing high interest in the occupation especially that no base capital is needed in the start of the business. Their association with bad odor, garbage and rotten materials exposes Scavengers to high risk of infections and ailments, consequently many become addicted to drugs.

Keywords: Culture, stereotype, occupation, satisfaction, preference and dumpsite.

BACKGROUND OF THE PAPER

Quite many literatures attested to the influence of inequality, illiteracy and joblessness on poverty, desperation and struggle. Whenever people have disparity in culture or ideology, there is tendency for civil unrest or social crisis. The primary arguments suggest that multi-cultural states are more prone to marginal living conditions than are the cultured homogeneous ones. As informal commerce, business and trade have grown to become the lifestyle of African cities, this is the underlying reason why African people earn livelihood on the street, corridors and pavements. In a recent development in Nigeria, the vagaries of poverty reach its climax around the late 1980's as a result of the so-called structural adjustment program (SAP), where unemployment and poverty forced people especially youths to engage in all means of livelihood options no matter dehumanizing or marginalizing. The supreme cause for accepting derogatory occupations is in fact mainly as a result of unemployment due to the limited job opportunities and poverty. Despite the fact that many of varying ages and sexes are engaging in scavenging, hawking and area-boyisms where the youths are the most dominant who in the third world

countries constitute about one third of the total population. The majority of the youths does not have the opportunity of being properly and adequately taken care of by their parents, guardians, and the community in which they live, many of them have to be engaging in hawking, begging, touting, prostitution to make ends mean (Lambu 2011) as in Lambu (2014). These youths, are regarded as the custodian of the society's future, who may become a source of nuisance to the societies primarily due to the abuse and neglect of their rights by people and the Government.

Scavenging is a process or act that involves in the initial collection, purchase, and recoverable materials. The scavengers are voluntary refuse workers and they are not concerned with waste management, they enter in to trade for economic reasons, their relationship with waste is for resources, they only collect those materials for which there is value in the market (Adamu 2014). Scavenging is a reality in almost all cities of developing countries and in many developed or wealthier nations as well. The current capacity of most solid waste management in Africa is inadequate and too slow to

meet the increasing demand of the solid waste generated (Tedesse,2012) as in Adamu (2014) the effort by municipalities in African countries to solve the problem of solid waste have only focused on expensive' end of the pipe 'solution, involving the collection and disposal of the solid waste, such solution usually requires high level technology, which is possible in the industrialize countries but usually not possible in the developing countries. The presence of formal recovery system in urban areas of Africa is hard to find, though such system usually exist in highly organize waste recovery system within the informal sectors (i.e. scavenging activities) in most cities. The activities have the potential of contributing to the solution of solid waste management problems, especially if the government authorities recognize the importance of the recovery activities carried out by the informal sector.

Many areas in the developing countries, mostly low income neighborhoods, slums and squatter settlements, are lacking municipal waste collection points. Some of these areas use informal refuse collectors who charge some fees to residents and retrieve the recyclable contained in it. The accelerated growth of urban population with unplanned urbanization, increasing economic activities and lack of training in modern solid waste management practices in developing countries complicate the effort to improve solid waste services. The changes in consumptions partners with alteration in the waste characteristics have also resulted in a quantum jump in solid waste generation (Ludwig et al. 2003). In addition solid waste management is hampered by the lack of data at all levels from the ward, district, and municipality, and were available is generally unreliable, scattered and unorganized (World bank 2012-2013). Most studies report that human scavengers constitute of the disadvantage and vulnerable segment of the population. Third world scavengers face multiple hazards and problems, due to their daily contact with garbage associated with dirt, disease, squalor, and perceive as a nuisance, a symbol of backwardness and even as criminals.

In Nigeria, like in any other developing nation, scavenging begins with a collection of plastic bags, bottles, papers, cardboards and cans, aluminum and metal piece. Mostly it takes place in the informal sector. Scavengers provide informal collection, recovering additional materials at dump sites. In Kano State the realization of very large dumps of over 400 waste disposal sites (Maigari, 2014), tends to attract scavengers locally called "Baban Bola" this scavengers play an important role in recycling the waste materials. They sort out the useful materials like papers, aluminum, plastic bottles, cans, Gerry cans; metal objects etc. and sell them to the recycling industries. Kano metropolis and in fact many urban areas have for many years been the most important commercial and industrial nerve centers of Nigeria attracting millions from all parts of Africa and beyond. Immigration and natural growth rate of 3% is expected to continue to increase the population and waste stream in the years to come. With a population presently estimated at 3.5 million, Kano metropolis is among the fastest growing cities in Nigeria. With a population of about 1000 inhabitant per km² within the Kano close settle Zone compared to the national average of 267 inhabitants per km². Maigari (2014), also Nabegu (2008) investigated the operation of the state agency responsible for waste management in the metropolis and reported that a significant portion of the population, 80%, does not have access to waste collection services, only 20% of the waste generated is actually collected and the vast majority of users of the service 92% consider the service poor. The economic

potentials and organization of informal plastic waste recovery sector was also studied which show that beside been a sources of livelihood for nearly 30000 individuals, provide cheap raw materials for plastic industries (Muktar 2008). In view of the above, scavenging is an issue worth study due to its sociocultural implication on the societal future.

Evidently the study is noble because waste scavenging in Kano State represent an adaptive response to chronic poverty; however, the benchmark appeared to be the structural adjustment program (SAP), Muktar, M. (2001). The study evaluates the socioeconomic impact of scavenging with a view to find a better way of handling and regulating their activities. If achieved, it will help government and public in handling the social affairs of its people so that youths are nurtured, cultured and trained through love and caring

STUDY AREA

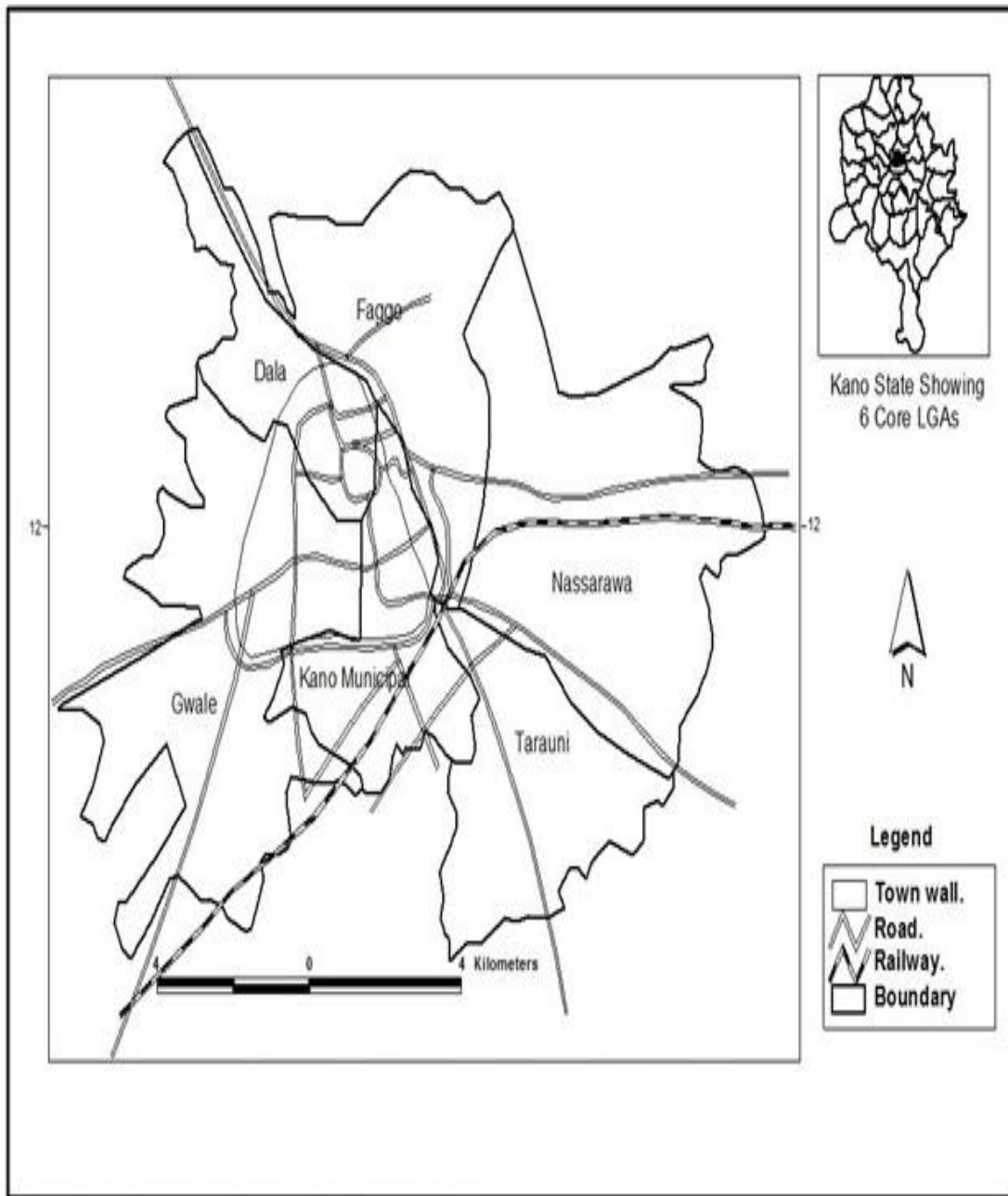
The study area

The city of Kano experiences changes and transformations over time. It is a cosmopolitan and heterogeneous society as a result of its extensive and numerous commercial and industrial activities. Kano has many occupations and means of livelihood, but was famous for its weaving, gold and blacksmith, dyeing and other handicraft activities. As a result of these, Kano has attracted people from far and wide. Kano State is made up of 44 local government areas, with a total population of 5,810,340 million by 1991 census figures. The indigenous population is homogenous in terms of culture, language, religion, etc. This homogeneity is apparent especially in the rural areas.

The metropolis recent lost its dominant occupation that is agriculture with about 75 percent of the population directly or indirectly involved in agriculture or agro-related activities in the past due to massive urbanization that swallowed the farmlands from within the walled city to as far as 5km at all directions. Currently, civil service, trade and commerce are the major activities. In fact Kano the capital city of the State has been known far and wide as an ancient and important center of commerce and trade. Kano was a major entry port in the Trans-Saharan trade. It is popular and known in the whole of West Africa, Maghreb and as far as Europe as a commercial center trading with Africa and Europe in local and manufactured goods, crafts and other items. This position is facilitated by the existence of modern communications (road network and rail line) which make Kano accessible.

Population of the study area

Kano is one of the most populated and urbanized states in northern Nigeria, as well as a dominant center of economic activity since the fourteenth century (Fika 1978). Consequently, commerce and industry in the urban areas and agricultural activities in the rural areas characterize the state. The communities in this part of the country have been exposed to vigorous family planning programs, with the establishment of many government sponsored family planning clinics in Kano State. However, there is a difference in terms of exposure to service between rural and urban inhabitants, with many of the clinics located in the urban areas. These clinics provide contraceptives and counseling services.



Source: Department of Geog. BUK (2012)

Adopted from (Lambu 2013)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The section explains the types of data, the sources of data, data collection procedures such as sampling and data analysis. The data in this study include quantitative indices like number of scavengers, age, income and status, etc. while the qualitative data in this study are the preferences, choices and

satisfaction on the livelihood. The main instruments of the study are the questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires are to collect quantitative information while the interviews are meant to measure the qualitative data. The two instruments can supplement one another and can serve as a check and balance where errors and mistakes can be corrected.

Table 4.2: shows age distribution of respondents

Age range	Frequency	Percentage
07 – 24	35	15.9
25– 44	165	75
45-64	15	6.8
65- above	5	2.3
Total	220	100%

Source: Field work 2015



Figure 1: adopted from Adamu 2014

Sample Size and Sampling Methods

The population of interest to this study consists of males of all ages, especially those at productive ages. This is because the study is interested in evaluating the principal actors in the scavenging occupation. The people's preferences over one occupation to another and, how the attitude, affects the subsequent decision toward the scavenging as a means of livelihood. The study concerns the Hausa people, a dominant ethnic group in northern Nigeria. The choice of this ethnic group was largely predicated on their traditional character of low taste, simplicity and contentment. The Hausa people constitute a significant proportion of the population in Nigeria, the largest country in Africa. The Hausa people are undergoing rapid socioeconomic changes manifesting various transformations, especially in the expansion of education and urbanization. Some samples of one thousand one hundred and sixty (1,160) respondents were drawn. The sample size was considered adequate due to the homogeneous nature of the population. In order to draw the samples combination of sampling methods was employed appropriate to the sampling units. Purposive sampling of Dumpsites and sales points of the relics were used in administering of instruments to the respondents. The cultural set up of the study area made it very difficult for women to be interviewed in this type of livelihood. Apart from the fact that, the purdah system being practiced by Muslims preserves women from unnecessary struggles, Scavenging has social phobia.

Data Collection

Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered for this study. Types of materials the scavengers are more interested in, the price and income accruing to that occupation on a daily

basis. These are achieved by self-administration of questionnaires to the respondents in the field. Likert scale was used to measure attitudes of respondents using a combination of negative and positive statements pertaining to practices related to scavenging. Respondents indicated their responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree on a four-interval scale.

Major results and findings of the study

The findings of this research suggest that the cultural set up of the people in the study area exercise greater influence on scavenging and scavengers. There is a social stigma attached to those engaged in the collection, sales and even the assemblage of the scavenging materials. This behavior affects the characteristics of scavengers, duration of the activities, social interaction, fate and prospect of the livelihood in question.

Characteristics of scavengers

The study concerns on the age, sex, marital status, educational attainment of the scavengers so that analysis can be made in the attempt to infer into the social implication of the result based on the characteristics discovered. It may not be an exaggeration to say that a study of this type is among the most difficult research in the social research. The reason may not be unconnected to the nature of the respondents, the locations and the scenery of the sites. Let's live leave this for now, the incoming presentations (charts, figures, plates and tables) will serve as self- illustrating. The characteristics may shade some lights as to the consequences facing the entire society and how it can be redirected toward socially-friendly

trends that can ensure harmony, progress and social tranquility.

Age status of the Scavengers

Samples of Scavengers interviewed showed a skewed age, status toward young adults whose ages range from 25 – 44 years with almost three-quarters in the acts which are followed by school-bearing ages of 7- 24 years (the future of the society) having almost 16% with lesser percentages of adults who are between 45 – 64 years that have 6.8%.

Table 4.2 reveals very important social implication that needs to be handled with caution. Scavenging in the study area is involving the productive ages of the population whom the future of the society rests upon. These age ranges 7 – 24 and 25 – 44 are very crucial to the socioeconomic development of the society. An individual that earns a livelihood on dumpsites from the age of 7 when he/she is expected to be in school acquiring basic education will probably end life in turmoil and wrangling. This indicated that the scavenging activities in the study area are practiced by either the Almajiris or less privileged (children of the masses) that have to take care of themselves or even render assistances to their parents.

Origin and purpose for the Scavengers

The study investigated the origin of the Scavengers in the study area so that more cultural meanings can be brought to light. Young children are mainly from within the metropolis and the neighboring LGAs of Kano state. Some youths, mostly above the age of 20 years were discovered to have originated from far areas away from the metropolis and other states like Katsina, Zamfara, Jigawa and Sokoto. Sizeable parts of them (as in chat 1) are in the study area purposely for traditional forms of education. They are into scavenging activities for a living, because it needs no any base-capital to start. With poor sanitary culture of the people, refuse is discarded everywhere, some valuable relics are picked and sold at some closely markets like Kurmi, SabonGari and Kofar-ruwa.

Educational status of The Scavengers

The educational status of the scavengers (as in chat 2) confirms the previous finding where most of the affected people are preoccupied since childhood. Larger proportion only attends primary education while very few reach the secondary school level. Amazingly, none were found to have any form of tertiary education. This type of scenario is very dangerous to the future of the society because with high level of illiteracy, there is a tendency for the scavengers to graduate into all sorts of crimes and later constitute nuisance to the entire society. Similarly, the level of illiteracy may trigger high contraction of diseases and illness to the scavengers and their family as well as those in contact with them. With the current problem of Lassa fever and other endemic diseases, both government and individuals, needs to handle all social interactions with uttermost care and vigilance so that outbreaks of diseases and

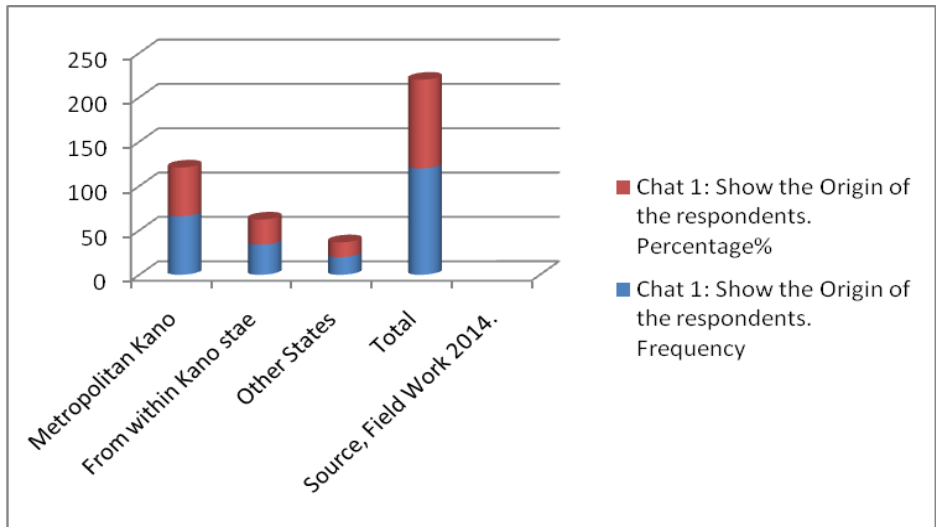
other social evils are not only protected but even prevented from occurring. The nature of the population density in the areas like Kano, should there be any epidemic, it may spell doom to the community and even the nation at large due to the interaction between it and other another part of the country.

Gender composition of the scavengers

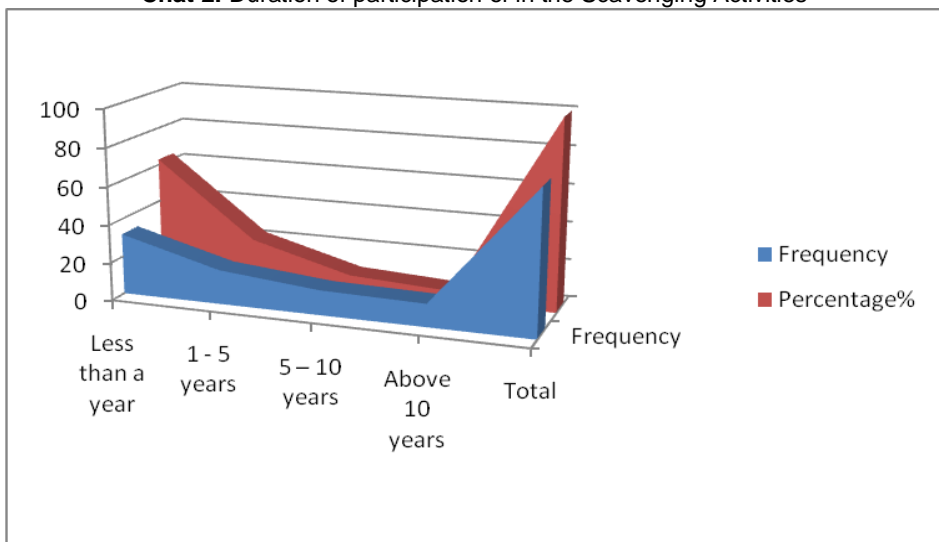
Kano is one of the unique cultures even in the northern Nigeria context as confirmed by Lambu (2013), (2014) and (2015). As a result of Islamic religious practices, almost all activities of scavenging are solely male dominated with 97%. The few females engaged in the occupation are over-aged women who are widowed, barren or lost all the children and have nobody to cater for their essential needs. Majority of females engage in indoor livelihood options no matter how marginal (Lambu 2016). Similarly the dumpsites (Juji) are culturally regarded as common ground of the spirits so females are afraid to trespass around for fear been possessed by the spirits. Many female respondents expressed negative phobia against scavenging and one lady affirm that 'I cannot even chat with Danbola (scavenger) talk less of marrying him, God forbid a sensible person cannot be moving from one heap of refuse to another ...' Other similar responses were obtain from females and this add to the reasons for low participation of female in the activities of scavenging in the area.

People's responses, perceptions and preferences on scavenging

The study found unanimous responses by all the people interviewed where the activities of scavenging are considered derogatory, dehumanizing and belittling. Many describe Yanbola (scavengers) as mentally retarded, semi-lunatics and stupid. 'I cannot eat and associate with Danbola (Scavenger) in fact I detest that acts' said one respondent. Over 85% regarded bola (scavenging) as their last option in life. Some prefer to work as sewerage than scavenging because sewerage disposal can be modernized and make more decent. The reasons people attach to their hate, rage are is dirtiness, the filthiness and the waywardness of the scavenging activities where the majority of the actors in scavenging smokes, take drugs or even both. Females express more dislike over scavenging one girl put it that 'they are rough, ugly, dirty and aggressive, in fact I hate to even see them ..'. Some few individuals expressed milder views about scavenging, according to this person, scavenging is a lawful occupation that helps people in gaining legitimate income. One Islamic scholar added that 'it is a means of sustaining one life in legal and legitimate way that is better than begging or nagging other people'. One educated elite lamented that 'scavenging helps in the management of resources through recycling process and also help in the environmental sanitation and the end the people get legitimate income to take care of their daily needs.' Some suggested that the scavengers should avoid smoking, drugs and also use safety measures like hand glove, rain boot and air filter to avoid infections.

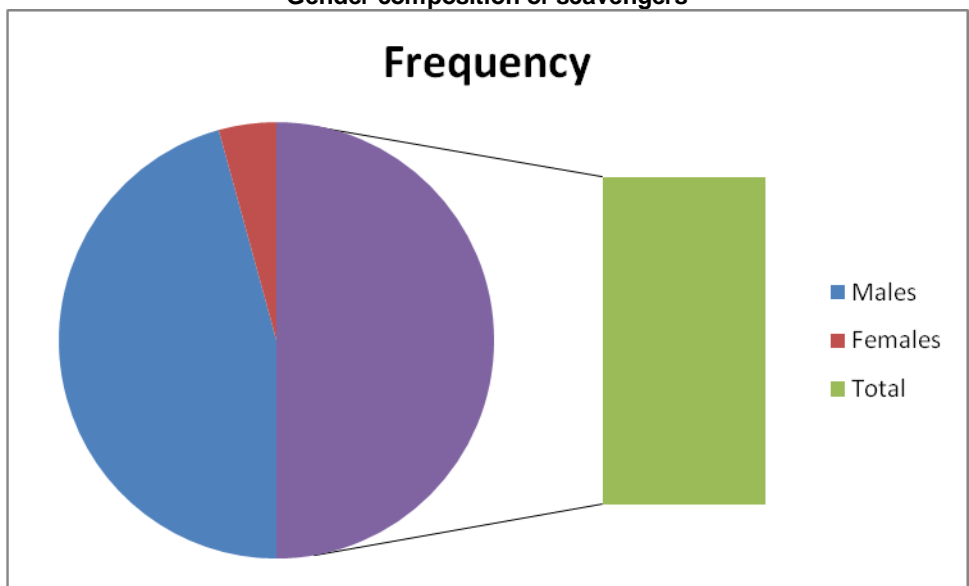


Chat 2: Duration of participation of in the Scavenging Activities



Source: Field Work 2015

Gender composition of scavengers



Source: Field work, 2015.



Figure 3: Nature of the dumpsite and its repulsive appearance to females

Scavengers' responses on the scavenging and the peoples' responses

Scavengers vary in their responses where some expressed happiness, but many are considering the livelihood as lack of any alternatives. A respondent added that he started this occupation from the age of 6 years and 'I will die scavenging, it is not stealing, it is not cheating, it is not...' the respondent was staggering and when asked why he is behaving like that he continued 'what do you mean? That's how I always behave, why are you bothering me? This rag is for wiping my face; I put it in the mouth and nose to... (Pause a while)... reduces tension. I only smokes cigarette and..' On their opinion on how other people relate with them, most of the scavengers are not happy. They complained the phobia against their livelihood as disturbing and frustrating. They only have friends from within the scavenging cycle because other people are not associating with them. One Scavenger who described his age as 45 years said ' I suffered before getting a wife, in fact I didn't tell her my occupation till after 10 years when we have 3 children and she started crying that I should change to another occupation. I never smoke, but very few people in scavenging are not smoking or using drugs. I travel to Lagos and do it there, but here in Kano I buy from the scavengers especially Aluminum cans, wires and containers...'

CONCLUSION

Culture plays significant role in shaping, molding and blading scavenging into a single-gender occupation. Social stigma accentuates exclusion, segregation and hatred which consequently push scavengers into negative responses such as smoking, drugs, snoring and the likes just to obtain falsified relief. Scavengers are considered or perceive as the poorest, and marginal in the mainstream society, in many cases, they are subjected to discrimination and humiliation in the society. The social phobia against scavenging is affecting the principal actors negatively. Many engage in smoking and drug abuse just trying to whirl away grief, sadness and annoyance. If corrective measures are taken, scavenging is a

good means of money making business that may help environmental cleanliness and ensure adequate resource utilization through recycle recycling and re-use. Government can integrate scavengers into the work force of environmental agencies like REMASAB, NUPDA, and so on so that their living style are redirected, renovated and reclaimed to better for themselves and for the sake of the entire society.

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