

African Journal for the Psychological Studies of Social Issues

Volume 29 Number 3, AUGUST, 2026 Edition

Founding Editor- in - Chief: Professor Denis C.E. Ugwuegbu
(Retired Professor of Department of Psychology.
University of Ibadan.)

Editor- in - Chief: Professor Shyngle K. Balogun.
Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan.

Associate Editor: Professor. Benjamin O. Ehigie
Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan.

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Professor S. S. Babalola	University of South Africa
Professor S.E. Idemudia	University of South Africa
Professor Tope Akinshaw	Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria
Professor O.A Ojedokun	Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria
Professor Catherine O Chowwen	University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Professor. Grace Adejunwon	University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Professor. A.M. Sunmola	University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Professor. B. Nwankwo	Caritas University, Nigeria
Professor. K.O. Taiwo	Lagos State University, Nigeria
Professor. Bayo Oluwole	University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Journal of the African Society for THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF
SOCIAL ISSUES % DEPT OF Psychology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

URBANIZATION, POLICING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIA

AMBA ETA
GRACE EGWU
AND

PATRICIA TAIWO

*Sociology department,
Faculty of Social science University of Abuja.
Email: theoeta@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

Nigeria is urbanizing faster than its governing institutions can manage, producing environmental collapse and security strains that existing policy frameworks have failed to contain. This paper examines how rapid urban expansion generates slums, environmental and ecological damage, with new crime geographies, and argues that rural urban migration leads to proliferation of slums which can cause environmental and eco system, and from the broken windows perspective if not quickly meet in the board can degenerate into a very decayed and unsafe society. Policing in Nigeria must not just be maintained but be reconfigured if environmental sustainability is to be achieved. The study demonstrates that urban decay and public disorder amplify one another. The paper further contends that effective policing in Nigerian cities must not only be reactive in crime control, but should infuse models that encourage community participation, environmental design, and rigorous enforcement of environmental statutes. The analysis rests on secondary sources and a systematic review of the literature. The central finding is that sustainable urban development in Nigeria requires security and environmental governance to be co-produced by state agencies, local communities, and regulatory bodies.

Keywords: *Urbanization, Policing, Environmental Sustainability, Nigeria, Community Policing, Environmental Crime*

INTRODUCTION

Industrialization served as a catalyst for the development of urban areas, as there became an upsurge in rural urban migration, leading to the creation and expansion of urban centres. People began to leave the agrarian styled life to the seeming sophistication that industrialization presented, for better living. population influx became regular. Nchanji et al. (2023) have asserted that population growth and rural urban migration are major contributors to rapid urbanization in Africa. According to Eghwere and Imutiyani (2019), the Nigerian state has had its fair share of rural urban migration due to the dearth of needed infrastructure and facilities in the rural area, an alleged prospect for a better life in the urban areas. Nigerian urban centres are projected to be home to over 200 million people in the next 40 years (Eghwere and Imutiyani 2019). The United Nations has also reported that more than half of the global population now resides in urban regions, a proportion expected to rise to two thirds by 2050 (United Nations 2018).

Ali and Rahman (2024) has noted that urbanization is driven by various factors like job opportunities, better services and improved infrastructure in urban settings. Ali and Rahman (2024) also asserts that rapid urbanization is reshaping human settlements, creating both opportunities and challenges. The positive effects of urbanization are mostly glaring, which

includes improved access to healthcare and education, enhanced communication facilities, and more effective administration. Urban areas offer a greater array of employment opportunities, which contribute to higher living standards through increased job availability, advanced technology, and superior infrastructure. Enhanced transportation and communication networks in urban cities further elevate living conditions. Urban centres also provide a broader range of services, compared to rural areas. Extensive public transportation, efficient water and sewage systems, well equipped educational institutions, recreational facilities, and health care centres. Access to diverse markets and entertainment options with numerous shopping malls, retail stores, and challenges for small businesses are other opportunities that urbanization presents. The overall quality of life made urban areas highly desirable for living and working (Ali and Rahman (2024).

It is important to note that rural urban migrants are not adequately prepared for urban centres in terms of housing, hospitals, roads, schools, waste management, water supply, job opportunities, power supply and traffic management. The lack of preparation leads to urbanization related issues such as the development of slums, traffic congestion, accidents, various forms of pollution, crime, insecurity, poverty, unemployment, and health challenges. These issues have significant effects on human capital development, environmental management, and the economic foundations of urban centres,(Okegbe and Okechukwu 2024).Population influx can also be overwhelming for the government. Olanyini and Abaje (2024) also maintains that fast urbanization and inadequate transportation facilities have resulted in serious problems with traffic congestion, which is made worse by the city's associated air pollution, a situation which poses serious risks to public health and the environment, greatly affecting the city's quality of life. According to Kamana et al.(2024) the rural urban migration though meant for growth, simultaneously caused spacial insecurities, and different forms of urban injustice and insecurity, confiscated urban land, uncompensated expropriations, inaccessible housing, high criminality rate, etc. According to Adedeji (2023),with the rapid urbanization taking place in Nigeria,the demand for housing has escalated, particularly among low and middle income families, a problem that has caused slum proliferation and inadequate infrastructure.The ripple effects of inadequate planning extend beyond housing and infrastructure, as overburdened cities witness increased social inequality, with urban poor populations often bearing the brunt of environmental hazards and limited public services.

In the face of the complexities presented as a result of urbanization, and the quest to stem the tide and alleviate the struggles of the rising urban population,in addition to salvaging depleting environment and the eco system,which obviously affect humans and living, government and other stakeholders have evolved over the years, formulating policies and establishing agencies, to safe the environment vis a vis society from unimaginable decay.

The role of policing within this urban-environmental nexus has received insufficient scholarly attention. While scholars have examined urbanization and environmental sustainability as one domain, and policing and crime as another, the intersection of the two remains under-theorized. This paper addresses that gap by asking two questions: How does rapid urbanization in Nigeria create environmental and security challenges that demand new policing strategies? And how can policing be restructured to support environmental sustainability in Nigerian cities?

Conceptual review

The main concepts for this paper are; urbanization, policing, environment, environmental sustainability. These concepts will be reviewed for clarity, as it applies to the context of this paper.

Urbanization:

According to Ali and Rahman (2024), urbanization is the trend of people moving from rural to urban areas, which over half of the world's population are in cities. Sanyaolu and Sanyaolu (2024) defines urbanization as the way the population shifts from rural to urban areas, the gradual increase in the proportion of people living in urban areas, and the way each society adapts to change. The United Nations in 2019 described urbanization as the trend towards greater population concentration in already existing urban areas. According to Aliyu and Amadu (2017), urbanization denotes a process whereby a society changes from rural to urban way of life or redistribution of population to urban settlements associated with development and civilization. Aliyo and Amadu (2017), also admits that the trend in urbanization and city expansion in developing countries including Nigeria, are caused by a million factors including rural urban migration, natural population increase and annexation, and expansion of neighbourhoods. Urbanization therefore is a concept that has to do with movements, population increase, expansion and settlement in previously unoccupied lands, and an adaptation to a new way of life. The process of surviving and adaptation therefore can have some detrimental effects on life, environment and society.

Policing

Sierra- Arevalo (2018) defines policing as the profession and practice of maintaining social order and enforcing the law through street level prevention, detection, and investigation of crime. Rogers (2016) conceptualizes policing as a socio-political function, instead of a formal legal one that was exercised in any civil society, not just within the confines of a state. For Deflem and Hauptman (2015), the typical characteristics of the culture of policing relate intimately to relevant functions of social control. Much police work especially in the realm of crime control by necessity must rely on information and other forms of cooperation from the public. In Nigeria, the context of policing has gone beyond the corridors of the Nigerian police force. Urbanization has broadened the spectrum of crime, thus the maintenance and enforcement of law and order has become multidimensional. Therefore several agencies have been established to do policing, including the community police perspective.

Environment

Josh (2016) asserts that the term environment means surroundings in which organisms live. Environment and organisms are two complex components of nature. The environment controls the life of the organisms including human beings. Human beings interact with the environment more vigorously than other living beings. For Kumar (2018), the normal meaning of environment relates to surroundings, but obviously, that is a concept which is relatable to whatever object it is, which is surrounded. Kumar (2018) noted that the normal meaning of the term environment in its etymological sense gives the meaning surroundings, especially the material and spiritual influences which affect the growth, development and existence of living beings, it means the circumstances or conditions that surround an organism or group of organisms or the complex of social or cultural conditions that affect an individual or community. Thus, in the context of human beings, the environment is the sum of all social, economical, biological. physical or chemical factors which constitute the surrounding of man. (Kumar 2018), taking on the definition of Justice P. N Baghwati, the term environment, refers to the condition within and around an organism, which affects the growth, and development of life processes, directly or indirectly. It includes conditions with which the organisms interact.

From the foregoing, the term environment in the context of this article goes beyond the physical components of the ecosystem. It is an all encompassing concept that has to do with life and living (Physical and Social).

Environmental Sustainability

Khan and Saeed (2021) looks at environmental sustainability as a conservation concept which is the meeting of services and resources of present and future generations, without affecting the health of the ecosystem that provides them. According to Patterson (2024), environmental sustainability refers to the responsible management of natural resources to fulfill current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet them. It aims to balance ecological, economic and social goals, such as reducing carbon emissions, promoting renewable energy and ensuring equitable resource access. Ogunkayan (2023) citing Mollie (2011) defines environmental sustainability as a state of balance, resilience and interconnectedness that enables human society to meet its needs while not exceeding the capacity of its supporting ecosystem to regenerate the services required to meet those needs, not by our actions reducing biological diversity. To achieve real environmental sustainability, all components of the ecosystem including all living organisms within it including man, should be properly managed.

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a qualitative, desk-based methodology that relies primarily on secondary data to examine the relationship between urbanization, policing, and environmental sustainability in Nigeria, using a doctrinal and content-analytic approach, systematically reviewing and synthesizing the existing documents and framing findings within the context of social disorganization and broken windows theory. Literature on urban governance, government publications from different Nigerian institutions, international reports from organizations such as the UN and World Bank, and media records documenting enforcement actions and environmental issues.

Qualitative content analysis is here by employed to analyze documents coded according to recurring themes such as patterns of urban expansion, enforcement gaps, regulatory capacity, and environmental degradation outcomes. These themes are interpreted through the study's theoretical lens to assess whether documented institutional responses align with the theoretical expectation that stronger, modernized enforcement mitigates the environmental costs of urbanization. Where quantitative indicators appear within secondary sources, such as urbanization rates, emissions data, or enforcement statistics, these are presented descriptively to support the qualitative interpretation rather than subjected to fresh statistical testing.

This design suits the study for three reasons. The phenomena under review are already extensively documented by government agencies and researchers, making primary data collection unnecessary for establishing baseline patterns; secondary sources allow a broader temporal and geographic scope than fieldwork would permit within the constraints of a single study; and reliance on documented institutional records reduces the risk of bias that could arise from self-reported accounts by serving officers or urban residents on sensitive enforcement matters. The principal limitation lies in dependence on the accuracy and completeness of existing records, some of which may be outdated or shaped by the reporting interests of the originating institution. To mitigate this, findings are cross-checked across multiple independent sources wherever possible before being incorporated into the analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Urbanization And Environmental Sustainability In Nigeria

The Scale And Drivers Of Urbanization

Nigeria's urbanization is propelled by several interconnected forces. Eghwere and Imuteyan (2019) examine rural-urban migration and youth unemployment, arguing that public programmes designed to stem migration have failed because they do not address the structural drivers of urbanward movement—land fragmentation in rural areas, conflict, and the perception of urban opportunity. Okegbe and Okechukwu (2024) characterize rural-urban migration as a threat to the development of Enugu urban, noting that the city's infrastructure cannot absorb the incoming population.

Auwalu and Bello (2023) explore the contemporary challenges of urbanization in Lagos, identifying traffic congestion, housing shortages, and the strain on public services as critical problems. Adedeji (2023) stresses the importance of affordable housing in managing Nigerian urbanization, observing that the housing deficit is both a cause and a consequence of slum formation. Kamana, Radoine, and Nyasulu (2024) review urban challenges and strategies in African cities through a systematic literature review, confirming that infrastructure deficits are a defining feature of the region's urban transition. Nchanji, Cosmas, and Nchanji (2023) examine access to resources in urban agriculture in Tamale, Ghana, illustrating how urban growth intensifies competition for land and water in African cities.

Environmental Degradation In Urban Nigeria

The environmental footprint of Nigerian cities is expanding at an unsustainable rate. Adenito (2023) conducts an ecological footprint analysis for Nigeria and concludes that urbanization is pushing national resource consumption beyond biocapacity. Ali, Law, and Zannah (2016) find that urbanization, economic growth, and energy consumption exert significant dynamic impacts on CO₂ emissions in Nigeria. Radoine, Bajja, Chenal, and Ahmed (2022) confirm that urbanization and economic growth degrade environmental quality in West Africa, particularly where manufacturing and fossil fuel dependence are high.

Ohwo and Abotutu (2015) provide a comprehensive inventory of environmental impacts: deforestation for urban expansion, wetland reclamation, surface water pollution from industrial and domestic waste, and air pollution from vehicular emissions and petrol generators. Ogunfemide (2025) reports on a collaboration between the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) and the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) to reduce vehicular emissions—an indication that the environmental costs of urban mobility are now recognized at the policy level.

Ibimilua and Ibimilua (2023) examine urban slums and suburban sprawl, identifying environmental obstacles to the creation of safe, resilient, and sustainable cities. Their findings align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11, which calls for inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities. Okafor, Izueke, Onah, Ugwu, Chuke, Nkwede, Udenze, and Okoye (2022) investigate environmentally responsible behaviour in urban and semi-urban settlements in Southeast Nigeria, finding that community development and environmental awareness remain weak in rapidly urbanizing areas.

The health consequences of this degradation are severe. Aliyu and Amadu (2017) review the challenges that urbanization poses to health in Nigeria, linking overcrowded cities to the spread of infectious diseases, poor maternal health outcomes, and increased non-communicable disease burdens. Their work underscores that environmental sustainability is inseparable from public health in Nigerian cities.

Governance And Legal Frameworks

Environmental governance in Nigeria is undermined by weak enforcement. Budnukaeku and Hyginus (2021) assess environmental laws and management agencies in Nigeria and question what hope exists for a desecrated landscape. They find that statutes such as the Environmental Impact Assessment Act and the National Environmental Protection Act exist on paper, but enforcement is inconsistent and frequently compromised by political interference.

Ijaiya and Joseph (2014) call for a rethinking of environmental law enforcement in Nigeria, demanding stronger institutional coordination and judicial capacity. Odey (2023) reevaluates environmental law enforcement, noting that regulatory agencies lack the personnel, equipment, and political support to monitor compliance. Orutonye and Altayar (2020) stress the role of enforcement in environmental protection, arguing that without credible sanctions, environmental laws remain symbolic.

Onyeama and Kpea-ue (2023) identify legal issues and challenges in the enforcement of laws addressing environmental pollution, including jurisdictional conflicts between federal and state agencies, outdated penalties, and the difficulty of proving environmental harm in court. Ogunkan (2022) reviews sustainable environmental governance in Nigeria and concludes that policy must prioritize inter-agency collaboration, public participation, and the integration of environmental metrics into urban planning. Abaidoo and Agyapong (2023) examine environmental sustainability risk, institutional effectiveness, and urbanization, arguing that institutional quality moderates the relationship between urban growth and environmental outcomes.

Policing and The Urban Environment

The Nigerian Policing

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) retains primary responsibility for internal security, but its capacity has been stretched thin by urbanization. Sirra-Arevalo (2024) discusses the danger imperative in American policing—a concept that resonates in Nigeria, where officers often regard urban patrols as high-risk, particularly in slum areas. This perception produces either aggressive policing or withdrawal, neither of which serves environmental or security objectives.

Adejobi (2023) reports that the NPF launched a green initiative for enhanced security operations with socioeconomic and environmental impact. This initiative, announced in November 2023, suggests a growing recognition within the police that environmental conditions affect operational outcomes. However, the details and implementation of this initiative remain unclear.

Mumuni and Abdulyakeem (2024) examine the role of the NSCDC in crime prevention and management in Gombe State, finding that the corps contributes to public safety but is constrained by inadequate funding and equipment. Ndakotsu (2023) studies the role of community police in crime prevention and control, arguing that effective management requires closer ties between formal police structures and local populations.

The Federal road safety corps and the National environmental standard and regulations enforcement agency, (NESREA) also entered into partnership to achieve the effective implementation of the national vehicular emission control programme (Ogunbemide 2025). The Federal Road Safety Corp and NESREA are committed to working together to promote a sustainable environment for the wellbeing of Nigerians (Ogunbemide 2025)

Community Policing and Environmental Design

Community policing has emerged as a response to the limitations of centralized policing in Nigeria. Kehinde and Odiaka (2020) argue that community policing and environmental design are panaceas to crime prevention in Ibadan. They recommend that urban planning incorporate defensible space, natural surveillance, and territorial reinforcement—principles that improve environmental quality while reducing crime.

Oloju, Sunday, and Adewumi (2024) present a community policing framework for engendering sustainable peace in Ondo State, Nigeria. Their case study shows that when community policing is linked to local governance structures, it can address both security and environmental grievances. Kenku and Umar (2025) examine the benefits of community policing in enhancing safety, arguing that this model is well suited to Nigeria's diverse and localized social fabrics.

Acha, Isangadighi, Chinedu, Clement, Airede, Ikhide, and Michael (2025) gather community perspectives on public safety, loss prevention, emergency management, and environmental sustainability in Oron, Nigeria. Their findings indicate that residents view environmental degradation—such as flooding and pollution—as directly connected to their sense of safety and well-being. This finding underscores the need for policing strategies that treat environmental harm as a security issue.

Environmental Crime And Specialized Policing

Environmental crime in Nigerian cities assumes many forms: illegal dumping of hazardous waste, deforestation for charcoal and timber, oil bunkering, and the pollution of water sources. Romaniuk, Kovalenko, Chernykh, Topyha, and Kupienia (2024) examine the policy and role of criminal police in combating environmental crime, noting that specialized environmental police units are becoming more common in Europe and should be replicated in developing countries.

In Nigeria, NESREA and the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) possess environmental enforcement mandates, but they lack police powers. The collaboration between FRSC and NESREA (Ogunfemide, 2025) to tackle vehicular emissions represents a step toward inter-

agency environmental policing, yet such efforts remain ad hoc. Oikhala (2022) argues that police and governance for sustainable development in Nigeria require institutional reforms that empower environmental regulators and create incentives for compliance.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Disorganization Theory

Social disorganization theory was postulated by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay in 1942. The theory was based on observation of urban American neighbourhoods. The theory assumes that crime rates are constant in areas with certain environmental conditions such as high unemployment, population fluctuations, or material decay. Such conditions prevent social organization and cohesion in the neighbourhood and thus informal control of delinquency. People are therefore influenced by their actions due to their interactions with certain environments (Wickert 2018). For social disorganization theory, crime rates remain high in certain urban areas due to environmental factors that undermine social cohesion and informal social control. Delinquent values and behaviours are passed down within disorganized areas despite population turn over. The social disorganisation theory suggests that changes in the environment could explain changes in an individual's behaviour (Brodwicks 2024). The extent to which the organization process of these urban spans could restore a depleted social structure was made clear. Despite changes in the urban landscape with urban renewal efforts and new housing strategies, many of the anti urban forces were never seriously addressed or indeed are products of an urban environment where populations are concentrated. Formal regulations shape community structure and function, but the haphazard placement of residential use units is a potent factor in creating the disorganization that is seen in urban areas. Urban planning is important because of constraints or opportunities of the physical environment, and because of the manner in which the physical environment interacts with social behaviour. Many researchers conceptualize social disorganization as simply, a poor physical and social environment. Characteristics of the physical environment are estimated by various measures, including the local indication such as the amount and rate of housing vacancies, the fraction of residential mobility, and such neighbourhood problems as abandoned buildings and lots, and public nuisance. Brodowics (2024).

In Nigeria, Somorija (2025) has asserted that the population is projected to exceed 400 million by 2050. The demographic surge, coupled with an urban growth rate of 3.7% annually, has led to the proliferation of urban slums. Over 50% of Nigeria's urban populations reside in slums characterized by inadequate housing, limited access to basic services and poor environmental conditions, driven by rural urban migration, high fertility rates and insufficient urban planning. (Somorija 2025). Somorija (2025) further reveals that overpopulation exacerbates infrastructural deficits, environmental degradation, and public health crises. Socioeconomic disparities in slums perpetuate poverty, crime, and disease, while a youthful population presents both a potential demographic dividend and a risk of social instability if neglected (Somorija 2025). Similarly, Ibimilua and Ibimulua (2023) revealed that slums and suburban sprawls are cogs in the wheels of safe, resilient, and sustainable cities. Again, Akinwale (2018) indicates that the large urban population in a city like Lagos, has been largely attributed to rural urban migration. It is a common phenomenon to see undeveloped land being taken over by rural immigrants and leading to uncontrolled and unorganised developments of slum communities. These communities usually lack basic infrastructural facilities and are characterised by very poor urban conditions. Akinwale (2018) also asserts that two thirds of the Lagos metropolitan population occupies such informal

settlements, squatter housing, unauthorized land developments, or rooms and flats in dilapidated and uncompleted buildings. The urban slum dwellers of Lagos are deprived of essential basic social facilities and are faced with poor living conditions due to population density, overcrowding, unemployment, poverty, lack of drinking water, inadequate liquid and waste management, noise pollution, poor healthcare access, poor structural quality of housing, cultural dislocation and insecure residential status, conditions which become breeding grounds for diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis, dengue, pneumonia, malaria, cholera and diarrhoeal diseases (Akinwale 2018). Nkereuwem and Nyene (2019) also studied urban slums and the spate of youth criminality in some selected slum communities in bayelsa state, and found that certain factors such as poverty, unemployment and government continued neglect were reasons influencing youth involvement in crime, and recommended that the clamour for restructuring of Nigeria should be imbibed to reorient society towards economic efficiency, equity and development.

Broken Windows Theory

Kuhl (2025) presents the broken windows theory as a criminological idea suggesting that visible signs of disorder, (graffiti, litter or broken windows) encourage further crime and antisocial behavior. The theory was first introduced by James R Wilson and George Kellings in 1982. It argues that maintaining order in communities helps prevent serious crime. Green (2015) asserts that the broken windows theory connects a messy environment to increased crime. According to Kuhl (2025), the theory is named after an analogy used to explain it. If a window in a building is broken and remains unrepaired for too long, the rest of the windows in the building will eventually be broken. According to Wilson and Kelling, that is because the unrepaired window acts as a signal to people in that neighbourhood that they can break windows without fear of consequences because nobody cares enough to stop or fix it. Eventually, as Wilson and Kelling argued, more serious crimes like robbery and violence will flourish. According to the broken windows thesis, physical and social disorders exert a causal effect on criminal behaviour. Disorder does so directly, as it signals to criminals, community's indifference to crime, and indirectly, as disorder undermines informal social control. The traditional formulation of the broken windows theory argues that visible (physical) signs of minor crimes, antisocial behaviour and civil disorder, creates an urban environment that in turn, encourages more crimes and a greater accumulation of thrash on the corner (Gracia- Tejeda and Fondevila 2023).

On the disorder, neglect, and disorder in urban Nigeria, which perpetuated consistent and more environmental challenges, Aliyu and Ahmadu (2017) have asserted that urbanization in Nigeria is mainly demographically driven without commensurate socioeconomic dividends and benefits to the urban environment. This has created urban health crises of inadequate water safe supply, squalor and shanty settlements, sanitation, solid waste management, double burden of diseases and inefficient, congested, and risky transport system. Aliyu and Ahmadu (2017) further noted that when managed carefully, urbanization could reduce hardship and human suffering, on the other hand it could also increase poverty and squalor, as some laws need to be amended to change the status of poor urban settlements. Again, Mbazor (2018) citing Bonnefoy (2007) has opined that the characteristics and conditions of housing constitute the basic factors that influence occupants health, further stressing that the quality of housing plays a significant role in determining the health status of the occupant. In Nigeria, it has been established that the negative effects of urbanization are evident, from actual poor environmental and housing conditions, to problems of crime and criminality. Turning a blind eye, and continuous negligence, will further exacerbate the problem, ruining our environment and the society. Therefore:

- Contemporary institutions, such as law enforcement and environmental regulators, can be transformed to incorporate ecological issues instead of viewing them as outside limitations on progress.
- The ability to enforce regulations influences whether environmental rules lead to real behavioral changes in urban dwellers, developers, and industries.
- The quality of institutions influences the environmental impact of urban expansion, where poor enforcement leads to more detrimental effects than robust enforcement despite comparable urban growth rates (Abaidoo & Agyapong, 2023).

In Nigeria, the rapid, largely unplanned urban expansion has created pressures that far exceed the capacity of existing environmental governance, and the data on the environmental impact of urbanization show that urbanization has consistently driven environmental degradation in Nigerian cities (Ali, Law, & Zannah, 2016).

This framing lets us look at policing differently. We can see it as more than just crime control. It's also about environmental governance. This includes enforcing rules for buildings and waste. It covers land use and pollution laws too. The research can then ask why enforcement in Nigerian cities doesn't match urban growth. It can also explore what reforms could help close this gap.

FINDINGS

Drawing from the reviewed literature, several findings emerge on the relationship between urbanization, policing, and environmental sustainability in Nigeria.

Urbanization is producing spatial and infrastructural conditions that predispose Nigerian cities to environmental disorder. Rural-urban migration, driven largely by the search for employment, infrastructure, and improved living standards, has outpaced the capacity of Nigerian cities to provide adequate housing, waste management, and planning oversight (Eghwere and Imutiyan, 2019; Adedeji, 2023). The result is a proliferation of slums and informal settlements, with more than half of Nigeria's urban population estimated to live in such conditions (Somorija, 2025). These settlements are consistently associated with poor sanitation, inadequate water supply, overcrowding, and weak infrastructure, conditions that Akinwale (2018) links directly to disease outbreaks and diminished public health outcomes in cities such as Lagos.

Social disorganization theory finds support in the Nigerian urban context. Areas characterized by high population turnover, material decay, and weak infrastructure show reduced informal social control, which in turn correlates with elevated crime and environmental neglect (Wickert, 2018; Brodowics, 2024). Nigerian-specific findings reinforce this pattern: youth criminality in slum communities in Bayelsa State has been linked to poverty, unemployment, and government neglect rather than individual disposition (Nkereuwem and Nyene, 2019), suggesting that environmental and social decay reinforce one another in a self-perpetuating cycle rather than operating as separate problems.

The broken windows perspective helps explain why unresolved urban disorder in Nigeria tends to escalate. Where visible signs of neglect, such as uncollected waste, dilapidated structures, or unregulated construction, are left unaddressed, they appear to signal an absence of oversight that emboldens further environmental and criminal infractions (Kuhl, 2025; Garcia-Tejeda and Fondevila, 2023). Aliyu and Ahmadu (2017) found that Nigeria's urbanization has proceeded without matching socioeconomic investment, producing exactly the kind of neglected urban conditions the theory predicts will compound over time if unaddressed.

Ecosystem-level findings confirm measurable environmental harm attributable to urban growth. Ohwo and Abotutu (2015) document adverse effects of urbanization on air, water, and land quality across Nigerian cities, while Okafor and colleagues (2023) report that deforestation and environmental degradation carry negative, though statistically modest, effects on economic growth. Adenito (2023) similarly finds that urbanization exerts a negative effect on environmental sustainability in Nigeria, even as working populations show a distinct effect on unsustainability, pointing to production and consumption patterns as an additional contributing factor beyond urban growth alone.

Institutional enforcement in Nigeria is fragmented but expanding. A wide array of agencies, including NESREA, the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, and the Federal Road Safety Corps, now share responsibility for environmental enforcement, with some evidence of active inter-agency collaboration, such as the NESREA-FRSC partnership on vehicular emissions control (Ogunbemide, 2025) and the Nigeria Police Force's own green initiative (Adejobi, 2023). However, enforcement is undermined by weak institutional coordination, underfunding, low technological capacity, and interference from powerful private interests, alongside unclear role delineation among agencies (Onyeama and Kpea-ue, 2022; Ijaiya and Joseph, 2014).

Community policing shows promise as a complementary enforcement mechanism. Where formal enforcement capacity is limited, community-based policing initiatives appear to improve local compliance and reduce environmental and criminal infractions by involving residents directly in monitoring and problem-solving (Kenku and Umar, 2025; Ndakotsu, 2023). This suggests that environmental sustainability outcomes in Nigeria depend not only on statutory enforcement but on the degree to which enforcement is embedded within the communities it governs.

Conclusion

This paper looked at urbanization, policing and environmental sustainability in Nigeria, key concepts that are intertwined. Any urban environment comes with chaos and complexities that must be checkmated if society needs to be safe and preserved for future generations. The paper attempted to take the discussion up from two theoretical perspectives, From the point of view of social disorganization, most rural-to urban migrants are vulnerable people who often leave the rural areas to seek better life and opportunities in the urban centres, but cannot afford to live in the high brow areas of the urban centres, they settle in the urban outskirts that may be referred to as slums, with poor environmental conditions, lacking basic amenities, and involving in crime for survival. The areas breed environmental pollution and infectious diseases which pose high risk to the environment and society. The high rate of crime in these areas, make crime widespread and normative, thereby being transmitted across generations, also posing a risk to social safety and security. The paper also discussed the assertions of the broken window theory, where neglect and abandonment of properties or environmental safety can cause severe problems, that can become serious menace if not attended to quickly, thereby causing not just environmental problems, but helping crime to be institutionalized. The collaboration between relevant agencies and the community policing perspective, will help to deal with urban crimes including ecological and environment decay.

Recommendations

While government and other relevant agencies can be applauded for the efforts so far, It is recommended that

1. housing schemes and estates should be built not just for the affluent, but for low income earners, and the vulnerable who have found themselves in urban centres.
2. Green areas should be marked, proper road networks laid across communities, even developmental strides, urban development activities should be taken more seriously, environmental sanitation should be compulsory with proper monitoring, constantly dismantle structures that could aid crime.
3. Community policing activities should be extremely intentional to deal with environmental and other activities that may threaten the safety of society.
4. Community watchdogs and whistle blowing actions should become a factor and rewarded. If we all turn a blind eye, (broken window perspective), environmental problems will deteriorate so badly that it will pose real threats to our society, and there will be no safety for the next generation.

REFERENCES

- Abaidoo, R., & Agyapong, E. K. (2023). Environmental sustainability risk, institutional effectiveness and urbanization. *FUDMA Journal of Humanities, Social Science and Creative Arts*.
- Acha, S., Isangadighi, G. E., Chinedu, N. B., Clement, E., Airede, R., Ikhide, B. O., & Michael, J. A. (2025). Community perspectives on public safety, loss prevention, emergency management, and environmental sustainability in Oron, Nigeria. *Journal of African Innovation and Advanced Studies*.
- Adededeji, I. (2023). Nigerian urbanization and the significance of affordable housing. *Journal of Service and Management*, 16(3).
- Adejobi, O. (2023, November 30). NPF launches a green initiative for enhanced security operations with socioeconomic and environmental impact. Nigeria Police Force.
- Adenito, E. (2023). Urbanization and environmental sustainability: An ecological footprint analysis for Nigeria. *Sustainability, Agro Food and Environmental Research*, 12(2).
- Akinwale, P. O. (2018). Urban slums in Nigeria: Ensuring healthy living conditions. In *Gender and inequalities, housing and construction*.
- Ali, H. S., Law, S. H., & Zannah, T. I. (2016). Dynamic impact of urbanization, economic growth, energy consumption, and trade openness on CO₂ emissions in Nigeria. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 23, 12435–12443. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-016-6437-3>
- Ali, I., & Rahman, A. (2024). Urbanization: An overview of causes and sustainability. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 12(5), 153–157.
- Aliyu, A., & Amadu, L. (2017). Urbanization, cities, and health: The challenges to Nigeria. A review. *Annals of African Medicine*, 16(4), 149–155.
- Auwalu, F. K., & Bello, M. (2023). Exploring the contemporary challenges of urbanization and the role of sustainable urban development: A study of Lagos City, Nigeria. *Journal of Contemporary Urban Affairs*, 7(1), 175–188.
- Budnukaeku, A. C., & Hyginus, H. (2021). Environmental laws and management agencies in Nigeria: What hope for desecrated landscape. *Biodiversity International Journal*, 5(1).
- Deflem, M., & Hauptman, S. (2015). Policing. In *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.).
- Eghwere, C. O., & Imuteyan, O. (2019). Rural-urban migration and youth unemployment in Nigeria: Why public programmes fail. *Spotlight on Youth and Employment*.
- Ijaiya, H., & Joseph, O. T. (2014). Rethinking environmental law enforcement in Nigeria. *Beijing Law Review*, 5(4).
- Josh, J. (2016). Meaning of environment.
- Kamana, A., Radoine, H., & Nyasulu, C. (2024). Urban challenges and strategies in African cities: A systematic literature review. *City and Environment Interactions*, 21.
- Kehinde, O. J., & Odiaka, N. O. W. (2020). Community policing and environmental design: Panaceas to crime prevention in Ibadan, Nigeria. *UNIOSUN Journal of Engineering and Environmental Sciences*, 2(2).
- Kenku, A. A., & Umar, S. S. (2025). Localizing security: The benefits of community policing in enhancing safety in Nigeria. *Journal of Public Administration and Social Welfare Research*.
- Kumar, A. (2018). Brief introduction of environment, ecology and environmental pollution. *Inspira- Journal of Modern Management and Entrepreneurship*, 8(1), 314–322.

- Mumuni, A., & Abdulyakeem, A. (2024). The role of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) on crime prevention and management in Gombe State, Nigeria. *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies*, 17(1), 1104–1135.
- Nchanji, E., Cosmas, L., & Nchanji, U. (2023). Access to and control over resources in urban agriculture in Tamale, Ghana. In *Urban and regional agriculture: Building resilient food systems* (pp. 207–227).
- Ndakotsu, R. M. (2023). The role of community police in crime prevention and control for effective management. *Wukari International Studies Journal*, 7(1), 23.
- Nkereuwem, E., & Nyene, M. G. (2019). Urban slums and youth criminality in Bayelsa State, Nigeria: A study of selective slums settlements in Yenagoa metropolis. *International Journal of Development Strategies in Humanities, Management and Social Sciences*, 9(4).
- Odey, S.A (2023). Environmental law enforcement in Nigeria. A reevaluation. *Journal Ilmu sosiologi dialektika kontemporea*. vol 11 no. 1 P SSN: 2303-2324
- Ogunfemide, O. (2025). FRSC and NESREA join forces to tackle vehicular emissions, promote a sustainable environment. Federal Road Safety Corps Nigeria. January 30 2025
- Ogunkan, D. V.(2022). Achieving sustainable environmental governance in Nigeria: A review for policy consideration. *Urban governance* 2(5)
- Ohwo, O., & Abotutu, A (2015). Environmental impact of urbanisation in Nigeria. *Britain journal of applied science and technology* 9, 212-221
- Oikhala, G. I. (2022). Police and governance for sustainable development in Nigeria. *Romanian Journal of Public Affairs*, (5), 39-68.
- Okafor, S. O, Izueke, E.M. C, Onah, S O, Ugwu, C.E, Chuke, N. Y, Nkwede, J.O, Udenze, C, and Okoye, O.E (2022). Social ecology, climate change and environmental sustainability among urban/ semi urban settlements in south east Nigeria: Probing environmentally responsible behaviour and community development. *Applied ecology and environmental research* 21(3): 1869-1889
- Okegbe, O, Okechukwu, C. F .(2024). Rural- Urban migration in Nigeria: A menace to the development of Enugu urban. *ARCN international journal of development*. vol 8 issue1. pp77-92
- Olanyini, T. K and Agbaje, A.A (2024). Integrated solutions for urban sustainability in Lagos, Nigeria: enhancing accessibility and transportation efficiency. *International journal of innovative business strategies*. vol. 10, no. 1. pp 657-662
- Olojo, O. J., Olojuolawe, S. R., & Adewumi, M. G. (2024). Community Policing Framework for Engendering Sustainable Peace: Case of Ondo State Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*, 11(3), 343-352.
- Oloju, J.O, Sunday, O, & Adewumi, M.G (2024). community policing framework for engendering sustainable peace: Case study of Ondo state Nigeria. *International journal of research and scientific innovation*. Xi(iii) 343-352
- Onyeama, A & Kpea-ue, B.S (2023).Legal issues and challenges in effective enforcement and implementation oof laws addressing environmental pollution in Nigeria
- Orutonye, E.D &M Altayar, Y (2020). The role of enforcement in environmental protection in Nigeria. *World journal of research and reviews* 7(1): 048-056
- Patterson, N (2024). What is environmental sustainability? Goals with examples
- Radoine, H., Bajja, S., Chenal, J., & Ahmed, Z. (2022). Impact of urbanization and economic growth on environmental quality in Western Africa: Do manufacturing activities and renewable energy matter? *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, 10, 1012007. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fenvs.2022.1012007>
- Rogers, C. (2016). One. who are the police and what is policing)Bristol university press. pages 3-20

Romaniuk, , Kovalenko, S, Chernykh, M& Topyha,K, Kupienia, L (2024?).Policy and role of the criminal police in combating environmental crime. Journalof environmental law ans policy.ISSN 2564-016x

Sirra-Arevalo, M.(2024). American policing and the danger imperative. Law soc rev. 1 55(1): 70-103

Somoriya, F. C. (2024). Urban slums and overpopulation in Nigeria. A demographic review. International journal of law, politics and humanities research. vol 7

United Nations (2018)

United Nations (2019)