

P1.7. The Socio-Economic and Health Implications of Waste Scavenging on the Adolescent Youths - Olu-Olu Olufayo, University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria
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Background/Significance: Refuse-dump sites are common features of both rural and urban areas. The menace it poses to the individual and the environment has attracted the attention of the government and individuals alike. Waste disposal vehicles are daily seen on sites evacuating solid and liquid wastes but much as they try, efforts seem not yielding desired result. Local Industries have taken advantage of this to further worsen the situation. Hampered by the inability to procure import licenses due to the downturn of the economy which makes competition difficult with bigger companies, many of them have resulted to scavenging for solid wastes such as used bottles, vehicle spare-parts, etc. to keep them in business.

The teenage youths are therefore the readymade cheap labour employed at dump sites, the health hazards it poses, notwithstanding. They are motivated by very cheap economic rewards to keep them working laboriously to their detriment. Very many of these teenagers have withdrawn from schools, and/or apprenticeship and are daily ruining their health for peanuts offered by their employers. This poses serious risk to the society.

Objective: This study therefore examines the behavioural consequences of waste scavenging on the adolescent youths. It equally examines the implications of such dangerous adventures on the economy and the health of the nation.

Methodology & Data: A representative sample of four hundred and nineteen (419) respondents, were involved in the survey. The respondents were drawn from both the rural and urban areas each from Ondo and Ekiti States. The research instruments used were the questionnaire and Indept interview.

They were however complimented with visual observational technique. The questionnaire was designed using the Likert-scale but making it non-structured to accommodate personal views. The in-depth interview was conducted at the sites with the employed youths and their employers.

Findings: Findings revealed among others the seemingly lackadaisical attitude of government toward the plight of the youths, the local manufacturers and the future of the society in general. Apart from environmental hazards it poses to the people, it was revealed that refuse dumps has further diminished the image of the nation as well as exaggerating our backwardness. It was however suggested that government should show serious concern through effective legislations and implementation to stop the involvement of Nigeria future leaders in such health risky behaviours such as waste scavenging.