

Environmental Health Officers and Prosecution Duties for the Enforcement of Public Health Law in Anambra State, Southeast Nigeria: Problems and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

This field research work interrogated the socio-demographic characteristics of Environmental Health Officers working in Anambra state located in Southeast zone of Nigeria; and the assessment of their pre-engagement training courses in terms of extent of exposure to court processes and prosecution skills and knowledge. The study also interrogated the current level of competences of Environmental Health Officers (EHO) in the state with respect to prosecution of public health matters in courts of appropriate jurisdiction and obstacles they encounter in that regard. A sample size of two hundred (200) EHOs constituted the study participants who responded to the questionnaire that was used to collect quantitative data. The systematic sampling technique was adopted in their selection given the availability of a sampling frame in form of Register of Environmental Health Officers in Anambra state kept by Environmental Health Officers Association of Nigeria (EHOHAN), Anambra State Chapter. The statistical package for the social sciences was used to process data, while the chi-square test statistics was employed to test the hypothesis. The study found among other things, that pre-employment training or studies of EHOs were assessed by EHOs as grossly inadequate in terms of equipping the officers with relevant skills, knowledge and competencies required for effective prosecution of public health matters in courts. The officers have also not benefitted from update trainings or seminars and workshops over the years. Consequently, most of the officers have performed woefully with regards to prosecution of cases upon their employment leading to non abatement of several public nuisances in the state. The study thus strongly recommended that the curriculum for training of EHOs be updated to address the deficiency in the law training. They (EHOs) should be regularly exposed to workshops to update their knowledge and skill in prosecution of public health matters in courts.

Keywords: Environmental Health Officer, Prosecution Duties, Public Health Matters, Nuisances.

INTRODUCTION

Sridhar (2006) citing World Health Organization (WHO, 1952) defined Environmental Health as the control of all those factors in man's physical environment which exercise, or may exercise, a deleterious effect on his physical, mental, or social well-being. In particular, it refers to the control of:

- Methods for the disposal of excreta, sewage and community waste to ensure that they are adequate and safe;
- Water supplies, to ensure that they are pure and wholesome;
- Housing to ensure that it is of a character likely to provide as few opportunities as possible for the direct transmission of disease, especially respiratory infections, and encourage healthful habits in the occupants;

- Milk and other food supplies, to ensure that they are safe;
- Personal and public habits or other alternative hosts associated with human disease;
- Atmosphere conditions, to ensure that the external atmosphere is free from deleterious elements and that the internal conditions of workshops, houses, etc are suitable for the occupation undertaken (WHO, 1952).

Thus, environmental health is a broad field of study that deals with the management or amelioration of factors in the environment, which if left untamed, will interfere adversely with public health. Control of environmental conditions has become increasingly important to protect and maintain the health of man as well as his sense of well being.

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Against the above background, Environmental Health officers, also called Sanitarians constitute a group of public health professionals who protect public health.

They control detrimental conditions in man's environment through education, consultation, regulation, and investigation and expert suggestions. Environmental health officers' work towards reducing risks and eliminating dangers to human health associated with man's living and working environment. As a noble and full fledged profession, Environmental Health Officers are licensed before they could practice in United Kingdom, America and Nigeria among other countries.

Specifically in Nigeria, the then President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo signed the Environmental Health Officers Registration Council (EHORECON) Bill into Law and the Council was consequently inaugurated at Abuja on the 15th of March 2004. The Council now sees to the accreditation, certification, and registration in the environmental health profession.

Environmental Health Officers provide expertise in the following public health areas:-

- Policing and protecting the nation from diseases and pollution.
- Food service sanitation and food safety.
- Housing and attendant nuisance control.
- Public health nuisance control.
- Fostering safe and sanitary conditions in public swimming pools, recreational areas, youth camp, resorts, fairs, festivals, hotels and motels.
- Sewage treatment and disposal.
- Indoor air quality control.
- Water supplies and water quality control or monitoring.
- Solid and hazardous waste management and disposal to ensure that health and safety conditions are maintained.
- Control of communicable diseases: the environmental health officer through various immunization programmes, specific disease control and surveillance programmes, as well as other measures aimed at breaking the link in the chain of transmission of both endemic and epidemic diseases.
- Consulting and education by proactively participating in teams promoting safe living conditions for children, older adults, migrant workers and other vulnerable populations.

In view of the above functions, Environmental Health Officers are by all standards, polyvalent officers, and administrators with a vision to police and ensure that man's total environment is safe, conducive and healthy for his survival. In discharging their duties, Environmental Health Officers are guided by the Public Health Laws applicable in their area of work which provisions they implement.

In Anambra state, located in the Southeast zone of Nigeria, the current law in place is titled as 'Public Health Law, Cap 111, The Revised Laws of Anambra State of Nigeria, Volume 7, 1991'. Environmental health officers practicing in the state are expected to use the law to regulate the entire state environment. For instance, Section 11 of the law granted the officers right of entry into any premises in the state, between the hours 6.00am and 6.00pm and at all reasonable hours, for purposes of inspection, detection and abatement of public health nuisances. Section 7m of aforementioned law defined public health nuisances as 'any act, omission, place or thing , which is or which may be dangerous to life or injurious to health or property'. Also, Section 46 of the same law provided that "Every sanitary inspector, while acting as such, shall by virtue of his appointment and without being sworn in, be deemed to be a police officer, and shall have all the powers and privileges of a police officer for the purpose of the execution of his duty under this law". It is on the strength of the provision of Section 46 quoted above that EHO's derive their power to prosecute matters bothering on infringement of public health regulations in courts of appropriate jurisdiction. The EHO's are empowered to arraign such matters before the court by themselves without need to hire counsel. This research paper therefore investigated the issues and problems encountered by EHO's especially with respect to prosecution of matters in courts in their attempt to abate public health nuisances.

Statement of the Problem

The state of health of man is related to the quality of his physical and social environment among other factors.

Accordingly, Erinosh and Oke (2004) noted that in Nigeria, the social and cultural factors of the environment are crucial in the definition of health status of the people. Similarly, in relating environmental quality to the state of health of man, Babanyara, Usman & Saleh (2010) argued

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that filthy and unkempt environment poses tremendous threat to mankind. According to them, such environment breeds disease germs that attack man.

On their part, the Environmental Health Officers Association of Nigeria (EHOAN, 2007) decried the increasing magnitude of environmental health problems facing rural and urban towns in Nigeria. The Association outlined some of the problems to include poor sanitary conditions, pollution of land, air and water through contamination by biological, chemical and physical agents that arise from natural events, human activity or the interaction of the two. Other environmental health problems identified by EHOAN (2007) include inadequate solid waste disposal, effluent discharge, rapid and unplanned urbanization, mining hazards, increasing use of chemical fertilizers and insecticides, poor meat and food hygiene, emission of green house gases and the depletion of the ozone layer. Others are climate change, flood disasters, deforestation, drought and desertification etc.

She (EHOAN, 2007) further observed that many diseases that contribute to incidences of mortality in Nigeria are environment related; and that environmental health problems in urban centers are compounded by rapid population growth, rapid industrialization and massive level of ignorance (poor environmental health education / awareness).

The prevailing excruciating poverty of many urban dwellers also contributes to their not taking proactive actions to safeguard their environment.

In his attempt to emphasize the need for preservation of environment, Obianyo (2004) recounted that human beings use the environment in three basic ways: As a resource bank – the environment supplies them with raw materials needed to maintain their existence and their social and technological structures; As a habitat – people require more space per individual than any other species; and As sink for wastes – human beings produce more waste than other species. Unwise use of the natural environment due to ignorance, poverty, over population and greed amongst others led to its degradation. With specific reference to Anambra state, Obianyo (2004) also recounted problems of poor sanitation and refuse disposal system, discharge of sewage water on roads, dirty gutters/drainages, uncontrolled street

trading, and unsanitary habits of residents, congested transport system, and serious environmental pollution. All these conditions constitute public health nuisances and are hazardous for human living. There is also problem of people's unwillingness to participate in sanitation exercises or take proactive measures on environmental health matters

Interestingly, Centre for Public Health, University of Liverpool (2009) has warned that mankind's activities within the environment in quest for development have resulted in a continuous and serious degradation of the ecosystem, thus posing serious threat to man's present and future living. It is against the backdrop of above discussed environmental health problems which have implications defined by time, space, quality of use, and level of socio-economic development amongst others, that the research was conducted to ascertain responses and problems encountered by Environmental Health Officers (EHO) in their bid to prosecute public health offenders in courts of appropriate jurisdiction in Anambra State of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

- In what ways do Environmental Health Officers employed in Anambra state assess the quality of their school training for prosecution duties and enforcement of the provisions of Public Health Law upon graduation and posting to duty posts?
- How do Environmental Health Officers working in Anambra state assess their level of knowledge relevant to prosecution and court processes for purposes of enforcement of provisions of Public Health Law in the State?
- What are the obstacles confronting Environmental Health Officers in Anambra state in performing their prosecution duties for the enforcement of Public Health Law in the State?
- What measures should be put in place to enhance the capacity of Environmental Health Officers in prosecution of cases in courts for the enforcement of Public Health Law in Anambra State, Southeast Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

The understated hypothesis was proposed and tested in the study;

There is a significant relationship between level of professional educational attainment of Environmental Health Officers in Anambra state and their assessment of the quality of their school training on prosecution

Theoretical Thrust

This study is anchored on the human ecological theory which focuses on the relationship between people and their environment. According to Nnatu (2010), ecologists examine how people influence their environment and how the physical environment shape people's lives.

In his application of the human ecological perspective to social discourse, Sociologist Riley Dunlap cited in Mooney, Knox and Schacht (2000) suggested that the natural environment serves three basic functions for humans, as it does for other animal species. They are:

- The environment provides the resources essential for life: These include air, water, and materials used to create shelter, transportation and needed products. If human societies exhaust these resources for example, by polluting the water supply or cutting down rain forests, the consequences can be dire.
- The environment serves as a waste repository: More than other living species, human beings produce a huge quantity and variety of waste products like bottles, boxes, papers, sewage, garbage, to name just a few. Various types of pollution have become more common because human societies are generating more wastes than the environment can safely absorb.
- The environment "houses" human species: It is our home, our living space, and the place where we reside, work, and play. At times, man may take this for granted, but when day-to-day living conditions become unpleasant and difficult, if our air is "heavy", if our tap water turns brown, if toxic chemicals seep into our neighborhood, we remember why it is vital to live in a healthful environment.

The way man handles the environment determines the level of effect it has on him or the environmental health problems that will emerge. When individuals harness the natural resources unlawfully or dump refuse indiscriminately, the aftermath is always very

disastrous. Environmental Health Officers play crucial roles towards averting such disaster by detecting health nuisances and taking appropriate actions (including prosecution of offenders in courts) in order to enforce provisions of Public Health Law of the state.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The area of the study is Anambra state, located in the Southeast region of Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. Only Environmental Health Officers constituted the sample size of two hundred (200) study participants who responded to the questionnaire that was used to collect quantitative data. The systematic sampling technique was adopted in the selection of the study participants. For that purpose, the register of Environmental Health Officers in Anambra state kept by Environmental Health Officers Association of Nigeria (EHOHAN), Anambra State Chapter was used as sampling frame.

Also, three (3) respondents who were equally Environmental Health Officers were interviewed with a view to complement quantitative data. The three (3) respondents interviewed were purposively drawn using inclusion criteria that such interviewee must not have less than 30 years work experience, and must not be below the rank of Deputy Director of Environmental Health Services. In addition, the interviewee must have headed Environmental Health Unit of a Local Government Area in the State for a period of not less than three years.

The questionnaire contained closed ended questions while the interview schedule had open ended items. Both instruments were pre tested in neighboring Enugu state for reliability after validation by senior academics that thoroughly checked their contents vis-à-vis their appropriateness to meet research objectives.

The researcher and two assistants administered the questionnaire made up of 23 closed ended items on self administered basis. The interview was conducted with an interview guide that contained 10 open ended items. It was held at respondents' offices with the help of the two research assistants using tape recorder and field notebook for recording.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to process the data. Data collected was analyzed at three levels. At the univariate level, simple percentages and frequency distribution tables were used. At the

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bivariate level, the stated hypotheses were tested with chi-square (χ^2) test statistic which measured association and frequency. At the multi-variate level, logistic regression analysis was used to predict 'disposition to prosecution duties of Environmental Health Officers' across socio-demographic attributes of respondents. The qualitative data was analyzed using manual content analysis technique involving transcription, data cleaning, and collation according to

Table1. Socio-Demographic Data of Respondents

	Frequency (n = 195)			Total %
	Male	Female	Don't know	
Gender What is your sex?	47(24%)	148(75.9%)	-	100
Religious Affiliation What is your religious affiliation?	Christian 184(95%)	Moslem 2 (2%)	Others 4 (4%)	100
Place of Work/Service Do you work in urban or rural area?	Urban 108(55.4%)	Rural 84(43.1%)	Don't know 3(1.5%)	100
Age Category To which of these age category do you belong?	21- 40yrs 154(79%)	41-61yrs 36(18.5%)	>61 yrs 5(2.5%)	100
Length of Service For how long have you worked as Environmental Health Officer (EHO) in Anambra state?	1-10 years 18(9.4%)	11-20 years 112(57.4%)	21-30 years 65(33.4%)	100
Environmental Health Qualification/Training obtained prior to license/practice	HND Envi Health 127(65.1%)	B.Sc Envi Health 52(26.7%)	M.Sc MPH 16(8.2%)	100
Additional Law Qualification/Training In addition to EHO's certificate and registration with their Council which other qualification do you possess?	LLB 3(1.5%)	Dip in law ---	None 192(98.5%)	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Table 1 shows that there are more females who work as EHO in Anambra state than males. Majority of EHO in the state (79%) are within the age category 21-40 years old with a mean age of 36.52 years.

Analysis of Research Questions

Four research questions were asked to guide this study. These questions are re-stated and analyzed accordingly.

Research Question 1

In what ways do Environmental Health Officers employed in Anambra state assess the quality of their school training for prosecution duties and enforcement of provisions of Public Health Law upon graduation and posting to duty posts? The findings are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents (88.7%) were of the view that they were not adequately taught issues relating to prosecution in the course of their training.

themes, and interpretation. Relevant areas of qualitative data were used to support the quantitative and were sometimes reported verbatim at the level of analysis/ interpretations.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Out of the 200 questionnaires distributed, only 195 were completely filled and returned and consequently used for analysis.

Table2. Distribution of Respondents by their view on whether they were adequately taught issues relating to prosecution duties in the course of their training as Environmental Health Officers

Responses	Frequency	Percent
No	173	88.7
Yes	22	11.3
Total	195	100.0

Table3. Distribution of Respondents by their assessment the quality/adequacy of their professional training for prosecution assignments and enforcement of provisions of Public Health Law in Anambra State

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Very Adequate	19	9.7
Moderately Adequate	22	11.3
Inadequate	56	28.7
Grossly inadequate	98	50.1
Total	195	100.0

Table 3 shows that 98(50.1%) of the respondents who constitute the majority, saw the content of the training for prosecution duties as

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grossly inadequate, while only 19 (9.7%) were of the opinion that their training for prosecution was very adequate. The interviewees had similar view. One of them asserted that ‘lawyers were not brought in to be part of their training team’

Research Question 2

How do Environmental Health Officers working in Anambra state assess their level of knowledge relevant to prosecution and court processes for enforcement of Public Health Law in the State? The findings are shown in tables 4 and 5.

Table 4 indicates that 136 (69.7%) of the respondents which is the majority believe that

they are not knowledgeable about prosecution duties for purposes of implementing Public Health Law in Anambra state.

Table4. *Distribution of Respondents by their opinion on how knowledgeable they are about prosecution duties for purposes of implementing Public Health Law*

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Very Knowledgeable	20	10.3
Fairly Knowledgeable	31	15.9
Knowledgeable	8	4.1
Not Knowledgeable	136	69.7
Total	195	100.0

Table5. *Distribution of Respondents by their Opinion on Subjects Related to their Prosecution Duties and Enforcement of Public Health Law in Anambra State (using 6-point Criteria).*

6-Point Opinion Profile on Prosecution Duties	Frequency (n = 195)			Total %
	Yes	No	Uncertain	
Preparation of Abatement Notice Do you know how to prepare and serve an Abatement Notice tenable in court?	148 (75.9%)	46 (24.1%)	3(1.5%)	100
Ever Testified in Court for Abatement of Health Nuisance Have you testified in court in a public health matter upon graduation?	40(20.53%)	155 (79.5%)	-	100
Preparation of Court Summons Do you know how to draft/prepare a valid court summon for public health matter?	41(21.02%)	154 (78.97%)	-	100
Preparation of Charge sheet Can you prepare a legally tenable charge sheet for prosecution of public health matter?	36 (18.46%)	159 (81.5%)	-	100
Knowledge of Public Health Law of Anambra State Are you very conversant with provisions of Public Health Law of Anambra state?	52 (26.66%)	140 (71.79%)	3(1.54%)	100
Ever Sued an Author of Nuisance to Court In your years of practice as EHO have you ever sued authors of public health nuisance to court?	48 (22.56%)	144 (73.84%)	3(1.54%)	100
Ever won a public health matter in court Have you ever won a public health matter in court appropriate jurisdiction?	43 (22.05%)	150 ((76.92%))	2 (1.03%)	100

Field Survey, 2017.

Table 5 above shows that EHOs working at various local governments in Anambra state have not done well with respect to prosecution matters and other applicable court processes in their years of practice. This accounts for the high rate of negative responses to most of the items on Table 5.

Table6. *Distribution of Respondents by their opinion about the major obstacle confronting Environmental Health Officers in Anambra state in performing their prosecution duties for the enforcement of Public Health Law in the State*

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Inadequate training on prosecution and court processes	98	50.3
Corrupt court officials and judicial system	32	16.4
Out-dated provisions of Public Health Law in the state	26	13.3
Lack of regular re-training programmes and seminars on prosecution and court processes	39	20.0
Low fines for public health offenders	-	-
Total	195	100.0

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Table 6 shows that the majority of the respondents agreed that inadequate training is the most important factor that affect prosecution challenges experienced by EHOs in Anambra state.

Table7. Distribution of Respondents by their view on how often they have attended lecture/seminars to broaden their knowledge and competences in the area of court processes and prosecution of cases

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Monthly	-	-
Quarterly	-	-
Every six months	3	1.5
Yearly	1	.5
Yet to attend any update seminar after graduation	193	98
Total	195	100.0

Research Question 4

What measures should be put to enhance the capacity of Environmental Health Officers in prosecution of cases in courts for the

enforcement of Public Health Law in Anambra State, Southeast Nigeria? The findings are shown in table 8 below.

Table8. Distribution of Respondents by their view on measures should be put to enhance the capacity of Environmental Health Officers in prosecution of cases in courts for the enforcement of Public Health Law in Anambra State, Southeast Nigeria

Responses	No	Percent
Government should set up special courts for speedy trial of public health matters	1	1.1%
Engagement of lawyers to prosecute public health cases on behalf of EHOs	11	11.6%
Payment of court attendance allowance to EHOs to motivate them to go through the rigors and adjournments of cases in courts	13	13.7%
Review of the curriculum for training EHOs in the state to accommodate relevant subjects on prosecution and court processes	31	32.6%
Adequate sensitization and regular workshops, seminars and re-training programmes for Environmental Health Officers on court processes	20	21.1%
Adequate funding of environmental health offices to enable them meet all financial obligations relevant to prosecution	15	15.8%
Review of Public Health Law to ensure that adequate punishments were provided against breaches or defaulters	1	1.1%
Employment of more Environmental Health Officers	3	3.2%
Total	95	100.0%

Table 8 shows that majority of the respondents saw review of the curriculum for training EHOs in the state to accommodate relevant subjects crucial to prosecution and court processes as the most important measure to be put in place to enhance the capacity of EHOs in prosecution and court processes.

Test of Hypothesis

The researcher tested the two hypotheses postulated for this study. The details are as follows:

Hypothesis 1

“There is a significant relationship between level of professional educational attainment of Environmental Health Officers in Anambra state

and their assessment of their quality of your school training on prosecution.” Data in table 3 formed the basis for testing hypothesis. Test results are shown on Table 9 below.

The computed value of Chi-square is 43.861 while the table value of chi-square at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom (df) of 18 is 28.869. Since the computed chi square value is greater than the critical value, the researcher accepted the alternative hypothesis. It follows therefore that there is a significant relationship between level of professional educational attainment of Environmental Health Officers in Anambra state and their assessment of the quality of their school training on prosecution.

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Table9. Relationship (association) between level of professional educational attainment of Environmental Health Officers in Anambra state and their assessment of the quality of their school training on prosecution.

What level of professional education have you attained	Which of these represents your assessment of the quality of your school training on prosecution					$\chi^2(18, N=193) = 43.861, P < .001$
	Very adequate	Moderately Adequate	Inadequate	Grossly Inadequate	Total	
No formal education	-	-	-	-	-	
FSLC	-	-	-	-	-	
B.Sc Envi.	10	6	21	15	52	
HND Envi.	9	13	29	73	121	
M.Sc Envi	-	3	5	8	16	
LLB	-	-	1	2	3	
Dip in law	-	-	-	-	-	
Total	19	22	56	98	195	

Table10. Logistic Regression Predicting the Influence of Socio-Demographic Variables on ‘Disposition to Prosecution Duties of Environmental Health Officers in Anambra state’.

	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Length of service	-.672	.071	88.569	1	.000	.521
Sex	-.352	.165	4.577	1	.031	1.424
Religion	-.536	.136	15.562	1	.000	.583
Law Education	.340	.067	25.453	1	.000	1.405
Occupation	.076	.044	3.053	1	.082	1.078
Constant	1.066	.473	5.085	1	.024	2.905

According to the distribution in the table, three variables, length of service, religion, and of additional law education (e.g. LLB or Diploma in law) were statistically very significant ($p<0.000$). The exponential of the distribution shows that respondents who are older in service are more likely to be positively disposed to court prosecution duties and responsibilities of Environmental Health Officers than younger ones.

Also, those with additional law qualifications are 140% more likely to be positively disposed than those with only environmental health officers certificates or qualifications lower level of education. Therefore length of service and possession of additional law training are good predictors on disposition to prosecution duties of environmental health officers with law education being the best predictor.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This research has far reaching findings in four core areas relevant to the research questions. These include social demographic characteristics of EHOs in Anambra state; their assessment of their training prior to engagement; their current competences and obstacles they encounter in respect of prosecution of matters relating to public health in courts of appropriate jurisdiction. With respect to social demographic characteristics of EHOs in Anambra state, the study found that

the female gender constitute up to 75.9% of officers. This has implications for effective discharge of duties of EHOs in the state including prosecution of cases in courts. This is because females are often referred to as the weaker sex and compounded by several children rearing and household chores they attend to in Nigeria’s patriarchal society, effective performance of their official duties are usually undermined.

Secondly, majority of EHOs in the state (about 65.9%) possess HND in Environmental Health as the only certificate enabling them to practice (without further exposure to seminars and workshops) on court processes and prosecution or law degrees/diploma. Also, majority of EHOs in the state (about 33.6%) have put in about 20-30years length of service and are obviously lacking in relevant skill and knowledge depth required to mitigate contemporary environmental health challenges through applicable court processes. In view of these findings, refuse accumulation which could be abated by suing culprits to court (when health education and other processes have failed) remains a major environmental health problem in Anambra state. This assertion is consistent with the views of Mogbo (2004) and Agu (2004) cited in Nwankwo (2006). There are also secondary environmental health problems such as the effects of economic development such as air, water and land pollution occasioned by industrialization and urbanization. With regards to how EHOs in

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Anambra state assess their training prior to engagement, this study also found that majority of EHO in the ((88.7%) believe that they were not adequately taught issues/subjects relevant to court processes and prosecution of public health offences. More than 50% of the officers assessed the quality of their training on prosecution of cases as grossly inadequate. Similarly, 69.7% of the officers categorically stated that they are not knowledgeable about court processes and prosecution public health matters. These findings provide a lot of information on why EHOs in the state may not creditably discharge their functions relative to arraigning defaulters of public health provisions to court and to secure favorable judgments.

The most worrisome finding of this research is related to the level of competences of EHOs in Anambra state as it relates to court processes and prosecution of public health offenders. It was found that majority of EHOs in the state cannot correctly prepare an Abatement Notice; have never testified in court in a public health matter; cannot adequately prepare a court summons or charge sheet; and do not know the State Public Health Law well. Similarly, majority of EHOs in Anambra state have never sued any matter for abatement of public health nuisance to a court and has never won any such matter bothering on public health in court of appropriate jurisdiction. These findings are direct reflections of the shallow depth of knowledge, skill and overall competences in court procedures and prosecution yawning to be filled, if EHOs in the state will leave up to their responsibilities towards prosecution of public health offenders.

With regards to obstacle they encounter in discharge of their prosecution duties, majority of EHOs in the state (about 50.3%) identified inadequate training on prosecution and court processes as the major handicap they face. The situation is further compounded by the fact that 98% of the officers are yet to attend any post graduation training on processes and prosecution. In this regard, the officers obviously cannot give what they do not have.

Consequent upon the findings discussed above, the prediction of ‘disposition to prosecution duties of Environmental Health Officers using multiple regression approach revealed interesting result.

Three variables, length of service, religion, and of additional law education (e.g. LLB or

Diploma in law) were statistically very significant ($p<0.000$). The exponential of the distribution shows that respondents who are older in service are more likely to be positively disposed to court prosecution duties and responsibilities of Environmental Health Officers than younger ones. Also, those with additional law qualifications are 140% more likely to be positively disposed than those with primary environmental health officers certification or lower levels of education. Therefore length of service and possession of additional law training are good predictors on disposition to prosecution duties of environmental health officers with law education being the best predictor. The implication of this result is that there is immense need to further equip EHOs with additional training exposures in the area of law for effective discharge of their prosecution assignments.

The Environmental Officers Registration Council of Nigeria must thus include law related modules in their mandatory training sessions for the officers. Also, lawyers should be part of the teaching team of Schools of Health Technology in Nigeria which produce most EHOs practicing in the country.

It is also obvious from the findings that other social groups were not fully mobilized to play supportive roles or give technical assistance to Environmental Health Officers relevant to court matters. This view is in line with the contentions of Nwankwo (2006) who had earlier stressed that the greatest challenge to the environmental health standards in Anambra State and indeed Nigeria, is the inability of the agencies to seek the co-operation of socio-cultural groups (like Nigeria Bar Association) that abound in the Nigerian society. The role of partnerships with socio-cultural groups and private organizations should be solicited and maintained in the spirit of multi-sectoral approach.

Furthermore, the adequacy of the theoretical framework adopted for this study is not in doubt. The human ecological theory with its emphasis on interrelationships between people and their environment is totally in tune with the findings of this study.

The state of environmental health in Anambra state is related to the actions and inactions of EHOs in the state vis –a-vis the peoples’ overall response to their environment. Public health nuisances tend to increase Anambra state because EHOs lack the competency to sue

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offenders to court and get judgments that will deter others.

This study recommends that effective public enlightenment campaign by government and non-governmental agencies be mounted through the mass media and other arrangements. The focus of such campaign will be on the roles of EHOs in prosecution of public health offenders, and the co-operation or support expected from the public. Such effort will generate new turn of positive events. Also, government should adequately fund environmental health officers' education and re-training. Such money should be used to purchase texts, and attract experts including lawyers and doctors who may have relevant inputs.

It must also be pointed out that everybody cannot be an Environmental health officer. Some politicians and administrators see environmental health duty as an all comers affair. Such duties have been used to offer political patronage to party stalwarts who often contribute to low morale of the professionals. The position of this paper is that Environmental Health Practice constitute of complex and intricate duties such as environmental monitoring, prosecution of offenders, pollution control, industrial toxicology, pest control, food poisoning and animal welfare. It demands intellectual analysis of health problems, creativity, control and evaluation which the EHO must be adequately equipped by training and re-training to meet.

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