

# An Analytical Evaluation of Urban Open Space Policies in Nigeria

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## Abstract

The governance of urban open spaces in Nigeria has been hindered by ineffective policy frameworks that are not sustainable. In spite of all these challenges Urban Open Space provides sense of neighbourhood integration and also facilitates physical exercise and better mental health for urban residents. Efforts for sustainable frameworks yielded no notable accomplishments yet. Between June 2018 and March 2023, a literature review was conducted to enhance understanding. The review on Urban Open Space Policy employed a thorough analysis of published papers from reputable databases like Scopus and Web of Science. After careful screening, thirty relevant publications were selected, ensuring scholarly rigor in examining urban open space policy. Based on the findings, it is evident that there is currently no sustainable policy framework in place due to several factors such as urbanization, land use conversion/change, lack of stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes, and limited participation from professionals within the built environment sector. The complexities faced hinder the establishment of efficient governance in urban open spaces in Nigeria. It proposes the need for a policy framework considering stakeholders' interests to ensure long-term sustainability. Further studies should also focus on rural open spaces to reduce problem of urbanization in the urban areas.

**Keywords:** Urban Open Space, Governance, Urbanization, Sustainable Policy Framework

## Introduction

Rapid urban population growth, a lack of effective governance, and a lack of knowledge are the main causes of Nigeria's current state of insufficient open space legislation. Each of these has a result on the qualities and characteristics of urban open space in terms of possible applications, which depend on its quality and substance (Johnson, 2018). By 2050, the United Nations anticipated that Asia and Africa would be home to more than 70% of the world's population. This shows that urbanization is spreading, especially in underdeveloped nations like Nigeria. Urban areas in Africa are growing quickly, which has resulted in slums (Adejumo, 2020). Statistics show that growth in developing nations has averaged 3%, while it has recently increased to 5.5%. Given that the 2018 Habitat II global agenda calls for improving living conditions to address the social, political, economic, and physical demands of the city,

policymakers attempt to build an urban open space network in human settlements. (Adejumo, 2020).

The need for more open space cannot be overstated at this time because it is a worldwide issue. Governmental policies have been found to have a significant impact on the growth of open space all around the world, according to research conducted by (Hung, 2021). Additionally, a number of studies have observed that developing countries like Nigeria are particularly affected by this issue of ineffective policies. The pieces of (Officha, 2018) have demonstrated this.

There are laws in the United Kingdom that support the creation of open spaces (Bako et al., 2018). Despite the existence of national rules, the majority of open space-related laws and decisions are often made at the local government level (Michael, 2019; Emenike, 2019). To establish excellent governance in the administration of open space, an effective governmental policy framework is required. Resources must be accessible and stakeholders must be involved for this to happen. Such an arrangement happens in the open, taking previous laws, the general public's interests, and society norms into account. Coordination and collaboration are used to operationalize decision-making and implementation, but with the distribution of power, legitimacy, and other factors defined by policy tools.

Nigerians are well-informed about the importance of open space legislation, per a recent analysis by (Agboola & Said, 2018). Only 20% of Nigeria's 180 million people are said to be aware of the norms governing open spaces, while 80% of the population is said to be ignorant of them. A lack of statutory laws, poor management, corruption, and political influence have all been linked to the intrusion on the scant open spaces that do continue (Officha, 2018). According to a comparable study on the administration and control of public open spaces in Lagos, Nigeria, by (Ayeni, 2019), 62% of respondents believed that the main the cause of the invasion in our open places is the lack of Effective Statutory laws. Only 28% of respondents said they did, with 10% saying that political power is less important than population. The National Code of 2006, the most recent law in Nigeria, contained limits on urban land use rather than open space laws. The National Assembly has not yet passed the code into law, even though it was developed and given financing (Ayeni, 2019).

According to various scholars, there are problems with Nigeria's urban open space policy that call for further inquiry. One of these might explain why Urban Open Space Policies in Nigeria have not gotten enough attention, despite study efforts. This study aims to address the challenges stated above through a rigorous investigation of the factors affecting urban open space regulations. The primary sections of this paper are the Introduction, methodology, analysis of Nigerian urban open space policies, results and recommendation.

### **Methodology**

A database, Science Direct, Scopus, Web of Science, and Web of Science were all utilized in the systematic evaluation of journal articles that were published between June 2018 and March 2023. Urban Open Space and Open Space Policies were utilized as search terms in accordance with the study's objectives.

According to the works of (Wittermore et al., 2018), one of the best scientific research methods that can be used for dependability and validity in giving objective data with obvious

outcomes and conclusions is a systematic review. Any open area in an urban setting that provides opportunities for social, commercial, and recreational interactions is referred to as an urban open space (Adejumo, 2020). The systematic review procedure included a thorough search methodology that looked at published papers, peer-reviewed journals, and conference proceedings. This took place from June 2018 until March 2023. The systematic review adhered to the recommendations made by (Wittermore, Knafl, & Gray, 2018) by developing research questions, gathering data, and identifying relevant and related studies based on the topic, assessing the significance of the study, summarizing the evidence as it appears in the author's conclusions, and analyzing the review's findings and outcomes.

Owing to its massive database, Scopus served as the study's primary database source (Falagas et al., 2018). Scopus, Science Direct, and Google Scholar were used in the research. The search strategy for the review used the phrase combination "Urban Open Space Policies in Nigeria." 300 abstracts and publications were discovered during the initial database search across several sources. A total of 200 abstracts and papers were left after 100 duplicates were discovered and eliminated. 90 abstracts and papers were removed based on the a priori exclusion criteria after additional examination by the authors, leaving 110 abstracts and papers. 45 abstracts and papers were discarded from the remaining 90, resulting in the creation of the remaining 65 abstracts and manuscripts. A scale of 1 to 3 was used to score the 65 abstracts and papers, with 1 denoting poor relevance, 2 denoting moderate relevance, and 3 denoting excellent relevance. The remaining 30 publications and abstracts with high relevance were deemed appropriate for evaluation after 35 were eliminated. Finally, only abstracts and articles with a rating of 3 (high relevance) were included in the study of Urban Open Space Policies in Nigeria. Only mentioning open space was regarded to be of low significance in abstracts and publications (1), however, it was determined that it was highly relevant to solely address urban open space policy (3). The systematic review procedure is depicted in Figure 1 below.

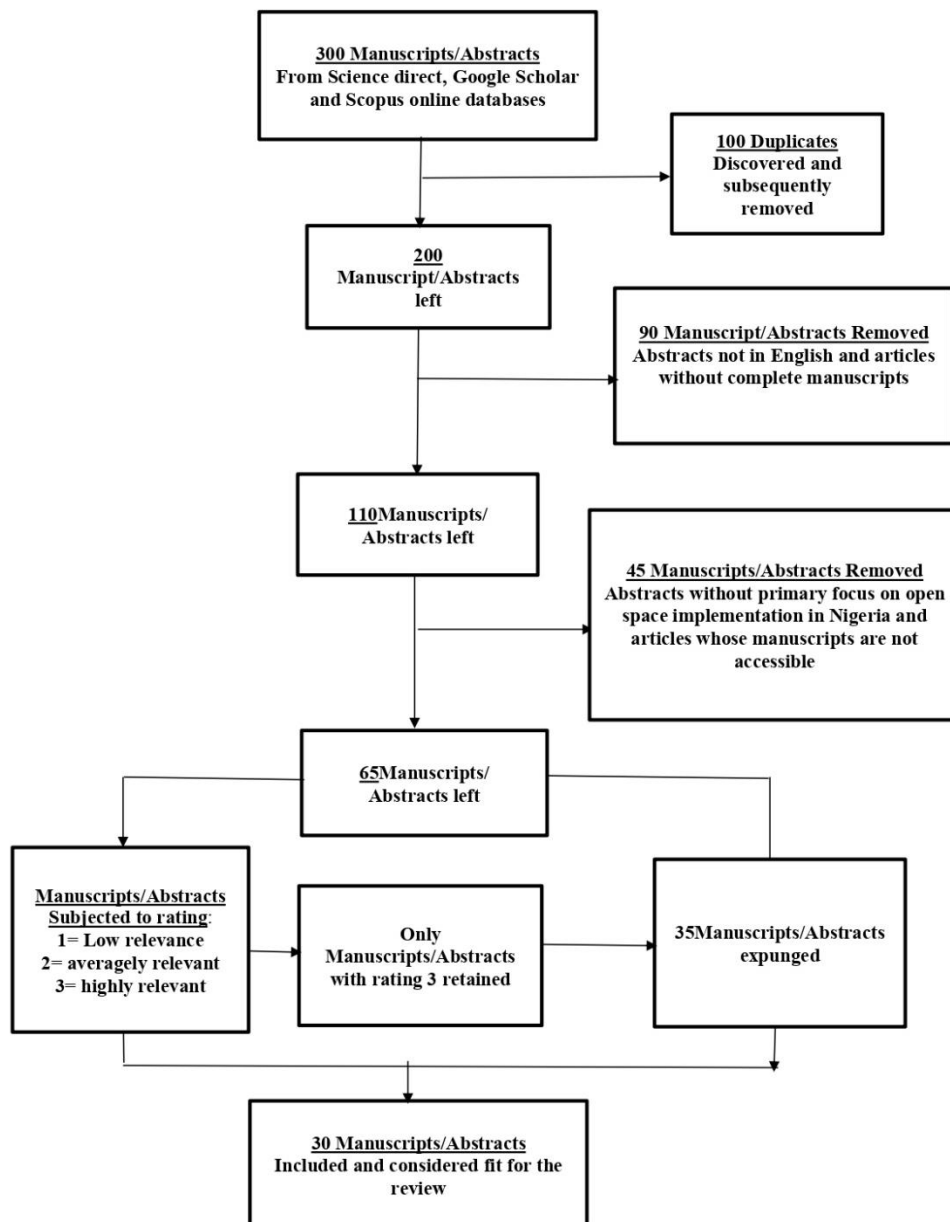


Figure 1 Systematic review flowchart for the study

### Data Collection - A Selection of Respondents

Focusing on those that were effectively collected and screened article manuscripts from online databases as indicated in the technique, the evaluated articles/manuscripts are offered as follows:

The United Kingdom's open space policy employs a number of strategies, including the public acquisition and management policy (Michael, 2019), the sub-division exaction sensitive regions for open space [38], and others. Additionally, incentives form the basis of open space legislation (Hung, 2021). The UK has a strategy of providing two hectares per 1,000 people, according to (Bako et al., 2018). The American Policies on Open Space stipulate the requirement that two hectares per 1000 people are required to be made accessible for metropolitan areas, in contrast to Australia, which suggests providing 2.83 hectares per 1000 inhabitants (Hung, 2021).

In Malaysia the Malaysian Parliaments mandate that 10% of every development be left aside for open space, while the practice varies from state to state (Bako et al., 2018). The quantity of open space that should be provided for each development can be determined using a variety of methods, including the land ownership approach, the number of dwelling unit approach, the size of the development, and the area approach (Officha, 2018). In contrast, the 2018 National Environmental Management Area Act of South Africa stipulates that 1000 hectares must be set aside for every 1000 inhabitants. According to the (United Nations Development Program, 2019) open space principles, Urban open space should occupy around 50% of the surface of a healthy urban area. There should be one hectare of open space for every 600 people.

The federal, state, and local governments of Nigeria all have policies pertaining to urban open spaces. The ineffectiveness of the policies is the issue, claims (Ayeni, 2019). They consequently failed. The Federal Government of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution stipulates that local governments are in charge of setting up regional park organizations and choosing specific areas for public parks. However, because local governments were given complete control over them, the concept was never put into practice (Adejumo, 2020; Barnabas, 2020; Edomwonyi, 2020). In 1976 Adejumo (2020), Nigeria predicted 40,000 people per hectare, while in 2002, it predicted 14,000 people per hectare. The policies were ineffective because of the population density per available hectare (Adejumo, 2020; Michael, 2019; Ayeni, 2019; Barnabas, 2020; Edomwonyi, 2020). Due to a research on different facets of open space rules in Nigeria's geographical zones, the Lagos State Parks Commission, an agency with the duty to provide parks and recreational services, was created in 1985. This body was unable to operate as a result of policy shortcomings Adejumo (2020) In 2007, the full development control manual for Abuja's metropolitan area was published. It provides the requirements for open space, parks, and recreational areas. Over the years, improper development inducement of officials or through high-level contacts, a lack of developer engagement, inconsistent policies, and inconsistencies in the policies have all added to disregard for the developmental control manual's use. the Urban Planning and Development Agency of Kaduna State (KASUPDA) was established. Its goal was to carry out open space policies in defiance of Law No. 88 of 1992 on Urban and Regional Planning. Municipal parks created a policy to pick a specific location for public parks and recreational areas, but it did not work since there were not enough competent workers and important stakeholders. Urban Planning and Development Agency of Kaduna State (Barnabas, 2020; Edomwonyi, 2020). The administration of the former Anambra state contracted Concepts Design Group of Nigeria and Eco Design of Massachusetts in 1978 to draft a master plan that included an open space policy. They did not, however, submit the final text for adoption into law; they simply produced the first through third drafts of the report. Since then, they've created a number of implementation plans with differing degrees of execution that aren't ideal for the various local administrations (Ayeni, 2019).

Hung (2021) conducted research on national policies, programs, and initiatives in Lagos. Urban open space policy received a grade of "poor oversight and opaque" from the study, which was carried out by evaluating the literature. Falagas et al (2018) concentrated on national policy and Ilorin, Nigeria, sustainably developing its urban areas. Study revealed that the development of urban open space policy results from broad participation by professionals in the built environment. The problems with open recreational space in the state of Edo are

examined in (Officha, 2018). The study uses survey techniques to get its facts. The results showed that the main issues are urbanization, bad spatial planning, and inefficient policy. Akanwa (2019) Examine the problems with the creation and management of public space in Onitsha, Nigeria. According to the findings, Nigeria's problems with urban open space policies are brought on by a lack of a sound management strategy, disdain for planning laws, and subpar town planning practices. Goomsu (2021) studied the sufficiency, utilization, and management of open space in Abuja, Nigeria. The research uses surveys as its data source. The study's findings indicate a scarcity of land as well as inadequate open space design, management, and infrastructure. Wittemore et al (2018) did a study on the adherence to development control restrictions in Ibadan, Nigeria. The investigation employed both survey data and written sources. The study finds that the absence of urban open space policy in Nigeria is a result of commercial activities encroaching on public open space, poor governmental policies, people's lack of awareness of a healthy environment, and their drive for financial gain.

The main topic of Emenike (2018) was Public Open Space: An Urban Development Strategy for Enugu Metropolis, Nigeria. Research's findings demonstrated that the pressure of urbanization and a lack of policies are to blame for Nigeria's problems with urban open space. Goomsu (2021) focused on the city of Abuja in Nigeria as a public space. The results show that political meddling prevented the Abuja Master Plan from being put into effect, which resulted in a violation of the regulations controlling public open spaces. Michael (2019) concentrated on issues pertaining to open space usage and sustainable urban design in Akure, Nigeria. A quantitative method was adopted in the data collection procedure. The results revealed that an additional substantial issue is the government's low priority for providing open space in compared to other uses. The physical condition of public open spaces in Nigeria's multiethnic districts is the subject of (Michael, 2019). The study collected its data using interviews and the quantitative approach. The study discovered that including locals' suggestions, ideas, and opinions into the decision-making process at various phases of open space planning will assist in resolving policy challenges. Ayeni (2019) a study on the management of open spaces in Nigeria with an eye on efficiency and sustainability. A literature research was conducted to acquire information for the study. Findings demonstrated that unplanned growth and insufficient design authorization from the necessary ministries were to be blamed for the problem with Nigeria's urban open space regulations. Goomsu (2021) did research on urban open space management and transition in Lagos, Nigeria. According to the study, there isn't a framework for sustainable policies. Michael (2019) concentrated on urban public open spaces in Lokoja, Nigeria. The results show that the norms controlling urban areas are not adhered to, which leads to policy issues in the studied area.

**Findings**

Table 1

*Summary of the Reviewed Works*

S/No.	Name of Authors	Title of Research	Findings	Methodology
1.	(Hung, N., 2021)	An example of a new international structure for managing open space in Vietnam's Hanoi City.	Public acquisition and management policy was used	Literature Review
2.	(Agboola, O., & Said, M. R. 2018)	Green Society: Policies to Residents Contribution toward Improving Physical Quantity of Neighbourhood Open Space in Multi-cultural Community of Nigeria.	Sensitive areas were safeguarded for open space through the application of sub-division exaction.	Literature Review
3.	(Adejumo 2020)	The Public Space in Nigeria: Politics of power, gender and exclusion.	Incentive approach was used as a policy	Literature Review
4.	(Ayeni, 2019)	Urban Open Spaces, Akure Nigeria.	1000 persons should receive two hectares of land.	Literature Review
5.	(Emenike, 2018)	Research Focus on Public Open Space: An Urban Development Strategy for Enugu Metropolis, Nigeria.	claims that the usual urban environment is two hectares per 1000 people.	Quantitative
6.	(Adedeji, Y., & Olotuah, A. 2020)	An Evaluation of Accessibility of Low-income Earners to Housing Finance in Nigeria.	states that each 1000 people should receive 2.83 hectares.	Quantitative
7.	(Michael, 2019)	Human response to greeneries in Public Spaces.	10% of any new development must be set aside for open space. Another strategy is the utilization of land ownership.	Quantitative



8.	(Officha, 2018)	Planning and Design for Sustainable Urban Mobility: Global report on human settlements.	State two hectares per 1000 population	Case Study
9.	(Alabi, 2020)	Re-theorising Contemporary Public Space: A new Narrative and a New Normative	According to the National Environment Management Area Act, one hectare must be provided for every 1000 people.	Case Study
10.	(United Nations Development Program, 2019)	Governance & Sustainable Human Development.	that open space should be provided on one hectare for every 600 people	Literature Review
11.	(Barnabas, 2020; Edomwonyi, 2020)	Kaduna State Urban Planning and Development Agency KASUPDA 2015	The Constitution gave Local Government the authority to create Open Spaces, but because Local Government had this authority alone, the idea was never implemented.	Literature Review
12.	(Alabi, 2020)	Socio-Cultural Utilization of Open Spaces in the Traditional Residential Neighbourhood of Suleja, Nigeria.	Nigeria proposed having 40,000 people per hectare of land in 1976, 14,000 people per hectare in 2002, and 81,000 people per hectare in 2019.	Literature Review
13.	(Akanwa, 2019)	Paradigm Change Reinvent Disrupted Public Spaces and Make Future Great Place in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.	Due to Nigeria's population density per hectare, the laws on urban open space were ineffective.	Quantitative
14.	(Adejumo 2020)	The Public Space in Nigeria: Politics of power, gender and exclusion.	The Lagos State Parks Commission, also known as the Lagos State Commission Edict, was first established in Nigeria in 1985. Due to the	Survey



			inconsistent nature of the regulation, this commission has never dealt with a single open space	
15.	(Barnabas, 2020)	The Formal and Informal tools of design governance.	Due to anomalies and weaknesses in the policies, the control manual experienced non-compliance and unlawful development.	Literature Review
16.	(Campbell, 2018)	The Place-Shaping Continuum: A theory of Urban Design Process. Journal of Urban Design	Due to insufficient regulations, a lack of skilled staff, and a lack of pertinent stakeholder participation, the policies that were formed to manage local parks and decide the specifications for public parks and recreational places did not work.	Literature Review
17.	(De Magalhaes, G., & Freire Trigo, S. 2018)	Contracting out Publicness: The private Management of the Urban Public Realm and its implications.	Research reveals government failure in making policy.	Quantitative
18.	(Bako, A., & O.T.B Aduloju & Enisan & Y, S. 2018)	Adequacy Use and Management of Open Space in Ikeja.	Thorough studies shows that weak monitoring and transparency.	Reviewed literature
19.	(David, 2018)	Collective Culture and Urban Space, City	Research shows the main issues include lack of planning and development regulation.	Survey Strategies
20.	(Emenike, 2018)	Dimensions and Models of Contemporary Public	Challenges of Land, ineffective policies.	Survey Method

		Space Management in England.		
21.	(Johnson, J., 2018)	The new Public Management in Australia.	The issues are encroachment government regulation.	Literature and Survey
22.	(Ebekozen, A., et al 2019)	Housing finance inaccessibility for low-income earners in Malaysia: Factors and solutions.	Study revealed that funding and lack of policy is a factor.	Quantitative Strategy
23.	(Goomsu, 2021)	A methodology for assessing the implementation potential for retrofitted and multifunctional urban green infrastructure in public areas of the Global South.	Studies shows that the Abuja Master Plan is influenced by political influence.	Quantitative Strategy
24.	(Francis, J., et al, 2018)	Creating sense of Community: The role of Public Space.	The findings shows that the ministries have overlapping function.	Quantitative
25.	(Godwin, M.M., 2020)	Geographical Location of South South Geopolitical Zone in Nigeria, Adele Communication.	The study showed that stake holder's opinions necessary.	Quantitative
26.	(Adegun, O., et al, 2019)	Housing Affordability among Low-Income Earners in Akure, Nigeria.	The study's findings revealed, fast urbanization, and a lack of sufficient governmental support.	Literature review
27.	(Ismail, S. S., 2021)	Critical for Public Open Space Enhancement to Achieve Social Interaction: A Review Paper.	The research indicates absence of policy framework.	Survey Method
28.	(Bako, A., & O.T.B., 2018)	Aequacy Use and Management of Open Space in Ikeja.	The findings of the study revealed violations of the rules governing urban service boundaries	Quantitative approach

			and a clear lack of incentive-based zoning, which created policy difficulties in the study area.	
29.	(Kent, E., 2018)	What if we reinvented civic infrastructure around place making?	The results showed stakeholder participation is crucial.	Quantitative
30.	(Adejumo 2020)	The Public Space in Nigeria: Politics of power, gender and exclusion.	According to the findings, two significant issues are governmental inducements and inconsistencies in urban open space legislation.	Quantitative

The summary of table 1 above shows that the percentage supplied to urban open space in Nigeria is insufficient since policies addressing the amount of percentage granted to urban open space across the world differ from those in Nigeria (Adedeji & Olotuah, 2020). Thirty papers on Nigerian urban open space policies were reviewed in total. According to the report, Nigeria's urban open space policy has problems because of inadequate regulations, a lack of transparency, a fragmented management plan, poor site planning, and poorly designed structures (Alabi, 2020). According to a review, there are many factors that contribute to the lack of urban open space regulations, including bad planning Alabi (2020), insufficient infrastructure and land availability Barnabas (2020), ineffective government control, people's lack of awareness of a healthy environment, and their desire for financial gain (Campbell, 2018). Lack of funding, the cost of urbanization, and inadequate management techniques all contributed to weak governance (David, 2018). The implementation of the master plan was hampered by political involvement that resulted in a breach of the rules regulating public open space (De Magalhaes & Trigo, 2018). Another significant factor is the government's low priority for providing open space in relation to other uses. The main reasons of the policy challenges in Nigeria's urban open spaces were unchecked population growth, urbanization, and a lack of necessary planning approval from the relevant authorities (Emenike, 2018). The investigation's conclusions are in line with those of earlier research [4, 6, 15]. 180 million people live in Nigeria, yet only 20% of them are aware of the nation's open space rules, while the remaining 80% are uninformed (Officha, 2018). According to an identical investigation on the administration and oversight of public open spaces conducted in Lagos, Nigeria, 62% of respondents agreed that the lack of effective governmental statutory rules is the primary reason for invasion into our public urban open spaces, followed by population growth (28%), and political influence (10%).

The results of Adegun et al (2019) in the Nigerian city of Akure reflect the assertions made by [7,8] that there is a larger requirement for residential land as a result of population expansion and policies from the government that overlap some roles. In 2010, 7,573,720

square meters (0.05) were devoted to residential and business usage; by 2018, that number had risen to 19,185,027 square meters (78.23%). The transformation of land use in the commercial sector underwent a significant shift, decreasing from 67.13% in 2010 to a mere 0.08% in 2018. In contrast, shopping mall spaces experienced substantial growth, expanding from 0.10% and 0.05% of the total area in 2010 to 0.33% and 0.12% in 2018. These changes align with the findings of references [4,6], which suggest that the increasing trend of peri-urbanization is primarily driven by the growing demand for residential and commercial properties, often at the expense of agricultural land. Institutional land usage, on the other hand, declined significantly, dropping from 19.15% to 10.41% in 2018 due to substantial encroachments. According to research Ismail (2021), the urbanized area in Enugu, located in South-South Nigeria, expanded from 2431.60 hectares to 49,351.93 hectares. While the amount of land designated as open space decreased from 75,359.70 ha to 39,983.05 ha. Residents' perceptions, loose development control, and poor policies are to blame for this. (Kent, 2018). Urbanization, deforestation, agricultural expansion, encroachment, and government policies are largely to blame for the significant changes and modifications in land use and land covers in Suleja of Nigeria, according to a study Bako (2018) in Suleja, Niger State in Nigeria between (2000-2018). Farmland increased from 50.1 km to 63.0 km, built-up land increased from 700 km in 1987 to 17.9 km in 2012, and public open space decreased from 68.7 km to 43 km in 2018.

The evaluation's findings also demonstrated that a quantitative approach together with reviews of the pertinent literature and surveys served as the main methodologies in the works that were examined. To better understand open space policy in Nigeria, this study supports the use of a hybrid technique, often known as the pragmatic paradigm, in accordance with past research by (Ebekozi et al., 2019)

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Despite the efforts of research organizations, the policies governing urban open space in Nigeria were evaluated, and it was discovered that no significant adjustments had been implemented. This arises because there is a limited allocation of land designated for urban open spaces, along with a deficiency in openness, a lack of consistency in management strategies, and issues with site planning and architectural designs. A number of factors contribute to the absence of urban open space regulations, including poor planning, a lack of land and infrastructure, inefficient government oversight, a lack of awareness of the benefits of a healthy environment, and the desire for financial gain. Effective policies were lacking in Nigeria as a result of inadequate funding, the burden of urbanization, and poor management techniques.

The report also notes that the elements listed as results from the studies under consideration are not all alike. The study also demonstrates that quantitative, literature-based, and survey-based methodologies were the main ones employed in the papers under examination. These studies underline the need to support ongoing study into urban open space regulations. As demonstrated from the review, such study should employ a mixed methodology to get trustworthy results, as stated by (Ebekozi et al., 2019).

Therefore, in order to address the issue at hand, this study suggests that there should be a sustainable policy framework that would be strictly implemented. Second, it is important to

promote the usage of information and communication technology like CCTV. Thirdly, the relevant authorities should constantly keep an eye on urban development and changes to land use. Finally, when making decisions about open space policy in Nigeria, it is important to encourage transparency, integrity, awareness, and stakeholder participation.

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