

ANALYSIS OF CEMETERY MANAGEMENT IN SOKOTO METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Cemeteries are critical infrastructure of the built environment. Their location and management have generated debate over the years particularly within the realm of urban planning and sustainability thereby prompting a study of this nature. This paper conducts an analysis of cemetery management in Sokoto metropolis. The study was based on three objectives which are to identify the major cemeteries and their growth over the years, the nature of management practices and the associated challenges. Data were obtained through administration of structured questionnaire to cemetery attendants purposively from the entire cemeteries in the metropolis. Key Informant Interview was also conducted with officials of Sokoto Urban and Regional Planning Board to obtain information on the planning implication of cemetery locations and results were analyzed descriptively. Data was analyzed descriptively using tables, charts and figures. The major findings revealed that there are 44 cemeteries in the metropolis with 42 belonging to Muslims, One for Christians and one mixed. The results also revealed that the cemeteries were not properly funded, managed and maintained and there exists several challenges in their management which includes lack or insufficient infrastructure like lightening, fencing, water, drainage, poor record keeping, low salary and lack of formal administrative structure. The study recommends among others, proper funding and establishment of well-developed structure for administration and management of cemeteries in the metropolis.

Keywords: Cemeteries, Management, infrastructure, Urban Planning and Sustainability.

Introduction

Cemeteries sometimes referred to as burial grounds, are public facilities within an urban space (Habila, 2017). It is usually a place where six or more human bodies are buried. In other words, a cemetery means any one or a combination of more than one of the following; Burial Park for earth interments, mausoleum for crypt or vaults interments, crematory and columbarium for cinery interments.

In urban areas the concern for sustainability is paramount, and therefore, the focus is to ensure proper physical planning of the landscape to avoid land use conflicts and haphazard development. Management of urban areas in form of good physical planning and development control is not only restricted to the living but also the dead. This makes the location of cemeteries a key component of the urban society which has of recent generated attention from scholars across the globe. Cemetery land is becoming an important issue in many localities all over the world (Lehrer, 1974): in East Asia (Dian, 2004; Lotfi, Habibi & Javad Kooshari, 2009; AlAnbari, Thameer, Al-Ansari and Knutsson, 2016; Doi, Chai, Xu, & Wang, 2021); in North America (Salisbury, 2002; Basmajian & Coutts, 2010; Larkin, 2011); in New Zealand (Judge, 2012) & Australia (Dent, 2002; Purdon, 2009); in South Africa (Croucamp and Richards, 2002; Dippenaar, 2014); & in Europe (Environment Agency, 2002; Cemetery Development Services, 2017).

In recent times the inevitable increase in the occurrences of diseases, hunger and man-made/natural hazards have resulted in an increase in death rate in the cities of the world particularly the developing countries where about 90% of global urbanization is taking place (Jiboye, 2011). The fact that people must die underscores the need for proper location and management of places of burial within communities. Emphasis on the cemetery in this study is due to vulnerability of cities to hazard and increasing incidence of death, and hence the need for a study which will unearth the development, management and proper planning for location of cemeteries in the study area.

Sokoto metropolis is undergoing massive urbanization due to population growth, redistribution of activities and expansion of the built environment. The population of Sokoto metropolis is said to have increased from 47,643 in the 1950s to about 657,679.89 in the year 2020 (Shamaki, 2005). And with 3% annual growth rate the population is projected to reach 1,082,496 by the year 2035 (U.N; World Population Prospects, 2020). Similarly, Sokoto expands from 614 hectares in 1959 to 4,820 in the year 1997 (Benna Associates, 1982), and by the year 2020, the extent of the built-up area was projected to be 6,290 hectares (Eniolorunda & Dankani, 2012).

From the foregoing, it is obvious the number of deaths will equally increase, and the demand for cemeteries will also follow suit. Thus, this study seeks to examine cemetery management in Sokoto metropolis as part of its contribution to both learning and development of Urban Cultural Geography.

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. identify the major cemeteries in Sokoto Metropolis and their growth overtime
- ii. examine the management and basic facilities available within the cemeteries in the study area.
- iii. identify the challenges of cemetery management of the study area.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

Sokoto metropolis is located within Latitudes 12°46'N-13°08'N and Longitudes 5°14'E-5°30'E and at an average elevation of 272m above sea level (Figure 1). It comprises mainly two local governments (Sokoto South and North local government areas) and portions around the frontiers of four other local government areas (Kware, Wamakko, DangeShuni and Bodinga). The Geographical extent of the metropolis is 16 kilometer radius from Kangiwa Memorial Stadium. The study area is bounded by Kware local Government to the North, Wamakko to the West, Dange-Shuni to the South and Rabah to the East.

The study area has an estimated population of about 734,000 people as of 2024, with 96 persons per square kilometer and 3% growth rate annually (National Bureau of Statistics {NBS}, 2018). The inhabitants comprise mostly of Hausa/Fulani and other groups such as Gobirawa, Zabarmawa, Kabawa, Adarawa, Arawa, Nupe, Yoruba, Igbo and other people of the Nigerian ethnic groups. The predominant language is Hausa, majority of city's population are Muslims, the culture of the people is nothing different from that of any other Hausa/Fulani areas in the state which is basically Islam oriented.

Sokoto metropolis remains the most developed part of the state which has a concentration of virtually all tertiary institutions and other important facilities that provide essential services such as those related to education, health, housing and hotel services, banks etc.

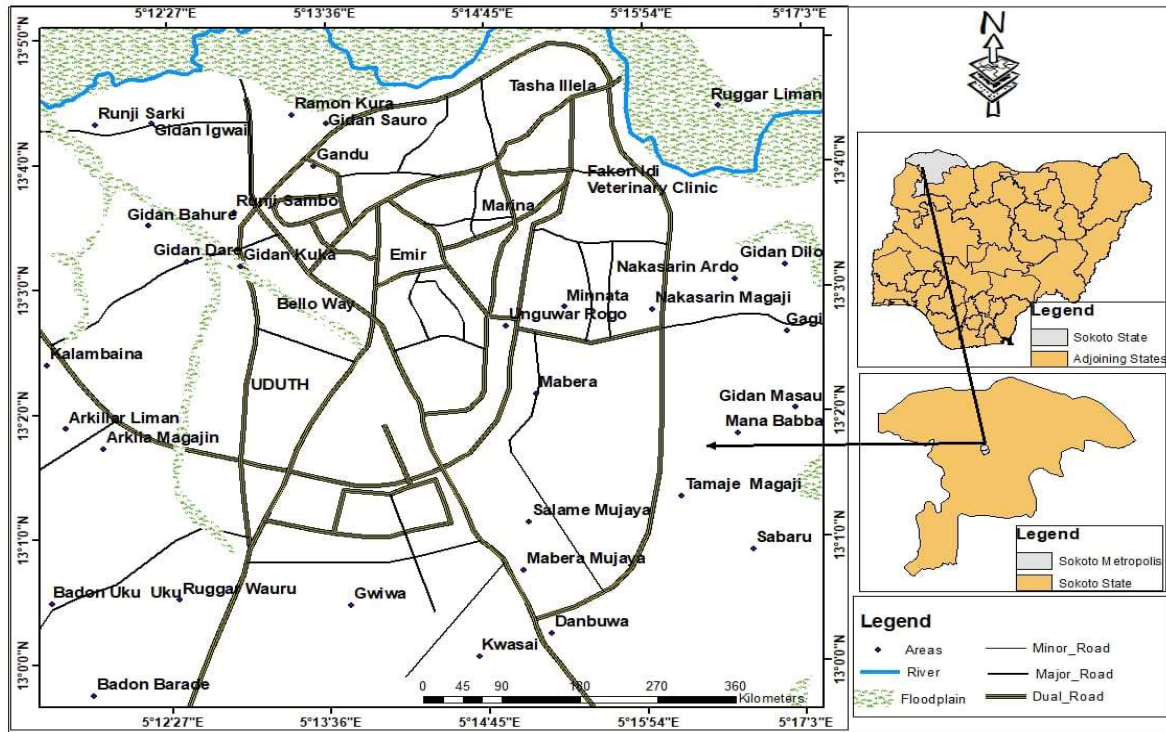


Figure 1: Sokoto Metropolis

Source: Adapted from the Administrative Map of Sokoto State, 1996

Reconnaissance

The researcher undertook a reconnaissance to all the cemeteries in the study area. The essence of this is to give the researcher a glimpse of the situation for the actual field data collection.

Research Design

The design for this study is a Mixed Method Design in which case both qualitative (Interview and KII) and quantitative (Interview and Ground Observation) data were used. This helped to bring out the viewpoints of multiple participants in the study area.

Types and Sources of Data

The research used both quantitative and qualitative types of data. The primary data were collected through questionnaire administration in the form of an interview with cemetery attendants as well as Key Informant Interview with Government Officials (Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Land, Housing and Survey and Sokoto Urban and Regional Planning Board). Spatial data (Coordinates) of cemetery locations were acquired using a hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver. For interview, the questionnaire was divided into two sections (A and B). The first section will be the socio-economic characteristics of respondents. The second section looked into the view of the respondents on cemetery location and its effects on the environment. Here, information about the history, growth and development, facilities and challenges were obtained. Key Informant Interview (KII) was conducted with officials of Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey and the Sokoto Urban and Regional Planning Board. Similarly, the KII conducted with planners and urban managers focused around issues regarding cemetery location, management and their planning implications.

Global Positioning System was used to collect coordinates of all cemeteries in order to use such information to provide a map of all cemeteries in the metropolis and to determine their pattern of distribution.

Sampling Frame, Sample Size and Techniques

There are a total of 44 cemeteries in the study area comprising of Muslim, Christians and mixed cemeteries. All the cemeteries in the study area were selected for the study. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in the selection of cemeteries, cemeteries attendants and cemetery committees as well as the participants for the Key Informant Interview. A total of 44 respondents were purposively selected on the basis of one cemetery attendant per cemetery in the study area.

Data Analysis Techniques

Result for each objective will be presented in the following manner:

Objective One: Identify the major cemeteries in Sokoto Metropolis. This will be achieved through physical observation/taking inventory of cemeteries and capturing of coordinates of the locations of cemeteries using GPS.

Objective Two: To examine the management and basic facilities available within the cemeteries in the study area. This objective was addressed by analyzing the physical observation and inventory of facilities within and around the cemeteries using descriptive statistics.

Objective Three: To identify the challenges of cemetery management of the study area. This information obtained through interactions with cemetery attendants and community leaders and was analyzed descriptively.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings obtained from the field and it is hereby presented based on the objectives of the study.

Cemeteries in Sokoto Metropolis

Table 1 and Figure 1 reveals the number of cemeteries in Sokoto Metropolis, their locations and year of establishment. There are 44 cemeteries as at 2024 in the metropolis distributed within the local government areas that make up Sokoto Metropolis. Going by the Table 1 nine cemeteries fall in Sokoto North LGA, ten in Sokoto South, three in Kware, seven in DangeShuni and fifteen in Wamakko Local Government Areas. The reason why Wamakko Local Government Area has the highest number of cemeteries could be attributed to the fact that it is the part of Sokoto metropolis with the highest level of growth and development of settlements of recent, and the wide expanse of relatively flat land could be the reason why most development and emergence of neighbourhoods occur in Wamakko, LGA.

Table 1 Location of Cemeteries and year of establishment in Sokoto Metropolis

S/N	NAME OF CEMET	ADDRESS	YEAR	LOCAL GOVT
1	Hubbare Cemetery	Hubbare Area	1817	Sokoto North
2	Christian Cemetery	Off Koko Road	1901	Sokoto South
3	Giginyoyi Cemetery	KofarKware	1961	Sokoto North
4	Old Tudun Wada Cemetery	Tudun Wada	1964	Sokoto South
5	Helele Cemetery	Helele	1969	Sokoto North
6	Salame Cemetery	Salame	1969	Sokoto South
7	Mana Babba Cemetery	Mana	1974	Sokoto South
8	More Cemetery	More	1977	Kware
9	Old Tsefe Cemetery	Tsefe	1977	DangeShuni
10	Army Barrack Cemetery	Army Barrack	1981	DangeShuni

11	Budau Cemetery	More	1982	Kware
12	Jegawa Cemetery	Jegawa	1982	Sokoto South
13	Mainiyo Cemetery	Kwannawa	1984	DangeShuni
14	Old Guiwa Cemetery	Guiwa	1984	Wamakko
15	GidanMaigoro Cemetery	G/ Igwai	1984	Sokoto North
16	Gagi Cemetery	Gagi	1985	Sokoto South
17	Tsakarawa Cemetery	Dambuwa	1988	DangeShuni
18	New Tudun Wada Cemetery	Tudun Wada	1989	Sokoto South
19	Girafshi Cemetery	Girafshi	1989	Wamakko
20	Federal Science More Cemetery	More	1990	Kware
21	Kwannawa Cemetery	Gargawo	1991	DangeShuni
22	Runji Cemetery	G/ Road	1991	Sokoto North
23	Tamaje/Dambuwa Cemetery	Tamaje	1992	Sokoto South
24	GidanJariri Cemetery	GidanJariri	1995	Sokoto North
25	Dundaye Cemetery	Dundaye	1997	Wamakko
26	GidanGanau Cemetery	GidanGanau	1998	Sokoto North
27	BadonBarade Cemetery	Bado Area	1998	Wamakko
28	Kalambaina Cemetery	Kalambaina	1999	Wamakko
29	UDUS Cemetery	UDUS	1999	Wamakko
30	GidanSanda 1 Cemetery	G/Sanda	2000	Wamakko
31	TudunFaila Cemetery	G/Igwai	2001	Sokoto North
32	GidanBahure Cemetery	G/Bahure	2002	Sokoto North
33	Yar Abba Cemetery	Yar'abba	2002	Wamakko
34	Tsefe Cemetery	Tsefe	2003	DangeShuni
35	Arkillla Cemetery	Arkillla	2003	Wamakko
36	Mana Karama Cemetery	Mana	2004	Sokoto South
37	GidanKadiri Cemetery	Kwannawa	2004	DangeShuni
38	BadonGabas Cemetery	Bado Area	2005	Wamakko
39	Gunburawa Cemetery	Gunburawa	2006	Wamakko
40	RuggarWuro Cemetery	R/Wuro	2008	Wamakko
41	BakinGulbi Cemetery	B/Gulbi	2009	Wamakko
42	GidanSanda 2 Cemetery	G/Sanda	2010	Wamakko
43	GwuiwaSabuwa Cemetery	Guiwa	2019	Wamakko
44	Sabuwarkurfi Cemetery	Korfi Town	2020	Sokoto South

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

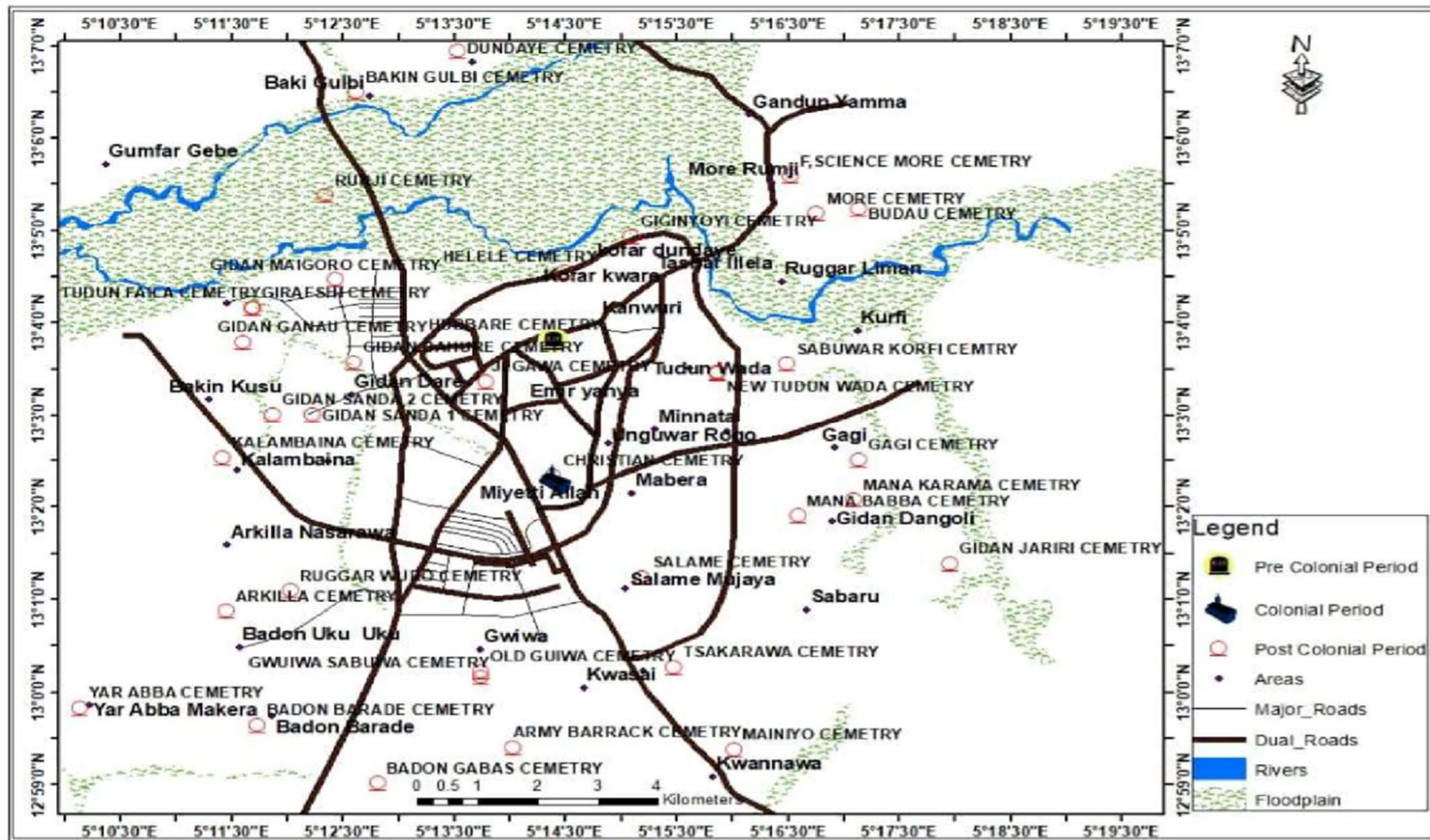


Figure 1 Cemeteries in Sokoto Metropolis

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

Figure 2 shows the categories of cemeteries in the study area. Out of the 44 cemeteries identified, 42 representing 95% are for Muslims while only one is for Christians and the last one is a mixed cemetery for both Muslims and Christians, which is the Army cemetery. One major factor attributable to having only one Christian cemetery is the practice by most Christians residing in study area of taking the corpses of their dead relatives to their ancestral homes in different parts of Nigeria for burial rather than burying it in Sokoto. The observed situation also speaks to the population pattern of the study area where majority are Muslims.

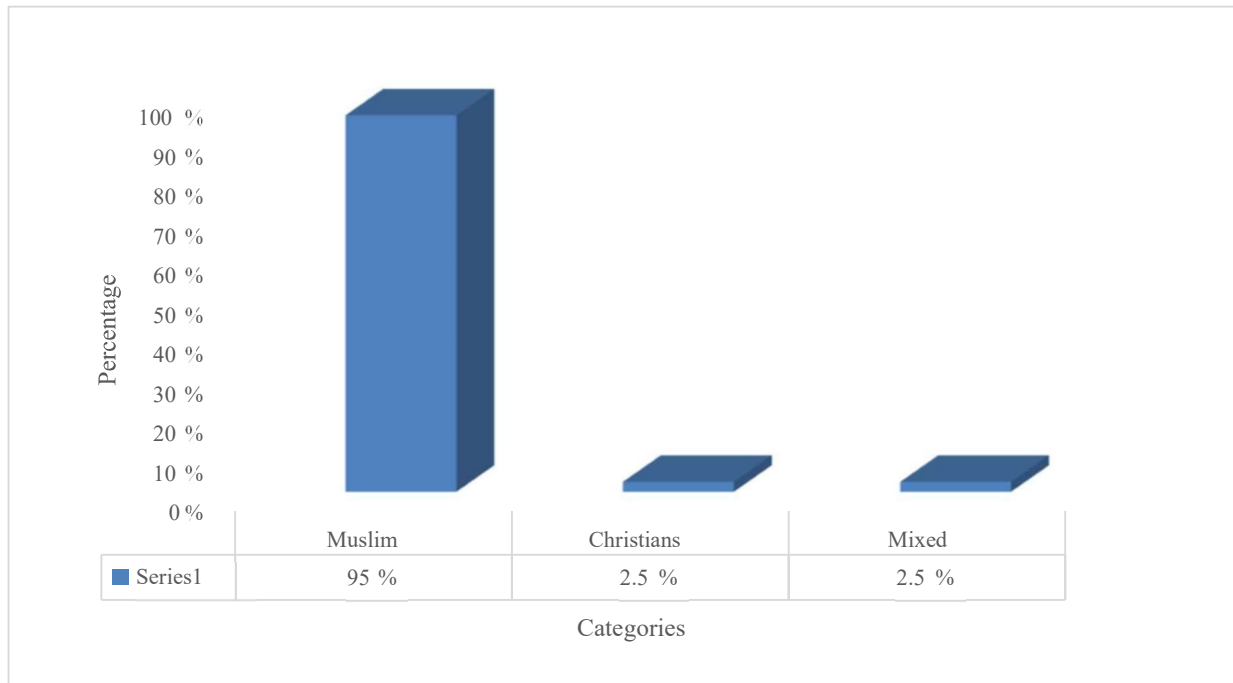


Figure 2 Categories of Cemeteries in the Metropolis

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

Management of Cemeteries

Cemeteries in Sokoto metropolis are managed by both governments (State and Local) as well as religious bodies and philanthropists. According to the majority of the respondents (80%) state and local governments are those in charge of management of cemeteries in Sokoto Metropolis while 20% claimed that religious sects/bodies together with philanthropists in the community are in charge of cemetery management. What is pertinent here is that state and local government do support cemetery management (Figure 3). Their roles could be described as complimentary because they overlap in most cases. Rich individuals and religious bodies do also play a prominent role in cemetery management particularly in the area of provision of services and maintenance. The Christians cemetery is managed and controlled by Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).

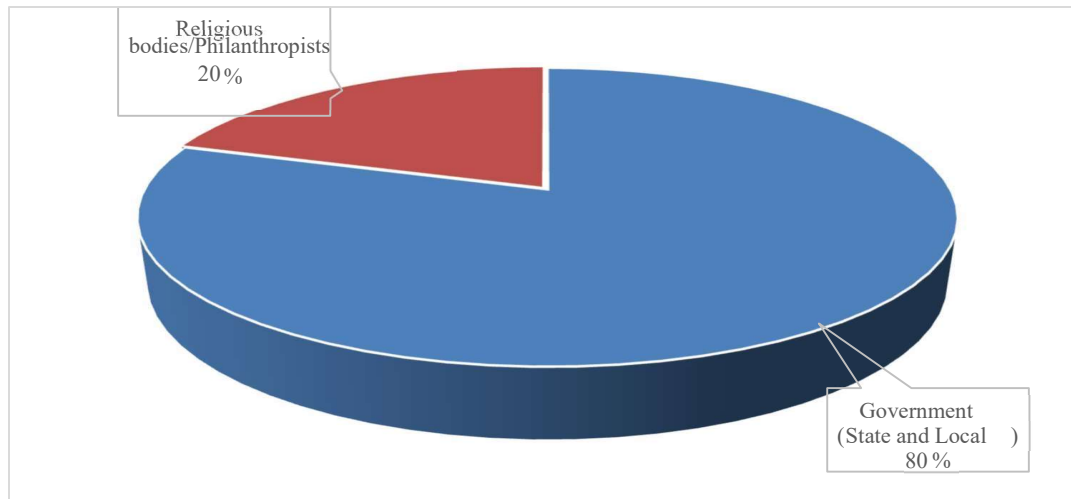


Figure 3 Those in charge of Cemetery management

Further analysis on who actually provides the facilities at the cemetery shows that Government is the major provider of such facilities particularly through the Ministry of Religious Affairs according to 80% of the respondents. Other sources according to the respondents are the community members, philanthropic organizations and the affluent members of the society (20%). According to Rugg, (2006) Cemetery maintenance covers a lot of different areas. The access road, internal roads and internal walkways either need to be tarred, or if dirt, then graded and kept smooth and passable in all weathers. Fences, gates and building structures must be maintained as well as signage and grave numbers. Horticulture issues include mowing of lawns, weed control, watering and pruning of trees shrubs and flowers. Finally, water, sewer and storm-water drains must be kept in good working order.

Inventory of Basic Facilities Available in the Cemetery

Inventory of facilities available in cemeteries are presented in Table 2. shows the basic facilities available in the cemeteries of the study area. The finding shows that 89% of the cemeteries are fenced (Plate 1), 61% have light, 52% have water, 16% have functional management office, and 23% have drainage either in or around the cemetery.

Table 2: Basic Facilities available in the Cemetery

Facilities	Available Frequency/Percentage	Non-Available Frequency/Percentage
Fence	39 (89%)	05(11%)
Light	27 (61%)	17(39%)
Water	23 (52%)	21(48%)
Drainage	10 (23%)	34(77%)
Management office	7(16%)	37(84%)

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024



Plate 1 Water Facilities at Kurfi Cemetery, Sokoto



Plate 2 Solar Lightening Facilities at Kurfi Cemetery, Sokoto

From Table 2, it can be deduced that majority of the cemeteries are fenced in order to safeguard them and prevent encroachment of buildings towards or on the cemetery land. Fencing demarcates the extent of the land of the cemetery and serves as a means of protection and ensuring that access to the cemetery can only be through designated gates. Similarly, Lights are the second most provided facility in the cemeteries (Plate 2).

Two reasons could be attributed to provision of fence and lightening. One is the need for security of the cemetery so that the area will always be illuminated so as to prevent criminals, ritualist and other categories of people from perpetrating criminal activities within the cemetery. Secondly, in Sokoto Metropolis, there is a long-standing tradition of burying people at night. These lights will make it easy for people to bury their loved ones in the night.

It is important to note that the practice of burying people in the night is now declining for several reasons of which security is the most prominent. Due to constant power outage or epileptic supply of light from the national grid and the cemetery cannot afford to use generator, solar lights are now the most common type of street light found in most cemeteries. They are cost-effective and environmentally friendly.

Most cemeteries are not provided with drainages to drain excess water particularly during the rainy season. This often results in the collapse of graves. Most cemeteries do not have management offices and this signifies that there is no effective monitoring of the affairs of the cemetery.

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Number of Personnel engaged in running Cemetery

Respondents were asked to state the number of personnel engaged in running cemeteries. This is with a view to ascertain whether the cemeteries are well managed and administered. Table 3 shows that 90.9% of the cemeteries in the study area are run by less than 3 active personnel, while more than 6 active personnel are involved in running 9.1% of the cemeteries. Most cemetery attendants because of their age (51 years and above) often involve their children in running the cemeteries.

Table 3: Personnel actively engaged in running the Cemetery

Number of Personnel	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 3	40	90.9
4 – 5	-	-
Above 6	4	9.1
Total	44	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

These categories of helping hand are usually compensated through gifts and donation at the point of internment. They do not receive any sort of financial assistance or support either from the state or the Local Government they are domiciled in. The fact that the young men are engaged by their parents or grandparents signifies that they are assisting in cemetery activities based on respect for and authority of parents over them.

Sources of Income for Cemetery Attendants

Table 4 reveals the sources of income for the cemetery attendants and three categories of income were identified.

Table 4 Source of income for Cemetery Attendants

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Salary	3	07
Stipend/Allowance	16	36
Gift	25	57
Others	-	-
Total	44	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4 shows that 7% of the cemetery attendants receive salary from their employers. These categories are cemetery attendants at UDUS, Army Barracks and those at the Christian cemeteries. Others receive stipends or rather allowance from local governments, the Sultanate Council and Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), which is the umbrella organization representing all Christians denominations in the country pays the salary of

the cemetery attendants in charge of the Christian cemetery in Sokoto metropolis. This implies that in most of the cemeteries in Sokoto there are no dedicated employed cemetery attendants. Those engaged are solely on part-time basis and are paid allowances monthly ranging from 3000-10,000 Naira.

Availability of Dedicated Security Guards

Figure 4 reveals that majority (61%) of the cemeteries do have dedicated security guards working at the cemetery. Their principal task is to protect the cemeteries and its facilities. The security guards are often appointed by the Local Governments and are paid stipend at the end of each and every month.

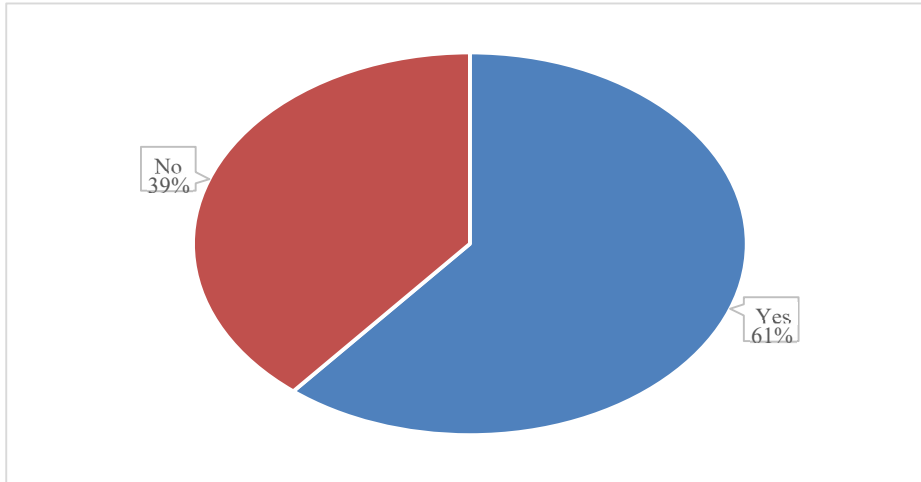


Figure 4 Availability of Security Guards

Frequency of Cemetery Maintenance

Table 5 shows the frequency of cemetery maintenance in the study area. The Table 4 shows that 72.7% of the respondents agree to regular maintenance of the cemetery, while 27.3% claimed they maintained once in a while. The level of maintenance is evident in most active cemeteries in the study area. The fact that people are still buried within these cemeteries necessitates regular maintenance. But most of the dormant cemeteries show a very low level of maintenance, as shrubs and grasses have grown in the cemetery impacting seriously on accessibility as the entire cemetery becomes bushy. According to the officials of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Sokoto State, the Ministry has of recent, embarked on serious maintenance of most cemeteries in Metropolis.

Table 5 How regular is the maintenance of the Cemetery?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Regular	32	72.7
Once in the while	12	27.3
No maintenance	-	-
Total	44	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

Facilities such as drainages, water supply, lightening and repair of fence were provided by the Ministry as part of its statutory responsibility. Other cemeteries such as the Christians, UDUS and the Army Cemeteries are maintained by their respective organizations and visitation have indicated good maintenance culture. One interesting finding is that communities were cemeteries are located often organize self-help initiatives in the maintenance of the cemeteries. Invitation for such maintenance exercise by the community is usually through radio stations for wider coverage. Such initiative is purely on humanitarian ground and the desire for reward from almighty God.

An official of the Sokoto State Ministry of Religious Affairs on the issue of maintenance stated that:

“We, as a Ministry are committed to regular maintenance of the cemeteries located both within the metropolis and the state at large. An amount was budgeted solely for the maintenance of cemeteries which is a permanent home for all living souls. A visit to some of the cemeteries will confirm what I stated”.

Record Keeping

The fact that cemeteries are places of burial necessitates good record keeping to keep track of those buried for planning purposes. Table 6 revealed the responses from respondents. It indicates that 95.5% of the cemeteries in the study area do not have a record keeping system of the activities in the cemetery while 4.5% do. The two cemeteries that have a record system are the Nigerian Army and Christian cemeteries.

The lack of record keeping makes it virtually impossible to know the actual people buried in the cemetery per month, year and decade. This also makes it impossible to have records of actual deaths and burials in the metropolis.

Table 6: Availability of Record Keeping System in the Cemetery

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No	42	95.5
Yes	2	4.5
Total	44	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

Such kind of records could have been a basis for efficient planning, monitoring and evaluation of cemeteries as well as serving as a basis for projection of future requirements of cemeteries in the study area.

Burial Document Demand

Table 7 present responses on whether cemeteries demand for documents before allowing burial. It shows that 95.5% of the respondents do not demand for documents before allowing burial in the cemetery, while 4.5% demand document.

Table 7 Do you demand any documents before allowing burial in the Cemetery

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No	42	95.5
Yes	2	4.5
Total	44	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

The two out of 44 cemeteries that demand for documents are the Christian and the Nigerian Army cemeteries. Most of the documents required are medical death certificate, next of kin details and consent from hospitals and relatives of the dead.

Burial Charges

Table 8 provides responses on whether burial charges are collected by cemeteries. Responses shows that 97.7% of the cemeteries in the study area do not charge fee for any burial service while only 2.3% charge fees. Only the Christian cemetery in the study area charges fees before burial service.

Table 8: Collection of Burial Charges

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No	43	97.7
Yes	1	2.3
Total	44	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

The management of the Christian cemetery said the fees charged is use for the maintenance of the cemetery. This could be the reason why the cemetery is well maintained. According to Gillies (2014) funding for the cemetery sector is quite constrained. In most cities the situation is worse as there is not much needed infrastructure in the cemetery like offices space, water, fumigation equipment, worship/meditation space, gardening tools, lawn mowers etc, due to low budget or contribution from the government to the cemetery sector. A steady flow of income through burial charges would have enable most cemeteries to provide and take care of facilities located in the cemetery.

Table 9 shows assessment of the management of cemetery in the study area. It shows that 68.2% of the respondents indicate that the management system of cemetery is fair, 29.5% said it is good, while 2.3% indicate that the management system of the cemetery is poor. Based on physical observation by the researcher it can be deduced that the cemeteries are not well managed. In some areas the water system is not working; in others, too much grasses and shrubs are all over making the areas not easily accessible particularly during the rainy season. There is also evidence of vandalization or rather stealing of facilities of the cemeteries such as tap head, lightening points, and at times, even gates and barb wire of the cemetery.

Table 9 Assessment of Cemetery Management System

Assessment	Frequency	Percentage
Good	13	29.5
Fair	30	68.2
Poor	1	2.3
Total	44	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

On the level of satisfaction by the respondents on the management of cemetery in the study area and their responses as depicted in Table 10 majority (41%) are unsatisfied with the way the cemeteries are managed.

Table 10 Level of Satisfaction with Cemetery Management

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Satisfied	3	07
Satisfied	14	32
Neutral	0	00
Unsatisfied	18	41
Highly Unsatisfied	09	20
Total	44	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

In the same vein, 20% of the respondents are highly unsatisfied. Those who are satisfied constitute 32% while those highly satisfied account for 7%. The implication is that there is a need for a better, more coordinated and structured management system to guide the operation, upkeep and maintenance of cemeteries in the study area.

Challenges confronting Management of Cemeteries

Figure 5 shows the responses on key challenges confronting the cemetery in the study area. Multiple challenges confronting cemeteries were identified by the respondents among which are; poor salary/stipend which accounts for 19% of the respondents, lack of formal administrative structure (18%), lack of lightening, poor record keeping and lack of water accounting for 17%, 16% and 12% respectively. Other challenges identified include security and drainage with 8% each and fencing (2%).

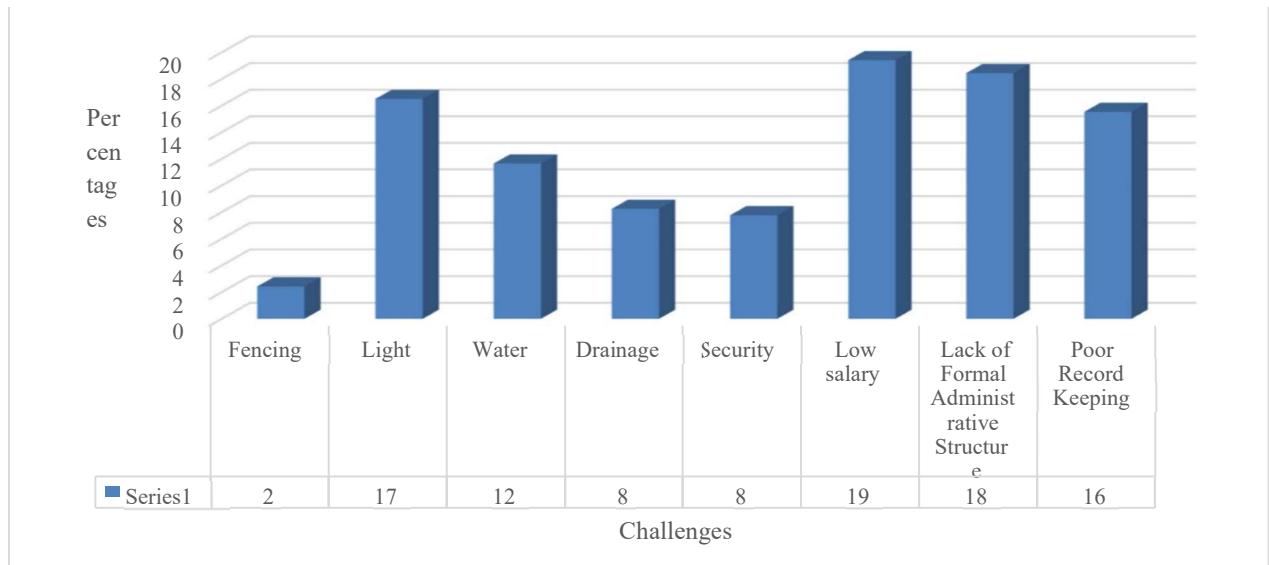


Figure 5 Key challenges confronting the Cemetery Management

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

These challenges can be comprehensively addressed with determined political will from the government and accompanied by proper financing and management. Sadly, most governments do not view cemetery as critical social infrastructure such as roads, health, water and electricity facilities.

Ways to Overcome Challenges Confronting Cemeteries.

Figure 6 presents the ways suggested by respondents to overcome challenges confronting cemeteries.

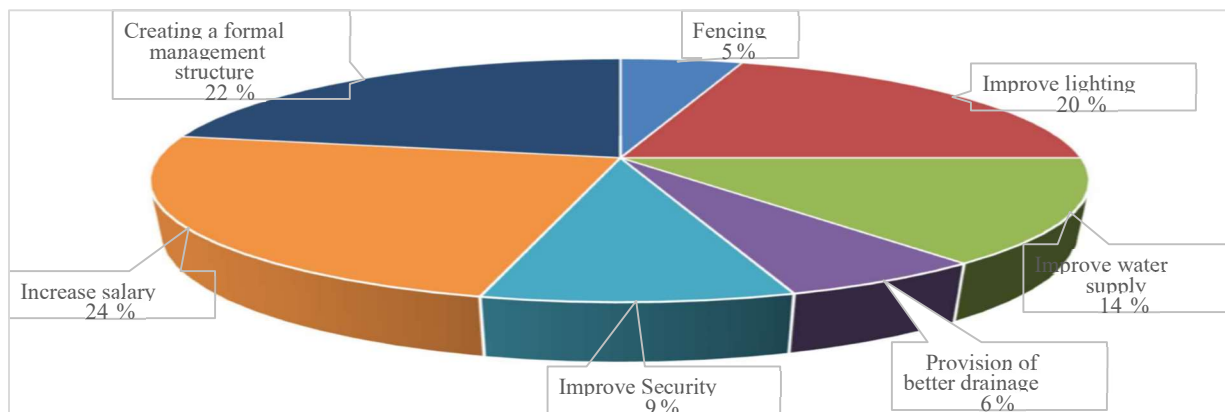


Figure 6: Solutions to Key challenges confronting the Cemetery

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

From the respondents' point of view (Figure 6) on ways to deal with these challenges, majority (24%) advocate for increased salaries or allowances, 22% cited creation of formal management structure to govern the cemetery in a proper manner with stipulated rules, regulation, remuneration and maintenance time frame. Improved lightening was suggested by 20% while

improved water supply, improved security and provision of drainages accounted for 14%, 9% and 6% respectively. These problems, if addressed squarely, will improve the condition of cemeteries and enhance their management.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Cemetery as a vital social infrastructure requires all the attention and support given to other infrastructure provided for the living. This study has identified the key cemeteries in the study area and signifies that as the study area expands, cemeteries follow the trend of the expansion. Therefore, future plan for neighbourhoods should capture cemetery as a vital social infrastructure. The management of cemeteries in the study area leaves so much room for improvement. The facilities are not well provided and maintained and there seems to be no formal management structure, documentation and control. It is worthy of note to state that the dead are also part of our community and catering for their final resting ground is not a privilege rather a right that must be fulfilled. Therefore, there should be a concerted effort to take good care of our cemeteries as a vital part of our history, evolution and culture.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were put forward:

- i. There is a need to develop a well-articulated structure for cemetery management where there will be hierarchy of command and communication from the community level to the state government or the Sultanate Council. This could be achieved through creation of dedicated agency on Cemetery management which will reduce the burden of management of cemeteries on both the Sultanate Council and the State Ministry of Religious Affairs.
- ii. There should be a regular maintenance of cemeteries at specific intervals, not only at the advent of rainy season. This will go a long way in reducing collapse of graves and erosion within the cemetery.
- iii. There should be a dedicated budgetary allocation for the maintenance of cemetery just like other social infrastructure from the State and Local Governments. Such amount will greatly ensure and facilitate good management and maintenance of cemeteries. Reliance on gift and donation might not be enough.
- iv. There is a need to employ permanent staff to manage the affairs of individual cemeteries. The employment status will enhance sense of belonging and improve productivity and diligence to duty.
- v. There is a need to introduce record keeping in cemeteries to record burials and its duration. This will go a long way in providing the much-needed data on mortality and burials which are vital for planning and projection purposes.
- vi. Due to paucity of funding, there is a need for cemeteries to be charging fees for burial services. Such funds could be used to maintain the cemeteries particularly in minor repairs.
- vii. In view of the activities of cultist and ritualists, there is need to provide more security and gadgets such as CCTV camera to monitor activities within the cemetery.
- viii. There is a need for the state government to partner with other charity organizations such as the Qatari Foundation and even the Zakkat and Waqf Commission in order to source funding or partnership in cemetery management.

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