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# Materialism in Nigeria and Its Implications for Wellbeing and Ecological Balance

**Mark Omorovie Ikeke**
Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy,
Delta State University, Abraka

## Abstract

*Various philosophical systems and ways of life have been proposed to humans to live out their purpose on earth. These philosophies include materialism, existentialism, fascism, hedonism, stoicism, Marxism, capitalism, and so forth. One of these philosophies, materialism pervades the world. Materialism sees all of reality as matter or arising from matter and there are no spiritual or transcendent aspects to life beyond the material universe. This philosophy of materialism predisposes people to live often only for material satisfaction and gain, and in a rugged individualistic matter. There is much emphasis on consumption which leads to overconsumption and consumerism. This invariable affects human wellbeing and ecological balance. Overconsumption adversely puts pressure on natural resources and can foster greed and struggle for resources. This paper argues that there is a kind of materialism that endangers human beings and the planet. The paper shows how this has affected Nigeria. Through critical analytic and hermeneutics methods the paper argues for combating the philosophy of materialism. If this is done, it will help to foster human wellbeing and ecological balance.*

**Keywords**: Materialism, Nigeria, wellbeing, ecological balance.

## Introduction

Different philosophical values and systems have arisen in human history. All of them propose ways that human beings should live and behave. Among the philosophical systems are Marxism, capitalism, socialism, fascism, hedonism, materialism, existentialism, etc. No matter how good a philosophical system is, it suffers from certain limitations. The concern of this paper is with the philosophical system of materialism especially in its ethical form. Materialism is not only a belief system, it is also a value that people live by, and it informs people's lifestyles. Nigeria is inundated with materialistic values. This can be seen in actions and phenomena such as get-rich quickly syndrome, so-called ritual money, yahoo-yahoo phenomenon, cyber fraud, extravagant spending on burial, marriage and other ceremonies, corruption, kidnapping, banditry, etc. Recently the government of Anambra state has to make a law guiding against extravagant spending at burials. Ojoye (2019) gives information on this bill. He cites Bishop Paulinus Ezeokafor of the Catholic Diocese of Awka concerning the issue of materialism who said the negative effects of excessive spending include failing businesses, broken marriages, inability to pay students' school fees, and strained relationships. People should focus on how to help their family members live decent lives and not so-called befitting burials.


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To carry out the goal of this paper, hermeneutics, and analytic methods are adopted. The basic concepts of the paper such as materialism, wellbeing, and ecological balance are interpreted. Through the analytic method, the issues raised in the paper are critically analyzed. It is to the meaning of materialism that the paper now turns. This is done to enable an understanding of materialistic values. It should be noted here that the paper will not go into the history of materialism as that is not the focus of the paper.

**Conceptual Discourse**

Some keywords are necessary to understand this paper. They are materialism, wellbeing, and ecological balance. The history of materialism is traceable to the ancient period of philosophy. The word, "materialism," was not used then but the ancient philosophers spoke of the universe being made of material. Democritus and Epicurus, ancient atomists proposed materialism. In the modern era, it was proposed by Hobbes, Gassendi, Meslier, Helvetius, La Mettrie, Holbach, and many others. Physicalism is a contemporary refinement of materialism. Stack writes that materialism implies that all realities are composed of physical bodies.[1]

Barowski states that: "Materialism is the infatuation with physical objects over intellectual or spiritual experiences and relationships. Individuals who are materialistic will buy objects over seeking close relationships with friends or religion."[2]Shukor et al write that materialism refers also to consumers' attachments to earthly possessions and all other goals even social goals are subsumed in materialistic values.[3] It could also be understood as "the theory that matter alone exists. It immediately implies a denial of the existence of minds, spirits, divine being, etc, in so far as these are taken to be non-material."[4] Tersely, the materialist philosophy acknowledges only the physical world, and human attention should be only to the physical and material reality. Believing in the suprasensible is unacceptable to the materialist.

Materialism is "… the antithesis of aestheticism, spirituality, and idealism (in its everyday sense)."[5] Oxford Reference notes the following are also different ways of understanding materialism: (1) philosophically as asserting the primacy of matter over mind and in its reductionist forms all reality is material including mental states; (2) from a Marxist perspective it is material conditions that form the basis of human consciousness, including the fact that historical and

[1] George J. Stack,"Materialism," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1998, accessed January 24, 2024, doi:10.4324/9780415249126-DC098-1.
[2] Janelle Barowski, *Materialism: Definitions and Examples*, 2023, accessed January 24, 2024, https://study.com/learn/lesson/materialism-overview-examples.html
[3]Muhamad Syakir Shukor et al, "Materialism, Altruism, Environmental Values,LearningStrategies and Sustainable Claim onPurchase Intention of Energy Efficient Vehicle(EEV) – A Literature Review," June 2017, *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering*, 215(1):012021, accessed January 28, 2024, doi: 10.1088/1757-899X/215/1/012021
[4]Thomas Mautner (ed.), *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 341.
[5]Oxford Reference, "Materialism," accessed December 18, 2023, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20111020111930156.


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economic factors are based on matter; (3) culturally as the textual representation of material conditions of social reality.[6]On philosophical materialism, Richard C. Vitzthum writes it is in physical terms that behaviour is explained and there are no gods, souls or spirits.[7] The New World Encyclopedia states that materialism is a monistic ontology that sees all realities as matter and is opposed to idealism, pluralism, and dualism.[8]On the website Global Social Theory, it is stated that: scientists who identify as materialists are threefold: those who look to material culture for how things are used in daily life, those who follow a Marxist framework in examining the economic conditions, and those who look at the relationship between nonhumans and humans.[9]

What then is materialistic value? The form of materialism that is of concern here is the one that is pre-occupied with the material acquisition of physical materials things, properties, and entities for the interests and needs of the acquirer not minding the impact of other human beings or the social good. This type of materialism is caused by selfishness and rugged individualism. This kind of materialism does not see any good in insistence on ethical and spiritual values. It is individualistic, self-centered, rooted in greed, avarice, and vain-glorious. Philosophy Basics state that: "In common use, the word "materialist" refers to a person for whom collecting material goods is an important priority, or who primarily pursues wealth and luxury or otherwise displays conspicuous consumption. This can be more accurately termed Economic Materialism."[10] The type of materialism that is critiqued in this paper is hedonistic, devoid of ethical concerns and filled with "unnecessary acquisition and consumption of 'material things'."[11] A fundamental understanding of materialism today especially from the ethical perspective is that it is an attitude to life that values material possessions, sensual pleasures, and more important than all it rejects other values.[12] Oladotun writes that: "Materialism is the acquisition of wealth through ill-gotten means" and focuses on worldly possessions and physical comfort to the detriment of other goods in life such as spiritual and intellectual pursuits.[13]

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[6]Ibid.
[7] Richard C. Vitzthum,"Materialism," accessed January 20, 2024, https://www.qcc.cuny.edu/socialSciences/ppecorino/intro_text/Chapter%204%20Metaphysics/Materialism.htm
[8]New World Encyclopedia Contributors, "Materialism," New World Encyclopedia, accessed January 28, 2024,https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Materialism&oldid=1086223
[9] Angela Last, "Materialism," https://globalsocialtheory.org/topics/materialism/
[10] The Basics of Philosophy, " Materialism," 2023, https://www.philosophybasics.com/branch_materialism.html
[11]John Haught, "Materialism," in*The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Michael Glazier and Monika K Hellwig ( Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004), 533.
[12] Marcel Reding, "Materialism,"in *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner (Mumbai, India: St Pauls, 2004), 943.
[13]Paul Kolawole Oladotun, "God Will Supply All Your Needs According to His Glorious Riches: The Problem of Extreme Materialism among Nigerian Pastors,"*Crucible* 11, no, 1 ( March 2020): 2. https://www.crucibleonline.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Final-Paul-Kowale-Materialism-in-Nigeria-.pdf


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Human beings need material things to be able to live their lives. One is not quarrelling with striving to have the basic amenities of life and other necessities or comfort of life. What is being questioned here is the undue attachment to or craving to have material things by all means and even to the detriment of others. There are people in society for instance who are willing to destroy others to advance, engage in ritual-killing to get money, etc. Ukwechusim writes: "Materialistic youths are not materialistic because of how much they have, but primarily because of their attitude towards money and the undue importance they allocate to material possessions ."[14]

What is the ecological balance? Realize that: "Every living species on the planet is important and helps to keep the ecosystem in balance. Ecological balance is a term that describes the state … in which species coexist with other species and their environment and how the ecosystem is organized."[15] General Multilingual Environmental Thesaurus defines ecological balance as: "The condition of equilibrium among the components of a natural community such that their relative numbers remain fairly constant and their ecosystem is stable." [16] Concerning ecological balance, Energisa states that every species in an ecosystem is important in the functioning of that ecosystem and its balance. Ecological changes and ecological degradation negatively impact the state of the ecosystem. Various other factors can contribute to ecological imbalance. These factors include the introduction of new species into an environment, sudden death of species, natural disasters such as earthquakes, war, deforestation, industrialization and urbanization, and overpopulation.

Another term that is necessary to define here is wellbeing. Wellbeing concerns functioning well, feeling good, and experiencing positive emotions and contentment and fulfillment of potential. [17] State of Victoria in 2021 states that is more than the absence of illness and disease for it is also connected to social factors, health, mental and physical aspects of life, and self-esteem. [18] There is no wellbeing without satisfaction. This sense of satiety is all informed by the various factors just identified. This paper argues that this sense of wholeness and satiety in life is not necessarily improved by materialism, especially in its extreme form. The definition and description of wellbeing that is often presented in books and dictionaries are too individualistic and personal. A

[14]C.P. Ukeachusim, 2022, "1 Timothy 6:6–14 and Materialism amongst Nigerian Christian Youths,"*HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 78, no. 3 (2022):1, a7457, https://doi. org/10.4102/hts.v78i3.7457

[15]Energisa, "What is Ecological Balance?" 2022, https://www.sentrum.com.tr/en/blog/what-is-ecologicalbalance#:~:text=Definition%20of%20Ecological%20Balance,how%20the%20ecosystem%20is%20organized.

[16] General Multilingual Environmental Thesaurus, "Ecological Balance," 2021, https://www.eionet.europa.eu/gemet/en/concept/2441

[17]Kai Ruggeri, Eduardo Garcia-Garzon, Áine Maguire, Sandra Matz, and Felicia A. Huppert, "Well-being is more than Happiness and Life Satisfaction: A Multidimensional Analysis of 21 Countries,"*Health Quality Life Outcomes* 18, 192 (2020): 1, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12955-020-01423-y

[18]Guest Blogger, "What is Well-being, How Can We Measure It and How Can We Support People to Improve It?" 20 July 2015, https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/blogs/what-well-being-how-can-we-measure-it-and-how-can-we-support-people-improve-it



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person's sense of wellbeing should not be separated from a person's social and communal identity. The African sense of communalism in such values as *Ubuntu*, *Ujamaa*, humanism, Afroecosolidarity[19] should ground a sense of wellbeing. Considered only from a sense of personal wellbeing, it runs the risk of becoming materialistic to the detriment of higher values. The World Health Organization's definition of wellbeing is better than the individualistic definition of the term. It enunciates that it is a positive state of life of quality, a sense of purpose, and meaning with being productive members of society.[20] In discussing wellbeing, the Trustees of Boston University state that is a process of lifelong learning relating to all life's areas in living a satisfactory life whether emotional, social, environmental, intellectual, spiritual, or financial dimensions.[21]This paper is concerned with the issue of materialism and how it affects human wellbeing and ecological balance in Nigeria. A materialistic life certainly has implications for human wellbeing and ecological balance. This will be discussed below.

**Manifestation of Materialism in Nigeria**

Materialism is manifested in different ways in Nigeria. People may not necessarily call themselves materialists or even know they are driven by it. When some people have a drive that all that matters to them is material wealth, earthly prosperity, social fame, and popularity no matter how it comes, then they are influenced by a materialist culture. They are driven by the material attitude to life that values comfort, sensual pleasure, and wealth above all others. Nigeria is a society that is plagued by a get-rich-quick syndrome. Some people want to make it at all costs. The craving for wealth has made many abandon their moral values. Once upon a time in Nigeria, villagers and the elders used to value greatly moral probity and conscience. If you travelled to the city and came back to the village with questionable wealth, you were questioned and your wealth was even rejected. But today in many villages it has become abnormal to travel to the city and not come back with wealth. Villagers clamour for their children to go into politics and expect them when they are in power to bring money for them. Even if you are a thief, many of your villagers

[19]Ubuntu is an African value that speaks of human relatedness. It means a human being is a human being because of others. Ujamaa means brotherhood or familyhood as opined by Julius Nyerere. Humanism speaks of humanness and the dignity is the human person. Afroecosolidarity is a theory conceived and developed by Mark Omorovie Ikeke. It speaks of the African value of Africans seeing humans as communal beings who stand in solidarity or togetherness in living to enrich one another and in harmony with all cosmic realities. You can read about Ubuntu, Ujamaa, and Afroecosolidarity in the following pieces: Mark Omorovie Ikeke, "The Value of Ubuntu in Restoration and Sustainability of the Niger Delta," *Journal of African Environmental Ethics and Values* 1, (2011): 97-115; Mark Omorovie Ikeke, "The concept of Afroecosolidarity and its implications for the African environment," in *African Indigenous Ecological Knowledge Systems: Religion, Philosophy and the Environment*, ed. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu (Jos: Association for the Promotion of African Studies, 2021), 317-345; Ikeke, Mark Omorovie, Gandhi's 'Sarvodaya' and Nyerere's 'Ujamaa': An Eco-Sociopolitical Appraisal, " *Humanus Discourse* 2, no. 2 (2022): 1-15, https://ssrn.com/abstract=3998198

[20] World Health Organization, "Promoting Wellbeing," 2023, https://www.who.int/activities/promoting-well-being

[21]Trustees of Boston University, "What is Wellbeing?" 2022, https://www.bu.edu/studentwellbeing/what-is-wellbeing/



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don't care as long as you bring the money to the villagers. It is an irony that any politician who steals public money is celebrated in his village. Morality and spiritual values are thrown overboard. Uzoh states that the newspaper stories in Nigeria are filled with news of embezzlement and corruption such as the N13b found in a house in Ikoyi on 18th April 2017, the 9.8m dollars discovered in ex-NNPC MD's house on 3rd April 2017, and mind-blowing corruption in Jonathan's administration.[22] Corruption is a hydra-headed monster that has brought much destruction to Nigeria, contributed to poverty in the land, and made many live in misery.

The materialist attitude to life is what you find in many biblical stories such as the rich man and Lazarus, the rich fool, in the critique of the 8th century BC prophets of Israel. Materialism seeks comfort and luxury, often at the expense of others. There is nothing wrong in itself in seeking comfort and genuine pleasure. But it becomes wrong when it is done to harm others or to their detriment. There is something for instance wrong when a parent who has not been able to attend to his children's school fees and other basic needs is buying a luxurious and expensive car to satisfy his vainglory and impress others. There is something wrong when a parent to satisfy his/her ego sends his/her children to expensive schools just to compete with the Joneses. This craving to satisfy one's ego is materialistic. It is a wrongly placed priority. Ndubueze writes that today in Nigeria there is a high priority placed on money over character and virtue as people with questionable character are given titles and recognition and the philosophy that people now follow is the survival of the fittest; while cooperation and co-responsibility are rejected.[23]

The attitude of materialism is rampant among many Nigerian youths who engage in all kinds of social ills to get successful and rich without counting the consequences. This fact is corroborated by Chidinma P. Ukeachusim when she writes that Nigerian youths now engage in fraud, ritual activities, cybercrime, drug, and human trafficking, prostitution, hired killings, and robbery. [24]Explicating further, Ukwechesim avers that Nigerian youths use their extreme strength, vehemence, and love to pursue material things with no regard for spiritual values. They keep acquiring material things and live flamboyant lifestyles.[25]Materialistic tendencies and attitudes are rampant in Nigerian educational systems. Many educational institutions have been accused of rampant materialistic practices. Ayotunde Adebayo, Funsho A. Olatunde, and Alex Friday Obaje in their study of junior secondary school teachers realized that teachers engage in professional misconduct as they force students to buy materials, assess students based on relationships, accept bribes, engage in

[22]Pius Eneji Akah and Cobham E Uzoh, "Compulsive Desire for Material Wealth and Unwholesome Acquisitive Spirit in Nigeria: Implication for Social Work Intervention and Policy Development," *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Reviews* 9, no.1 (2019): 281.
[23]Uwalaka Jude Ndubueze, "Materialism and the Materialistic Incursion into Modern African Societies: Consequences for the African Personality and Society (Nigerian Experience)," *Asian Journal of Social Science and Management Technology* 3, no. 3 (2021): 52.
[24]Ukeachusim.
[25]Ukwechusim.


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corrupt practices, and engage in other forms of extortion, exchange of marks for sex.[26]

Nigerian churches are also troubled by the plague of materialism. On this Oladotun writes that instead of turning the hearts of God, today many churches do not preach against immortality, corruption, or decadence. Even the churches have become materialistic as ministers of the gospel live in flamboyant wealth, use expensive cars, and trade on God's blessings and miracles. They use illegal and unbiblical means to get money from the people. There is an emphasis on extreme materialism and lust. [27]

**Implications of Materialism for wellbeing and Ecological Balance in Nigeria**

The implications of the type of materialism that this paper is concerned about should become apparent. A materialistic mindset can be hedonist and rooted in seeking self-pleasure in all things. Pleasure is sought at the expense of the public and social good and the wellbeing of others. It is rugged individualism that cares nothing about the welfare of others. This kind of materialist greedily and avariciously steals and even kills to obtain what he/she desires. In the process, other human beings are harmed and deprived of their rights. Both the physical and mental health of others are affected. Some people have lost their sanity and even committed suicide as a result of being deprived of their properties and goods by greedy materialists. These people cannot actively participate in the economy as they suffer the effects of being deprived of their rights. Nigerian courts are filled with cases of struggle over property rights and commercial disputes. Some of these cases are people whose mindset are focused on the acquisition of material wealth no matter the cost. They are willing to use their power and status to intimidate the poor and corrupt the courts. The desire to acquire more can lead to more mental health challenges as people worry over their unmet expectations.

There is the erroneous belief that materialism necessarily brings more happiness. And so some people tend to believe that the more they acquire and consume material things the more they will be satisfied. The appetite to consume more goods is insatiable unless morally restrained. Wenz writes that: "Economic growth and increased person consumption do not always improve people's sense of well being" and different surveys and research( such as those by the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago) have all shown that there is a disconnect between more consumption and happiness. [28] On the negative effects of materialism in Nigerian society, Ukwechusim writes thatthe extreme quest to acquire more material things in life leads to depression, worries, and anxiety. [29] Materialism destroys the noble values of

[26]Ayotunde Adebayo, Funsho A Olatunde, and Alex Friday Obaje, "Corruption and Materialism: Pedagogical Nuisance among Social Studies Teachers in Surulere Local Government Area, Lagos State," Journa*l of African Social Studies* 1, no. 2 (2020): 84-94, https://jass.org.ng/vol_1_no_2/corruption_and_materialism.pdf
[27]Oladotun.
[28]Peter S Wenz, *Environmental Ethics Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 241-242.
[29]Ukwechusim, 1-2.


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society. Ndubueze states that: "The materialistic individualistic pursuits are winning over the time-honoured inclusive values. The time-honoured and noble values of hospitality, solidarity, and social responsibility are being threatened by the economistic values of profitability and the rule of the market forces – the zero-sum game."[30]

For physical materialists who believe that everything is matter, the material world is all that there is and this world is there, uncreated and existing forever, it is indestructible as matter cannot be destroyed or created and since there is no creator there is no moral imperative to use it following ethical imperative.[31] Nature or the physical universe is to be exploited and utilitarianly used to meet human needs. As Bacon noted, nature is like a book to be exploited. Heidegger has critiqued people who simply see the world as a reservoir of resources to be utilized. The material universe is inexhaustible and science and technology can be used to solve any problem associated with the material universe. [32] Permit here a long quotation from Ezedike who spells out some implications of materialism for the environmental and ecological balance. He writes that materialism sees nature simply as a resource to be exploited and consumed and sees no intrinsic value in nature.[33] For the materialist, there should be no restraint in the use of nature. As nature is exploited, ecosystems are degraded and their ecological balance is hampered.

The materialism that fosters more acquisition and consumption of material things certainly affects ecological balance. More acquisition and consumption implies more natural resources have to be tapped and exploited to meet these human wants and desires. As human beings acquire more material resources there is bound to be more pollution. Reduction of pollution is necessary to maintain ecological balance. Energisa writes that the world population has tremendously grown and too many people are threatening the ecological balance so there is a need to control the birth rate to reduce human pressure on natural resources. Energisa citing Guha writes that industrial society continues to multiply human wants insisting that more goods such as bigger cars, exotic clothing, and sumptuous food make life better. [34]

Davis writes that the global economy is driven by a desire for more exploitation of the natural resources of the environment and this led to increased pollution, and destruction of land, and caused harmful conditions. In a materialist culture, there is pressure to consume more in life. [35]The fact that materialism fosters negative behaviours towards the environment is well documented by many authors. Materialists see no need to improve their behaviours towards the environment as they see the environment as a mere matter for human

[30]Ndubueze, 52.
[31]Edward Uzoma Ezedike, *Environmental Ethics and Sustainability: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy* (Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press, 2020), 41.
[32]Ezedike, 41-42.
[33]Ezedike,43.
[34]Ramachandra Guha, *How Much Should a Person Consume? Thinking through the Environment* (Gurgaon, India: Harchette, 2006), 285.
[35]Jeff Davis, "How Materialism Hurts Us and Our Environment," October 19, 2022, https://soapboxie.com/social-issues/Material-Wants-VS-Needs


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exploitation.[36] Aruta argues that: "Connectedness to nature encourages, but materialism hinders, ecological behavior in the Philippines."[37] Shukor et al write that there can be a place for prudent and moderate acquisition and natural resource contribution. Human beings should live sustainably. Excessive desire for material goods and wealth, criminal activities such as kidnapping, defrauding, assassination, robbery, and many other social vices should be shunned.[38] All these activities are rooted in a materialistic quest for more in life.

Corruption is rooted in a spirit of materialism. Corruption does not only affect human wellbeing and socio-economic status but also directly and indirectly affects the natural built, social, and natural environment. Public and political corruption drains the public purse of money needed for socio-economic development. People are left to suffer, poverty grows in the land, and there is an inadequate supply of social amenities. All these affect the health and wellbeing of the people. Some persons have died as a result of their financial entitlements and pensions being stolen by corrupt government officers. Government has a responsibility to care for the natural environment. This responsibility includes protecting wildlife and the landscape from disasters, remediating environmental degradation, etc. Public money that should be used for ecological purposes to protect the environment is stolen by some government officers. The Nigerian environment is certainly suffering from ecological imbalance. Environmental problems such as deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, and oil pollution, have destroyed wildlife and degraded the environment. In this myriads of valuable species necessary for the proper function of the Nigerian ecosystems have been destroyed

Since many materialists tend to believe that science and technology have infinite powers to solve all human problems, they tend to see nothing wrong in overpopulation. On this point, Ezedike writes that materialists promote overpopulation, especially in poor countries and underdeveloped regions of the world and this puts more pressure on the world's resources. The materialist as he notes believes that the world can always create new forms of energy and even food systems as it creates genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and genetically modified foods (GMFs) which have been shown to have all types of health implications.[39]

**The Way Forward**

Materialism in some of its forms has indeed led to positive development in society. Ndubueze has argued that materialistic orientation has led to development and improvement in agriculture, technology, scientific

[36]William Kilbourne, and Gregory Pickett, "How Materialism affects Environmental Beliefs, Concern, and Environmentally Responsible Behavior," *Journal of Business Research* 61, no. 9 (2008): 885-893, doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2007.09.016
[37]John Jamir Benzon R. Aruta, "Connectedness to Nature Encourages, but Materialism hinders, Ecological Behavior in the Philippines: The Higher Order and Second-Order Factors of Environmental Attitudes as Viable Mediating Pathways,"*Ecopsychology*13, NO. 2 (2021): 114–122, https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2020.0053
[38] Akah and Uzoh,278.
[39]Ezedike, 44.


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breakthroughs, and medical services.[40] Nobody should doubt the achievements of certain brands of materialism. The problem and concern here is with excessive and imbalanced forms of materialism that seek pleasure and gratification by all means at the expense of the values of justice, kindness, environmental protection, wellbeing, and social good.

The paper has also noted that the drive to possess material resources is not evil in itself. The concern of this paper is not with the positive dimensions of materialism. The desire to acquire can make some people work harder and strive to overcome obstacles. The concern of this paper is with negative materialism. There is a crucial need to combat the attitude of materialism and the materialistic lifestyle in Nigeria. This can be done in various ways such as: by promoting moral education and ethical campaigns against materialism, emphasizing the value of discipline, a life of sacrifice and service, and hard work. The role of integral environmental education that is sensitive to the social and natural environment is inestimable. The 1977 Tbilisi Declaration states that environmental education should enable people to know about the environment and help them cultivate values that aid environmental protection. It should enable people to know their complex environment, their relationship with them, and how they can live responsibly.[41]

There is a vital need for re-orientation. This is one of the aims that environmental education across the disciplines should foster. It should inculcate in people values, knowledge, and skills to enable them to live as integral human beings in the social, built, and natural environment. Values and habits such as consumerism, extreme materialism, and utilitarian valuation of the natural world as simply raw materials for development ought to be countered in environmental education. Environmental education should inculcate in people the need to foster sustainable consumption and promote the values of critical sustainable development. It should foster responsible environmental behaviour that makes people take action for a harmonious relationship with the environment.[42]

There is a need to call for a life of simplicity. There is too much overconsumption of material resources in our world. The advice of Mahatma Gandhi is useful here. He called for a code of voluntary simplicity to counter modern lifestyles, believing there is enough in the world for everybody's needs but not greed. [43] A life of simplicity that promotes communalism and the sharing of resources will put less pressure on environmental resources. This is where the philosophy of relationality and Afroecosolidarity is very useful. Extreme materialism tends to promote rugged individualism and personal acquisition of almost everything. Human beings are created to be social animals and every human being doesn't have to practically own everything for himself.

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[40]Ndubueze, 54.
[41]United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "Tbilisi Declaration," 1977, https://www.gdrc.org/uem/ee/tbilisi.html#:~:text=A%20basic%20aim%20of%20environmental,knowledge%2C%20values%2C%20attitudes%2C%20and
[42]Akpofure Rim-Rukeh, *Environmental Science: An Introduction* (Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2009), 46.
[43]Guha, 299.


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People should share and thus make use of less material. When people carpool for instance they use less gas than if each individual were to buy and drive their cars. Think of the domestic food waste that comes from many households every morning. This material waste can be avoided if people share their excess food with others and not letting it get spoiled. Social policy is important in every society. Government has a responsibility to make and implement laws that foster good environmental policies. The government should encourage sustainable consumption and a green economy. People's desire to consume more material things should be channeled to green products. For instance instead of people buying more petrol cars they can buy more electric cars.

**Conclusion**

As this paper draws to a close, it is important to remark that the paper does not in any way imply that materialism is the only factor that promotes ecological imbalance or diminishes socio-economic wellbeing. But materialism especially extreme materialism or an inordinate quest for material possessions is a cardinal factor. It is in this light that the paper examined the meaning of materialism and some of its types. The paper also examined the meaning of socio-economic wellbeing and ecological imbalance. It showed that materialism is plaguing Nigerian society and this has brought a lot of negative consequences.

The negative consequences of materialism for socio-economic wellbeing and ecological imbalance in Nigerian society include lack of development of infrastructure as a result of corruption, exploitation and degradation of the environment, physical and mental ill-health as people struggle to acquire more, marriage and family conflicts, etc. There is a need to curb materialism, the version that promotesthe inordinate acquisition of material goods. The paper has noted that education, especially environmental education can be a vital way forward in promoting the values of a non-materialistic culture to one of ethical values that promotes balanced and moderate use of the earth's resources.

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