



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Emergence of Informal Housing: Implications for Development of Low-Cost Housing Delivery Strategies in Abeokuta, Nigeria

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Abstract:

Literature revealed that the emergence of informal housing has been largely viewed as problem and had described it as spontaneous, unplanned and uncoordinated emergent development. They are often carried out through self-help efforts without necessarily complying with the planning and building regulations or standards. Events have shown that government eviction have in turn helped to fuel its further growth, which later became permanent dwellings for the displaced residents. This suggests that, the emergence of informal low-cost housing is inevitable as long as the cities or urban centres manifest its economies at different scales with the concomitant effects of rapid rural –urban migration, economic survival reactions, prohibitive land cost, inaccessibility to affordable land, inability of the government to provide adequate and affordable housing. The paper tries to assess the implications of the emergence of informal housing on the development of low-cost housing delivery strategies in Imala/Elega/Bode-Olude area of Abeokuta, Nigeria. Purposive and stratified random sampling techniques were adopted in the selection of study area and dwelling units respectively. Data collection was from literature and structured questionnaires, where quantitative and qualitative information were extracted on the building type, location, attraction of participants and construction strategies adopted from the 384 stratified randomly selected respondents. Data obtained were analysed and discussed with the use of group statistics, independent samples t-test analysis and correlation matrix analysis for the testing of related hypotheses in relation to the objectives and identified variables. Findings shows amongst others that, the development situations in the study area are not hopeless but can be made more decently, safe and healthily habitable without disrupting the informal housing market and hurting the housing need. The paper made recommendations and concludes that, with enabling intervention strategies, informal low-cost housing can be a viable and sustainable platform for increasing the housing supply, especially for the urban poor.

Keywords: informal housing, emergence, intervention, strategies, housing supply, implications

1. Introduction

Informal housing has severally been defined by researchers. UN (2003) also revealed it as a phenomenon fairly homogeneous in nature, complex and diverse in manifestation that solutions could not be generalised but needed to be context-specific. UN (2003) further revealed a number of names, either colloquial or as connotation, by which informal housing is being described by various authors and sometimes used interchangeably. They include informal settlements, impermanent or semi-permanent settlements, illegal or unauthorised settlements, unplanned settlements, uncontrolled settlements, shanties, slums and squatter settlements. These descriptions or definitions highlight the attitudes and approaches towards informal housing and/or informal settlements, ranging from negative, neutral and positive dispositions (Srinivas, 2005).

Although, informal housing seems to match affordability and free of long-term financing obligations, it offers the opportunity of being closer to the design and building process, which could form the basis of its enhancement and upgrading (Sivam, 2003; Olsen, 2003; Arnott, 2008; Taylor, 2011). This position is thus instructive because, the common characteristics of informal housing are add-on structures, defective design and structural failures; defective material choice and application; insecure tenure-ship; poor access to basic infrastructures and services; unhealthy living conditions and social exclusion. They are impermanent and seem to be under threat of

demolition. Formal housing on the other hand, is residential buildings/houses inhabited or owned predominantly by individuals and are constructed following the building codes and standards (Agbola, 2005). The compliance with such building codes and standards are enforced by relevant development control agencies/authorities.

Informal low-cost housing in the context of this paper is defined as residential buildings/houses built, inhabited or owned predominantly by individuals from the low-income group, which do not have formal development permit or approval and are built on planned and unplanned areas. It is in this stead, seen as problem and solution to low-cost housing delivery. The paper therefore assesses the implications of informal housing on the development of low-cost housing delivery strategies in Abeokuta., Nigeria.

1.1. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to assess the implications of the emergence of informal housing on the development of low-cost housing delivery strategies in Abeokuta, Nigeria

The objectives are to:

- (i) assess the characteristics of building and construction strategies adopted in the study area
- (ii) determine the interrelationship of building location and attraction to informal low-cost housing in the study area

1.2. Hypothesis

- H₀1: There is no significant difference between the building type and construction strategy adopted
- H₀2: There is no significant relationship between the attraction to informal housing and the building location

1.3. The Study Area

Abeokuta is the capital city Ogun State Nigeria. It covers a landmass of about 350 square kilometres and has about 60% of its settlements rural, semi-rural and peripheral urban in nature. The population of Abeokuta had been projected to reach 1.2million by year 2025 (Ogun State Government, 2008). Imala/Elega/Bode-Olude, the study area, is within the capital city of Abeokuta. It is characterised by development of clustered buildings/settlements at the southern part of the main city centre, which are predominantly residential with pockets of commercial and cottages/small-scale industrial buildings along the major roads at the periphery of the city centre. The study area is made up of ten (10) Wards, 5 contiguous villages, about 500 interwoven clans, about 53,184 buildings, with an average population of about 567,618 (FRN, 2009), and falls within the urban fringes of Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. It also consists of tributaries (i.e. major rivers and reservoirs of Oyan, Ogun and Osun), a large percentage coverage of agrarian land/vegetation

In Imala/Elega/Bode-Olude, there resides the main source of pipe-borne water supply to the entire Abeokuta Township, presence of public/private socio-economic amenities/facilities and the extension of the campus of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. The study area is exposed to concomitant pressure of population influx, urban drift, and other attendant effects of the consequential characteristic of an ever-expanding State capital. It is therefore, not unusual to see proliferation of unplanned settlements, streets and dysfunctional development as people's survival reactions. The inhabitants are mostly Nigerians of mixed tribes/ethnics from Egba, Ijebu, Yewa, Awori, Anaago, Egun, Ibadan, Offa, Igbo, Hausa/fulani, Igede and Edo extractions. The quality of life and inter-relationships of inhabitants, as well as their activities have, over time, brought about inter-tribal or inter-cultural marriages, which have further generated interest of the people in the area and as such gave rise to demand for land beyond its availability in the core parts of the study area.

2. Literature Review

Literatures have revealed that informal housing emerges as a result of the inadequacy of the capacity of public agencies to deliver housing (Bana, 1991 and Emerole, 2002) and little or no consensus had been reached on the strategies and approaches government should follow in addressing the housing need of its citizens (Mukhija, 2004). The emergence of informal housing was also noted to be the consequence of high values placed on the available land, which are not within the reach of the low-income households (Arayela 2002, Taylor, 2011, Ali and Sulaiman, 2006, Olayiwola, *et al*, 2005 and Tsenkova, 2009). The inability of the majority of the urban dwellers to own land forced them out of the inner core to spread outward into land and housing area they could afford. UN (2003) also describe it as a phenomenon fairly homogeneous in nature, complex and diverse in manifestation for which solutions could not be generalised but needed to be context-specific.

Turner (1974, 1976), Awotona (1986) and Tipple (1987) have in the past shown concern over the inability of the government of the Third World Countries in tackling the problems of lack of appropriate shelter for the urban poor. They had pointed out that informal housing is a triumph of self-help and self-determination, as well as an irreversible phenomenon, where self-help is contextually understood to be beyond do-it-yourself-affairs, but include a function of decision making on one hand and the power to exercise control over the housing production process, on the other hand. It was in this stead that Uji (1988, 1994) posited that, the seeming official disposition of policy makers considering informal housing as illegal, an aberration and/or fit only for eradication would not solve its further emergence. It was rather suggested that an integration of informal housing into the urban planning and shelter production process with the inclusion and participation of the urban poor will be of advantage.

The consequences of informal housing, its spontaneous emergence and proliferation notwithstanding, it appears to have become a phenomenon that has come to stay in Abeokuta and its environs, as in other cities. However, Myers (2011) had observed that, not all informal settlements are necessarily slums; and that not all slums are informal settlements. It is in this stead that Todaro (1994) and

Ahmed (2007) had perhaps perceived informal housing as problem and solution to housing need in growing cities of many developing countries. They noted that informal housing comes with the advantages of providing opportunity for stage or phase development in consonance with the realities of the prevailing socio-economic and cultural changes of the owner, without the need for translocation; and encourages the use of available local building materials and technology amongst others. Its illegality and spontaneous nature of emergence, in terms of structures in perpetual fear of being demolished, offers opportunity of transforming into an acceptable and affordable housing without necessarily demolishing them, through upgrading of existing structures while preserving existing economic systems of the inhabitants and maintaining the subsisting communal structure.

In a similar vein, Hernández and Kellett (2009) opined that leniency and support are the best methods of ensuring the future success of these inhabitants. The pertinent question is that, “should this scenario be totally eliminated or formalised or upgraded?” Thus, raising a challenge for professional and governmental interventions towards achieving its liveability and sustainability. It is this question that this paper tries to answer.

2.1. Characteristics of Buildings and Construction Strategies of Informal Low-Cost Housing in the Study Area

The selected study area of Abeokuta reveals a development pattern characterised by temporary structures, partially completed and inhabited dwellings, as well as uncompleted and uninhabited dwellings built on planned and unplanned areas and/or without statutory development permit. It also reveals an area with dilapidated and poorly defined road network and street drains; undefined and uncoordinated waste disposal, water and electric power supply strategy as shown in Figures 1- 4, which is in line with the positions of Lloyd (1979); Blitzer, Hardoy and Satterthwaite (1981) and Uji (1994) in their related studies on spontaneous settlement phenomenon of the Third World Cities; as well as in those of Agbola (1998); Olotuah (1997, 2000, 2001 & 2005) on the deplorable conditions of dwelling units in most urban centres where informal low-cost housing are developed.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Figures 1-2: Views of dwellings with temporary structures for ancillary and socio-economic activities without defined road and street drains, coordinated waste disposal, electrical and water supply network.



Figure 3



Figure 4

Figure 3-4: Views of completed, partially completed dwellings, poorly aligned road network and without defined street drains, coordinated waste disposal, electrical and water supply network.

The construction of these dwellings usually start from small size with the use of used or discarded or new or combination of any of the building materials found within and/or outside of the neighbourhood. These building materials are obtained as gift or at give-away price in assistance to the course of building up a place of habitation in accordance with the available financial, human and material resources, as well as building techniques. The emergence of this kind of development seems to be inevitable, as long as the cities

manifest its economies at different scales with the concomitant effects of rapid rural –urban migration, economic survival reactions, prohibitive land cost, inaccessibility to affordable land, inability of the government to provide adequate and affordable housing especially for the urban poor. The consequence had been somewhat noted as deplorable development pattern which had in turn informed the unsuccessful government’s repulsive attitude and approach of clearance, eviction or displacement or total demolition of informal housing. This unsuccessful approach might not have been unconnected with the discountenance of the importance of the location, building type, socio-economic and socio-cultural attractions of the inhabitants and its implications on the emergence.

However, Uji (1988; 1994) revealed that, though it is common to consider informal housing as below official standard, but it has not in any way undermined the urban dwellers of informal housing or squatter settlements’ inherent capacity and success in taking decisions at addressing their urgent and basic housing need. Thus, the non-success, of most previous housing policies, especially for the urban poor, was attributable to the inability or failure in the official position to acknowledge the capability of the urban dwellers of informal housing to take their own decisions in providing appropriate and better housing for themselves through self-help. It therefore brought to bear on the need to harness the positive attributes of informal and non-formal housing initiatives as a strategic intervention for low-cost housing delivery in Nigeria.

Events have also shown spontaneous emergence of more informal settlements in Nigeria resulting from the prevailing economic realities, status conflict and rapid rate of urbanisation at the core urban-periphery, government’s negative attitudes and approaches against it notwithstanding. Moreso, Scholz *et al.*, (2005) argued that, there are no alternatives to informal or socially regulated development, planning processes have to be integrated into the existing legal system with shared responsibilities, with the view to upgrading and formalising informal settlements. It therefore suggests a paradigm shift in attitude and approach, whereby government/ authorities and all stakeholders need to appreciate and offer support to the people who are attempting to build by themselves.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopts survey approach with the use of structured questionnaires, direct field observation, interviews and discussions to extract quantitative and qualitative opinion. Other sources of information include literature, published and unpublished articles and books. The study population was all residential buildings, inhabited or owned predominantly by individuals in the defined space either completed or uncompleted. The research population projection of 338,728 was used (i.e. at the rate of 3.18%) based on the FRN (2009) population figure of 247,549 of residents above the age of twenty-four (24) years in the area of study (Abeokuta), upon which information were extracted. The age bracket has been chosen based on presumption that adult-occupants above the age of twenty-four (24) years, would have at least reasonable knowledge and control over their dwellings or could conceivably be in the position to take any decision on or control over the process of its production and/or any form of physical intervention in the state of dwellings.

A purposive sampling technique and stratified random sampling technique was adopted in the selection of study area and dwelling units respectively. The dwelling units for the study are uncompleted and completed buildings that are already inhabited. In the determination of the sampling size for this study, the established America Marketing Association, (AMA 2007-2012) sampling size calculator was adopted and applied, using the total projected population of household-heads/tenant-occupants, at a confidence level and confidence interval of 95% and 5 respectively. The total projected population figure of 338,728 was then imputed into the calculator after which, an expected sampling size of 384 was arrived at.

The questionnaire was designed and developed to collect information relating to the research questions and objectives alongside the related hypotheses and identified variables. The structured questionnaire were administered on a sample size of 384 stratified randomly selected respondents to elicit information on building characteristics; types of buildings, building location, construction strategies, the attraction to informal low-cost housing, nature of the building, purpose for which the building was constructed, number of bedrooms provided in the building, development approval of the government regulatory/control agency, who designed and supervised the building, rent paid per month of the study area.

The method of data analyses employed involved the use of group statistics, independent samples t-test analysis and correlation matrix analysis for testing hypotheses. The data gathered were thereafter reviewed, discussed and presented in relation to the research objectives, hypotheses and identified variables.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of data collected on the types of buildings, building location, construction strategies and building characteristics of the respondents are as presented in tables 1(a-b) and table 2 and3, which were discussed in relation to the study objectives, hypotheses and identified variables.

Tables 1 (a-b) reveals the results of the group statistics and independent samples t-test analysis relating to hypothesis I (**H₀₁**: There is no significance difference between the building type and construction strategy adopted) with respect to Objective I (assessment of the characteristics of building and construction strategies adopted in the study area), the identified dependent and independent variables. The Independent Sample Test table 1(b) shows the *Sig.* (2-tailed) value of 0.000 on assumption that the variances are unknown but equal.

This implies that there is significance difference between the building type and construction strategy adopted at 5% level of significance. Thus, rejecting the null hypothesis (**H₀₁**), while the alternative hypothesis (**H_{a1}**) is accepted.

a) Group Statistics											
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean						
Data	Building Type	315	2.11	.749	.042						
	Construction Strategy	314	2.46	.904	.051						
<i>Source:</i> Researchers' computation 2016											
b) Independent Samples Test											
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
										Lower	Upper
Data	Equal variances assumed	20.485	.000	-5.343	627	.000	-.354	.066	-.484	-.224	
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.342	605.369	.000	-.354	.066	-.484	-.224	

Table 1: Independent Samples t-test Analysis
 Source: Researchers' computation 2016

Tables 2-3 reveals the results of correlation matrix analysis relating to hypothesis II (**H₀₂**: There is no significant relationship between the attraction to informal low-cost housing and the building location) with respect to Objective II (determine the interrelationship of building location and attraction to informal low-cost housing in the study area), the identified dependent and independent variables.

Table 2 shows that the attraction to informal low-cost housing is a linearly transformed variables of type of building, nature of the building, purpose for which the building was constructed, number of bedrooms provided in the building, development approval of the government regulatory/control agency, who designed and supervised the building, rent paid per month and the attraction to the current land/building location. The bivariate correlations matrix table 2 therefore shows the Pearson correlation value of -0.043 with a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.512, which implies that there is an insignificant very weak negative imperfect relationship between the attraction to informal low-cost housing and the building location.

Table 3 however, further shows that, of the individual variables for attraction to informal low-cost housing, only Purpose for which the building was constructed, designed & supervision, and rent paid per month have positive effect on building location. Thus, rejecting the null hypothesis (**H₀₂**), while the alternative hypothesis (**Ha2**) is accepted.

Correlation Matrix			
		Attraction to informal housing	Location of building
Attraction to informal housing	Pearson Correlation	1	-.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.512
	N	255	232
Location of building	Pearson Correlation	-.043	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.512	
	N	232	286

Table 2: Correlation Matrix Analysis
 Source: Researchers' computation 2016

		Location of building
Type of building	Pearson correlation	-.027**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.652
	N	285
Nature of the building	Pearson correlation	-.001**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.990
	N	284
Purpose for which the building was constructed	Pearson correlation	.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.899
	N	279
How many bedrooms are provided in the building?	Pearson correlation	-.161
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006
	N	285
Has it any development approval of the government regulatory/control agency?	Pearson correlation	-.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.704
	N	285
Designed and supervised by	Pearson correlation	.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.326
	N	278
Rent paid per month	Pearson correlation	.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.895
	N	247
What attracted you to the current land/building location?	Pearson correlation	-.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.913
	N	280
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). <i>Source</i> : Researchers' computation 2016		

Table 3: Paired Correlation Matrix Analysis

5. Summary of Findings

The summary of findings shows that:

1 There is an insignificant, very weak, negative and imperfect relationship between the attraction to informal low-cost housing and the building location

2 the attraction to informal low-cost housing is a linearly transformed variables of type of building, nature of the building, purpose for which the building was constructed, number of bedrooms provided in the building, development approval of the government regulatory/control agency, who designed and supervised the building, rent paid per month

3 there is significant relationship between the attraction to informal low-cost housing and the building location, because the purpose for which the building was constructed, designed & supervision and rent paid per month had positive effect on building location; and

4 There is significance difference between the building type and construction strategy adopted.

The foregoing therefore suggests that, the physical planning, design and development situations in the study area are not precarious or not hopeless but can be made more decently, safe and healthily habitable through strategic intervention.

It is suggestive of the challenge for the government to strike a balance between discouraging unauthorized housing and disrupting the informal housing market on one hand and hurting the housing need on the other hand.

It also implies that, the concept of informal low-cost housing possesses inherent potentialities that are capable of increasing the housing supply-side, if its planning and development processes are socially regulated and integrated into the subsisting planning and building regulations, with the view to upgrading and/or formalizing informal low-cost developments. This should be done in such a way and manner that will bring about improvement in community living and environmental condition with secured tenure without incentive for induced increase in land market-price and/or make inhabitants be attracted to selling their land for another informal re-settlement elsewhere rather than improving in the quality of habitation.

6. Recommendation and Conclusion

The study has generally elicited information to engender better understanding of the inherent socio-cultural and socio-economic values in informal low-cost housing as against otherwise known negative perceptions. It has revealed its implications for the development of low-income housing delivery strategies, through which the housing supply can be increased, especially for the urban poor. The paper therefore advocates for interventions in the areas of formulation of appropriate regulatory framework, policies, strategies and

development plans/programmes that will promote and enable the integration of informal low-cost housing without necessarily translocating the sitting residents.

Intervention strategies in the form of upgrading or regeneration and/or the provision of easy access to site-and-services; appropriate, accessible and affordable basic amenities/socio-economic activities; and provision of design and building techniques standards that primarily addresses the basic spatial and physiological needs rather than wants or desires towards increasing the housing supply that is decent, healthy, safe and affordable is recommended.

It is also recommended that the intervention(s) should be inclusive of the involvement and participation of the members of the community, professionals, non-governmental organisations and developments regulatory agencies, especially in the area of enlightenment, social mobilisation/emancipation on the roles, duties and responsibilities of all stakeholders/participants towards achieving, maintaining and sustaining decent, healthy, safe and convivial physical living environment.

The implications of this, requires that the government should essentially provide the logistics and enabling environment through budgetary provisions; establishment of vocation centres and/or rejigging of the existing technical colleges to facilitate and conduct training and re-training programmes for skills acquisitions in renovation, retrofitting, upgrading, physical facilities improvement and maintenance. There's also the need for the revision of subsisting curricular of the technical colleges/vocation centres, landuse Act, development plans or masterplan/layout plan, building and planning regulations, as well as the architectural designs and materials standards to accommodate the integration of informal low-cost housing development in a more specific and orderly manner. Such integration should encourage communal participation, voluntary compliance with the set land and building regulation, community, private and public participation as well as investment in the planning, development, maintenance and management of infrastructure and services. The sale and transfer of land or habitation under such intervention programme should ordinarily be disallowed and where inevitable, the condition and procedure precedent to such transaction must be stringent, tedious and unattractive. All land or habitations otherwise sold or transferred in defiance, without the expressed consent of the designated approving authority, should be confiscated with no compensation to the buyer or beneficiary of such unapproved transaction. This will serve as a deterrent. The paper concludes that with enabling intervention strategies, informal low-cost housing can be a viable and sustainable platform for increasing the housing supply especially for the urban poor.

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