
COMMUNITY ACCOUNTS OF UNCONVENTIONAL HOUSING STRUCTURES IN SELECTED AREAS OF IBADAN CITY, NIGERIA

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Abstract: *IN RECENT TIME THE NEED FOR SHELTER AND PRESENT ECONOMIC SITUATION HAS INFLUENCE INNOVATION IN PATTERN OF HOUSING CONSTRUCTION IN DEVELOPING SOCIETIES. TYPICAL OF SUCH CASES ARE FOUND IN NIGERIA. WHILE MANY PEOPLE PLAYED BY THE RULES IN THE COURSE OF HAVING AN ABODE TO LAY THEIR HEADS IN ORDER TO AVOID POSSIBLE HOSTILITIES AND/OR EVICTIONS THAT ARE COMMON OCCURRENCE BETWEEN THE LANDLORDS AND THE TENANTS, REVERSE WAS THE CASE AMONG SOME PEOPLE. SITUATION OF THIS NATURE THAT WAS FOUND WITHIN THE INDIGENE-POPULATED AREAS OF IBADAN, OYO STATE, NIGERIA WAS THE FOCUS OF THIS STUDY. CURIOUS MODE OF HOUSING CONSTRUCTION WHERE ONE-STOREY BUILDINGS WITH MUD STRUCTURE ON THE GROUND FLOOR AND CONCRETE BLOCKS ON THE FIRST FLOOR WERE FOUND SCATTERED WITHIN THE STUDY SETTINGS. THE ASSISTANCE OF CONTACT PERSONS WAS UTILIZED TO LOCATE SOME OF THESE THESE STRUCTURES. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW WAS ADOPTED TO ELICIT INFORMATION FROM 16 RESPONDENTS IN THE IDENTIFIED STUDY SITES. THE DATA COLLECTED IN THE PROCESS WERE ANALYSED THROUGH CONTENT ANALYSIS AND THE RESULTS WERE ILLUSTRATED IN VERBATIM QUOTATIONS TO SUPPORT THE ISSUES BEING DISCUSSED. INEXPERIENCE, MISPLACEMENT OF VALUES SYSTEM, LACK OF AVAILABLE SPACE TO PUT A STRUCTURE THAT WILL ACCOMMODATE THE EXPANDING FAMILY STRUCTURE AND THAT ABANDONING THE EXISTING SPACE FOR NEW ONE ELSEWHERE WILL LEAD TO LOSS OF THE FAMILY LAND IN THE INDIGENOUS AREAS TO OTHER SIBLINGS FROM EXTENDED FAMILY ARE THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED THIS TYPE OF HOUSING CONSTRUCTION. AT THE SAME*



TIME THE FEAR OF TRADING AWAY THE HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND INADEQUATE MANPOWER IN THE TOWN PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACCOUNTED FOR INEFFECTIVE CONTROL OF THIS PRACTICE BY THE COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT RESPECTIVELY.

Keywords: *UNCONVENTIONAL, HOUSING, STRUCTURES, COMMUNITY, BUILDING*

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INTRODUCTION

The current total housing needs in Africa are estimated at around four million units per year with over 60 per cent of this required to accommodate the urban demand. In the midst of this, weak implementation of planning measures is reducing access to amenities and services (Bashir et al., 2017, Claude et al., 2017, UN-HABITAT, 2016) thus denying large proportion of the populace the right to adequate housing. However, the right to adequate housing was noted as being broader than the right to own property; it was seen as addressing the rights not limited to ownership and is intended to ensure that everyone has a safe and secure place to live in peace and dignity, including non-owners of property. Within this ambit, security of tenure, which is the cornerstone of the right to adequate housing often take a variety of forms, including rental accommodation, cooperative housing, lease, owner-occupation, emergency housing or informal settlements (Ofori, 2020, UN-HABITAT, 2015).

Despite the necessity of housing, a wide gap exists between housing needs and housing supply in most African countries. Sub-Saharan Africa is seeing rapid urbanization and an increase in the number of people living in slums, according to the World Bank (2015). Based on present trends, urban populations are expected to reach 1.2 billion by 2050. Every year, 4.5 million people relocate into informal settlements, according to the report. According to statistics, many households are unable to afford basic formal housing or secure mortgage loans. Scholars (Chen, 2020, CAHF, 2018) therefore submitted that formal housing might be prohibitively expensive at times because of onerous regulatory limitations and a lack of basic infrastructure. In Nigeria there was a plan to deliver 202,000 housing units to the public between 1975 and 1980 but only 28,500 units, representing 14.1% was achieved. Out of 200,000 housing units planned to be delivered between 1981 and 1985, only 47,200 representing 23.6% was constructed (Ihua-Maduenyi, 2019, Chirisa & Matamanda, 2016).

The 1991 housing policy estimated that 700,000 housing units are to be built annually if housing deficit is to be cancelled (Ibimilua & Ibitoye, 2015, Owoeye & Adedeji, 2015). Despite the beauty inherent in these plans and programmes, the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) was able to build only 30,000 housing units nationwide between 1973 and 2006 (Oladimeji, 2019). Out of the current estimated housing deficit of between 12 million and 16 million homes in Nigeria (Oladimeji, 2015, Emiedafe, 2015), the FHA estimated that it constructed a total of about 10,000 new housing units annually (Lawal & Adekunle, 2018). The reality is that the country needs ten times more or at least 100,000 new housing units annually (Adedayo, 2015, Makinde, 2014) to meet ever-growing demand.

The failure to deliver enough houses according to UN-HABITAT (2016) is not just a social problem; it has huge repercussions in terms of economic development. Series of effort have been



made in the past (Ekpo, 2019). Till the present moment no reasonable results have been achieved through these efforts that came in the form of government policies. These include the National Housing Funds, housing loan schemes and so on (World Bank, 2016). The policies have failed to provide adequate low-cost housing alternatives it promised thereby creating inequitable distribution of the little so provided.

In Nigeria, the outright failure or little results in the words of Agbugah-Ezeana (2019) was due to structural (high cost of building materials, high construction wages, high bank interest rate and high rent relative to income) and institutional (Land Use decree and approval process of building plan) problems. It was noted that many real estate developers could not have access to construction loan, which would help to facilitate the provision of houses for the people (World Bank, 2016, Ogidan, 2010). Couple with this is the issue of urban renewal and redevelopment efforts, which sometimes result in the demolition of homes and relocation of thousands to areas which, being far removed from livelihood opportunities result in further impoverishment for those already on low incomes. While this has rendered several people homeless, some are staying in unhygienic abode while others are innovating in terms of putting a structure for them to have a place to play their heads.

In most cases, the construction of some of those structures took place outside the ethical standards set out by the stakeholders for comfortable and sustainable living. One of the outcomes of such practice includes failure and collapse of buildings which in recent times has become very rampant in the country (Oyedele, 2018, Oguntimehin & Adejugbagbe, 2019). The implication of this is that millions of the citizenry have resorted to living in unsuitable, insecure conditions often characterized by a lack of basic services and serious health threats against their will. A situation like this is therefore a variance to the recognition given to the housing as one of the best indicators of a person's standard of living and of his or her place in society (Piekut, 2020) as well as the medium for the reflection of the available standards of living of a society (Streimikiene, 2015).

The import of this is that construction of houses goes beyond the provision of an abode for human habitation, but having a structurally effective dwelling where people will live in peace for productive life and sustenance of human race. The expectation is that structural design for a building must ensure that the building is able to stand up safely, able to function without excessive deflections or movements which may cause fatigue of structural elements, cracking or failure of fixtures, fittings or partitions, or discomfort for occupants (Agbugah-Ezeana, 2019, World Bank, 2018). At the same time, it must take into consideration, movements and forces due to temperature, creep, cracking and imposed loads. It must also ensure that the design is practically buildable within acceptable manufacturing tolerances of the materials. Aside from this, it must allow the architecture to work, and the building services to fit within the building and function (air conditioning, ventilation, smoke extract, electrics, lighting and so on). The summary of this is that the structural design of a modern building can be extremely complex, and often requires a large team to complete.

Scholars (Obioha, 2021, Adedayo, 2015) have identified and variously discussed the emerging trends within the construction industry; particular in this case are the issues that contravened the laid down procedures within the industry. The corrupt practices that pervade every segment of the society (Egbedina, 2008) have been noted as prevailing in construction industry as well. This was termed unethical practices by Oloke *et al.*, (2017). According to her, worrisome dimension of collapse of buildings (in Lagos State) with its attendant loss of lives and properties worth millions of Naira put a question mark on ethical status of stakeholders within the industry.

Occurrence of this nature has been traced to infiltration of housing industry by all manners of people (Obodoh *et al.*, 2019, Emiedafe, 2015, Agbola 2005) with the collaboration of the bad eggs among the professionals, thereby wreaking havoc on the industry and the society. Given the importance of human resources for national development (Saha, 2018, Terziev & Georgiev, 2017,



Hamid *et al.*, 2017, Lawal, 2002), it's only natural to perceive the deaths that result from such immoral acts as a waste of resources. The need to prevent this is particularly pressing at this time, when the problem of sustainable development, which necessitates the prudent use of both human and environmental resources, has become critical.

Another dimension which differs significantly from those noted by Oloke *et al.*, (2017) is obtainable in certain part of Ibadan city, Oyo State; this includes erecting coursed mud or concrete block structures on top of previously constructed mud house bungalows though the practice is no longer conspicuous; however, the products and adverse effects of such unethical practice could be traced to collapse of buildings that has remained a regular phenomenon especially during raining season in the city (Are, 2016). At this period of information age one begins to question the roles of the government agencies (town planner, police and so on) when such practices which negate the laid down procedures within construction industry are going on. The fact that cannot be ignored is that this practice falls short of expectations of professionalism as noted by Oladimeji (2019) thus giving rise to the question of professional ethic in the issue.

Ethical issue or moral conduct in building industry is not a recent concept; it is known among the professionals as building code. It has a long history; from the first building code known as the Code of Hammurabi to its present status in the contemporary era there are stipulated sanctions in order to ensure that morality is put into consideration while professionals are engaging in building constructions. This study recognized the need for scientific study of this phenomenon for academic discourse and contribution to knowledge. It is also exploring the professional status of the people engaged in construction of these peculiar structures noted as widespread among the indigenous settings in Ibadan area. As a guide, the following are the specific concerns of this work: ascertaining the social background of owners and builders of such structures; document the factors that influence the construction of such structures; note the rate of such practice and sustaining factors; examine the community's position over construction of such structures and Government's efforts at controlling the practice over time.

METHODOLOGY

The study Site and Population: The city of Ibadan formed the study area for this work. The sites were the areas where such structures are located within the city, and they were purposively selected for the study. The areas in question include *Popo Yemoja; Oranyan; Oke 'Bioku; Ode Aje* and *Beere*. From each of these areas, three (3) sites were selected making 15 sites altogether.

Sampling Instrument: Qualitative method which involved in-depth interview to elicit information from the target population was adopted in this work.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size: Unlike the previous study (Asa and Lawal, 2010) where the researchers used a Draughtsman as contact person to reach out to some of these structures, cases under focus are parts of the efforts made through the library search. Reconnaissance surveys were made to these areas where after confirmation from the residents of the areas, some of the structures were found to have been completely demolished to avoid accidental collapse on passers-by. About 4 of such structures were still found standing on their feet but no longer habitable due to their derelict nature. The elder statesmen living within the vicinity of these structures were selected as the respondents in this study. An individual per study site was selected thus making 15 respondents in all. For assurance of confidentiality and to secure maximum cooperation from the respondents, assistance of important personalities within the study area was sought and obtained. This time around, these personalities were the religious leaders who are well respected by the people.



Procedure for Data Analysis: Open code software was utilized to analyze the data collected for this work. In addition, verbatim quotations were utilized to illustrate some points during interpretation of results.

RESULTS

Information gotten from the study sites revealed that the owners of such structures are deceased. Most of the structures are dilapidated save for two that are still being occupied; the residents therein have no information to offer on these structures but two elderly persons within the study sites who witnessed the construction of such structures assisted in providing more information.

The dilapidated forms of such structures in some areas revealed that the bungalows of the structures were made of mud; sturdy planks were used as floor upon which coursed mud or concrete blocks were erected to perfect the owners/occupiers ideas of one-storey building and complemented with cement plastering. The staircases which were made of wooden structure and commonly located within the passage of the first floor are equally available. Anybody coming across such structures for the first time will surely know that the buildings were not of concrete blocks in their entirety. Several structures of this nature are scattered all over the indigenous part of Ibadan. This type of structure usually has its bungalow made of mud while the upper floor was of coursed mud and the balcony was of concrete cement. Most often the balcony usually tilts downward due to its ability to stand properly.

Social Background of the People involved in this Practice

Data showed that the people involved in this practice were not formally educated. Majority of them were Artisans who learnt their vocations through informal apprenticeship scheme. Those that experienced formal education among them have dropped-out at the earlier stages of their education at primary school level. The structures transformed in the manner being reported in this study were virtually products of inheritance. It was further shown that the prevalence of this practice became obvious from the late 1970s towards the mid-1980s. It was revealed that the professionals engaged in the construction of the structures were equally neighbourhood artisans (bricklayers, carpenters, and so on). In some cases, the owners (as professionals in their own rights) took significant roles in the construction of these structures particularly in the areas where they were specializing. Shedding light on the perspectives of the artisans working on these structures at that time, an elderly person who was one of the artisans that worked on some of such structures volunteered thus:

At that time, we hardly considered the negative implication of this practice. Our view then was that nothing will happen with judicious usage of cement and faith in God. The recent happening where people were killed by collapsed building however demonstrated the level of ignorance then (IDI Male/79years/Ode Aje/Ibadan).

The factors Sustaining this practice

As previously shown in other parts of Ibadan where similar issues were examined, the sustaining factors were classified as technical and socio-cultural in nature. The technical factor hinged on the fact that there was inadequacy of trained professionals and qualified government officials to move around and act as checks against the practice of erecting concrete structures on mud structures. The socio-cultural factor could be understood from the angle of ignorance on the part of the dramatis personae and members of the neighbourhood where this is taking place about the inherent dangers involved in this practice. The ignorance manifested further through the silence being maintained by the members of the community when such unethical practice is going on in the name of allowing peace to reign. Cultural factor of holding onto the ancestral properties also made the owners of such structures to refuse to expand outside their ancestral settings. They had the desire of remaining within



the neighbourhood to protect their ancestral properties and maintaining the family holds on such landed properties. The contact person in this study submitted thus:

People hardly move out of the indigenous areas then. They preferred staying within the ancestral homes to protect the family legacies; absence of land to erect structure of their dreams in view of their desire not to move out informed their resolve to put concrete bricks on mud structures. The prevailing fashion then was the use of concrete blocks to build or renovate old houses; it thus became the impetus needed to benefit from the new vogue of using concrete blocks to build houses. There was also the belief that such blocks are much lighter than the mud (IDI Male, Draughtsman/55years/Oke Bioku, Ibadan).

Contrary but revealing information was further provided by another respondent thus:

At that time, most cities of which Ibadan is inclusive were experiencing mass influx of migrants. The demand for accommodation became higher hence the desperation on the part of the people to benefit from economic returns of having houses for rent. During this period relocating out of the indigenous areas for construction of housing was not attractive; though there was handful of the economically upcoming ones who moved out to construct new buildings in areas like *Ile Tuntun, Olomi, Academy, Sanyo, Olunde, Olorunsogo, Muslim, Sango, Eleyele, Ijokodo* and so on. These people were seen as snubs and unreasonable because those areas were largely rural and undeveloped. The general belief was that they running away from the responsibilities of providing supports to family members who were always around the corners. Majority that were of the view that they cannot run away from such responsibilities however continued to stay in the indigenous setting and with their survival strategy of erecting blocks on mud structure to pave the way for more spaces (IDI Male/73years/Popo Yemoja, Ibadan).

In similar vein, another respondent said:

The need for dwelling to accommodate the ever increasing family size informs the emergence of such structures. For instance, in this part of the world, people cherish large family. Every member of a family whether male or female has a right to family assets, which include family houses. This right extends to the children and grandchildren as well. So at any point in time an individual may decide to come and reside in such houses or accommodate a younger wife therein. A female family member with marital problem may relocate to the house permanently or temporarily depending on the situation of things. A situation of this nature therefore translates to the need for more space hence this type of innovation in housing construction (IDI Female/69years/Oranyan, Ibadan).

As a confirmation of findings by Asa and Lawal (2010), it was revealed that drastic reduction in the incidence of such practice manifested during the military era of the '80s. The military style of dealing with recalcitrant members of the public became plausible social control mechanism. During that period, there was fear of being rough-handled by the military personnel hence the continue deterrence of people from activity that the community may frown at. By and large, the effects of this control mechanism substantially assisted in stemming the tides of unethical practice in housing construction and the incidence of collapsing of building.

Community's Attitude to this construction practice

Absence of enlightened elites to confront the people involved in this activity was one of the factors affecting the timely reduction of emergence of such structures in the community. Those



residing within the community at that time were the believers in traditional dictum of the Yoruba that you don't take your neighbour(s) to court and still remain the best of friends. This position therefore encouraged 'culture of silence' on the part of the community members. With absence of people with courage to challenge what seemed suicidal mission, it further influenced escalation of the practice. The party politics also led to breeding of political thugs that terrorized the environment; so attempt by an individual or group of individuals to checkmate the situation has led to unpalatable experiences. Many of those daring moves (to checkmate unruly behaviour and practices) have led to maiming or brutal physical harassments in the hands of the thugs. At that time, if an ordinary rascal within the neighbourhood decided to misbehave everybody will abandon him so as to allow peace to reign. Because most of the owners of these structures particularly those who are bricklayers themselves are well travelled in the course of their works, they knew when to act funny in order to deter people from confronting them or asking too many questions over what they are doing. All these provided leeway to the practice for as long as the practice lasted. As a result of this, everybody started to behave the way he felt; with this, it was difficult for the Town Planning officials to act.

Data further showed that members of the community took the involvement of the resident artisans in such construction as a guarantee of perfection of what was being done. Most of these bricklayers have allayed the fears of the members of the communities on the reliability and the durability of the structures being put up. The manner of construction of such structures took was not seen as the major cause of their eventual collapse. According to a veteran bricklayer residing in one of the study sites, most of these structures got dilapidated due to neglect and absence of people to occupy them after the demise of the people that constructed and owned them. The import of this is that houses are like human beings; they got stronger when 'they' (houses) continue to hear human voices; but by the time such houses become desolate, they usually got dilapidated.

Government Regulatory Processes

Centralized Town planning system known as Ibadan Metropolitan Planning Authority was noted as accounting for ineffective monitoring of quality of houses being constructed as well as manner of construction in Ibadan land. The authority was rated as performing reasonably based on the limit of resources available to it and prevailing circumstances. The outcomes of such 'reasonable performance' were the weird-looking structures which having partly collapsed still threateningly dotted the neighbourhood. It was further revealed that the available manpower could not do justice to the geographical spread of Ibadan city which has now been decentralized to 5 Local Government Areas (LGAs). On a positive note, the decentralization was stressed as translated to an improvement in the services being rendered by the various Town Planning Authorities that emerged from the new LGAs created from defunct Ibadan Municipal Government under which Ibadan Metropolitan Authority was serving. Corrupt practices (though was not of high magnitude as we have today) were other factor noted by the respondents as paving the way for unethical construction of houses. In the words of the contact person:

Most of the field officers in the then Metropolitan Authority were too powerful. Whatever they pretended to see is what will be acted upon. In this processes, most of their actions were not logical. Nepotism was the order of the day. People do influence them through social contact, family members and so. So rather than having effective government control of some of these activities, reverse was the case (IDI Male/65years/Beere, Ibadan).

Another revelation was:

Most of these types of construction emerged through the process that was usually seen as renovation. The reality here is that renovation usually leads to alteration or modification of



initial structures. Most often renovation hardly attracts the attention of Town Planning Authority. It is within this purview that the practice of erecting concrete structure on mud in the name of having a storey building usually emerged (IDI Male/61years/Popo Yemoja, Ibadan).

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that the level of education and professional training received by the artisans who built some of the structures being studied may not afford them the opportunity to understand what is ethical or conventional in the real sense of it. It was further shown that such activity was their own idea of renovating and sustaining their late parents landed properties. Other factors that sustained the practice include inadequate manpower by the town planning authority to curtail these activities, ignorance about inherent dangers involved in such constructions by the members of the community and the stakeholders as well as culture of silence which emerged in the name of allowing peace to reign to reign. Centralization of the main monitoring agency (Town Planning Authority) and lack of trained manpower inhibited government efforts at ensuring adherence to conventional code in building construction within the area at that point in time.

In view of the revelation that most of these edifices were the idea of owners/occupiers who equally supervised and monitored the construction, it is not possible for the community members to trace the issue of unethical practices as noted by Oloke et al. (2017) to this practice. Corroborating this, it was shown that the members of the assumed that the owners/occupiers who equally doubled as professional in the field should know better based on their professional experiences and having travelled far and wide in the course of their duties. The scenarios so demonstrated above are epitome of sheer ignorance on the part of the people in general about ethical concern in housing construction as well as the misapplication of priority and values on the parts of the owners/occupiers of such structures.

The outcome of this study affirmed, the existence of abnormality in the administrative practice of Town planning Authority, the need for reform and overhauling of Town Planning Authority in Nigeria as well as the need for urban renewal. In view of the above, the following are the recommendations on what should be done to ameliorate the situation:

- ✚ There is need for training and workshop programmes for the artisans in informal setting to intimate them with the contemporary issues in housing construction especially matters affecting the ethics of their profession. Access to these artisans could be through their local professional association.
- ✚ Constant enlightenment programme on how the residents of indigenous areas especially those staying in and around such structures should conduct themselves particularly during the raining season when collapse of buildings is very rampant.
- ✚ Housing provision through public/private partnership should be explored.
- ✚ Faith-based organisations (FBOs) should be encouraged to engaged in housing programmes as a complement of existing housing programmes in the country.
- ✚ Semi-formal organization like cooperative society should be encouraged to take active role in the venture of housing provision.

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