



The Impact of Housing Transformation on Residents' Quality of Life: A Case Study of Low-Income Housing Estate, Ipaja, Lagos.

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Abstract: Housing transformation is a situation where households carry out far-reaching alterations, extension, modification or addition to the original forms, extent and patterns of their buildings including their immediate environment. This paper investigated the impact of housing transformation on residents' quality of life. The Federal Low-Income Housing Estate, Ipaja in Lagos State was purposively selected for the study. The study population was 1514 housing units spread across four different zones (A-D) of the estate. Sample size of 560 randomly selected housing units alongside their household heads were units of study. Data was collected by means of structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics, cross tabulation and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients at $p < .05$ significance level. 560 questionnaires were administered out of which 379 were validly returned. Result revealed that housing transformation in public housing is inevitable and carried out irrespective of income status of residents. Tenure status was also identified as a key factor which impacts on housing transformation. The study identified that spaces prone to transformation were those deemed as unsatisfactory by residents and with dire effect on their quality of life. It is recommended that appropriate policy guidelines be put in place to accommodate flexibility in design of public housing to suit the traditional lifestyles of would-be occupants.

Keywords: housing, housing transformation, low-income housing, quality of life, Nigeria.

1.0 Introduction

Housing is universally acknowledged as one of the

most basic human needs, with a profound impact on the lifestyle, health, happiness as well

as productivity of the individual (Dunn, 2000). Economically, it represents a major portion of the family budget or that of an establishment (Kinyungu, 2004). Housing constitutes the first major capital investment and life ambitions of individuals (Bello, 2003) while the desire to own a house constitutes one of the strongest incentives for savings and capital formation (Ozo, 1990). Housing plays an important role in safeguarding the self-esteem and worth of human existence. In spite of its importance however, inadequacy in supply is evident and prevalent in most developing countries. In Nigeria, the issue of housing supply inadequacy has given rise to calls on the various tiers of government to give greater priority to the inherent housing problems. Relatively, little continues to be done in improving housing supply in comparison with overall needs (UN-HABITAT, 2006).

To reduce the housing gap, the Federal Government of Nigeria commissioned massive public housing intervention schemes to provide accommodation particularly for the low-income groups beginning from the post-civil war era. These residential apartments designed and built without recourse to the living traditions and lifestyles of the

intended users became detrimental. This approach is similar to what has led to the gradual replacement of individual houses with residential multifamily complexes and apartments in Iran (Mahta, 2009). The approach focused only on technical aspects, and consequently led to conflict between architectural design and traditional lifestyles. Mahta noted that all spatial characteristics of traditional houses have been lost in this new environment. The consequence of this “enforced modern lifestyle” is that while it thoroughly changed the physical appearance of dwellings, the living habits and lifestyles of residents have not changed with the same pace. In the Nigerian context, most of the public housing schemes were designed with imported rather than homegrown solutions, leading to changes in user requirements particularly with recourse to their life styles and climatic considerations. Thus, this study safely concludes that dissatisfied users perhaps occupy the public housing estates, an action that may be responsible for housing transformations in public housing.

It suggests therefore that there is a close connection between compatibility of housing needs

of residents and their lifestyles. Mahta (2009) identified that there is a close connection between social needs and the built environment. Mahta based her submission on Nasr (2009), who noted that the external environment which man creates for himself is no more than a reflection of his inner state. The prevailing lifestyle, rooted in socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the society, is embodied in the composite elements of residential units. In addition, Mahta further noted that drastic change in architecture took place in many developing countries in the early 20th century through which the traditional architectural style of the people was lost to the modern style. This change occurred so rapidly that it represented replacement rather than adaptation. Thus, local architectural forms, which had responded to the physical and cultural requirements of the people for thousands of years, were neglected completely (Behsh, 1993). As a result, people could not follow their customary patterns of life in the new public houses. This is in contrast to the notion of housing described by Mohammed Mai and Shamsuddin (2007) as a physical manifestation of society's culture, which in itself, is dynamic. The negligence of incorporating the dynamism of

traditional lifestyles and socio-economic characteristics of people is perhaps another factor responsible for the pervasive housing transformation that residents perpetuate in public housing schemes.

Studies have shown that housing transformation by residents in public housing takes place due to various reasons. For instance, Hassan (2006) noted that transformation is a response to the failure of the government of the day to cater for the housing needs of the people specifically the low and medium income groups. On the contrary, Tipple, Owusu and Pritchard (2004) held the view that housing transformation is a major livelihood strategy among low-income households in urban formal and informal settlements, which is carried out sometimes out of desperation. Conversely, Sheuya (2004) suggested that housing transformation promotes the asset base of owner households and the local economy of the settlements. While Avi (2002) opined that transformation resulted out of the urge by one to create a personalized environment and also to share that of others or to follow a fashion. Whatever the reason for housing transformation may be, Mohammed Mai & Shamsuddin (2007) argued that

transformation for personalization is more common in developed societies than the developing. They based their submission on affordability and taste differentials of the respective societies. In contrast, Van Hal & Femenia (2009) observed that housing transformation in most European cities perhaps would be as a result of a task that is driven by objectives for sustainable urban renewal as well as political targets to reduce carbon emissions and fight global climate change.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that housing transformation by residents has to do with the need for creating a personal environment in an attempt to fulfill either traditional lifestyles or socio-economic needs or both. Reviewed literature also suggests that one cannot really identify with an area unless one has made some transformation in the way of construction or alteration and that a sense of belonging can only really be achieved through leaving physical traces. Tipple (2000) view of this process of transformation is summarized in his submission that every house is a work in progress. It begins in the imagination of the people who build it, and it is gradually transformed for better or for

worse by the people who occupy it, since their housing need could not be met. Transformation therefore has been identified as an inevitable phenomenon with residents in public housing due to various reasons discussed earlier. In summary, this study identified that while empirical studies existed about the underlying factors that make people to transform spaces in public housing in other climes, same cannot be said of public housing in Nigeria. This study thus set out to empirically determine the factors that lead to public housing transformation and to suggest solutions for future public housing policies in Nigeria.

2.0 Purpose of Study

This study is aimed at exploring the impact of housing transformation on the quality of life of residents of Federal Low-Income Housing Estate, Ipaja, Lagos State. The study focused on residents of a typical low-income public housing estate. This low-income group constitutes the largest percentage of the population of the country. The FRN (2006) core welfare indicators questionnaire survey conducted in collaboration between National Bureau of Statistics/World Bank reported that almost two-third of the households in the country

considered themselves to be poor. Male headed household that considered themselves poor are 62% while 70.5% of female headed households considered themselves poor. Furthermore, this study on the quality of life of the low-income group is useful because they provide the work force for driving the economy of the nation. The results could also be used to guide in developing appropriate housing policies for the design and provision of low-income public housing estates that will conform to the socio-economic characteristics and lifestyles of the target group, which will culminate in reducing the negative effects of housing transformation.

3.0 Methodology

This study explored the impact of housing transformation on the quality of life of residents of Federal Low-Income Housing Estate, Ipaja, Lagos State, Nigeria. The methodology considered appropriate and selected for this research was a combination of the case study and field survey approach. The former approach was adopted because the nature of the research issue is of real life situation while the latter approach was to solicit direct information and feedback from the residents.

3.1 The Study Area

The study was conducted in the Federal Low-Income Housing Estate located in Ipaja at Alimosho Local Government Area Council, Lagos State, Nigeria. It is the largest and most densely populated of all the low-income public housing initiated by the Federal Government of Nigeria during the regime of the second republic President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari (1979 – 1983). The main objective of the scheme was to make beneficiary low-income earners full homeowners in the nearest future and within the shortest possible period. The construction work for the Federal Low-income Housing Estate located in Ipaja started in 1980. Allocation of the apartments to the target group was through ballot system between 1982 and 1983. Table 1 shows that the Estate is made up of a total number of 1514 (one thousand five hundred and fourteen) housing units spread across four different zones (A - D). It comprises of 1284 units (one thousand two hundred and eighty four) of one-bedroom in rows of 2 in semi-detached bungalows, and 230 units (two hundred and thirty) of three-bedroom in rows of two in semi-detached bungalows.

Table 1: Distribution by Zone, Number, Typology and Sample Size in the different zones

S/No	Zone	One Bedroom	Sample size (37%)	Three Bedroom	Sample Size (37%)	Total No of Bedroom	Total Sample Size
1	A	192	67	-	-	192	48
2	B	688	241	46	12	734	184
3	C	278	97	-	-	278	69
4	D	126	44	184	46	310	78
Sub-Total		1284	475	230	85	1514	560

Source: Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Ipaja

3.2 Data Collection

Data collected for this research was through direct observations and structured questionnaires. A multistage sampling technique method was adopted in data collection. First, the Federal Low-income housing Estate, Ipaja, Lagos was purposively selected for this study being the most populated and the largest public housing estate. Secondly, the housing typologies were stratified by their zones within the estate. Finally, for adequate representation, 37% sample size of housing typologies from each zone was randomly selected which gave a total size of five hundred and sixty (560) as shown in Table 1. The houses and household heads represent the unit of study. A total of 560 questionnaires were thus administered to respondents out of which 379 were validly completed and returned.

3.3 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics using frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of respondents. There were eight variables under this category namely gender, age, religion, marital status, education level, income classification, average monthly income and tenure status of respondents. This procedure was also used to assess respondents' level of satisfaction with their indoor spaces. A cross tabulation was carried out to explore relationship between the socio-economic variables of respondents income classification and tenure status and their impact on housing transformation. Finally, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients at $p < .05$ significance level was used to explore the relationship between

each of the eight socio-economic variables and their impact on housing transformation within the estate.

4.0 Results and Discussions

4.1 Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 2 shows the socio-economic characteristics of respondents. Majority of

respondents were male (276 or 72.8%) which reinforce their dominant role as breadwinners in the African setting. The World Development Report (2012) confirmed the main role for men as the one of primary income-earner and breadwinner in the family.

Table 2: Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency N = 379	Percentage
Gender		
<i>Male</i>	276	72.8
<i>Female</i>	103	27.2
Age		
<i>25 - 40</i>	130	34.3
<i>41 - 50</i>	94	24.8
<i>51 - 60</i>	102	26.9
<i>61 – 70</i>	53	14.0
<i>≥ 70</i>	0	0
Religion		
<i>Christianity</i>	229	60.4
<i>Islam</i>	128	33.8
<i>Atheist</i>	22	5.8
Marital status		
<i>Single</i>	35	9.2
<i>Married</i>	269	71.0
<i>Widow</i>	27	7.1
<i>Widower</i>	39	10.3
<i>Divorced</i>	4	1.1
<i>Separated</i>	4	1.1
<i>Missing</i>	1	0.3
Education level		
<i>No formal education</i>	14	3.7
<i>Primary</i>	11	2.9
<i>Secondary</i>	100	26.4
<i>Tertiary</i>	253	66.8
<i>Others</i>	1	0.3
Average monthly income (naira)		
<i>Less than N20,000</i>	27	7.1
<i>N21,000 – N60,000</i>	206	54.3
<i>N61,000 – N100,000</i>	65	17.2
<i>N101,000 – N200,000</i>	77	20.3

<i>Above N201,000</i>	2	0.5
<i>Missing</i>	2	0.5
<i>Income classification</i>		
<i>Low</i>	56	14.8
<i>Middle</i>	256	67.5
<i>High</i>	53	14.0
<i>Not sure</i>	14	3.7
<i>Tenure status of respondents</i>		
<i>Privately rented</i>	112	29.6
<i>Owner occupied</i>	205	54.1
<i>Inherited</i>	59	15.6
<i>Free houser</i>	2	0.5
<i>Missing</i>	1	0.3

The age range of respondents showed that 86.0% are between 25 and 60 years old while 14% are 61 years and above. The youthful age of the residents might lend to increase in housing transformation since they are still very active economically and still have prospects of increase in family size. Christian respondents are in the majority (229 or 60.4%). The religion of the respondents may be indicative of the type and scope of transformation. For instance, it was observed that Muslims respondents transformed their houses to accommodate a mosque to mitigate travelling long distances to communal mosques and for safety purposes. On marital status of respondents, the result indicated that majority are married (71.0%) while 9.2% are single. Widows and widowers are 17.4% while the divorced and separated are only 2.2%. This finding is in line with the expression of a participant who

said that: *“Most of us here are happily married and are showing good examples to our children and wards so that they can cherish and appreciate the marriage institution”*. It implies that majority of respondents are happily married and living peacefully within the estate. This has profound positive effect on the quality of life of residents. The education level of respondents showed that majority are educated and literate enough to understand the reasons (if at all) and consequences for any form of transformation that they have initiated. The data showed that respondents with tertiary education are in the majority (66.8%) while 26.4% of the respondents have secondary school leaving certificate. The high literacy level among respondents also suggests that the target low-income group occupants for the estate may have changed overtime. The average monthly income of

respondents was assessed as a parameter which better indicated the economic status of the residents. The data showed that 61.4% of the respondents earn less than N60,000.00K per month. This category of people can be classified as low-income earner. Those that earn between N61,000.00K and N200,000.00K who can be classified as middle-income earner constitute 37.5% of respondents while those who earn above N201,000.00K are almost negligible representing only 0.5%. However, respondents were asked to place themselves in income classifications based on their own assessment. The data showed that the low-income, middle-income and high income group are 14.8%, 67.5% and 14.0% respectively. This is significantly different from data presented under their average monthly income. This suggests that while the monthly income of respondents better indicated their income classification, the stigma of not being identified as poor might have influenced their choice of income classification. Thus, it can be concluded that the occupants of the estate are still the targeted low-income group. Lastly, the tenure status of respondents was assessed

which might perhaps be the greatest consideration in terms of the nature and extent of transformation that may go on in the estate. It is hypothesized that more transformation will be carried out by those who are owner occupier more than any other category of residents. Data showed that majority of residents (69.7%) owned their homes (owner occupier and inherited) while 29.6% are residing in the estate as tenants (privately rented). The data was subjected to further statistical analysis to identify the socio-economic variables responsible for housing transformation and the impact this might have on quality of life within the estate.

4.2 Socio-economic variables and impact on housing transformation

A cross tabulation of data was carried out to show relationship between socio-economic variables of income classification and tenure status of respondents and its impact on housing transformation. The result of the cross tabulation presented in Table 3 revealed that all 56 (14.8%) of those who indicated that they were low-income earners have transformed their housing.

Table 3: Cross tabulation to show relationship between socio-economic variables of income classification and tenure status and impact on housing transformation

Variable	Have you transformed your housing?		Frequency N = 379
	Yes	No	
Income classification of respondents			
<i>Low income</i>	56	0	56
<i>Middle income</i>	171	85	256
<i>High income</i>	30	23	53
<i>Not sure</i>			14
Tenure status of respondents			
<i>Privately rented</i>	27	85	112
<i>Owner occupier</i>	182	23	205
<i>Inherited</i>	59	0	59
<i>Free houser</i>	2	0	2
<i>Missing</i>			1

For the middle-income earners, 171 out of 256 (66.8%) have actually transformed their housing while 30 out of 53 (56.6%) of the high-income earners also transformed their housing. This implied that housing transformation cuts across every income group.

On the impact of tenure status on housing transformation, the result revealed that 241 of 264 (91.3%) of owner occupier tenure status (owner occupier and inherited) transformed their housing. The result also indicated that 24.1% of respondents with privately rented tenure status transformed their housing. The result confirmed the hypothesis that significant housing transformation will be carried out by residents with owner-occupier tenure status. It is

apparent therefore from the result obtained that housing transformation is a phenomenon that cuts across residents irrespective of their income status and most significant among residents with owner occupier tenure status.

4.3 Assessment of Residents’ Level of Satisfaction with Provided Spaces and its impact on their quality of life.

Table 4 shows respondents’ assessment of their level of satisfaction within their indoor spaces. Inferences drawn from the result are based on the submission of Harker (2006) who suggested that unsatisfactory spaces characterized by poor housing conditions and overcrowding may contribute to the emergence of problem behaviour. Thus,

such unsatisfactory spaces will have negative impact on the quality of life of residents.

Table 4: Assessment of Respondents Level of Satisfaction with Interior Spaces

Space	Total N = 379		
	Satisfied	Neutral	Not satisfied
<i>Living room</i>	115 (30.3)	126 (33.2)	138 (36.5)
<i>Dining room</i>	66 (17.4)	126 (33.2)	187 (49.4)
<i>Kitchen</i>	76 (20.1)	144 (33.0)	159 (41.9)
<i>Bedrooms</i>	25 (6.6)	113 (29.8)	241 (63.6)

Figures in bracket represent percentages

The living room space was satisfactory for 115 (30.3%), unsatisfactory for 138 (36.5%) while 126 (33.2%) were indifferent. Thus, it can be inferred that the relative even distribution of responses indicated that the living room was satisfactory and thus, provided occupants with a good quality of life. On the other hand, the dining room, kitchen and bedroom spaces were unsatisfactory to the majority of respondents with 49.4%, 41.9% and 63.6% unsatisfactory level respectively. The most unsatisfactory interior space as established by the respondents (63.6%) was the bedroom. The bedroom provides privacy needed for quality rest and relaxation. A space that does not meet this basic requirement will

have negative impact on quality of life of residents. Therefore, residents are prone to transform such spaces to conform to their socio-economic status, lifestyles and comfort.

4.4 Relationship between socio-economic variables and impact on housing transformation

The study explored the relationship between the eight socio-economic variables and the impact of each on housing transformation. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients at $p < .05$ significance level was used to explore the strength and direction of linear relationships between the variables. The result of the Pearson product-moment correlations is as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Pearson product-moment Correlations between socio-economic variables and impact on housing transformation

Variables		Gender	Age	Religion	Marital Status	Education level	Average monthly income (Naira)	Income classification	Tenure status
Gender	Pearson relation	1	-.208**	-.037	-.025	-.098	.091	-.029	-.086
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.475	.628	.056	.077	.578	.094
	N	379	379	379	378	379	377	379	378
Age	Pearson relation	-.208**	1	-.368**	.361**	.100	.023	.416**	-.158**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.052	.659	.000	.002
	N	379	379	379	378	379	377	379	378
Religion	Pearson relation	-.037	-.368**	1	-.217**	-.106*	-.006	-.222**	.150**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.475	.000		.000	.038	.911	.000	.003
	N	379	379	379	378	379	377	379	378
Marital status	Pearson relation	-.025	.361**	-.217**	1	-.307**	-.143**	.143**	-.143**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.628	.000	.000		.000	.005	.005	.005
	N	378	378	378	378	378	376	378	376
Education level	Pearson relation	-.098	.100	-.106*	-.307**	1	.393**	.483**	-.155**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.056	.052	.038	.000		.000	.000	.002
	N	379	379	379	378	379	377	379	378
Average monthly income (naira)	Pearson relation	.091	.023	-.006	-.143**	.393**	1	.060	-.214**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.077	.659	.911	.005	.000		.247	.000
	N	377	377	377	376	377	377	377	376
Income classification	Pearson relation	-.029	.416**	-.222**	.143**	.483**	.060	1	-.171**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.578	.000	.000	.005	.000	.247		.001
	N	379	379	379	378	379	377	379	378
Tenure status of respondents	Pearson relation	-.086	-.158**	.150**	-.175**	-.155**	-.214**	-.171**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.094	.002	.003	.001	.002	.000	.001	
	N	378	378	378	377	378	376	378	378

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The strongest correlation exists between housing transformation and socio-economic variables of education level and income classification of respondents with Pearson correlation coefficients of .48. This implies that there was a medium positive correlation between housing

transformation and variables of education level and income classification of respondents with $r = .48$, $n = 379$, $p < .005$ with high levels of housing transformation associated with lower levels of education and income classification.

5.0 Conclusion

Generally, the study identified that housing transformation in public housing is an inevitable phenomenon. The study also observed that residents of the estate have engaged in various forms of housing transformation irrespective of their income status. The study identified that spaces transformed were those deemed as unsatisfactory by the residents because of the adverse effect such spaces have on their quality of life. Thus, housing transformation is inversely proportional to the level of satisfaction within the space. Finally, the study identified that the extent of housing transformation is directly

proportional to the tenure status of the resident.

In view of these findings, it is recommended that policy guidelines for future public housing schemes should be tailored towards accommodating the socio-economic status and lifestyles of the intended users. Furthermore, future public housing should provide for flexibility of design such that housing transformation by residents will not negatively impact on the totality of the building. Adequate manpower must also be provided to control and monitor transformational developments on public housing.

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