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OKPALA OBINNA REX ¹, OMOJUWA YETUNDE ²,
ELENWO CHISA GRACE ³, OPOKO AKUNNAYA
PEARL ⁴

^{1, 2, 3, 4} Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria

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SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION: INVESTIGATING PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN UNCONTROLLED URBAN GROWTH IN NYANYA - A SUBURB OF ABUJA, NIGERIA

OKPALA OBINNA REX ^{1*}, OMOJUWA YETUNDE ², ELENWO CHISA GRACE ³,
OPOKO AKUNNAYA PEARL ⁴

^{1, 2, 3, 4} Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria

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Abstract. Sustainable urbanization is said to be key to successful development in urban areas, most especially those that have a rapid population growth. Identifying the various problems caused by the rapid urban growth in developing countries will go a long way in providing basic urban needs such as the maximization of economic efficiency in the use of resources including air, water and soil in the area. This paper thus investigates the issues of uncontrolled urban growth in Abuja, Nigeria by discerning the issues encountered in rural-urban drift in Nyanya, in order to create a humane-living environment that tends towards attaining sustainable development. And to identify and analyse challenges that relate to sustainable development, the cause of increase in population of Nyanya and the need for proper services and infrastructure in the area. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry. Data were analysed using appropriate statistical tools and content analysis. The result shows that major challenges encountered in uncontrolled urban growth include: lack of planning policies, poor air quality and traffic fatality. Based on the findings, there is a need for proper growth policies and controlled planning, which can be achieved through the use of modern technology and innovation.

INTRODUCTION

Urbanization, which alludes to the extension in the extent of a populace living in urban zones, is one of the significant social changes clearing over the globe. It speaks to the development of individuals from rustic regions to urban zones with populace development comparing to urban relocation. It constitutes the movement of people from a rural setting to an urban setting, with an increase in population that introduces urban migration (Jiboye, 2011, 2009).

Urbanization refers to the movement of people from one place to another, which is majorly practiced by people from rural areas migrating to urban areas, resulting in an increase in population. Urbanization is an activity that is caused by factors such as economic, social and political factors. Urbanization is the result of social, financial and political advancements that lead to urban fixation and development of vast urban communities with changes in area use (Ekpenyong, 2015).

Hove, Ngwerume and Muchemwa (2013) have noted that Africa is highly urbanizing. Unfortunately, many cities in developing countries are evolving in ways that are considered unsustainable. In developing the world, identifying that in order for an urban area to be sustainable, one must not focus on the shift in the increase in population of the people from rural to urban areas, but the rate of growth and the implementation of

urban policies to tackle such sheer scale. Equally of concern is the rapidly growing rate of urban poverty. In relating sustainability to cities, adopting the metamorphosis of metabolism cannot be over emphasized. According to Illesanmi (2010), a city can be characterized as turning out to be more feasible in the event that it is lessening its asset inputs (land, vitality, water, and materials) and waste yields (air, fluid, and strong waste) while at the same time enhancing its bearableness (wellbeing, livelihood, salary, lodging, recreation exercises, open spaces, and group). In other words in achieving a sustainable city, one must identify the resources that make a city function. This is to ascertain the level of resources such as energy, water, material, air, liquid and solid waste so as to improve the living standard of people in the city. One of the challenges of rapid population increase in Nigerian cities is the pressure on facilities and other public services (Izueke & Eme, 2013). The challenges confronting Nigerian cities like Lagos can also be discovered as the wrong implementation of colonial urban planning policies and post-colonial policies which had no bearing in addressing the urban development issues (Okeke, 2014). Over the years however, these have been exacerbated by lack of resources and capacity on the part of government and uncontrolled development by the people. As a result, literature posits that residents in such areas

*Corresponding author: Okpala Obinna Rex

†Email: obinna.okpala@gmail.com

are exposed to different environmental, social, psychological and health hazards which threaten their living standards.

Objective of the Study

This paper aims at investigating the problems encountered by residents of Nyanya, a suburb of the Nigerian Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja as a result of uncontrolled development. Specifically, the paper attempts to identify the manifestations of uncontrolled urban growth in the area and the challenges they pose to the residents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Challenges of Rapid Urban Growth in Developing Countries

In third world developing countries, most especially in Africa, due to poor city planning, urban dwellers are miserable to a great magnitude from severe challenges due to the state of an unhealthy environment as a result of insufficient availability of clean drinking water, inadequate infrastructural services such as drainage facilities and solid waste disposal. Uncontrolled urbanization introduces poor city planning of neighborhood structures aiding the decay of structures and increases the need to provide more infrastructural services. This rapid Urbanization process has led to poor city planning and has been identified as a key problem in the Nigerian urban setting (Izueke & Eme, 2013). African countries such as Nigeria have issues and challenges of rapid urban growth which have been identified as substantial as identified in areas that have been affected by the rapid urban growth. Cities like Abuja have not only attracted people because of its socio-economic activities or its political practices, but also has complicated the problems of human settlement and urban areas. It can also be said that this uncontrolled urban growth has been responsible for poverty cutting across its people, the environment and their living standards (Ayedun et al., 2011). The standard of people used in the country unexpectedly excludes about 60% of the country from rural-urban drift activities (Okeke, 2014).

Urban Poverty and Crime

Hove et al. (2013) identified the major challenges of urban growth to include urban poverty, rising crime and human insecurity as well as lack of adequate infrastructural facilities. Poverty manifests in several dimensions which include deprivation, exclusion and unprotected areas in an over-populated shanty environment classified as a slum, are usually identified by inadequate water supply, sanitary facilities, power supply and unemployment (Berger, 2006). Crime is exacerbated by the anonymous and haphazard nature of the urban area especially

slums. Other features seen in urban sprawl and degradation include insufficient access to food, poor health care due to substantial deficiencies and poor living standards as well as inadequate learning environment.

Poor Health

In addition, Henderson (2002) also found traffic fatality, air pollution and the time constraints to travel from one place to another as some of the effects of urbanization.

Poor Air Quality

Uncontrolled urban growth is cited as a major cause of all types of pollution including air pollution. This is because of the car-dependent lifestyle evident in urban areas which leads to increase in the use of natural fuel such as coal or gas and the discharge of conservatory gases such as carbon monoxide that can impede plant growth, create fog and acid rain, causing global warming and decreasing human health. Furthermore, ozone arrangement from its antecedents, nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons, is improved by warmth (Brody, 2013). Moreover, the poor processes of manufacturing, production of goods and disposal of wastes also contribute significantly to air and other forms of pollution.

Traffic Fatality

The growing use of the automobile in many cities brought about increasing number of accidents and deaths. Although it does appear that rates of car fatalities and wounds per driver and per mile driven have fallen because of more secure autos and streets, safety belt use, laws that debilitate plastered driving, and different measures, however the supreme toll of car accidents stays high. This is worse in developing countries characterised by road conditions and high levels of non-compliance to laws. At the most straightforward level, additionally driving means more noteworthy introduction to the risks of the street, meaning a higher likelihood of an engine vehicle crash. Rural streets might be a specific danger, particularly real business avenues and "feeder" streets that join rapid, high activity volume, and successive 'check slices' for drivers to use in entering and leaving stores and different destinations (Bhatta, 2010).

Noise

Often associated with traffic and other urban activities is the problem of noise. Noise is essentially sound beyond tolerable limits. Noise does not only cause irritation but can lead to permanent damage to the ear and deafness.

Urbanization in Nigeria

According to (Usman, 2013), World Bank pointers for Nigeria in 2010 demonstrate that while country populace development rate was 1.1% for each annum, urban populace was developing at 4% per year. The report further shows that with urbanization level of 48.4%, about 15% of the country's population now reside in cities of 1 million people and above.

It is assessed that the nation will be 75.4% urbanized by the year 2050. The year 2050. The biggest urban communities seem to have been developing at the fastest rates, a wonder which has offered ascent to the idea of urban power. The demographic, financial, social and political predominance of one city over all others inside an urban framework is visible.

The biggest urban areas are no more in the created world however in the creating scene. Before the end of the twentieth century, the world's 20 most crowded urban communities have changed from a Euro-American center to a creating world inclination within just 20 years (Ilesanmi, 2010). Because the urban growth in Nigerian cities has not been well-managed, the result has been an unsustainable urban environment, portrayed by unemployment, urban neediness, casual settlements and ecological corruption (Okeke, 2014).

In acknowledgment of the way that urban communities are significant donors to the national economy as an aftereffect of the need to differentiate the economy and advance industrialization, the Nigerian government started building up a National Urban Development Policy (NUDP) in 2002. NUDP expects to deliver issues identified with urban administration in the nation and also arrive at land use control and administration (Okeke, 2014). The implementation of the NUDP has not achieved its key objectives of unlocking economic development and improving people's well-being in the short term. There are also other existing national policies on the environment such as the Urban and Regional Planning Law, Decree No. 88 of 1992, and the National Housing Policy. However, these are not enforced with a specific end goal to successfully oversee urban advancement, including strong waste and modern contamination (Izueke & Eme, 2013).

RESEARCH MODEL

The Study Area

Data for this paper were obtained from Nyanya, one of the major suburbs of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. It shares boundaries with Mararaba in Nassarawa State of Nigeria. It was originally designed to provide accommodation for federal civil servants who had to relocate from Lagos to the new federal capital city, Abuja when the Nigerian seat of government moved from Lagos to Abuja. Presently, it accommodates official

residential quarters for several government departments and agencies, organized private sector institutions as well as housing developed by the informal sector.

Nyanya has continued to witness a steady inflow of migrants, in spite of its reputation as the dirtiest suburb of Abuja. A major reason for this is the low cost of accommodation compared to other parts of Abuja. The population of Nyanya was estimated at about 600,000 persons as at 2013 (Frontiers News, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

The study strategy was for the most part embraced to assemble information for this study. Structured questionnaires were administered to residents of the study area to obtain quantitative data. Using the systematic sampling technique, houses were selected at regular intervals of every fifth house along the streets of Nyanya. Subsequently, a household per house was randomly selected for the study.

Respondents consisted of heads of households or their representatives. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information on personal characteristics and basic challenges encountered in their urban neighborhoods. User perception instead of a more technical method of measurement was relied upon for data collection.

This was informed by lack of time and equipment required for technical assessments. Besides, it was considered necessary to approach the investigation from user perspective in order to get useful feedback from users and appreciate better the evolving issues from user perspective.

Altogether, eighty-five questionnaires were returned and utilized for examination. The high level of questionnaire retrieval can be attributed to the persistence of the main researcher and the fact that questionnaires were distributed during weekends when residents were at home and relaxed. It was complimented by the observation of researchers and interviews held with some of the respondents. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including percentages and charts while qualitative data were content analyzed.

DATA ANALYSIS

Respondents' Personal Characteristics

Analysis of data revealed that 61.2% of respondents were males compared to 38.8% who were females. Although majority of the respondents representing 50.6% of respondents were below 25 years of age, 40.2% fell within the 26-40 years age bracket while only 6.9% were above 40 years of age. Concerning marital status, data revealed that 66.7% of respondents were single while 26.4% were married. About 4.5% of the respondents were once married, but are currently single due to death of spouses

or divorce. Only 2.3% of the respondents reported having no formal education. About 8% of the respondents claimed to have attained primary school level of education while majority of respondents (55.2%) had attained some level of secondary education.

Respondents who had attained tertiary level of education at the university level and polytechnic/college of education levels accounted for 19.5% and 12.5% respectively of the respondents. While 24.1% of respondents claimed to be students, majority of the respondents (59.7%) were however self-employed. Only 13.8% were civil servants.

Furthermore, only 4.6% of respondents had stayed in Nyanya for more than 15 years. Respondents who had stayed in the area for 1-5 years and 6-10 years accounted for 34.5% and 36.8% respectively of respondents while 21.8% had stayed for 11-15 years. Household sizes in the area ranged 49.4% for 1-5 persons' households to 48.3% for households comprising of

more than 5 persons. Data also showed that only 11.5% of respondents occupied more than 5 rooms.

The Physical Layout of Nyanya

Nyanya is divided into six main sections. Area A is the market which overtime has come to serve Abuja and the environs. In Area B are located the general hospital, a bank as well as staff quarters for the Nigerian Customs and Immigration Services. Also mainly found in Area C are supposed staff quarters for the Nigerian Customs and Immigration Services, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and the Nigerian Mobile Police Force. Similarly, Areas D, E and F consist of residential accommodation provided for civil servants who work in various government ministries and agencies in the central business district in Abuja.

The accommodation consists of a single housing prototype. The prototype consists of blocks of nine units of three bedroom bungalows. Twenty seven of such blocks constitute an Area.

The Map of Nyanya

FIGURE 1

A Sectional Map of Nyanya Showing the Various Areas with its Infrastructural Layout



It was observed that over time, the original plan of the area has been distorted mainly by uncontrolled developments. These were observed to be mainly low rise buildings roughly constructed of temporary materials like cardboard paper, wood and other discarded materials. Further investigation revealed that the new developments, which were usually handled by informal tradesmen, were mainly for petty business and home-based income generation activities. Sometimes, they also encroached onto the roads. It appeared obvious that the roads had been poorly maintained over the years. In many places, the surfacing

had worn out completely while in others were large potholes resulting in slowing down of traffic. This is further exacerbated by volume of vehicular traffic. In addition, it was observed that street lights and pedestrian walkways were not provided.

Respondents' Perception of Quality of Dwellings and Neighborhood

The investigation sought to determine the quality of the dwelling units and by inference, the challenges they pose to residents. Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with

the dwelling attributes. With respect to the dwelling units, 60.9% of respondents were not satisfied with the level of privacy while 50.6% expressed satisfaction with the lighting in their dwellings. However, 54.0% of respondents were not satisfied with ventilation in their dwellings. Regarding services, about 51.7% and 62.1% expressed dissatisfaction with water supply and electricity supply respectively. In addition, 71.3% of respondents were not satisfied with sanitary facilities in their dwellings.

At the neighborhood level, the study investigated respondents' satisfaction with landscaping and external appearance of buildings. Regarding the landscape, 82.8% expressed dissatisfaction while about 81.7% expressed dissatisfaction with the external appearance of buildings in the study area.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this paper suggest that majority of the households are headed by males, which is consistent with the Nigerian cultural tradition. However, the relatively high percentage of female respondents, though at variance with traditional setting, is consistent with urban areas in Nigeria and other developing countries such as Ghana, Cote d'voire. The respondents are mainly very young adults, students, unmarried and with minimal education. This suggests that they are mainly young people who have come to Abuja in search of greener pastures, perhaps to enable them continue with their education. Even though the conditions in Nyanya are poor, this is simply what they can afford, now, given their low income and propensity to mobility. The low representation of civil servants suggests a high level of subletting of official quarters which could be traced to the poor living condition in the area. Another plausible reason is the traffic related difficulties experienced in commuting to and from the work place located mainly in the business district of Abuja. The data also suggest high level of squatting since most of the respondents were single and earned insufficient incomes to enable them maintain three bedroom flats. It is however not unusual for group of tenants to pool resources together in order to rent accommodation which is shared by them. However, such arrangements are guided by friendship, kinship or other relationships. The data on the length of stay suggest that respondents do not stay in Nyanya for a long period of time which suggests that as their circumstances improve, they move to better locations.

The study also found that the housing units and levels of services provided were considered inadequate by majority of the respondents. It can be inferred that the services like electricity, water and sanitary facilities (including waste disposal methods) have become overstretched and unable to meet the demands of

the current overwhelming population of Nyanya, which was most probably not planned for. In addition, the authorities have failed to scale up these services to match growing demands. A major reason for this could be dwindling resources on the part of the agencies. Large number of persons per household suggests overcrowding, which not only reduces privacy but also creates friction and spread of diseases. This can be more complicated considering the demographic characteristics of residents.

The poor environmental quality of the study area characterized by poor landscaping, building exteriors and the poor roads constitute serious threat to the psychological, mental and physical health of residents as documented in earlier studies. Respondents interviewed corroborated this as some claimed to be scared walking along the roads especially at night. Some recounted incidents of accidents especially those involving pedestrians and commercial motorcycle riders. In addition long stay in slow or stagnant traffic was reported to expose residents to attack by hoodlums and various categories of robbers. In addition, poor traffic conditions caused irritations and exposed residents for longer periods to fumes from vehicles.

The uncontrolled addition of building structures, albeit of temporary nature, was observed to pose serious health and fire risks. Because of the haphazard manner these structures were developed, they sometimes obstructed proper ventilation in the buildings. Most of the materials used in these constructions were also observed to be flammable in nature. In addition, some of them accommodated activities that involved cooking with open fire. Apart from fire threats, open fires also release smoke and dangerous gases like carbon mono-oxide into the atmosphere causing choking, eye irritation, blurred vision and wider impact on climate change. Further investigation revealed that the uncontrolled structures were mainly erected for small-scale business activities to meet the needs of residents which were not catered for in the initial plan.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has examined the uncontrolled development in Nyanya, a suburb of Abuja, Nigeria with a view to finding its effect on the residents. Evidence from the study shows that uncontrolled development in Nyanya can be attributed to the indiscriminate erection of building structures mainly for income generation purposes. They have posed a major challenge due to lack of professional involvement resulting in the haphazard manner in which they evolve. May it be pointed out that these structures and the businesses they house have emerged to meet needs of residents that were not provided initially. Uncontrolled urban growth in Nyanya is evident as seen in the demographic

characteristics of residents and existence of no policy to check influx of people to already stressed areas like Nyanya. Equally evident is the inadequacy of urban dwellings and neighbourhood infrastructure as can be seen from the level of respondents' dissatisfaction. The paper thus concludes that urban growth in the study area has progressed in an unsustainable manner with severe consequences.

The major challenges posed by uncontrolled urban growth in the study area can be summarized as: overcrowding; inadequate infrastructure; poor maintenance of infrastructure like roads and drainages, accidents, deaths and uncoordinated erection of building structures for small-scale business activities. These were found to result in lack of privacy; spread of diseases; high crime rate; health challenges and personal dissatisfaction. Other studies have associated these with psychological and mental health as well as the quality of life and general wellbeing of residents.

Recommendations

The paper proffers the following recommendations to mitigate the impacts of uncontrolled urban growth:

- The relevant government agencies must be proactive in order to properly guide urban development and growth by anticipating and planning ahead for population growth. This is in view of the fact that Nigeria is urbanizing at a very fast rate. This also calls for current and reliable data

to guide planning.

- In view of the variety observed in the demographic constitution of respondents, it does appear that adoption of a single house type may not be appropriate. Thus, future developments should take into consideration the peculiarities and inherent varieties in the population being catered for. Design of dwelling units also should be flexible enough to allow for remodelling as the need arises.
- Dwelling neighbourhoods should be planned in a holistic manner to cater for the basic needs of residents. Neighbourhoods consist of much more than the dwelling units. To this regard, provision of corner shops, recreational facilities and other non-residential but essential components of neighbourhoods will go a long way to ensuring the liveability and desirability of neighbourhoods.
- The need for maintenance of existing services and infrastructure cannot be overemphasized. In addition, these should be upgraded from time to time in line with demands.
- The government should tackle the rural-urban drift migration challenges which result in an uncontrolled urban growth. For instance, making rural areas more attractive by creating employment opportunities and provision of services and infrastructure will stem the tide of urban migration.

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