

Full Length Research

Estate Residents' Perception of their Neighbourhood Conditions in Greater Port Harcourt: Nigeria

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The term, housing includes the house itself and the total surrounding environment with its ancillary facilities and services (Obinna, 2008). The 1976 Vancouver (Canada) Declaration on Human Settlements of 1976 states that "Adequate shelter and services are a basic human right which places an obligation on governments to ensure their attainment by all people, beginning with direct assistance to the least advantaged through guided programmes of self-help and community action"; In housing production the perception of the end user is very important because they are the beneficiary so their views are equally important as stakeholders. Private estates residents' perception and satisfaction is very important in the housing industry. Therefore, the objectives of the research were to; (1) To examine the perceptions of private estate residents about their neighbourhoods. (2) To examine the factors that determinants and give private estate residents satisfaction. (3) To engage estate residents and stalk holders in housing development by their involvement in discussions. The research design used was the "passive-observational" method The total number of private estate residents interviewed was 400 (ascertained field research). The study relied on two sources of information - primary and secondary. Primary sources comprised (a) a largely pre-coded questionnaire, administered face-to-face by trained interviewers, (b) Individual Depth Interviews (IDIs) of key informants, (c) direct observation, (c) measurement, and (d) photography. Secondary sources included: (a) unpublished and published material in past theses, books, journals, maps, etc; and (b) the Internet. Data analysis utilised mainly univariate and multivariate statistical analytical techniques. Analysis was carried out with the aid of the microcomputer – adapted Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 16. The results showed that Estate residents' perception of their neighbourhood was measured using a 5-point Agreement-Disagreement Likert Scale, with reference to certain aspects of their estate. The research shows that over one third of estate residents strongly agreed that their estates were attractive, no doubt taking into account the state of the foregoing aspects. Thus, the research provides an insight into the determinants of perceived estate attractiveness – information that would be invaluable to prospective estate developers. Factors that determined the level of satisfaction were examined using Multiple Classification Analysis and 65% of the variance in satisfaction of residents was explained. This was quite high for a research of this type The study recommended, among others, that (1) Government should incorporate greener infrastructure in planning to enhance walkability, bike ability and ultimately the liveability of GPHC through the adoption of Tax Incentive programmes (TIP) for greener development. (2) Government should formulate policies and implement techniques that promote liveability in Greater Port Harcourt City. This can be achieved during the approval of building plan and building permit .processes by monitoring the project from start to finish.(3) Estate developers should furnish themselves with available and current researches that give adequate data of what estate residents' perception of their estate. This will enable the estate developers produce estates that will be desired and easily rentable.

Keywords: Private Estate Residents, Perception, Neighbourhood Condition,

INTRODUCTION

Housing is one of man's basic needs to survive on earth, which is in second place to food. There are many definitions on housing but for the purpose of this research, the definition most relevant is "housing as a process which makes the act of dwelling possible" (Turner, 1976; Habraken, 1972). In effect, the term, housing includes the house itself and the total surrounding environment with its ancillary facilities and services (Obinna, 2008).

The word ancillary facilities refer to the supporting amenities that complement the house such as water supply, energy, access road, sewage and refuse disposal facilities. There are some basic items that must be in a building such as: toilet, appropriate room sizes, kitchen, and bathroom. Also, the standard of construction of the building is equally important, with reference to materials used for roofing and flooring; internal layout, orientation, water supply, electricity, storage facilities, parking and distance to other buildings. It is also important that some basic services and facilities are readily available such as: hospital/health centres, primary school, secondary school, market, recreational facilities, maintenance of facilities when due, installation of modern facilities, proper sanitation, internet facilities, drainage system, fire station/extinguishers, fumigation services, interlocked compound and parking space constitute proper housing estate and desirable neighbourhood.

The 1976 Vancouver (Canada) Declaration on Human Settlements of 1976 states that "Adequate shelter and services are a basic human right which places an obligation on governments to ensure their attainment by all people, beginning with direct assistance to the least advantaged through guided programmes of self-help and community action"; Unfortunately one out of every three city dwellers – nearly a billion people – live in a slum. Slum indicators include: lack of water, sanitation, overcrowding, non-durable structures and insecure tenure (UN-HABITAT, 2006). Millions more face a severe housing problem living without adequate sanitation, with irregular or no electricity supply and without adequate security.

In housing production the perception of the end user is very important because they are the beneficiary so their views are equally important as stakeholders. The residents of any estate are important because without them the estates will be vacant and not rented. Just as the popular saying goes "the customer is king". The views of the estate residents are important because they are some housing estates all over the world and particularly in Port Harcourt that are vacant not occupied. Also when tenants are not satisfied with their housing estate, they tend to relocate at the expiration of their yearly rent which is the norm in this part of the

world. That will be a loss to any private estate developer whose business is to make profit from such investment.

Aim

To understand what private estate residents' perception is about their neighbourhood and to gather this information and interpret them to be available to estate developers. This will help in the production of better estates that are desirable by residents and rentable.

Objectives of the research were to;

- (1) To examine the perceptions of private estate residents about their neighbourhoods
- (2) To examine the factors that determinants and give private estate residents satisfaction.
- (3) To engage estate residents as stake holders in housing development by their involvement in discussions.

Study Area

Port Harcourt is the capital of Rivers State, one of the largest cities in southern Nigeria. Nigeria with geographical coordinates $4^{\circ} 47' 21''\text{N}$ and $6^{\circ} 59' 55''\text{E}$ and an altitude of 463m. Port Harcourt City Local Government Area is located within latitudes $4^{\circ} 45' - 4^{\circ} 50' \text{N}$ and longitudes $6^{\circ} 75' - 7^{\circ} 05'\text{E}$. It lies in the tropical wet climate zone, which is characterized by abundant rainfall with little dry season, The monsoon season occurs between April and October, bringing heavy rainfall ranging from 2000 – 2500mm with temperatures up to 25°C and a relatively constant humidity, The climate of this area experiences rainfall all year round. Although there are two main seasons; dry season lasting from December to March and rainy season from April to November (Gobo, 2001).

Port Harcourt is considered as one of the fastest growing cities in Nigeria with a lot of commercial and industrial activities situated here. The city has access to potential energy from oil and gas as a result, the headquarters of all multinational oil prospecting companies, including Shell, Agip, Total Fina Elf, Exxo Mobil are all located in Port Harcourt. Some of the companies have estates they but for their staff but they are not adequate to house every one of them. Most of the estates are given to the very senior staff and not all eventually housed (see figure 1).

Primary sources comprised (a) a largely pre-coded questionnaire, administered face-to-face by trained interviewers, (b) Individual Depth Interviews (IDIs) of key informants, (c) direct observation, (d) measurement, and (e) photography. Secondary sources included: (a) unpublished and published material in past theses, books, journals, maps, etc; and (b) the Internet. Data analysis utilised mainly univariate and multivariate statistical analytical techniques. Analysis was carried out with the aid of the microcomputer – adapted Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 16.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the services/facilities that were needed the most in some of the estates. Housing goes beyond simple shelter to include the income of the residents, utilities and community services such as water supply, energy, access road, sewage and refuse disposal facilities. There are some basic items that must be in a building such as: toilet, appropriate room sizes, kitchen, and bathroom. Also, the standard of construction of the building is equally important, with reference to materials used for roofing and flooring; internal layout, orientation, water supply, electricity, storage facilities, parking and distance to other buildings. It is also important that some basic services and facilities are readily available such as: hospital/health centres, primary school, secondary school, market, recreational facilities, maintenance of facilities when due, installation of modern facilities, proper sanitation, internet facilities, drainage system, fire station/extinguishers, fumigation services, interlocked compound and parking space. The highest was Electricity, mentioned by 77(19.25%) of respondents; Hospital/Health Centres, 42(10.5%); Good Roads, 41(8%); Drainage, 39(9.75%); Potable Water 25(3.75%); and Parking Space and Fire Extinguisher, 1(0.3%).

Table 1: Service/Facilities Needed in Privately Built Housing Estates

Services and Facilities	N	%
Hospital/health centres	42	10.5
Potable water supply	25	6.25
Primary school	3	0.75
Secondary school	3	0.75
Electricity	77	19.25
Good roads	41	10.25
Police post/station	8	2
Recreational facilities	18	4.5
Maintenance of estate facilities when due	4	1
Installation of modern facilities	4	1
Proper sanitation	1	0.25
Internet facilities	2	0.5
Drainage facilities	39	9.75
Fire extinguishers	1	0.25
Tiled premises	11	2.75
Parking space	1	0.25
Non response	120	30
Total	400	100.0

Source: Author's Field Survey, November 2014

Table 2 shows Estate Residents Housing Satisfaction. The result shows after using Multiple Classification Analysis(MCA) "Overall quality of construction" emerged as the most important variable in explaining variation in the dependent variable, with a beta score of 0.62 while "Distance of the nearest dwelling unit to dwelling" was the least important, having a beta score of 0.09. Taken together, the 8 variables could explain 65% of the variation in Housing Satisfaction.

Table 3 shows residents' perception of housing estate conditions, based on a measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Agreement-Disagreement, ranging from "Disagree strongly" to "Agree strongly". Estate residents' perception of their neighbourhood was measured using a 5-point Agreement-Disagreement Likert Scale, with reference to certain aspects of their estate, as shown in Table 4. The scale used was:

1. Agree Strongly; 2. Agree Somewhat; 3. Don't Know/Uncertain; 4. Disagree Some What 5. Disagree

Table 2: Explaining Variation in Housing Satisfaction(Multiple Classification Analysis, N= 400)

Variables	Coefficients		
	Adjusted Eta	Adjusted Eta ²	Beta
Type of dwelling unit	0.48	0.23	0.21 (2)
Number of rooms in dwelling unit	0.50	0.25	0.10 (7)
Size of rooms	0.42	0.18	0.16 (3)
Distance of the nearest dwelling unit to dwelling	0.55	0.31	0.09 (8)
Private outside space attached to building	0.48	0.23	0.13 (6)
Electricity supply	0.38	0.15	0.15 (5)
Water supply	0.47	0.22	0.16 (4)
Overall quality of construction	0.76	0.57	0.62 (1)
Adjusted Multiple R ² (Explained Variance)	0.65		

Source: Author's Field Survey, November 2014.

(Note: The figures in parentheses in the last column show the relative importance of the variables in explaining variation in the dependent variable)

Table 3: Residents' Perception of Housing Estate Conditions (N =400)

Aspect	Percentage (%)					Total
	Agree Strongly	Agree Some-what	Don't Know/Uncertain	Disagree Some what	Disagree Strongly	
My estate is quiet	37.19	31.66	30.15	0.75	0.25	100
My neighbours are friendly	35.29	37.43	25.94	1.07	0.27	100
There is a lot of road traffic (vehicular)	21.51	30.11	32.80	10.22	5.38	100
My estate is crowded	8.13	25.75	25.47	13.82	26.83	100
The estate is safe (i.e. crime rate is low)	36.00	37.60	23.20	1.33	1.87	100

Source: Author's Field Survey, November 2014

Strongly for the 400 respondents, modal responses regarding the various items were as follows:

“My estate is quiet” – Agree strongly (37.19%);

“My neighbours are friendly” – Agree some-what (37.43%);

“There is a lot of road traffic” (vehicular) – Don't Know/Uncertain (32.8%);

“My estate is crowded” – Disagree strongly (26.83%);

“The estate is safe” (i.e. crime rate is low) – Agree somewhat (37.60%)

The research has brought out various considerations that estate residents held uppermost in their choice of an estate. Most residents agreed strongly that their residential estate was quiet. A quiet estate is necessary since if a developer locates an estate in a

noisy neighbourhood many people would not want to rent such an estate. A home is a place of rest and most people go home at the close of work or business and need a quiet place to rest. Rest is a very essential aspect of human well-being and eventually total health.

Most of the respondents agreed somewhat that their neighbours were friendly. Man is a social being; human beings interact with one another as well as with their environment. A friendly neighbourhood can be achieved through design -- layout of the buildings; as well as presence of gardens, walkways and a neighbourhood recreation centre. On the one hand, these are things that can cause neighbours to meet and interact. A bad neighbourhood design, on the other hand, can “imprison” people in their homes.

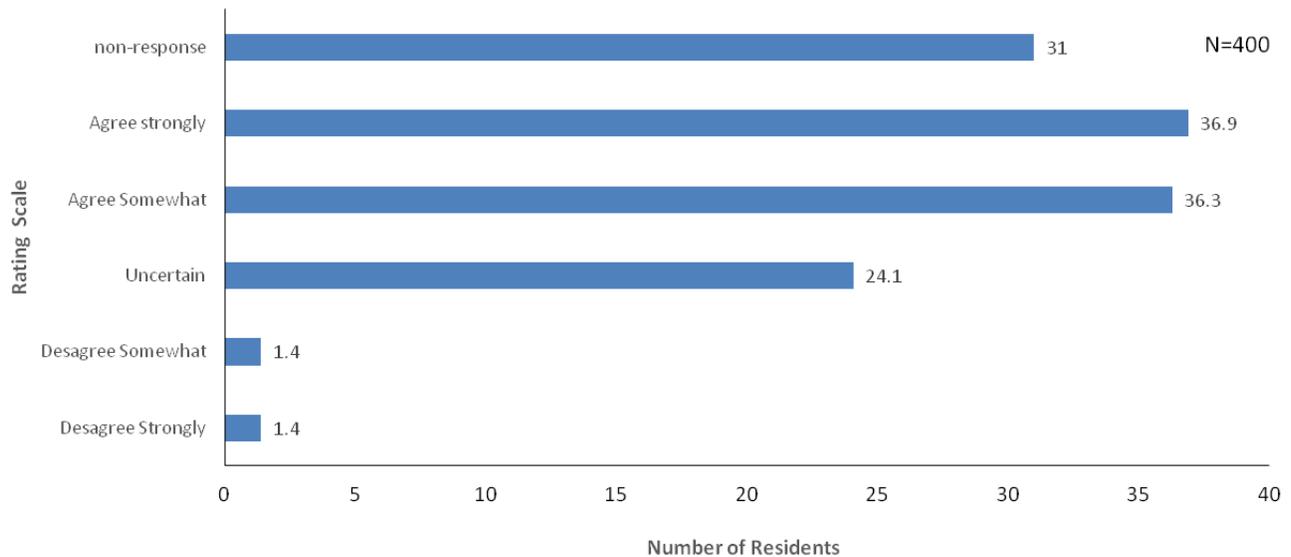


Figure 2: Residents' Opinions as to the Attractiveness or Otherwise of their Estates

Source: Author's Field Survey, November 2014.

Estate residents expressed the opinion that they were uncertain about the amount of road traffic (vehicular) in the estates. This may be because some of the estates were designed in such a way that they were gated, limiting vehicular access.

Estate residents disagreed strongly that their estates were crowded. Most people would not want to stay in a crowded neighbourhood. The study found that most of the estates studied were gated. Apparently people were careful to ascertain that such security provisions were available before they moved in. Furthermore, the study found that in some of the estates arrangements had been put in place to screen both visiting vehicles and pedestrians to deter crime, thus enhancing the overall sense of safety.

Residents' perception of neighbourhood attractiveness was particularly tapped, using the 5-point Agreement-Disagreement Likert Scale. The results are shown in Figure 2.

Estate residents were asked about their perception of the attractiveness of the estates. Attractiveness has to do with a place being pleasant, good looking, and liveable. Thus, aspects examined in this research -- quietness, friendliness of neighbours, volume of vehicular road traffic, crowding, and safety -- contribute to attractiveness. The research shows that over one third of estate residents strongly agreed that their estates were attractive, no doubt taking into account the state of the foregoing aspects. Thus, the research provides an insight into the determinants of perceived estate attractiveness -- information that would be invaluable to prospective estate developers.

Figures 3 and 4 show some types of housing built by, the private sector, including corporate bodies, well - designed and functional estates by private sector

Estate residents used a 5-point Satisfaction-Dissatisfaction Likert scale to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the functionality of their building with reference to a number of aspects as shown in Table . The scale used was:

1. Very Dissatisfied;
2. Dissatisfied;
3. Don't Know/Uncertain;
4. Satisfied;
5. Very Satisfied

Modal responses regarding the various items for the 400 respondents were as follows:

Type of dwelling units -- "Satisfied": 254 (71.35%); Number of rooms -- "Satisfied" : 288 (77.63%); Size of room -- "Satisfied" : 275 (75.34%); Distance to the nearest dwelling -- "Satisfied" : 242 (66.85%); Private outside space attached to your dwelling -- "Satisfied" : 214 (65.24%); Electricity supply -- "Satisfied" : 118 (32.51%); Water supply -- "Satisfied" : 202 (55.80%); Security -- "Satisfied" : 242 (67.98%); Overall quality of construction -- "Satisfied" : 225 (64.47%) and Overall dwelling unit -- "Satisfied" : 276 (77.53%).

The foregoing results showed that the majority of respondents were "satisfied" with the ten aspects of their dwelling units examined. Factors that determined the level of satisfaction were examined using Multiple Classification Analysis, as shown in Table 4. The most important determinants of satisfaction were, in descending order: Overall quality of construction, Type of dwelling unit; Size of room, Water supply, Electricity supply, Private outside space attached to dwelling,



Figure 3:Privately-Built Two- and Three-Bedroom Bungalows at Derefaka, Estate, Ajuwa Close, Abuloma, Port Harcourt

Source: Author's Field Survey, November 2014



Figure 4: Privately-Built Row Duplexes at Trans– Amadi Garden Estate

Source: Author's Field Survey, November 2014.

Number of rooms, Distance to the nearest dwelling, and Overall dwelling unit. Also, 65% of the variance in satisfaction of residents was explained by the

forementioned predictors, which was quite high for a research of this type. For instance, in a recent quality of life study, Wokekoro (2014) found that using such

predictor variables as objective housing quality index, perceived housing quality index, perceived neighbourhood quality index, dwelling unit satisfaction index, neighbourhood satisfaction index and socio economic status index to explain variation in perceived quality of residential life and had explanatory power of 14%. This explains only 14% of the variation in Port Harcourt residents' perceived quality of residential life. This comparison suggests a high level of efficiency of the predictive model used in this study.

Housing Quality is related to the functionality of the house and the various components of the house are interrelated. In Architecture, there is a popular saying that "form follows function". This is very true for any dwelling unit. The daily operations in the dwelling unit must balance out to give the occupants maximum comfort. During the design process for a custom home, there is always an attempt to integrate form and function in the belief that form should follow function and not merely serve as an ornament. In fact, "form follows function" is a phrase coined by American architect Louis Sullivan (1995).

Wright (1995) argued that the shape of a building should not be fashioned after some aesthetic tradition, but rather should be determined by the purpose of the building.

In the early 20th century, influential architect Sullivan mentee of Frank Lloyd Wright, adapted and further developed this approach to architectural design, which he termed "organic architecture." Like Sullivan, Wright argued that "form and function are one." Organic architecture seeks to integrate space into a unified whole. The style of a building should grow naturally from its environment

CONCLUSION

The perception of the estate residents about their neighbourhood is important because if they are dissatisfied about their neighbourhood. From the findings of the research it is very glaring that there is acute shortage of privately built housing and this need has to be met. There are numerous people living in substandard homes as well as homeless people. There is a ready market to be tapped into by investors they will not rent those houses again. The study has also brought out that the estate residents are stakeholders in the housing industry and their views should be given due consideration. Government should formulate policies and implement techniques that promote liveability in Greater Port Harcourt City. This can be achieved during the approval of building plan and building permit processes by monitoring the project from start to finish. There is need to increase the number of basic social services/facilities in the city to serve the increasing

population. Private developers must consciously in cooperate in the various housing estate ancillary facilities and services and ensure that the total surrounding environment is attractive. Private developers should ensure that the houses supplied meet the residents' satisfaction such as having adequate distance between houses and the overall quality of construction of the dwelling.

RECOMMENDATION

(1) Government should incorporate greener infrastructure in planning to enhance walkability, bike ability and ultimately the liveability of GPHC through the adoption of Tax Incentive programmes (TIP) for greener development. Green Infrastructure uses vegetation, soil and natural processes to manage water and create healthier urban environment. This can be achieved through the Rivers State Parks and Gardens under the Ministry of Agriculture.

(2) Government should formulate policies and implement techniques that promote liveability in Greater Port Harcourt City. This can be achieved during the approval of building plan and building permit processes by monitoring the project from start to finish.

(3) Estate developers should furnish themselves with available and current researches that give adequate data of what estate residents' perception of their estate. This will enable the estate developers produce houses that will be desired and easily rentable.

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