

STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH MULTI-FUNCTIONAL DYNAMICS OF RESIDENTIAL HOUSING

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Abstract: The impact of human dynamics on planned residential neighbourhoods over time has resulted in conflicts between classifying homes along mono-functional or multifunctional concepts. For residents, especially the low and middle-income earners, the essence of a home transcends beyond just a living space as a result of the integration of income generating ventures. This study analyses the historical development of informal home-based enterprises (HBEs) in Nigeria, the nature of activities, their economic and environmental benefits to households and neighbourhoods in general. A case study methodology was applied to the Nigerian situation through the analysis of secondary data. A review of literature on the historical perspective, nature and the economic and environmental benefits of HBEs was carried out. The result identifies both income generation and employment provision as leading attractions for enterprise start-ups in homes. Other contending determinants are personal focus objective and access opportunity challenges of homes to commercial activity areas. Activity types are small-scale engagements in retail, service production and manufacturing usually carried out within a particular dwelling and its wider physical setting. The outcome of the study provides contrary insights to previously held views that HBEs are nuisances that should not be accommodated in residential areas. In view of the numerous benefits derivable from HBEs by households in the neighbourhoods, this study offered strategies for their integration from planning to design stages of any housing development.

Keywords: Home-Based Enterprises, Neighbourhoods, Residential Area, Income generation, Sustainable Housing Development

1. INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, the residential neighbourhoods hitherto conceived by urban planners as an exclusive abode for a living are turning out to incorporate other activities especially income generation ventures. Several reasons have been attributed to this dynamism. Essentially, the desire to earn income and augment living are the primary reasons for enterprise start-ups in neighbourhoods [1]. Other than these, lack of access to commercial facilities [2] and personal focus factors have greatly induced HBE occurrences in neighbourhoods [3, 4]. The paradigm shift of homes and neighbourhood spaces functioning as commercial premises is seen as a paradox [5]. The scenario of homes accommodating businesses has split urban planning professionals along the thoughts of the "Modernist" planners such as T. Garnier, Ebenezer Howard, and Le Corbusier in 1930 and those sharing the ideas of contemporary urban critic and writer like Jacobs [6]. The former viewed HBEs as the urban nuisance which should be discouraged in residential areas [7, 8] while the latter viewed it as a survival means for the urban poor and liveliness to the neighbourhood [9]. Consequently, a contemporary architect like Davis [10] inspired by Jacobs's effort and the works of architect Christopher Alexander supports a return to updated versions of the shop/house, since this is capable of invigorating higher residential densities [10]. In sharing a similar view, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlement [11] in the "Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000" and "The Habitat Agenda" [12] gave credence to housing as an economically productive sector. This is a deviation from an earlier view of the sector as a consumption entity in previous housing policies, thus redefining the multiple roles of the home [13, 14].

In recent time, the UN-HABITAT's stipulated five principles as a strategy of sustainable neighbourhood planning. This includes the issue of mixed land use where it stipulates that at least 40 percent of neighbourhoods' floor spaces should be allocated for economic activities [15]. In line with the concept of sustainable neighbourhood and housing development, stakeholders recognised for the first time that application of enterprise-residential mix will be a boost to the draft national housing policy of Nigeria. The draft National Housing Policy of Nigeria (2012) therefore stipulates as a strategy; "the incorporation of micro-enterprises (such as agro-allied ventures) in the housing scheme with a view to generating employment opportunities and enhancing the ability of the beneficiaries to repay their loans at reasonable periods with less strain" [16, 17].

Previous researches have been concentrated on informal settlements and not so much is directed towards informal work [18]. Furthermore, Kellet, [19] affirmed that researches conducted in this direction have mainly dwelled on the economic implications of HBEs, neglecting approaches on ways of integrating workplaces with residential activities and spaces. The United Nations and ILO have called for more researches into the linkages

between home and work [20]. Against this backdrop, this paper assesses the historical development of HBEs, the nature of economic activities carried out, and also the environmental and economic benefits to households and the neighbourhood in Nigerian cities. Accordingly, an attempt has also been made to suggest ways of coping with their externalities for a sustainable housing development.

2. METHODOLOGY

The paper is structured into four sections. The first section which covers the introductory aspect examines the perspective of housing stakeholders on the issue of HBE occurrences. This is followed by a theoretical framework with an extensive review of the literature on the historical perspective, nature, and the economic and environmental benefits of HBEs. The third section discusses the strategies of coping with HBE occurrences in neighbourhoods while the fourth section wraps up the paper with summary and conclusion in the light of the findings. A case-study approach involving quantitative analysis of secondary data was adopted for the study.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Historical Perspective of Informal Economic Activities in Nigeria

Nigeria has a huge size of informal economic activities with a substantial proportion operating as HBEs. Their occurrences have become a way of life as they have over time been accepted to operate within the residential environments providing supplementary services to the major land uses in the neighbourhoods. As a result, they are conveniently integrated into the land use process [21]. The prevalence of informal economic activities across Nigerian cities is aggravated by many years of poor economic performance resulting in a high unemployment rate of 12.9% and soaring poverty incidence of up to 54% [22]. Literature evidence shows that the study carried out by Archibald Callaway's in the early 1960s on "Unemployment among African School Leavers" (1963) provided an insight into the limitations of young school leavers in the quest for "modern" sector employment in Ibadan, Western Nigeria. The study revealed that as an alternative to the "modern" sectors job search, young school leavers venture into "traditional apprenticeship" training in mechanic, carpentering, tailoring and other related activities. These activities described by Callaway as "transition" activities (between family subsistence farms and modern industrial units) are what is now referred to as informal sector training by ILO [23].

Informal sector nomenclature first gained prominence in the Nigerian urban labour market discourse in 1975 with the publication of the ILO Working Paper titled "Urban development, income distribution, and employment in Lagos" undertaken by Olanrewaju, Fapohunda, Mein Pieter van Dijk, & Jap Reijmerink [22]. The expansion of the informal sector can be traced to the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced in 1986 by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a debt-reduction and balance-of-payment alleviating measure. The measure was aimed at realising a more diversified, less petroleum-dependent, and productive economy [16]. The outcome is the subsequent austerity programme triggered serious socio-economic crises in the country and presented a worse scenario for the economy. Inflation, job retrenchment, and hardship became a wide-spread occurrence thus, accelerating the growth of the informal sector.

3.2 Nature of Informal Home-Based Economic Activities

The nature of HBE is explained in this study to describe the location and types of enterprises operated in neighbourhoods. Location of activities is important in land use studies both in terms of measuring accessibility factors and or evaluating planning implications of activities on space. As a component of the informal economy, a home-based enterprise is an economic activity which takes place in or very close to the home as against commercial or industrial building or area. The concept of "Home" refers to a dwelling unit and/or structure attached to a dwelling unit and/or an open area next to a dwelling unit [24, 25].

Home based enterprises sometimes referred to as household enterprises or unincorporated enterprises owned by households are distinguished from corporations and quasi-corporations on the basis of their legal status and the type of accounts they hold. They are usually not constituted as separate legal entities independently of the household or of household members that own them, and no complete set of accounts are available. There is no distinction between the production activities of the enterprises and the other activities of their owners [26]. Participants in the informal sector are unable to separate economic life from such other aspects of social life as a culture, religion, kinship and lineage. Home-based income generation activities are carried out within a given dwelling and its broader physical context [27]. The hierarchical organisation of spaces that are used in home-based income generation includes the dwelling (meaning a house); its courtyard; the lane or street (immediate to a given dwelling) abode; the broader neighbourhood and, the public open spaces. By this understanding the entire neighbourhood constitutes the home, therefore informal enterprise occurrences within household and neighbourhood spaces fall within the scope of HBE study.

Across African cities and Nigeria in particular, activities of the informal home-based enterprises are essentially the same. Many studies have been carried out to understand the nature of economic activities which takes place in the homes; these studies gave revelations of diverse activities ranging from primary to tertiary activities. These activities are generally categorised into three broad activities; these are retail, manufacturing, and service

production. The study by Hadebe [28] on South African townships reveals quite a number of activities which includes, childminders, traditional healers, hair salons, satellite installers, public phones operators, building constructors, self-employed artisans, shoemakers, tailors, wood carvers, garment makers, welfare organisations, churches, beverage sellers etc. [29] observed a variation in the frequency of HBEs in Madina (Ghana) and Mamelodi (South Africa), but commonalities exist in the types of activities carried out. These activities are essentially in the area of production and sales of foods and drinks. Their findings show that, even though a wide range of HBEs are operating in both Madina and Mamelodi, the most common types are retailing and/or producing food and drink. In both Madina and Mamelodi, almost 60% of HBEs are involved in the production and/or sale of food and drink with another 12–13% retailing non-food items such as stationeries and clothes. The popularity of the processing and sales of foods and drinks, they concluded is because of response to local demand, it requires a small amount of initial capital and does not require high skills.

Onyebueke and Geyer [22] summarises the categorisation of the informal sector to include; home-based enterprises, informal land and housing delivery, waste collection and recycling, street trading and artisanal fishing among others, emphasizing that Nigeria's informal sector is predominantly residential-bound. In Lagos metropolis, as in many cities of Nigeria, about 80% of the respondents are engaged in informal activities of varieties economic activities ranging from petty trading to hawking, selling of cooked food and raw farm produce and other minor household items. The other activities include hairdressing and barbing, tailoring, secretarial services, horology, sign writing, photography and auto repair services. Informal manufacturing is done by only 7% of the respondents and includes cobbling, production of sachet water and packed food, nylon production, crafts, carpentry and metal works [30].

3.3 Economic and environmental benefits of HBEs

The informal economy accounts for over 70% of urban employment in Nigeria [31]. While the rationale for working at home is linked to the desire to enjoy “improved quality of life” or enhanced well-being. Among the foremost benefits is perhaps the degree of autonomy as against working for someone else. Also, career satisfaction has been identified as one of the five essential elements of well-being, and this is tied to liking what you do every day [32]. HBE operation brings about increased motivation, inspired sense of personal growth with self-fulfilment. Beyond this, there are convenience and cost-saving advantages [33]. Schedule flexibility, time saved not commuting and daily contact with family members while working together in business are attributes that enhance well-being. HBE could also translate to economic benefits with guaranteed unlimited income growth and lower labour costs. In addition, it ensures savings in workspace rental costs, reduced commuting cost and costs of care for family [34]. Households' well-being is closely related but transcends the concept of livelihood which refers to as “the mix of individual and household survival strategies, developed over a given period of time that seeks to mobilise available resources and opportunities” [35]. Urban planners are increasingly coping with the challenges of incorporating livelihood systems into formal and informal planning processes [36].

The perspective of livelihood is conventionally understood only in terms of income earning of which responses has been tailored to promote employment creation and local economic development. Quite a number of persons have opted for these informal activities for daily survival and sustenance of livelihoods especially for those who have either been retrenched from their job or whose incomes are no longer adequate to support basic needs [37]. Neighbourhoods can provide assets whereby through productive use, household well-being is enhanced. However, livelihood discourses and literature are rather silent on the ways households can mobilise this asset and its value for their well-being [38]. Household strategies can help in their goals to survive (livelihood), increase security or expand their wealth [39].

The economic, social and environmental benefits of home-based enterprises manifest through enhancing local economies by creating employment opportunities and also their commercial linkages. Egbu, Kalu, and Nwobi [40] affirmed that the strength of HBE lies in its ability to create employment, even though wages paid to employees may be low compared to government and other corporate establishments. It minimises local economic leakages, bringing life to daytime activities of the neighbourhood. This is expected to enliven daytime neighbourhoods, increase neighbourhood safety, and security [41] as well as providing a means of achieving work-life balance [42]. People who are tied to the home for social or physical reasons and therefore excluded from the labour market (e.g. those who have family caring responsibilities, aged or are disabled) become economically active [43]. The other attraction of HBE in the neighbourhood entails a reduction in commuting which creates environmental benefits, a cost saving means in monetary term and time for their customers, who otherwise would have to travel to the central business district. This is, in addition, to reducing traffic jam, pressure on public transport, and air pollution [44, 45, and 46]. Goods and services are also available in the right quantities and at affordable prices. Goods and services from the informal economy satisfy the needs of the urban population in three ways: availability, affordability, and accessibility [47]. It is also believed that children involvement in HBE is capable of creating the next generation of entrepreneurs as children become involved in their parents' home-based businesses [34].

The other perspective of HBE impact on neighbourhoods reflects on how to cope with their negative externalities. The alternative perception emphasises their attendant negativities. The impression presented is that HBEs brings about the challenges of sprawl, incompatible land uses, building alterations, the danger of temporary structures, alteration of land use functions, open space conversions and land degradation [48]. Those who support this view believe that HBEs, like most other human activities, takes place in space and the ever growing sector has continuously converted every “suitable” and “available” land space for business location. They are of the view that this situation is not peculiar to the informal neighbourhoods but are visible in well-planned housing developments where organised open spaces meant for recreational uses, have been encroached upon by these activities [2].

Several arguments portray HBEs as environmentally unfriendly. For instance, Olajoke [49] argued that unregulated conversion of residential housing to commercial and in many cases as an unorganised mixed use is capable of blocking airspace due to extensions created to buildings, thus affecting proper and adequate ventilation. Others felt that the informal economy includes many pollution- intensive activities. They posited that these activities are difficult to monitor because of their size, number, and geographical dispersion or because they have very low safety standards. One of the potential downsides of unregulated activities is the absence of official control over health and safety issues, particularly for workers and their families (especially children) [13].

There are views that informal sectors are more pollution intensive than larger sources. This view further stated that they use inputs relatively inefficiently, lack pollution control equipment, lack access to basic sanitation services such as sewers and waste disposal, and are operated by persons with little awareness of the health and environmental impacts of pollution [50]. These positions are contrary to some other researchers opinion who otherwise felt that HBEs are environment-friendly, small-scale, non-polluting and do not threaten natural resources [44, 45, and 46]. It is a truism that indiscriminate dumping of scraps from artisans’ workplaces in the neighbourhood could endanger pedestrian movement. The fact that these activities have a mix with a residential domain, children become vulnerable compromising their safety. The oil, grease and other chemical solvents from auto repair work in neighbourhood spaces could endanger life and the environment in general [51, 52 and 53]. However, the magnitude of HBE occurrences is not beyond the control of authorities, thus minimising whatever danger they may pose to the environment.

The study carried out by Strassman [54] (1986) in Lima, Peru shows that the effects of HBEs on the worth of buildings in conventional neighbourhoods with a high rate of occurrences are usually lower than those in neighbourhoods lacking them. However, the same study recorded contrary result in poor neighbourhoods as dwellings with HBEs were better than others without; dwellings with HBEs had a resale value one-third higher as estimated by owners [24, 55]. It shows that for a sustainable housing development for the low-income earners, consideration of space provision for HBE is apt. Downplaying the negative impact of HBEs in neighbourhoods, Tipple, [56] asserts that most arguments supporting HBEs for being polluting or hard to control including Fass, [57], Strassmann, [53], Ghafur, [27], Mahmud, [58] and others focused on manufacturing and other production activities, especially those relating outworking, where HBEs are part of a larger manufacturing system.

On the contrary, HBEs benefits the environment considering their positive role in carbon balance [41]. Rukmana, [59] posits that from the urban environmental perspective, most of the problems associated with the informal sector are not attributes inherent to the sector but a manifestation of unresponsive urban planning. In agreement with Tipple and Rukmana, observations of neighbourhoods in Nigeria with HBE occurrences do not constitute much of nuisance as their activities are not too distinct from households’ undertakings. Therefore planning efforts are capable of regulating them without the scorn and forceful evictions treatment by the authorities. This is in consideration of their numerous advantages to households in particular and the entire neighbourhood as a whole.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Nigeria, the perception of the informal sector generally by authorities shows that it is not recognised in urban development policies and practices [60]. This official disposition encourages negative attitudes leading to repression and complete neglect of the sector [661, 51]. This scenario portends negative consequences on housing development. Several housing policies launched in 1988, 1991, 2002 and 2004 never took consideration of the fact that informal HBEs have become an integral part of residential development. Onyebueke and Geyer [22] opined that there is still no coherent policy support for the informal sector, and the planning response to its activities is both ad hoc and rudimentary. The draft national housing policy (2012) which supports enterprise mix in housing has not been operational. In fact, currently, there exists no supporting evidence in this regard in the housing development of any Nigerian city. In Nigeria where unemployment and underemployment rate is very high, evidence of homes as workplaces are quite visible in streets and neighbourhoods of planned and unplanned residential areas but in a haphazard manner. Several housing developments lack neighbourhood centres and commercial activity areas. This phenomenon has limited access opportunity of neighbourhoods to

commercial outlets thereby encouraging the proliferation of HBEs in an uncoordinated manner. In order to cope with HBE occurrences, existing planned neighbourhoods will need to be rehabilitated as most of them are already deteriorating and exhibiting slum characteristics. Evidently, most neighbourhoods were designed and developed without commercial activity areas, corner shops and other facilities required for residents' shopping needs. Reliance on informal commercial activity areas (markets) has been found to be inadequate towards meeting their immediate needs and sometimes not easily accessible. Rehabilitation effort will entail the provision of neighbourhood centres that can accommodate HBEs instead of allowing them littered in public spaces and streets. The neighbourhoods' rehabilitation will also require the provision of alternative locations close to the homes where these activities can be carried out in an organised manner. Corner shops can be developed as part of the rehabilitation plan to accommodate those to be displaced from public spaces with minimal rent payment by beneficiaries and a secured tenure guarantee. Furthermore, the traditional land use zoning system should be made flexible to allow for commercial activities in an organised manner in the neighbourhoods. The recent document on housing policy though a draft needs to be operationalised for housing development in the country. It is important that as a long term planning measure, policies that favour mixed-use should form part of the urban structure and strategic plans. Aside from policy measures, flexible mixed-use guidelines should be formulated specifying in detail the modalities for its implementation. It is apt to state that reliance on state edicts (with general regulations for local plans and development control) is too broad to effectuate mixed-use planning in neighbourhoods. Formulated guidelines will serve as a template or manual that will outline the pattern of residential mix and type of activities that are permissible in neighbourhoods. As a policy, housing design form will have to take into cognisance the fact that in Nigeria, low income households will require organised outlets and spaces attached to their homes for small-scale business ventures. Therefore, a typical prototype design of low and medium income house should provide facilities for business ventures along specified routes in the neighbourhoods.

CONCLUSION

The paper has examined the divergent views of the "modernist" planners and the contemporary urban writers that are for and against accommodation of HBEs in neighbourhoods. Global stakeholders in housing and settlement, as well as policy drafts in Nigeria, have realised the need to mix housing with economic activities for sustainable housing development. A cursory look at the activities of HBEs in Nigeria suggests that they are activities that entail small-scale retail, manufacturing, and services. Such activities provide overwhelming benefits to households and enliven the neighbourhoods. In view of the new thoughts that arose from the national housing policy draft, it is imperative that urban planners and other stakeholders in Nigeria become more proactive in identifying and developing strategies that will support mixed housing. Among the strategies to cope with HBEs in neighbourhoods is to ensure that existing neighbourhoods grappling with the menace of unorganised business ventures in neighbourhoods' homes and public spaces are rehabilitated. Neighbourhood centres that will accommodate business ventures and recreational facilities must be introduced in existing neighbourhoods. By this approach, strict zoning laws that hitherto emphasised separation of land uses need to be reviewed and made more flexible. Mixed-use housing development has been recognised as a veritable opportunity to generate employment and enhance the capacity of housing beneficiaries to repay their loans at reasonable periods with less strain in the draft housing policy. Effort should be intensified to operationalise this document for Nigeria to achieve its sustainable housing development programme.

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