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SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFESTYLE OF SLUM DWELLERS – A LIMITING FACTOR TO URBAN RENEWAL EFFORTS IN AKURE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Most indigenous cities of emerging nations in the third world are characterized by large-scale housing and environmental deficiencies. This paper attempts to investigate the limiting role of socio-cultural attributes of slum residents on renewal policies which are implemented to minimize or eradicate such deficiencies. The study was carried out in Akure, in South-Western Nigeria. Using questionnaires, direct observation, housing demographic and facility survey for data collection, it was discovered that residence satisfaction is not to be measured only by the facilities therein or by the quality of the dwelling units. Other imperceptible cultural and social factors play prominent roles, which need be considered while framing policies for city development. However, full participation of slum residents is noted very indispensable for the success of any large scale renewal programme while effective public enlightenment, improved socio-economic base and sanitary education strategies will help in re-orientating the people and equipping them towards healthy and aesthetically decent environment.

Keywords: Socio-cultural lifestyle, slum dwellers, environmental deficiencies, renewal policies, emerging nations.

Introduction

Uncontrolled urbanization has resulted in the sporadic growth of slums in emerging nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America. They are characterized by large-scale housing deficiencies and poor social and residential environments. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlement (UNCHS, 2002) affirms that cities and towns are centers of civilization, which generate development and socio-cultural, spiritual and scientific advancement. Slum can simply be expressed as substandard living environments, which Wegge (1983), described as 'Surviving Housing'. Slum communities have inadequate provision of water, sanitation, roads, electricity and housing. They have the largest concentration of the urban poor and the illiterates (Olanrewaju, 2004; Owoeye, 2006 and 2010). George (1999) defined it as urban areas which are physically, socially and emotionally harmful to the residents at large. It is an area where the social and environmental factors are proven to cause problems and pathologies. This paper attempts to investigate the contribution of socio-cultural attributes of slum residents in the formation and promotion of the growth of slums in urban area with a particular reference to the city of Akure.

Literature Review

Slum issue is a global affair. UNCHS (2003) reported that 923, 986,000 people, or 31.6 % of the world's total population, lived in slums in 2001. About 43.0 % of the urban population of all developing regions combined lived in slums, in comparison to 6.0% in developed regions and 78.2% in the Least Developed Countries. Among these, however, the sub-Saharan African was reported to have the largest proportion of urban slum dwellers (71.9%). The estimate by its 2002 edition was that one-third of the world's urban population does not have access to adequate housing, safe water and sanitation. Such people live in overcrowded and un-serviced slums, often situated on marginal and dangerous land. Their waste are not only remain untreated, it surrounds them as their daily activities which has direct effects on their health. Slum may emerge from the dirty living habits of dwellers and the neglect of building while the physical deterioration of the environment can as well encourage slum habits in the people (George, 1999).

Many researchers have established a strong linkage between poverty and slum formation. For instance, Abumere (1987), as quoted in Osatuyi (2004) and re-echoed in Owoeye (2006, 2008 and 2010), argued that poverty is the major factor for urban decay in emerging nations like Nigeria. A report by the World Bank and a Nigerian collaborator affirms this, which states that 21.0 % of the urban population in Nigeria is living below poverty line. The works of Olanrewaju (1990 and 2004) further corroborate this submission. Using nutritional absolute, relative income, and social well-being approaches to measure the level of deprivation in Nigeria, Olanrewaju (2004) extensively argued that population earning below minimum amount needed for an average family to survive is to be regarded as poor. Rein (1970) conceptualized poverty as a state of having lack of needs or desire and the inability to make such needs available due to financial incapability occasioned by low or poor level of income. Apart from inadequate income, Olanrewaju and Olujimi (2001) discovered that the areas with high level of erosion, non-provision of drainage and high level of uncollected refuse are mostly affected by poverty indicators. Generally, the poor are the most severely affected group and mostly located in slum environments since they are not financially capable of making urban environmental services available for their comfortable living. Another aspect of socio-cultural characteristics of slum dwellers reflects through the family pattern. The extended family systems pervade the socio-economic and political circumstances in most of the emerging nations. The burden of extended family system can be bogged down by a great number of dependants and multifarious family commitments. It jeopardizes individualism, hinders mobility (because of strong family ties) and may lower ambition and rate of achievement. Because of the heavy burden of this factor, the amount that can be spent on personal comfort, renewal of dwelling units and basic necessities is limited. Besides, members of extended family have strong cultural and sentimental attachment to their father's lands. Underlying this conception is the belief that a person must be buried under his own roof and that it is seemingly derogatory for one to be house-renter or tenant in his home town, especially when considered within the home-owing age (Onibokun, 1985). A house owned by an individual, whatever its quality, is a symbol of success and prestige as well as indication of being a 'worthy citizen'. It distinguishes people social status in the traditional societies like ours and tends to foster social cohesion and gives sense of belonging. Omole (2001) opined that man's position is measured and determined by the extent of his land and/or the houses he owns. In Yoruba land, for instance, a new dwelling built

over the land where one's father is buried is a great achievement, a sign of gratitude to the father's spirit and an evidence of pride in the parental heritage (Onibokun, 1985). To buttress this as a general belief and philosophy of human life, Nelson Mandela in Onibokun (1985) commented that **"a man is not a man until he owns a house "**. These assumptions, therefore, serve as propelling force that motivate individuals to put up 'just any structure' even when such is grossly substandard for human habitation. This cannot be unconnected with the factors responsible for incessant building collapse in our country today. Coupled with this is the cultural belief and traditional importance attached to some norms and values in most of our cities. This affects some old and dilapidated structures in the cores which cannot be removed, though they are eyesore that gives bad impression of the city. Examples are shrines and spots for traditional meetings located in the core of urban centres. The people believed these are traditional heritages which urbanization cannot remove.

Generally, urban renewal has always formed part of the complex urban dynamics, usually recognized as an indispensable response to the decaying nature of ageing cities. Its activities are underlined by the desire to rebuild or create new urban environment with desirable aesthetic quality and virile economic base. In addressing the problem of slum, urban renewal has been suggested by several scholars as potent tools for slum treatment and a means of restoring life back to defected parts of urban centers. However, renewal of slums in cities could take different forms ranging from redevelopment (total clearance) approach to provision of Urban Basic Services (UBS). It could also be in the form of conservation or economic revitalization approach (Omole, 2000). Considering these approaches, Wahab (2001) observed that urban renewal involving wholesale clearance has been the commonest measure at eradicating slums in the recent past. According to him, the approach has become unpopular and counter productive. He observed upgrading of defected settlements to be much better as it involves the provision of better physical environment through the improvement of sanitary facilities and infrastructures like safe drinking water, improved circulation routes, toilets, school buildings, and waste management facilities. This was experimented in places like Ayeye, Mapo, Eleta and Agbeni communities in Ibadan and Ilaje-Bariga in Lagos by the United Nations Children Endowment Funds (UNICEF) under the UBS program (Adeyanju, 2000; Basorun, 2003; and Osatuyi, 2004). Apart from establishing the preference of upgrading program to redevelopment approach, Wahab (2001) equally admits the full participation of slum dwellers as indispensable factor in any large slum upgrading program that will enhance its effectiveness and success. This can be efficiently done through public-private partnership initiatives.

Research Setting, Materials and Methods

This research was carried out in Akure, the capital of Ondo State, Nigeria. Focusing on the limiting effects of socio-cultural attributes of slum residents a specific area in the core of the city was chosen for the study, comprising Araromi, Ojaoshodi, Odokoyi, Isolo and Ijomu streets (see Figures 1a and 1b). This area has a land expanse of about 3.6km^2 with a population of 43,191 inhabitants (NPC, 2006). The land-use is largely residential with a few commercial activities around the CBD. The materials used for data collection mainly include direct observation, questionnaires, photographs, building demographic and facility survey. Secondary data such as base map, population figures and administration of environmental management data were sourced from various institutions, ministries and agencies.

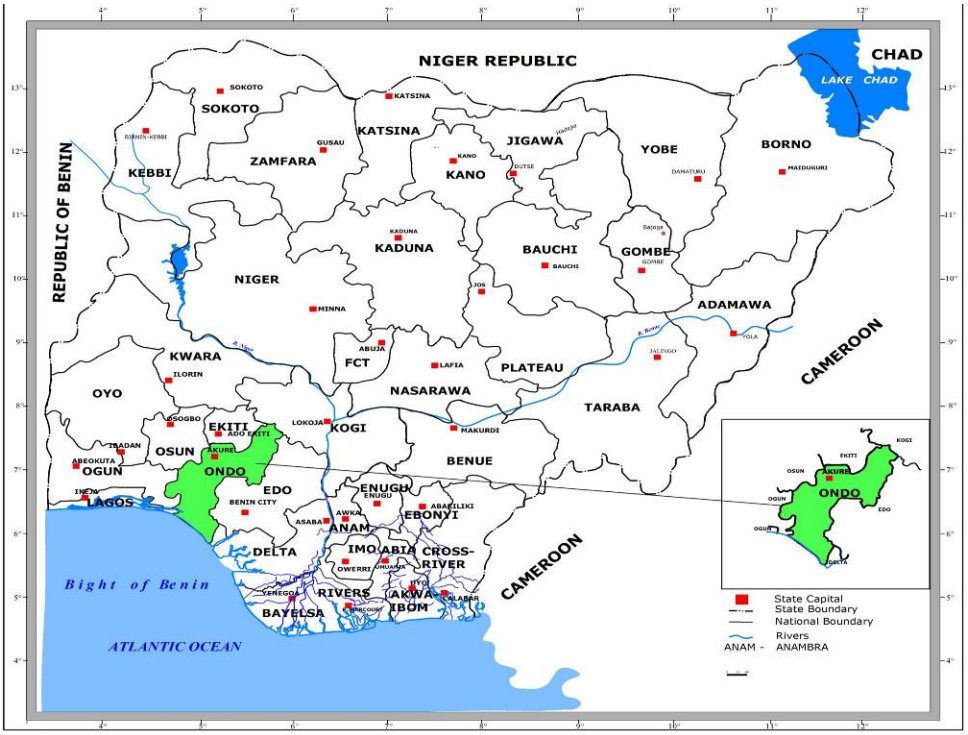

Figure 1a: Map of Ondo State in the National Settings
Source: Ondo State Ministry of Lands and Housing, Akure; 2009

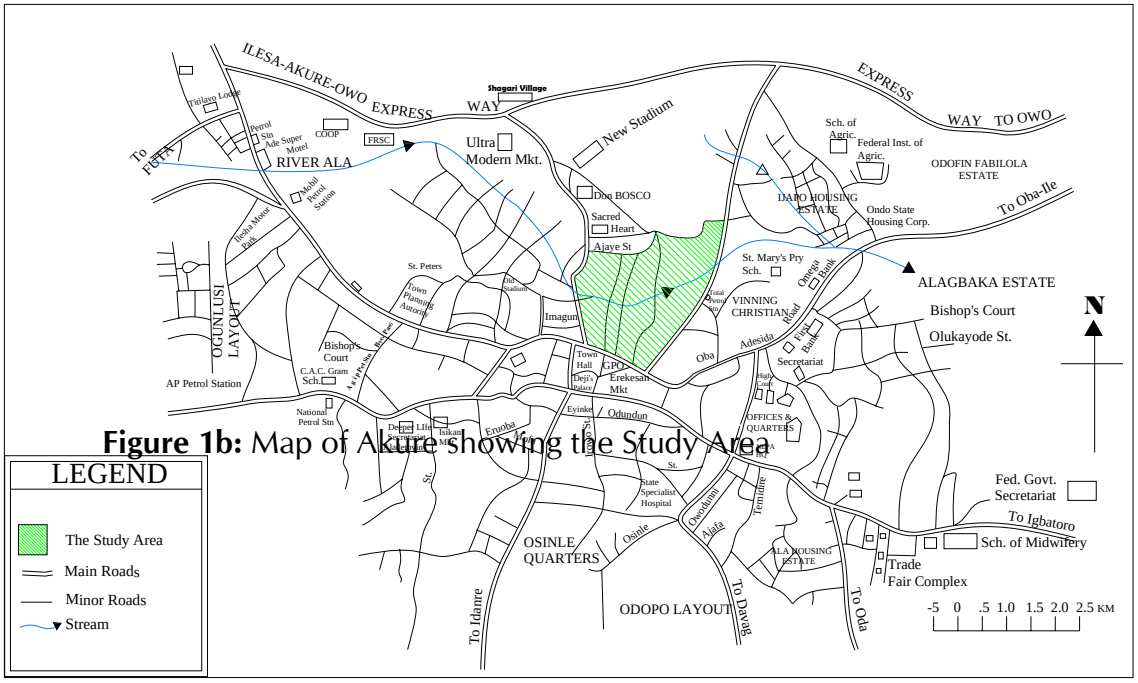

Figure 1b: Map of Akure showing the Study Area

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2009

About 1306 buildings exist in the area, out of which 48 are non-residential, leaving 1258 as target population for the study. From this, a sample of 20%, amounting to 250 buildings was selected randomly for questionnaire administration. In selecting the respondents, every 5th house in the five streets involved was taken for interview, usually a household-head per building. The sum effects of slum variables examined on socio-economic status of respondents (x_1), physical environment (x_2) and health condition of the people (x_3) was calculated using multiple linear regression model as $y = a_0 + \sum b_i$

$x_i + b_2 x_2 + \ldots\ldots\ldots b_n x_n + e$; where a_0 is constant while b_i, b_2 and b_n are model parameters. Also, the relationship of poverty level of residents with slum formation was investigated using correlation coefficient model. Owing to invalidation of some of the questionnaires due to inconsistencies observed in them, only 230 (out of 250 administered) were made available for the data analysis. This represents about 92% of the total expected responses and is considered suitable for the study.

Research Findings and Discussion

The discussion of major findings in the study is focused mainly on socio-cultural characteristics of the residents and its limiting effects on urban renewal efforts implemented in the study area. The general level of education of respondents is very low. As shown in Table 1 below, over 50% of the respondents have no formal education while only 20.4% went beyond the primary school level. This affects their level of income as majority (about 50%) are either engaged in craft-works, apprentices or unemployed. About 20% have no fixed source of income while only 8.3% receive monthly income above #15,000. The implication of this is high rate of poverty level and deprivation, as large number of the populace may not be able to afford good quality housing and adequate feeding. The cumulative effect of this is the poor standard of living on different households.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Educational Level		
No Formal Education	129	56.1
Primary Education	54	23.5
Secondary Education	29	12.6
Tertiary Education	18	7.8
Total	230	100.0
Occupational Pattern		
Farming	31	13.5
Craftsmanship	44	19.1
Trading	71	30.9
Civil Service	19	8.3
Unemployment	55	23.9
Apprentices	10	4.3
Total	230	100.0
Income Distributions		
No Fixed Source of Income	44	19.1
Below # 5,000	74	32.2
# 5,000 – 10,000	50	21.7
# 10,001 – 15,000	43	18.7
Above # 15,000	19	8.3
Total	230	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009

The average household size in the area falls between 5 and 6 people with average density of 14 people per building. Considering the reasons for this congestion, it was discovered that about 57.2% of the respondents live in the area (in their personal

buildings) with their families, 17.8% live in the area because of low income and low rentage of accommodation compared with other parts of the city, while 25.2% live in the area because of closeness to their place of work so as to reduce transport cost. This presumes high level of pressure that will be mounted on household facilities as well as the few available infrastructures within the neighborhood. This has consequential effects on environmental sanitation in an urban setting. The general situation of housing in the area provides an atmosphere for high fertility as well as high infant mortality rates. Since slum areas are associated with lack of necessary social amenities and clustery built environment, sexual relationships become very high. Over 80.0% of the buildings have spent close to 40 years out of the usual 50 years average lifespan of traditional mud buildings as estimated in Fadamiro (2002). Hence, most of the buildings in the area are old and dilapidated which serves as hide-out for criminals. The authors observed many environmental and sanitary defects prevailing in the area as product of poor maintenance culture, negligence and lack of positive action by the residents. The smoky ceilings and walls, the dirty fly-infested cooking utensils, the bits of excreta strewn around the compounds, the rubbish invaded kitchen that are left un-swept, buildings that are left uncared for, and many more are notable cultural features of the living environments in the area. Drainages are often misused with human defecations and constantly blocked by garbage and household wastes; thereby causing incessant flooding that creates swimming ponds for pigs, ducks and harbour for mosquitoes. Liquid wastes too are poorly managed. Waste water from bathroom, kitchens and laundries are not channel into drainages. Most of the gutters are not cemented and full of foul smelling water. To walk near the wall of many buildings is to experience terrible odour of urine disposed here and there by the inmates and passersby. These conditions create ugly look of the environments which makes it unattractive and susceptible to outbreak of diseases. They are degrading situations that the inhabitants themselves can conveniently eradicate at no expense other than investment of their personal efforts if they are conscious of the need for environmental hygiene and good living condition. Infrastructural facilities provided by the government are considered as government properties, so they are left uncared for. In spite of government efforts to control poor waste management through the agency of Waste Management Authority, a substantial number are still in the habit of dumping their refuse indiscriminately in open spaces (21.3%) and drainages (1.7%) where nobody cares for them. This constitutes comfortable breeding grounds for rodents, flies, mosquitoes and other health infested animals. Table 2 shows the degraded and uncivilized condition of these services. From the Table, it is revealed that the use of pit latrine is prevalent in the area, which accounts for 65.2%. Only 10.9% used modern day WC while 23.9% do not have provision for it at all. The alternative methods used include bucket latrine (4.8%), dung-hills (11.3%), drainages (7.8%) or squatting. This situation too presents ugly appearance of the area and makes the surroundings look very dirty, stinking and unattractive.

Table 2: Condition of Sanitary Facilities

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sewage Disposal (Toilet)		
Pit latrine	150	65.2
Water closet	25	10.9
Bucket latrine	11	4.8
Bush / dunghills	26	11.3
Streams and Drainage	18	7.8
Total	**230**	**100.0**
Bathroom facilities		
Indoor – Self contained	10	4.3
-- Shared	124	53.9
Out-door – open court yard	73	31.7
None (Not available)	23	10.0
Total	**230**	**10.0**
Kitchen facilities		
Indoor-- Self contained	12	5.2
-- Shared	145	63.0
Outdoor –open courtyard	65	28.3
None (Not available)	8	3.5
Total	**230**	**100.0**
Waste Disposal Facilities		
Free Range @Road sides	4	1.7
@Open space	49	21.3
Controlled Tipping	150	65.3
Incinerating / Burning	27	11.7
Total	**230**	**100.0**

Source: Field survey, 2009

A good number of households interviewed have bathroom facilities, which majority are either substandard or inconveniently located or both. About 53.9% are shared among different households, which in most cases are being over-utilized while 10.0% have no provision for it. Such residents become squatters in the nearest buildings. Majority of the kitchen facilities too are shared among different households as indicated by 63.0% of the sampled respondents. About 28.1% have theirs outside, usually at the backyard some of which are built very close to the location of pit larine. Other essential facilities that affect the socio-economic life of the residents include the inadequate provision of portable water, electricity and security services.

Various environmental related problems experienced in the area due to the degraded condition are clearly shown in Figure 2 in their varying sizes. Causative factors, as suggested by respondents include inadequate sanitary facilities (57.4%), poor water supply (14.8%), dirty environment (14.8%), overcrowding (12.2%) and lack of good drainage system (0.9%).

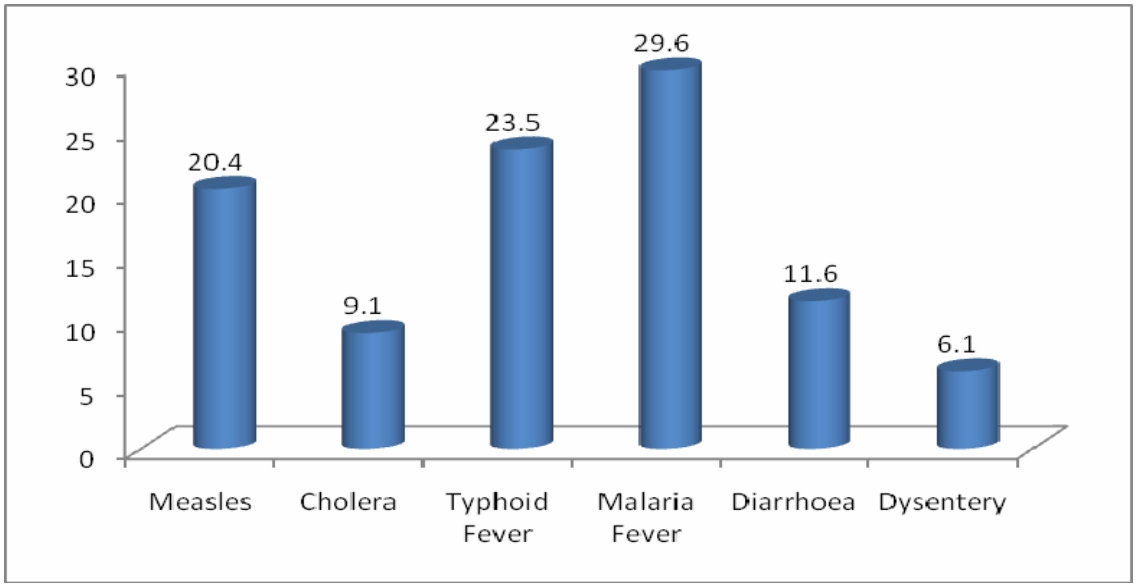

Figure 2: Environmental Related Problems & Diseases experienced in the Study Area
Source: Field Survey, 2009

The multiple linear regression analysis computed to validate the sum effects of poor housing system, inadequate facilities, and low socio-economic attributes of residents to slum formation in the area show a positive significant relationship of 52.3%. It therefore implies that the area is a typical location of slum since it exhibits such features as examined in the study. Equally, the correlation coefficient of R was determined to establish the relationship between poverty level of the people in the area with slum formation. This shows a negative but significant value of -0.583, giving the R^2 value to be 0.34. It simply means that poverty accounts for 34.0% of the factors responsible for slum formation in the area. The negative relationship therefore indicates that as the poverty level increases, so is the financial ability of the residents to maintain their housing units and the environment reduces. Thus, the vulnerability of such area degenerating to slum is very high.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The situation in the core of Akure, as it has been examined in this paper, illustrates the typical housing and environmental problems plaguing most indigenous urban centers in underdeveloped countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The importance of socio-cultural issues therefore suggest that policies and programs formulated for dealing with housing, social and environmental problems in emerging nations can only be effective if they are sensitive to the historical and cultural characteristics of the residents in cities concerned. For example, parts of the study area are ripe enough for redevelopment while upgrading through rehabilitation, renovation and provision of Urban Basic Services (UBS) like water, electricity, roads and other essential facilities can be effected in some other parts. However, there is need for the people to be incorporated and co-opted in the planning process of any renewal policy to be implemented in the area so as to achieve success in its execution. This will enable the needs of the people to be attended to in other of preference. Generally, the residents of the area need sanitary education and adequate enlightenment, which will enable them to know and appreciate the importance of such policies and programs. The area of job provision cannot be neglected as it has the potential to re-orientate the people and revitalize their economic base which will offer them privilege to meet their basic needs. Government should therefore fashion out ways to let the people at the grass-root benefit from the ongoing minimum-wage campaigns and implementations.

However, for regular upkeep of improved sanitation in the area, the re-introduction of old sanitary inspectors with formidable monitoring empowerment tools is strictly recommended as a sustainable strategy for any intending renewal policy to be efficiently implemented and sustained in the area.

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