



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Effect of Migration on Housing Conditions in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Golden, Michael Imeremu

Senior Lecturer, School of Foundation Studies, Bayelsa State College of Health Technology, Ogbia, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Arogo, Nathaniel Idiaridi

Lecturer, School of Foundation Studies, Bayelsa State College of Health Technology, Ogbia, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

March, Mandu

Librarian, School of Foundation Studies, Bayelsa State College of Health Technology, Ogbia, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Abstract:

Port Harcourt city is having serious housing problem. Migration amongst other factors is commonly held responsible for housing congestions in urban centres across the globe. This study takes a look at the incidence of migration into the city, whether it is responsible for the situation in Port Harcourt. The study adopted expos facto survey design. Data was obtained from government records, academic publications, unstructured interview and structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was served 80 estate developers and agents in the city, divided into four convenient zones to which was allocated 20 each, drawn through convenience sampling. Some results are presented in tables while others are presented in essay form and periodized into pre – 1980 and post - 1980. The numerical result is analyzed in simple percentages. The result shows that the housing preference for migrants before 1980 was predominantly the single tenement buildings which were abundantly available, while migrants from 1980 onwards predominantly preferred flats and other upscale property which is also available. The result further showed that while 46.25% of demand for houses is in the single room category, over 61.75% of houses available are in the flats and other upscale categories. Migration has no strong causal link with the housing situation in the city. Rather the disparity between the type of houses in demand and the type of houses provided is more directly responsible for the situation in the city.

Keywords: Migration, housing conditions, estate development, Port Harcourt, Rivers State

1. Introduction

Housing is the most basic need of man alongside food and clothing. It is so central to the existence of man that problems of housing such as insufficiency and inadequacy have continued to interest scholars and policy makers in government. The problem is so profound that specific policy statements and declarations on housing the population of the world are being made by various governments in the world including the United Nations.

However it is to be noted that the problem of housing insufficiency and congestions is spatial specific. It is a problem we see mainly in the urban centres of the world. All cities both in the first and third worlds are experiencing or have at one time or the other experienced very serious housing insufficiencies and inadequacies. This has led to the development of shanty towns around the cities particularly cities in the third world. It is one of the negative consequences of rapid urbanization (Nguyen 2013, Ekpenyong 1992).

Port Harcourt, the capital city of Rivers State Nigeria is having more than a fair share of this problem. The housing problem in Port Harcourt is so serious that some studies have called it a crisis. Okereke (2011) emphasized that the situation in Port Harcourt has reached a very critical level and a lot of people in the city remain unhoused from year to year. Two phenomena have developed out of this situation. The city has rapidly increased in spatial dimension with the result that very large shanty towns have covered the banks of the many constricting creeks bounding the southern end of the city. The other is the intractable phenomenal rise of property rent in the city. On the average annual rent of a three bedroom flat is about $\text{^}1.800.000.00$. It varies slightly from one part of the city to another.

Many studies (Zimmerer 2014, Kumuji 2013, Johan 2012, Okereke 2011, Gimba & Kumshe 2011, Ekpenyong 1992, Berry & Kasarda 1977, Kuper 1965) have linked housing problems in urban centres with the incidence of migration. Kuper (1965) says migration, the patterned movement of people which masses people in primate cities of the world is chiefly responsible for congestions in our cities leading to housing insufficiencies. They say that the mere rapid movement of people into a particular enclave leads to congestions and reduces its capacity to house the people. The 1985 World Bank report on Population Change and Economic Development, and Hove, Ngwerume & Muchemwa (2013) were very categorical that migration accounts for over 75% of urban congestion leading to housing insufficiencies and inadequacies in our urban centres.

We know that migration has a strong empirical link with housing congestions and shortages in urban centres. The effect of migration on housing shortages is always amply demonstrated whenever a city hosts a big cultural, economic or sporting event. For the duration of the event we see how all hotels and every other available accommodation are fully booked, which often lead to great inconveniences in the city and its immediate environment. So if we consider an in-migration of that magnitude on a permanent basis in that enclave, the effect will be tremendous.

As popular as this model is there is another view that says the cause of housing congestion in our cities is not a product of mere migration. It is rather rooted in the character of capitalist production. Haloe (1978), Lamarche (1976), Ginatempo & Cammarote (1978), Mingione (1978), Lojkine (1978) Gugler & Flanagan (n.d.) and Brinded (2016) say housing insufficiency and inadequacy is a product of capitalist production and reflects the class struggle between capital and labour. That is why the poor majority suffer most from housing insufficiencies. Lojkine (1978) was specific that the ruling capitalist class controls the decision making process and therefore decides often to build factories, warehouses and other commercial buildings to meet the requirements of capitalist production.

Brinded (2016) in her empirical study of the housing situation in the United Kingdom concluded that housing shortages exist because estate developers are building more for the wealthy than the poor. That in 2015, only 19% of the houses built were for the low income earners.

They continue that capital by its nature whenever it becomes pervasive in any environment commands all resources in that environment including housing structure for its use in the self-reproduction process. This situation grossly limits resources available for the provision of houses for the poor and others outside the direct exploitative influence of capitalist production.

We need to determine which explanation the Port Harcourt situation reflects. Is it the migration model or the conflict model that can explain the almost-crisis housing situation we have in Port Harcourt. This study takes a look at the incidence of migration into Port Harcourt and places it against the peculiar housing conditions in the city to determine whether migration is really chiefly responsible for the problem.

Port Harcourt was founded in 1913 by the British colonial administrators for strategic economic reasons when they started moving into the hinterland at the turn of the 20th century to secure control over markets and sources of raw materials to serve the industries in Europe. The port was established for the evacuation of primary produce from the east and northeastern parts of the protectorates (Obinna, Owei & Okwakpam 2010). It is an in-migration city which in the 21st century has grown to become the second most important industrial and commercial enclave in Nigeria.

Port Harcourt has been the capital city of Rivers State since 1967 when the state was created. It has two seaports and an international airport, a large manufacturing sector and is the nerve centre of all oil and gas exploration, exploitation, export and downstream operations in Nigeria. This multi-faceted status has attracted a large number of migrants into the city who service the very large formal and informal sectors (Okereke 2011, Obinna, Owei & Okwakpam 2010). The National Population Commission estimated population of Port Harcourt city for 2012 is 2,000,000 with a growth rate of 5.8% (Cookey-Gam 2010).

2. Materials and Methods

This study adopted an *expos facto* research design. Primary and secondary sets of data were used in this study. The primary source is a structured 5 point scale ordinal questionnaire based on inclusive criteria served on property developers and property agents in Port Harcourt metropolis. It was intended to collect information on the demand and supply structure of the property market in the city from at least 1980 to present day. A sample of 80 property developers and agents was purposively determined, and were served the questionnaire on face to face basis. Stratified sampling technique was used to distribute the sample into various layouts of the city.

Maintown and Borokiri Layouts 20

Diobu, Rumueme, Rumuokwuta, Rumuigbo Layouts 20

Elekohia, Rumuomasi, Rumuola, Aba Road Layouts 20

D/Line, GRA, Ogbunabali Layout 20

The grouping of the layouts does not pertain to similar characteristics in social segmentation of residents, but rather a recognition of spatial nearness.

Convenience sampling technique was used to obtain the sample in each layout. The secondary data was obtained from published academic studies and government records. These sources were augmented by personal observations and interviews. Some of the results are presented in tables while others are in essay form, and analyzed in simple percentages. The presentation of some parts of the results has been periodized into pre-1980 and post-1980 for clarity of analysis and understanding.

3. Results

3.1. Housing Conditions in Port Harcourt Pre-1980

Port Harcourt immediately after the civil war in 1970 was a relatively small city. It was bounded by the D/Line residential area to the north, the Borokiri layout to the south, the Old GRA to the east and the Diobu residential layout to the west, with the Aba Road commercial axis and the Old Township as the core. Apart from the GRA, D/Line and Amadi Flats, the common property style in the city was the single room tenements. Up to 1972, many of these buildings were still empty particularly in the Old Township and Borokiri layouts, and till about 1979 the government was collecting rent on them. Flats, duplexes and bungalows were not common sights outside those three layouts.

Tenants dealt directly with landlords. Prospective tenants were interviewed directly by the landlord who also collected the rent with very minimal documentation. Over 95% of the spaces in the neighbourhood were occupied by families for residential purposes. Stores and commercial houses within the property were almost absent. Erected wooden kiosk effectively took care of those needs. Houses were cheap in the city. As late as 1978, monthly rent per room was as low as $\text{^}4.50\text{k}$. Payment of rent was not strictly enforced, particularly in the buildings under the control of the government. Demand for one or two years rent by landlords was completely absent. Tenants pack into a building and start to pay the rent monthly as and when due for as long as they live there.

Being ordered to pack out by a landlord on any ground or changing of residence even wilfully was not common. Families live in the same neighbourhood for years and relate with each other as if they are relatives. Ekpenyong (1989) referred to the Federal Office of Statistics housing survey report of 1971 and stated that over 56% of the residents in Port Harcourt lived in these single room tenement buildings. Shanty towns were very few and small in size. They functioned primarily as ports for communication with some principal towns in River State.

3.2. Housing Conditions in Port Harcourt Post-1980

From the early 1980s the housing situation in the city changed and acute housing shortages became a noted phenomenon. Land and house speculation became common and property agents began to regulate the whole relationship between landlord and tenant. Estate agencies of various types and sizes, registered and unregistered, run by professionals and amateurs of various backgrounds, some operating from residential rooms sprang up to get a slice of the fast-rising lucrative housing market.

Today leasing and renting of property and even collection of rent in some cases is now handled by estate agents and legal firms, with increasing documentation and cost borne by the tenant. No estate agent's commission is below 10% of the value of the deal including a non-refundable registration fee of $\text{^}2000$. Presently rent in Port Harcourt has gone out of control. The monthly rent of a room without basic facilities has hit the $\text{^}5.000.00$ mark. A room has to be grossly inadequate for the rent to be below $\text{^}5000.00$. Compulsory advance payment of up to two years rent has become the normal thing.

Landlords no longer build single room tenements. They now build semi-detached apartments, block of flats, bungalows, duplexes and commercial structures. They have seen that return on investment on these types of property is considerably higher. They have been sensitized into the enormous profit in the real estate business by speculators. These new style of property springing up in every street in the city is targeting those reaping enormous wealth from the modern formal sector of the economy. Because of this desire landlords of residential buildings have resorted to quitting tenants on any slight disagreement. These buildings the moment they become vacant are either renovated for commercial use or are pulled down completely and are replaced by high rise structures that only big commercial houses can rent.

These changes are taking place in all parts of the city where commercial life has taken hold and expanded its grip. Even originally pure residential layouts like the new GRA, D/Line, Borokiri, the Old Township, Diobu and Elekohia have not been spared. All layouts in the city are now functioning like commercial districts like the Aba Road axis and the Trans Amadi district. But observation shows that some of these commercial buildings remain untenanted for a considerable length of time with the "TO LET" sign hanging on them in various parts of the city. The frequent quit notices given to residential tenants and the high rents have made some families to find themselves in the burgeoning shanty towns around the city. The banks of all the creeks around the city have become large residential areas. The phenomenal growth of these shanty towns began in the early 1980s.

3.3. Migration into Port Harcourt 1913 –1960

From the founding of the city by the colonial officers till date people have constantly migrated into the city. This period from founding year to independence is the first phase of migration into Port Harcourt. Apart from the colonial officials including the white officers, the black administrative assistants, civil servants and ancillary staff made up of cooks, gardeners, messengers etc. those who came are mainly ex slaves from sister British colonies of Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia. Others are missionaries, Yoruba, Ibo Urhobo and Hausa traders drawn mainly from the Southern Protectorate (Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia).

They are all adults most of which was already married. Many particularly those having direct contact with the colonial structure had little to moderate education provided by the missionary schools (Ehrensaft 1977). Apart from the missionaries the rest had purely economic reasons for migrating into Port Harcourt.

3.4. Migration into Port Harcourt 1961 – 1980

This period marks the second phase of the wave of migration into Port Harcourt. The migration intensified around the 1970s as the Nigerian civil war ended. Most of the migrants came from the hinterland of the old Rivers State. The civil war had displaced many families and destroyed many homelands and sources of livelihood in many places, so they set out looking for enclaves with promising opportunities. Port Harcourt the new state capital was the nearest. Dolbe (1995) and FOS (1989) stated that 70.9% of migrants into Port Harcourt within this period came from the rural areas within the state. The dangers and the atmosphere of general insecurity the civil war visited on the eastern region had not completely left the minds of the people, so they were yet to venture far from their places of origin.

A particular character of the migrants of this period is that migrants from the riverine areas of the state were more permanently settled down with their families in Port Harcourt than those from the upland hinterland. A good percentage of the migrants from the upland hinterland particularly from the Obio/Akpo area of Ikwerre Land were coming to work in the city from their villages. Easier transport conditions and shorter distances in the upland areas we believe accounted for that situation.

These migrants from the hinterland were of the 30 – 50 years bracket, and over 60% were already married with children. They had little or no education. Many had not even attended primary school. Their occupations back at home attest that they were not educated. The Federal Office of Statistics report of 1989 was very specific. It says only 4.7% of migrants into Port Harcourt in that period had attended secondary school.

As they arrived, they went for jobs in the informal service sector and trading where their lack of modern skills occasioned by low level of education was not an inhibiting factor. Less than 10% entered the civil service and the then small formal sector on low income grade positions such as security guards, messengers, drivers and clerks. Some of them end up as bricklayers, carpenters, transporters on bicycles (carrying people on bicycles as means of transportation was common in the city in that period), waterside job men and touts. Some still did occasional fishing in the numerous creeks around the city to supplement their income. On arrival many stayed with relatives briefly before getting their own accommodation more often close to their place of work or business. These are the single room tenement buildings there were common in Port Harcourt metropolis.

3.5. Migration into Port Harcourt 1981 – To Date

Some economic processes matured in the early 1980s in Nigeria which led to changes in the character of migrants into Port Harcourt from the 1980s. By this period the oil and gas industry, the largest economic subsector in Nigeria had expanded enormously. Apart from Shell Petroleum Development Company, Nigerian Agip Oil Company, Elf Petroleum Limited, Mobil Producing Nigeria Limited, Chevron Nigeria Limited, Texaco Overseas Petroleum of Nigeria, tens of indigenous oil prospecting and marketing firms and scores of oil field operations supporting companies have either joined or increased their presence in the lucrative oil business. The recent local content initiative of the Nigerian Government has also added more players to the industry.

The city of Port Harcourt has been the centre of this multi-billion dollar subsector. It is the headquarters of field operations of many oil companies and also the administrative headquarters for some. Port Harcourt has always had a comparatively strong industrial presence. The large Trans Amadi Industrial Layout attests to that. But by the 1980s, many more manufacturing and commercial companies have established in the city. Apart from the Trans Amadi Industrial Layout which is very congested now with high technology manufacturing companies, there are few other industrial enclaves around the city manufacturing various goods. The Federal Ocean Terminal established later at Onne, added to the old port has also become a hub for shipping and business. Here could also be added the many banks and commercial houses providing services in the city.

The educational sector too has experienced tremendous growth. We now have three universities and many diploma and higher certificate awarding professional institutions. All these have combined to create a sector of modern skills with many jobs and business opportunities, needing the young, the strong, the educated and the motivated. By the early 1980s the Nigerian civil war had been over for more than ten years, and from that period till now the nation and the economy have been fairly stable which has given the young and the like the confidence to venture afar for job and business opportunities.

So this time the migrants came from far and near within the Nigerian federation and beyond, in response to the labour needs of the city. They are mainly young adults still within the 25 – 45 years bracket of both sexes. Majority of them are single, energetic and highly motivated. They have been to school. A considerable portion of them have been to university, and on arrival are targeting high income jobs in the bustling formal sector for which their education has prepared them, though many are still absorbed by the large informal sector.

The types of house they prefer are mostly within the high scale of the property market; the flats and to a less degree bungalows and duplexes. These houses match the new status their education and new income have given to them. The high incomes they earn always enable them to make effective demand despite the fact that many consider the rents very exorbitant.

However we must note that though the lines between these migration phases are marked, they are not very rigid. Some of the characteristics spread across all the phases both in migration and housing conditions. In every given phase there is a portion of the others present. A particular phase does not mean complete absence of the characteristics of the other phases. It is only a capture of the very dominant and widespread characteristics.

3.6. Result of Estate Agents and Developers

S/No	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Age		
	26 – 30	25	31.25
	31 – 35	29	36.25
	36 – 40	18	22.50
	41 – 45	8	10.00
	46 – 50	-	-
	50 ⁺	-	-
	Total	80	100%
2.	Area of City		
	Maintown And Borokiri	20	25.00
	Diobu, Rumueme, Rumuokwuta, Rumuigbo	20	25.00
	Elekohia, Rumuomasi, Rumuola, Aba Road	20	25.00
	D/Line, Gra, Ogbunabali	20	25.00
	Total	80	100%
3.	How Long Have You Been in This Business		
	1 – 5 Years	30	37.50
	6 – 10 “	35	43.75
	11 – 15 “	10	12.50
	16 – 20 “	5	6.25
	21 ⁺ “	-	-
	Total	80	100%

Table 1: Presentation of Demographic Information

Table 1 shows that the age bracket 31 – 35 recorded the highest response with 36.25%, followed by age bracket 26 – 30 with 31.25%. Age brackets 36 – 40 and 41 – 45 recorded 22.50% and 10.00% respectively. Age brackets 46 – 50 and 50⁺ did not reflect in the sample. The distribution reflects the normal active age structure in a country. All the city four layout groups reflected in the sample with 20 estate agents and developers each. On how long they have been in business, out of the 80 respondents year bracket 1 – 5 had 30, 6 – 10 had 35, 11 – 15 had 10 and 16 – 20 had 5. The year bracket 21⁺ did not reflect in the sample. The distribution shows fairly experienced estate professionals.

S/N	Items	Single Rooms	Self Contained	Flats	Bungalow	Duplex	Total
1.	Types of Houses Most Available	(%)	32 (40%)	42 (52.50%)	2(2.5%)	4 (5.0%)	80 (100%)
2.	Types of Houses In Highest Demand	37 (46.25%)	32 (40%)	5 (6.25%)	2 (2.5%)	4 (5.0%)	80 (100%)
3.	Current Average Rents	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)

Table 2: Presentation of Variables on Housing

Table 2 shows the estate market structure of the city of Port Harcourt. This is broken down into types of houses most available and types of houses in high demand. While single room category does not appear under houses most available, it comes out with the highest value in houses in high demand. Self-contained, bungalow and duplex categories squared out in houses most available and houses in high demand. Flats category shows a high value of 42 under houses most available, but scored only 5 in houses in high demand.

Variables	Single Room	Self Contained	Flats	Bungalow	Duplex	Total
MAINTOWN/BOROKIRI						
Houses Most Available		12	11			21
Houses In High Demand	19	3				22
DIOBU, RUMUEME etc.						
Houses Most Available		14	9			23
Houses In High Demand	18	5				23
ELEKOHIA, RUMUOMASI etc.						
Houses Most Available		3	17			20
Houses In High Demand		15	1			16
D/LINE, GRA, OGBUNABALI						
Houses Most Available			7	4	5	16
Houses In High Demand		9	4	2	4	19

Table 3: Layout By Layout Analysis of Variables on Housing

Table 3 gives us more information by showing the layout by layout and category by category distribution of houses most available and houses with highest demand in Port Harcourt. It shows highest concentration around single rooms, self-contained and flats, showing that more business is transacted in those categories than the others.

4. Discussion

A careful look at the result shows that the incidence of migrants into Port Harcourt has limited causal link with the acute housing shortages in the city. We noted that before the early 1980s there were no acute housing shortages in the city. Up to late 1970s there were still open empty tenement rooms in the city particularly in the Old Township, Borokiri and parts of Diobu layouts. In this same period the type of migrants that came into Port Harcourt preferred these commonly available types of houses except the negligible few who entered the civil service at senior service level. But from the 1980s to present day the migrants predominantly prefer flats and to a lesser degree the bungalows and the duplexes. It is noted that in this period estate developers are building more and more of flats. So it is expected that demand and supply of houses should square out as it did in the pre-1980 era. We rather have serious housing shortages.

The source of the problem lies in the disparity between supply and demand for houses in the city from the early 1980s to the present time. Table 2 shows that demand and supply balanced out under the self-contained (a flat with less facilities) category. But in the single room and flats categories there is great disparity between supply and demand. While more and more people are looking for singles rooms, estate developers are building more of flats, far outstripping the demand made by the new set of migrants. This is in response to the high returns from speculation at the upscale end of the housing market. Landlords and their agents are always ready to attest that there is more money and fewer problems in building flats for renting than singles rooms. They believe that it is a waste of land to use it to build single rooms when flats could be built on it with higher returns in the market.

From table 3, it is clear that no landlord is building single rooms in any part of the city, when over 46% of aggregate demand for houses in the city is in this category. Meanwhile over 52% of houses being built is in the flats category, the aggregate demand for this type amounted to only 5%. It is clear that migrants into Port Harcourt from the 1980s have the characteristics of those who prefer and could afford the flats type of houses, level of effective demand has fallen very short of expectation. Yet the landlords go on in their building frenzy. The result is the uncommon side by side existence of many "TO LET" sign around the city on flats and blocks of offices and acute housing shortages.

The high demand for single rooms in the Maintown/Borokiri and Diobu layouts is consistent with the class character of the residential pattern of the city. These are traditionally low income residential areas. Yet the high values for houses most available today in these layouts under the flats and self-contained categories shows how greatly landlords have demolished the tenement buildings and replaced them with flats and office blocks in pursuit of high profits.

These buildings are now very common sight even in traditionally residential streets like Victoria, Bende, Bonny, Lagos, Accra, Freetown, Takoradi, Hospital, Bernard Carr, Niger, King Jaja, Bishop Johnson, Ibadan, Moore-House and Enugu in the heart of the old city. When these demolitions take place many families are displaced because the flats replacing them could house only very limited number even where they could afford the new rent. Many families inevitably find their way into the demeaning and very inadequate houses in the shanty towns around the city. The situation is replicated even in the Elekohia/Rumuomasi/Rumuola/Aba Road layouts.

On the other hand we can see that real housing shortages in the city correlated with the third wave of migrants called forth by the heavy presence of investment capital particularly in the oil and gas sector, which in turn fostered capitalist characteristics on the city. The predominance of these characteristics changed the demand and supply structure of the housing market. Landlords saw the enormous profit to be made from the upscale end of the market, and concentrated their resources in the provision of the type of property that capital needs such as the warehouses, office blocks, flats and bungalows. This means they are now providing more for the satisfaction of the needs of capital and its cohorts than the general population more of whom are of the low income earning group. The "TO LET" sign on many of such buildings around the city reflects the land speculation character of the housing market and the attendant over-production that characterizes capitalist production in many spheres. The notable net in-migration is a product of the accumulation of venture capital in the enclave maturing in the early 1980s. This is the position of Brinded (2016), Haloe (1978), Lamarche (1976), Ginatempo & Cammarote (1978), Mingione (1978), Lojkine (1978) Gugler & Flanagan (n.d).

5. Conclusion

This study has shown that migration which is commonly held responsible for acute housing shortages in urban centres does not have a strong direct causal link with the housing condition in Port Harcourt. Other conditions such as the penchant for landlords in the city to build without reference to the demand structure of the housing market have led to this situation.

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