

THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF POPULATION GROWTH ON HOUSING IN ASABA IN 2014

Faith J. Sajini

Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State

Abstract

The Human Population being a dynamic variable changes in size and composition from time to time. Population growth is a major underlying factor for the demand of housing and other resources. This paper examined the perceived impact of population growth on housing in Asaba in 2014. The major findings are that indeed, there is housing problem in Asaba and that the nature of the housing problem is that of quantitative and qualitative deficiency. That the manifestations of the said housing problem are found in; high rent, scarcity of quality houses, overcrowding and people living far from work place. In addition, the correlation analysis carried out shows that the r calculated value of 0.446 is greater than the r critical table value of 0.2072 at 0.05 significant level ($df; N - 2 = 91$), therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that, as population grows in Asaba, housing problems if not checked will also be increasing. To determine the percentage of relationship, the coefficient of determination is ascertained ($1 - r^2 \times 100; 1 - 0.1989 \times 100 = 80.11$) which gives us 80.11% of the influence of population growth on housing problems in Asaba. More public and private participation in housing provision is recommended.

Key words: Population, Growth, Impact, Housing, Problem.

Introduction

The term population has been defined as the total number of people resident in a given geographical location at a particular time. It has also been defined as a group of people whose exact number and composition changes from time to time. In other words, population as a dynamic variable changes in size and quality overtime (Onokerhoraye 1993; Olomo and Sajini 2011). Increasing population places a serious demand on the available facility. In the actual sense, if the rate at which facilities required are provided does not keep pace with the rate at which the population is growing, there is bound to be a problem of deficit in the needed resources. In different parts of the world, the “explosive growth” of the human population in the past few decades has been accompanied by a relatively slow rate of increase in housing thus leading to housing problems.

Housing is one of the three basic needs of man. Onokerhoraye (1984) lends credence to the above assertion when he posited that housing represents the most basic of human needs and has a profound impact on the health, welfare and productivity of individuals. One of the goals of our national population policy for sustainable development is the achievement of a balance

between the rate of population growth, available resources, and the social and economic development of the country. To underscore the importance of housing in Nigeria, Chapter II of 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which deals with Fundamental objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy provides as follows:

“The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring...that suitable and adequate shelter...are provided for all citizens” (Section 16 (2) (d)). Although the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted a National Housing policy that stated that every Nigerian should have access to adequate shelter as a right, yet, this is not the reality in the country. Demographic factors, cultural factors, social factors, economic factors, political factors as well as construction industry all act either independently or in interaction with one another to induce housing problems. For instance demographic factor can shoot up housing need while cultural and socio-economic factors can limit housing delivery and the construction industry together with political factor can structure the choice of housing policy (Ikelegbe 2000).

Rapid urbanization are possible contributory factor to housing problems experienced by nations. The urbanization process in question is triggered off by migration caused by socio-economic prosperity of receiving regions (Aribigbola 2011). In addition to urbanization process, Stressman (1982) identified disasters as another causative factor of housing problem. He noted that after disasters such as typhoon or earthquakes, tents are usually among the goods that are sent in as emergency relieve. Housing problem can also emanate from the economic prosperity of towns relative to the rural areas, as well as from state creation. For instant, Olawepo (2009) recognized the housing problem in Lokoja to have emanated from the moment Lokoja was made the capital of the newly created kogi state in 1991. In Nigeria, generally, the high rural-urban migration leading to urbanization is one of the major cause of housing problems in the country.

In urban areas, the major housing problems are severe shortages of housing, overcrowding and the spread of slums and shantytowns (Uwejeya 2012). In the rural areas, most houses are poorly constructed, insecure and deficient in basic amenities such as potable water and electricity (Umebali and Akpekpe 2000). The rapid rate of growth of both the urban and rural populations and inadequate funding has made it extremely difficult to provide sufficient housing for the ever-increasing population. From the foregoing it is obvious that increase in human population obviously increases the demand for more housing unit.

By a way of stating the research problem, it is no gain saying to state that housing problem exist in every society in spite of various efforts at solving them. According to Freeman (2002) and Kotkin (2013), the nature of housing problem in the United States has shifted from shortages to problems of quality, affordability and inability of certain groups in the population to obtain decent housing. The number of poor renters is growing, but the supply of new affordable housing has dropped over the past year

In Britain, the problem is not just that of allocation, but that average home now costs eight times the average wage, and social housing is withering away (Thornberry 2014). There is rising demands for home ownership and reasons for rising demand include improved life expectancy rates and a growing number of one-person households. The state housing provision in the advanced countries can be characterized by the weakness of efficiency, bureaucratization, poor maintenance and quality (Kotkin 2013; Thornberry 2014).

In the developing countries, the housing condition is characterized by low stock and consequent inadequacy, scarcity, high and unaffordable costs, low quality, overcrowding and squalor (Ikelegbe, 2000; Segbawu 2014). In Nigeria, housing problem usually take the form of housing shortage, overcrowding, high rent, slums and squatter settlements, worsening infrastructures, poor sanitary condition and blighted environment (Onokerhoraye, 1984).

Since Asaba became the capital of Delta State on the 27th of August 1991, the town has been experiencing influx of people due to in-migration of civil servants from the defunct Bendel State, periodic mass employment of fresh civil servants by the Delta State Government and influx of job seekers from different parts of the state. These migration process led to increase in the existing population and it induced demand for more housing units to accommodate the migrants. However the fact that many of the migrants could not secure accommodation immediately signifies that the rate at which new houses are been built has not kept pace with the rate at which the population has been growing thereby presenting an obvious housing problem in Asaba. It is based upon this premise that this paper aimed at examining the perceived impact of population growth on Housing in Asaba in 2014. The specific objectives set out to achieve this aim includes; to identify the causes of population growth in Asaba, to ascertain whether there is housing problem in Asaba, to identify the nature of housing problem in Asaba and to make relevant recommendation based on the research findings. In this research articles, it is also hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between population growth and the housing problem in Asaba.

With regard to the methodology of the study, the required data for the research article was drawn from both the primary and the secondary sources. The primary sources include the use of questionnaire while the secondary sources were obtained from textbooks, journal articles, internet sources and government official documents. The study area was stratified into six zones and undergraduate students on field work in 2014 served as research assistants in administering questionnaires in these zones. A total of 100 questionnaires were administered and 93 were retrieved. The analyzed data were presented in simple percentage tables and charts were used to depict some other information gathered. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between population growth and the housing problem in Asaba was tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation coefficient

Conceptual Framework

It is necessary to briefly examine the concept of housing as it relates to the topic under investigation. Just as human requirement has been changing over the years, so also the perception of housing has been changing. In the past, housing was looked upon basically as a material phenomenon, which offers people protection against uncontrollable elements and other forms of incursion. In recent years, the conception of housing has changed remarkably. Apart from the protection it offers, housing is viewed in its wider-socio-economic context. According to Onokerhoraye (1984), housing is more than merely a dwelling unit, but a combination of services, indoor living space, land, utilities, locational situations, outdoor living space and relationship to neighbors, family members and friends. Housing presents a physical symbols of one's position in the social structures. In other words it is one of the most accurate indices of one's socio-economic status.

From the perspective of the World Health Organization, a good housing is a physical structure that man uses for shelter and the environs of that structure include all necessary services, facilities, equipment and devices needed or desired, for the physical and social well-being of the family and individual. To further strengthen its position on the appropriate concept of housing, the organization further advocated for International guidance on "healthy housing" to be developed to help prevent a wide range of diseases and unintentional injuries which can emanate from poor housing quality (WHO 2010). Housing may serve as a workplace for many families, it can be used for recreational activities, it can generate income and it can provide storage space for man's valuable assets. Accordingly, housing is viewed as a focus of economic activity, as a symbol of achievement and social acceptance and as an element of income distribution. Thus its absence or inadequacy present an obvious societal problem. Yet despite the critical social and economic role that housing plays, it has tended not to have the same political profile as, say, health and education. This notwithstanding, the need to increase the supply of housing and tackle affordability issues is a key housing policy issue.

Discussion of Findings

The research article made several findings. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed and 93 were successfully retrieved. Starting from the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the age distribution shows that 25% of the total respondents are between ages 15-24, 33% are between ages 25-34 while another 25% are between ages 35-44. Furthermore, 8% of the total respondents are between ages 45-54 while 3% are between ages 55-64 and 6% are 65 years and above. The age structure with about 94% within the economically active age group portrays Asaba as ideal urban centres with high concentration of people of working age group engaged in one form of productive activity or the other. The sex distribution of the respondents shows that 68% are males while 32% are females. The sex distribution also shows that there is high sex ratio among the Asaba dwellers. This is attributable to the age and sex selective nature of the migration process that brought the people to Asaba.

As per the occupational structure of the respondents, out of the 93 responses on occupation, 2% are farmers, 19% are civil servants, 14% are students of various categories, 52% are business men and women of various scales, 10% are artisans doing their own handworks having learnt different crafts and 3% are company workers. The large percentage of civil servant recorded among the respondents (19%) is an indication that Asaba is a civil servant town. While the larger percentage of people in business (58%) is as a result of the need to offer various services to the large population in the study area. It can also be attributed to closeness to the largest market in West Africa i.e. Onitsha market. In other words, it is a trickle-down effect of what goes in Onitsha.

The research also established the fact that from the respondents perception, there is the existence of housing problem in Asaba as about 66 respondents (representing 71% of the total responses) signed in favour of the 'yes' option to the question posed as to whether housing problem really exists in Asaba (see Fig.1 below).

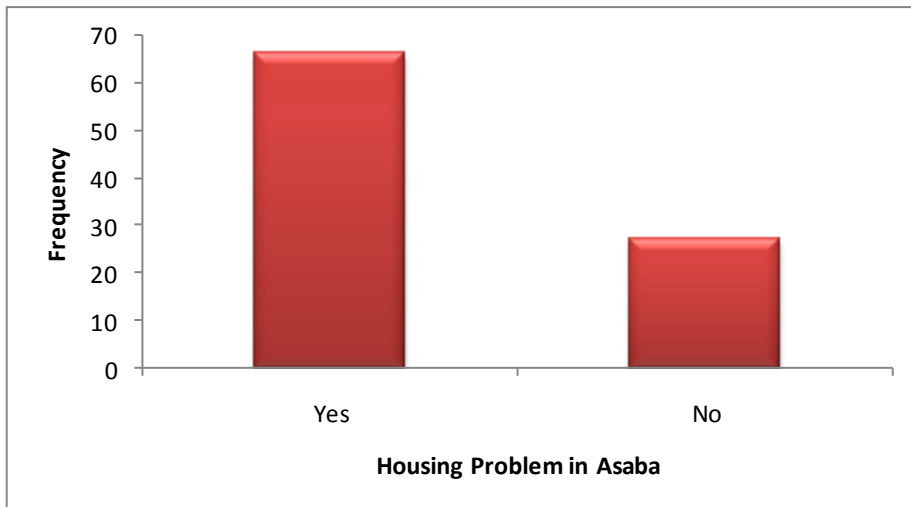


Figure 1: Showing responses on Housing Problems

Furthermore, the research also shows that there is qualitative deficiency as the houses with all the required in-house and out-doors facilities are those with very high rent which is not within the reach of an average income earner. Additionally, the research also found that there is quantitative deficiency in housing provision as many of the migrants especially the civil servants had to pick up residence in the surrounding towns and villages outside the main Asaba towns due to insufficiency of dwelling units in Asaba to accommodate the rising population. The expressions of housing problem in Asaba features primarily as high rent (58%). This finding corroborates the one made by Champion (1989) in which he concluded that there is a geographical relationship between the processes operating in the housing and labour market, with the two markets operating partially to reinforce one another. He noted that those areas with employment growth in West Jutland were also the area of high rate of house price increase. Other features of housing problems as indicated by this empirical research include overcrowding in a house (9%), living far from work place (31%) and scarcity of quality houses (2%) (see Table 1 below)

Table 1: Nature of Housing Problems in Asaba

Items	Frequency	Percentage
High rent	54	58
Scarcity of quality houses	2	2
Overcrowding in a house	8	9
Living far from work place	29	31
Total	93	100

Source: Field survey 2014

Test of Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between population growth and housing problems in Asaba

The positive responses from questionnaire items on population increase and perceived housing problems in Asaba was used to test this hypothesis using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.

Table 2: Correlation

	Population Growth in	
	Asaba	Housing Problem in Asaba
Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	0.446
N	93	93
Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	0.446	1
N	93	93

Source: Field survey 2014

From the above table, r calculated value is 0.446. In correlation analysis, an r value of 0.4 is scientifically significant. Therefore the r calculated value 0.446 which is greater than the r critical table value of 0.2072 at 0.05 significant level ($df; N - 2 = 91$) implies that the null hypothesis earlier stated is rejected and an alternative is adopted indicating that there is a significant relationship between population growth and housing problems in Asaba. This means that, as population grows in Asaba, housing problems if not checked will continue to increase. To determine the percentage of relationship, the coefficient of determination is ascertained ($1 - r^2 \times 100$; $1 - 0.1989 \times 100 = 80.11$) which gives us 80.11% of influence of population growth on housing problems in Asaba town.

Recommendation

Since the population growth in most urban centres Asaba inclusive is basically due to social factor of migration, it is recommended that:

- There should be rural development planning which will serve as panacea to rural-urban migration which has been fuelling population increase in the study area.
- Both the private and public sector should be involved in housing provisions .
- There should be direct housing provision especially for the Civil servants majority of whom are migrants.
- Public housing should be built and sold to migrants who may be low, middle or high income earners at a highly subsidized rate. The Government should evolve a justifiable means of allocation as past experiences have shown that housing units designated for the low-income classes never get to them.
- Finally, mortgage facility should be made available to encourage private participation in housing provision

Conclusion

Having established the fact that there is a strong statistical association between Population growth and housing problems in Asaba via this empirical research, it is safe to conclude that both public and private participation are needed in the enhancement of the available housing stock in terms of quality and quantity so as to alleviate the suffering of the people and aid the achievement of the goals of our National Housing Policy that stated that every Nigerian should have access to adequate shelter as a right as well as the achievement of the goals of our National Population Policy for sustainable development which aims at the attainment of a balance between the rate of population growth, available resources and socio-economic development.

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