



Comparative Analysis of Urban Neighbourhood Relations in Port Harcourt Residential Neighbourhoods

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Abstract: *The anthropological community has traditionally been viewed as a relative society with degrees of interaction. However, this neighbourhood relation is declining due to increasing independence. This paper assesses urban neighbourhood relations in three different settlements of Port Harcourt. These are low, medium and high density neighbourhood settlements. Parameters such as security, festivals and ceremonies, offering of gifts and welfare as well as children interactions were considered. Findings revealed individualistic approach among high income neighbourhoods while communal system of addressing issues, expression of concern and trust is high in the low income neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood relations and communal living were basis in the traditional Africa settlement and still needs encouragement.*

Keywords: *Heavy Metals, Bullet, Soil, Carcinogenic, Boko Haram, pollution*

Introduction

The present day urban society is characterized by rapid change of life-style and approaches due to highly dominating secondary groups on the traditional settlers. This settlement is influenced by physical, psychological, economic and social changes. The dynamic impacts on residential neighbourhoods form the goal of this paper.

Historically, neighbourhood originated from the early time of human settlement. Thus, bands of people began to settle and live at close proximity to one another. Nearness to one another in term of human settlement forms neighbourhood.

There are different approaches to the concept of neighbourhood.

Thus, researchers of different academic disciplines have attempted to define neighbourhood base on available parameters. Some define neighbourhood in line with physical space, especially walking distance and spatial coverage, others view neighbourhood subject to population size and social interaction. Morris and Hess (2015) portray that the homeliest test for neighbourhood would include the fact that a person can easily walk it boundaries, it is not so large going from one side to another. Neighbourhood is also viewed from the perception of family size which is an element of human population. According to Judith

(2015), micro neighbourhood in one composed of three families. These families accordingly involve the respondents and those of his two closest neighbours. The composition of three family size is ideologically accepted as parametric standard for micro neighbourhood. Shiron (2008) termed it as nuclear neighbourhood with the minimum composition of three families.

There have been variations of family size in the determination of neighbourhood size. According to Caplow and Forman (2000), the term neighbourhood comprising ten accessible family dwellings.

However, identified number of persons within social proximity in a specific settlement is largely ascertained as standard of measurement in the assessment of neighbourhood definition. Warren and Warren (2009) maintain that assessing the number of first names a person can recall determine the size of social neighbourhood. This accordingly corresponds roughly to the anthropological basis of village size (a population is numbering approximately 500 families).

The population of 500 families corresponds to an elementary school size which is generally used in the determination of neighbourhood size in physical planning profession. This assessment views urban neighbourhood in relation to number of children enrolment and capable of population maintenance of elementary school (Warren and warren, 2009). Accordingly, the population of pupils for urban elementary school should be basis for urban neighbourhood with the entire population hovering between 2,500 and 5,000 persons. Other researchers used a larger size of population but still centre on the servicing size of elementary school. The physical planning profession generally accept neighbourhood as the unit of residential area and the smallest planning unit with confined population, space and facilities. These parameters may range from 5,000 – 20,000; spatial diameter of 1 mile and with centralized primary school and recreation ground still at the centre of the neighbourhood. These facilities serve as meeting points for both children and adult members of the neighbourhood.

Thus neighbourhood is viewed as an essential component of an urban area with a population that can generate enough children for a primary school. This size is determined by primary school, social services and landmass. However, according to Umunakwe (2004), the population range is placed between 1,500 and 60,000 which is classified into small, moderate and mega urban neighbourhoods.

The neighbourhood is still described as an ideal-sized elementary school district area, bounded by major thorough fares rather than intersected by them, and within a convenient walking distance of an elementary school building which is situated upon a common green (park and playground) as community centre and social point of neighbourhood activity (Goodman and Freund, 2001). The neighbourhood therefore becomes a systematic arrangement of houses of different types with central facilities aiming to bring people together to partake in recreational activities and discuss issues pertaining their welfare and environment such activities are carried out within the playground or elementary school which is located at the centre of the neighbourhood.

In the traditional African society, neighbourhood can be viewed from the urban and rural perspectives. The urban neighbourhood disclosed a sector defined by boundaries with social and economic segregation. According to Ohachenu (2001) while defining neighbourhood as the most intimate physical and economic space reveal that in Nigeria's urban centres, the most feature of neighbourhood arrangement is the physical separation of the rich and poor

households. This stated arrangement is almost the reverse of the rural neighbourhood settings where there is no physical separation and all activities are shared in common. Therefore, the neighbourhoods become settlements where facilities and services are commonly shared (Oluwasami, 1997).

Neighbourhood Relations

The traditional neighbourhood becomes a place of physical proximity and social interaction. Community pattern of living has been a major factor which has been found in most African settlements. This pattern assisted in the expression of concern for one another and the collective training of younger generations in accordance to the societal norms. However, urbanization has appeared to break the traditional African pattern of communal concern and springing up the operation of individualism. According to Rejula (2016), in the change from traditional to modern societies, modern societies are highly differentiated and individualistic. Neighbourhoods' relations are important in traditional societies where there are few ties outside their localities. Boyce (2006) reveals that mutual help between neighbours were common and often needed. When societies become modernized people are much less under the control of their local community. Thus, in the safety network, they need less neighbourliness. It appears that in the present day societies, neighbourhood relations are no more important. According to Boyce (2006), we have interaction in metropolitan settings that is characterized as intellectual rather than emotional, anonymous and strictly role governed.

A metropolitan community neighbourliness has necessarily a rather limited role. Modern urban environment tends to encourage a privatised way of life and undermines any attempt to create neighbouring communities (Fischer, 1992) Boyce (2006) pointed out that interaction in urban public space is characterized by polite indifference. According to Elster (2007), neighbour relations to each other were characterized by negative solidarity. Thus, urban societies were entering into an era of hyper individualism.

This study is designed to investigate into the dynamic neighbourhood relations in Port Harcourt the capital of Rivers State and the headquarter of the oil rich Niger Delta of Nigeria. The city is rapidly undergoing urbanization sequel to its complex functions and location in the economy of Nigeria. Rapid population increase and spatial expansion have become part of the metropolitan city's structures. These in relation to rapid urbanization, residential patterns are shifted from the traditional African neighbourhood pattern of joint family structure to nuclear family composition. This shift has created rapid change in the residential pattern as well as neighbouring relations. Relation between neighbours is one of the informal relations which are parts of daily life in most African settlements especially in Port Harcourt metropolitan city. However, the change in the residential structure of the neighbourhood relations appears highly pronounced and tends to affect communal life style of the people. This study therefore intends to investigate such changes.

Methodology

This study considers three different residential neighbourhoods with the basic objective of assessing degree of neighbourhood relations. The areas are the New Government Residential Area which is regarded as high income area; Mile I Diobu area an urban high density settlement habited by low income earners, market traders and low class civil servants in

manufacturing industries. The third case study is Akpajo – Eleme traditional settlement that is currently experiencing gradual urbanization. Households were randomly selected from each of the case studies. The study focused on level of relationship in terms of security, neighbourhood meetings, children interactions and aids.

Case Studies

Case 1: New GRA – High Income Level

the New Government Residential Area of Port Harcourt is a settlement designed for high income earners. The residents are mainly serving and retired Class I officers from federal and state government institutions, captains of industries, first class entrepreneurs and major contractors. A total of 15 households were selected and head or adult members of households were questioned with same questionnaire at same period of time. It is found that neighbouring within this high income residential area is formal as 14 out of the 15 total respondents signifying 93.3% revealed that they never involve in any degree of emotional place. Emotional place indeed involves daily concern in forms of calls and physical visitations. To them, a good neighbour is somebody friendly in emergencies and with minor things and ready to express sympathy during emergency and unexpected situations. However, it is ascertained in this study that 100% of the respondents unveiled that all kind of emergencies are met with the help of security network system especially police and fire service. The study maintains that 12 out of the 15 total respondents symbolizing 80% unveiled that when there is an occasion of festival or gathering, which is an inevitable part in Nigerian socio-cultural system especially in the Niger Delta, then the residents usually will never gather and celebrate as a whole. This accordingly does not mean that there are clashes of identification in any form within the neighbourhood. It is observed that diminished dependency in the high residential neighbourhood of New Government Residential Area of Port Harcourt leads to a balance between mutual aid and respecting privacy.

However, positive neighbour relations providing mutual help, commitment, care and expression of concern among neighbours is declining in degree due to privatization of lifestyle. Also, it is visible that neighbourhood relations have fully moved from public families as practised in traditional African culture to public anonymous. In most cases 74% confirmed that they did not know who is residing next three doors since they do not have anything in common which is absolute anonymity. It is found that social interaction network is highly formal as every household keeps to its boundary thereby portraying that physical proximity is not counting any kind and does not matter. The study reveals that residence association meeting does not hold. Relatively, all residents fall within same socio-economic strata. Children are not usually free to walk to a common playground if any, but rather, enjoy in house and outside built-up space within the plot for recreation. It is there observed that socialization of the children is not involved with the neighbouring relations but rather only within school and television programmes.

Case 2: D Lline Residential Neighbourhood Middle Income Group

This neighbourhood appears to be a middle level between high and low income levels. In Nigeria, this group accommodates professionals like Doctors, Lawyers, higher Institution Teachers and Senior Civil Servants. In this neighbourhood, a total of 15 households were examined. Findings reveal that neighbouring in this area is semi-formal and involves the

acceptance of neighbours to a certain extent. During situations of emergency, residents are involved base on necessities (92%). However, 86% of the respondents unveiled that whenever there are festivals and other similar functions, residents gather together and involve accordingly. It maintains that 68% of the respondents reported that they attended to one another problems such as payment of school fees for children of death residents which is usually carried out through residence association and individual members. However, the involvement in neighbourhood relations is not in an emotional level but in an official manner. There exists a certain degree of detachment and privacy. Though, there is satisfaction in communication and limited personal dependency on neighbours. Children within the neighbourhood tend to know themselves more but there is limitation in outdoor recreation. This leads to limited socialization of children in the neighbourhood.

Case 3: Mile 1 Diobu Low Income Group

This residential area consists of large low income residents who are low level civil servants, petty traders, transporters, casual workers and self-employed and industrial workers. The area presently occupies almost central part of Port Harcourt and of diversified ethnic ground. The settlement was designed around 1949 by then Government of the Eastern Region to accommodate migrating low income earners of the region into Port Harcourt city.

In this residential neighbourhood, a total of 20 households were investigated. Findings revealed that neighbourhood relations are high. There is presence of neighbourhood organized security network in support of the police (85%). The degree of communication is higher especially within the yard (a compound building of mostly single rooms with shared facilities like toilet and kitchen buildings). This as revealed, some occasionally leads to quarrels and many other kinds of conflicts. Despite presence of quarrels and high level of insecurity, neighbourliness is stronger especially during emergencies. A significant number of residents especially at close proximity and in good terms attend each others festivals such as marriage, burial and birthday parties. Accordingly, there is interference in the private affairs of residents (92%) leading to increasing informal relation.

Conclusion

Neighbourhood relations traditionally play significant role in the physical, social and economic development of human society. However, neighbourhood relations have obviously changed and appear not of great significance anymore. It is rapidly losing its importance especially in the urban areas. Urbanization tends to reduce high level of neighbourhood relations. People in the urban neighbourhoods seem to have different means of socialization. Income levels still determine extent of neighbourhood relations as those of low income still operate high level of social interaction compare to those of high income who live independently of neighbours.

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