



# **The Effect of Multiple Levies on Private Housing Development in Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas, Rivers State**

**ADIBE, Nkeiruka Okwakpam; OKEY-EJIOWHOR Caleb Happiness & AMAKIRI Ibiene Tamunoala**

**Department of Architecture,  
Faculty of Environment Sciences,  
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria**

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper argues that private housing development in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State is largely affected by building plan approval cost and the multiple levies that emanate from the various interest groups in the community. It aims at examining the effects of these two factors on housing development in Rivers State with particular reference to Obio/ Akpor Local Government Area. The study is a correlational qualitative and quantitative research that adopted the survey research design. The data for the study was gathered using the personal interviews guide and direct observations. The data was analyzed on two levels which are the descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The result of the analyses was presented using tables and the results were subsequently analyzed thematically. Firstly, the study found on one part that, although, the trio of community levy, plan approval cost and unauthorized government levies significantly existed in Obio/Akpor, both community levy and unauthorized government levy however, manifested higher in the Local Government. One another part, it also established that private housing development is poor in Obio/Akpor as at today. Secondly, the findings of this study reveal a very strong negative correlation between the multiple levies and private housing development in Obio/Akpor. The study concludes that the interferences from interest groups and the high cost of building plan approvals from planning authorities act as catalytic variables to the expansion of unauthorized housing settlements and poor private housing development. The paper therefore, recommends that the government being the ultimate authority in lands and housing related matters, needs to intervene in the imposition of unauthorized levies on private house developers by host communities and government officials.

**Keywords:** Plan Approval Cost, Community Leaders, Housing Development

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Housing is a universal and multidimensional impression that constitutes an environment. Land, finance, labour, infrastructure and building materials are the five main mechanisms that interrelate in housing without which housing cannot take place. These mechanisms are usually organized and somehow controlled by the legal, regulatory and institutional framework. Housing has been established as a stimulant of national economy (indicate citation). For this ultimate reason, the provision of adequate and affordable housing becomes very vital in every country. This is because; housing is a stimulant of the national economy. It is also seen as a set of durable assets, which accounts for a high proportion of a country's wealth. Housing has therefore become a regular feature in economic, social and political debates.

The social, economic and political development of mankind cannot be separated from a housing and it is uniquely important asset for most households. Land is unique in nature and plays a significant role in human settlement which consists of different activities. It is so critical to all developments and its role

can be seen as an entity distinct from other components. It is the major factor of housing production, without it, housing production cannot be achieved. The importance of land accessibility and its affordability in housing development in Rivers State cannot be over emphasized. Land value in major cities of developing countries has being on increased at an alarming rate and exerted an undue influence on housing affordability. Rapid growth and uncontrolled urban population in Nigerian leads to high demand for land which has eventually gets transmitted into increase in land value. Many authors have examined rapidly rising land value in developing cities but the effects of building plan approval cost and multiple levies from the communities on land value and housing development has not been fully dealt with, especially in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

This study therefore examined the effects of multiple levies from community leaders on land value and building plan approval cost on housing development in Obio/Akpor. It argued that a rapid rise in land value and housing unaffordability are not likely in the future limited to possible future economic and rapid population growth, but also as a result of multiple levies from Government agencies (building plan approval cost) and community leaders. It is therefore important for efforts to be made towards eliminating the effects these factors may have on housing development.

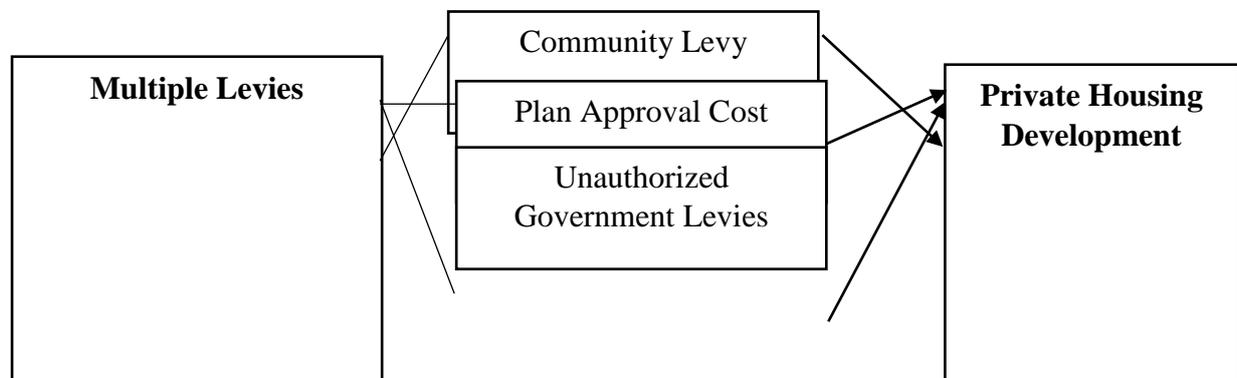
**2. Statement of The Problem**

There is no doubt that multiple levies play a part in private housing development in any global social setting. For instance, the Government authorities are involved in the construction of buildings where the client or building owner has to obtain formal requisite papers pertaining to the land upon which the building is to be erected. In addition, the land will have to go through rigorous registration process with the appropriate government authority in which fees and levies are charged, receipts and certificates are issued, and ultimately approval is obtained. Also the building must be constructed according to the construction plan or document, at the same time the specification from and contribution of different categories of professionals/workers (Architects, Engineers, Quantity Surveyors, Masons/builders, and other skilled and unskilled laborers on site). On another hand, the stakeholders in the community such as the Chiefs, traditional rulers, Community Development Chairmen (CDCs), Youths in the community, agents of the traditional rulers and even the so-called “tax force” come into the picture, playing various roles in the construction process.

These stated identified challenges have given rise to several related studies that focused on improving private housing developments. Most of these studies have however, focused on single variables such as the role of estate agents in housing development while some focused on the relatedness of these variables in a larger study population. Despite the submissions of these research efforts, the challenges encountered in private housing development still persist, particularly in this part of the world. Against this background, this study focuses on analyzing the impact the levies imposed by both government and other interest group such as the host communities have on the development of quality housing in Obio- Akpor.

**2. Conceptual Frame Work**

As stated, the study is mainly focused on two variables – multiple levies and private housing development. The frame work below was used to guide the study.



**Fig 1:** Conceptual Framework depicting the relationship between multiple levies and private housing development.

**Source:** Researcher’s Desk (2021)

### **Housing Development**

Housing provision in Nigeria is conducted by both the formal and informal sectors. Houses provided by formal sector housing are those houses provided by the public sector and the private sector, while the informal sector include houses that are self-built by individuals, and produced by families, co-operatives and community development efforts which do not adhere to official planning permits. The bulk of housing developments in Nigeria, generally, and Obio -Akpok, specifically, is carried out by the private sector. This includes houses that are provided by individuals (self-built), which forms about 90% of houses delivered. In contrast, there is minimal production of housing by small-scale enterprises, including real estate developers classified as the organised formal private sector, as well as the state.

#### **Private Sector Housing**

In Nigeria, 80% of housing units are delivered through non-state controlled schemes (the private sector). In most cities in Nigeria there is a high proportion of privately-built housing, as individuals and households play a vital part in the production of housing units. Most urban households in Nigeria are made up of a mix of middle-income earners and low-income earners (Olatubara & Fatoye, 2006; Makinde, 2013).

According to FGN (2004) over 90% of houses in Nigeria are delivered through the private sectors initiatives where small-scale private landlords and individuals provide housing units. The variety of housing types provided reflect the diversity of socio-economic classes present in cities: higher-income earners inhabit deluxe owner-occupied housing, with middle income to the lower-income residents inhabit rental or shared housing as well as informal low-quality ones (Ndubueze, 2009). In Auchi, one of the main built-up regions in Nigeria, private initiatives have been responsible for the production of over 96% of the housing stock. Of these, a significant percentage was informally built by individuals without adhering to formal housing codes and planning laws. For example, in Auchi, 48% of housing is considered to be informal or unofficial (Ogu & Ogbuozobe, 2001).

#### **Self-Built Housing**

Alagbe and Opoko (2013) define self-built housing as the process where a person is involved in the building of a permanent home from start to finish instead of paying a building expert. Self-built housing in Nigerian cities allows for personal engagement and autonomy with the process of housing delivery and as such the house mirroring tastes, conditions and ambitions of the person constructing the house are put to play (Alagbe & Opoko, 2013). Again, Turner (1976) argued that individual and social wellbeing are inspired when residents are given liberty to choose what type of housing to produce. However self-built housing is also limited by the financial realities of home owners. Self-built housing can either be privately provided or informally provided but as discussed earlier there is an alarming increase of informally self-built houses in Obio - Akpok.

To self-build a house in Nigeria, the first step is the acquisition of land. Land can be purchased from the government, or through traditional/community heads, or from families and land owners who are land speculators. The process of land acquisition is not straightforward and works to constrain housing delivery. Thereafter, the house is erected incrementally over time (over a period of 5-15 years for middle and low-income earners) by the 'household' (a term used to describe the owner of the house that is being erected or built) in line with their priorities and level of income, through a self-build process (Ogu & Ogbuozobe, 2001). After the purchase of land by the household, it is necessary to get the land surveyed by an official surveyor. Thereafter, the Architect designs the building; working drawings are prepared and taken to the Housing and Development Authority for approval. Several authors (Agbola, 1988; Ikejiofor, 1997; Ogu and Ogbuozobe, 2001; Alagbe and Opoko, 2013; Makinde, 2013; Collier and Venables, 2014) have identified that the problem of housing production is worsened by the existence of official standards which are foreign to Nigerian culture. Plans take a long time to be officially approved by the planning authority. Consequently, frustrated soon-to-be developers may build without gaining planning approval.

In some of Nigeria's states, the process of house-building is constrained by additional local practices which serve to further frustrate the efforts of self-builders. In Rivers state and other states within the federation such as Lagos, Delta, Bayelsa, and Imo, the household is not able to commence the building of a house until they have paid levies to a group of individuals who call themselves the 'Community Development Chairmen' (CDC). These payments of levies are required in addition to the numerous normal formal payments made to the relevant Local Government office to get the building approved. Levies are informal payments made to the traditional community leaders of the CDCs from which the

land was purchased, and land purchased from private individuals is also levied by the CDCs. Such levies amount to significant sums of money over an extended period. There is no evident academic literature on this set of informal practices and their subsequent impact on housing delivery and housing quality.

### **Housing Development Challenges**

The scale of the housing shortage in Nigeria has not been fully established. This is because those in charge of housing management in the country do not have exact data and appropriate statistics (Alagbe & Opoko, 2013). Despite this, there have been attempts to approximate the scale of the housing shortage in Nigeria. In 1991, the National Housing Policy (NHP) detailed that 700,000 houses should be built yearly to reach the goal of providing 8 million houses by 2000 this was the figure which, the NHP concluded, was needed to meet the housing deficit in the nation (FGN, 1991; COHRE, 2004 (in Alagbe & Opoko, 2013); Okonjo-Iweala, 2014). According to Okonjo-Iweala (2014) the housing units constructed annually is about 100,000 and an average of 80% of the people living in Nigeria live in informal housing beset with the problems relating to low quality and a lack of infrastructural facilities (FGN, 2009).

It is assessed that, in financial terms, the sum of N12 trillion (Naira) (about £45.3 billion) is needed to address the current shortage (Alagbe & Opoko, 2013). It is also estimated that a minimum sum of 56 trillion Naira (about £211Bn) is required to produce an average of 720,000 houses annually within a 20-year time-frame in Nigeria to meet housing requirements (Alagbe & Opoko, 2013); (Makinde, 2013); (Waziri & Roosli, 2013).

While specific causes for the housing shortages vary across the country, in Obio - Akpor, the primary problem is the low income of residents. This is a problem because a privately-built house is expected to meet official planning laws, as well as the other costs incurred during the process of house construction (Udechukwu, 2008; Makinde, 2013). One major index that illustrates that there is a housing deficit in Obio - Akpor is the high occupancy rate which ranges from 5-8 persons per room; this is significantly above the official standard of 2-4 persons per room (Omuta, 1986); (Fiadzo, 2004). One reason for this is that most of the housing stock is traditional in form, and the sharing of one room by more than two persons along with the sharing of individual housing units by several households is a central feature of housing in Obio - Akpor.

### **Access to Finance**

The problem of housing finance is one of the most significant factors informing housing delivery and influencing urban policy. Various authors have argued that the establishment of an appropriate system of finance may enhance the production of housing in any given society (Udechukwu, 2008; Makinde, 2013; Okonjo-Iweala, 2014; Mukhtar, Amirudin & Mohamad, 2016). The governments of some countries have revamped their financial institutions to motivate the involvement of private sector funding organisations in providing finance for the delivery of housing (Mukhtar *et al.*, 2016). As argued by, Makinde, (2013) and Mukhtar *et al.*, (2016), in Nigeria the delivery of housing is bedevilled by a lack of an adequate system of housing finance and this undermines the production of housing.

In Nigeria, housing finance is categorised into formal and informal (Nubi, 2000; Makinde; 2013 and Mukhtar *et al.*, 2016). The formal includes financial institutions such as the Commercial Banks, Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN), and Specialized Development Banks. In contrast, informal sources of housing finance are typified by individuals saving money for extensive periods of time in order to build a house. Most houses delivered in Nigeria (80%) are provided through the practice of long-term individual savings (Makinde, 2013; Udechukwu, 2008 and Mukhtar *et al.*, 2016). Other informal sources of finance include; voluntary housing movements and different credit co-operative organisations and individual moneylenders (Okonjo-Iweala, 2014; Makinde, 2013 and Udechukwu, 2008). While the informal sources tend to contribute to the finance required for housing delivery, its influence on the delivery of housing cannot be statistically measured due to such practices being largely unplanned and unrecorded. They also differ in scope of operation (Adedeji & Olotuah 2012).

Embedded in the formal financial mechanisms are institutions that make access to this form of finance problematic to many people who desire to build a house. The National Housing Policy of Nigeria (NHP) 1991 set up a dual system of housing finance. In the 1991 housing policy, the first system of housing finance was the Primary Mortgage Banks (PMBs), while the second system was the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) established in 1977 to provide finance for the delivery of standard

housing for the people. One primary role of the FMBN is to direct and manage the PMBs. However, this role has been reassigned to the Central Bank of Nigeria (Makinde, 2013). Two of the aims of the FMBN are to enhance the creation and expansion of PMBs banks nationally and to provide funds to housing funds. It was established to supervise the National Housing Fund (NHF) which ensures that obligatory contributions are made into the fund by private and public servants employees (Sanusi, 2003; Makinde, 2013). In 1992, the NHF was established to provide long term mortgages at affordable rates to people. Nevertheless, the rate and level of achievement has not been successful because only 12,000 persons have benefitted out of a total of 3.8 million eligible contributors who made applications for loans (Okonjo-Iweala, 2014).

To be able to apply for the NHF loans some requirement needs to be fulfilled, these include earnings of over 3,000 naira annually and contribution of 2.5% of employees monthly basic earning must be paid. These compulsory contributions and the long wait to access these funds tends to limit the ability of workers to access this source of funding (Okonjo-Iweala, 2014). Furthermore, the interest paid on such loans must not surpass 9% with a repayment period of about 30 years. In addition, the finance awarded to any individual applicant must not exceed 5 million naira (Udechukwu, 2008). This, in current times, is insufficient to construct a quality house and is also unaffordable to a large number of the population of Nigeria.

The ability to deliver housing in Nigeria through accessing formal financial mechanisms has been bedevilled by multiple challenges. These include issues of housing finance such as; where people are constrained by diverse institutional bottlenecks as explored above, the bureaucratic processes of getting titles for land ownership which impedes the disbursement of the NHF funds, high inflation and interest rates in the country, and the inability of individuals and developers to access long-term loans (Udechukwu, 2008; Mukhtar et al., 2016).

#### **Government Impositions and Laws**

In Nigeria, a three-tier system of administration is employed in governance. This includes Federal, State and Local Government Area. Olomola (1999) argued that before 1854, and preceding colonial government in Nigeria, land-use management was vested in the hands of community heads or rulers in diverse neighborhoods. These included the *Obis* in the eastern part of the country, the emirs in the northern part of the country, and the *Obas*, in the southern and western parts of the country. These leaders had lawful rights to allot, re-allot and oversee land-use within their different domains. During the commencement of the foreign administration in 1854, great vagaries were observed in Nigeria land-use structure. The traditional and development systems deteriorated particularly in urban regions. Throughout the colonial era, the control of land was vested primarily in the state with individuals, traditional leaders and neighborhood leaders devoid of such authority. Colonial practices of formal urban planning were introduced, which superseded other practices. Consequently, the 1946 Nigeria Town and Country Planning Ordinance encouraged planning growth nationwide through planning policies. Following independence in 1960 several local governments in Nigeria retained the 1946 Town and Country Planning Ordinance as Town and Country Planning Law: specifically, as Chapter 123 of the laws of Western Nigeria 1959, Chapter 130 of the Northern Nigeria and Chapter 155 of the laws of Eastern Nigeria (Oduwaye, 2006). For instance, 1992, the government passed the *Nigeria Urban and Regional Planning Law Decree No. 88* in order encourage inclusive planning across different states within the Nigeria federation. The urban development section 5 of the law states that:

... for the initiation, preparation and implementation of the national physical development plans, the Federal, State and Local Planning Agencies, shall establish and maintain, respectively, National Urban and Regional Commission, a state Urban and Regional Planning Board in each state and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and a Local Planning Authority in each Local Government Area (Oduwaye, 2006). Therefore, in terms of physical planning and development within Nigeria, the three tiers of government play some role in relation to issues regarding land-use, housing, and physical development which are controlled by the federal, state and local government at their different level of jurisdiction.

#### **Cost of Building Materials**

Several reports have shown that access to building materials due to the high cost of building materials is problematic and impinges on the quality and quantity of housing development, however the result of this study indicate that getting access to building materials is problematic and getting access to quality building material is problematic for house developers because of cost, because this problem derives its

roots from the enthusiasm for imported goods which are of exorbitant prices and many are of inferior quality.

Furthermore, in the past despite the extensive importation of building materials, the demands for building materials by house developers were still unmet and as a result there were great shortages (Udechukwu, 2008; Makinde, 2013 and Collier and Venables, 2014). Nevertheless, the effect of enthusiasm for imported goods has enhanced massive importation of building materials of different sorts into Nigeria and the country has become a key destination for many imported goods of diverse quality.

As noted, prices of building materials are unusually expensive in Port Harcourt because of Nigeria's high dependence on imported goods; over 60% of building material are imported (Makinde, 2013). Also, the failure of the government of Nigeria to stimulate the production of building materials locally to meet the building capacity of housing delivery has been notable (Collier and Venables, 2014; Makinde, 2013). Udechukwu, (2008) therefore argues that for the delivery of a single housing unit, building materials form 75% of the cost of building. Most houses produced in the case study areas use sandcrete blocks made from high proportion of cement (Mukhtar & Amirudin, 2016) and the cost of a bag of cement at present is between ₦3,700 and ₦4,300. This is a high price for low and middle income residents, contributing to their difficulty in building quality houses. This is because of the high cost of building materials, the price of constructing a simple 3-bedroom house in Nigeria, according to Okonjo-Iweala (2014), is US\$50,000 as against the cost of producing such houses in South Africa (US\$ 36,000) and India (US\$26,000). Also, as evidenced by these interviewees they had to buy low quality material to build since they cannot afford the quality ones which cost more.

This is why the inability of most interviewees to purchase quality building materials due to its high cost significantly impacts on the quality of housing produced by the different socio-economic groups in the case study area. However, as evidenced by Mr Arthur, Mrs Ndidi, and Mr John, if building materials are locally sourced and provided at cheaper rate and of good quality and made available to house builders, housing cost can be reduced. This echoes similar findings from Yeboah (2005), Udechukwu, (2008), Makinde, (2013) and Mercer, (2014). The ability for people to produce more quality houses will therefore be enhanced with more attention given to the production of locally-developed materials so that people can avoid the costs of buying imported goods.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The study aims to investigate how multiple levies facilitate or constrain quality housing delivery in Obio/Akpor. To achieve this aim, the study focused on the following objectives:

1. It investigated how plan approval cost is related to private housing development in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.
2. It examined how levies imposed by host communities relate to private housing development in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.
3. It investigated the relationship between the levies imposed by Community Leaders and private housing development delivery in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative and quantitative approach was used to explore the objectives of the study. This method is relevant because it aims to provide a nuanced understanding of complexity, detail and context and contextual understandings based on rich, detailed and nuanced data (Mason, 2002).

On one hand, a qualitative approach is adequate for this research because of the need to better understand peoples' subjective understanding and opinion of their housing and its quality in addition to understanding what enhances or constrains the development of private housing within the case study area. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews, observations, and visual methods were employed to get appropriate data.

The population of this study covers 5 communities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area comprising of Rukpokwu, Rumuodomaya, Igwuruta, Igwuruta Alia, Eliozu, and Eneka. Due to the small size of the population, a census method was applied in which the entire 5 communities were used as the sample size of the study. However, 7 representatives from each community were chosen as participants of the study. Therefore, a total of 35 participants were chosen for the study. Data from these communities delivered a rich presentation of the role of government and community levy institutions in private

housing development in the Local Government. More so, Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2016) suggest that scholars could choose a sample size based on the level of possible information that can be retrieved from the intended participant.

In order to collect data for this research, one set of interviews conducted cut across four main groups of people. The first group are the tenants, the second are prospective house owners who are currently tenants, the third group are the house owners; either self-built houses or outright purchase houses and private developers, and the fourth group are the government officials. The second set of interviewees was focused on stakeholders in the communities comprising of the Chiefs, traditional rulers, youth representatives and CDC chairman. The four groups of participants were chosen based on their involvement with housing development processes. The aim of speaking to these groups was to get a better understanding of what quality housing delivery involves as well as an understanding of their experiences and perceptions of what constitutes quality housing. The interviews were conducted in both English and Pidgin English.

In this study, structured and semi-structured interview consisting of a series of open-ended questions were prepared to attain constructed knowledge. A list of questions were prepared for the execution of the interview process in order to get a smooth flow or responses, as well as to regulate the direction of flow in the interview meetings. The data gathered were analyzed on two levels, one being the descriptive statistics showing the mean score, and two being the correlation analysis showing the level, nature and direction of the relatedness of the variables.

**Table 1 - Classifications of Respondents**

Classification of Respondents	Number of Participants
1. Tenants	10
2. Home-Owners/Private Developers	15
3. Government Officials	5
4. Community Leaders (CDC's)	5
<b>Total Interviews</b>	<b>35</b>

**Source:** From author's fieldwork

## **ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

The data gathered were subjected to two levels of analyses to help in understanding the manifestations of the study variables and at the same time address the study aims and objectives. The first analysis is the descriptive statistics which analyzed the responses of the participants such that the mean score for each of the four variables was determined. The second analysis measured how multiple levy related with private housing development.

### **3.1 Descriptive Statistics**

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Variables**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Private Housing Development	1.36	.623	35
Community Levy	3.25	.674	35
Plan Approval Cost	2.09	.633	35
Unauthorized Government Levy	3.59	.654	35

**Source:** SPSS 22.0 Output (2021)

Table 2 shows the result of the descriptive statistics for the study variables. With a mean score of 1.36, Private Housing Development shows to be poor in Obio-Akpor. Furthermore, the mean scores of 3.25 and 3.59, shows Community Levy and Unauthorized Government respectively manifested highly in the communities in Obio-Akpor. Finally, with the Plan Approval Cost having a mean score of 2.09 it shows that it manifested averagely in the communities. The standard deviation ranging from .623 to .674 which is less than 1 shows an acceptable variability to the responses of the respondents.

**7.2 Correlation Analysis**

**Table 3: Correlation Result for the relationship between Multiple Levies and Private Housing Development**

		Multiple Levies	Private Housing Development
Multiple Levies	Pearson Correlation	1	-.722**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	35	35
Private Housing Development	Pearson Correlation	-.722**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	35	35

**Source:** SPSS 22.0 Output (2021)

For this level of analysis, the responses on community levy, plan approval cost and unauthorized government were transformed as one variable (multiple levies) statistically and related to private housing development in Obio-Akpor. The result showed a correlation (r) value of -0.722 with a significance value (p-value) of 0.000 which is < 0.05. The result indicates that there is a very strong negative relationship between multiple levies and private housing development in Obio-Akpor. This implies that private housing development will continue to decline as multiple levies increase in Obio-Akpor. The result from the qualitative interviews somehow corroborates this relationship as most of the respondents from the tenants and house owners’ bloc mentioned that the high level of community levies, house plan approval cost and unauthorized government levies they encounter has drastically affected their house development plans.

**DISCUSSION**

Firstly, the findings of the study reveal on one part that, although the trio of community levy, plan approval cost and unauthorized government levies significantly existed in Obio-Akpor, both community levy and unauthorized government levy however, seem to be more prominent in the Local Government. On another part, the study established that private housing development is poor in Obio-Akpor as at today. Secondly, the findings of this study reveal a very strong negative correlation between the multiple levies and private housing development in Obio-Akpor. This identified relationship is further explained from the descriptive statistics as its found that while the component variables of multiple levies manifested highly, private housing development manifested poorly in Obio-Akpor. It further established that Government institutions and processes are shown to be problematic in private housing development in Obio - Akpor Local Government as most participants indicated in their interviews. For example, the process of getting planning permission from the state was highly problematic. This corroborates the finding of Makinde, (2013), Ikejiofor (1988) and Udechukwu (2008). The findings further indicate that each stage was beleaguered with problems such as delays in gaining documentation for plan approval, and delays in plan approval processes and the high cost of plan approval. Also, one striking finding evidenced by the present research is that the process of plan approval/planning permission is also beset with other, less well-documented dimensions of this problem. These include difficulties in the provision of levy certificates by potential house builders, and the production of floor plans drawn by certified professionals with covering letters to show proof of certification by the professionals to the housing parastatals which tends to increase the cost of housing construction. Together, the difficulty in accessing the levy certificate coupled with its very high cost, and the exorbitant cost of getting planning approval, impacted on the cost of housing delivery as showed in our result.

In addition, the study revealed that the analysis of informal processes through which land is acquired and house building regulated is vital in providing a nuanced understanding of quality housing delivery. For this, our participants agreed that the informal processes such as ‘*matching ground*’, community youth demands, palace fees, etc. have contributed to the frustrations faced in developing private houses in the community.

**CONCLUSION**

This paper succeeded in exploring the effects of multiple levies on private housing development in Obio - Akpor. With the adoption of a qualitative and quantitative research method and the use of

interviews, data was accessed to measure the level of impact community levies, plan approval costs and unauthorized Government levies have on private housing development in Obio-Akpor Local Government. The research specifically found that both the government and community levy institutions (such as rules from the state and non-state actors and the CDCs) have a great impact on the quantity and quality of housing development in Obio – Akpor and the need for government to intervene and cut down these levies. Other factors impacting on the construction of quality housing in Obio - Akpor are shown to include the laissez-faire attitude of government, access to finance, problems of land acquisition, high prices of building materials, as well as the activities of dishonest and unskilled workmen, etc. All these are put forward as constraints to the delivery of quality housing in Obio – Akpor.

These related particularly to the multiple levies collected by the CDCs in all the case study areas.

There are marked variations in levies paid depending on the neighbourhood, proximity of land to main access road and the type of house to be constructed. The collection of levies by the CDCs at every stage of housing construction occurred irrespective of neighbourhood and socio-economic levels of house developers; yet differences between neighbourhoods were apparent, and analyses across the diverse neighbourhoods revealed that there were variations in amounts paid. The GRA neighbourhood accounted for highest levies paid. This impacted on the cost of housing delivery, created longer finishing times, in addition to insecurity of tenure which together constrains the quality of housing delivered in Obio – Akpor.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Having established the negative relationship that exists between multiple levies and private housing development in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State, the study recommends that:

1. The government needs to wake up to their responsibility of eliminating the bureaucracy in the plan approval process.
2. The government being the ultimate authority in lands and housing related cases, needs to intervene in the imposition of unauthorized levies on private house developers by host communities and government officials.
3. Community leaders in collaboration with the government need to set up active monitoring team within their communities to minimize the level of unauthorized levies from both the government and youths in the communities.

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