

Assessing the Influence of Abandoned Buildings On Security And Health of Campus Dwellers in Nigerian Universities: A Quest Towards Achievement Of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2030)

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Abstract

The campus environment remains an important area that should be well managed to enhance students' academic performance. It is on this premise that the study assessed the influence of abandoned building structures on the teaching and learning environment of Nigerian universities with a focus on security and health. Two objectives and corresponding research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey design and employed the use of interviews to elicit information from university staff and students within Makurdi. University campuses in Makurdi, Benue State were sampled to represent the Nigerian universities situation. A convenience sampling technique was used. Result obtained from the analysis were collated and discussed. The study found that the incessant abandonment of buildings has negative influence on security and health of campus dwellers. Based on the findings, the study recommends that Nigerian government should enact policies that would guide towards designing and constructing new university buildings as well as retrofitting abandoned ones on campus which would not only raise the aesthetic but also enhance the security and health of dwellers.

Keywords: Abandoned Buildings, sensibility, Security, Health, Campus, Nigerian Universities

Introduction

Abandonment of building projects involves complete absconding from accomplishing project objectives, and when this happens, the sensibility of dwellers within such vicinity to appreciate or respond to emotional or aesthetic influences are detracted. Striking environments appeal to every individual particularly in a learning environment. In this light, Arnold (2010) opines that the somatic reception and response to perceptual stimuli are an essential part of aesthetic sensibility. However, most African campuses visited by the researcher lack beautiful environments as they are replete with abandoned buildings that offer

poor view quality. Project development, particularly infrastructural projects are intended to provide new product and services to the community while promoting the beauty of the built environment. However, these benefits are undermined and unattained because of incessant abandonment (Saleeman & Anifowose, 2018). Development projects are classified as abandoned when the expected activities to be performed at its completion is stopped because of many difficulties surrounding the project (Yapeng, 2013). Saleeman and Anifowose (2018) argues that it is the improper understanding and utilisation of the basic project managerial principles that

contribute to the situation. This could be simply attributed to improper focus of the management by rewarding the wrong actions for good and the lack of communication of the project goals. Alao and Jagboro (2017) argue that project abandonment results from lack of the project team commitment towards completion; lack of contractor competencies; lack of understanding of risk and liability assessments; lack of the client competencies; lack of the end user needs specification; and the end users imposed restrictions on the project development. However, development project environments vary and every organisation operates differently from others. Thus, a set of causes may not be transferred from one project development environment to another.

A cross-country review has shown that building project abandonment is not peculiar to Nigeria, as it exists in other countries of the world. According to Yapeng (2013), abandonment of construction projects (ACP) is considered one of the most common and serious problems plaguing the Malaysian construction industry given the number and the value of projects involved. It affects not only the immediate purchasers but also other key project players and members of the general public.

In Ghana, Amoa-Abban (2017) observes that abandoned construction projects are scattered all over Accra, presenting an ugly image on the outset of architectural performance in the city. Observing this from one point of view, one would attribute the failure to poverty, but looking at it from a different perspective, one would see that, the luxurious and

expensive architectural provision on the abandoned buildings have a significant role to play in the frustrations of the project. Therefore, rampant abandonment of buildings on our campuses will attract negative sensibility effect to the dwellers. Basically the effects of abandoned buildings are enormous particularly on the teaching and learning environment. However, this study focuses on security and health. This is in line with SDS 3 and 11-that target safety and health respectively. SDG-11 aims at making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable while, SDG-3 hinges on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages (Casier, 2016).

Security on campuses is threatened as terrorists and other criminals find a safe haven in abandoned buildings. Abandoned buildings pose a combination of risks as criminals use them as a hideout (Bavani, 2009). Akpan (2010) opines that criminals are never far from those surroundings. Apart from these, abandoned buildings also accommodate illegal immigrants who pour into our country assured of free accommodation. Destruction of building elements such as removal of roof, broken doors/windows among others are common acts of vandalism plaguing abandoned buildings. Gangs will "tag" abandoned building with spray paint to signal it as their territory. According to Ahmed (2012), abandoned buildings tend to encourage illegal activities in our social environment such as drug dealings, prostitution, robbery and rape among others, and when this happens the effectiveness of security within such

environment is degraded. Abandoned buildings are also prone to trespassing.

Trespassing is a precursor to burglary that occurs when the property is unprotected. Trespassers view unprotected property (including buildings) as available for their use as shortcut, hangout or places for engaging in criminal activities. Unprotected property is also inviting to curious children who use it as a playground, and homeless people who use it to establish encampments. Trespassers, particularly children, risk injury and victimisation and may generate noise or invade the neighbourhoods' privacy (Amoa-abban, 2017). All these lead to a serious threat to public health.

Abandoned buildings are prone to open faeces, illegal dumping of home waste and industrial waste such as asbestos, lead particles, hazardous waste discharge, and airborne mold. When these are within the university, health of campus dwellers is threatened. In addition, standing water in pools, hot tubs and discarded tires which are often characteristic of abandoned buildings breed mosquitoes and other insects. Likewise, overgrown and undeveloped landscapes harbor mice, rats, stray animals, and other vermin. Mosquitoes and vermin are vectors for diseases, particularly West Nile Virus, rabies, and various parasites that undermine public health. Public health is indirectly threatened by infectious diseases when criminals use abandoned buildings for illicit sex and drug use involving needle-sharing (Wolf, 2010). Abandoned building structures can trigger pollution crisis through creation of uncontrolled and

unsupervised garbage disposal. Pollution effects can be summarised as a decrease of water quality for aquatic life and recreational activities, eutrophication, alteration of ecological conditions and increase of illnesses related to water (Gasper, 2010). When this pathetic situation (building abandonment) is dealt with, the target of SDG-11 and 3 on safety and health respectively will be achieved. When the study recommendations are implemented and all buildings completed, it facilitates the target of SDG 9-Build resilient infrastructure promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. This is the most direct call for increased investment in sustainable infrastructure in the SDGs (Casier, 2016).

Despite all these, abandoned building projects still litter campuses leading to security threats, promotion of illegal activities, waste of human resources, poor aesthetics, among others. This situation has negatively affected campus environment and by extension the society. The issue of abandoned buildings on campuses is left without adequate attention despite its multiplier effect on security and health.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this research is to assess the security and health impact of abandoned campus structures with a view to reducing the negative effect among dwellers. This can be achieved through the following objectives:

- i. Assess the influence of campus structures abandonments on

security of dwellers in Nigerian universities.

- ii. Assess sensibility of abandoned campus buildings on health of dwellers in Nigerian universities.

Research Questions

- i. What is the influence of campus building abandonments on security of dwellers in Nigerian universities?
- ii. What is the influence of campus building abandonments on health of dwellers in Nigerian universities?

Literature Review

Infrastructure is core to our quality of life, this is a fact that explains the prevalence of infrastructure, both implicitly and explicitly, in the SDGs. Population growth, migration and urbanization trends demand an increase in infrastructure development, especially in emerging economies and developing countries. The general effects of building abandonment are not only assumed to include waste of resources, declining property value and loss of community and neighborhoods aesthetics but also affects security and health (Momoh, Opaluwah & Albeera, 2018). Criminals are drawn to an abandoned property because it suits their needs and has few controls (Erodogan, 2010). In the UK, there is a loss on community and neighborhood aesthetics which the anticipated development projects on completion ought to have provided in enhancing the built environment. However, the unattractive nature of abandoned buildings as a result

of lack of the needed facilities has had an adverse on the Nigeria economy.

Nigeria is still among the poorest countries in the world. Asaju (2022) states that real gross domestic product per capita and terms of trade are insignificant in determining sustainable development. In the era of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), eight goals were slated to be achieved by 2015 with 18 targets and 48 indicators. By the time MDGs were terminating and replaced by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), 11 out of about 57 countries made an impact in some of the eight goals (such as Libya, South Africa, Seychelles, Equatorial Guinea, Cape Verde, Egypt, Eritrea, Gabon, and Comoros). Nigeria was not among the countries with significant impact on the eight goals. Maduabum (2016) reveals that with the advent of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targeting 17 goals by 2030, the case of Africa is even more sympathetic as many African countries including Nigeria have entered into economic recessions.

The 2030 Agenda has been adopted to achieve a better and sustainable future for all. According to Akhimien, Isiwele and Adamolekun (2019), sustainable development can be described as that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In other words, it can be described as the ease of living at little or no cost. This definition is a pointer to the fact that concerted efforts must be made by the Nigerian government to find ways and means of using the available resources in more sustainable practices by completing all

abandoned buildings within nation's campuses.

Sustainability of developmental goals remains a significant challenge for every nation in the world. In an environment of flexibility coupled with multiple and conflicting objectives on social, economic, energy and environmental issues, a fuzzy goal programming approach proves to be suitable in helping policymakers for attaining aspirational goals as it takes imprecise information into account. Campus social vices leading to violence are recognised as impediment towards the realisation of United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This could be unavoidable with incessant abandonment of building structures particularly on university campuses.

An empty hostel, for example, is a perfect setting for a host of reprehensible illegal activities and societal misfit. Bavani(2009) states that apart from committing serious criminal acts, such a setting can encourage unwarranted defacement or scribbles. There is always a lure for teenagers to break into abandoned buildings which can cause damage to the building and an increase in youth crime and underage delinquencies. There is also the danger of squatters occupying the building and metal thieves targeting the building to strip out things such as wiring and piping. For example, when a building property has been raised and later abandoned, it adds no aesthetic values, pleasures and contributions to a campus environment instead become eyesores to the area. Furthermore, development projects abandonment contributes to the

effect of wasted resources and loss of tax revenue (Saleeman&Anifowose, 2018) to the government and other groups in the economy. Real property development projects are usually capital intensive and when abandoned and/or left uncompleted, the expected returns are lost and the already deployed capital is apparently wasted. Therefore, every development project should be completed as earmarked.

To achieve SDG 4; which is concerned with ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. The teaching and learning environment has to be convenient and comfortable. According to Chisom, Nwachukwu and Emoh(2018), abandoned building projects have pools of stagnant water which served as a breeding ground for mosquitos and thus a threaten public health. Considering that abandoned buildings damage the landscape, sight-seeing within the vicinity of the campus becomes impaired by this obnoxious situation. The existence of abandoned structures in Nigerian campuses has shown that the positive influence of an aesthetic environment is greatly missed. The aesthetic impact of a building's scenic lookout is greatly influenced by the view it offers, which is determined largely by the landscape features directly visible from observer locations. The negative impact of building abandonment cannot be overemphasised as the situation thwart achievement of several SDGs. Particularly, SDG-9 that dwells on building resilience infrastructure can be achieved when the practice of building abandonment is reduced. It is on this premise that the paper intends to assess the

impact of abandonment on security and health.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey design and employed the use of interviews to elicit information from university staff and students within Makurdi campuses. University campuses in Makurdi for this study are presented as subset of the Nigerian situation. A convenience sampling technique was used to get respondents on campuses where abandoned buildings are predominant. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as an approach to psychological [qualitative research](#) with an idiographic focus was employed. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to analyse the data collected from the interviewees who live close to abandoned buildings within the study area. The results of the interviews were analysed using the methods for analysing open ended data (Creswell, 2012). Transcription was done by representation of audible and visual data into written form as an interpretive process. Results obtained from the analysis were collated and discussed.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on security in Nigerian universities?

In consonance with SDG-11; make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The study elicits impact of campus building abandonments on security of Nigerians university dwellers. Numerous respondents gave their opinion about the

situation on campuses within the study area as discussed below. A key informant from the Benue State University answering research question one above stated that:

First of all, anything or anyone can hide in the abandoned building and be a threat to security of the campus. lastly, leaving the structure empty can lead to a hiding place for bad persons.

Question: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on security in Nigerian universities?

Response: A student at Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi also stated that:

It affects us through theft of stolen items which can be stored there. And the big problem are drug addicts and such makes the campus environment not pleasing to the eye.

Question: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on security in Nigerian universities?

Response: Again, another interviewee from the Benue State University staff quarters said

It affects them, in a way that hoodlums gain access into the building and perform unlawful acts such as drug-taking and the like. So honestly speaking, it affects because these vices can spread to neighbouring households and their children may witness these negative acts which can lead to spoiling their good behaviour and training, and this makes them afraid that their kids may copy this bad behaviour; this what really bothers us regarding the abandoned building in this place.

Question: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on security in Nigerian universities?

Response: A question on the implication of abandoned building for security;

Another interviewee said abandoned building become to be a gathering point for thugs, they take Indian hemp and do bad things in this building. So, you see this is affecting the entire campus because those who don't participate in this behavior may eventually become attracted and this will ruin our students.

Question: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on security in Nigerian universities?

Response: Still on research question one, another respondent at University of Agriculture Makurdi reveals that;

The abandoned building has negative implication on the lives of dwellers in many ways. To mention a few: the gathering of young men in the place is usually not a good thing. Mostly, they engage in cultism activities, gang raping, vandalism, snatching of valuable from both innocent lecturers and students.

Question: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on security in Nigerian universities?

Response: On the contrary, a student at the State University Makurdi responding on the influence of campus building abandonments on security;

Honestly speaking, the abandoned buildings have not affected the security of the area because they

have security on campus. So, it has not adversely affected the dwellers. However, he posited that hoodlums who go into the building for nefarious acts is what bothers them in the hostel.

Question: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on security in Nigerian universities?

Response: An informant from one of the universities responded on the influence of campus building abandonments on security;

Yes indeed, there are crimes such rape, arms robbery, drugs related crimes, fornication and adultery. They happen and anywhere there is such an abandoned building structure it can happen as was evident here on this campus; this has happened to us.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on health in Nigerian universities?

In line with SDG-3; Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages. The study elicited information on the impact of campus building abandonments on health in Nigerian universities and result revealed that:

These kinds of abandoned buildings should not be allowed especially because the abandoned building can house reptiles like snakes, turtles, lizards among others, creation of environmental pollution that causes diseases. The abandoned buildings breed snakes. And you can see that a snake is dangerous to public health.

Question: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on health in Nigerian universities?

Response: Another interviewee at Benue State University, Makurdi, said;

It breeds mosquitoes which consequently bring about health challenges such as malaria.

Question: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on health in Nigerian universities?

Response: A student at the University of Agriculture Makurdi said:

any form of dirt, such as trash and dead animals are always found in the uncompleted building affect the campus with the bad smell.

Question: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on health in Nigerian universities?

Response: In the first campus of the Benue State University, Makurdi, a lecturer asserted that;

abandoned building it negatively affects the lives of people by posing as a threat. Firstly, as one is returning from his lectures one may not know that an attacker could be hiding inside the abandoned building. Such kinds of acts or even stolen items may be stored there. Drug addicts and all these bad things happen in abandoned buildings. So because of that, the unoccupied building has no use at all as can only cause health problems.

Question: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on health in Nigerian universities?

Response: One of the key informants stated that;

The structures here are aligned but if you come to the front of the abandoned building it is disgusting, there is urine, faeces, dead animals and refuse inside; the place is not pleasing to look at and poses serious threat to public health.

Question: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on health in Nigerian universities?

Response: At the second campus of the Benue State University, Makurdi, an interviewee said;

Here's the abandoned building and refuse beside it. If not for the refuse, the area should have looked neat. But because of this dilapidated abandoned building, there is trash all over the place that is always burning in open air. It is causing health challenge.

Question: What is the influence of campus building abandonments on health in Nigerian universities?

Response: Again, it was gathered from a staff of the University of Agriculture Makurdi that;

It is a place which is old and being old, it has become a haven for dangerous animals; snakes and scorpions. And again, it has become a site for defecation used by some people. The odour emanating from the abandoned

building is a source of discomfort for both students and staff, the open defecation attracts diseases. Furthermore, these young boys who gather there indulge in drug-abuse of dangerous substances and they also bring in women of free virtue.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that abandoned buildings are gathering points for thugs, who take Indian hemp and engage in diverse social vices in the structures. This affects the entire campus because students who do not participate in this behaviour may eventually become attracted and this will ruin their studentship. This finding is in agreement with Bavani (2009) who avers that leaving the structure empty can lead to a hiding place for criminal elements. Abandoned buildings pose a combination of risks as criminals use them as a hideout. Supporting this, Akpan (2010) opines that criminals are never far from those surroundings. The finding also reveals that criminal element always engage in cultism activities, gang raping, snatching of valuable from both innocent lecturers and students.

On the other hand, it causes a lot of security problems such as aiding criminals or hoodlums' access into the campuses to perform unlawful acts such as drug-taking, engage in acts of rape among others. It was also revealed that abandoned structures affect the physical environment within the campus, for example, the gathering of bushes, as a distortion of campus master-plan, aesthetics, functionality of facilities, security and other landscaping considerations are affected. In discussing

abandoned buildings effects on the security within the campus, respondents revealed that issues of vandalism and trespassing are common within the study area.

The study found that these abandoned buildings should not be allowed especially because the abandoned buildings can house reptiles like snakes, turtles, lizards among others, creation of environmental pollution that causes diseases. The abandoned buildings breed snakes. And you can see that a snake is dangerous to public health. The study also found that abandoned buildings harbour urine, faeces, dead animals and refuse which make the university environment unpleasant to look at and create associated health complications. This is in agreement with Asaju (2022) which explicitly extended the use of group model building to understand, predict and potentially influence the processes which support the resilience of health systems in contexts of adversity. A comprehensive approach to health promotion requires changing the practices of building abandonment that have widespread detrimental effects on health rather than solely changing the habits of individuals. Further progress in this field requires building new structures for health promotion, new systems for risk reduction and greater emphasis on health policy initiatives on Nigerian campuses. University structures need to be critically analysed in order to ascertain their effects on security and health impacts right from the briefs and design stage before embarking on construction in order to avoid building abandonments. With stringent measures towards preventing

building abandonment, achievement of SDG-9 will be greatly enhanced.

Conclusion

The study revealed that abandoned campus buildings disturb the conducive environment on campuses, for example, the gathering of bushes, distortion of campus master plan, aesthetics, functionality of facilities, security and other landscaping considerations are affected. Campus building abandonment harbour urine, faeces, dead animals and refuse which create health challenges to dwellers. The implication of this study to the nation, state, educators, students and other relevant stakeholders is the security and health challenge posed by these structures which avert the smooth attainment of sustainable development goals 3, 4, 9 and 11. There is an urgent need to complete these structures, make them habitable as well as allocate to the end-users. This will curb the effect of visual defects on the project site; eliminate distortions of the landscape/urban planning, limit structural failure of buildings, curtail environmental pollution, reduction health problems, and threat to lives/insecurity and buoy economic activities among others on Nigerian university campuses.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The University management should ensure that all abandoned building projects on campus in their possession, and even those privately owned are given

good environmental sanitation at regular intervals to ensure negative health implications associated with campus building abandonment is reduced.

2. The University management ensure that contracts for development projects should routinely and duly be awarded to capable hands that should be able to carry out timely execution, in order to ensure a timely execution of projects in a bid to avert the security threats posed by incessant campus building abandonment.

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