

Engaging Stakeholders in Urban Planning and Decision-Making Processes in Enugu State: A Collaborative Approach for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Urban planning is essential for sustainable and inclusive development in rapidly urbanizing areas. In Enugu State, Nigeria, inadequate stakeholder engagement severely undermines transparency, accountability, and effective policy outcomes. This study assesses the extent and challenges of stakeholder participation in urban planning in Enugu metropolis, with a population of 1,029,400, data were collected from 625 respondents using stratified and purposive sampling through structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and field observations. Quantitative analysis employed frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and Chi-square tests. The findings reveal minimal and largely symbolic stakeholder involvement in the urban planning process. Superficial engagement practices and structural challenges—such as poor communication, lack of civic education, elite dominance, and top-down decision-making—hinder effective participation. The study concludes that inadequate stakeholder engagement compromises the legitimacy and responsiveness of urban planning in Enugu State. It urges the establishment of inclusive participatory frameworks, genuine collaboration in decision-making, and enhanced civic education to promote equitable and sustainable urban development.

INTRODUCTION

Urban planning is critical in shaping the dynamics of our urban environments, providing a framework for governmental authorities to manage land use, infrastructure development, and service delivery effectively. In Nigeria, the rapid urbanization, rural-to-urban migration, and population growth are pressing challenges that necessitate strong urban planning (Olajide, Agunbiade, and Bishi, 2020). Cities like Enugu face significant pressures regarding housing, transportation, and public services, underscoring the need for comprehensive and inclusive planning strategies. Globally, stakeholder engagement has become a vital component of effective urban planning, emphasizing the involvement of all relevant parties—government bodies, civil organizations, local communities, and private developers—throughout the planning process (Omisore, Adebayo, and Olowoporoku, 2022). This involvement enhances transparency and trust while increasing the chances of sustainable outcomes. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, stakeholder engagement often lacks authenticity and effectiveness, resulting in tokenistic actions that do not foster real change (Agbola and Agunbiade, 2021). National and international frameworks, including the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act (1992) and Sustainable Development Goal 11, emphasize inclusive planning practices. However, agencies such as the Enugu Capital Territory Development Authority (ECTDA) frequently carry out necessary stakeholder engagement as merely symbolic efforts (Ezeh and Ikejiofor, 2023). This neglects crucial perspectives from women, youth, and informal settlers, undermining the equity of planning outcomes. Despite numerous studies calling for enhanced stakeholder participation, much research has been focused on megacities like Lagos and

Abuja, leaving mid-sized cities like Enugu underserved (Oduwaye, 2021). Furthermore, discussions on participation often fall short, engaging stakeholders primarily during initial consultations with little ongoing feedback (Uzonwanne and Nwokoro, 2022). These shortcomings highlight the need for a focused investigation into participatory practices in cities like Enugu. This study aims to examine the nature, extent, and barriers to stakeholder engagement in urban planning and decision-making in Enugu State. By providing empirical insights on who participates, their involvement stages, and their influence, this research will address existing knowledge gaps and offer impactful policy recommendations for more inclusive urban planning practices in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite growing advocacy for inclusive urban planning in Nigeria, Enugu State shows a significant gap between policy and practice. Urban development initiatives are often implemented with minimal consultation, leading to public resistance, resident displacement, and distrust in planning institutions. While agencies claim to involve stakeholders, these efforts are typically superficial, characterized by limited scope, poor timing, inadequate communication, and exclusion of marginalized voices.

Additionally, existing studies on stakeholder participation tend to focus on macro-level issues or larger cities, leaving mid-tier areas like Enugu underexplored. The few studies that address participation lack critical analysis of processes and power dynamics, resulting in insufficient empirical evidence about stakeholders' experiences in Enugu State.

This gap hampers effective urban planning and policy formulation. Without detailed data on stakeholder engagement, it is difficult to create reforms that genuinely empower communities. Therefore, this study aims to provide insights into stakeholder engagement in Enugu's urban planning processes.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to examine stakeholder engagement in urban planning and decision-making in Enugu State. The specific objectives include:

1. Assessing the extent of stakeholder participation in urban planning.
2. Examining the impact of superficial engagement on planning outcomes.
3. Identifying challenges that limit effective stakeholder engagement.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are stakeholders involved in urban planning in Enugu State?
2. How does superficial engagement affect urban planning outcomes?
3. What challenges limit effective stakeholder participation in the planning process?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Stakeholder engagement involves actively including individuals, groups, or organizations affected by planning decisions. Omisore et al. (2022) highlight the importance of two-way communication for effective participation between planning authorities and stakeholders, ensuring decisions reflect local knowledge and needs. Agbola and Agunbiade (2021) stress that engagement should enable active participation, but in many Nigerian cities like Enugu, it's limited due to political influence and weak frameworks. This study sees stakeholder engagement as a continuum from information-sharing to full citizen empowerment.

Urban planning is the process of land development and infrastructure organization, focusing on sustainable urban environments. According to Olajide et al. (2020), Nigeria's planning has

evolved from colonial master plans to fragmented systems lacking inclusivity. Urban planning addresses housing, transportation, and social inclusion but struggles, especially in the Global South, with informal urbanism and political interference (Watson, 2019). Unegbu et al. (2024) note that poor coordination and exclusion hinder effective implementation. Oduwaye (2021) emphasizes the need for participatory processes, which this study defines as integrating public input at all planning stages.

Decision-making in urban planning encompasses the structured processes for setting development priorities and implementing projects. Ezech and Ikejiofor (2023) argue that participatory decision-making fosters transparency and public ownership. However, in Nigeria, processes are often dominated by elite interests, as highlighted by Uzonwanne and Nwokoro (2022), leading to non-inclusive decision-making. This study views decision-making as collaborative and transparent, acknowledging that it is political and influenced by power dynamics (Acheampong and Ibrahim, 2021). In many Nigerian cities, decisions are made without adequate community input, resulting in public discontent and project resistance. As noted by Idemudia and Olorunfemi (2022), a lack of transparency limits citizen participation and trust in local governance.

Participation is essential for effectively engaging citizens and interest groups in the planning process, particularly when it comes to formulating and implementing policies that directly impact them. This engagement can take various forms, ranging from passive receipt of information to active co-decision-making. While Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (1969) lays the groundwork for understanding involvement, scholars like Olowoporoku and Adebayo (2022) have refined this framework to address the contemporary realities of African urban planning. They assert that true participation necessitates early engagement, access to vital information, and genuine opportunities to influence outcomes.

Stakeholder participation is not a mere formality; it encompasses the active involvement of stakeholders at critical stages of a project or decision-making process through public hearings, consultations, and surveys. This process emphasizes the importance of allowing stakeholders to express their opinions or give feedback on established plans. In contrast, stakeholder engagement represents a broader, ongoing commitment to establishing long-term relationships with stakeholders. It requires their continuous involvement throughout all stages of planning and ensures that their contributions meaningfully shape outcomes. This dynamic approach is rooted in partnership and collaboration rather than superficial consultation (Omisore et al., 2022).

Agbola and Agunbiade (2021) convincingly argue that stakeholder engagement is inherently more democratic and effective. It builds trust, promotes accountability, and leads to sustainable urban development outcomes. In Enugu State, if citizens are simply invited to comment on a draft master plan during a one-off meeting, this is merely participation. However, when citizens are engaged from the beginning, co-develop the plan, and are involved throughout multiple stages of planning, monitoring, and feedback, this is genuine engagement.

Currently, participation in Enugu is often restricted to public hearings held after plans have been drafted, significantly limiting community influence. Consequently, for this study, we define participation not as a singular event but as an ongoing process integrated into each stage of urban planning, from agenda-setting to evaluation.

Theoretical Framework

The framework based on Arnstein's Ladder of Participation and Collaborative Planning Theory provides a strong basis for analyzing stakeholder engagement in urban planning in Enugu State. Arnstein's model evaluates stakeholder influence, while Healey's theory

outlines conditions for effective engagement. Together, these frameworks clearly show that stakeholder engagement enhances planning decisions and development outcomes in the area.

Empirical Review

Leo Olagbaye, Odeyinka, and Rathnasiri (2023) explored the roles of stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable housing initiatives in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study garnered 203 responses, achieving a response rate of 78%. Primary data on stakeholders' awareness of their responsibilities in sustainable housing were gathered. The analysis of the collected data utilized mean ranking analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The research highlighted significant contributions from key stakeholders towards sustainable housing and underscored the necessity for improved coordination among them.

In a similar vein, Amatari and Gunn (2024) performed a survey with 250 participants in rural Nigeria to evaluate the success of participatory planning in fostering environmental resilience. Through ANOVA statistical analysis, the findings indicated that merely 21% of participants were informed about environmental regulations, although over 80% showed a willingness to participate. The authors concluded that awareness campaigns led by the government and more comprehensive engagement strategies are critical for achieving sustainable development.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for systematically collecting and analyzing data related to the current state of stakeholder engagement in Enugu State urban planning processes.

The study area is Enugu urban, the capital city of Enugu State, located in the South-Eastern region of Nigeria. Enugu urban comprise three major local government areas: Enugu North, Enugu South, and Enugu East. This area is characterized by high population density, rapid urbanization, and mixed-income neighbourhoods, ranging from high-income estates to informal settlements. Enugu urban has experienced persistent challenges related to urban planning and redevelopment, resulting in frequent demolition of structures in some parts of the city.

The population of this study is therefore 1,029,400 people of the three local governments in Enugu Urban (i.e. Enugu East 397,700; Enugu North 347,500; Enugu South 284,200) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022 Enugu State Projected Population).

A sample size of six hundred and twenty five (625) was calculated using Yamane (1967) formula with 4% error margin. The sample size for each local government was determined using proportional allocation formula which gave us 241 for Enugu East, 212 for Enugu North, 172 for Enugu South. The respondents were selected using a two-stage sampling technique. In the first stage, stratified sampling was used to categorize Enugu urban into three local governments: Enugu East, Enugu North, and Enugu South Local Government Areas. In the second stage, purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the sample for each local government area. The researcher used this technique to ensure that only those with cognate information were sampled such as government officials, urban planners, traditional leaders, community-based organisations, residents, private developers, and civil society actors among others.

The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was designed with closed-ended questions in a Likert scale point to collect quantitative data on the current state of stakeholder engagement in Enugu State urban planning processes. In-depth interviews were also conducted with some stakeholders to gain qualitative insights into institutional challenges, administrative issues, and policy implementation. Observational data

were also collected to assess the current state of stakeholder engagement in Enugu State urban planning processes.

Data analysis employed statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean score, and Chi-square analysis. The researcher organized raw data from respondents, determining frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. A mean score above 3.0 indicates agreement, while below 3.0 shows disagreement. These results framed the research questions. Hypotheses were tested using Chi-square analysis at a 0.05 significance level. When the computed Chi-square value surpassed the table value, the alternate hypothesis was accepted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study meticulously examined the role of stakeholders engagement in urban planning and decision-making processes in Enugu State, Nigeria

RESULT

Table 1: Mean score on extent are stakeholders involved in urban planning process in Enugu State

S/N	Items	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean	Dec
1	Urban planning process in Enugu State involves a wide range of stakeholders (e.g. government, professionals, residents, private developers)	52 10% 208	41 8% 164	34 7% 102	265 51% 530	122 24 %	514 100% 1126	2.2	Disagree
2	People aware of opportunities available for public participation in urban planning decisions in Enugu State	51 10% 255	23 4% 92	32 6% 96	302 59% 604	106 21 %	514 100% 1354	2.6	Disagree
3	Government agencies in Enugu State actively seek input from all stakeholders during urban planning exercises	54 11% 270	38 7% 152	23 4% 69	281 55% 562	118 23 %	514 100% 1171	2.3	Disagree
4	Opinions of residents, private developers and community leaders are taken seriously in planning and development projects.	48 9% 240	27 5% 108	40 8% 120	312 61% 624	87 17 %	514 100% 1179	2.3	Disagree
5	Public hearings and consultations on urban planning issues are conducted regularly and transparently	92 18% 460	47 9% 188	30 6% 90	319 62% 632	26 5% 26	514 100% 1396	2.7	Disagree
6	There is sufficient awareness and education among citizens about their roles in the urban planning process.	52 10% 208	41 8% 164	34 7% 102	265 51% 530	122 24 %	514 100% 1126	2.2	Disagree
7	The urban planning process in Enugu State is dominated by government officials with little room for citizen input.	312 61% 1560	87 17% 348	40 8% 120	48 9% 96	27 5% 27	514 100% 2365	4.6	Agree
Total Average Mean Score							19/7	2.7	Disagree

The analysis presented in Table 1 above shows that mean scores of the first six items are below the cutoff point of 3.0 indicating disagree. While the mean scores for the last item is above 3.0 depicting agree. This shows that all the items are indicatives that stakeholders are not actively involved in urban planning process in Enugu State. The overall averages mean score of 2.7 is a strong affirmation that the items are indicatives that stakeholders are not actively involved in urban planning process in Enugu State.

Table 2: Chi-Square (χ^2) Contingency

Observed Frequency (o)	Expected Frequency (e)	(o-e)	(o-e) ²	$\frac{(o-e)^2}{e}$
27	29.44	-0.44	0.1936	0.79
20	20.98	-0.98	0.9604	0.05
20	17.29	-5.29	27.9841	1.62
62	22.73	-5.73	32.8329	0.44
44	17.54	-6.54	42.7716	2.44
15	32.68	-0.68	0.4624	0.01
3	26.93	-11.93	6.0025	1.28
11	35.40	-14.4	207.36	0.86
81	27.17	2.00	4.000	1.33
35	22.39	0.64	0.4096	0.30
24	14.46	19.54	381.8116	1.40
29	19.00	25.00	625.00	0.89
9	9.63	16.37	267.9769	0.83
95	7.94	-0.94	0.8836	0.11
47	10.43	-6.43	41.3449	1.96
				$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum(o-e)^2}{e} = 14.30$

Since the computed value of chi-square (χ^2) of 14.30 is less than (<) the table value of chi-square (χ^2) of 15.51, hypothesis one is rejected. The statistical analysis therefore indicated that stakeholders are not significantly involved in the various stages of urban planning in Enugu State.

Table 3: Mean score on the effect of stakeholder engagement on the effectiveness of urban planning outcomes in Enugu State.

S/ N	Items	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean	Dec
1	Urban projects are more successful with stakeholder participation but this is poorly practiced in Enugu State	265 51% 132 5	122 24% 488	34 7% 102	52 10 %	41 8% 82	514 2108 100%	4.1	Agree
2	Stakeholder engagement improves the quality and sustainability of urban developments but is poorly implemented in Enugu urban	302 59% 151 0	106 21% 412	32 6% 96	51 10 %	23 4% 23	514 100% 2005	3.9	Agree
3	Poor stakeholder engagement leads to conflict, delays, and failure of urban projects in Enugu State	281 55% 140 4	118 23% 472	23 4% 69	54 11 %	38 7% 38	514 100% 2158	4.2	Agree
4	Participation is legally mandated but poorly implemented which leads to poor plan execution and weak public support	312 61% 156 0	87 17% 348	40 8% 120	48 9% 96	27 5% 27	514 100% 2365	4.6	Agree
5	Enugu State urban planning process lacks transparency and effective public participation.	293 57% 146 5	108 21% 432	23 4% 69	56 11 %	34 7% 68	514 100% 2108	4.1	Agree
6	Symbolic stakeholder involvement increases lack of public trust in government-led urban projects in Enugu state	319 62% 159 5	92 18% 368	26 5% 78	47 9% 94	30 6% 90	514 100% 2005	3.9	Agree
7	More participatory approaches in urban planning would lead to better living conditions for Enugu residents	265 51% 131 0	122 24% 488	34 7% 102	52 10 %	41 8% 41	514 100% 2158	4.2	Agree
Total Average Mean Score							29/7	4.3	Agree

The statistical analysis in Table 3 indicates that all the items have mean scores above the cutoff point of 3.00 indicating agree. This shows that all the items are the role of stakeholder engagement on the effectiveness of urban planning outcomes in Enugu State if effectively practiced. The overall averages mean score of 4.3 is a strong indication that the effect of stakeholder engagement on the effectiveness of urban planning outcomes in Enugu State if effectively practiced.

Table 4: Chi-Square (χ^2) Contingency

Observed Frequency (o)	Expected Frequency (e)	(o-e)	(o-e) ²	$\frac{(o-e)^2}{e}$
31	18.42	12.58	158.2564	8.73
55	30.89	24.11	581.2921	18.82
13	12.25	0.75	0.5625	0.04
52	16.16	35.84	1284.5056	76.49
22	21.77	0.23	0.0529	0.01
38	22.36	-0.36	0.1296	0.01
53	37.49	-12.49	156.0001	4.16
17	15.48	5.52	30.4704	1.97
28	19.61	3.39	11.4921	0.59
9	13.07	3.93	15.4449	1.18
59	24.22	-0.22	0.0484	0.00
41	45.61	8.39	70.3921	1.54
27	16.77	-4.77	22.7529	1.36
44	21.24	-4.24	17.9776	0.85
25	20.84	-4.16	17.3056	1.22
				$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum(o-e)^2}{e} = 116.02$

Since the calculated value of chi-square (χ^2) of 116.02 is greater than ($>$) the table value of chi-square of 15.51, the second hypothesis is accepted. The statistical analysis therefore affirmed that superficial stakeholder engagement has a significant negative effect on the effectiveness of urban planning outcomes in Enugu State.

Table 5: Mean score on major challenges limiting effective stakeholder participation in urban planning processes in Enugu State

S/N	Items	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean	Dec
1	Urban planning in Enugu state largely follows top-down approach where decisions are made by government agencies and then presented to the public for compliance	281 55% 1404	118 23% 472	23 4% 69	54 11% 108	38 7% 38	514 100% 2158	4.1	Agree
2	Poor dissemination of planning information, jargon-filled documents, and lack of civic education prevent meaningful engagement	312 61% 1560	87 17% 348	40 8% 120	48 9% 96	27 5% 27	514 100% 2365	3.9	Agree
3	Traditional elites and political stakeholders dominate public forums, resulting in skewed stakeholders representation	293 57% 1465	108 21% 432	23 4% 69	56 11% 112	34 7% 68	514 100% 2108	4.2	Agree
4	Urban planning in Enugu is frequently influenced by political considerations	319 62% 1595	92 18% 368	26 5% 104	47 9% 188	30 6% 120	514 100% 2645	4.6	Agree

	and vested interests.	1595	368	78	94	90	2005		
5	Agencies like ECTDA and Ministry of Lands and Urban Development lack clear guidelines and enforcement mechanisms for inclusive participation	265 51% 1310	122 24% 488	34 7% 102	52 10% 104	41 8% 41	514 100% 2158	4.1	Agree
6	Inter-agency rivalry and unclear mandates hamper coordinated stakeholder engagement in Enugu state	265 51% 1325	122 24% 488	34 7% 102	52 10% 104	41 8% 82	365 1415 100%	3.9	Agree
7	Government processes are often slow, opaque, and riddled with red tape, which discourages citizens and civil society groups from sustained engagement	302 59% 1510	106 21% 412	32 6% 96	51 10% 102	23 4% 23	365 1515 100%	4.2	Agree
Total Average Mean Score							29/7	4.1	Agree

The statistical analysis in Table 5 indicates that all the items have mean scores above the cutoff point of 3.00 indicating agree. This shows that all the items are the major challenges limiting effective stakeholder participation in urban planning processes in Enugu State. The overall average mean score of 4.1 is a strong indication that the items are the major challenges limiting effective stakeholder participation in urban planning processes in Enugu State.

Table 6: Chi-Square (χ^2) Contingency

Observed Frequency (o)	Expected Frequency (e)	(o-e)	(o-e) ²	$\frac{(o-e)^2}{e}$
51	12.75	-0.44	0.1936	0.79
54	17.54	-0.98	0.9604	0.05
23	14.46	-5.29	27.9841	1.62
34	19.00	-5.73	32.8329	1.44
11	20.98	-6.54	42.7716	2.44
59	7.02	14.98	224.4004	31.97
37	5.79	19.22	369.216225	63.82
19	7.61	13.40	179.426025	23.59
18	11.772	15.23	231.891984	19.70
12	9.70	3.30	10.883401	1.12.
71	17.29	19.54	381.8116	26.40
55	22.73	25.00	625.00	32.89
13	9.63	8.37	70.0569	7.27
37	7.94	9.06	82.0836	10.34
20	10.43	-6.43	41.3449	3.96
				$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum(o-e)^2}{e} = 227.40$

Since the calculated value of chi-square (χ^2) of 227.40 is greater than ($>$) the table value of chi-square of 15.51, hypothesis three is accepted. The statistical analysis therefore affirmed that there are significant challenges limiting effective stakeholder engagement in urban planning in Enugu State.

DISCUSSIONS

The descriptive analysis in Table 1 confirms that the urban planning process in Enugu State fails to engage a diverse range of stakeholders, including government officials, professionals, residents, and private developers. A lack of awareness among the public about opportunities for participation in urban planning decisions is evident. Furthermore, government agencies in Enugu State do not actively solicit input from all stakeholders during urban planning processes. This oversight results in the opinions of residents, private developers, and community leaders being largely ignored in planning and development projects. Public hearings and consultations on urban planning issues are neither conducted regularly nor transparently, reflecting a serious deficiency in civic engagement.

These findings are consistent with the observations of Agbola and Agunbiade (2021), who assert that stakeholder participation in urban planning in Nigeria is frequently inconsistent, symbolic, and often confined to the early stages of project development. Additionally, a study by Uzonwanne and Nwokoro (2022) emphasizes that the lack of continuous and meaningful involvement undermines the fundamental principles of participatory planning, which prioritize inclusivity, feedback loops, and community empowerment. In Enugu, planning agencies are predominantly adopting a top-down approach, presenting decisions to the public for mere compliance rather than fostering true co-creation. This approach starkly contradicts the participatory ideals outlined in the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act (1992) and international frameworks such as SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda.

The findings from the Table 2 clearly demonstrate that stakeholders are significantly excluded from the various stages of urban planning in Enugu State.

The results of the statistical analysis of Table 3 and 4 revealed that superficial stakeholder engagement has a significant negative effect on the effectiveness of urban planning outcomes in Enugu State. The study found that urban projects are more successful when there is active stakeholder participation; however, this practice is poorly implemented in Enugu State. Effective stakeholder engagement enhances the quality and sustainability of urban developments, yet it is inadequately executed in the region. Poor stakeholder engagement leads to conflicts, delays, and failures in urban projects within Enugu State. Although participation is legally mandated, its implementation is lacking, resulting in poor plan execution and weak public support. Moreover, the urban planning process in Enugu State suffers from a lack of transparency and effective public participation. The limited involvement of stakeholders fosters a lack of public trust in government-led urban projects.

The findings suggest that adopting more participatory approaches in urban planning would significantly improve living conditions for residents of Enugu. These conclusions align with the views of Omisore et al. (2022), who emphasize that participatory planning must extend beyond mere consultation to include shared decision-making and accountability. Furthermore, a study by Uzonwanne and Nwokoro (2022) revealed that ineffective engagement erodes trust between communities and planning institutions, diminishes the legitimacy of planning authorities, and reduces the responsiveness of planning policies to the needs of diverse groups. As a result, urban development may be technically sound but socially unaccepted or poorly implemented.

The results of the statistical analysis in Table 5 and 6 revealed significant challenges that limit effective stakeholder engagement in urban planning in Enugu State. The descriptive analysis highlighted that urban planning in Enugu primarily follows a top-down approach, where decisions are made by government agencies and subsequently presented to the public for compliance. Issues such as poor dissemination of planning information, the use of jargon-filled documents, and a lack of civic education hinder meaningful engagement. Additionally, traditional elites and political stakeholders dominate public forums, leading to skewed representation among stakeholders.

Urban planning in Enugu is often influenced by political considerations and vested interests. Agencies like the Enugu Capital Territory Development Authority (ECTDA) and the Ministry of Lands and Urban Development lack clear guidelines and enforcement mechanisms for inclusive participation. Inter-agency rivalry and unclear mandates further impede coordinated stakeholder engagement in the state. Moreover, government processes tend to be slow, opaque, and plagued by red tape, discouraging citizens and civil society groups from sustained involvement.

These findings align with earlier studies, such as those by Oduwaye (2021), which argue that effective participation necessitates not only open forums but also the removal of structural, linguistic, and cultural barriers that restrict access for diverse stakeholders. The situation in Enugu reflects broader trends in Nigeria, where planning institutions often lack the capacity, willingness, or frameworks to support inclusive governance in urban development.

Overall, the findings indicate a significant gap between policy ideals and actual practices in stakeholder engagement within Enugu State's urban planning processes. While legal and institutional frameworks mandate public participation, the implementation is largely symbolic. Bridging this gap will require a deliberate shift towards inclusive governance, improved communication, and structural reforms aimed at democratizing the planning processes in Nigerian cities like Enugu.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study unmistakably demonstrate that stakeholder engagement in urban planning and decision-making processes in Enugu State is critically inadequate and ineffective. Stakeholders are largely sidelined, and this, combined with significant challenges such as a top-down planning approach, poor information dissemination, lack of civic education, and the overwhelming influence of political and traditional elites, severely compromises the effectiveness and inclusiveness of urban planning outcomes. The persistent interference of political interests, vested agendas, inter-agency rivalry, and vague mandates only compounds these problems.

These deficiencies not only erode public trust and participation but also result in planning decisions that neglect the diverse needs and priorities of the wider population. It is imperative to cultivate meaningful stakeholder engagement to ensure sustainable, equitable, and community-responsive urban development in Enugu State.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

- 1) To enhance stakeholder involvement in urban planning, the Enugu State government should establish inclusive participatory mechanisms at all stages of the planning process. This can be accomplished by creating stakeholder advisory committees, conducting regular public consultations, and incorporating community input early in the planning and policy development stages.
- 2) To address the negative effects of superficial stakeholder engagement, there needs to be a transition from symbolic participation to genuine collaboration. Urban planning authorities should adopt participatory planning models that empower stakeholders to co-create and influence outcomes, ensuring their input is not only acknowledged but also meaningfully incorporated into final decisions.
- 3) To tackle the challenges that hinder effective stakeholder engagement, the government and relevant agencies should invest in civic education and capacity building. They should also simplify planning documents for better public understanding and improve the dissemination of information through accessible channels. Additionally, measures should be implemented to ensure balanced representation by regulating the influence of political and traditional elites in public forums.

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