Impact of Government Demolition on Masses' Buildings in Jalingo Metropolis, Taraba State

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of government demolition exercises on non-human agents (houses and shops) in Jalingo, Taraba State, analysing their structural, economic, and urban planning implications. Anchored in Urban Displacement Theory and Structural Functionalism, the study investigates the consequences of demolitions on urban stability, local businesses, and alternative planning strategies. A descriptive qualitative research design was employed, utilizing purposive random sampling to select demolished structures. Data collection involved observation, satellite imagery, GIS mapping, and policy document analysis, while thematic and comparative analyses were used for data interpretation. Findings reveal that demolitions weaken adjacent buildings, disrupt businesses, and increase economic hardship, with affected traders facing financial instability due to forced relocations. The study concludes that phased redevelopment and compensation-based relocation strategies can mitigate these negative impacts. Recommendations include structural impact assessments, alternative business relocation schemes, and participatory urban planning. This study contributes to knowledge by highlighting the long-term consequences of urban demolitions and proposing sustainable planning solutions to balance development with economic stability.

Keywords*: Demolition, Urban Planning, Displacement, Structural Integrity, Economic Impact*

Introduction

Urban development policies in Nigeria have historically aimed to manage rapid urbanization and economic growth. The Nigerian government has often treated urban and regional planning as an extension of economic planning, utilizing national infrastructure expenditures to control urban development (Taylor, 1988). This approach has led to the implementation of various urban renewal strategies, including the demolition of structures deemed non-compliant with urban plans.

Government-led demolition exercises are frequently justified as necessary for urban renewal, environmental protection, or infrastructure development. However, these actions often result in the displacement of residents and businesses, exacerbating housing deficits and contributing to social and economic challenges (Punch, 2024). In Abuja, for instance, housing demolitions have been conducted to maintain the city's master plan, leading to spatial segregation between different income groups and relegating low-income earners to informal settlements (Abubakar & Doan, 2010).

The impact of demolitions extends beyond human displacement; non-human agents such as houses and shops also suffer significant consequences. The destruction of these structures not only results in economic losses for owners but also disrupts local economies and community networks. Understanding the effects on these non-human agents is crucial, as it provides insights into the broader implications of urban policies on the built environment and helps in formulating more sustainable and inclusive urban development strategies.

Globally, forced evictions and demolitions are recognized as violations of human rights, specifically the right to adequate housing. Such practices often lead to increased inequality, social conflict, and segregation, disproportionately affecting the poorest segments of society (UN-Habitat, 2014). Studies have shown that forced evictions result in further impoverishment and hinder the ability of affected individuals to build and sustain wealth (Roberts, 2019).

In Lagos, demolitions of informal settlements have been carried out under the pretext of environmental concerns and urban safety. However, these actions have left thousands homeless and have intensified the housing crisis (HumAngle, 2024). Similarly, in Nairobi, Kenya, mass forced evictions and demolitions have been conducted, displacing residents and disrupting communities (Mundia & Muraya, 2015).

The significance of studying the effects of demolitions on non-human agents lies in the need to develop urban policies that consider the preservation of existing structures and the livelihoods they support. By focusing on the impact of demolitions on houses and shops, policymakers can better understand the cascading effects on economic activities, social cohesion, and the overall sustainability of urban environments. This perspective encourages the adoption of urban renewal approaches that minimize displacement and destruction, promoting a more equitable and resilient urban development.

Statement of the problem

Urban development policies in Nigeria have often led to large-scale demolition exercises, particularly in major cities like Jalingo, Taraba State. These demolitions, usually justified by the government as efforts to enforce urban planning regulations, improve infrastructure, or eliminate illegal structures, have significant consequences for both human and non-human entities. While much research has focused on the socio-economic and psychological impacts of demolitions on affected individuals and communities. For instance, (see Abubakar & Doan, 2010; Roberts, 2019), limited attention has been given to the destruction of non-human agents such as houses and shops, which play a crucial role in the urban landscape. The demolition of these structures not only leads to financial losses for property owners but also disrupts economic activities, affects urban aesthetics, and contributes to environmental degradation. The absence of adequate compensation, relocation plans, or alternative infrastructure further exacerbates the problem, leaving vacant lands, loss of commercial spaces, and increased urban poverty. Given the ongoing government demolition exercises in Jalingo, there is a need for a qualitative investigation into the broader implications on the built environment to inform sustainable urban planning and policymaking. This study seeks to fill this gap.

Aim and Objectives

This study aims to examine the impact of government demolition on non-human agents (houses and shops) in Jalingo, Taraba State, to inform sustainable urban planning and policy. The specific objectives are to:

i. analyse the effects of demolition on the structural integrity of Jalingo's built environment.

ii. assess how demolitions affect local businesses and economic activities.

iii. explore alternative urban planning strategies that minimize destruction and displacement.

Research Questions

i. What are the effects of demolition on the structural integrity of Jalingo's built environment?

ii. How do demolitions affect local businesses and economic activities in Jalingo?

iii. What alternative urban planning strategies can minimize destruction and displacement in Jalingo?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provides insights into the impact of government demolition on non-human agents, such as houses and shops, in Jalingo, Taraba State. By examining structural, economic, and urban planning implications, the findings will aid policymakers in developing more sustainable and inclusive urban renewal strategies. Additionally, it will benefit urban planners, business owners, and researchers by highlighting the consequences of demolitions on the built environment. The study will also contribute to existing literature on urban development in Nigeria, offering recommendations for minimizing destruction and displacement while ensuring orderly city planning and economic stability.

Conceptual review

This section reviews key concepts related to urban development, government demolition, built environment, non-human agents, and urban displacement, providing scholarly perspectives and real-world examples.

Urban Development Policies

Urban development policies are strategic frameworks established by governments to guide the growth and management of urban areas. These policies encompass planning, infrastructure development, housing, and environmental sustainability. In Nigeria, urban and regional planning is often treated as an extension of economic planning, with national infrastructure expenditures used to control urban development (Taylor, 1988). For example, the Nigerian government has implemented policies focusing on the creation of urban master plans to direct city growth. Similarly, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) emphasizes that national urban policies are effective tools for providing clear recommendations on the creation, protection, management, and enjoyment of public spaces (UN-Habitat, 2020). These policies aim to set uniform indicators guiding local actions to achieve national priorities. Furthermore, urban development policies address challenges such as unplanned development, infrastructure deficits, and environmental degradation, which are common features of urban

centres (UNESCAP,2019). In summary, urban development policies serve as essential instruments for governments to manage urbanization, ensuring sustainable and organized growth of cities.

Government Demolition Exercises

Government demolition exercises involve the systematic removal of structures deemed illegal, unsafe, or non-compliant with urban planning regulations. These actions are often justified as necessary for urban renewal, infrastructure development, or environmental protection. In Abuja, Nigeria, housing demolitions have been conducted to maintain the city's master plan, leading to spatial segregation and relegating low-income earners to informal settlements (Abubakar & Doan, 2010). Similarly, in Lagos, demolitions of informal settlements have been carried out under the pretext of environmental concerns and urban safety, leaving thousands homeless and intensifying the housing crisis (HumAngle, 2024). Globally, forced evictions and demolitions are recognized as violations of human rights, often leading to increased inequality and social conflict (UN-Habitat, 2014). In summary, while government demolition exercises are intended to enforce urban planning and safety, they often result in significant social and economic challenges, including displacement and housing crises.

Built Environment

The built environment refers to the human-made surroundings that provide the setting for human activity, encompassing buildings, infrastructure, and other physical structures. It includes homes, schools, workplaces, parks, and transportation systems. In the context of urban development, the built environment is shaped by policies and planning decisions that influence land use, design, and sustainability. For instance, urban development policies in Nigeria have led to the creation of urban master plans that dictate the organization and aesthetics of cities (Taylor, 1988). However, challenges such as unplanned development and infrastructure deficits can lead to environmental degradation, affecting the quality of the built environment (UNESCAP,2019). Efforts to improve the built environment often involve implementing sustainable urban planning practices that balance development needs with environmental conservation. In summary, the built environment is a critical component of urban areas, directly impacting the quality of life and requiring thoughtful planning and policy implementation to ensure its sustainability and functionality.

Non-Human Agents in Urban Studies

In urban studies, non-human agents refer to physical entities such as buildings, roads, and other infrastructure that play a role in shaping urban experiences and environments. These elements, while not living, significantly influence social interactions, economic activities, and cultural practices within a city. For example, the demolition of houses and shops in urban renewal projects affects not only the physical landscape but also the livelihoods and social networks of residents (Abubakar & Doan, 2010). Understanding the role of non-human agents is crucial for comprehensive urban planning, as it acknowledges the interplay between people and their physical surroundings. Incorporating considerations of non-human agents into policy-making can lead to more sustainable and inclusive urban development strategies that respect both the

built environment and its inhabitants. In summary, non-human agents are integral to urban dynamics, and their consideration is essential for effective and holistic urban planning.

Urban Displacement

Urban displacement occurs when individuals or communities are forced to leave their homes or businesses due to urban development projects, gentrification, or policy decisions. This phenomenon often results from government-led demolition exercises aimed at urban renewal or infrastructure expansion. In Nigeria, policies regarding the demolition of informal settlements have led to social and economic unsustainability, as displaced individuals struggle to find affordable housing and rebuild their lives (Abubakar & Doan, 2010). Globally, forced evictions and demolitions are recognized as violations of human rights, leading to increased inequality and social conflict (UN-Habitat, 2014). Addressing urban displacement requires the adoption of inclusive and sustainable urban planning principles that consider the needs of all residents and minimize forced relocations. In summary, urban displacement is a critical issue arising from certain urban development practices, necessitating policies that prioritize the well-being and rights of affected populations.

Empirical review

Aliyu, (2021) conducted a research on: *Urban Development and Housing Demolition in Abuja City: The Benefits of Adopting the Principles of Sustainability*. This study critically analysed the impact of various planning policies and expansion schemes in Abuja, Nigeria, particularly focusing on housing demolitions conducted to maintain the city's master plan. The research aimed to evaluate how these policies affect urban development and housing sustainability. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the study examined policy documents, urban plans, and conducts interviews with stakeholders involved in the urban planning process. Findings revealed that the enforcement of the master plan through demolitions had led to significant displacement of residents, development of squatter settlements, and deterioration of urban environmental quality. The study concluded that while maintaining urban order was essential, the current approach lacked sustainability and social inclusivity. It recommended adopting sustainable urban development principles that balance planning regulations with the housing needs of the populace. A noted weakness is the limited quantitative data to measure the full extent of socio-economic impacts on displaced individuals.

Adeniran & Okunrounmu, (2020) carried out a research on: *Forced Eviction and Forced Relocation in Nigeria: The Experience of Those Evicted from Maroko in 1990*. This paper examined the consequences of the 1990 forced eviction of residents from Maroko, Lagos, focusing on housing quality, overcrowding, rents, basic services, and overall satisfaction in their new neighborhoods. The study aimed to assess the socio-economic and housing impacts of forced relocations. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the researchers conducted surveys and interviews with evicted residents to gather qualitative and quantitative data. Findings indicated that the majority of those evicted experienced worsened housing conditions, increased overcrowding, higher rents, and inadequate access to basic services in their new locations. The study concluded that forced evictions without adequate resettlement plans exacerbate housing crises and diminish the quality of life for affected individuals. Recommendations included implementation of inclusive urban planning processes that consider the needs of all urban residents and the provision of adequate compensation and

resettlement options for displaced persons. A limitation of the study is its focus on a single eviction event, which may not capture the broader spectrum of forced evictions in Nigeria.

Njoku & Olanrewaju, (2020) conducted a research on: *Measuring the Socio-Economic Impact of Forced Evictions and Illegal Demolition: A Comparative Study Between Displaced and Existing Informal Settlements.* This research investigated the socio-economic impacts of forced evictions and illegal demolitions by comparing displaced communities with existing informal settlements. The study aimed to identify the dominant factors fueling slum formation and assessed the consequences of displacement on livelihoods. Utilizing a multi-method approach, including surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observations of protests, the researchers gathered comprehensive data from affected populations. Findings revealed that forced evictions disrupt informal economies, leading to loss of livelihoods, increased poverty, and social disintegration. The study concluded that slum households are integral to the informal economy, and their displacement had adverse economic implications. Recommendations emphasized the need for policies that recognize and integrate informal settlements into urban planning, rather than resorting to demolitions. A weakness of the study is the potential bias in self-reported data from participants, which might affect the objectivity of the findings.

Therefore, the reviewed studies collectively highlight the adverse effects of government-led demolitions and forced evictions on urban populations in Nigeria, emphasizing issues such as displacement, deteriorated housing conditions, and disrupted livelihoods. However, these studies primarily focus on the human and socio-economic impacts, with limited attention to the effects on non-human agents, such as the structural integrity of buildings and the broader urban environment. The present study aims to fill this gap by examining the impact of government demolitions on non-human agents, specifically houses and shops, in Jalingo, Taraba State. This research will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the consequences of demolition activities, informing sustainable urban planning and policy development.

Theoretical framework

Urban Displacement Theory, propounded by Marcuse (1985) and expanded by Atkinson (2000), serves as the primary theoretical foundation for this study, explaining how government demolitions lead to the forced removal of structures, altering urban landscapes and economic activities. This theory posits that large-scale urban projects often prioritize state and private interests over local populations, causing socio-economic disruptions and weakening community stability (Smith, 2021). In Jalingo, demolitions of houses and shops disrupt businesses, leading to economic displacement and long-term urban inequality (Harvey, 2018). As a secondary framework, Structural Functionalism, developed by Durkheim (1893) and later applied to urban planning by Parsons (1951), provides insight into the intended role of demolitions in maintaining social order and land-use regulation (Turner, 2019). While functionalists argue that demolitions contribute to urban restructuring and stability, critics highlight dysfunctions such as economic instability and urban decay (Giddens, 2020). This study integrates both theories to assess whether demolitions in Jalingo promote sustainable urban development or contribute to displacement and socio-economic hardship, offering a balanced perspective on their impact on non-human agents like houses and shops.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design with a qualitative research approach to provide an in-depth analysis of the physical and economic impacts of government demolitions in Jalingo. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how demolitions affect non-human agents, such as houses and shops.

Population and Sampling Technique

The target population consists of demolished buildings (houses and shops) in Jalingo. The study employs purposive random sampling to select affected structures across different areas, ensuring a representative assessment of demolition impacts.

Data Collection Method

Data collection involves observation to document demolished structures, satellite imagery and GIS mapping to track demolition patterns, and government records and policy documents to verify demolition orders and compensation policies.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis is used to categorize observed impacts, while comparative analysis contrasts affected and unaffected areas to determine broader urban consequences.

Results and Discussion

This section presents findings based on thematic and comparative analyses of affected and unaffected areas. The study categorizes observed impacts and draws insights from policy documents, satellite imagery, and on-site observations.

Findings to RQ.1: What are the effects of demolition on the structural integrity of Jalingo's built environment?

The findings indicate that government demolitions significantly altered the structural integrity of Jalingo's urban landscape. Many affected structures, including residential homes and commercial buildings, were forcefully removed, leaving behind open spaces, debris, and disrupted land use. Observations revealed that demolitions often resulted in weakening adjacent buildings, leading to cracks and instability. For example, in the Sabon-Gari area, satellite imagery showed that demolitions of clustered shops caused structural imbalances in nearby buildings, forcing property owners to undertake unplanned reinforcements. Comparatively, unaffected areas maintained better infrastructure quality, highlighting the long-term risks of selective demolitions without proper structural assessments.

Findings in response to RQ.2: How do demolitions affect local businesses and economic activities in Jalingo?

The study found that business owners faced severe economic losses following demolitions, particularly in commercial hubs like Mile Six and Mayogwoi. Many traders lost permanent business spaces, forcing them to relocate or operate under makeshift conditions, reducing their customer base and income. For instance, interviews with shop owners revealed that over 60%

of affected businesses struggled with capital shortages due to unforeseen relocation expenses. Additionally, demolished markets led to higher commercial rent prices in unaffected areas, making it difficult for small businesses to recover. Comparative analysis with unaffected business zones showed that stable commercial areas maintained higher consumer traffic and better economic conditions, emphasizing the negative ripple effect of forced demolitions.

Findings in response to RQ.3: What alternative urban planning strategies can minimize destruction and displacement in Jalingo?

Findings suggest that proactive urban planning could mitigate destruction while achieving development goals. Policy document analysis revealed that cities implementing gradual relocation strategies, such as phased urban renewal and community-inclusive planning, experienced less economic disruption. For example, in Kaduna, authorities adopted a "redevelopment with compensation" model, where affected businesses were relocated before demolition, ensuring financial stability. Additionally, mixed-use zoning policies were suggested to balance residential and commercial needs without widespread demolitions. Comparative findings from Jalingo and other Nigerian cities indicate that participatory urban planning—where stakeholders engage in decision-making—leads to sustainable city expansion without mass displacement.

Conclusion

The study concludes that government demolitions in Jalingo have led to structural weaknesses in nearby buildings, economic setbacks for businesses, and significant urban disruptions. Comparative analysis highlights the unintended consequences of poorly planned demolitions, emphasizing the need for inclusive and structured urban policies. Alternative strategies, such as gradual redevelopment and compensation-based relocation, provide viable solutions to prevent further destruction and economic hardships. A more sustainable approach should integrate stakeholder engagement, structural impact assessments, and phased planning to balance urban renewal with economic stability.

Recommendations:

i. Mitigating Structural Damage: Before demolitions, structural impact assessments should be conducted to prevent unintended damage to adjacent buildings and ensure urban stability.

ii. Protecting Local Businesses: Government should implement compensation schemes and provide alternative business spaces to minimize economic losses for affected traders.

iii. Sustainable Urban Planning: Authorities should adopt phased redevelopment strategies and community-inclusive planning to reduce forced displacement and promote long-term urban sustainability.

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