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Assessment of First-Year Students Decisions on Housing Preference in the University of Benin, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Decent housing plays a very important role in the formative years of any man's life. Accommodation decisions have become very important in ensuring that man and his immediate family are safe and comfortable. The choice of university accommodation plays a vital role in determining the quality of life the student experiences in the university. Every student needs to put some factors into consideration before making a housing decision. This study aims to explore the factors affecting student's decision on housing preferences in the university of Benin, Nigeria. A total of 120 structured questionnaires were administered to first year students of the faculty of Environmental Sciences and information obtained forms the benchmark on which the result is based. The data was analyzed using the Relative importance index (RII) and frequency distribution tables. Findings showed that, income of parents or sponsors, price of accommodation, gender of other occupants, proximity to classrooms and other places of interest, security, the age of the student, privacy, availability and frequency of supply of utilities, size of the accommodation and the conduciveness of the environment were the most important factors that students considered in making accommodation decisions in the university of Benin as evidenced by their ranking of preference.

Keywords: *Students' accommodation, decision, housing, housing preference, university.*

INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of housing dates back to the Palaeolithic ages, man in his primitive stage as homo-sapiens, incorporated natural materials such as stone, wood, leaves, animal skin, crude and primitive materials for protecting him and his loved ones from the elements of weather elements (Ifesanya, 2003). In recent times, decent housing has become a very integral part of man's happiness, in a bid to satisfy that innermost urge of complete satisfaction and peace of mind, man has evolved from living in primitive dwellings to well designed and built edifices. Waziri (2014) stated that housing is a product of human's enterprise and a significant sector of any economy that is pre-requisite to national socio-economic prosperity. In recent times, the kind of house a person inhabits is used to measure his level of affluence and influence in his immediate society. Jiboye (2009) further stated that, housing has been shown to be one of the best indicators of a person's standard of living and place in the society.

Student accommodation is a residential structure where students reside during their study in a university. According to Amole (2002) student housing or residence can be described as a place where students live independently when in school and a place where they grow educationally while studying. Ranjani et al. (2013) also argued that student accommodation transcends a place to live and grow, but it is an organisation where the students are stakeholders and end users. However, Shoukat et al. (2013) added that tertiary institutions must incorporate student housing or hostels as an integral part of any tertiary institution founded in line with close and corresponding relationship of learning and living. Students need to choose if they would want to live and grow in the school provided accommodation or privately owned and managed students hostels, located within or outside the school environment.

Educational fulfilment has become a very important achievement in present times. The idea that, you can only be successful when educated is a fundamental principle in Nigeria and Africa as a continent. The university is a tertiary institution of learning where students are granted degrees for academic and research excellence. Annually, there is a steady increase in the number of students sitting for entry examinations into the various tertiary institutions in developing countries, to which Nigeria belongs (Sharma 2012). In a bid to meet the yearnings of Nigerian youths, to acquire tertiary education, the federal and state governments have gotten involved in ensuring that, there is a higher institution of learning in every state of the federation. Today, there are, at least, two tertiary institutions in each state of the federation. Despite the intervention of the federal and state governments, the number applications into tertiary institutions are on a steady increase annually. In a bid to meet the educational needs of the youths, private universities, and higher institutions have been licenced and established across the 36 state of the federation. At least, there are 5-10 private universities in each geo-political zone of the country. Despite the increase in the number of higher institutions of learning in Nigeria, there is a huge deficit of applicants on a yearly basis. In a bid to meet the educational needs of the youths and also take advantage of the business opportunity in providing higher education, the federal and state tertiary institutions have increased the number of intake by a whooping 200-300%, without providing an enabling environment to learn and live.

According to Joefsson (2016), between 40% to 50% of cities or towns with universities and colleges, have experienced shortages of student housing in the last 5 years. University accommodation is a major challenge facing students in Nigerian Universities. Aluko (2011) stated that the deplorable state of students housing is a major challenge for students studying in Nigerian institution, the students have to contend with overcrowded hostels, unsanitary environment and erratic supply of electricity and water. Ubong (2007) and Oyetunji and Abidoeye (2016) also added that the low attention paid by Government on student housing in Nigerian universities has made it a problematic situation for students. Despite the fact that the University of Benin has been in existence since the 1980's, very little has been done in assessing the housing situation of students in the university. This research therefore seeks to investigate the factors affecting student's decisions of housing preference in the University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria.

ISSUES ON STUDENTS HOUSING

The reckless upsurge in the admission of students into federal and state tertiary institutions in Nigeria, without a corresponding increase in facilities, translates that; accommodation of students would be a huge challenge. Ubong (2007) opined that, student accommodation or hostels have been given very little and sometimes, no attention in state and federal universities in Nigeria, this has adversely affected the universities host communities. In an attempt to proffer a lasting solution to the accommodation problems in universities, Khozaei et al. (2010), suggested three models that could be implemented to systematically solve the accommodation problems of students, they include: non-residential model (where the university does not provide any form of accommodation for its students e.g. Lagos State University); residential model (where all students are housed in the university e.g. Benson Idahosa University, Covenant University) and finally, dual- residential model (where students are housed in the university and private accommodations within the host community e.g. University of Benin, University of Ibadan). The University of Benin adopts the dual-residential model, which gives freedom to the students to choose a convenient environment that can aid their academic performance. The university would love to adopt the residential model and monopolise the business phase of providing

accommodations services for its students for a price, but due to the meager allocations received from the federal government on a monthly basis, the university would rather have a dual model residential arrangement and ensure that the quality of education is constantly improving.

Once upon a time in the life of every student, a critical decision on a place to live and learn has to be made by the student. A student housing decision is a resolution made after considering various options. Most students are always saddled with the choice of either staying in the school provided hostels or private owned and managed accommodation also known as off-campus accommodations. A number of researchers have carried out studies in regards student housing and satisfaction as far back as the 70's till date. Examples of some studies include: Bradley (1986) studied the level of satisfaction of Indiana University students with residential hall life; Najib et al (2011) and Khozaei et al. (2011) measured students satisfaction with University hostel accommodation; Khozaei et al. (2011) studied the factors predicting students satisfaction with university hostel in Malaysia; Asaju and Olanrewaju (2002) studied the problems associated with housing in tertiary institutions in Nigeria in Obafemi Awolowo university and federal university of technology, Akure; Oyetunji & Abidoye (2016) did an assessment of the factors influencing student's choice of residence in Nigerian tertiary institutions taking the federal university of technology, Akure as a case study.

Comparative Assessment of On-campus and Off-campus Students Accommodation

There exist a variety of terms used in describing student's accommodation or residences. These diverse terminologies are a function of the university, country, culture and the researcher. A few examples are: student housing (Shoukat et al. 2013), dormitory (Kaynoy & Bruhn, 1996), (Kaya & Erikp, 2001), hostels (Sohail et al. 2003), catered halls of residence (Price et. al., 2003), and halls of residence (Dahlan et al. 2009). Student housing can be simply defined as a place, outside the parents or guardians house, where a student lives through his stay in the university. However, Oyetunji & Abidoye (2016) argued that, student housing is a supervised kind of hostel with shared facilities and amenities, where living and learning can be done. It is very important for every student in tertiary institutions, to live in a very conducive, convenient and comfortable environment. According to Hassanain (2008), the student's accommodation enables them to meet and exceed academic, living and socials expectations during the duration of study.

Every student is faced with limited options when choosing a suitable university accommodation, the options include; On-campus accommodation which could also mean, housing within the school premises, provided by the university; off-campus accommodation, in this case the student resides outside the university premises, the accommodation can be provided by private investors or the student's parents or guardian. Sometimes, students are very comfortable living in the school hostels despite the pros and cons. Some universities build hostel accommodation in the school environment. This is usually very convenient in regards, accessibility to classes and other school facilities. Also, It is cheaper than accommodation off campus because most universities try to subsidise the cost of accommodation for less privileged students, especially in Nigeria universities. There are many advantages of school hostels, according to Oyetunji & Abidoye (2016) with regards to personal accomplishments; students who lived on-campus have better social skills. Thompson et al. (1993) added that, students who lived on campus were more involved in extra-curricular activities in the campus. Finally, Karsten (2007) stated that students, who live on-campus, had better grades as compared to other students. Despite the various advantages stated, university hostels in Nigeria are stretched beyond limits, due to the increase in the number of students admitted yearly and very poor monitoring of the occupants of the hostels. The hostels are usually very dirty, jam packed, not conducive and lack privacy. Nigerian hostels are plagued with vandalized amenities; makeshift kitchens, toilets, bathrooms and very poor living conditions.

On the flip side, we have the off-campus accommodations, which is usually located outside the university premises. This is usually owned and managed by individuals and private organizations. These individuals and organizations take advantage of the housing need of students to provide all sorts of accommodation for a price. The accommodation off campus is not always cheap because you pay for a lot of privacy. It is assumed that accommodation off-campus is for the children of the rich and the influential in the society who can afford to pay whatever price for comfort and privacy. Though it has

not been proven if students who live off campus are better off academically, it can be inferred that, if they live far away from the university campus, they would most likely be less interested in extracurricular activities within the campus and this, in turn, can translate to poor social skills by these students. Animba (1993) stated that students who live off-campus are most likely to be punctual for lectures; he also added that, they are more likely to be involved in the activities of secret cults and also likely to be victims and casualties of secret cult clashes.

Factors Influencing Students Decision on Housing Preference

The decision to either reside in an accommodation facility, within the school environment provided by the university, or to reside in an apartment or shared private accommodation located anywhere, within the universities host community, is a major decision that every student has to make, at some point in his or her stay in the university. There exist a number of factors that influence the decision of students in choosing a certain kind of accommodation over the available options. According to Oyetunji & Abidoye (2016), the various factors considered by students in making a housing decision are based on demographic, micro and macro variables, they include; Privacy and Age of the student (Stamps, 1999) and Devlin, 1994); gender of the student (Balogh et al. 2005) income of parents or sponsors (Opoku (2010); Trendy houses, frequency of renovation (Akalin 2009) price of accommodation (Wu 2010) decent housing, conducive environment, neighborhood features, (Jim and Chen 2007) Proximity to classrooms and other places of interest, proximity and accessibility to classrooms and social amenities (Wang et al., 2004; Moore 2000) security, layout and orientation (Jim and Chen 2007) availability and frequency of supply of utilities (O'connell et al. 2006);) size of the accommodation (Wang and Li (2006)) exterior facade, dwelling type. ; (Ge and Hokao 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The article adopted a mixed qualitative-exploratory method and a quantitative survey. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to primarily investigate a part of a whole to have a representation of the population. However, a normality test was conducted using skewness and kurtosis (± 1.96) to establish whether the data was normal or not. The result finally revealed that the data was non-parametric. Nonetheless, according to Ramly *et al.* (2015), the views of respondents with respect to agree or disagree tend to shift the mode to one direction as such it is not unusual. Eighteen (18) construction factors influencing the choice of students' accommodation were identified through literature review and interactions with the students of Environmental Sciences in the University of Benin. The first year students were most suitable for the research because we needed first hand information from their experience with accommodation in the university. The focus of the research was on on-campus and off-campus student's residences. This is the first time a research of this nature will be carried out to address the accommodation challenges of the students of the University of Benin.

The questionnaires were administered to 150 first year students of Quantity Surveying, Architecture, Geomatics, and Estate Management. The respondents were asked to express their level of assessment on a 5-point Likert. Out of 150 administered questionnaires, 120 questionnaires were returned which represents 80% of returned questionnaires. This was considered appropriate for the analysis. The analysis of the study was carried out using the Relative Importance Index (RII) and Spearman Rank Correlation. The frequency of occurrence and the degree of severity was established on a Likert scale (1= least important; 2= important; 3= moderately important; 4= major importance; 5= extremely important) by using the RII (Eq.1). This approach was adopted by Muhwezi *et al.* (2014) and Desai & Bhatt (2013). The respondents provided numerical scores in order to express their assessment level with 5 as the highest value. The average RII for the overall ranking was calculated using equation 2.

$$RII = \frac{\sum x_i.y_i}{H_v.N} \quad (\text{Eq.1})$$

$$Av.RII = \frac{\sum x_i.y_i (\text{Male}) + \sum x_i.y_i (\text{Female})}{N} \quad (\text{Eq.2})$$

$$Hv. \sum N$$

Where, x_i = number of respondents that chose p_i .

y_i = 1 to 5 on a Likert scale

N = total number of questionnaire returned.

$Hv.$ = highest value in Likert scale.

The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is a measure of correlation existing between the two sets of ranks. It concerns itself with the median rather than the mean and in this case, its measure of association is based more on the ranks of the observations rather than the numerical value of the data. The value of Spearman's rank correlation coefficient lies between "+1 to -1". While the +1 indicates a perfect positive correlation, the -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation between two variables. The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ) according to Fatoye (2012) can be obtained from;

$$r_s = \frac{1 - 6 \sum d^2}{N^3 - N} \quad \text{Eqn 3}$$

Where;

r_s = Spearman's rank correlation coefficient between two groups

d = the difference between the ranks given by any two respondents for individual variable and

N = the number of factors (i.e. 18)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Distribution of the Respondents according to department

Demographic Characteristics	Male	Female
	Frequency(%)	Frequency (%)
Quantity Surveying	30(34.09)	1(3.12)
Architecture	20(22.73)	7(21.88)
Geomatics	17(19.32)	4(12.50)
Estate Management	21(23.86)	20(62.50)
Total	73(100)	27(100)

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents in the various departments in the Faculty of Environmental Sciences in the University of Benin. It can be deduced from the Table that male students make up 73% of the population while 27% of the population comprises of female students. Fig 1 shows that there are more male students as compared to female students in the faculty of Environmental sciences. Fig 1 also reveals that the Department of Quantity Surveying has the highest number of male students with 34% while the department of Estate Management has the largest population of female students with 63%.

Table 2. Factors influencing the choice of male students' accommodation.

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	RII	Rank
Price of Accommodation	-	-	1	12	19	0.91	1
Gender of other occupants	-	1	4	10	17	0.87	2
Income of Parents or Sponsors	-	1	8	8	15	0.83	3
Security	2	1	6	8	15	0.81	4
Proximity to Classrooms/places of Interest	3	2	6	7	14	0.77	5
Privacy	5	2	7	6	12	0.71	6
Age of the Student	6	3	6	5	12	0.69	7
Availability and Frequency of Supply of Utilities (electricity, water etc)	6	3	7	5	11	0.68	8
Conducive Environment	7	4	4	7	10	0.66	9

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	RII	Rank
Decent Housing	9	5	5	5	8	0.59	10
Size of the Accommodation	11	6	4	4	7	0.54	11
Proximity and Accessibility to Social amenities (Markets, hospitals etc).	12	6	5	3	6	0.51	12
Neighborhood Features	14	5	4	4	5	0.48	13
Frequency of Renovation	15	6	4	3	4	0.44	14
Layout and Orientation	16	5	5	2	4	0.43	15
Exterior Façade	17	6	4	2	3	0.40	16
Trendy Houses	17	7	3	2	3	0.39	17
Dwelling type	18	8	2	2	2	0.36	18

Table 2 shows that the factors influencing the choice of accommodation by male students. The Table shows that income of parents or sponsors with a relative index score of 0.77, price of accommodation 0.75, gender of fellow occupants 0.73, proximity to classroom and places of interest (0.70) and age of student (0.68) were the most important factors to consider by male students as they ranked between 1st to 5th respectively. From the above, we can deduce that the male students are only concerned with the housing finance, the social make-up of the accommodation and the ease to get to places of interest.

Table 3. Factors influencing the choice of female students’ accommodation

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	RII	Rank
Price of Accommodation	-	-	1	12	19	0.91	1
Gender of other occupants	-	1	4	10	17	0.87	2
Income of Parents or Sponsors	-	1	8	8	15	0.83	3
Security	2	1	6	8	15	0.81	4
Proximity to Classrooms/places of Interest	3	2	6	7	14	0.77	5
Privacy	5	2	7	6	12	0.71	6
Age of the Student	6	3	6	5	12	0.69	7
Availability and Frequency of Supply of Utilities (electricity, water etc)	6	3	7	5	11	0.68	8
Conducive Environment	7	4	4	7	10	0.66	9
Decent Housing	9	5	5	5	8	0.59	10
Size of the Accommodation	11	6	4	4	7	0.54	11
Proximity and Accessibility to Social amenities (Markets, hospitals etc).	12	6	5	3	6	0.51	12
Neighborhood Features	14	5	4	4	5	0.48	13
Frequency of Renovation	15	6	4	3	4	0.44	14
Layout and Orientation	16	5	5	2	4	0.43	15
Exterior Façade	17	6	4	2	3	0.40	16
Trendy Houses	17	7	3	2	3	0.39	17
Dwelling type	18	8	2	2	2	0.36	18

Table 3 shows that price of accommodation (0.91), gender of fellow housing occupants (0.87), income of parents (0.83), security (0.81) and proximity to classrooms and places of interest (0.77) were noted as the top five factors considered by female students when choosing accommodation in the university. From the findings it can be deduced that the female students are more concerned with the housing finance, security and overall convenience in regards getting to places of interest when making decisions on housing preference.

Table 4. Overall RII of factors influencing the choice of student’s accommodation

Factors	Males (N=88)		Females (N=32)		Overall; $\sum N = 120$ Average	
	RII	Rank	RII	Rank	RII	Rank

Income of Parents or Sponsors	0.77	1	0.83	3	0.79	1
Price of Accommodation	0.75	2	0.91	1	0.79	1
Gender of other occupants	0.73	3	0.87	2	0.77	3
Proximity to Classrooms/places of Interest	0.70	4	0.77	5	0.72	4
Security	0.66	6	0.81	4	0.70	5
Age of the Student	0.68	5	0.69	7	0.68	6
Availability and Frequency of Supply of Utilities (electricity, water etc)	0.65	7	0.68	8	0.65	7
Privacy	0.62	8	0.71	6	0.65	7
Size of the Accommodation	0.62	8	0.54	11	0.60	9
Conducive Environment	0.58	11	0.66	9	0.60	9
Decent Housing	0.56	12	0.59	10	0.57	11
Neighbourhood Features	0.57	10	0.48	13	0.55	12
Layout and Orientation	0.56	12	0.43	15	0.53	13
Proximity and Accessibility to Social amenities (Markets, hospitals etc)	0.51	14	0.51	12	0.51	14
Frequency of Renovation	0.49	15	0.44	14	0.48	15
Exterior Façade	0.46	17	0.40	16	0.44	16
Dwelling type	0.62	8	0.36	18	0.44	16
Trendy Houses	0.44	18	0.39	17	0.43	18

Table 4 shows the factors influencing the choice of accommodation by both male and female students in the university. The table reveals that income of parents or sponsors and the price of accommodation were the most important factors considered by the students when choosing their accommodation in the university. It shows that most students would prefer an accommodation that their parents can afford considering that most student depend on their parents for money in the university.

Table 5: Test of Agreement of factors influencing the choice of student's accommodation between Male and Female students

Multiple R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	P-Value	Observation	Alpha	Standard Error
0.85398	0.72928	0.71236	6.5045E-06	18	0.05	0.05208

In order to establish the degree of agreement between the male and female students, a correlation analysis using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was carried out on the rankings. A high correlation value indicates the presence of a significant positive relationship between the sexes of students. Table 6 shows that, at 95% confidence interval i.e, significant level of ($P < 0.05\%$), there exists a statistically significant correlation between the sex on all the factors, with $r(16) = 0.85$, $p < 0.001$. It therefore implies that male and female students share similar opinions on the factors influencing the choice of accommodation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is a shot at contributing to knowledge by evaluating the "factors affecting students' decision on housing preferences in the University of Benin". It was carried out by the first year students of the faculty of Environmental sciences in the University of Benin, Edo state, Nigeria, with the aim of establishing the salient factors considered by male and female students, when deciding on where to reside in the university. After analysing the data retrieved from the students, it was discovered that income of parents or sponsors, price of accommodation, gender of other occupants, proximity to classrooms and other places of interest, security, the age of the student, privacy, availability and frequency of supply of utilities, size of the accommodation and the conduciveness of the environment were the most important factors considered by students in making residential decisions in the university. In line with the findings, Amole (2011) stated that privacy, level of study, economic status, age and residential experience were the factors influencing students housing decisions in South-west Nigeria.

Furthermore, La-Roche et al. (2010) concluded that security and cost were the most important factors to consider in student housing in the United States of America. It should be noted that this research is limited to the University of Benin, hence, the findings should not be generalised to other institutions. However, this research can be replicated in other tertiary institutions within and outside Nigeria, this would give in-depth view of the topic under consideration.

Considering the findings of this study, it is imperative to recommend that the federal government, state governments, the universities, private estate developers and well meaning individuals should invest in the business of providing decent and conducive accommodation for students, within and outside the university premises, taking the factors discovered in this research into cognisance. Any property developer that can provide an accommodation facility with constant supply of basic utilities, security and a means of transportation to and from the university, can be sure of a return of investment in very good time.

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