



Perceptions of Causes, Effects, and Solutions to Abandoned Public Building Projects in Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the perceptions of causes, effects, and solutions to abandoned public building projects in Benue State, Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study. The study adopted a survey research design. The study used the entire population of 34 respondents made up of building professionals and supervisors. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for answering the research questions and a t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that there are many types of abandoned public housing projects in Benue State such as government quarters, public toilets, and warehouses among others. Findings also revealed that lack of proper analysis, delayed disbursement of funds to the contractors, and non-continuation of projects by successive regimes are some of the causes of abandonment of public house projects in Benue State. Findings further show that a professional team ensuring proper monitoring of the progress of work, timely disbursement of funds to contractors, background check of contractors' financial capacity before awarding a contract, and implementing strict penalties for both parties for breach of contract are some of the solutions to the problem of abandoned public houses projects. It was concluded that the causes of abandoned public house projects are surmountable with the implementation of the solutions proffered. It was recommended that the

government of Benue State should ensure timely disbursement of funds to contractors to ensure projects are completed within the specified time.

Key Words: Assessment; Abandoned; Public Houses Projects; Benue State

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

A building is referred to as a walled roofed structure built for permanent use for man's living, working, and storage of items. Buildings can also be referred to as structures that serve as shelter for man and his properties. To obtain the desired satisfaction of buildings, they must be properly designed, constructed, and maintained (Seeley, 2017). Building all over the world constitutes one of the most valuable assets of mankind. The main function of a building is to provide safety for occupants and protect them from weather conditions like rain, wind, and extreme temperatures. A building must be properly maintained and occupied to survive (Okantunde, 2014). However, the incidence of building abandonment in Nigeria is reaching an epidemic proportion and is hindering occupants from enjoying the full benefits of buildings.

The demand for and provision of housing is as old as the history of man. The ancient building served its primary purpose of shelter but lacked modern amenities. However, with the modern technological advancement, the society is exposed to new life. More so, due to harsh weather conditions, and the need for security and privacy, it became necessary for man to provide shelter for himself and his family. Housing is one of the basic needs of mankind and it is the most important for the physical survival of man after the provision of food. Adequate housing contributes to the attainment of the physical and moral health of a state and stimulates social stability, work efficiency, and the best indicators of a person's standard of living and his place in society. Housing both units and multiples is a significant component of the physical form and structure of a community; it serves as the very spirit of life and property of the society.

According to Agbola (2018), housing is a set of durable assets, which account for a high proportion of a country's wealth and on which households spend a substantial part of their income. It is for this reason that housing has become a regular feature in the economy. Olateju (1997) noted that nobody initiates a building project for abandonment, because an uncompleted building project is always a source of sorrow to its owner, an unfulfilled hope and aspiration a failure to achieve a purpose. Though there is high demand for housing abandoned public house building projects still litter our society, causing

problems like security threats, promotion of illegal activities, unemployment, waste of human and material resources, and poor landscaping.

Abandonment is the action of suspending activities on something totally, with no definite intention of when to restart. In the opinion of Hanachor (2012), when events and actions on building projects are postponed without any confirmed time of recommencement, the projects are said to be abandoned. According to Hanachor (2012) lack of social analysis of project development, projects that ignore the traditional values and social organization of the intended beneficiaries, have a low success prospect and could be abandoned. No matter how important and most desired a project may be to the members of a community, if the project goes against the cultural practices of the community, the project could be abandoned. This shows that social analysis of the project must be also considered to avoid abandonment.

Building construction of any kind involves the services of several building professionals. Building professionals refer to those who design, construct, and maintain a building or structure from inception to completion, and to terminal demolition. The Building professionals that are actively involved in the Nigerian construction industry include architects, builders, estate surveyors and valuers, land surveyors, quantity surveyors, town planners, civil, electrical, Mechanical, and Structural Engineers among others. According to Okuntade (2014), 50 percent of the causes of building abandonment are attributed to fault on the part of building professionals. Building professionals are trained in their respective fields for proper execution of projects, other sets of workers also contribute grossly towards the execution of a project. These include; skilled laborers, and unskilled laborers. Hence, the construction industry is regarded as the largest of all industries. The abandonment of buildings is attributed to people ranging from clients, professionals, skilled laborers, unskilled laborers, and those who supply different building materials. This study, therefore, sought the perceptions of building professionals and supervisors on the abandonment of building projects in Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian building industry is plagued with several challenges, the central being the abandonment of projects across the towns and cities of Nigeria. As a developing country, Nigeria is witnessing several incidences of uncompleted and abandoned building projects both from private individuals and governments at all levels. The rate of building project abandonment in Nigeria is alarming and increasing by the day. Building projects are supposed to be beneficial to both the individuals and society at large as they depict the level of a country's

development. However, the incessant abandonment of these building projects undoubtedly has some negative impact on the people, real property values, the construction industry, and the built environment. However, a report from the Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors estimated that Nigeria has around 56,000 abandoned house buildings valued at 12 trillion naira across the country belonging to public and private sector organisations.

In Benue State, while precise statistical data on the number of abandoned building projects is limited, evidence suggests a prevalence of abandoned projects especially in urban areas. Personal observations show that many of the housing projects awarded by the government of Benue State aimed at curbing housing shortages are abandoned. The rate of abandonment of housing projects in developing countries including Nigeria is worrisome and needs to be urgently tackled as it is becoming a norm in our society eating deep into the national fabric. The problem of this study therefore is to assess the status of abandoned building projects in Benue State and thus proffer solutions to their completion.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to assess the status of abandoned Public housing projects in Benue State. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Identify the type of abandoned public buildings in Benue State.
2. Determine the causes of abandonment of public house projects in Benue State.
3. Identify the effects of abandonment of public house projects in Benue State.
4. Proffer solutions to abandoned housing projects in Benue State.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the types of abandoned public housing building projects in Benue State?
2. What are the causes of the abandonment of public house projects in Benue State?
3. What are the effects of abandonment of public house projects in Benue State?
4. What are the solutions to the abandonment of public house projects in Benue State?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on cause-and-effect theory. The theory of cause and effect (also known as feedback loops) was originally proposed by Braun and Le Chatelier in the 18th century in ground-breaking studies about how systems

constantly establish a new equilibrium in response to stimuli. Feedback loops can be described as cause-and-effect processes within individuals or systems that can be either negative and maintain equilibrium or positive and promote change within an individual or system. According to this theory, feedback loops enable an individual and systems to maintain control or change important processes by signaling back whether an input should be intensified or stopped. In its simplest form, a feedback loop might include an action that stimulates a reaction, which in turn leads to change, which then promotes a new action (Watson, 2010).

The implication of this theory to this study is that the nonavailability of funds, and lack of political will and supervision can cause the abandonment of building projects which would result to Effects such as wastage of valuable resources, declining property values and conditions, environmental pollution, and criminal hideouts pose insecurity to lives.

2.2 Building Abandonment

An abandoned building is any project in which the construction work is incomplete and suspended (Hanachor, 2012). A high incidence of building abandonment has been observed the world over (Mallach, 2004). For instance, the number of abandoned buildings in Baltimore in 2001 was between 12,700 and 42,480 (Cohen, 2001). Between 1996 and 2001 Detroit, Michigan demolished 18,200 condemned buildings with an estimated 10,000 substandard structures remaining. Forth-Worth environmental management department in the United States has currently identified over 3,250 abandoned buildings in the city (Mallach, 2004). This rightly suggests that the problem of building abandonment can be more ingrained in less developed countries like Nigeria.

There are many causes of abandoned building projects. Ayodele and Alabi (2011) identify major causes of building project abandonment as; inadequate planning, inadequate finance, inflation, bankruptcy of contractor, variation of project scope, political factors, death of client, delay in payment, and incompetent project manager. Other causes that were less significant are; wrong estimate, faulty design, inadequate cost control, legal action, dispute, and disaster. Olalusi and Otunola (2012) in their study opined that poor risk management, misunderstanding of the work requirement, poor quality control by regulatory agencies, corruption, communication gap among the personnel, inconsistent government policies, lack of accountability, incompetent contractors, non-availability of building materials, lack of utilities or infrastructure facilities, wrong location may also cause construction project abandonment.

The Technical Management teams are those on the provision for temporary management of the development projects and it is expected that those are qualified personnel to help with tracks for all the project development work breakdown structure (Efenudu, 2010). However, most construction organization avoids this group because of the high cost of employing those with the required expertise. However, they prefer to use those that have little or no knowledge just to minimize profit by reducing total capital outlet into the development.

In the execution of any project, there are parties involved in one activity or the other, playing their roles from the inception stage to the completion stage and the parties involved include; clients, architects, builders, quantity surveyors, land surveyors, engineers among others (Onwusonye, 2002).

2.3 Factors Leading to Abandonment of Projects

There are several factors that could be responsible for the abandonment of projects. Some of the factors are; social factors, natural factors, human factors, and economic factors.

2.3.1 Social factors

Hanachor (2012) lamented in a paper on Community Development Abandonment in Nigeria: causes and effects that lack social analysis of a project; development projects that ignore the traditional values and social organization of the intended beneficiaries have a low success prospect and could be abandoned. No matter how important and most desired a project may be to the members of a community, if the project goes against the cultural practices of the community, the project could be abandoned. This shows that the social analysis of a project must be considered to avoid abandonment.

2.3.2 Natural factors

This is also a factor we cannot neglect irrespective of the economic factors or human factors; they can render a site abandoned. Again, this is a factor we do not plan for; they come unexpectedly and disrupt the purpose of work. Ugofunle (2007) points out that accident in the course of work is a major area of concern. Factors considered under these are loss or damage due to fire, lightning, explosion, busting or overflowing of water banks, and the sudden collapse of parts of the structure may lead to eventual delay or suspension of construction work.

2.3.3 Clients

According to Barwell (1987), clients do not consider the availability of funds before the award of a contract which in turn leads to project abandonment knowingly or unknowingly. The fund is an important factor that provides both the private and public sectors the required provision to embark on the project; therefore, adequate financial provision must be made before any project can be embarked upon. Any lapse in this regard might lead to total abandonment of the project. Therefore, it is the role of the client to provide sufficient funds for the project.

2.3.4 Contractors

A contractor is a person or firm who undertakes to complete a building project by the contract document on behalf of the employer or the client. Some factors can cause abandonment of projects by contractors. According to Fugar and Agyakwah-Baah (2010), the availability of materials on-site at the right time and in the right quantities is directly related to the ability of the client to honor certificates when due. Liquidity problems make it difficult for contractors to procure materials. Again, materials suppliers are reluctant to supply materials on credit, because contractors will normally pay suppliers only when they are paid. These can cause delays in the projects.

2.3.5 Consultants

The consultants are professionals and one of their aims is to make a profit from the service rendered and also to ensure the quality of the executed project. Consultants are classified as Architects and Engineers. Architects are highly qualified and educated building professionals whose main duty is to design buildings and structures. Kelleher and Walters (2009) highlighted the roles performed by an architect in the construction industry to include assisting the client in preparing a strategic brief, carrying out feasibility studies and options appraisals, advising on the need to appoint other professionals to the consultant team, independent client advisers, specialist designers, and specialist contractors, preparing the concept design, preparing the detailed design among others.

The architect inspects works to determine the dates of substantial completion and completion; and checks if the contractor finished his punch list, and if the work conforms to standard. The architect also considers building materials, building systems, and equipment consistent with the owner's budget, and schedule. The architect submits drawings and specifications showing the development of the design to the owner and updates the estimated pricing (Connor, 2012). According to Onwusonye (2002), the architect must avoid

ambiguity as much as possible. Architecture must take into consideration factors like build-ability and maintainability, for these factors, if ignored during the drawing stage by the architect. May adversely affect the successful completion of the project). In the construction industry, the architect is regarded as the leader of a building team and he is usually the first to be contacted. He has some obligations, in failure to do them can threaten a project. Part of the architect's obligations is to design according to the briefing of the client and also know the financial capacity of the client to guide his design, so that it may not be too expensive or unaffordable for the client. Failure in this regard might lead to project suspension or ultimately lead to abandonment.

2.3.6 Engineers

Technical Management teams are those on the provision for temporary management of the development projects and it is expected that those are qualified personnel to help with tracks for all the project development work breakdown structure (Efenudu, 2010). In building, engineers are the most important people among the consultants and failure in their duty may lead to suspension of the projects. Engineers provide the structural drawings and details for the project and lateness in the submission of the drawing can affect the successful completion of the projects. Likewise, proper supervision of the work must be adequately carried out, because this can also form the basis of project delay or suspension as a result of an error committed by the contractor when there is a lack of supervision.

2.3.7 Economic factors

Onwusonye (2002) opined that an important task for any project manager is to make sure that a project is financially feasible within a changeable economic environment and since periodic economic cycles extensively affect the actions of the construction industry, precise and efficient forecasting of economic trends both local and globe is significant. The economic factors can be said to be one of the factors causing the abandonment of the building project, considering Nigeria as a developing country, whereby the economic factors have contributed grossly to the subject matter. In recent times, inflation has been one of the major economic factors affecting the abandonment of projects.

2.4 Effects of Building Abandonment

Abandoned buildings cause environmental pollution. The sites are replete with unhealthy pollution activities, especially within the area where toilet and waste disposal facilities are inadequate or non-existent (Olaniyi, 2005). The presence of abandoned buildings encourages residents nearby to dump refuse and defecate in them. The fight against pollution activities by town planning and

environmental management would be a mere wish if nothing is done to eradicate the problem of building abandonment. This may be why the prevalent health problems in the city are diarrhea, typhoid fever, and other filth-related health problems. Such sites are also vagrants' delight, miscreants' convenient abode, and the den where criminals plan, conclude, or perpetrate nefarious acts in the neighborhood. In other words, abandoned buildings are associated with crime. Abandoned buildings especially dilapidating ones are potential accident points where suspending debris or the whole house can fall on passersby.

3.0 Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. The population of this study is 30 building professionals and 4 supervisors of building projects working in the Benue State Ministry of Works, Housing, and Transportation. The study used the entire population of 34 respondents. This is because the population is small and can be easily managed by the researcher. A structured questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection in this study. The items in the questionnaire were organized by the research questions developed to guide the study. The instrument is indexed on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The content validity of the instruments was carried out by three experts. The experts were requested to validate the instrument based on content, relevance, and clarity of language. Each expert was requested in writing to specifically validate and make suggestions or corrections where necessary. To guide the experts, the instruments were attached with objectives and research questions for the study. One of the experts made suggestions which led to the addition of the fourth research objective. The experts also made minor corrections on the items of the instruments. The corrections were effected accordingly. All the questionnaire items were retained by the three experts. The remarks of the three experts show that the instrument was valid for the study.

Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was used to estimate the reliability coefficients of the instrument which was found to be 0.79. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents by the researchers through face to face contact method. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation.

4.0 Results and Discussions

4.1 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Research question one: What are the types of abandoned public building projects in Benue State?

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation on Abandoned Public Building Projects in Benue State

S/ No	Types of Abandoned Public Housing Projects in Benue State	Mea n	SD	Remar ks
1	There are uncompleted government quarters in Benue State	3.19	0.13	Agree
2	There are uncompleted public toilets in Benue State	3.19	0.13	Agree
3	There are uncompleted public classroom blocks in Benue State	3.32	0.23	Agree
4	There are uncompleted public warehouses in Benue State	3.16	0.59	Agree
5	There are uncompleted public hospital laboratories in Benue State	2.05	0.04	Disagre e

Table 1 above presents the perceptions of clients and supervisors of building on the types of abandoned public housing projects in Benue State. From the table, one can observe that four out of five items have mean response scores above the acceptance mean of 2.50 on the Four-point rating scale, except item 5 which has a mean score of 2.05. This means that both clients and supervisors of the building are of the perception that there are so many types of abandoned public housing projects in Benue State such as government quarters, public toilets, and warehouses among others. However, respondents opined that there are no uncompleted public hospital laboratories in Benue State.

Research Question Two: What are the causes of abandonment of public house projects?

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation on causes of abandonment of public house projects

S/No	Causes of abandonment of public house projects	Mean	SD	Remarks
6	Lack of proper analysis of the community before projects are awarded/Social	3.28	0.20	Agree
7	Untimely supervision from the authorities concerned	1.64	0.25	Disagree
8	Delay in the distribution of funds to the contractors	3.37	0.26	Agree
9	Contractors are selected and not by merit.	3.31	0.22	Agree

10	Lack of public building projects continuation by successive regimes	3.26	0.18	Agree
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Table 2 above presents the perceptions of clients and supervisors of building on the causes of abandonment of public building projects. From the table, it is observed that four out of five items have mean response scores above the acceptance mean of 2.50 on the Four-point rating scale, except item 7 which has a mean score of 1.64. This means that both clients and supervisors of buildings are of the perception that lack of proper analysis, delay in distribution of funds to the contractors, and lack of public building projects continuation by successive regimes are some of the causes of abandonment of public house projects in Benue State. However, respondents were of the view that untimely supervision of public house projects from the authorities concerned is not among the causes of abandonment of public house projects in Benue State.

Research Question Three

What are the effects of abandonment of public house projects in Benue State?

Table 3

Mean and Standard deviation on effects of abandonment of public house projects

S/No	Effects of abandonment of public house projects	Mean	SD	Remarks
11	Insecurity of lives in the neighborhood due to its use as a criminal hideout	3.24	0.21	Agree
12	Health problems	3.64	0.25	Agree
13	Environmental pollution through garbage disposal	3.30	0.27	Agree
14	Defacing the aesthetics of the urban environment	3.34	0.20	Agree
15	Wastage of valuable resources	3.28	0.19	Agree

Table 3 shows the respondents agreed with all the items as effects of abandoned buildings. Table 3 revealed that the respondents rated all the items with a mean above 2.5 which implies that all the items are effects of abandoned building projects. Specifically, Table 3 reveals that the respondents agreed that abandoned buildings constitute a security threat to people around them since most abandoned buildings are hideouts for criminals. The respondents also agreed that abandoned buildings have the effect of health-related problems,

cause environmental pollution, deface the aesthetic of the city, and waste valuable resources.

Research Question Four

What are the solutions to the abandonment of public house projects?

Table 4

Mean and Standard deviation on solutions to abandonment of public house projects

S/No	Solutions to the abandonment of public house projects	Mean	SD	Remarks
16	The professional team should ensure proper monitoring of the progress of work.	3.54	0.38	Agree
17	Contractors' financial capacity should be known before awarding a contract.	3.34	0.24	Agree
18	Social factors i.e. project analysis should be carried out in the enlisted community.	3.51	0.35	Agree
19	Tight penalties on both parties for breach of contract.	3.20	0.57	Agree
20	Timely disbursement of funds to the contractors should be a priority of the clients.	3.46	0.33	Agree

Table 4 above presents the perceptions of clients and supervisors of building on the solutions to the abandonment of public house projects. From the table it is observed that both clients and supervisors of the building have agreed that; a professional team should ensure proper monitoring of the progress of work, contractors' financial capacity be known before awarding a contract, social factors i.e. project analysis should be carried out to the enlisted community, penalties be tighten to both parties for breach of contract and timely disbursement of funds to the contractors should be a priority of the clients in Benue State.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

Results of data presented in Table 1 show that respondents are of the perception that there are so many types of abandoned public housing projects in Benue State such as government quarters, public toilets, and warehouses among others. The high means of above 2.5 are indication that the respondents are aware of the types of abandoned building projects. Findings in a similar study conducted by Ayodele and Alabi (2011) revealed that there were about 400 uncompleted or abandoned projects belonging to the Federal Government of Nigeria with an estimated cost of over N300 billion. Ayodele and Alabi (2011) further reported that there were eleven thousand eight hundred and eighty-six

abandoned Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) projects all over the country that were estimated to cost N7.78 billion to be completed.

Results of data presented in Table 2 show that respondents are of the perception that lack of proper analysis, delay in distribution of funds to the contractors, and public building projects continuation by successive regimes are some of the causes of abandonment of public house projects in Benue State. However, few respondents are of the view that there is timely supervision of public house projects from the authorities concerned in Benue State. Contrary to these findings, Ayodele and Alabi (2011) identify significant causes of project abandonment as; inadequate planning, inadequate finance, inflation, bankruptcy of contractor, variation of project scope, political factors, death of client, delay in payment, and incompetent project manager. Other causes that were less significant are; wrong estimate, faulty design, inadequate cost control, legal action, dispute, and disaster. Olalusi and Otunola (2012) in their contrary opinion stated that poor risk management, misunderstanding of the work requirement, poor quality control by regulatory agencies, corruption, communication gap among the personnel, inconsistent government policies, lack of accountability, incompetent contractors, non-availability of building materials, lack of utilities or infrastructure facilities, wrong location may also cause construction project abandonment.

Results of data presented in Table 3 show that respondents agreed that; a professional team should ensure proper monitoring of the progress of work, contractors' financial capacity be known before awarding a contract, social factors i.e. project analysis should be carried out to the enlisted community, penalties be tightened to both parties for breach of contract and timely disbursement of funds to the contractors should be a priority of the clients in Benue State. According to Onwusonye (2002), to prevent project abandonment, architects must avoid ambiguity as much as possible. Architecture must take into consideration factors like build-ability and maintainability, for these factors, if ignored during the drawing stage by the architect.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that delay or none disbursement of the fund, lack of supervision by government relevant agencies, and lack of continuation of building projects by successive governments are the major causes of abandoned building projects and that these abandoned building projects have effects such serving as a criminal hideout, pollution, and waste of resources.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should ensure timely disbursement of building funds to enable the contractors to complete building projects within the time frame agreed in the contract.
2. Government agencies such as the Ministry of Works and Housing should supervise building projects to ensure the contractors complete the project.

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