

**LOCATION PREFERENCES OF WORKERS AND
IMPLICATIONS FOR URBAN HOUSING STOCK IN
NIGERIA; A CASE STUDY IN OGBOMOSO**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the preferences of urban workers for the location of their personal houses. Four location options were presented to the entire non-academic staff of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) Ogbomosho. The options include Employees Home Town (EHT), Employees Working Town (EWT), Employees State Capital (ESC), and Others; where others may include the Federal Capital City, the Local Government Headquarters, the spouse's home town or any other location or town outside the first three options given above.

The methodology involves the administration of questionnaires, seeking to know in order of preference, location choice of employees; for their personal residential houses among the four options given above. A total of 227 questionnaires were distributed to all available non-academic staff members of LAUTECH in the Vice Chancellors Office and the Farm, Registry, Bursary, Health Centre, Security Unit and the Physical Development Unit of the university. The result shows that employees generally prefer their home towns for the location of their personal residential houses.

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INTRODUCTION

The quantitative urban housing needs in Nigeria are well documented in Nigerian housing literature (Abiodun, 1985; Adedokun, 1990; Arayela, 2000; Olatubara, 2007; etc). So is the urban housing stock which manifests in high room occupancy, derelict and obsolete physical structures, etc.; and generally, the quantity of habitable dwelling units available to needing households. Both are determined based on housing situations prevalent in each of the many urban centres of the country. The qualitative urban housing indicators also include indecent, dillapidatory and inadequate infrastructural facilities and services. The Federal Ministry of Housing and Environment has observed a much greater quantitative housing need in the urban centres than rural areas (FMHE, 1982). But urban housing situations- either deficits or surpluses are a reflection of housing availability to urban dwellers, especially workers whose productivity does not only depend on their housing conditions but constitutes a matter of great concern to the different employers of labour, private or public. That workers housing constitutes a substantial object of housing budget in both public and private sectors of the economy is evident from the history of housing interventions by the various governments of Nigeria from independence (Onibokun 1990; Atolagbe, 1997; Olatubara, 2007). Target groups have always been income earners specified mostly as low-income. Thus, workers need, or lack, has contributed substantially to the general housing situation (shortage or deficit) in Nigerian urban centres. But how do these workers, who constitute a major target in the housing budget of the different tiers of government since independence help the Nigerian urban housing situation? Onibokun (1990) observes the tendency among urban workers to situate their private houses in their home towns, even in the face of acute shortage in the urban centres where they work and earn a living. This curious observation is the object of this study.

Ogbomoso has been chosen for this study for a number of reasons. It is a town whose rate of urbanization has been steady. Though acclaimed the second most populous city in West Africa (second only to Ibadan) prior to independence, Ogbomoso has managed to keep a slow rate of population agglomeration and remain, today, a medium Nigerian urban city (Tanimowo, 1997; Atolagbe, 2011). Such cities should not be spared efforts in an attempt to guide their rate of urbanization. This study is out to examine the preferences of non-academic staff of LAUTECH for the location of their personal houses. How true is the postulate that workers prefer their own

towns against their working places; and the trend among urban employees today, specifically in a city like Ogbomoso which is not a state capital, and on account of which it may fare worse in the location preference of workers for their personal houses? What reasons could be adduced for this inordinate attachment to home towns? What recommendations to employers of labour for a sustainable housing for their workers?

Ogbomoso is an up-coming urban centre whose population and rate of urbanization may have recently surged upwards, on account of the establishment of Ladoko Akintola University of Technology in 1990. Thus, there is the need to study the antics of workers and students, with the view to putting in place, efficient housing policy for the students and workers in the city.

Besides, Ogbomoso is a meeting point between the northern savannah and the southern rain forest belts of the country. Its citizens travel wide, exhibiting some cultural pluralism that is not predominantly aligned, either politically or religiously (to Christianity or Islam). Therefore, the result of a study in Ogbomoso can be more fairly generalized for medium cities in Nigeria than any other city in the core north or south. As a city with no state-capital status, it can also provide a study model for other Nigerian upcoming towns like Nssuka, Zaria, Ilesha, Akungba Akoko, Ayingba, Auchu, etc, whose work force consist majorly of migrant higher institution employees and whose home towns are neither economically, nor politically linked with the cities in which they work.

The sample frame in the study consists of the non-teaching staff of the Ladoko Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso Campus. This category of staff is sampled from the units of university where they are dominant. The justifications for this are many. First, non-academic staff consists of all full range of income levels/classes from Office Assistant to a Director and Registrar. This is closer to the employment hierarchy that obtains in the ministries and parastatals for which the study may provide some generalization. It is unlike with academic staff whose grades range from Graduate Assistants to Professors, all of whom are concentrated in the middle and high income classes. The result based on the Non-academic staff provides a better generation with a wide range of real low, to real high, income employees. Second, academic or university teaching staff enjoy relatively more job mobility; a lecturer may work in two or more universities before retirement. This may reduce the commitment of such a staff to building a house in his working place. Non-academic university staff have relatively less mobile jobs and may often be

expected to end their career in one university. It is thus expected that more of such staff may elect to build their private homes in their working places.

METHODOLOGY

The sample element for the study consist of all Non-academic Staff of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho Campus i.e. 100 percent sampling frame was intended. A total of two hundred and sixty seven questionnaires were given out to all available staff on duty at the rate of 87, 30, 39, 60, 51 and ten (10) to non-teaching staff of the Vice chancellors office and the university farm, registry, bursary, security unit, the university clinic and the physical development unit, respectively. A total of 242 or 87.36 percent of the questions were retrieved, dully completed at the rate of 75, 27, 35, 53, 40 and ten (10) from these units respectively. Respondent were to indicate in order of priority where they would wish to locate their private residential houses from among the followings. Working town, home town, state headquarters and others; where others could be the Federal capital city, their spouses' town, etc. Further, a question required interviewees to state the locations in order of preference if they had opportunity to put up four houses in their lifetime. Respondents' local government headquarters were consciously excluded from the options to forestall the confusion that may arise when a town is divided into more than one local government areas. For instance respondents from the same home town, say Osogbo may fall into different local government areas like Osogbo or Olorunda. It will be difficult to ascertain wheather answer given in Osogbo refers to respondents' local government area, or town. One other pertinent question is that the questionnaire sought to know if respondents' already had house(s) of their own; and where such house(s) was (were) built. One or two group interviews were conducted in each unit at the time the questionnaires were being retrieved. Such interviews were to find out why respondents preferred the town they chose as the priority location for their private residential houses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the V.Cs office and the university farm combined, where 75 or 86.20 percent of the questionnaires were retrieved, 59 or 78.66 percent of the respondents preferred their home towns as location for their private residential houses. Seven or 9.33 percent prefer their state headquarters and five or 6.66 percent preferred other places. Only four or 5.33 percent constituting the least proportion of respondents preferred their working towns; see Table 1. The

fourth and fifth columns show the number of respondents (out of the total number of questionnaires retrieved shown in column three) and the percentage of respondents that preferred home towns from each of the units. Column five (5) shows that between 52.5 and 90 percent of respondents prefer to build their houses in their home towns. Only four, six, nine and one respondents, constituting between 5 and 26 percents of the respondents would want their houses built in their working towns; (columns 6 and 7 of Table 1.0). The reasons for the overwhelming preference for workers home towns were given at the conference interviews. Most workers remained more socially and economically attracted to their home towns than their working places or towns for a number of reason: job security in Nigeria was not assumed; implying that a worker may have cause to change his working place anytime. Building a residential house in such places which may turn out to be temporary may be unwise, as shifting employment base to another place/town would imply the abandonment of such private houses. Besides, workers generally return to their hometowns after retirement from public service. A house, back home, will be handy after retirement; and workers could fall back on such homes in the save midst of kinsmen. Other respondents gave political instability as reasons for preferring to build in their home towns. For instance, each time new states are created, workers indigenes to the newly created state and their employment are often transferred to their home states. They are forced to sell or abandon whatever landed property they had acquired in the previous state/working town. Instances were cited of workers transferred from Ibadan in Oyo state to Osogbo in Osun state when the latter was carved of Old Oyo state. Thus it is safer in many circumstances-political, economic, cultural, etc; to build in ones hometown. Others prefer their home bases as the location for their homes in response to pressure from such home bases. People from home towns and villages often pressurize their indigenes in urban centres to come and assist in developing their less developed towns and villages. Foremost among the tools for such developments is the erection of residential and other commercial buildings. Often, one of such projects attract the other; as a worker who has one of both would want the other to join at the same or close location.

Table 1.0; Frequency Distribution and Percentage Scores of Employees Housing Location Preferences.

Units	Questionnaires		Employees Home Town		Employees Working Town		Employees State Capital		Others	
	Given out	Retrieved	Score	%	Score	%	Score	%	Score	%
V.C's & Farm	97	75	59	78.66	4	5.33	7	9.33	5	6.6
Registry	30	27	19	70.57	6	22.22	1	3.70	1	3.7
Bursary	39	35	19	54.28	9	25.71	5	14.28	2	5.71
Security Unit	60	55	45	4581.81	6	10.90	2	3.63	2	3.63
University Clinic	51	40	21	52.50	9	22.50	4	10.0	6	15.0
Physical Development	10	10	9	90.00	1	10.0	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total	277	242	172	83.49	35	16.99	19	9.22	16	7.76

Source: Authors Computation (2010).

Table 2.0 shows the proportion of employees from each unit who already own their own houses. The highest percentage of employee-owners are in the university clinic while the least is from the Bursary. Table 2 shows, a practical demonstration of the preference of home towns for the location of workers houses. Row 3 shows the number and percentage of respondents who already own houses of their own; column four shows the percentage of respondents who own houses; column five the number of such houses built in employees home towns and their percentages are shown in columns six. They are 80.77, 80.00, 83.33, 62.50, 69.23 and 100 percent each for the Vice Chancellor's Office (and Farm), the Registry, Bursary, Security Unit, University Clinic and Physical Development Unit respectively. The figures in column four is worthy of note; it shows the percentage of non-academic employees of Ladoke Akintola University that already own

houses of their own. Only 59 out of a total 242 employees have houses of their own. This gives an average of 21.33 percent of this category of employees having houses of their own. Within the limits of accuracy in this survey, it could be used to estimate the percentage of workers in similar south western universities that have houses. In other words, only about 21% (21.33 in this instance) of such urban workers in similar south western universities have their own houses; and over 78% (78.7 in this instance) of such urban workers in similar institutions in the region have no houses of their own. Better still, ownership or housing affordability is a bare 21.3 percent among employees of this category.

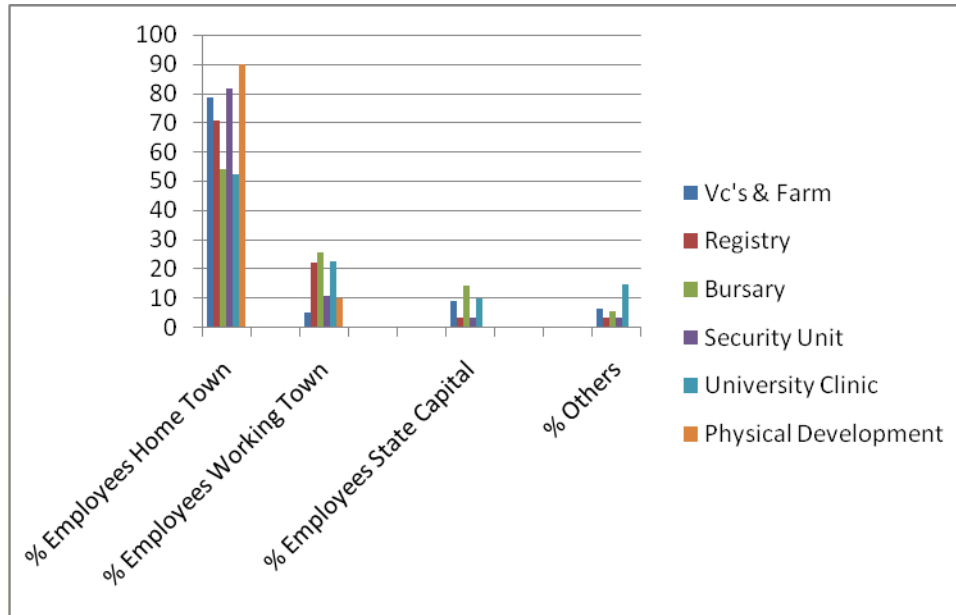
Table 2.0: Proportion of Respondents who own personal Houses

	VC's office, Works and Farm		Registry		Bursary		Security Unit		University Clinic		Physical Planning Unit		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	23	31.08	5	18.52	5	13.89	10	18.18	14	34.14	2	22.22	59	100
No	51	68.92	22	81.48	31	86.11	45	81.82	27	67.86	7	77.78	183	100
Total	74	100	27	100	36	100	55	100	41	100	9	100	242	100

If house ownership is as low as 21.3 percent among non-academic employees of a university, the percentage of such ownership may expectedly be much lower among other Nigerian public employees. This is because, a comparison of the salary scale of a university employees with their counterparts in the state public / civil service shows a higher take-home among the former.

Figure 1.0 shows a graphical comparison of the location choices of staff across the different non-academic units of the university. The choice of home town as location for personal houses of employees is highest ranging between 52 and 90 percent among employees from all the units. The second popular choice of house-location is the employees working town, ranging between 5 and 26 percents; Employees' choice of housing location is lowest for locations other than home town, working town and employee's State Headquarters. These 'others' include Federal or Nation's capital city spouse's home town, Local Government Council Headquarters, etc.

Figure 1.0 Rating of Employees' Choices among the Different Residential Locations.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the result of this study (in Ogbomoso), workers in urban cities in Nigeria tend to prefer building their own houses in their home towns. Between 50% and 90% of workers in the solely non-academic units of Ladoké Akintola University of Technology would prefer their home towns as the location for such houses. This practice may have contributed substantially to shortage in urban housing stock- bordering on abysmal quantitative shortage on one hand and over stress on urban facilities and services on the other. The overall effect on the national housing stock reflects “Shortage in urban housing, in the midst of plenty rural stock”. The bias in employees’ housing location in favour of hometowns is not without understandable reasons. It arose from the fear of insecurity of place, tenure, employment, etc; and the restriction of rights often meted out to employees working outside the towns and local government areas where they are not bona-fide.

In order to stem the practice of siting private houses in employees’ hometowns, the following recommendations are made:

Employees of labour should plan and embark on employees’ house-ownership programme, in which employees are encouraged to own houses in their working towns. The

scheme, which should be introduced to staff within their first ten years of service, could build houses for staff who could move into them and pay through deductions from their salary; until the total cost of the house and possibly some interest has been offset. Thereafter the occupant takes full ownership possession of the house. This method may even encourage such owners to invest other human and financial resources in their working towns.

A level of political stability should be injected into the nations polity such that state creation and other state policies would not alienate employees from their working towns.

A national policy should be enacted that will bequeath the right of citizenship to employees who have worked or stayed in a place for a certain length of time; say ten (10) years.

A dismally low percentage (21.33%) of employees in this study own their personal houses. The implication of this is that, housing affordability is so low that about 79 percent of the staff can not afford a minimally decent houses of their own. It is therefore recommended that employees of labour in the country should consider an upward review of salaries and wages. This will enable more employees to own houses of their own, relief governments and other employees of labour part of their borden on workers housing and enhance better productivity among the different work forces.

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