

EXPLORING LIVELIHOOD COPING MECHANISMS IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS OF LAGOS: THE CASE OF IJORA-BADIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the coping mechanisms utilized by residents living in informal settlements in Lagos, specifically focusing on the case of Ijora-Badia. Informal settlements pose unique challenges to residents, including inadequate housing, limited access to basic services, economic hardships, and security concerns. Understanding how individuals cope with these challenges is crucial for developing effective interventions and improving the well-being of residents. Data was collected through surveys administered to residents in Ijora-Badia, capturing their experiences and perceptions. The study investigates various coping mechanisms employed by residents, including support from non-work social networks, support from work-based social networks, support from family and friends, subsistence farming, loans, other informal enterprises, provision of personal security, and government support. The findings reveal that residents in Ijora-Badia rely on diverse coping mechanisms to navigate their circumstances.

They seek support from non-work social networks such as faith-based organizations, social clubs, community development associations (CDA), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Additionally, they rely on support from work-based social networks, including thrift clubs, trade groups, and cooperatives. Family and friends play a crucial role in providing support to individuals, while subsistence farming, loans from various sources, and engagement in other informal enterprises are employed as additional coping strategies. Residents also depend on personal security measures and, to some extent, government assistance.

INTRODUCTION

Background to Study

Globally, it has been observed that close to 193,107 new urban dwellers become part of the world's urban population every day. In 1976 almost one-third of the global population lived in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2010).



From 2007 to 2012, the figure rose, with 50% of the world's population living in urban settlements (Teyana and Mrema, 2018). Writings by (UN-Habitat, 2010), show that slightly over one-third of the world's urban population resides in informal settlements with a high rate of urban poverty, and there has been a steady increase in the number.

The massive rise in the world's urban population and rapid urbanization has resulted in fast growth in size and an increase in the number of new settlements, whereby most of the settlements informally take place. As a result, they are hosting a majority of the urban poor. (Teyana & Mrema, 2018).

Moreover, many of the city's urban poor reside in informal settlements due to the inability to meet their service and accommodation needs via formal mechanisms Amendah et al., (2014); UN-Habitat, (2009) State that almost 90% of the world's informal settlements are in developing countries, and they accommodate 25% to 35% of the urban population. However, (Kyessi 2022) asserts that most informal settlements in Sub-Saharan African countries have been urbanizing faster than the rest of the world as they accommodate up to 72% of the current urban population in the region.

Informal settlements were described as areas of squatters that lack good housing and inadequate facilities like sanitation, water supply, drainage, sewerage, health care facilities, and community centers (UN-Habitat 2022). Also, informal settlements can be defined as spatial manifestations of certain living conditions that do not conform to legal rules and formal planning. The situation is often dynamic and complex, and poverty tends to be the outcome of various dimensions of deprivations and exclusions.

Urban informal settlements are usually densely populated and consist of low and middle-income groups, which means survival and strategy combine numerous livelihood activities. (Endris et al. 2018) assert that households in informal settlements face shocks and stress, both man-made and natural, and often find ways to respond to the stress and create strategies to cope and recover from them.

How a given household copes with and survives economic stress and shocks largely depends on the options available to them regarding assets, capabilities (which include social resources and materials), and activities from which the households draw a living.x

Informal settlements have continued to increase in different cities in Nigeria, which



has negatively impacted established settlements in different cities, especially Lagos. The exponential increase in a city's population, an example is Lagos, leads to a reduction in how the city functions correctly, which leads to a decrease in infrastructure and service provision by the city authorities.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the informal settlement of Ijora Badia in Lagos, Nigeria, and to analyze the challenges households are facing and the coping mechanisms adopted by households who reside in Ijora Badia, Lagos Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Informal settlements, also known as slums or shanty towns according (Mooya et al, 2012) and (Amao, 2012), are a prevalent urban phenomenon in many developing countries, and Lagos, Nigeria, is no exception. With a rapidly growing population and limited formal housing options, residents of these settlements face numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of access to basic services, and limited livelihood opportunities. In the face of such adversity, residents employ various coping mechanisms to navigate their daily lives. This review aims to explore and evaluate the coping mechanisms utilized in informal settlements of Lagos, shedding light on their

effectiveness, implications, and potential for improvement.

Community Solidarity

One of the most powerful coping mechanisms observed in informal settlements of Lagos is community solidarity according to (Marx, 2007). Residents band together, forming tight-knit networks and support systems. Through collective efforts, they address common challenges such as water scarcity, security, and access to healthcare. Community-led initiatives, such as shared water points, community policing, and locally run health clinics, contribute to fostering resilience and improving living conditions.

Informal Economies

According to (Adebayo, 2006) Informal settlements in Lagos often have vibrant informal economies. Residents engage in a range of informal income-generating activities, including street vending, small-scale manufacturing, and providing services to their fellow community members. These economic activities enable residents to earn a livelihood and meet their basic needs. However, the lack of formal recognition and support for these informal businesses poses challenges in terms of stability, access to capital, and market integration.



Adaptive Housing Strategies

(Ihua-Maduenyi, 2018) Added that In the absence of formal housing options, residents of informal settlements employ adaptive housing strategies to cope with their living conditions. These strategies involve incremental construction, utilizing locally available materials, and maximizing limited space. Self-help initiatives and communal efforts enable residents to construct and upgrade their dwellings over time. However, inadequate infrastructure and lack of secure tenure limit their ability to make substantial improvements(Adebayo, 2006).

Social and Cultural Practices

According to (Kihato, 2010)Social and cultural practices play a vital role in coping with the challenges faced by residents of informal settlements. Strong social networks, cultural traditions, and shared norms foster resilience, social cohesion, and mutual support. Religious institutions, community festivals, and informal education initiatives contribute to a sense of belonging and identity, which in turn helps individuals cope with adversity and build a sense of hope for the future (Aluko, 2004).

Advocacy and Grassroots Movements

In recent years, advocacy groups and grassroots movements have emerged to champion the rights and well-being of informal settlement residents in Lagos According to (Landman et al, 2010).

These movements, often led by community members themselves, seek to raise awareness about the challenges faced by the marginalized population and advocate for policy changes and better infrastructure. By giving voice to the residents, these movements contribute to shaping the discourse around informal settlements and inspire positive change(chia et al, 2017).

Coping mechanisms employed by residents of informal settlements in Lagos are diverse, resilient, and borne out of necessity (Adam, 2014). Community solidarity, informal economies, adaptive housing strategies, social and cultural practices, and grassroots movements all play significant roles in helping residents navigate their daily lives and build resilience. However, it is important to recognize that these coping mechanisms are often responses to systemic failures in urban planning and governance. Addressing the underlying issues, such as lack of basic services, inadequate housing, and limited economic opportunities, requires comprehensive and sustainable solutions that prioritize the rights and well-being of informal settlement residents(Aluko, 2004).



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Livelihood Diversification and Income Generation

Livelihood diversification and income generation strategies play a crucial role in the coping mechanisms employed by residents of Ijora-Badia. Empirical studies have highlighted the various informal economic activities undertaken by residents to secure their livelihoods. For instance, street vending has been identified as a common income-generating activity, with individuals selling a wide range of goods and services in the local markets and streets (Adelaja et al., 2018). Small-scale trading, such as selling groceries, household items, and clothing, is another prevalent livelihood strategy adopted by residents (Onibokun & Kumuyi, 1996). Additionally, manual labor in construction, transportation, and other informal sectors provides an avenue for income generation (Oduwaye & Nubi, 2017). These livelihood diversification strategies enable residents to generate income despite limited formal employment opportunities.

Informal Financial Practices and Social Networks

Informal financial practices and social networks also play a significant role in the

coping mechanisms of residents in Ijora-Badia. Studies have shown that residents utilize informal financial mechanisms, such as rotational savings and informal credit systems, to manage their financial needs (Onibokun & Kumuyi, 1996). Rotational savings, commonly known as "esusu" or "ajo," involve regular contributions by group members, with each member receiving a lump sum at regular intervals (Ilesanmi & Obayelu, 2014). This practice provides a form of informal financial support and risk-sharing mechanism.

Social networks and community support systems contribute to coping mechanisms by providing access to resources, information, and mutual assistance. Residents in Ijora-Badia rely on strong social ties with family, friends, and neighbors to navigate challenges and cope with hardships (Adelaja et al., 2018). Mutual aid groups, such as cooperative associations and rotating credit societies, have also emerged as platforms for collective support and resource pooling (Sridhar & Lone, 2019). These networks serve as sources of emotional support, financial assistance, and information exchange, enhancing residents' resilience in the face of adversity.

Methodology



The methodology section of this research paper outlines the qualitative approach employed to address the research questions raised and achieve the objectives of the study. It details the procedures and methods utilized to collect data, carry out analysis, and interpret data, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings. This section provides a comprehensive overview of the research design used for the study, data collection techniques, and the data analysis methods that was employed in this study. A qualitative research approach was adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of the livelihood coping mechanisms employed by residents in Ijora-Badia.

Sample size

The present investigation utilized Slovin's formula as the means for determining the necessary sample size for the study, as advocated by Tejada and Punzalan (2012). The formula devised by Slovin to estimate the sample size in a population-based statistical study is expressed as $k = P / (1 + P e^2)$. Herein, k denotes the sample size, P represents the total population, and e stands for the margin of error. This research employs a calculation of sample size with a 95% level of confidence and a margin of error amounting to 5%. Hence, it can be inferred that the value of 'e' is equal to 0.05. According to Ajibade et al. (2015) and Iroham et al. (2020),

the estimated human population of the Ijora Badia region is 600,000 individuals. Hence, the current study involves a total population denoted as $P = 600,000$. The given mathematical expression, $600,000 / (1 + 600,000 * 0.05^2)$, corresponds to a numerical computation. The resulting value that is obtained from the computation is 150. Based on the research requirements, a sample size of 150 has been deemed sufficient for the purpose of this study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Coping mechanism of the respondent

Coping mechanism	Y e s	N o	If yes, how?
Support from non-work social networks (Faith-based, Social club, CDA, NGO's, etc)	9 2	5 8	Church palliatives, social club, mosque, contributions, CDA group contributions, women society, rotary club, Elder forum, NGO, food stuffs, empowerment program,



Support from work-based social networks (Thrift, Trade group, Rotating credit, etc)	8 3	6 7	Daily contributions, thrift, club, trade group, women society, rotary club, cooperative,
Support from family and friends	1 0 0	5 0	Children, husband, family members, relatives
Loan	9 2	5 8	Ajo, club, contribution, women society, micro finance bank, LAPO,
Other informal enterprises	6 4	8 6	Fruit selling, gas, business and enterprises
Provision of personal security	1 0 0	5 0	The boys, vigilante
Government	7 4	7 6	Foods, roads, provision of loans, clearing of

		waste dump on the road
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From the data collected, the summary of findings can be deduced.

1. Livelihood Coping Mechanisms:

Residents of Ijora-Badia employ various coping mechanisms to sustain their livelihoods in challenging conditions. These mechanisms include engaging in informal economic activities such as street vending, petty trading, and artisanal work. Social networks and community support systems play a crucial role in providing mutual aid and assistance.

2. Lack of Basic Services:

The settlement faces significant challenges in accessing basic services such as clean water, sanitation facilities, electricity, and healthcare. Limited access to these essential services negatively impacts the living conditions and health outcomes of residents.

3. Informality and Tenure Insecurity:

The informal nature of the settlement leads to tenure insecurity and lack of legal recognition for residents. The



absence of formal property rights hampers investment in homes and livelihoods, creating a cycle of vulnerability and limited upward mobility.

4. Limited Livelihood Opportunities: Residents face constraints in accessing formal employment and income-generating opportunities. Lack of skills, education, and resources restrict their ability to improve their livelihood prospects and break free from the cycle of poverty.

5. Social Networks and Community Resilience: Social networks and community support systems play a vital role in providing emotional support, mutual aid, and collective problem-solving. These networks contribute to the resilience of residents in the face of challenges.

6. Limited Government Intervention: The study reveals a lack of comprehensive government interventions and services targeted towards improving the living conditions and livelihood opportunities in Ijora-Badia. There is a need for enhanced government

support and investment to address the challenges faced by residents effectively.

7. Potential for Positive Change: Despite the challenges, the study highlights the resourcefulness and resilience of residents in coping with their circumstances. There is potential for positive change through targeted interventions that enhance basic services, formalize settlements, strengthen livelihood opportunities, and foster community participation.

These findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive and integrated approaches to improve the living conditions and livelihood opportunities in informal settlements like Ijora-Badia. By addressing the challenges identified and implementing targeted interventions, it is possible to create a more sustainable and inclusive environment for the residents, enabling them to thrive and break free from the cycle of poverty.

Recommendations

The following are my recommendations based on the study that was carried out



1. Enhancing Basic Services and Infrastructure

- There is need to Improve access to basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity, and healthcare in Ijora-Badia to enhance the living conditions of residents.

2. Formalizing Informal Settlements

- There need to Develop policies and strategies to formalize informal settlements like Ijora-Badia, ensuring tenure security and providing legal recognition to residents.

Strengthening Livelihood Opportunities

- Creation of skill development and vocational training programs tailored to the needs and aspirations of Ijora-Badia residents, enhancing their employability and income-generation prospects.

4. Enhancing Community Resilience

- Establishment of community-based organizations and support networks to promote collective action, social cohesion, and resilience within the settlement.

5. Strengthening Governance and Participation

- Promote inclusive governance structures that involve local residents, community leaders, and relevant government agencies in decision-making processes regarding Ijora-Badia's development.

Conclusion

The study on exploring livelihood coping mechanisms in the informal settlement of Ijora-Badia in Lagos sheds light on the challenges faced by residents and the strategies they employ to sustain their livelihoods in difficult circumstances. The findings provide valuable insights into the dynamics of informal settlements and the need for targeted interventions to improve the lives of residents.

In conclusion, this study underscores the urgent need for comprehensive and integrated approaches to address the challenges faced by residents in informal settlements. By implementing the recommended strategies to enhance basic services, formalize settlements, strengthen livelihood opportunities, foster community resilience, improve governance and participation, and establish social safety nets, it is possible to improve the living conditions and prospects for the residents of Ijora-Badia. Such



efforts would contribute to the broader goal of achieving sustainable and inclusive development in informal settlements across Lagos and beyond.

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