



CRITICAL DRIVERS AND CONSEQUENCES OF INFORMAL LAND TRANSACTIONS IN OWERRI URBAN, IMO STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT.

Urban land markets are important components that shape, reshape and transform urban areas. There are two types of urban land markets namely: formal and informal land markets. Whereas the formal land markets are those governed by state law, informal land markets are those that are neither governed by the state law nor registered in the government system. It has been observed in Owerri that the formal land market (the Land Use Act) is unable to meet the demand for urban land when and where needed for the teeming urban population. This is because of its implementation process which has been found to be time consuming, frustrating, cumbersome and highly bureaucratic. Because of this, majority of the urban dwellers are compelled to resort to informal land market (private land market transactions) as a reliable alternative. This study sought to identify and rank the critical drivers and consequences of informal land transaction in Owerri urban, Imo state. The study adopted a cross sectional design approach within quantitative research methodological paradigm. Data for the research were through the Key informant interview technique and Personal observation for the primary source and already written literatures and maps for the secondary. The research revealed that there are eight (8) drivers and eleven (11) consequences of informal land transaction in Owerri urban and proved that all the eight (8) drivers are critical because each of them scored a mean value above 3.5. But out of the eleven consequences, eight (8) were found to be critical while three (3) were not. This is because they scored a mean value below 3.5. The study contributed to the existing body of knowledge by identifying and ranking these critical drivers and consequences. It was recommended among others that there is the need for radical re-examination of formal land administrative systems with a view to adopting more flexible ways of interacting with informal land acquisition processes. Again, the government should critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of both land markets and harmonize them for efficient urban land market transactions.

KEYWORDS: Informal land market, formal market, urban land, critical drivers and consequences, Owerri urban.



1 INTRODUCTION

Land, a free gift of nature is the base for all human activities. It supports all human activities and it is from it that all other economic resources are derived. It is fixed in supply and can hardly be renewed without adverse consequences. A careful analysis of the role land plays in the lives of people shows that man's attachment to it is inevitable. Therefore, it must be judiciously and efficiently used in a sustainable manner for the use and benefit of all. It is for this reason that different countries of the world have evolved land tenure systems to protect various interests in land and for effective land management. In Nigeria, before the promulgation of the Land Use Act of 1978, each region of the country operated different forms of land tenure. But after the promulgation of the Act, land became nationalized and land management changed. Firstly, The Act extinguished perpetual land ownership right and replaced it with Statutory or Customary Right of Occupancy. This right is evidenced by the issuance of certificate of occupancy which cannot be alienated in the market except with the consent of the Governor in whom all lands within the territory of the state was vested in. Secondly, although this land law essentially nationalized the lands, persons in occupancy of urban lands at that time whose lands were not subjected to any specific government acquisition action remain in possession. In that case they are free to trade with the lands despite the absence of the statutory certificate of occupancy (Butler, 2012). From the above changes therefore, it can be seen that the promulgation of the Act created the informal land market that was never in existence before. Therefore, as at today in Nigeria, there exists two types of urban land market namely: the formal and the informal land markets. In many cities of the third world countries, urban land can either be obtained through the formal or informal sector. However, the informal sector provides more land to urban land seekers than the formal.

Immediately Owerri was made the capital city of Imo State in 1976, it began to experience rapid rural-urban migration with its attendant rapid urban growth. During this transition period, many households were able to get easy access to land for the construction of their own houses through land acquisition from various land owning families. This was made possible because the allocation of customary land by legitimate rights' holders was fairly practiced and accepted by the society. However land policies by successive governments in Nigeria since independence, be it military or civilian, have concentrated on analyzing the shortcomings of informal land transactions rather than trying to understand how the processes were sustained in the past.

The rapid growth of urban areas of Nigeria increases demand for land. Statutory (formal) methods of land allocation have been found not to have adequately met the demand for land for all the income groups. This is because its implementation is time consuming, frustrating, cumbersome and highly bureaucratic (Mortimore, 1986; Antwi and Adams,



2003) thereby giving rise to significant transaction costs in terms of delays, fees, bribery, and so on (Ikejiofor, 2009 and Emeasoba,2011). These problems have resulted in the inadequate supply of land, thereby pushing up prices beyond the reach of so many urban dwellers especially the urban poor. As a result, informal methods of land acquisition gradually grew into prominence to meet the demand. Yet the workings of these informal land sector are usually ignored, and are hardly investigated or documented. Several actors participate in this process including states and local governments, traditional rulers, land agents, landholding households, etc. The response of the informal sector to the ever increasing demand for land, largely for commercial and residential use has resulted in adverse effects and complex land management system. However, even though it is possible to conclude that the causes and effects of informal land transactions in Nigeria are easily identifiable, it is not easy to guess the critical causes and effects. The aim of this study is to identify and rank the critical causes and effects of informal land transaction in Owerri urban with a view to evolving better land administration process and delivery system in the State. In achieving this, the mode of land accessibility, factors that promote the continuous informality as well as their effect on land delivery system in Owerri urban were discussed.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the review of relevant literature relating to informal land transaction and the development of conceptual framework. The essence of the literature review is to situate the study within the wider body of knowledge in the informal land market spectrum thereby justifying the relevance of the study.

2.1 CONCEPTS OF NIGERIAN LAND MARKETS.

Land rights transfer through purchase is usually referred to as land market because it involves exchange of commodity (land) against money between the seller (land owner) and the buyer; and may be through a middle man (agent). Land market in the context of African land tenure is discussed as being the same as land sales (transaction). It is a medium through which people who seek land for various uses can acquire it for their required uses (Okuku, 2006). The transaction involves the interplay of land availability and affordability by the buyers.

There is a difference between market transactions and non- market transactions. While market transactions relate to land purchases including leases in which parties to the transaction negotiate and agree on terms and register the transaction for law enforcement purposes, non-market transactions relate to government administered land ownership, transfer and sales. It also includes the transfer of private land ownership and use rights by the legislative power of the state (Butler, 2012).



Informal land market obey the forces of demand and supply which are responsible for the escalating, arbitrary and unfounded high land prices in Nigeria and are imperfect. Kasanga (2008) stated that though land is communally held in customary land tenure system in Nigeria, families and individuals are effectively controlling land use decisions. There are many defects in the customary land ownership system. Abdullai and Ndekugri, (2007) are of the view that these defects could be cured through government intervention to ensure effective and meaningful land distribution. But Kasanga, King and Roth (1996) took exception to this view but rather stated that it is government bureaucracies that are responsible for many of the observed problems in the land markets and not the traditional land ownership system. They observed that it is the state sponsored land sector institutions that have turned out to become the best medium for appropriating land to the close friends and business associates of the bureaucratic elites. Therefore, the primary state agency for the supply of urban land has been largely ineffective and is responsible for the many distortions in land market transactions and investment decisions (Kironde 2000), hence, the reason for the high patronage of the informal.

3. CONCEPT OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL LAND MARKET

The concepts, formal and informal have been associated with various urban land activities in Africa. The analysis of land markets in African cities recognizes the co-existence of formal and informal land markets. This is because, they share similarities, actors, and logics (UN-Habitat, 2010). However, according to Dale and McLaughlin (2000), formal land systems are those systems where interests are explicitly acknowledged and protected by the law, for example; the Land Use Act of Nigeria, while informal land market are those markets where interests are recognized by the local and informal communities which are not formally acknowledged and protected by the law. They exist outside the state legal system and are often as a result of inadequate or excessive and insufficient bureaucracies (UN-Habitat, 2010).

3.1 Formal Land Markets.

Formal land markets are those markets that are backed by the legal system of the government (Dale and McLaughlin, 2000 and UN-Habitat, 2010). They entail transactions in laid out plots as approved by the law and for which there are title (certificates), deeds or conveyance documents (Kironde, 2000). It has its origin in the colonial era when land administration system was governed by formal rules set out in legislation and administrative procedures. Formal land transaction in Nigeria is regulated by the Land Use Act of 1978. Its aim was to unify the land tenure systems in Nigeria and make land easily accessible to all Nigerians irrespective of tribe, ethnicity and nationality.



However, its implementation has not been very successful. This is because no one seems satisfied with the procedure for acquiring land. Opportunities for corruption are abound and it is questionable whether the legal and professional costs are socially desirable for the poor (Mortimore, 1986). In agreement with Mortimore (1986), Emeasoba (2011) added that the operation of the Act is time consuming, cumbersome and highly bureaucratic which has given rise to significant transaction costs in terms of taxes, fees, delays, bribery etc. These problems have limited the supply of land more and pushed up prices beyond the reach of majority of the urban dwellers (Okeahialam and Ogbuefi 2017). As a result, only the enlightened in the upper and middle class strata that have the resources to contain with these problems can access land easily from this market. The poor/the low income class therefore resort to the informal market for their land acquisition. Consequently, the law marginalized majority of the people that do not have the resources to face the challenges in acquiring land from the market, (Ikejiofor, 2009).

Some authors such as Marx and Roystone (2007) queried the validity of laws and regulations that effectively marginalized majority of the people from gaining easy access to land. They also added that in many African countries, the political and economic elites support the retention of these existing complex legal systems because they can manipulate them to their advantage due to their greater access to resources and power. In agreement to the above, Ikejiofor (2009) and Antwi and Adams (2003) stated that land acquisition through the formal process is too costly for the low income earners to bear due to the array of bureaucratic and professional undertakings it entails. In reality, the proportion of the urban economy that could be seen as legal or formal is small and excludes majority of the urban population. This is an apt description that can be applied to the situation of affluence in Nigeria's cities including Owerri where few have access to the state and formal land markets and enjoy the benefits of planned urban settlement while the majority subsists on the margins in the lands they acquire through informal land markets (Ikejiofor 2009). But the good thing about the Act is that it made land acquisition cheaper and easier for public use. Omirin (2009) observed that while land acquisition has become easier and cheaper for public use under the Act, its acquisition by private developers appear to have become more and more difficult than before.

Rewiss and Scott (1978) arrived at the following as fundamental conclusions that hold true for most formal urban land transactions.

- a) Whereas a wide variety of policies are employed to guide and regulate private rights to the use of urban land, none is secured to have an unambiguous long run effectiveness.



- b) Whereas government has assumed a major responsibility for the supply and control over the developable land, the spontaneous utilization of this land in the private sector is left to follow the momentum of demand and supply.
- c) There are no effective policies seeking to control urban land exchange.

3.2 Informal Land Market.

Informal land market is achieved by the ability of the land owners who hold customary rights over land for urban development to subdivide them for sale and purchase.

The success of informal land delivery system to all categories of people as noted by Rakodi and Leduka (2003) can be attributed to their practical attributes and social legitimacy. They stated that practical attributes make land transaction arrangements better suited to the needs of urban land sellers and purchasers and the social legitimacy derives from the wide understanding and acceptance of the social rules which enables transactions to occur smoothly. Here sale and purchase of land is by open market transactions from recognized owners (Kironde, 2010). The transaction involves land agents who act as middlemen between the vendors and the vendees and attestation ranges from mere issuance of purchase receipts signed by both parties for the money that has exchanged hands through the drawing up of formal conveyance document which is eventually executed by a lawyer as at today. (Mabogunje 1990, cited by Kironde, 2000).

Other strengths of the informal land transaction stems from the fact that its acquisition process is fast and at the reach of both the rich and the poor. Also, Purchasers are able to negotiate flexible methods of payment and sales agreements are witnessed by elders and friends of the purchasers. To crown it all, the validity of such agreements are generally accepted and respected by the courts in case of disputes (Oloyede, Ajibola and Oni, 2007 and Rakodi and Leduka, 2003).

However, its weakness lies on the inappropriate locations and the poor layouts in which settlements emerge with almost infrastructural deficiency (Odum and Ibem, 2011). However, these problems associated with informal land transaction notwithstanding, it has continued to be tolerated by the government because they expect to secure political support from the people and also to raise substantial revenue (Rakodi and Leduka 2003). Suffice it to state that informal land transaction becomes the only optimal solution to access to land where the formal system becomes of limited value because of the excessive bureaucracy and cost it is riddled with (Antwi, 2002).



4. DRIVERS AND CONSEQUENCES OF INFORMAL LAND TRANSACTION.

4.1 Drivers of Informal Land Transaction in Nigeria.

Informal land transactions thrive in Nigeria urban cities because of the difficulties encountered in acquiring land from the formal market (government land allocation process). The difficulties stem from the implementation process which has been found to involve preferential treatment in terms of allocation, very cumbersome, entails a lot of costs, full of fraudulent practices, frustrating, time consuming and highly bureaucratic (Mortimore, 1986; Antwi and Adams, 2003; Ikejiofor, 2009 Emeasuba, 2011, Buttler, 2012). Also Gando (2008) as cited by Adamu (2014) stated that: costly, lengthy and cumbersome land delivery process, high bureaucracy, resulting in slow land delivery process, bad governance and corruption have all combined to make it difficult for the urban poor to access land easily from the formal process in the area, hence their reliance on the informal land delivery process. Again, Governor's consent is needed before sale can be effected (Land Use Act 1978). Furthermore, Igbozurike (1980) stated that informal land transaction is brought about by the fact that most land owners bluntly refuse to accept that the Land Use Act of 1978 can oust their rights over their land no matter how legitimate it may be. To compound the matter more, Compensation is not paid for undeveloped land in excess of 0.5 hectares which is appropriated by the government (section 34) even where such land has been the bonafide property of a family for several generations. Secondly, the enforcement of the Act has been half-hearted and land speculators whose eradication constituted one of the major reasons for the promulgation of the Act are still very active and there is no legal action, moral campaign or even economic sanction meted out to them. In fact, the existence of the informal land market has become an efficient means for continued accumulation through speeding up the legal consolidation of private land holdings (Okeahialam and Ogbuefi, 2017).

In formal land transactions, the governor's consent must be sought and obtained before land is sub-divided and any sale effected by a landowner. This provision has frustrated/delayed most land transactions in the formal market. But in informal land transaction land owners can sub-divide and sell their land without seeking for the governor's consent. This factor helps to beat the cumbersome and frustrating process involved in the formal land allocation process where it takes governors a very long time to give consent to sell (Emeasoba, 2011 and Ogbuefi, 2012).

Another reason is that the buyer does not need to know anybody in a special way before he is able to acquire land from the market. All he needs to do is to make enquiries about land in any area of his choice and once there is land for sale and he is satisfied with the root ownership title after investigations, he negotiates and payment is made. Whereas in



the formal market, government officials are more interested in providing land to their friends and relations but paying little or no attention to the needs of the poor who may not be their close friends or relative or have money to give as tips. In this case, a person can apply for land allocation several times without success (Okeahialam and Ogbuefi, 2017, Emeasoba, 2011).

Again land is at the reach of both the rich, the poor, the alien and the powerful in the informal market. No matter ones status or economic power, he or she can enter the market and buy the size and number of land that he or she wants. Also, most of the fraudulent practices that characterise the formal market such as bribery, missing of files, preferential treatment etc., are very rarely experienced in informal transactions (Maduike 2002).

Above all, the title of land acquired through the informal land process which in most times is by way of power of attorney is equally recognized by the government. All these findings are in line with those of (Okeahialam and Ogbuefi, 2017; Butler, 2012; Ogbuefi, 2012; Emeasoba, 2011; UN Habitat, 2010; Antwi, 2002; Maduike, 2002 and Mortimore, 1986) who in their separate works confirmed that the above stated reasons are the factors that have compelled a greater proportion of the urban population to rely on informal land market as a fast and dependable source of land acquisition in urban areas of Nigeria

4.2. Consequences of Informal land transaction in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, colonial and post-colonial changes in land tenure system left the natives with rights to substantial tracts of land which they have subsequently divided and sub-divided and sold and re-sold to people. This private sale of land to people provide significant plots of land for housing and other economic activities to urban land dwellers without considering any possible consequence. Informal land transaction has encouraged sub-division of land in an effort to make sure that any member of the urban population in effective demand of land acquires one. This sub-division is not healthy for efficient urban land development as it leads to haphazard development, poor access road, development of slums and poor land use planning thereby making the quality of developments and environment as well as infrastructure remain below standard (Odum and Ibem, 2011)

However the scramble for land by all income groups as a result of the advantages of the informal land market over the formal is not without some negative effects. There are obvious consequences and risks encountered in informal land transactions in Owerri urban. These include haphazard development leading to poor and inadequate access roads, development of slums, poor visual outlook, multiple sales of land, illegal sub-division of land as well as poor land use planning (Okeahialam and Ogbuefi, 2017)



Again, because sub-division of land is practiced in informal transaction, land owners and agents can sell a piece of land more than once using different sets of witnesses. They achieve this by sub-dividing a piece of land that had already been sold and sell part of it to a different buyer. This could be because the land owner may be in dire need of money to settle immediate pressing problems such as payment of hospital bills or children's school fees or the land may have remained for a long time without any form of ownership exercised over it. In that case, the land owner or agent can sell the land again on the feeling that the purchaser is dead without any of his heirs having knowledge of the land. However, when the owner surfaces, disputes usually set in which may lead to quarreling, fighting and even litigation if not amicably settled by both parties. Some gullible and overzealous buyers are also duped through this process as the seller (agent) may sell land to them and disappear (Okeahialam and Ogbuefi, 2017).

Another consequence of informal land transaction in Nigeria is that it encourages land speculation which is not healthy for urban land management (Antwi and Adams, 2003; Ikejiofor, 2009 Emeasuba, 2011). The market does not control the number of plots or the sizes of a piece of land anybody can acquire. This has those who are economically strong to cash in on this weakness and acquire as much land as they want (Buttler, 2012; Okeahialam and Ogbuefi, 2017). In fact, the phenomenon of informal land transaction has led to increase in land speculation, development of haphazard settlements, illegal sub-division of land, poor circulation, poor visual outlook, multiple sale of a piece of land, increase in the number of illegal land transfers and other cases of land related corruption and ineffective urban land market (Ikejiofor (2009), Odum and Ibem (2011) and Gando, (2008) cited by Adamu, 2014).

4.3. Conceptual Framework of Drivers and Consequences of Informal Land Transaction in Owerri Urban.

The development of the conceptual framework for the study is to summarize the existing findings into a structure. From the review of literature on the drivers and consequences of informal land transaction in Owerri urban, eight driving factors and eleven consequences have been identified. The eight drivers are fast processing of documents, ease of land sub-division, cheap, government acceptability of documents, no governors approval is required, less cumbersome, no preferential treatment and easy accessibility to land while the eleven consequences are haphazard development, poor visual outlook, illegal Sub-division of land, poor circulation, land speculation, fighting, litigation, multiple sales of a piece of land, duping, overcrowding as well as threats to health and safety. See figure 1. (Framework of Drivers and Consequences of Informal Land Transactions in Owerri Urban).

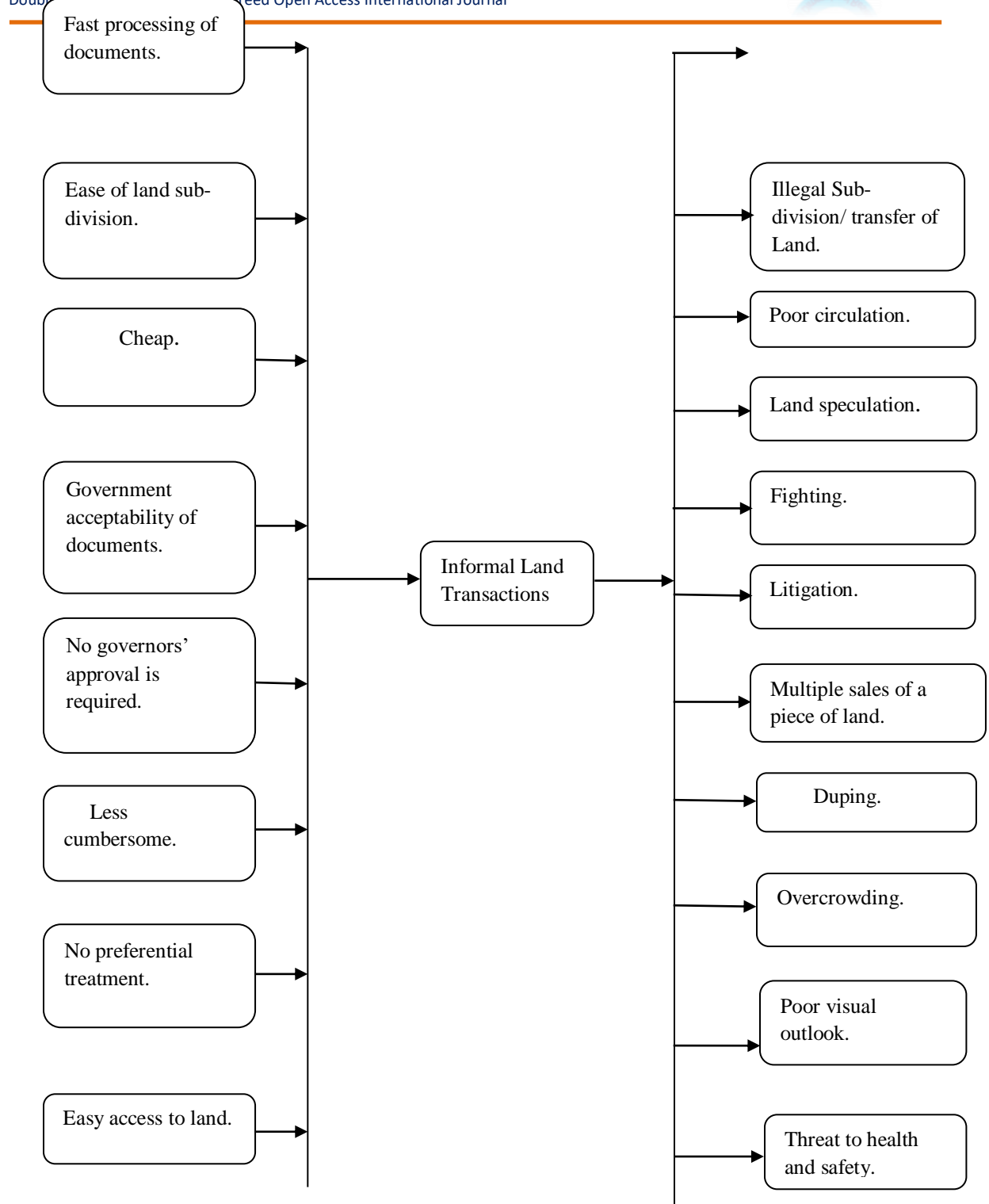


Fig. 1. Framework of Drivers and Consequences of Informal Land Transactions in Owerri Urban.
 Source: Authors Construction 2018.

5. THE STUDY AREA



The study was conducted in Owerri Urban, Imo State, Nigeria. Owerri urban is made up of Owerri Municipal council, two-third (2/3) of the parts of Owerri West and Owerri North local governments and one-third each of the parts of Egbeada, Ubomiri and Mbieri: all in Mbaitoli local government area of Imo state. It is bounded on the East by Aboh Mbaise, on the West by Ohaji/Egbema, on the North by Mbaitoli and Ikeduru and on the South by Ohaji and Ngor Okpala local governments. It lies on longitude 5.48⁰E and latitude 7.03⁰N and its inhabitants are mainly civil servants, traders and farmers who are predominantly the natives. Its projected population based on the 2006 population census is 507,476.

6. RESEARCH METHODS AND MATERIALS.

This section presents the research methods and materials that were employed in the study. The study employed a survey research design approach within a quantitative research methodological paradigm to address the research problem. Data for the study were from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were gathered using questionnaire and personal observation. The secondary information were gathered through literatures from scholarly journal articles, research papers, thesis, and policy documents reviewed for the study. The secondary information was largely used to ascertain the existing findings on the drivers and consequences of informal land transactions in Owerri urban, Imo State, Nigeria. The drivers and consequences of informal land transaction in the study area from the literature were ranked by respondents comprising of land owners/developers and land agents (which include professionals such as estate surveyors and valuers, lawyers and other non-professionals who actively participate in land transactions in the area). These categories of respondents were the targeted for the study because they were deemed to have appropriate experience and knowledge of informal land transactions in the area, thereby situating them in the appropriate position to be able to rank the drivers and consequences of informal land transactions in the area; and also suggest ways of improving the situation. The researcher targeted 170 respondents. This sample size was regarded adequate for the study and accordingly, the respondents were selected for the study based on suitability, proximity and easy access. The study employed the purposive sampling technique in selecting the sample size. However, prior questions confirming their involvement in informal land transaction was undertaken so as to be sure that the right respondents were contacted. Drawing from the established drivers and consequences of informal land transaction from the open literature domain, a pilot survey using informal interviews was undertaken prior to the actual data collection to confirm the practical applicability of the drivers and consequences of informal land transaction. A total of 8 land owners and 11 land agents were taken. The final data collection was undertaken using questionnaires. Those who were selected for the pilot survey were however not included in the actual data collection.



A total of 170 questionnaires which contained both close and open ended questions were distributed in nine (9) different locations in the study area namely: Umuguma, Naze, Avu, Nekede, Egbu, Orji, Okwu, Akwakuma and Irete. The questionnaire was grouped into four sections (Section A to D). Section A contained demographic data of the respondents. Section B contained information pertaining to drivers of informal land transaction and required the respondents to rank the variables on a five point Likert scale of 1- not very critical, 2- not critical, 3- normal, 4- critical and 5- very critical. In section C, information was sought on the effects/consequences of informal land transaction and required the respondents also to rank the variables on five point Likert scale of 1- not very critical, 2- not critical, 3- normal, 4- critical and 5- very critical. Lastly, section D comprised of open ended questions. It sought information on ways of addressing the consequences of informal land transaction. The questionnaires were personally administered to the respondents by the researchers who later retrieved them. The demographic features of the respondents were reported using frequency distribution tables. The responses from the questionnaire were analysed into a form of scale ranking using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS 20).

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the results and discussion of the data that was gathered to answer the research questions. Out of a total of 170 questionnaires that were administered, 107 were retrieved from the respondents. This represents a response rate of 63%. It was considered adequate for the study because the response rate exceeded 50% of the total number of questionnaires administered. This section has three sub-sections comprising of bio-statistics of the respondents, critical drivers of informal land transactions and critical consequences of informal land transactions.

7.1 Bio-Statistics of the Respondents

The study gathered data on the demographic characteristics of respondents comprising of land owners and land agents. The demographic data was necessary to ascertain the scope of the respondents and how the different opinions factored properly into the study. The demographic data included the sampled locations, gender and age of the respondent. A summary of the various demographic data are presented below:

Table 1: Bio-Statistics of Respondents

Gender	No. of Respondents (N=107)	% of Respondents (N=100%)
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Male	88	82.2
Female	19	17.8
Age (years)	No. of Respondents (N=107)	% of Respondents (N=100%)
15-24	8	7.5
25-34	19	17.8
35-44	67	62.6
45 and Above	13	12.1
Location	No. of Respondents (N=107)	% of Respondents (N=100%)
Umuguma	10	9.4
Naze	13	12.1
Avu	11	10.3
Nekede	10	9.4
Egbu	15	14.0
Orji	13	12.1
Okwu	10	9.4
Akwakuma	12	11.2
Irete	13	12.1
Educational Status	No. of Respondents (N=102)	% of Respondents (N=100%)
No Formal Education	15	14
Basic Education	32	30
Secondary Education	40	37.4
Tertiary	9	8.4
Degree and More	11	10.2

Source: Field Survey, 2018

From Table 1, it can be noticed that 88(82.2%) of the respondents are male while 19(17.8%) are female. This shows that the male gender group predominate the land transaction business in the area than the female. The reason for this skewed result could be ascribed to the fact that women do not inherit land in the area. However, the inclusion of both male and female respondents in the study was to allow for the views of gender differentiations to be captured. It was also observed that land transaction in the area is dominated by the youth whose age range is between 35 years and 44 years, indicating that land conveyancing in Owerri urban is dominated by Adults. With regard to spatial coverage, the study captured views from nine locations immediately surrounding Owerri urban. Also, the research revealed that majority of those in land transaction in the area



have secondary education 40(37.4%) while the percentage of those without formal education is 14%. This result was not amazing because one must not be literate to be effective in land conveyancing.

7.2 Critical Drivers of Informal Land Transactions in Owerri Urban.

One of the objectives of study was to identify and rank the drivers of informal land transactions in the study area after they have been identified from the open literature and confirmed by the respondents. The respondents ranked these drivers on a five point Likert scale of 5-very critical, 4- critical, 3-normal, 2-not critical and 1-not very critical. As a result, a driver was said to be critical if it scored a mean value above a conventional mean of 3.5. This is because a mean score of 3.5 is the midway between normal and critical on the 5-point Likert scale and any score above 3.5 is closer to 4(critical) than 3(normal) on the scale. Table 2 is a mean score presentation of the drivers of informal land transactions in Owerri urban using one sample t-test.

Table 2: Critical Drivers of Informal Method of Land Transaction.

S/N	Drivers	N	Mean		Standard deviation	Rank
			Statistics	Standard Error		
1	Fast processing of documents.	107	4.77	.041	.425	1
2	Ease of land sub-division.	107	4.15	.067	.698	6
3	Cheap.	107	3.96	.090	.931	7
4	Easy access to land.	107	4.51	.050	.521	4
5	No governor's approval is sought.	107	4.58	.050	.515	3
6	Less cumbersome.	107	3.96	.081	.835	7
7	No preferential treatment.	107	4.65	.046	.478	2
8	Government acceptability of title document from informal land transaction.	107	4.33	.058	.595	5

Source: Authors' Construct 2018

From table 2, it can be seen that all the eight drivers of informal land transaction in Owerri urban were regarded by the respondents as critical. This is because all the variables scored mean values above the conventional mean of 3.5. However, based on the mean score ranking, fast processing of documents was ranked 1st as a driver of informal land transaction with a mean score of 4.77. The mean score is closer to 5(very critical) than it is closer to 4(critical).



Therefore, the respondents collectively indicated that the speed by which land documents are processed is a very critical driver of informal method of land transaction in the area. No preferential treatment with a mean score of 4.65 was ranked 2nd. No governor’s approval is sought with a mean score of 4.58 was ranked 3rd. Easy access to land with a mean score of 4.33 was ranked 4th. Government acceptability of title document from informal land transaction with a mean score of 4.51 was ranked 5th. Ease of land sub-division with a mean score of 4.15 was ranked 6th while Cheap and less cumbersome process with a mean score of 3.96 ranked 7th each. All these are in line with the findings of Okeahialam and Ogbuefi (2017), Butler (2012), Emeasoba (2011), UN Habitat (2010), Oloyede, Ajibola and Oni, (2007), Antwi (2002), Maduiké (2002) and Mortimore (1986) who in their separate works have confirmed the above factors as the drivers compelling a greater proportion of the urban population to rely on informal land market as a fast and dependable source of land acquisition in Owerri urban and indeed other urban areas of Nigeria.

7.3 Critical Consequences of Informal Land Transactions in Owerri Urban.

Having presented and ranked the drivers as shown in table 2, it became vital to proceed with the evaluation and ranking of the consequences. The respondents also ranked the consequences on a five point Likert scale of 5-very critical, 4-critical, 3-normal, 2-not critical and 1-not very critical. As a result, a consequence was said to be critical if it scored a mean value above 3.5. This is because a mean score of 3.5 is the midway between normal and critical on the 5-point Likert scale and any score above 3.5 is closer to 4(critical) than 3(normal) on the scale. Table 3 shows a mean score analysis of the consequences of informal land transactions in Owerri Urban using one sample t-test.

Table 3: Critical Consequences of Informal Land Transactions on Land Market in Owerri Urban.

S/N	Consequences	N	Mean		Standard deviation	Rank
		Statistics	Statistics	Standard		



				Error		
1	Haphazard development	107	4.53	.060	.619	1
2	Poor visual outlook	107	4.04	.081	.835	4
3	Illegal Sub- division of land	107	3.86	.087	.895	5
4	Poor circulation	107	4.24	.061	.627	3
5	Land speculation	107	3.83	.075	.771	6
6	Fighting	107	3.17	.084	.874	9
7	Litigation	107	3.13	.086	.891	10
8	Multiple sales of a piece of land	107	4.43	.062	.646	2
9	Duping	107	3.07	.079	.816	11
10	Overcrowding	107	3.66	.074	.764	7
11	Threat to health and safety	107	3.51	.077	.793	8

Source: Author’s Construct 2018

From the collective perspective of all the respondents as shown in Table 3, it can be seen that eight (8) out of the eleven (11) consequences of informal land transaction in the area scored mean values above the conventional average of 3.5 and accordingly, were regarded as critical; while three (3), scored mean values below the conventional average of 3.5 and therefore were regarded as not critical. The consequences however were ranked from one to eight, starting with the one with the highest mean score as the 1st (Haphazard development) to the one with the lowest mean score as the 8th (Threat to health and safety). Those that were not regarded critical were ranked 9th (fighting), 10th (litigation) and 11th (duping). This finding is in line with the findings of Okeahialam and Ogbuefi, (2017), Ikejiofor (2009), Odum and Ibem (2011) and Gando, 2008 cited by Adamu, (2014) who in their separate works stated that the phenomenon of informal land transaction has led to increase in land speculation, development of haphazard settlements, illegal sub-division of land, poor circulation, poor visual outlook, multiple sale of a piece of land, increase in the number of illegal land transfers and other cases of land related corruption and ineffective urban land market. Fighting, litigation and duping were not regarded critical because they are of day to day occurrence in land transactions.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper examined informal land transactions in Owerri urban and identified and ranked its critical drivers and consequences from the opinions of land owners and land agents. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that all the drivers of informal land transaction in the study area are critical. This is because all the variables scored above the conventional mean value of 3.5. The four topmost drivers are: fast processing of



documents (ranked 1st); no preferential treatment (ranked 2nd); no governor's approval is sought before land is sold (ranked 3rd) and easy access to land (ranked 4th). As for the consequences, eight (8) out of the eleven (11) scored mean values above the conventional mean of 3.5 and accordingly are all regarded as critical while three (3) scored mean values below the conventional average of 3.5. They are therefore not regarded critical. The three topmost consequences are: haphazard development (ranked 1st); multiple sales of a piece of land (ranked 2nd) and Poor circulation (ranked 3rd), while the three that scored mean values below the conventional average of 3.5 and therefore regarded as not critical are: fighting (ranked 9th); litigation (ranked 10th) and duping (ranked 11th). Going by these findings, it is recommended that informal land delivery process should be made to thrive along relationship building in land administration process right from the land acquisition stage through issuance of land title documents. This is because informal land delivery process have become inevitable in urban land development. Therefore, the government should radically re-examine the formal land administrative systems with a view to adopting more flexible ways of interacting with informal actors. They should make land title registration process simpler and easier by reducing fees payable for the issuance of certificate of occupancy and those payable for building plan approvals. Also, the government should enact a law making it mandatory for all agents to be registered so as to reduce the rate at which unsuspecting buyers are duped.

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