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CORRELATION OF THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS AND RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH WALL-FENCE AND IRON BURGLAR-PROOFING OF DWELLING HOUSES IN AGEGE AND ABULE-EGBA, LAGOS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The primary functions of housing are to provide shelter from adverse weather and as an enclosure for privacy. In contemporary times however, housing is required as a means for accessing all facilities and amenities that make a complete living. Unfortunately, efforts at securing some conveniences of living often trigger new sets of dangers or risks, especially those that bothers on security of lives and properties. The dilemma is often exacerbated in developing economies where the liveable environment that should ordinarily, be guaranteed by the State on neighbourhood basis, must be provided by individual dwellers. This paper examines the aspect of privacy and security concerns that often lead to high boundary wall-fences and iron burglar-proofing of windows and doors in most of Nigerian urban dwellings. Questionnaires were administered to medium-density residents of Agege and Abule-Egba axis of Lagos Metropolis using random sampling, comprising 145 in Agege and 123 at Abule-Egba, cutting across both tenants and owner-occupiers. Their perception of exposure to risks to lives and properties by these two safety measures was gauged on a 5-point Likert-type scaling and the outcome analysed via Spearman's rho correlation. Findings revealed that Agege residents attached higher importance to iron reinforcement of window openings than their counterparts in Abule-Egba indicating higher sense of insecurity from mixed-class environment. Respondents from both places had very high positive correlation (rho = 0.8857) on their perceived benefits of high wall-fence and another positive correlation, though not as high (rho = 0.4857) on the benefits of iron grille reinforcement to windows. On the other hand, their perception of risks had comparatively, lower RII scores. The Spearman correlation for risks associated with high wall-fence was negative (-0.2857) while in respect of reinforcement iron grilles to windows, there was a low, positive correlation (0.2857). Good governance that ensures neighbourhood approach to and State provision of vital security infrastructure coupled with the use of contemporary technological gadgets, including burglar-alarms, surveillance cameras, are germane to reducing the spate of insecurity without endangering lives and properties in our living environments.

Key Words: *Burglar-proof, dwelling units, fatal risks, governance, high wall-fence, insecurity*

1.0 Introduction

Housing has, for ages, been accepted as a fundamental need of man (Noonan & Watson, 2017). While the primary function of housing is the provision of shelter, modern man has recognised additional need for privacy and security in an increasingly complex and pluralistic society (Zeng & Roesner, 2019; Macedo, Ornestein & Elali, 2022). The growth of human population and the complexity of its composition are however, some of the fall-outs of organised living and the advancements in economic and technological

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framework. Accordingly, individuals in modern societies should have no course to carry the responsibilities of Robinson Crusoe to survive on a Pacific Island of "Más a Tierra". Essentially, one vital measure of the quality of governance in any contemporary society is the extent of responsibilities of safety of lives and properties that have been taken away from individual members. Proliferation of housing amenities and the conveniences of living, including safety concerns, does not only amount to economic waste and a threat to sustainability of life and the environment, but a practice that tends towards a boomerang effect.

Man as gregarious being often have his living environment to be pluralistic and attendant with risks of various forms (Costa, 2022). There is the danger of someone's carelessness affecting a larger population of neighbours, close and frequent interactions breeding frictions and the increased spate of crimes. Thus, the insecurity aspect of our living environment has become a topical subject. Agarbati (2015) believed that the risk of crime in a building is a function of its vulnerability and the subsisting crime rate in the neighbourhood. Essentially therefore, residents of a neighbourhood considered to be above the community average in terms of socio-economic status tend to be relatively insecure, thereby requiring a more cautious security cover. It is not unusual therefore, to see pockets of residential developments in mixed-density neighbourhoods being serviced by extraneous security infrastructure. This paper is looking at the issue from the perspective of typical medium-density dwelling houses within a mixed-density urban neighbourhood, where pockets of such intersperse a substantially, low-income, high-density setting. This is to be viewed vis-à-vis residents in a more monolithic density neighbourhood. The focus is not just at insecurity per se, but the dangers inherent in self-help measures being employed to confront this challenge by residents in developing nations like Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

Perception is individual, subjective judgement, as against expert assessment. According to Stovic (1987), this has to do with examining the judgement of people when requested to evaluate their hazardous activities or practices. That something has benefits and that it is latent with risks does not necessarily mean everyone has the same understanding or consideration for the pros and cons. Often-times, decisions on investment and other critical subjects are significantly influenced by perception, beyond hard facts (Jemison, 2019, Lyman & Kuderer, 2023). Social scientists and

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psychologists would argue such individuals are unlikely to be good performers who can be entrusted with responsibilities nor even fit for leadership positions (Charron, 2016 and Odwazny & Berkman, 2017). In the investment world however, it is apt for researchers and advisers to strive to understand decision-influencing variables, beyond deciphering which is right or otherwise. Property users, especially in the residential sector, are sometimes in a dilemma between freedom of living with unfettered exposure to nature and its environment, and that of securing lives and properties from burglars and attackers. The statistics on crime rate and burglary in Nigeria comes in different modes. Suffice to note however, that crime rate is influenced by seasonal changes, composition of the neighbourhood and socio-political developments. Knoema (2025) reported that in Nigeria, domestic burglary and housebreaking rate dropped by 7.88% between 2009 and 2010 but rose from 1.2 cases per 100,000 population in 2012 to 1.5 cases per 100,000 population in 2013. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2025) of Nigeria, 51.89 million estimated crime incidents occurred between May 2023 and April, 2024 period. Expectedly, Lagos Metropolis has remained the hotspot for such incidents, with the statistics for 2017 for instance, indicating that Lagos State accounted for 37.9% of reported incidents, followed by Delta with a distant 9.2% share while the lowest record was for Kebbi State with just 0.2%. Thus, a study on housing and security measures would evidently be more appropriately focus on Lagos Metropolis.

Generally, property-related crimes are matters of concern on the global scale, though in developed countries, such are more prevalent outside the main administrative cities, and especially, the suburbs (Lee, 2006 and Ricciardelli, 2018). The Australian Institute of Criminology (2015) had revealed in a study that residential properties are more prone to burglary than other property types and indeed, and that the rate of residential burglary transcends other forms of reported crimes in Australia.

High boundary wall-fence is perhaps, more prevalent in neighbourhoods susceptible to burglary and house-breaks. Ordinarily, the gregarious nature of man presupposes compatibility, by the refrain ‘like attracts like’ (Ahn, Lee & Chung, 2023). Invariably, to have otherwise is to expose the man to danger through competition, conflict and strife that could be rooted in envy. Accordingly, it is not uncommon to find higher-end dwellers in a neighbourhood with mixed socio-economic class confine themselves within securely-

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walled premises with doors' and window-openings appropriately fortified against invasion. The concept of 'architecture of fear' was coined to express the unconscious feelings of insecurity and danger that are being inculcated into modern building designs and constructions (Z33, 2011).

The emergence of specialisation and urbanisation meant close spatial interaction of people with diverse culture, religion, economic and social status. This interaction comes with their opportunities (like provision of complimentary economic and social services) and dangers (such as frictions of diverse form). Efforts are nevertheless often made by governance to maximise the opportunities and minimise friction through the instruments of physical planning, development control and policing. Thus, among the leading features of good governance according to UNESCAP (2014) are responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency in addressing the needs of the governed.

One of the goals of physical planning is harmonious living environment (Raji, 2019). Harmony relates to compatibility in user and class structure. Thus, different uses are not only segregated over space as much as desirable but within a use category like residential, the social, economic and cultural factors that shape human interactions are considered in further re-classifying residential land among different density sizes – low, medium and high densities. Ordinarily, the low income group and most often those within the lower rung of social and cultural ladder occupy the high density neighbourhoods with small sizes of accommodation per household. Here, accommodation is relatively cheap, conveniences of living are shared, and hence interactions are high.

In the medium density zones however, accommodation units are larger, number of householders per plot are fewer with level of interactions being milder. However, we often have the low-medium and the high-medium sub-categories here as well. While the high-medium residence situate in close proximity to (or a times within) high density neighbourhoods, the low-medium group are more detached within specific layouts. This upcoming economic class is usually more vulnerable to insecurity as they sometimes, are just evolving from the lower income (high density) group where they may still have peers with envious dispositions. More so, they can seldom afford the costs of effective environmental crime check.

On its part, the low density group occupy spacious land area per household and could afford remarkable

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security measures – human and technological – such that their dwellings are designed to be significantly environment-friendly. Interactions among neighbours are usually much more formal and often take place at leisure parks.

High wall-fence around a dwelling effectively demarcates the boundaries, affords enhanced privacy and reduces friction with adjoining property owners and occupiers. On the other hand, it also hampers effective communication among neighbours and encourages burglary as intruders into such premises can be shielded from public view.

Anti-theft reinforcements and grilles add to structural strength and stability of buildings. But when the purpose is to prevent forceful access, this borders on security. Agarbati (2015) had observed that window openings represent the weakest or most vulnerable part of a building, hence the common practice of reinforcing them against burglars. Unfortunately, in Nigeria and across the world, there has been death reports related to iron grilles trapping the victims inside fire (Muhammad, 2025). Not even digital-coded doors are quite safe in such circumstance, as panic can make one not to recall the code early enough (Muhammad, 2025).

There are of course, other security measures being adopted for dwelling houses. Security personnel are often engaged on house-to-house basis by those capable of affording them (Aina, 2020). In the lower socio-economic communities however, this do take the form of street surveillance or shared security, especially within gated vicinities. And within typical African setting, Atolagbe (2011) documented 17 different ethno-medical practices associated with Yoruba traditions in use against pilfering, burglary and armed robbery. He attributed a resort to these old mystical devices to the corrupt nature of the internal security outfits and the strict legislations against possession of firearms in Third World countries.

3.0 Methodology

This study concentrates on high-medium density residential developments scattered within Agege, an indigenous settlement abutting Ikeja in the north-eastern end of Lagos metropolis. This was in comparison with similar dwelling units in Abule-Egba, a more monolithic medium-density neighbourhood. While Agege is predominantly high density residential, there are pockets of medium density residential layouts such as along Omotoye/Somoye Street, Kabiawu Street and Alexandra Street. A total of

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178 properties were identified and surveyed across several streets of Agege, through clustered sampling. One hundred and forty-five (145) representing about 81% of the responses were found useful for analysis. In respect of Abule-Egba, 160 similar questionnaires were distributed but 123 (or about 77%) proved useful for analysis. Data were elicited by combination of direct observations and structured questionnaires which required respondents to gauge their perception of issues through a 5-point Likert scaling. This was subsequently analysed using the Relative Importance Index (RII) and the results in both locations were subjected to Spearman rho correlation to examine the existence or otherwise, of neighbourhood attributes on the respondents' perc

eptions.

4.0 Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the composition of sampled dwelling houses. In both locations, block of flats predominates (64% in Agege and 47% in Abule-Egba) but the relative strength of other dwelling types differ in these two places.

Also, of the 145 respondents in Agege, 101 (or approximately 70%) had their premises highly fenced, with the corresponding proportion in Abule-Egba being even higher (79%) (See Table 2).

Table 1: Types of dwelling houses in the study

Type of dwelling house of respondents	Agege		Abule-Egba	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Block of Flats	93	64	58	47
Single-family Bungalows	13	9	15	12
Semi-detached Houses (Duplex)	12	8	26	21
Detached House	18	12	22	18
Others	9	6	2	2
Total	145	100	123	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Virtually all the 123 respondents in Abule-Egba and all but one in Agege had their window openings reinforced with metal grilles.

Table 2: Types of Security Measures in place

Security measure	Agege		Abule-Egba	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Boundary fence				
High frontage	101	70	97	79
Low frontage	41	28	21	17
None	3	2	5	4
Electrified gate	3	2	7	6
Burglar-proofed windows	144	99	123	100
Fortified entrance doors	78	54	81	66
Internal security guard	9	6	22	18
Street/neighbourhood vigilante	135	93	78	63
Ethno-medical (often invisible)	2	1	1	1

Source: Field Survey, 2025

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Table 3 revealed that in both Agege and Abule-Egba, respondents agreed that privacy, security and value-enhancement are three leading benefits of high boundary wall-fence, with their ranking producing a high positive Spearman correlation of 0.8857.

Table 3: Respondents' perception of benefits of high wall-fence

Perception on benefits of high wall-fence	Agege			Abule-Egba		
	Score (max. 725)	RII	Rank	Score (max. 615)	RII	Rank
High front fence is for privacy	670	4.62	1	598	4.86	1
High front fence is for enhanced security	642	4.43	2	535	4.35	3
Enhances property value	586	4.04	3	570	4.63	2
Secures boundary lines with neighbours	490	3.38	4	435	3.54	5
Povides private playground for the family	445	3.07	5	480	3.90	4
Able to rear animals securely	320	2.16	6	197	1.60	6
	Spearman rho correlation = +0.8857 indicating a high, positive relationship					

Source: Field Survey, 2025

On iron burglar-proof to windows, respondents in Agege and Abule-Egba were in agreement in ranking only security and protection of children from accidental fall as first and third, respectively. Other benefits were perceived to have varying significance, such that their positive Spearman rho positive correlation dropped to 0.4857 (see Table 4). One notable comparison from Table 4 is the substantial importance Agege residents attached to burglar-proofing in increasing property values (RII = 4.29) which benefit is very lightly accepted in Abule-Egba (RII = 2.68), most likely due to the relatively lower-economic status of Agege.

While theoretically, there are obvious risks of home burglars being shielded from view of neighbours on the street, and of victims of home accidents not being able to escape nor easily accessed by rescuers due to iron reinforcement bars, the perception of respondents to issues like these received relatively low RII scores. As depicted in Tables 5 and 6, it is obvious that these security measures, among others, remained in vogue as their perceived benefits dwarf their potential dangers. More revealing is the reduced level of Spearman rho correlation between the two sets of respondents, with that on high wall-fence actually being negatively correlated.

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Table 4: Respondents' perception of benefits of iron burglar-proof

Perception on benefits of iron anti-burglary grilles	Agege			Abule-Egba		
	Score (max. 725)	RII	Rank	Score (max. 615)	RII	Rank
Enhances security of premises	712	4.91	1	595	4.84	1
Enhances property value	622	4.29	2	330	2.68	5
Protects children from accidental fall	555	3.83	3	465	3.78	3
Non-solid design allows for ventilation	470	3.24	4	486	3.95	2
Gives visual and aesthetic appeal	405	2.79	5	230	1.89	6
Adds to privacy level by obstructing view	314	2.17	6	421	3.42	4
	Spearman rho correlation = +0.4857 also indicating a positive relationship, though not quite strong					

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Findings from this study revealed that Agege residents/respondents demonstrate higher significance for the iron reinforcement to window openings than their counterparts in Abule-Egba, considering the

Table 5: Respondents' perception of risks associated with high wall-fence

Perception on risks associated with high wall-fence	Agege			Abule-Egba		
	Score (max. 725)	RII	Rank	Score (max. 615)	RII	Rank
High wall-fence is susceptible to windstorm	530	3.66	1	321	2.61	4
High front fence shields burglars and trespassers from street monitoring	492	3.93	2	250	2.03	7
Increases construction cost	486	3.35	3	275	2.24	5
Confinement inside wall-fence could limit sense of neighbourliness	458	3.16	4	395	3.21	1
Limits scenic view	430	2.97	5	380	3.09	2
Could limit access to sunlight	425	2.93	6	260	2.11	6
Could shield a property's design and construction from street appeal	422	2.91	7	335	2.72	3
	Spearman rho correlation = -0.2857 indicating a low, negative relationship					

Source: Field Survey, 2025

higher RII scores in Table 4. Invariably, these medium density residents in a neighbourhood dominated by

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high density dwellings believe that they require more security architecture than what wall-fence could offer.

5.0 Concluding Remarks

The paradox of fortified security measures in urban dwelling houses also becoming latent danger to security of lives and properties calls for concern. However, as noted in this study, proliferation of security measures is evidence of ineffective governance where expected public neighbourhood infrastructures are lacking. Nevertheless, the use of technological gadgets like anti-theft or anti-burglar alarms, electrified low-fence, theft detectors and surveillance cameras should prove more effective measures to checkmate crimes in individual residential premises and neighbourhoods. But there could be the challenge that these often require constant supply of electricity which cannot be guaranteed in most developing nations, Nigeria inclusive. In any case, most night burglaries are aided by darkness within a neighbourhood. Good governance that ensures neighbourhood approach to and State provision of vital security infrastructure coupled with improved power supply are germane to reducing the spate of insecurity in our living environments. Moreover, the traditional antidotes in the form of ethno-medical practices in use by a few respondents, could be subjected to scientific research and if validated, they could be developed into application software for crime prevention and control.

Table 6: Respondents' perception of risks associated with iron grilles

Perception on risks associated with iron grilles	Agege			Abule-Egba		
	Score (max. 725)	RII	Rank	Score (max.615)	RII	Rank
Iron grilles could trap people inside in emergencies like fire	554	3.82	1	410	3.33	4
Burglar-proofing windows and doors constitute self-confinement	490	3.38	2	523	4.25	1
It increases construction cost	485	3.34	3	330	2.68	6
If bolted externally, could actually reduce security	438	3.02	4	465	3.78	2
Obstructs view	327	2.26	5	220	1.79	7
It could disfigure a building, especially when old or obsolete	305	2.10	6	435	3.54	3
Could be expensive to maintain and/or clean	180	1.24	7	347	2.82	5
	Spearman rho correlation = +0.2857 indicating a low, positive relationship					

Source: Field Survey, 2025

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