

AN ASSESSMENT OF OCCUPANTS' EXPECTATION IN THE DELIVERY OF LOW-INCOME HOUSING IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Low-income housing provision has been a major focus of the government in post-apartheid South Africa. While success can be noted, there is a growing concern on the housing expectations and satisfaction of the housing occupants'. Utilizing post-occupancy survey conducted in four locations that had benefited from the government housing subsidy scheme, the research identifies how the expectations of the occupants of low-income housing can be met in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The results from the post-occupancy survey revealed that most of the beneficiaries' housing needs were not met, as a majority of the respondents informed that they had expected bigger units; however, when they were allocated the houses, the expectation was not met. Though, a major obstacle while the respondent's expectation was not met pointed toward the lack of consultation between the Department of Human Settlement and the occupants'. A comparison is also made to ascertain the correlation between meeting of occupant's expectation and the maintenance of the houses. It is suggested that the Department of Human Settlement should conduct occupants need assessment on future housing project to be developed and on a consistence basis should employ post-occupancy survey to inform, improve and guarantee the expectation and housing satisfaction of the beneficiaries' of subsidised housing units in South Africa.

Keywords: housing subsidy beneficiaries, housing satisfaction, low-income, needs and expectations, occupants.

INTRODUCTION

In spite of the numerous measures to improve low-income housing quality in the new South African state, the standard has remained a persistent and divisive social issue among the practitioners of social housing studies, academia, non-governmental organizations, government, and the affected citizens amongst others in South Africa. Virtually all beneficiaries of low-income housing in South Africa desire to live in a conducive housing environment, but the housing condition has been gradually deteriorating without due consideration to the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries by the housing providers. This is due to the continually formulation and

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diminutive implementation of housing policy without a meaningful consultation with the eventual beneficiaries of the low-income houses. Hence, Ha (2008) posits that the failure of many housing projects may be traceable to the lack of knowledge on the determinants of housing satisfaction from the occupants of the houses. He stressed that the success of housing programmes does not only depend on merely provision of housing units, but also on other factors that affect the needs and expectations of the residents. This is because the achievement of occupant's satisfaction in terms of their needs and expectations, aside quality, time and money, in any housing project is a key factor that contributes to the ultimate success of that project.

Therefore, the South African National Department of Human Settlement must take a proactive step towards an understanding of the beneficiaries' expectations with respect to the houses being delivered, in order to improve the quality of the low income houses. This can be done effectively through the assessment of the occupants' expectation prior to the houses being constructed and allocated to them. Because the present and future successes in the low-income housing sector in South Africa will depend on the extent to which occupiers are satisfied with the built houses. Without a consideration of this factor the measure of housing success through the quantity produced will be a contradiction of the principles governing basic housing provision, which serves to improve the lives of the low income and slum dwellers as contained in Millennium Development Goals 7 (Target D). This importance is based on the fact that many problems in the existing low-income housing environment are the result of neglecting the beneficiaries' expectation before the houses are built. Fatoye (2009) and Lahdenpera and Tiuri (1999), also noted that beneficiary satisfaction is not only a matter related to the handing-out of a freshly completed building, but is a life-cycle issue which has to be taken into account right from the policy initiation phase. There is therefore need to first understand and establish what the beneficiaries' expect from the houses to be given to them both real and perceived expectations, because only then could such satisfaction with the built houses be met.

Hence this research explores how the expectations of the occupants' of low income housing can be met in the Gauteng Province of South Africa, thus ensuring that the occupants' are satisfied with the houses being provided. Also a comparison is made to ascertain the correlation between the meeting of occupant's expectation and the maintenance of the houses. It is recommended that the investigation of beneficiaries' expectations should be used to assess the quality of low-income housing and as a benchmark to quality improvement in housing production and delivery in South Africa. It is thus believed that the research will help the Department of Human Settlement build better low-income houses that will assist in providing healthy, better quality of life, productive and comfortable in/outdoor environment and long-term benefits to the low income group as well as for the South African society at large. Hence the next section of the article presents an overview of housing needs and expectation.

SATISFYING HOUSING NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

As part of the conceptual framework of residential research, the gratifications of occupants housing needs and expectations should have the noteworthy prominence. For people with different housing needs and expectations, the same housing condition could bring different satisfaction levels because their needs and expectation are different. Also, residential satisfaction is basically formed under the condition of what level of housing needs is currently pursued by the occupants (Yiping, 2005). Unless

level one need is sufficiently satisfied, they will remain in the occupant's consciousness and will thus become the prime determinants of housing behaviour. In earnest, the living condition that is currently pursued forms the housing expectation of the individual, which is highly related to the overall residential satisfaction.

From the literature on housing research, from various perspectives, there have been many studies separately addressing different needs level of individuals and social groups, or its significance on informing policies on how best to handle a need of a particular social group. For instance, Marcus (1995) studies the self-actualization level and believes that housing is like a mirror which has a powerful effect on our sojourn toward a state of wholeness. Also, research on social needs in housing environment has increased in which social capital is the focus (Putnam, 1995). Social capital refers to social trust, norms and networks that people can draw upon to resolve common problems such as a housing problem (Lang and Hornburg, 1998). All over the world, and in South Africa, there is a growing agreement that social capital constitutes a significant new dimension of community development and establishment, as occupants are directly involved; which means their needs and expectations would have been taken care of through their activate participation in the development process. Furthermore, the security needs of housing extend to another large area of research. For example, Newman (1978) addresses the relationship between built environment and security using his theory of defensible space. Related to the security issue, there have been proposals and projects on urban renewals (Smith, 1996); also, debate on the gated community (Hamnett, 2001; Landman, 2004), and on social issues of residential segregation (Hamnett, 2001). Housing needs as a shelter are mostly a concerned by those who struggle for these needs, such as the homeless, those previously disadvantage from owning property as a result of government policy such as the apartheid rule in the previous South Africa government.

All these social researches on housing can be grouped within a system relating to different needs order. Individually, every household is inspired to pursue the higher level needs in the housing needs order when the lower needs have been satisfied. Collectively, it brings social issues regarding the processes of different level of housing need's satisfaction. Discrepancies in housing priorities are so big that housing provision sectors has to provide a wide variety of dwelling types with all forms of tenure to meet the demand. This is because residents are only satisfied when their current housing needs and expectations are satisfied. However, it must be noted that the satisfaction will not stay unchanged, because soon, there will be other higher level needs and expectation that will have to be satisfied. More so, households who are dissatisfied are likely to consider some form of adjustment. They may attempt to make adjustment to reduce dissatisfaction by revising their needs and expectations to reconcile the incongruity, or by improving their housing conditions through remodelling ((Hamnett, 2001). According to Morris and Winter (1975), they may also move to another place to bring their housing into conformity with their needs and expectations. However, both mobility and adjustments are subject to the constraints posed by financial resources at one's disposal and by information regarding alternative adaptation opportunities (Morris and Winter, 1975). Thus moving behaviour is only one type of adjustment residents perform during the time of dissatisfaction of housing needs and expectations; but in the case of the low-income group, it might not be possible, as most cannot access housing on their own and the subsidized houses received might be their only life time opportunity to access

housing. Furthermore, the next section of the article discusses the methodology used in conducting the research.

METHODOLOGY

The data used in this paper were derived from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was obtained through the survey method, while the secondary data was derived from the review of literature and archival records. The primary data was collected through a structured occupant survey questionnaire. Structured questionnaire was used to conduct interviews with beneficiaries at four (4) housing subsidy locations in Johannesburg, Gauteng Province of South Africa. These households had all benefited from the government housing subsidy scheme. The questionnaire was administered to the head of households or their spouses. One household head per house was engaged in the interview/questionnaire administration. However, it was recognised that this method has a few weaknesses in that; there is an absence of probing beyond the answer given; lack of control over who answers the questionnaire; and they can be characterized by a low response rate because of cost.

Beneficiaries were randomly selected from areas visited; these were interviewed based on the fact that they have been resident in the areas for more than a month and likewise the houses have been allocated to them for more than one month. All households from each location had an equal chance to be drawn and to occur in the sample. All completed and allocated subsidized housing units in each housing location area were chosen as the sample frame. A total of 30 households were chosen in each locality for the research, making the overall sample size to be 120 households. This was achieved as follows: each locality was divided into 10 regions using the streets, with each region containing 205 houses or more. A systematic sampling was then applied through the selection of every 20th house in each region; for easy identification of the 20th house, house numbers were used to calculate the number of the next 20th house. Thus in each locality, 30 households were selected. This process was essential to obtain true representativeness of the entire sample. Out of the 120 questionnaires sent out, 78 were received back representing 65.0% response rate. Also, a physical observation of the housing units was conducted during the survey. The next section presents the findings of the study and a discussion of the result.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the occupant's survey as presented in figure 1 indications the length of stay of the occupants in the housing units. Findings showed that 28.6% of the occupants have been living in the subsidized housing unit for more than five years. Those who have lived in the houses between three and five years were 22.10% and 26.0% for those who have been living there for less than one year. In quintessence occupants who have lived in the subsidized housing units for many years completed most of the questionnaires, informing that the respondents have adequate knowledge of their apartments and the out-door environment.

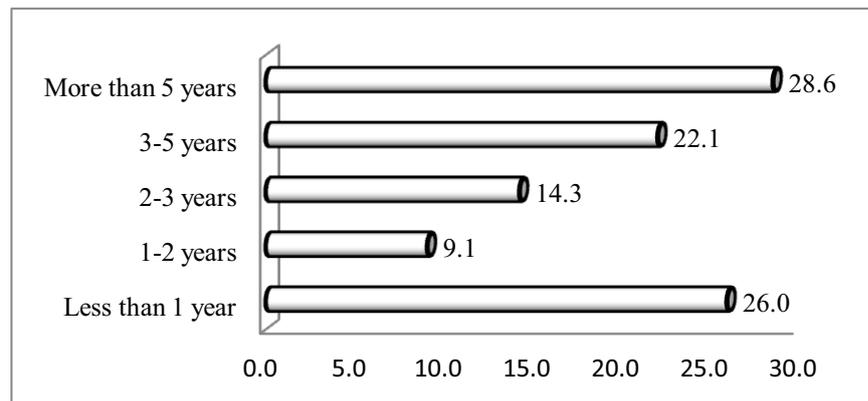


Figure 1: Length of stay in housing unit

Likewise, when occupants' were asked about their intended duration of stay beyond what has already been reported in figure 1. About 95.0% of the respondents indicated that they intend to reside in the houses for more than five years. This is a further confirmation that the occupant's responses in the satisfaction survey are based on unpretentious motive, because they seek the good and betterment of the dwelling units and neighbourhood environment; as most of them have been living in the houses for a long time.

Therefore when the occupants' were asked about their particular expectations before the houses were given to them; results as shown in Table 1, revealed that beneficiaries' expectation for bigger housing units (84.62%), free services (74.36%), adequate hot and cold water (89.74%), consultation with the DHS (92.31%), and structure with quality finishes (98.72%)- (this being the major problem in most constructed low-income housing units that has been evaluated in different studies) were all not met. The findings supported studies by Charlton and Kihato (2006) and Tissington (2010) where they found that a majority of the developed low-income houses in South Africa seldom meet the expectations of the eventual occupants.

Nevertheless, the respondents further indicated that their expectation of a housing unit with improved living condition from shacks (98.72%) was met representing 87.18%; likewise, 83.33% respondents informed that they now have more comfort than their previous living environment. This findings supports the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights accord, which informs that everyone has a right to a standard of living that is adequate to the health and well-being of himself [herself] and his [her] family; and General Comment 4 1990; paragraph 8 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which defined the concept of adequate housing, and making plain the wordings of Section 26(1) of the South African Constitution. Also, occupants had expected more consultation with the government prior to them being shortlisted to receive houses, but findings showed that this expectation was also not met. This was in contrast with the DHS goal informing that provincial and local sphere of government should consult meaningfully with individuals and communities in order to facilitate the active participation of all relevant stakeholders in housing development. From the above findings, it can therefore be inferred that the DHS did not succeeded in meeting the housing expectations of the occupants; but from the basic expectation of an improved living conditions from shack and more comfort that previous living, which agrees to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and confirmed the wordings of Section 26(1) of the South African Constitution, it can be concluded that beneficiaries are satisfied with the overall housing condition even though most of their expectations were not met. This inference is made because additional findings

revealed that 97.5% of the respondents were previously living in shacks and other forms of slum housing before the subsidized houses were allocated to them; while 2.60% had no houses (were in a state of absolute homelessness) before the allocation to them.

Further, when the beneficiaries were asked the reason why their expectation for units with structure with quality finishes (98.72%) was not met, they informed that they have observed various defects on different part of the building, ranging from the floors, walls, doors, windows, roof, ceiling and on the plumbing works. When beneficiaries were further asked the types of defects that had been observed in these areas, they revealed that the floors were not finished which thus made the wooden doors to be infested and also caused the house to be damp; roofs were not firmly secured to the walls and/or trusses, causing them to rattle, or even blow off, when windy. Thus beneficiaries had taken to placing stones and used tyres on roofs to prevent it from being blown off. Also, they complain that the roofs leaks when it rains; cracks had appeared on the walls, which was a major problem to the beneficiaries of which they attested that these defects developed soon after they move in, particularly around the windows, doors and corners. Likewise, the doors did not fit securely into their frames and they had to stuff materials along the frames, especially at the bottom, to stem water from coming in when it rains.

However, from the physical observation of the doors, the researcher observed that the doors were also not varnished and as such some beneficiaries had to cover their doors with plastic to keep them waterproof. Also, some doors had gaps between the wooden slats and between frames and the actual door opening which were wide enough to see through. Also, in the houses that had sanitary fittings installed, the beneficiaries revealed that there was a common problem of pipe leakages and low pressure from the water closet cistern. As for the windows, there were gaps between the window frames and the wall; the metal frames had rusted and some windows do not close properly. Physical observation and general complains about the ceiling revealed that most units did not have ceilings, which greatly affected the occupants satisfaction and expectations levels of the units, as the units were very cold during the winter seasons and hot during the summers. Thus the research findings agrees with the work of Nobrega (2007) in a study of subsidized housing units in the Eastern Cape, South Africa and that of Ogunfeditimi (2007) a study done on four different subsidized housing units in Johannesburg, South Africa. Also, the present findings concurs with the work of Mkuzo (2011), who found that the beneficiaries of a housing project in Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, South Africa, had problems with cracks on the walls, poor plumbing and door were not properly fitted. Overall, 78.0% of the respondent in that study rated the building quality very poor while 10.0% of the respondents were very satisfied with the quality of the housing units they had received; informing that they are happy and thankful to have received houses for free.

In addition, when the beneficiaries' perception was assessed on the physical quality of the housing units, findings revealed that 38.50% indicated it was neither good nor bad, while 15.40% indicated that it was very good. However, an overall assessment of the building quality revealed that 52.0% respondents revealed that the houses were not of good quality, while, 36.0% indicated that it was of good quality with a further 12.0% indicating they were not sure if it was good or bad. This finding concurs with a previous work done by Aigbavboa and Thwala (2011) on the occupants of Kliptown low-income housing, where they found that the occupants perceived very poor the physical quality of their houses and the building quality. However, in the present

study, the occupants' responds can also be attributed to the fact that most occupants' have not been able to repair the defects that has appeared on the buildings as the next set of findings revealed.

Table 1: Level of housing satisfaction according to beneficiaries expectations

Areas of expectations	Expectation		Expectation	
	After allocation		Before allocation	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Improved living conditions from shacks	68 (87.18)	10 (12.82)	77 (98.72)	1 (1.28)
More comfort than previous living environment	65 (83.33)	13 (16.67)	77 (98.72)	1 (1.28)
Good sanitary systems	44 (56.41)	34 (43.59)	76 (97.44)	2 (2.56)
Clean environment	40 (53.33)	38 (50.67)	75 (96.15)	3 (3.85)
Bigger plots	36 (46.15)	42 (53.85)	64 (82.05)	14 (17.95)
Adequate hot and cold water	34 (43.59)	44 (56.41)	70 (89.74)	8 (10.26)
Consultation with the DHS	27 (36.99)	51 (69.86)	72 (92.31)	6 (7.69)
Free services	18 (23.08)	60 (76.92)	58 (74.36)	20 (25.64)
Structure with quality finishes	12 (15.38)	66 (84.62)	73 (98.72)	5 (1.28)
Bigger units	10 (12.82)	68 (87.18)	66 (84.62)	12 (15.38)

Note: Figures in parentheses are in percentages

Subsequently, when a comparison was made to ascertain the correlation between meeting of occupant's expectation and the maintenance of the houses, findings revealed that 59.0% respondents has carried out repairs to their housings units, while 41.0% have not been able to effect any repairs to the observed defects. Supplementary findings from those that have been able to effect repairs in their houses revealed that they were able to do so through their personal savings (87.0%), while 6.5% were able to effects repairs through helps from family and likewise from grants they had received from the government.

Those that had carried out repairs through government grants indicated that the grants were not given to them specifically for repairs, but it was through the child support, foster care and disability grants they had received that they used to carry out the repairs. Also, when the beneficiaries were asked about the nature of repairs that have been done, a majority of them informed that they have painted the whole house (internal and external) and also they have fixed burglary to the doors and windows which does infers that aesthetics of the building and security were two of the most valuable issues to the occupants'. Thus, the above findings inferred that there is no correlation between the meeting of occupant's expectation and the maintenance or repair of their houses. This indicate that regardless of their expectations not being met and the other concerns raised about the quality of the housing units, occupants' valued their houses and as such those that could afford to carry out repairs have done so and still some have to deprive themselves of personal and family upkeep to make the houses' comfortable.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper examined if the expectations of the beneficiaries' of four different subsidized housing schemes has been met in Johannesburg, South Africa. Findings

revealed that most of the beneficiaries' expectations prior to when they were allocated the housing units were not met. But they did indicate that through the housing units, they now live in houses with improved living conditions from shacks and other slum housing situations and also that they now have more comfort than their previous living environment. Hence, this gives the South African government commitment to achieving MDGs 7 Target D, (achieving a significant improvement in the lives of slum dwellers) a leap. However, occupants' informed that they had expected more consultation with the government prior to them being given the houses; but findings revealed that this expectation was not met, which was in contrast with the DHS goal that provincial and local spheres of government should consult meaningfully with individuals and community to receive housing, in order to facilitate the active participation of all relevant stakeholders in housing development.

Therefore, in order for the expectations of the beneficiaries' of low income housing to be met in the Gauteng Province of South Africa, it is recommended that beneficiaries should be meaningfully involved in the housing development process right from the onset before any actual development is done. By so doing, a needs and expectations assessment consultation will be conducted to ascertain the needs of the beneficiaries' in order to channel the housing development plans to meet their specific needs if possible. Also, the expectations assessment will also ascertain the expectations they have with regards to the totality of the housing units. Thus after the assessments, if the expectations and the needs of the beneficiaries cannot be met with the housing units to be provided since there is a predetermined building design and cost allocation, an adjustment can be made where possible and if not possible, feedback should be given to them so that when the building is finally constructed, they already know what they are getting. Hence, these will thus guarantee that their expectations are met and satisfaction in the unit will be guaranteed since they were consulted prior to the development process. Also, another area to be explored is the dynamics of the beneficiaries housing life cycle. This can be incorporated into the needs and expectations assessments consultation to ascertain the changing aspects of the home needs of the beneficiaries' in the present and in the future.

Also, the study has demonstrated that post-occupancy survey can indeed be useful to extract valuable information from occupants of subsidized housing units that can inform housing development stakeholders on the changes to be made so that new houses being constructed are done to elevate the quality of life of the beneficiaries' and serve as a route for them to contribute to the general economy.

Furthermore, when a comparison was made to ascertain the correlation between meeting of occupant's expectation and the maintenance of the houses, findings revealed that there was no correlation regardless of the fact that their expectations were not met and the other concerns raised about the quality of the housing units. This shows that occupants' value their houses and as such those that could afford to carry out repairs have done so even when they have to deprive themselves of valuable necessities.

Findings in this study are of enormous policy implications. First policy implication is that future construction of public housing should be responsive to occupants' need for adequate quality such as in safety, security, thermal comfort and adequate sleeping area; and that the housing units should be a means to empower the occupants to gain economic freedom and not to put burden on them to start carrying out repairs due to negligence from the contractors and limited level of supervision of building work

during construction. This is because the challenges are not peculiar to the South African housing space alone, but a revelation of the developing world. To this end, the workmanship level and supervisor of the housing unit during construction should be taken serious by the DHS. Also, the houses should be equipped with adequate measures and features that will keep the thermal comfort of the building at a level that will enhance the quality of life of the occupants'. Also, the DHS should solicit beneficiaries' involvement before the actual construction process starts.

Another policy implication is that the present model of public housing provision that delivers 40 square meters units should be revised to cater for the need of households with large family size, as the study showed that the occupants need for bigger housing units was not met. It is therefore suggested that a thorough needs assessments of the occupants in any area to be provided with housing units should be carried out before the actual construction. On the whole, findings from the research revealed that the advanced awareness of the right to adequate housing as contained in the South Africa constitution is being met by the government, as the occupants informed that their quality of life has increase because the provided houses has given them an improved living condition and they now have more comfort than their previous living environment. Hence the DHS objective of the broader housing vision in promoting and improving the quality of life for the poor is being achieved as findings have showed.

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