

Analysis of Immigrants' Residential Preference and Ethnic Segregation in Yenagoa Metropolis

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Abstract

Migrants from diverse ethnic background now live in Yenagoa city. But instead of being a city with culturally mixed neighborhoods, the various ethnic groups live in residential areas that are segregated by ethnicity. This paper thus seeks to investigate how the migrant's preference in the choice of initial residence determine the dimension of ethnic residential segregation in Yenagoa Metropolis and its neighborhood impacts. Using the chi-square statistical techniques, result shows that there is a statistical significant relationship between migrant's residential preferences and ethnic neighborhood composition. On the other hand, the multiple regressions revealed that there are differences in the socio-economic characteristics that explain segregation within each ethnic group. Such that for instance, segregated Urhobo/Isoko and Hausa neighborhoods were found to have lower socio-economic characteristics, such as lower education and income, than segregated Ijaw places.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO STUDY

Ethnicity and residential segregation rank very high among the oldest and most persistently studied topics in the Social sciences in Africa. However, one particular recurrent issue in the literature of ethnicity in Europe, America and South Africa but which has not been sufficiently examined in sub-Sahara African is the ethnic residential segregation of urban strangers or ethnic migrants. In most parts of African continent, one can easily notice the existence of these urban residential sub-communities of which two types are most visible. One is the "stranger settlement" established by the ethnic migrants themselves through persistent congregation within specific wards of some cities. The second type is segregated settlement forced on the strangers by the urban development policies of the host (Alfred, 1996). Similarly, Albert (1993) has noted that there are many types of segregated sub-communities in Nigeria cities, the religiously motivated, the ethnically motivated, the economically motivated and the professionally motivated sub-communities.

It is pertinent to note that, ethnic diversity is a reality in most countries of the world and is increasing in many of them. Immigration, refugees' streams, ghost workers and job seekers all contribute to the mixing of people and culture in an area. Ethnic affiliation in a group sharing common identical cultural traits is fostered by territorial separation or isolation. It is generally observed the world over, that separation identifies home territories within which ethnic groups is dominant and with which it is identified. Also, ethnic groups have imprinted their presence on the landscape in which they have transported their culture. Notwithstanding, the effect of ethnic residential preference and attitude in neighborhood ethnic homogenous or residential segregation is as a result of both within group self selection and out-group avoidance. According to Zubrinsky and Bobo (1996), preference and attitude regarding the desired ethnic composition of neighborhood can have a decision effect on residence decisions because they are often linked with individual belief, ideas and values regarding their lifestyle and expectations associated with the population composition of the area. Individuals may decide to move from their current location because its ethnic composition is not in accord with their expectations as to what constitutes a desirable neighborhood (Farley *et al.*, 1994).

However, an obvious factor affecting residential choices in general, and neighborhood ethnic homogeneity in particular is the fact that an appreciable proportion of the members of an ethnic population may find it advantageous to live among co-ethnics. Individuals who share a common ethnic identity may express a preference for living in neighborhoods that are homogeneous with respect to ethnicity. The sharing of cultural traditions and customs, community institutions and establishments, and similar labor market experiences may all act to facilitate the concentration of the members of an ethnic group. In addition, the level of comfort, the sense of security, well-being, safety, trust, and the ease of social interaction that ethnic neighborhoods engender are important for the development a group identity and a collective sense of place (Clark, 1992, 2002).

The recent increase of immigrants across Nigerian cities has raised concerns on the integration of

different communities into their host communities. Particular attention is directed to “new” immigrants who exhibit very distinctive and different characteristics from their host population as well as their tendency to voluntarily or involuntarily concentrate in specific neighbourhoods. Urban planners, other professionals and the citizens alike are concerned with the consequences that the resultant residential segregation by these immigrants could have on the social integration and exclusion of immigrants in their new cities or neighborhood. There is a general fear that these tendencies could make the integration process more arduous, as well as influence the development of several urban areas. For instance, it has been suggested that in order to prevent the formation of ghettos (by these immigrants), it should be of interest to explore whether their residential location choice is influenced by factors such as ethnic composition of neighborhood or grouping behavior of individuals of same origins as well as how strong this influence can be and which outcomes can it produce in the future (Ibraimovic *et al* 2010 and Howell *et al* 1983).

This is to say that, new entrants to an area tend to cluster in neighborhoods where they can find members of their kiths and kin of their regional or linguistic group. Families and social networks play a significant role in the process of in-migration and urban insertion, including the choice of the place of residence upon arrival in the city especially, but also for a change of dwelling within the urban agglomeration (Mulder, 2007). Obafemi (1999) in a comparative analysis of ethnic segregation by immigrants into two Nigerian cities of Port Harcourt and Ile – Ife reveals an evident pattern of segregation by immigrants. According to him, this accounted for the emergence of Hausa-Fulani immigrants into southern cities joining their kith and kin in a segregated area often known as ‘Sabo’, while in the Northern Nigerian cities the southerner immigrants live in ‘Sabo Ngari’.

The motivation for this study is partly premised on the significance of a study of this nature especially for urban planning and environmental management. For instance, one can use data on residential preferences and mobility to investigate how different characteristics of neighborhoods (e.g., their ethnic and economic composition) affect the desirability of that area. Such studies examine either preferences for neighborhood characteristics (as observed in Vignette studies) (Farley *et al* 1978; Mare and Bruch 2003; Charles; 2005) or the relationship between neighborhood characteristics and the actual choices made by individuals (Quillian 1999; Massey, *et al*, 1988; Clark, 1991). One can also use residential choice data to explore the extent to which people’s choices are constrained by discrimination, low income, or lack of information (Pager and Shepherd 2008). Mobility studies can combine information on residential choices of individuals with population data on neighborhoods to infer the population dynamics and residential patterns that are implied by the residential preferences and choices of individuals. Besides, it is stating the obvious that residential mobility is a key determinant of the spatial distribution of populations; such that the segregation of persons who differ in socioeconomic status, and ethnicity; and the stability and quality of children’s homes and neighborhoods. Patterns of residential choice have implications for the persistence of ethnic segregation and the concentration of neighborhood poverty (Fuiguit *et al*, 1975 and Howell *et al* 1983). Of course, individuals do vary in their preferences for different kinds of neighborhoods. Moreover, individuals may have unique responses to neighborhood characteristics that are not measured by characteristics such as their ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.

It is in the light of the foregoing that this study investigated and analyzed the individual immigrants’ preferences and choices about where to live, pointing out the implications of these choices for residential patterns and the spatial distributions or segregation of immigrants in Yenagoa, the capital city of Bayelsa state. To achieve this goal, the study examined the ethnic composition and distribution of immigrants and their settling pattern on arrival in the city, ascertain the factors responsible for ethnic residential preference/segregation, as well as its residential neighborhood impacts.

THE STUDY AREA

The Yenagoa metropolis is the capital of Bayelsa state in the Niger - Delta Region of Nigeria. It is located geographically between latitude 5° 02 “Northings and 6° 20 “Eastings. The LGA has an area of 706 km² and a population of 353,344 comprising of 187,791 male and 165,553 female with an annual exponential growth rate of 2.9 as at the 2006 National Census (Federal Republic of Nigeria Gazzete, 2007). See figure 1. Generally, the relief of Bayelsa State and in particular Yenagoa city, is a low-lying wetland environment, which slopes gently in a North-South direction to the sea. The drainage of Yenagoa is characterized by Creeks and swamps criss-crossing each other as they flow to Epie Creek and finally to the Atlantic Ocean.

The soil is mainly deltaic comprising mostly of loamy and alluvial soils close to the River bank. The soils of the coastal plain are rich in topsoil nutrients and best for planting crops. Its vegetation which falls under the fresh water swamp forest, comprises of tall and thick shady trees, climbers, shrubs and grasses, as well as other economic tress like Raffia palm and Oil palm trees, Wild/African Mango, Crocuces, Ogbono, etc. In addition to these, the area is richly supplied with

streams and ponds, which are home to reptiles, fishes and hydrophytes such as the water lettuce (*Pistiastraliotes*), water Hyacinth, (*Eich hornia crassipes*), waterlily, (*Nymphaea lotus*) and so on.

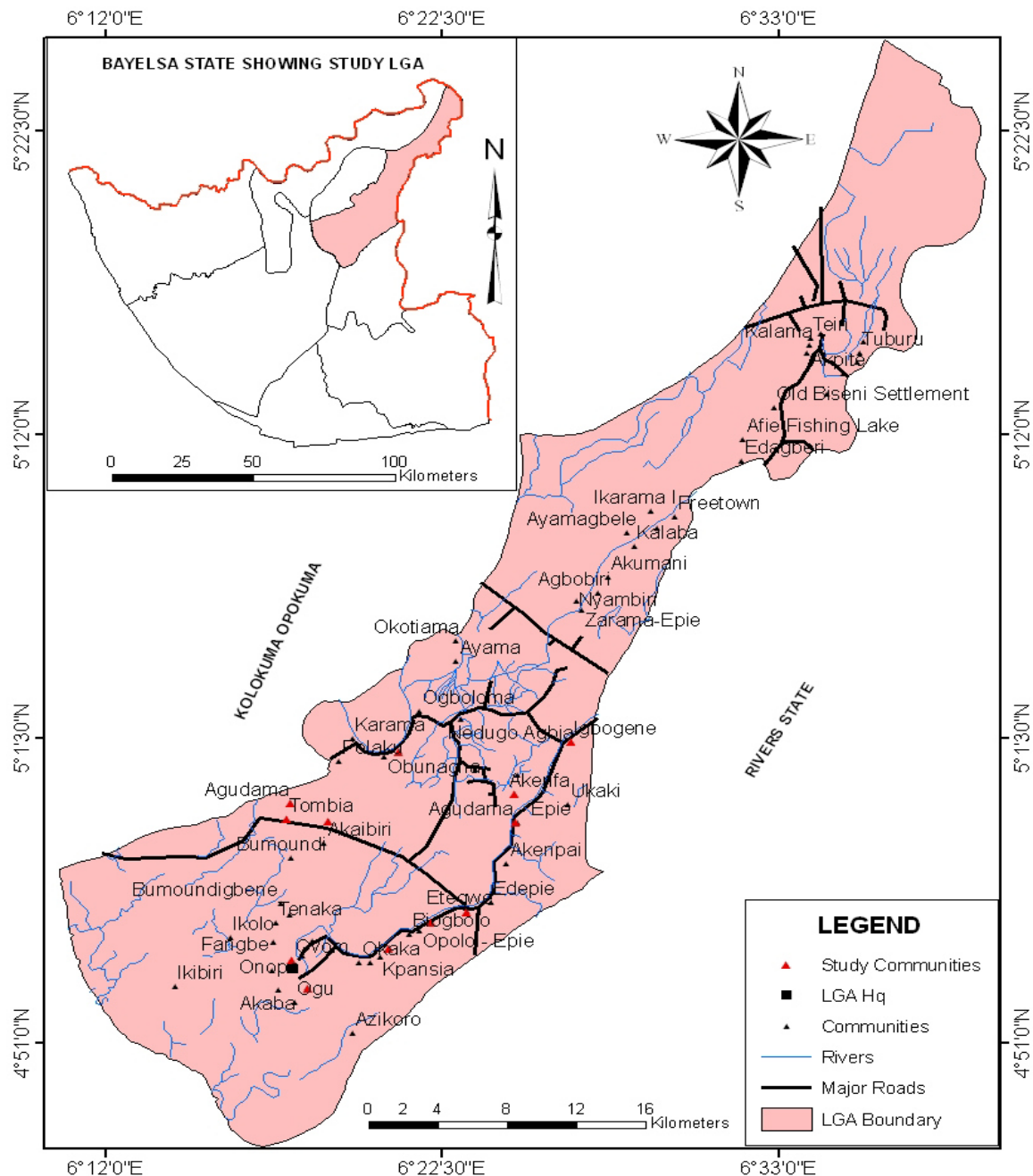


Figure 1: Yenagoa Local Government Area showing the sampled communities

The climate of the area is tropical (wet and dry season). The wet season is not less than 30 days. The mean monthly temperature is in the range of 25°C to 27°C. The mean annual temperature is uniform for the entire Bayelsa state. The hottest months are December to April. The difference between hot season and wet season on temperature is about 2°C at the most, and relative humidity is high in the state throughout the year and decreases slightly in the dry season. The rain fall varies in quantity from one area to another. The state experiences equatorial type of climate in the southern and most of the part and tropical rain towards the northern parts. Rain occurs generally every month of the year with heavy down pour.

In terms of the population, people and the culture of the area, the Yenagoa city LGA has a population of 143,150,000 according to the 2006 population census (2006 census). Yenagoa Local Government Area is the traditional home of the Ijaw people, Nigeria's fourth largest ethnic group after the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. The Ijaws form the majority of the town. English is the official language, but Epie/Atissa language, one of the Ijaw

languages, is the major local language spoken in Yenagoa. Other Ijaw dialects include Tamu, Mein, Jobu, Oyariri, and Tarakiri. There are other pockets of ethnic groups such as Urhobo and Isoko. There are local dialects in some places. Other notable languages in the LGA are Epie, Atisa, Nembe and Ogbia. Christianity and traditional religion are the two main religions in the State. The culture of the people is expressed in their unique dresses, festivals, dietary habits, arts and crafts, folklore and dancing. These distinguish the people from other ethnic groups. The major crafts include canoe building, fish net and fish traps making, pottery, basket and mat making.

The socio-economic activities of the people of Yenagoa are mainly fishing, farming, palm oil milling, lumbering, weaving and trading. Almost half of the population engaged in agricultural activities. Due to its well endowed crude oil and gas resources, the area is host to three Gas flare sites and flow stations located at Oporoma, Ogboinbiri and Imiringi communities. With the area naturally endowed with abundance of natural resources especially oil and Gas deposits, extensive forests, excellent fisheries and good agricultural land, it is certain that these may continue to be the attraction and pull factors for immigrants to the region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data for this study were generated through a survey method in which a well validated questionnaire and oral interviews instruments were used. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections. Section A focused on retrieving demographic data on the respondents' age, sex, religion, marital status and occupation. Section B on the other hand, sought information relating to the research aim and objectives especially on immigrants time of arrival, characteristics, ethnic composition and frequency of mobility within the study area.

For the purpose of this study, the sample population includes residents of Yenagoa Local Government Area which is made up of 60 Communities. About 20% of these communities were selected randomly through the use of simple random sampling techniques via table of random numbers. The aim is to give each community a chance of being selected. At the end of the day, a total number of 350 residents were sampled from the selected twelve (12) communities made up of seventy (70) wards in the study area. The questionnaires were distributed proportionally across the wards with five (5) questionnaires allocated to each ward.

Data analysis entails the use of Frequency, which is the number of times a particular variable occurs. The frequency distribution tables were then interpreted into simple percentages [%], which is defined as a part of a whole expressed in hundredths. This is to provide meaningful discussion and analytical description. To establish statistically the significance association between residential preference and neighborhood ethnic composition for the study, the chi-square Analysis was used. Similarly, the statistical significant effect of social economic status on residential segregation across several ethnic groups in the study was also tested using the multivariate regression analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biographic characteristics and Ethno composition of Respondents

A critical examination of the distribution of ethnic grouping and respondents' state of origin by neighbourhood reveals that the ethnic structure of the Yenagoa metropolis is heterogeneous. The Ijaws are the major ethnic group accounting for 51.2% of our sample population. Next to the Ijaws are the Urhobos with 20.6%, while the Hausas are 15.6% and the Yorubas are 6.9%. There are yet other several ethnic groups which make up the remaining 5.7%.

Table 1: Ethnicity of Respondents

Ethnicity	No. of Respondent	Percentages (%)
Ijaw	154	51.2
Urhobo/Isoko	62	20.6
Hausa	47	15.6
Yoruba	21	6.9
Others	17	5.7
Total	301	100.0

Source: Authors Field Work 2012

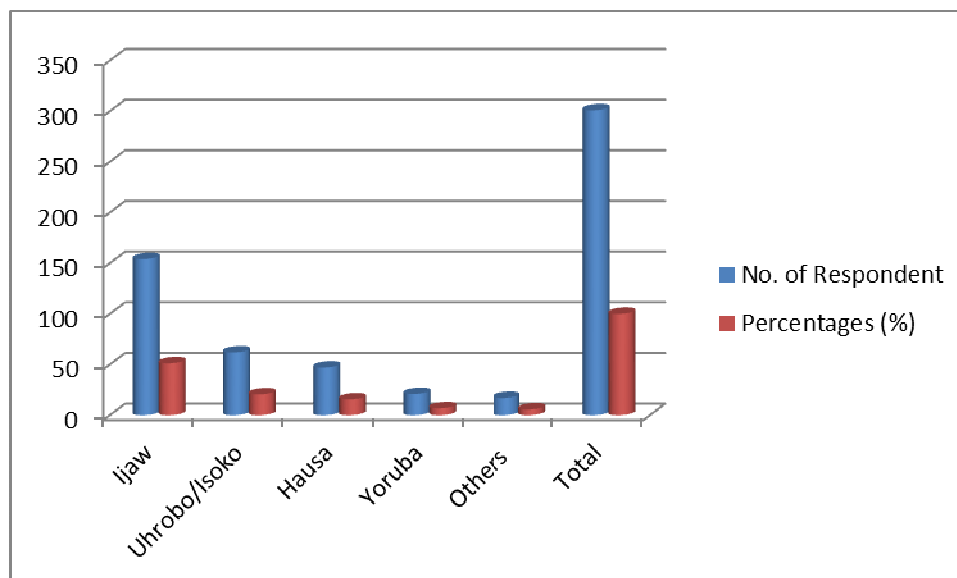


Fig 3: Ethnicity of Respondents

Analysis of Migrants Residential Location/Choices

Of the 301 questionnaires analyzed for this study, more than two-thirds of the people sampled moved to Yenagoa before age 25, while as much as 50 percent came into city from the 15-24 age bracket. This confirms previous findings on the predominance of the able-bodied within migration streams. Again, there is evidence of chain migration with about 56 percent of the migrants having lived elsewhere besides their place of birth before moving to Yenagoa.

On their first place of abode or residential location in the city, an overwhelming majority with 73.7 percent of the migrants did not stay on their own when they first arrived in Yenagoa. The study reveals that most of the dependent migrants stayed with their kith and kin, while the rest stayed with friends and employers. This confirms other findings on the predominant role of kin and friends in providing diverse assistance to the new migrant (e.g., Afolayan, 1982; Ozo, 1986; Lindert, 1991; Ahmad, 1992).

Usually, these hosts are established kin and friends who migrated to the city at an earlier period. When the respondents were asked whether they received help in securing their own initial accommodation, more than two-thirds responded in the affirmative. Their responses showed that most of the assistance received were usually in the form of shared accommodation, information as to where to find a room to rent, and money for the lease, which mainly came from kin and friends, thus reinforcing the earlier observation on the role of kin and friends.

A question worth considering is whether variation exists in dependence on friends and relatives over time. Although dependency has always been important, recent arrivals appear to be more dependent. For example, whereas only a few of those who migrated to the city depended on someone on arrival, more than a third of recent arrivals (2002 to present) did so. Considering the low housing supply and the high cost of rental accommodation coupled with the difficulties of getting jobs in recent years, the observed trend is not surprising and might even increase in the coming years.

Another important observation is the high concentration of immigrants in slums and low income neighbourhoods. For instance, about half of those who settled initially, were found located in the slums and low income neighbourhoods. The proportion is even higher among those who settled in the former and recent peripheries (old and New Yenagoa). If one excludes the few (3.3 percent) who settled in localities outside Yenagoa and disregards the main zone of entry, it is evident that almost two-thirds settled initially in the low income neighbourhoods on arrival. This is similar to the settlement pattern that has been observed among migrants in some other African cities such as Nairobi (Muwonge, 1982, Malombe, 1990).

Neighborhood of initial location and ethnicity

Studies elsewhere have documented the marked concentration of identifiable ethnic groups within certain sectors of the city being the initial location on arrival to a new Town. This study identified among others the major migrant ethnic groups in Yenagoa to consist of the Ijaws, Urohob/Isoko, and Hausas who constituted 51.2percent, 20.6 percent, and 15.6percent respectively of the study sample. Considering the problems of initial adjustment into the urban community, migrants are expected to locate initially in neighborhoods where the predominant language and culture are their own kind. This hypothesis is corroborated by the data: the

relationship between ethnicity and neighborhood of initial residence is statistically significant, suggesting a rejection of the null hypothesis.

Also on the issue of whether ethnicity influences where a migrant resides on arrival in Yenagoa, the result revealed a marked concentration of the different ethnic groups in certain areas of the city. For example, half of the Urhobo/Isoko settled initially in the predominantly inner-zone of the city (e.g Ekeki). Similarly, about two-thirds of the Hausas settled in the former Yenagoa (e.g Aretaline). It is further shown in **Table 2** below that there is more or less an even spread of the Ijaws on arrival reflects their overall distribution within the city. Constituting about half of the entire Yenagoa population, the Ijaws are spread throughout the city.

Table 2. Ethnicity and initial zone of residence

Ethnicity	Zone of Initial Residence			Total Number
	Inner city Percent	Former Yenagoa Percent	New Yenagoa Percent	
Hausa	21.2	39.4	39.4	137
Urhobo/Isoko	50	26.7	23.3	30
Yorubas	22.0	62.0	16	50
Ijaws	5.9	61.8	32.4	34
Others	28.6	57.1	14.3	7

Source: Author's Survey Data 2012

Furthermore, the study has also shown that on Residential Mobility of immigrants, about 95 percent of the sampled population has changed residence since moving to Yenagoa with a median of two moves (**Table 3**). This suggests that migrants tend to be very mobile in their early years in the city in search of a preferred neighborhood but become more stabilized with length of stay.

Table 3: Frequency of Relocation

Frequency of moves	Since moving to Yenagoa	Percent (%)
None	16	5.7
Once	123	43.5
Twice	99	35
Thrice	35	12.4
More than three time	10	3.5
Total	283	100

Source: Author's Survey Data 2012

Although there might be multiple reasons for moving, respondents were asked to indicate the most prominent ones. The reasons given by the respondents here replicate some of the most commonly given in the relocation literature (Table 3). One distinct observation, however relates to the proportion of respondents who move for safety reasons. Because slum and low income neighborhoods serve generally as the initial receiving neighborhoods for the majority of migrants, it is not surprising that safety concerns became a prime factor in subsequent mobility. After the initial exposure to crime and the unsanitary conditions in slums, the now established migrant prefers to relocate to a more decent neighborhood.

Again, an explanation for those who changed residence because they wanted to become independent of their hosts might be sought in the pattern of initial residential arrangement. As discussed earlier, an overwhelming majority of migrants depended on kin and friends on arrival. After securing jobs, most of them could afford to live on their own and thus become independent of their hosts. However, considering the role of kin and friends in the initial residential pattern, it is surprising to observe that only a few (1.2 percent) cited proximity to friends and kin as the principal reason for relocating. This might be due to the improved communication network within the city. As is the case elsewhere, effective transportation has reduced the friction of distance such that irrespective of how far one lives away from friends and kin, they can always reach themselves in times of need.

Furthermore, the relative insignificance of proximity to work among the reasons for moving might also be due to the dispersed nature of informal sector employment within the city. **Table 4** also supports the life cycle related reasons as one of the major reasons for moving. The literature abounds with evidence of the strong relationship between residential relocation and family life cycle (Rossi, 1980). To many, family and life cycle stage plays a critical role in the decision to move.

Table 4: Reasons for Relocating

Reasons	Number	Percent (%)
Safety concerns	60	23.6
To be independent of host	50	19.7
Life-cycle related reasons	44	17.3
Eviction	35	13.8
Moved into own/family house	18	7.1
Proximity to work	22	8.7
Retirement	9	3.5
Affordable rent elsewhere	7	2.8
Proximity to kin and friends	3	1.2
Others	6	2.4
Total	245	100.0

Source: Author's Survey Data 2012

While 17.3 percent of the respondents moved for life cycle related reasons, like the changes in household size and marital status, about 14 percent relocated to another place due to eviction. When ranked in order of frequency of responses, concern for safety of lives and property accounted for the highest response with 23.6 percent, followed by those who moved to another place to be independent of their host accounting for about 20 percent. It is of particular interest to note, however, that almost a quarter did not move because they do not have the money to make the two years lump sum advance rent usually demanded from new tenants by the landlords and 10% agent and agreement fee. It is thus reasonable to argue that although some households might be dissatisfied with current housing conditions; their mobility preferences are restricted because of constraints in the housing market. The lump sum rent advance demanded by landlords and the agent/agreement fees could be regarded as one of the factors that impedes mobility.

CONCLUSION

The overall goal of this study is to establish the profile and dimensions of ethnic residential segregation of migrants in Yenagoa, the capital city of Bayelsa State. The study found that Yenagoa urban spaces are residentially divided by ethnicity. Even though there are different variables explaining the variations in ethnic residential neighborhoods in Yenagoa, the fact that segregation exists today is noteworthy. It is not only symbolic that people of different ethnic backgrounds do not live together, but the reality is that there exist socio-economic differences between and within ethnic groups living in segregated neighborhoods in Yenagoa. It is pertinent to also mention here that the opportunities for interactions of kiths and kins, and the perceived protection of new migrants by the older ones partly encouraged migrants preference to locate their ethnic kiths and kins on arrival in the city.

This study also found that various scholars have earlier classified segregated neighborhoods as types of residential segregated sub-communities. In Nigerian cities for instance, about four of such neighborhoods were identified by Albert (1993) to include - the religiously motivated, the ethnically motivated, the economically motivated and the professionally motivated segregated neighborhoods. Of these four types, the most interesting and easily noticed in Yenagoa Metropolis is the ethnically motivated segregated neighborhoods or sub-communities. The peculiarities of the ethnically motivated sub-communities are derived largely from their demographic composition, social orientation and religious characteristics. The composition of these ethnically motivated segregated sub-communities as revealed in this study includes amongst others, the Hausa's who dominantly resides in the Aretaline and Yenezue-gene communities, the Isokos and Urhobos, who dominates the Ekeki and Tombia communities, as well as the Ijaws who constitute the dominant immigrant population in the Agudama and Akenfa communities of Yenagoa metropolis.

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