Covenant Journal in the Research Built Environment (CJRBE) Vol. 7 No. 2, Dec. 2019

ISSN: p. 2384-5724 e. 2384-5716 DOI:

An Open Access Journal Available Online

Place Attachment in Poor Residential Neighbourhoods of Akure Nigeria

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Received October 27, 2019 Accepted December 09, 2019
Date of Publication: December, 2019

***Abstract*:** This paper reports the findings of an attachment experiment in Nigeria's poor residential neighbourhoods. The study examined how residents were attached and the factors that predicted attachment to the neighbourhoods. Specifically, three ranges of attachment, the home, the area, and the city were investigated. In order to determine the degree of the attachment, it also explored the social and physical aspects of attachment. Statistics was collected from questionnaires distributed in the core of Akure, Nigeria, to a group of 532 household heads in four poor residential neighbourhoods. These have been evaluated using frequencies and models of categorical regression. Results indicate that the attachment rate varies across the three ranges. City attachment is the highest and social attachment has been found higher among residents of poor neighbourhoods than physical attachment. Length of residency and household number are the strongest predictors in all three ranges.

***Keywords*:** neighbourhoods, attachment, housing, poor residential neighbourhoods, Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

Several social science researchers (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, Lawrence, 2002, Bonaiuto, Fornara, and Mirilia Bonnes, 2003) have conducted numerous studies for more than three decades to determine neighbourhood attachment. In spite of the high level of research on this topic, Most of the experiments were carried out in Western countries. Such research explored how attached residents are to their environments and the factors that account for attachment. However, there is very little research to tell us if the results of the studies in other less developed countries are generalizable to neighbourhoods. It is not known whether the factors that promote attachment in most neighbourhoods have the same effects in the most disadvantaged areas or whether there are different factors at work in those areas. More research is therefore needed in other contexts to test the generalizability of the results and models developed in western contexts. Moreover, most of the studies examining neighborhood attachment focused more on housing's social characteristics than on its physical attributes. Therefore, for design and planning, these studies were of very little influence and significance.

This paper is concerned with the relationship between residents and their neighbourhoods in poor residential environment of Akure, Nigeria. An appropriate criterion must be established to assess the residential environment. Over the years, many indicators of the neighborhood environment have been developed, including the concept of attachment, which has been used in evaluating the residential environment. It has been used majorly to investigate the relationship between people and their residential environment (Tognoli, 1987; Lawrence, 2002, Bonaiuto, Fornara, and Mirilia Bonnes, 2003). Attachment to a neighbourhood is considered important in the evaluation of environment as spatial inequalities and concentration of poverty is on the increase and this is expected to weaken levels of attachment. (Dorling & Rees, 2003). Attachments in poor residential neighbourhoods are likely to be influenced by a lot of factors, and it has been found that levels of attachment are weaker in these neighbourhoods. It is therefore necessary to carry out similar research in poor residential neighbourhoods in Nigeria since attachment varies from one place to the other and little is known about the kind of places people are attached to or what kind of neighborhood dimensions they are attached to. This research is relevant because it will add further to the existing literature on this very important topic by concentrating on the degree of attachment to poor neighborhoods in a developing nation like Nigeria as neighborhoods in developed countries are not usually comparable to the less developed countries.

Most studies on attachment have focussed mainly on one level of the neighbourhood (Cooper Marcus, 1992, Hufford, 1992). However few researchers have found out that attachment exists also in other levels such as house or street, and the city (Hidalgo & Hernanandez, 2001, Cuba & Hummon, 1993). Therefore in measuring attachment, it would be necessary to identify the various levels of attachment and the comparison between them.

The specific objective of this study was therefore to assess the degree of

attachment to three specific spatial levels, house, neighborhood and city, and also to examine the physical and social dimensions of attachment in poor residential neighbourhoods of Akure, Nigeria. The study also tried to investigate whether the social-demographic characteristics of the respondents influence attachment.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Poor neighbourhoods and place attachment

Attachment is characterized as a positive connection between a person or group and their environment (Low & Altman, 1992; Williams *et al.*, 1992). Place attachment also accounts for complex yet lasting positive people-to-people relationships and valued socio-physical environments such as homes (Brown & Perkins, 1992). Place attachment is the bond of human sentiment, not only with the physical surroundings of the place, but also with the individuals and behaviours of people in the place in agreement with its physical setting (Khaled, 2016).

These attachment bonds often reflect and help in group and individual identity communication. Residential neighbourhood attachments are also described as feelings of pride in and appearance of the residential area (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996) and a general sense of well-being (Harris, Werner, Brown, & Ingebritsen, 1995). Similarly, Hummon (1992) identified objective factors such as neighbourhood size and type, housing quality and ownership, and the nature of the physical neighbourhood as particularly important in developing a sense of community attachment and feeling. Place attachment is often conceptualised as a bond or tie to a particular area (such as community, city, or country) that evolves over a period through continuous interactions (Scannell, Cox, Fletcher, & Heykoop, 2016). Social involvement has also been identified to be the most consistent and significant means of developing sentimental ties to the neighbourhood (Rennick, 2003). Long-term residency, which develops bonds through increased local social ties, is one such process, perceptions of the neighbourhood, such as maintenance and relationships with neighbours, also contribute to a stronger level of attachment. In addition, the resident's general attachments are influenced by experiential, historical and personal perceptions of satisfaction in the neighbourhood. Place associations are further reinforced by frequent experiences with the community and neighbors, seasonal events, continuing physical personalization and maintenance, and positive feelings and values about the house, home and neighborhood (Werner, Altman, Brown, & Ginat, 1993).

Residential attachment strengthens and provides stability, familiarity, and protection in poor neighborhoods, but attachments can also change as individuals and households grow, society age, or as the attachment-supported processes change (Brown, *et al.* 2003).

Most communities usually decline when housing stocks and the resident's age, owned homes later turn to rentals, and poor tenants move in (Myers, 1983). Nevertheless, place attachments are often correlated with the changing housing and community circumstances, but they are not defined. For example, a case study of

Boston's West End urban renewal in the US found that residents, amid declining housing, had strong place attachments and community viability (Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003). The West End community urban renewal program pushed people out of their homes and West Enders grieved for years for homes and communities that had been lost.

Likewise, new high-rise public housing Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis, which was originally physically sound, did not command connections or other obligations, and the plan deteriorated rapidly (Brown *et al.* 2003). For various reasons, both examples show the danger of connecting good residential value with strong residential bonds and weaker-attached poor neighborhoods. Poor housing and conditions in the community may affect strong place attachments but also reflect residents ' deteriorating physical and or economic capacity to sustain their homes. Therefore, place attachments are supportive ties to physical and social environments that sustain identity and other psychological advantages.

Attachment to poor neighbourhood was questioned by Bailey, et al, (2011), they were of the opinion that because of the composition of the neighbourhoods, attachment are likely to be lower. Nevertheless, in poor urban communities, place attachments have been overlooked as a potential strength. If these bonds of attachment exist in a poor neighbourhood it can be activated toward neighbourhood improvement (Ayoola, 2015).

Brown *et al.* (2003) concentrated on the relationship between the interpretation of negative physical features and the affective attachment to the environment. The study found that place attachment was higher for residents perceiving fewer incivities on their block and less physical decline. Similarly, Mesch and Manor (1998) suggested that by evaluating an environment as a good place to live, location attachment is determined: the higher residents rate the characteristics of their physical and social setting, the greater the probability of place attachment.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Study Area

Akure is a traditional town in Nigeria, similar to the country's several other traditional Yoruba cities. The city is located in the country's south-western part. It is located approximately at 7 ° 15'N latitude and 5 ° 15'E longitude, approximately 1.214 ft. (370 m) above sea level. The rapid development of the city stemmed from the city's political status, initially a provincial headquarters but now a state capital.

According to the 2006 census, the population of Akure was 360,268. With an annual increase of 2%, it was expected to be 486,300 by 2016 (National Population Commission of Nigeria (web). The constant growth of the population has been tied to the administrative role of the city and its long-standing status as a centre of economic activity and also been classified as an oil-producing state, two features that have attracted a large array of immigrants.

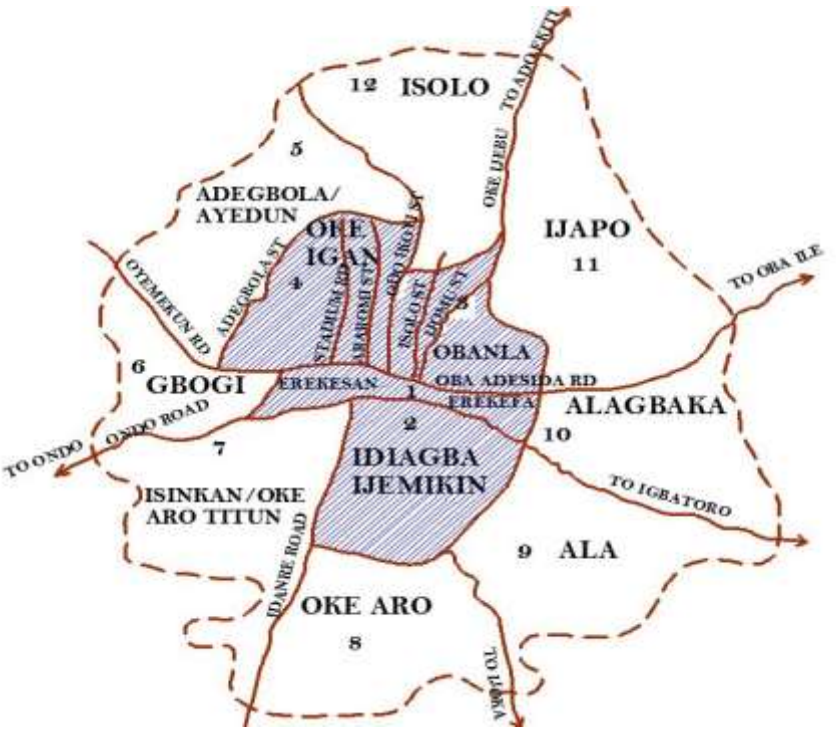

Figure 1 Akure division into 12 residential zones
Source Owoeye, (2012)

3.2 Data Collection

This paper is part of a larger analysis that examined urban poverty in central residential communities in Akure, Nigeria. This paper is however focused on measuring the degree of attachment in poverty concentrated neighbourhoods. This study uses primary data to achieve a reasonable measure of attachment through a standardized questionnaire survey. Based on the study's purpose, the questionnaire layout is designed to make the question series easy to follow, making it easy for the respondents to understand. To assess attachment to the home, neighbourhood and community, these questions were formulated. In addition, questions have been included to differentiate between the physical and social aspects of attachment. The study adopted element that other researchers used previously (Gerson *et al*, 1977, Manor, 1998) to assess attachment, ''I would be sorry to move out"

This item was used to determine the house, neighbourhood and city attachment. It was also adopted in distinguishing between the physical and social dimensions of attachment ' I'd be sorry to move out without the people I live with. In relation to the home, neighbourhood, and community, these questions were also asked. The scale for measuring place attachment consisted of nine items and answers range from 1(strong disagree) to 5(strongly agree). The internal consistency of the scale used was first calculated. The result reveals a

Cronbach's alpha of 0.86 for the whole scale, indicating a high degree of reliability. The same was calculated for the house, neighbourhood and city and obtain an alpha of 0.79. This also shows a high degree of consistency but smaller than the overall scale as a whole. The questionnaire contained information on the physical characteristics of the neighbourhoods under study and the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, in addition to the attachment.

Akure city as characterised by Owoeye and Omole, (2012) was divided into 12 residential zones by applying the Burgess Theory of concentric Zones and further narrowed down into 3 zones namely, the inner core, intermediate and the periphery. Zones 1,2,3 and 4 represent the inner core, zones 5,6,7, 8 and 11 represents the intermediate while zones 9,10 and 12 represents the periphery (fig 1).

The neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of poverty were selected for this study, and the study is also limited to households living within the four poor residential neighborhoods in the core of Akure's. The four neighborhoods selected are Zone 1 covering the Erekefa / Erekesan market, the Town Hall, the General Post Office and the King Palace, Zone 2 covering Idiagba, Ijemikin, Irowo, Odopetu, Ajagunle, Zone 3 covering (Araromi, Oja Oshodi, Odo-Ikoyi, Isolo and Ijomu via Oke-Ijebu streets), and zone 4 covering the other side of Araromi, Odo–Ijoka and Old stadium areas.

The core urban zone which is the study area is characterized by an infrastructure that is nonfunctional due rapid urbanization, inadequate supply of housing units, and improper coordination of physical development due to poor planning and a dearth of basic infrastructure. Most of the buildings in this part of Akure are already old and in need of rehabilitation. The population within the area is mostly in the low-income category; consist of either the unemployed or the self-employed.

The sample size was determined by the number of existing buildings in the area since the administration of the questionnaire will be done on one person per household and one household per household. The analytical unit was the head of the household in the housing units.

The sample size for the analysis is five hundred and fifty-seven of a total population of approximately 2228 residential buildings, which was developed using the 95 percent confidence sample size calculator. Based on their relation to population size, the questionnaire number for each area was determined. A systematic random technique was then used to select the houses being studied; every fourth residential building was selected for interview, starting from the first dwelling unit in each of the streets involved. The basic focus of questionnaire administration was the heads of households in each house. For the questionnaires (Table1a) the percentage return was 95 percent (532 copies), which was considered sufficient for the study. The study was analysed using single factor descriptive analysis and categorical regression analysis.

Table 1a: Distribution of Questionnaire

Zones	No. of questionnaire	No retrieved
Zone 1	102	97
Zone 2	162	157
Zone 3	196	186
Zone 4	97	92
Total	557 (100%)	532 (95%)

4.0 Results

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Out of the 532 respondents, (50%) are male, and (49.6%) are female, while 2 of the respondents didn't indicate their gender. There was also a good representation of each participating age bracket. More than a third (31.8%) of respondents belonged to the 26-40 very active age bracket; this group also represented the most economically active group, while respondents between 56 and above represented the most economically active group while the 20.5% remaining respondents represents the elderly.

Most respondents fall within the low-income brackets; about one-third of household heads earned less than NGN10,000 per month (below the national minimum wage of NGN18,000 per month approved by the Federal Government of Nigeria for the lowest-paid civil servants at the time of the survey), and nearly 38% earned just NGN10,001-20,000 per month.

However, the neighbourhood was home to a few households living far above the minimum wage. The neighbourhoods are dominated by those living in rented apartment (51.5%) and those living free in family homes (25.8 %) dominated the communities. The average household number per building is 5, and the average household number is 20. The socio-demographic profile of the respondents is evidence of a concentration of neighbourhood poverty.

Table 1b Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (n = 532).

Variable	Characteristics	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	266	50.0
	Female	264	49.6
	Missing values	2	0.4
Age	< 25	101	19.0
	26-40	169	31.8
	41-55	153	28.8
	56-70	91	17.1
	71+	18	3.4
Marital Status	Single	122	22.9
	Married	283	53.2
	Divorced	20	3.8
	Widowed	82	15.4
	Single parent	15	2.8

Income (NGN per month)	< 10,000	171	32.1
	10,001-20,000	200	37.6
	20,001-30,000	67	12.6
	30,001-40,000	44	8.3
	40,001-50,000	26	4.9
	50,000+	17	3.2
Homeownership Status	Owner	115	21.6
	Renter	274	51.5
	Rent free	4	.8
	Living in family house	137	25.8
House Type	Rooming apartment (face me I face you)	400	75.2
	Flat	85	16.0
	Others (single dwelling unit, semi-detached)	47	7.3
Length of residency	0-10 years	118	22.2
	11-20 years	140	26.3
	21-30 years	125	23.5
	31-40 years	79	14.8
	41-50 years	38	7.1
No of households	1-2	79	14.8
	3-4	121	22.7
	5-6	283	53.2
	Above 6	49	9.2

Note. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding and because some respondents did not answer every question

4.2 Levels of attachment

Since the aim of the paper was to calculate the level of attachment towards three levels of attachment and not general attachment, the average scores for each of the different levels were calculated (Table 2). First, there was a determination of the level of general attachment to the home, neighbourhood and community. The house attachment measure revealed on a scale of 1 to 5 an average of 3.06. This implies that the residents were quite attached to their house, which is an agreement with the results of previous studies (Brown, Perkins & Brown, 2003; Hernandez & Hidalgo, 2001). Also, the measure of neighbourhood and city attachment attained a value of 3.19 and 3.26 respectively. So according to the result, attachment to the house is lesser than city and neighbourhood attachment. In agreement with the result of other study carrying out a similar comparison (Cuba &Hummon, 1993), Attachment to the neighbourhood was higher than the house. However, attachment to the city was considered highest among the three levels of attachment under investigation. The result of the levels of attachment, however, differs from the findings of Hernandez &Hidalgo, (2001) where attachment to the neighbourhood was considered the weakest. This difference in the results of the levels of attachment in the two studies could likely be as a result of the difference in socio-economic

profile of the respondents and also the difference in the physical and social characteristics of the neighbourhoods. Attachment to the house in this study is likely to be affected based on the tenure status of the respondents, only 21% of the respondents are home-owners while others are renters or living free in family houses. This factor may also influence attachment since most residents are likely to have a lesser emotional bond to their residence. In any case, the study corroborates previous researches that attachment to place is also possible in poor residential environments despite the difference in ranking of levels of attachment.

Second, the physical and social dimensions of attachment were analyzed and compared. The measure of physical and social attachment was also measured across the three levels. The measurement of the house's physical attachment shows an average of 3.04. This was the weakest interaction level compared with the other stages. Attachment to the neighbourhood was the highest with an average of 3.31, followed by attachment to the city at an average of 3.23. The neighbourhood in this context is considered the most important information of attachment. This result is in agreement with the result of (Cuba & Hummon, 1993).

The social attachment was found greater than physical attachment in all levels. Social attachment to the city was found lowest at an average of 3.37 while attachment to the house came second at an average of 3.57. Social attachment to the neighbourhood ranked highest at an average of 3.69. As expected a lot of activities are carried out in the neighbourhood in which the residents are directly involved and the possibility of wanting to further be a part could be a reason for higher attachment. The study, however, agrees with the observations of (Hernandez & Hidalgo, 2001), that social dimension is indeed highly important in the formation of attachment to place. The results of this study, therefore, confirm previous studies on attachment, and that the physical and social characteristic of place affects people's feelings toward their place of residence.

Table 2 Mean score of the different levels and dimensions of attachment

	Global Attachment	Social Attachment	Physical Attachment
House	3.06	3.57	3.04
Neighbourhood	3.19	3.69	3.31
City	3.26	3.37	3.23

4.3 Predictors of attachment

To test whether the respondents ' socio-demographic characteristics influence the attachment levels, categorical regression analysis was performed using the optimal scaling method with convergence criteria set at 0.00001. The analysis consisted of three levels of attachment, the house, neighbourhood and city as dependent variables while the independent variables were the socio-demographic characteristics namely (sex, age, marital status, income, number of households, tenure status, house types and length of residency).

The result of the regression analysis between attachment to the house and socio-demographic characteristics are supported by the regression representation with multiple R=0.327 and R2= 0.107. This means that the regression model shows that 10.7% of the difference in the attachment to the house in the study area is influenced by the socio-demographic characteristics of the residents. The explanation for this low value could be that other factors rather than demographic characteristics are responsible for this attachment. The ANOVA result also shows that F=4.338, df = 14, p= 0.000, which also signifies that the regression model is significant at 0.000. This shows that all the variables together have a significant relationship with the house attachment. This confirms the findings of Hummon (1992) which suggested that socio-demographic variables considerably sway attachment. Of the eight variables used, four are major house attachment predictors. As shown in (Table 3), the variables in their importance of attachment to the house, number of households (b=-.104), age (b=.231), length of residency (b=.129), and house types (b=-.089). The remaining four variables sex, income, marital status and tenure status are not significant predictors of house attachment in the study.

The result of the regression model between the neighbourhood and socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent yielded a multiple R=0.260 and R2= 0.067. This suggests that there is a relationship (though weak) between neighbourhood attachment and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Similarly, the result of the analysis of variance also produced F=2.610, df = 14, p= 0.001, which confirms a significant relationship. Nevertheless, just five of the eight variables of socio-demographic characteristics influenced attachment to the neighbourhood. As revealed in (Table 3), the major predictors in their order of importance are the length of residency (b=.175), tenure status (b=-.083), sex (b=.084), house type (b=-.093), and the number of households (b=-.080). The remaining three variables age, income and marital status are not significant predictors of neighbourhood attachment.

Similarly, predictors of city attachment were also considered using the same regression method. The regression analysis between attachment to the city and socio-demographic characteristics is made clear with multiple R= 0.268 and R2= 0.072. This explains that the regression analysis reveals 7.2% of the variance in the attachment to the city in the study area. The model indicates that there is a relationship (though weak) between city attachment and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. The reason for this could be because other issues rather than soci-demographic characteristics are responsible for this attachment.

Also, the result of the analysis of variance also produced F=1.940, df = 20, p= 0.005, which confirms a significant relationship. However, only five of the eight variables of socio-demographic characteristics influenced attachment to the neighbourhood. As revealed in (Table 3), the important predictors in their order of significance are the length of residency (b=.179), tenure status (b=.100), age (b=.117), number of households (b=-.105) and income (b=-.089). The remaining three variables sex, house type and marital status are not significant predictors of

neighbourhood attachment. Also, predictors of city attachment were also considered using the same regression method. The regression analysis between attachment to the city and socio-demographic characteristics is explained with multiple R= 0.268 and R2= 0.072.

Table 3 Model summary and coefficients of demographic predictors of attachment.

	Standardised coefficient (House)					Standardisedcoefficient (Neighbourhood)					Standardised coefficient (City)				
	Beta	Std.error	df	F	Sig	Beta	Std.error	Df	F	Sig	Beta	Std.error	Df	F	Sig
Sex	.067	.043	1	2.456	.118	.084	.044	3	3.651	.013*	.068	.043	3	2.454	.062
Age	.231	.053	2	18.804	.000**	.071	.049	1	2.106	.147	-.117	.052	3	4.995	.002*
Marital status	-.069	.050	1	1.876	.171	-.056	.048	1	1.326	.250	.038	.049	2	.604	.547
Income	-.067	.042	1	2.553	.111	-.027	.043	2	.402	.669	-.089	.044	2	4.063	.018*
No. of households	-.104	.042	4	6.079	.000**	-.080	.043	2	3.449	.033*	-.105	.043	2	5.821	.003*
Tenure status	.024	.042	2	.326	.722	-.083	.043	3	3.655	.013*	-.100	.043	3	5.367	.001*
House types	-.089	.042	2	4.419	.013*	-.093	.043	1	4.615	.032*	-.033	.043	1	.600	.439
Length of residency	.129	.047	1	7.529	.006*	.175	.046	1	14.309	.000**	.179	.047	4	14.733	.000**

*Significant predictors P<0.05
** Significant predictors p= 0.000

5.0 Discussion

This study has revealed that residents were highly attached to the study area. It also provides an insight into the ranges of attachment and the dimensions of attachment. It has shown that attachment differs at the house, neighbourhood and city ranges. There is also a difference between physical and social attachment to places. This finding supports similar studies that suggested attachment differs at the different spatial ranges (Brown, Perkins &Brown, 2003; Hernandez & Hidalgo, 2001). In support of previous studies (Cuba &Hummon, 1993, Hernandez & Hidalgo, 2001), the city has a higher level of attachment and the neighbourhood attachment was also found to be higher than house attachment unlike the other studies. Surprisingly the house range received the lowest level of physical attachment among the three ranges under investigation. This is probably because the houses are in very poor physical condition and majorly lack the necessary infrastructure to have a decent living. The findings here indicate that people are more likely to be attached to affluent neighbourhoods than poor neighbourhoods due to the wide gap in the condition and quality of infrastructure available.

The result also showed that social attachment is higher than physical attachment in all the three ranges investigated and therefore supports previous studies (Hernandez & Hidalgo, 2001). The neighbourhood and the house are the strongest in terms of social attachment. Indeed this is not unexpected because more social interaction and activities takes place at this level which could lead to higher attachment.

This study also found that most of the characteristics which influenced place attachment also accounted for attachment in poor urban neighbourhoods. This research, for instance, found that age and number of household are strong determinant attachment to the house. Attachment is likely to increase as age increased; thus following previous studies

which established correlation linking respondents socio-economic characteristics and attachment. Also, the results of previous studies (Rennick, 2003, Hummon, 1992) have shown that length of residency and tenure status are strong predictor of attachment, this study confirms the findings. Indeed, across the three ranges of attachment, length of residency and number of households are the strongest predictors of attachment. Hashemnezhad et al., (2013), suggested that length of residency in a neighbourhood is likely to increase local ties, which is an important part of attachment.

6.0 Summary and Conclusion

This paper looked at place attachment in the perspective of poor urban neighbourhoods in Nigeria. First it was interested in examining the dimensions of attachment in poor neighbourhoods and the ranges of attachment. Second, it investigated the factors which influenced attachment in this context, most importantly the socio-demographic characteristics of the residents. The study showed that attachment is possible in poor or declined residential neighbourhoods. It also provided information about the user group by revealing the user attributes which influenced attachment at the three different ranges (house, neighbourhood and city).

This paper has revealed that the results of attachment studies in other neighbourhood situation cannot simply be universal to all residential neighbourhoods. Differences occurred from the socio-economic characteristics as well as from the physical dimensions of neighbourhoods. Although the physical and social dimensions of attachment were similar to those of other studies, the ranges of attachment differed slightly from the results of other studies on general attachment. There were also certain socio-demographic characteristics that influenced attachment in each of the ranges of attachment. This study as specifically showed the different

predictors of attachment at each of the specific ranges.

However, length of stay is a strong predictor of attachment across the three ranges examined in this study. The longer the residents stayed the more attached they became. This is probably because as time goes on, they become accustomed to the physical situation around their housing environment and also got more involved socially, which improved their level of attachment.

Finally, neighbourhood physical characteristics contributes to attachment, yet too little attention in place attachment research has been paid to the physical nature of places, hence future studies of attachment should investigate how the neighbourhood physical characteristics contributes to attachment. Research on which attributes of the physical environment enhances attachment will be of immense benefit to architects, planners and policy makers in the process of design or buildings and cities.

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