

Application of Qualitative Approach in Housing Research

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Abstract

The importance of qualitative approaches such as grounded theory designs, ethnographic designs, narrative research designs, personal observations, face-to-face interviews, telephone interview and focus group discussion cannot be over-emphasized. They provide fundamental ways of discovering diverse issues in housing research that assist in making necessary decision in meeting both qualitative and quantitative housing needs of housing consumers. In housing research, qualitative approaches in data collection and analysis unfold subjective and complex facts from the consumers that can serve as powerful instrument for solving housing problems. They provide contextual information directly from consumers and gives researcher full ideas, knowledge and understanding of how individual consumers go about meeting their housing needs. However, these approaches are yet to be given much attention in housing research compared with quantitative approaches in data collection and analysis. This article focused on personal observation and face-to-face interview among others approaches and provides insight on their importance, advantages and limitations in housing research. These are more economical and suitable to capture the ideas, knowledge and understanding of consumers' perception on housing situation and strategies in meeting their housing needs. This will serve as eye opener to scholars in housing research on their application for the purpose of producing expressive and rigorous research methodology and findings.

Keywords: Housing, Interview, Observations, Qualitative Approaches, Research Designs.

1. Introduction

Housing as one of the basic necessities of man has great influence on the health, survival, welfare and productivity of the individual [1-6]. Housing must not be considered purely as shelter but against lifestyle which encompasses economic, social, educational needs and

serves as one of the best indicators of a person's standard of living as well as his or her position in the society [7-9]. It must be able to meet the need and aspiration of the residents as well as contributes to the physical, mental, social wellbeing of the people and provide maximum quiet environment, living and outdoor space, privacy, cleanliness, safety and aesthetic satisfaction [2, 4, 10-14]. The rate of urbanization in Nigeria is remarkably increasing especially during the oil boom period which has consequently led to an unprecedented increase in population and resulting in high demand in housing [2, 15, 16]. Both government and individuals are being so concerned in the provision of both quantitative and qualitative housing to meet the demand of the ever increasing population in Nigerian urban cities [17]. The efforts of the government at all levels (Federal, State and Local) and individuals in making provision for an adequate and qualitative housing unit for Nigeria populace are yet to be fruitful [11]. Many researchers focused on quantitative approach in solving housing problems without taking into consideration the housing consumers' perception in understanding the actual housing situation. This article aims at exploring the use of qualitative approaches as the strategies through which housing consumers' perception would be known for the purpose of getting the understanding, ideas and knowledge of housing situation in Nigeria, the problems individual housing consumers are facing and how they get their housing needs met. This is an attempt to complement the role of traditional quantitative approaches. The needs of housing consumers and their perception on housing situation in Nigerian urban setting can be well understood through the qualitative approaches. Efforts are made in this article to discuss qualitative approaches and their roles in housing research in Nigerian urban centers. The advantages and challenges of qualitative approaches were also looked at in this article. This study strongly claims that embracing qualitative approach in housing research will certainly offer more trustworthy outcomes. These understandings are importance for the purpose of ensuring adequate qualitative and quantitative housing in developing countries like Nigeria.

2. The Context of Qualitative Approaches

Grounded theory designs, ethnographic designs, narrative research designs, personal observations, interviews and focus groups discussion are the different approaches that could be employed in qualitative research. This study focused on personal observations, interviews and focus groups discussion because they are more economical approaches that can give better understanding, knowledge and ideas from individual housing consumers especially in Nigeria context. The personal observation is to identify the housing situation and local problem hindering the effective housing supply to meet the housing needs of the different housing consumers. The personal observation goes along with personal interview to determine the magnitude of the housing situation, problems, consumers' housing needs and the solutions adopted so far in solving housing problems as well as the strategies housing consumers are adopting in meeting their housing needs. The results could be used alone and could be used to determine further studies which may be drawn through another approach. Application of personal observation and interview approaches in housing research gives first-hand information of the subject matter. The researcher takes voluminous records from the personal observation and interview and then organizes the records, themes and ideas to form a narrative description and explanation of the subject matter. To conduct a personal observation and interview studies, the researcher decides what to observe and what to ask the participant during the interview. For example, in determining the perception of housing consumers on housing satisfaction, housing rent and effect of government housing policy on housing supply necessitates the understanding of housing consumers' view.

A study on housing market needs proper understanding of which actors to be approached to participate. The supply actors in the housing processes include the house owners (landlords), developers, planners, surveyors, local authorities and estate agents [14, 18]. These are mainly those agents and intermediaries that are important in housing production, consumption and mediation within housing market. Personal interview and discussion need to be held with the key stakeholders such as experts in housing construction, professionals like town planners, architects and estate surveyor, chairmen of the Landlords Association and chairmen of the Artisans such as Bricklayers, Carpenters and Iron Benders as well as local government

planning authority official especially the director of planning [19, 20]. Personal interviews with these stakeholders will provide a better understanding and knowledge of their perspective and view towards the subject matter. Personal interviews could take any forms like informal interaction between the researcher and interviewee.

Semi-structured and un-structured questions known as interview schedule are generally being used for personal interview. It has the advantages of flexibility in accordance with respondent's participations [21]. In this form, every participant is to be asked the same questions. However, the answer to a question at times may generate another unprepared question(s) which may vary based on the response. Generally, the same questions in form of standardized open-ended questions are to minimize interviewer's bias in the cause of personal interview. Personal interviews in qualitative housing research can be recorded verbatim in a transcript or electronically followed by transcribing the recording notes for analysis. This is in line with Post Occupancy Evaluation that were undertaken through interviews, site visits and field observation in early 60s and 70s on public housings and students' housing sector in Britain, France, Canada and United states [22, 23].

Focus group discussion is another strategy that could be applied in housing research. It is originated in business administration and marketing. Housing consumers' opinions could be obtained on Housing situation and problems with the aim of ameliorate the housing problems and meeting the housing needs of the consumers. Participants are to be requested if they will be willing to participate in the focus group discussion. With their willingness, discussions would be held between the group through which individual participant would express their view in the subject matters. In housing research, there would be different view from participants on housing situation, problems and how individual housing needs could be met within a particular setting. Researcher may divide the participants into different smaller groups consists of eight to twelve participants in a discussion using a moderator to coordinate each group. Each moderator must be skilled through training to persuade participants within the group to discuss thoroughly on the subject matter with the aim of creating and capturing a rich dialogue among the participants. Creation of atmosphere that is conducive for the participants to engage themselves in the topic through verbal discussion and ensure the achievement of the purpose of the research is highly important to take into consideration in this research approach.

3. Materials and Methods

For the purpose of applying qualitative approach in housing research, review of relevant literatures was made through published researched journal articles, books, conference proceedings, unpublished thesis and monographs. This is to identify issues that relate to the application of the qualitative approach. The employment of an extensive relevant literature reviews in this paper focused on the themes through Search Engines such as Google scholar, Library of congress, LISTA (EBSCO) and Web of Science core collection (Thompson Reuters). Many materials like articles and books were consulted but only fifty-five materials were used and quoted in this paper after winnowing. The selected fifty-five materials were based on their contents' relevancy to the themes of discussion in this paper. Those that were not directly relevant to the themes were discarded. The application of content analysis techniques was employed for the analysis and explanation. This involved reading, skimming and interpreting the documents that were necessary in the materials to be analyzed. The literature review aimed at examining and synthesizing issues as relate to the underlying themes.

The significant issues as contained in this paper were viewed as the process of understanding the attributes, application and importance of qualitative approach as the techniques of data analysis in housing research. The paper offered rudimentary knowledge of the approach for analyzing qualitative data for housing research. These are expected to be of assistance for analyzing qualitative data in housing research. The paper will serve as eye opener to the researcher in housing to have better understanding of qualitative research analytical

approaches through which other housing researchers can build upon. At the same time, the paper will add to the existing literature in housing and qualitative research.

4. Data Analysis in Qualitative Approaches

The data analysis procedure in qualitative approach is a difficult task that necessitates rigorous, high quality preparation and understanding. There is no specific formula or fact and rule in qualitative data analysis. The use of qualitative approaches in housing research is extremely vary and multifaceted methods analysis. Each of the qualitative methods analysis should be seen as a unique method for qualitative analysis. The qualitative researchers in housing should learn each of the methods that is best suited for the purpose of their research. Thematic analysis provides core skills that is useful for steering many other methods of qualitative analysis [24]. Thematic analysis provides universal abilities in qualitative analysis. As a matter of fact, Kolb, Boyatzis [25] describe thematic analysis method as non-specific method but rather a tool that can be used through different qualitative methods. This supported the opinion of Ryan [26] that viewed thematic coding as the process undertaken during other analysis and not as a specific approach. On the other hand, Braun and Clarke [24] considered thematic analysis as a specific method in qualitative analysis and the flexibility nature of the method as a great benefit in the analysis. Hoff and Witt [27] and Miles and Huberman [28] identifies grounded theory, content analysis, semiotics, narrative analysis, and textual analysis as different methods of analyzing qualitative data. These methods depend on their specific goals but share two important elements. This includes close attention to the context of subject matter. Secondly, there should be dedication to the process of collecting, coding, and linking data that is interactive [27]. Detailed representation of the words, ideas and capturing of the thoughts behind them is the main target of these approaches.

Qualitative research process involves recoding of gathered information in the survey [29]. The development of data summary sheet for the collected data is an important step to be taken before the commencement of the qualitative analysis. The process of transferring the data from the questionnaire or data collection form after the data might have been collected into a data summary form is known as “recording scheme” or “producing coding” [29]. The qualitative analysis could follow the process of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as described by Ojala [30] and Smith and Osborn [31]. This is the process through which the recorded interview discussions were read and reread with the aim of examining and coding recurring ideas and themes. The information gathered would thereafter be coded in form of ideas and themes to reduce the large numbers of individual responses to a few general categories of answers. There would be placement of all similar answers in a general category and assign these categories a code such as house rent value, land price, government regulation and policy, housing supply problem and so on. Coding identifies and classifies each answer into themes and ideas [29, 32]. The relationship between ideas and themes across the participants would thereafter be identified.

The process in qualitative data analysis in accordance to different methods are not differ from one to the other [24]. The process of qualitative data analysis in housing research begins from taking note of important meaning and subjects that are of great interest in the collected data. This may begin from data collection stage through the stage of reporting the content and themes in the data. Qualitative analysis has no specific or exactly guidelines or rule to follow in housing research. The process of analysis is flexible in order to be suitable for the collected data and research questions [33, 34]. The process of qualitative data analysis in housing research runs through before, during and after data analysis that involves continuous moving in and out; backward and forward within the entire collected data set, the coded data and the data analysis [24, 26]. Braun and Clarke [24] divided the stages of data analysis in qualitative research into six phases as summarized below:

- i. **Familiarizing yourself with collected data:** This entails transcribing the data, reading and re-reading the data as well as noting down initial ideas.

- ii. **Generating initial codes:** Generating initial codes involves coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
- iii. **Searching for themes:** This is collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
- iv. **Reviewing themes:** Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
- v. **Defining and naming themes:** This is an ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
- vi. **Producing the report:** The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

The qualitative analysis approach of content analyses is another method of qualitative analysis. This involves the participants' opinions which are to be illustrated and triangulated on their similarities and differences in the study. Content analysis can be described as quantitative message attributes research analysis approach that is systematic and objective with careful examination of human interactions by the use of a procedure to make valid inferences from the verbal information and convert the verbal information to more useable data [35-37]. It is used to align the participants' view in order of relevance and presentation to make it interpretable within the content of the information for research purpose.

5. Using Qualitative Approaches in Housing Research

Quantitative research approaches are traditionally applied in housing research. This involved the need to test and verify hypothesis. Descriptive and inferential statistics are used to analyze collected data through quantitative approach which necessitates explanations of some certain variables discovered through review of literatures and previous studies of other scholars. However, all the variables being discovered have not fully understood the contextual housing consumers' needs in the quantitative results for the purpose of giving appropriate solution on housing situation and how the housing needs of various housing consumers of different socio-economic status could be met. Levy and Lee [38] applied qualitative approach which is personal interview to examine the influence of family members on housing purchase decisions. According to Aribigbola [39], housing policy formulation and implementation that will work in the country must reflect and take into cognizance of socio-economic circumstances and condition of the people. Qualitative housing researchers should have clear understanding about what to be done, how and why it has to be done in order to be able to determine the appropriate qualitative method that needs to be adopted in their housing research. The problems of housing shortages, its quality and consumers' housing needs in Nigeria cannot be solved unless the consumers' perception and view are taken into consideration and reflected in Nigerian housing policy formulation and implementation. Okechukwu [10] was of the opinion that the existing quantitative approaches and indicators of determining housing affordability need to be improved as results of their pragmatic restrictions.

The quantitative approaches and indicators fundamentally emphasis certain issues of housing and fails to apprehend the multi-dimensional nature of housing. This however restricts full insights of what housing situation is all about as relates to the consumers' perception and views. The housing policy provision needs to be more specific in the light of differences among different consumers of different socio-economic status. Giving proper identification to different consumers' perception and view of different socio-economic status within the context of housing policy provision can be achieved through qualitative approaches. There are various elements in housing research that cannot be understood through the quantitative approaches except through the qualitative approaches. While the quantitative approaches deal with socio-economic data of the housing consumers in evaluating housing situation,

qualitative approaches give better understanding on some other numerous factors housing consumers considered in evaluating housing situation. The mind of housing consumers and the strategies they adopted in meeting their housing needs could be understood through qualitative approaches. The quantitative approaches are concerned with proving and disproving of a preconceived idea known as hypothesis because it is inductive methodological approach. Qualitative approach on the other hand seeks to explore research questions [21]. Considering this approach in housing research will enable the housing researcher to allow respondents to initiate the track of the study instead of restricting the tract of the study to researcher's predetermined concepts on housing situation occurrence. The flexibility of this approach makes it authoritative and imperative for better understandings in housing research. In adopting either qualitative or quantitative approach in housing survey, some questions came to mind and these include:

- i. Can you evaluate the rent in your community to be expensive or less expensive?
- ii. Can you give the reason(s) why people prefer to reside in this community?
- iii. Can you say land price in this community is cheap or expensive?
- iv. Which category of the people out of low/medium/high income earner lives in this community?
- v. In what way is planning policy affecting the rate and typology of housing supply in this community?
- vi. What do you think is the main problem facing different people of different socio-economic status in meeting their housing need in this community?

Creswell [40] describes qualitative research approach as a process where the research problem is studied in its natural setting rather than having subjects studied in a laboratory. Collection of information through this approach allows for gathering of information from multiple sources with aim of understanding the meaning of the problems from the participants or involved audience. The data collection in qualitative procedures is not restricted by categories but allows for in-depth and detail information [33]. Van Maanen [41] defines Qualitative research approaches as array of techniques which gives interpretation through decode, describe, translate, and give the meaning that is naturally occurring and not the frequency phenomena. Qualitative research approaches are social or organizational behavior research approaches that produce results which are not obtain through statistical procedures or other quantification approaches [29]. Richards [42] in his own opinion sees qualitative data as records of observation or interaction that are complex and cannot easily reduce to numbers. People's behavior research through observation and interview are carried out through qualitative approaches [29, 43, 44].

Qualitative approaches are applied in a unique environment and therefore give room for a deeper understanding of the subject matters [28, 43]. The ethnographic, interviews, focus groups discussion, and observations are the most widely used qualitative research approaches. Data collection through qualitative approaches establishes rapport between the interviewee and interviewer. Through this, the interviewer or researcher directs the attention of the interviewee to the material and motivate him or her to carefully answer the questions [45]. The questions of which fact could be derived from the participant or interviewee is the main target in applying these research approaches [43]. It gives room for the researcher to give further and better explanation on questions whenever he takes note that the interviewee misunderstands any question. Conveniences of the researcher and the respondents, opportunity of taking place at any time, at any place such as respondents' home, on the street, in a respondents' shop or office, face-to-face contact between the researcher and the respondents, two-way conversation between the researcher and respondent, taking place in a relaxed and conducive atmosphere, identification of respondents' body language and expressions, accuracy of the data, researcher's control over the pattern of discussion and high response rate are the advantages of qualitative research approaches identified by many scholars [29, 32, 44, 46-50].

The collected data through these approaches would be in form of field notes. The information gathered will undergo the process of coding and reduction to themes and ideas for the purpose

of analysis [28, 32]. The Qualitative approach employed in this article that served as case study was through personal interview with twenty-seven participants with the aid of semi-structured open ended questionnaires. The information gathered were in form of words which were evaluated through information reduction into themes and ideas to give narrative description and analysis. Cultural anthropology and cultural patterns of a setting gives birth to ethnography as a research approach which gives knowledge of what can be derived from that setting [43]. Ethnography in housing research focuses on the perception of housing consumers on housing needs, housing problems and consumers' strategies and plans in meeting their housing needs. The data to be gathered through these approaches would be in form of field notes that could be analyzed through the process of coding into themes and ideas [28, 32].

6. Qualitative Approaches in Housing Research - Case Study

In qualitative analysis, the results of qualitative data need to address how the research questions were answered by the qualitative findings which can as well be compared with the findings of past research studies in the literatures [32]. The validation of the results can be achieved through triangulation of the data drawn from several sources such as transcripts, pictures and from several individuals. The results are to understand the perception of consumers on housing problems and situation within a community. The perception of the consumers as regards the effect of government housing policy on housing supply and the problems the consumers are facing towards meeting their housing needs are the two issues used as case studies in this article. The approaches are mainly to understand fully consumers' view on these aspects of housing survey. Two research questions were designed in this article to use as example. Firstly, what is the effect of planning policy on the rate and typology of housing supply and secondly what is the problem facing different people of different socio-economic status in meeting their housing need. These two research questions are set to explain the application of approach in housing research. However, the process of coding and generation of themes from the transcripts were not discussed in this article.

6.1 Effects of Planning Policy on the Rate and Typology of Housing Supply

According to the opinion of the participants during the direct interview, planning policy did not affect the rate or typology of housing supply especially within the indigenous unplanned core areas of Ibadan urban center. Ibadan is fully developed and planning policy in term of planning standard could not be fully observed and implemented, otherwise many houses would not be approved. Taking planning policy in term of planning standard into consideration would seriously affect the rate of housing supply. Some buildings were already dilapidated and eventually collapsed. Such dilapidated and collapsed buildings could not be re-erected because of the problems within the family members. This indirectly reduces the housing supply. However, the planning policy affects the typology of the housing supply in a well laid out area especially government allocated land such as Lagelu scheme, Oluyole estate, Bodija housing estate and so on. It is not just possible to erect a roomy or any type of housing besides flat. Planning standard and other guidelines are there to guide the development and the type of house to erect. This has been the reason why many consumers especially among low income households within Ibadan urban center could not afford to reside there except the affluence people. Family ties hindered some families from re-selling their family house to be re-constructed. The indigenous unplanned core areas were more of old structures that affect housing supply. The change of use from residential to commercial in some areas especially along the major roads such as Iwo road and Mokola areas within Ibadan urban center because of economic value attached to it is another factor that leads to the reduction of the residential housing supply. Housing development is capital intensive and the major problem to housing supply has been income of the people, cost of building materials and land price.

Moreover, there is no master plan to guide the development within Ibadan urban center and this constituted a major problem confronting the planning in Ibadan. Government is not interested in providing housing for her populace; it is individual that provides for their

housing needs. The type and rate of housing supply as well as its quality depends on individual's taste and the economy situation. The economic situation in Ibadan urban center that leads to conversion of residential to commercial use and mixed land uses comprised of residential and commercial land uses affects the housing typology.

According to some others' perception, the planning policy did not affect the rate and typology of housing supply within the five local government areas of Ibadan urban center especially in a freehold land but guided the development and prevented people from developing in a wrong location. Planning policy only increase the quality of the housing supply. Government land only was affected by the planning policy in term of typology and land use. In government housing estate where planning policy affects the typology of housing supply, developers could not just build any kind of house whereas there was no such in freehold land. Only high income earners could afford to construct house within the government housing estate while the medium and low income earners could not afford to get land to construct there because of the cost of land and government policy as regards housing typology. Professionals like Town planners and Engineers made sure that things are in order. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report guides the type of development to be put in such place. It helps the people to determine what structure to put in a particular location in terms of zoning. People were not getting it easy to just develop their land anyhow and anyway. Duplex buildings are the most common in government housing scheme which the low income households could not afford. Moreover, survey plan, building plan preparation and plan approval processing fees for building are more expensive. A four bedrooms flat building plan preparation and approval processing cost up to N500, 000.00 while survey plan for a plot of land cost N75, 000.00. Price increase in building plan assessment for processing and approval discouraged many intended housing developers especially among the low and middle income earners thereby reduce the rate of housing supply because majority of these people could not afford it. People's economy affected the type of housing they were constructing for their living. For example, some people constructed just a room or 2 rooms to live in an interior rural area where town planning authority officials would not be able to know before they completed and occupied it. At times, this indecent housing unit would not be fully completed or habitable before they occupied it.

Government policies on housing provision are yet to be successful due to the way they are being implemented. The low income earners are not much more benefitting from it; they had no easy access to low cost housing estate because of its cost and the condition that were attached to it. Moreover, there are some other factors that affected the rate of housing supply to some level and these factors include the extension of road that affects some residential buildings and reduce the number of housing in stock. The recent Oyo state land use charged policy which enforced every residential buildings and other land uses to pay a property charge to government also increase the house rent.

The provision of planning regulations was mostly disobeyed in Ibadan and there were historical reasons for this. For example, there was a time a state commissioner between 1979 and 1983 was anti-planning regulation, he was not only announced that people should not disobey planning regulation but also gave backing to disobey planning regulation. For instance, he said that people in planning authority have no right to stop any building construction that developed up to window level. He publicly advised the people that whenever they wanted to construct, they should develop it in piece meal and start the work after the closing hour from the office on Friday and ensure that before Monday morning when the town planning official will be resuming, the construction of any part they are constructing either a room or two is already up to the window level. The result of this advice and action was that except in GRA, the development in Ibadan is generally uncoordinated, lacks provision of necessary facilities and very narrow road where the roads are provided. Disobedience to planning regulations had succeeded in producing slum areas. National housing policy gave room to upgrading and renewal of existing stock of housing especially in core areas of the city by the federal and state governments but the provision is not implemented. Housing policy is not implemented very well. Housing policy supposed to affect the rate of housing supply but the implementation is faulty. For example, housing

policy supposed to make provision for more and adequate housing for the people, if the housing policy has been implemented well, it would have affected the rate of housing supply.

As a result of ineffectiveness of housing policy, it does not affect the rate of housing supply. According to some participants, the major problem in Ibadan urban centre is housing quality and not quantity. Some houses were abandoned because of the quality. The children of the owner had moved out of the house to rent better apartment somewhere else. Most of the housing units were not accessible. Though there is planning law, there is no guiding tool to enhance the land value and housing. Developing areas are left unguided and affect the quality of housing units. It does not affect rate of housing supply and the housing typology is not controlled.

6.2 Problem Facing Different People of Different Socio-Economic Status in Meeting their Housing Need

Majority of the respondents during the interview looked at finance as the main problem facing different housing consumers of different socio-economic status in meeting their housing needs in Ibadan. The finance and purchasing power/ability of many consumers especially among the low and middle income earners cannot afford to neither live in decent and comfortable house nor get their personal house starting from purchasing of land which is out of reach to them. Others problems include high house rent that prevents many low and middle income consumers from meeting their housing needs. Urban slum, housing quality and unplanned environment distracted many of the high income earners from living in some area within Ibadan urban center. Those living in slum area only depended on what they have while income and taste determined those living in estate. High unemployment rate, low salary to the government workers, and people's ambition in doing what they could not afford to do especially marrying of more than one wife and giving birth to many children that lead to large family size especially among low income earners constitute problems to inadequate housing supply according to some participants.

Over ambition to get more than what middle income earners could afford, lacks of proper planning and carefree attitude among the middle income earners are the factors that prevent the middle income earners from getting their personal housing unit. The problem of non-satisfaction in terms of site location and taste in housing design among the high income earners are the major problems facing the high income of socio-economic status in meeting their housing needs in Ibadan urban center. Other factors that are preventing people of different socio-economic status in meeting their housing needs include high cost of building materials, cost of land, economic hardship, disparity in salary among the government workers, poor salary, inflation rate and lack of government adequate land policy to cater for the people. Government is not concerned on people's welfare in relation to housing situation. The housing policy on paper made provision for housing provision adequately in form of credit facility and access to land and social housing, but in reality there is no provision for these Low and Middle income earners. For example, low income housing schemes is being taken over by the high income earners and civil servants. The civil servant bought the low cost housing units in paper and resell them to the politician and high income earners at higher price. The credit facilities are not made accessible to the low and middle income earners. The conditionality of getting credit facility is in favor of high income earners. The implementation of the housing policy is faulty. Finance in the aspect of low and middle income earners, taste in respect of high income earners. While the low and middle income earners do not have sufficient money to get their own house, the high income earners found it difficult to be satisfied with the location and design of the house easily. High rate of assessment was another problem that constituted problem to the housing supply. Assessment of 4 bed-rooms flat was average of N150, 000.00 which included the cost of application fees, fence permit fees and assessment. If the development is on the government land, you have to pay sub-division fees in addition. This discourage developer to go into housing development. Land speculator affect the rate of housing supply because they sell land to more than one person and this influence developers to be scared and discouraged.

From the two issues narrated, several themes can be generated for the qualitative analysis through which some findings can be inferred to make appropriate suggestion to solve housing problem within the study area. This is not within the scope of this present article.

7. Features of Qualitative Approaches

Creswell [51] identified characteristics of qualitative research approaches. According to him, qualitative research approaches should explore a problem and develop a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon based on the literature review that justifies the problem. It should state the purpose and research questions in a general and broad way to get the participants' experiences. Small number of participants' views is obtained while data analysis and interpretation of findings are done using text analysis followed by report writing. Trust, honesty, efficiency, communication and participation are the key elements that are required if the approaches in research would be implemented successfully [52]. The approach especially when adopting personal interview according to Naoum [29] is suitable when the people being interviewed are homogenous and share the same characteristics. The researcher should know enough about the interviewee so that the researcher is concerned with asking what is important and know how to ask it. The interpersonal contact is essential to explain and describe the questions if the personal interview would be suitable. The personal interview is also suitable when a case study needs to be investigated in detail asking questions such as how and why things had happened the way they happened and, when the research requires more than a yes or no, agree or disagree answer. This is when the answer requires an explanation of why the respondents are answering or feeling in a particular way.

8. Advantages and Challenges of Qualitative Approaches

This aspect of this paper briefly discusses the advantages and challenges of qualitative approach in housing research. Though the approach is flexible in nature with varieties of techniques, the approach is with many advantages and challenges. Various challenges in qualitative approach depend more on poorly conducted analyses or inappropriate research questions [24]. There are several advantages and challenges of qualitative approaches. Qualitative studies are relatively less expensive and easy to implement [21]. Qualitative data consist of information obtained through open-ended questions which gives opportunity to the participants to provide information based on questions that do not restrict the participants' opinion for responding [32]. Collected data are more extensive in the qualitative approaches because of its attribute of no restriction. The approaches allow the development description of the subject matter in a natural setting [52]. They give room for the adjustment in response to data that contradict researcher's preliminary assumptions or concepts [21]. The creation of new thoughts might emerge in the course of qualitative data analyses. The approaches are subjective and complex in nature that does not entails counting but rich and subjective to reflect reliabilities and equivalents that hold the elements of the collected data.

However, as good as qualitative research approach is, it has some limitations. Respondents are not anonymous and therefore may be reluctant in providing confidential information to another person [44]. Respondents may be reluctant to answer sensitive question honestly in a personal interview. During the course of interview, the way the questions are phrased, interviewer's tone of voice and his appearance may influence the answer that would be given by the respondents. Qualitative approaches processes through data collection, coding, and processing are labor intensive [32]. Besides the fact that the approaches are labor intensive, they are also generally more expensive. The expenses on this approach include the travelling and time taken in the interview. Personal insights are always part of the data as the researcher works to understand the complexities of the phenomena, the relevant processes and the interrelationships may lead to researcher's biasness. Different styles of interviewing are being exercised by different researchers or interviewer which could give rise to inconsistency in the respondents' responses. Patton [33] suggests required researcher to be empathically neutral. The researcher should not approach the phenomenon with the aim of confirming a preconceived hypothesis but instead be neutral.

Various measures are used to overcome the challenges in qualitative approaches. The study design should be carefully made and verification of results with participants and triangulating data collection for the purpose of strengthen the internal validity. The data collection and analysis through careful documentation will also ensure reliability. The understanding of the subject matter in the context of its local setting is the main goal why traditional ethnographer study individual families, organizations, cultures and tribes and present sufficient detailed field research. The problems of external validity or generalize ability of the findings through qualitative research is the most challenging to deal with which has led to many criticisms among scholars on qualitative approaches. However, qualitative researchers such as Denzin [53] and Guba and Lincoln [54] have argued that generalize ability cannot be considered as limitation as that is not a target of qualitative research.

The need to reconcile cross-case analysis to have “thick description” of housing situation like Ibadan urban center is an effort to improve evidence-based housing situation in Ibadan urban center and replicate it in other urban centers in Nigeria. For the purpose of achieving this target, the themes and patterns of housing situation across other cities within the nation must be understood [28]. The emerging theory is applicable to ensure external validity or generalize ability of the findings in general, not just to the study area as this [55].

9. Conclusions

The importance of qualitative approaches in housing research cannot be over emphasized. The approaches provide insight into the housing consumers’ perception on housing situation and problems. When qualitative study is well adopted, it helps in gaining full knowledge, ideas and understanding of housing consumers’ perception on housing problems in a particular setting and how their housing needs could be met. The approaches reduce the time spent in survey, enhance efficiency of the data collection and help the researcher to get result to the problems on the subject matter without unnecessary delay. Qualitative approaches offer the opportunity of understanding housing consumers’ perception and views, discovering their indulgences of housing situation and needs through which an insight would be gained into how the qualitative and quantitative housing need of consumers of different socio-economic status can be met. This is to support and compliment the quantitative approaches in getting better understanding of the housing situation in a natural setting.

As good as qualitative approach is in housing research, it is important to choose a method that is more appropriate to the research question in housing research instead of falling into the victim of research methodology. As a matter of fact, research approach and qualitative techniques to be adopted should be motivated by the research question and theoretical assumptions. Though qualitative approach is flexible in nature, it is important for the researcher in housing research to be cleared and explicit in the research he embarks upon, and what the research is all about needs to be matched with the purpose of the research. As a result of this, both the theory and methodology are to be applied rigorously and systematically with the concept of the subject matter. The authors are of opinion that the approaches should only be employed as methodological approach where it is appropriate for the study. The approaches should not be adopted simply because the researcher just prefers the approaches for the purpose of trying it or when the validity of data collected will not be achieved.

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