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## **A Critical Investigation on Housing and Musical Noise Pollution in Selected Neighborhoods in Lagos, Nigeria**

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**To cite this article:** Olusoji, S. (2020). A Critical Investigation on Housing and Musical Noise Pollution in Selected Neighborhoods in Lagos, Nigeria. *African Journal of Housing and Sustainable Development*, 1(1), pp. 3-12.

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### **Abstract**

Musical noise endangers the health, well-being and peaceful coexistence of people in neighbourhoods, particularly in the urban centers. Archival materials, library sources, unstructured interviews, observation and available statistics from government and its agencies were the data sources for this study. Simple random percentile revealed the presence of uncontrolled noise pollution, which was more pronounced in the high-density areas of Lagos such as Mushin, Oshodi, Ajegunle, and Alimosho, among others, when compared with the low-density areas of Ikoyi, Victoria Island, Lekki, and Banana Island. Several factors accounted for the prevalence of musical noise pollution in the low- and high-density areas of Lagos, including level of compliance with good neighbourliness, observance of basic social ethics, decorum and comportment, and educational level. The study suggests that government should promulgate more stringent laws to curb this social malaise and prosecute individuals and organisations that breach the law. Sustained public enlightenment should be carried out by relevant government agencies, communities and the people to create awareness on the inherent dangers of loud and uncontrolled music. Emphasis is on the urgent need for urban renewal in the zoning, design and construction of residential buildings, particularly in areas regarded as slums.

**Keywords:** Housing and well-being; Good health; Lagos; Music; Noise pollution

### **1. Introduction**

Noise is an unpleasant and excessive sound that is unwanted and capable of harming people and the environment. Lagos, with an estimated population of over 21 million people, suffers from

environmental, community and industrial noise, among others. One other type of noise in the noise emanating from sports and games, festivals, street carnivals, public events, clubs, hotels, relaxation centres, street live bands and other sociocultural events (Shabi, 2016).

Noise pollution is sometimes the result of poor urban planning. Congested housing in which families live in choked areas invariably leads to noise pollution. At social events such as weddings, as well as places of worship, street carnivals, marketplaces, improvised kiosks and other temporary 'attachments', people flout noise prevention rules by playing loud music from giant speakers as they seek to attract attention.

Yumkella (2019) suggests the need to improve the quality of life in Nigeria. Citing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Yumkella explained that the nation cannot discuss issues of growth and development separately from environmental issues. He argued that the quality of life of the people can only be improved through the provision of good education, security, electricity and housing, among others. Goal 11 of the SDGs targets the emergence of sustainable cities and communities via meeting the challenges of rapidly growing urban areas, tackling unstructured growth and increased migrations and, most significantly, ensuring the renewal of slum areas. The author further noted that visionary leadership matters in the effort to leapfrog Nigeria into a powerhouse by the year 2050. Since bad politicians will only make bad policies, thus compounding the chaos and abuse of zoning and building laws in the urban areas, Yumkella argues that it behoves all Nigerians to elect good leaders who will tackle the problem of noise pollution. Among others, the 17 items on the SDG agenda as adopted by United Nations members in 2015 mark a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. Observing that Nigeria is the 26th largest economy in the world, Yumkella argues that with good policy, infrastructure and energy revolution, Lagos and Ogun states can become the catalysts of industrialisation in Nigeria. However, for this to happen, Lagos will have to make hard choices in re-inventing the megacity and controlling noise and urban pollution, among others.

As Nigeria's former federal capital and the nation's commercial hub, Lagos is a cosmopolitan city that faces the environmental and health hazards that are common to developing nations. The following questions are therefore germane to this study:

- (i) What is the role of music in an urban centre like Lagos?
- (ii) When does music become noise or environmental pollution?
- (iii) What pleasure do people derive when they play loud music?
- (iv) Are communal norms and beliefs behind noise levels in the African societies?
- (v) What is the agent of musical noise pollution in Lagos State?
- (vi) What is the attendant health hazards associated with loud music?
- (vii) What are the efforts put in place by government and other regulatory bodies in Lagos State to curb excesses by various agents of musical pollution and others identified in this study?

Undergirding this study are the positions expounded by environmentalists, urban and regional planners, environmental psychologists, social psychologists, experimental aestheticians and other experts from allied areas on musical noise pollution, social stability and cohesion. As such, the study is cross-disciplinary, focusing on housing and well-being, good health and well-being, peaceful coexistence, as well as musical noise pollution and the well-being of city dwellers.

## 2. Literature Review

Considerable scholarship has been undertaken on housing and urban development, well-being, musical noise pollution, societal structures and needs. For example, Maslow (1943) theorised on the 'hierarchical level of human needs', wherein he listed security and safety as basic to human existence and survival. Although security and safety needs may be met by the state and individuals, they are particularly determined by a country's system of government and economy, be it capitalism, socialism, or communism, among others. In discussing these necessities of life, Okoro (2011) observed that:

From the economic perspective, environment can simply be defined as the habitation within which man derives his sustenance by way of economic and business transactions guided by ethical and legal principles. Plato, in *The Republic*, uses the word "state" to describe the economic environment, and he says a state arises out of the needs of mankind. This means that the true creator of a state is necessity. The first and the greatest of the necessities is food, the second is dwelling while the third is clothing (Okoro, 2011: 4).

The inadequacy of habitable, affordable and befitting dwelling places is not only a Nigerian problem but a worldwide phenomenon, particularly in countries, cities and areas with large populations, as well as high prevalence and influx of people to the urban centres due to their cosmopolitan nature and economic viability. Schaefer (2005) listed the following as the bane of homelessness worldwide:

Soaring housing costs, unemployment, cutbacks in public assistance, and rapid population growth have all contributed to rising homelessness around the world. Most social policy is directed toward sending the homeless to large shelters (Schaefer, 2005: 481).

Lagos, Nigeria's commercial hub is by no means insulated from the housing quagmire as highlighted by Schaefer. The state is particularly burdened by the influx of people from different parts of the country as well as from the West African sub-region and beyond. This influx has taken its toll on the state's facilities and infrastructures, just as it has implications for economic and urban planning as well as the welfare of residents. Among the categories of migrants to the state are beggars and herdsmen from the north, motorcycle riders from places as far as Niger Republic, Mali, Guinea, Chad, and Senegal, as well as apprentices from the eastern part of the country and other jobseekers. Mabogunje (1968) addressed the question of urbanisation in Nigeria, focusing on its prospects and problems. He classified Lagos into low-, medium- and high-density areas. Similarly, Oduwaiye (2009) focused on the cost and values of residential land use in the Lagos metropolis, while Adedayo et al. (2014) examined the impact of density and best use of residential lands in metropolitan Lagos. Aribigbola (2019) notes that, "to resolve the quandary in housing and urban development in Nigeria, there is a need for pro-poor housing and urban development policies.

In a situation where there is little or no government intervention in city planning, it would be inevitable for makeshift structures to emerge, especially in high-density areas and slums. Under such circumstances, numerous social vices emerge and bring about disorderliness in various areas of society. These housing problems were addressed in a stakeholders' meeting as reported by Ihuama-Iduanyi (2019). According to the author, the stakeholders noted that "there was an acute problem of housing availability, accessibility and affordability without corresponding actions to match the demand. They therefore "called for urgent collaboration among stakeholders.

One major consequence of unplanned, congested and overpopulated cities is noise pollution. On this note, Dapo-Thomas (2019) remarks thus:

The challenges of noise pollution and its attendant effects on the wellbeing of the people in a mega city like Lagos cannot be overemphasized. Nigeria is a country with over 180,000,000 (One Hundred and Eighty million) people and Lagos State being the commercial nerve center with a population in excess of 20,000,000 (Twenty million) people, is daily exposed to noise pollution attributed to the proliferation of various activities predominantly religious and commercial especially in areas zoned for residential. (Dapo-Thomas, 2019)

What can be deduced from the above is that there is a connection between noise levels and over-congested cities. The vexatious issue of noise levels, particularly musical noise, has been critically addressed by scholars of music and allied studies. Early research into African music, as undertaken by foreign music scholars and enthusiasts, missionaries, anthropologists, ethnologists and others, reported that African music was barbaric, exotic, full of noise and incomprehensible in comparison to Western music. However, more recent scholarship by Africans has debunked these assertions, with African music being affirmed to be meaningful, contemplative and well-thought-out and to be used for entertainment and recreational purposes (Nketia, 1974; Akpabot, 1986; Uzoigwe, 2001; Omibiyi-Obidike, 2001; Adedeji, 2011). Many scientists, social psychologists, music psychologists, music therapists and aesthetics practitioners have adduced several reasons for musical tastes and preferences for various musical types. For instance, Helmholtz (1954) attempts a distinction between musical sound and noise. According to him:

On what difference in the external means of excitement  
Does the difference between noise and musical sound depend?  
The normal and usual means of excitement for  
The human ear is atmospheric vibrations. The irregularly  
Alternating sensation of the ear in the case of noise leads  
Us to conclude that for these the vibration of the ear must  
Also change irregularly (Helmholtz, 1954: 8).

In the same vein, social psychologist Konecni (1982) observed that:

People listen to music while working, talking, eating, engaging in sexual intercourse ... what music does to people at different times, why they choose to listen to it so much, why they choose a particular type of music while engaging in a particular activity – all of these are unanswered questions (Konechi, 1982: 500).

Konecni's assertions could be a true reflection of the diverse ways in which people react to music in both the low- and high-density areas of Lagos, as well as in the slums proper. Lagos, Nigeria's busiest city and a melting pot of social, recreational and entertainment activities, has a major music pollution problem. From the blare from all sorts of commercial and business outlets seeking patronage from customers and religious houses with their unabating jarring noises to the loud speakers mounted on commercial buses for advertising purposes, it has indeed been an endless harrowing experience, leading to gradual but significant debilitating health hazards and challenges on city dwellers. Commenting on Fuji music, loud and lousy music and city life, Lasisi (2008) observed thus:

If Fuji music were a disease, it would have been a contagious one.... The fact is that you will always come across it whether at a social occasion, on the radio, or television, or at the

notoriously lousy music shops that dot every corner of Nigerian cities, especially in the South Western part of Nigeria. (Lasisi, 2008:44).

Fagbohun (2019) noted that “prohibition of noise in private and public places focuses on offences created through: (1) Musical records and musical equipment; (2) Public address systems or loud speakers to propagate beliefs or advertise goods or solicit for passengers; (3) Use of public address system without permit. Lagos State, through its “noise mapping and New Urban Development plan, has embarked on implementation, enforcement and developing policies that will improve the quality of life of the people. The attempt was at sensitizing and creating awareness on emergent issues, impact of noise pollution, among others. It tried to emphasize the necessity of a map to determine exposure level of residents, the city traffic plan, research and impacted areas, with a view to achieving a noiseless in Lagos (*The Nation*, 2019).

Among the effects of noise pollution are hearing defects, cognitive impairment in children, increased blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, ulcer, headache, depression, sleep disorder, and irritability. Other effects include emotional disturbance, low productivity at work, as well as decrease in the quality of life and life expectancy.

In spite of the extant laws, including the Environmental/Management and Protection Law, 2017, Section 177, which empowers the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA) to prosecute offenders for offences, people wantonly contravene zoning and building regulations. Based on the foregoing observations, there is need to address the problem of inadequate housing in order to prevent chaos and social disruption in urban centres.

### **3. Methodology**

As it is virtually impossible to cover all the areas in Lagos State due to constraints of time and finance, the following high-density areas were selected through random sampling Oshodi, Mushin, Agege, Alimosho, Ojuelegba, Ajegunle, Iyana Iba, Ojo and Okokomaiko. Similarly, the following low-density areas were selected: Victoria Island, Ikoyi, Lekki, Banana Island and Ikeja Government Reserved Area. Data were also collected via library and archival materials. Moreover, the study utilised statistics provided by stakeholders, including the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA, see Appendices 2 and 3), as well as responses from unstructured interviews, chats and the opinions of religious leaders and their followers, business and shopowners, commercial vehicle operators (drivers and conductors), and selected city dwellers in specific areas (see list at Appendix 1). The study also used observation techniques to deduce noise mapping movements and occurrences in the selected areas. Finally, simple percentiles were used in analysing results and discussing findings emanating from the study.

### **4. Findings and Discussions**

On the factors constituting musical noise pollution in Lagos State, the following are the identified agents of musical noise pollution in the selected areas:

- (a) Commercial and business outlets soliciting patronage from passersby by using music as an advertising tool. Such businesses include records shops promoting all sorts of recorded music in various formats, including compact disc and DVD. Such businesses were prevalent in high-density areas of the state such as Oshodi, Mushin, Ajegunle, Ojuelegba, and Agege.

- (b) Foods, confectionery and lollypop (ice-cream) sellers who blast music from speakers mounted on their shops, mobile buses and bikes in their bid to solicit customers.
- (c) Loud music from speakers mounted at motor parks at Oshodi, Ojota, Iyana Iba, Ikorodu and other parts of the city. Motor parks touts were also found to yell out at commuters' various destinations.
- (d) Unsolicited music played in commercial buses.
- (e) Religious houses, particularly Pentecostal churches that regularly hold praise/worship sessions, vigils and other programmes involving very loud music. Musical noise pollution is also common in the vicinities of mosques, especially during calls to prayer.
- (f) Unpermitted and uncontrolled musical noise at social occasions, street parties and other social occasions.

Respondents' answers to the questions posed are now addressed. Some of the questions have been reframed and merged together for convenience.

*Question 1:* What is the role of music in the urban centres and why do people relish playing and listening to loud music?

The question above was put to city dwellers in an unstructured interview manner, in the selected areas, especially in the high-density areas with high prevalence of musical noise pollution. Seventy-eight (78) percent of the respondents believe that city life will be boring without music and that they are used to it being loud so that they can hear all the "beats, dance to the tune, invite others to join and that it is already a way of life for them. The remaining 22 percent have a contrary opinion, noting that it should be controlled because it constitutes nuisance to the society and has wider health implications.

*Question 2:* What is the connection between music in religious places and housing in an urban centre like Lagos and what challenges does it pose to controlling noise pollution?

Many respondents from the religious domain, as well as other city dwellers, were asked whether they considered religious organisations as the main source of musical noise pollution in the state. Eighty (80) percent reported that religious organisations, particularly the Pentecostal churches, have abused the basic urban planning arrangements for construction of buildings as stipulated by government and city planners. They cited the examples of churches sited in places meant for living and the conversion of garages, warehouses, shops, verandas and other places to worship centres, with unabating musical noise emanating from these worship centres and constituting serious distortions to city planning. Some respondents reported that Muslim organisations also contribute to the problem of noise pollution by erecting unapproved mosques all over the neighbourhood and conducting religious activities within the vicinity of the mosques. The remaining 20 percent used biblical and koranic injunctions and quotations to justify why churches and mosques should spread even at the expense of the health and well-being of the state's residents.

*Question 3:* Are there differences between the high-density areas and the low-density areas (highbrow) in terms of abuse and control of musical noise pollution?

The researcher relied on statistics provided by the Lagos State Environmental Protection

Agency (LASEPA) on the mapping of noise pollution complaints (2018). The data showed the local government areas that were mapped for noise pollution (see Appendices 2 and 3). Alimosho Local Government Area, a high-density area in the Lagos suburb, had the highest number of complaints on noise pollution. This is perhaps understandable, given that it is the largest local government in the state.

*Question 4:* Can the differences discussed in 3 above be attributed to levels of education, enlightenment and exposure?

In terms of musical noise pollution and its control, there could be wider gaps between the high-density and low-density areas due to the following reasons:

- (a) The highbrow areas are usually well-planned and have well-enforced, stringent laws on noise pollution, outdoor entertainment and other social gatherings that could infringe on the rights and social well-being of others in the immediate environment. This can also be said of the new estates in the high-density areas with well-planned housing units. The high-density areas have overwhelming population problems and always have to grapple with higher proportions of dwellers who are not willing to follow government regulations and respect the rights of others in their immediate environment.
- (b) The low-density areas are most times populated by the elite and enlightened individuals, usually the *creme de la creme* and members of the upper echelon of the society. Owing to their exposure levels, which could be through educational attainment, societal status or achievements, as well as exposure to advanced and developed countries through travels, they tend to prefer a culture of musical noise control in their residences. However, the high-density areas consist of a mixture of both the enlightened and others in the society. With the larger percentage of people being in the middle and lower classes, residents may find it difficult to obey simple laws and regulations and government officials may not be willing to enforce these laws.

*Question 5:* Are city dwellers aware of the health implications of regular exposure to loud music?

For this question 85 percent of the respondents were aware of the danger that loud music poses to their health, while 15 percent were unperturbed and stated that the pleasure and fun they derive from music is more useful than the hazards it constitutes to their health.

## **5. Recommendations**

There is no doubt that public enlightenment is key to the correction of any social ill or problem. As such, the researcher recommends that the relevant agencies should do more by educating the general public and other stakeholders, including health workers, community leaders, religious leaders, market associations, musicians' associations, commercial motor operators, on the danger of musical noise pollution and its implications for human well-being. In this regard, serious public awareness through the print and electronic media, as well as outdoor advertising and citywide mobilisation, is to be organised. This researcher noted that the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA) holds an annual workshop to sensitise the citizens on the danger of noise pollution.

Government should also do more by enacting laws on noise pollution and urban planning and review them regularly to meet contemporary needs and developments. It should also monitor

and regulate their enforcement by the various arms of government and officials entrusted with their execution.

Proliferation and construction of religious houses, e.g. churches and mosques, in residential houses should be discouraged and stringent laws promulgated to punish offenders. Moreover, government should have a working urban renewal master plan and religiously execute it to turn slums into well-planned neighbourhoods for people to live and be exposed to quality life. Ensuring this would have a positive impact on the people's well-being and change their social orientation on noise pollution, particularly musical noise. As observed in this study, the wide gaps between the high-density and the low-density areas should be bridged through provision of necessary infrastructure to cater for the people in order to have a saner environment.

As done in advanced countries, specific areas of the city can be carved out and tagged as noise-free zones. This way, proper orientation on the needs to curb noise excesses can be gradually learnt, cultivated and imbibed by members of the society.

Due to regular exposures to excessive musical noise in all strata of the society and its inherent health implications, people should be counseled to go for regular medical checkups to determine if they have hearing problems and other health issues associated with exposure to noise pollution.

To inculcate the right attitude in pupils from the early years, environmental studies should be incorporated into the school curriculum to teach them how to take care of their environment and learn basic social ethics.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has addressed housing and musical noise pollution in Lagos State and the environmental and health hazards that uncontrolled musical noise can constitute to citizens of the state. It stressed collaboration among the government, its agencies, city dwellers, as well as the identified agents of pollution and others discussed in the paper as a way of stemming the wanton tide of musical pollution in the state. It also appealed to the government to do more to meet the housing needs of the people by providing quality dwelling abodes to improve residents' living standards, as this will in turn engender and foster good neighbourliness.

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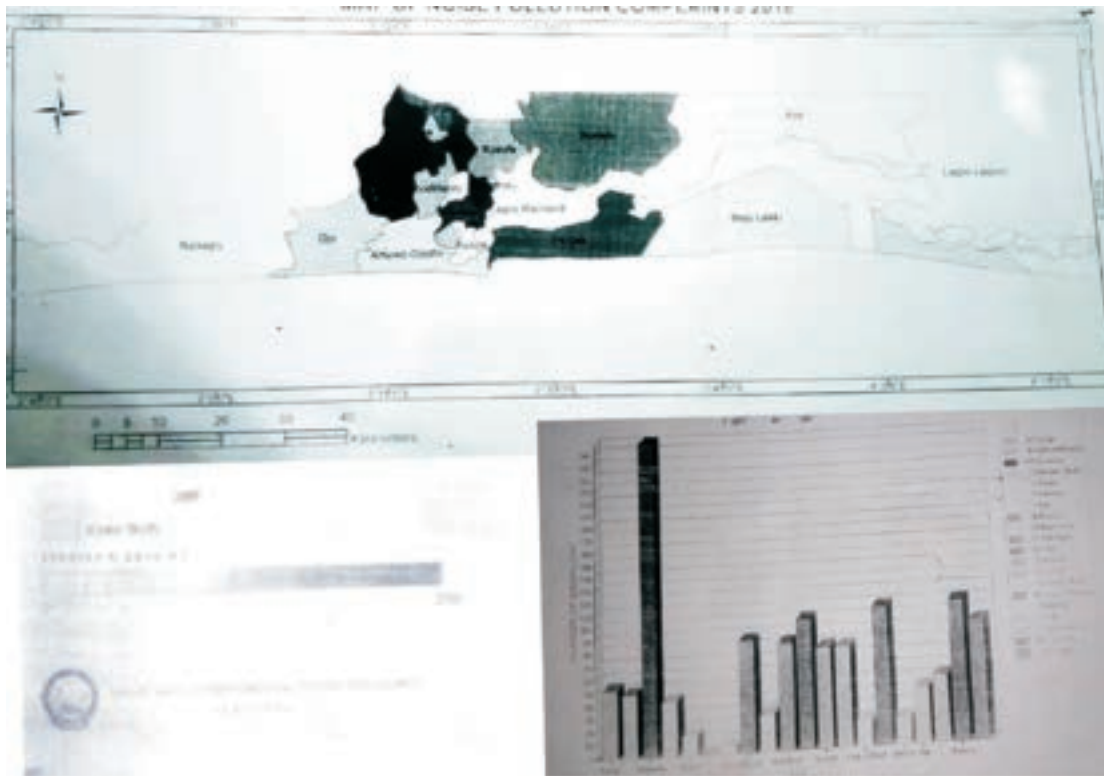
## Appendices

### Appendix 1

List of some of the people consulted in the course of the research  
Religious leaders, commercial music promoters and transporters

- (1) Special Apostle PST. J. T. Odedele (CAN chairman, Oshodi/Isolo)
- (2) Rev. Dr. Michael. O. Adesanya, JP, CPFN/PFN
- (3) Pastor Barnabas Otoibh, Temple Builders Ministry
- (4) Alhaji Sekoni, Ajumoni central Mosque, Ijaye-Ogba
- (5) Bro. Sunday Ogunshola, Christ Foundation Gospel Church, Bariga
- (6) Pastor Timothy Oyejobi, church leader in Oshodi/Isolo local government
- (7) Record/CD sellers and marketers at Oshodi, Ikeja, Ojuelegba Roundabout, Mushin, + etc.
- (8) Commercial transport operators and members of unions at parks specified in the paper
- (9) Market women and shopowners in selected areas listed in the paper
- (10) First-hand information from Mr. Babatunde Sosanya and Mr. Korede Omopeloye, music teachers residing in Lekki and Ajah areas of the state.

**Appendix 2**



**Appendix 3**

