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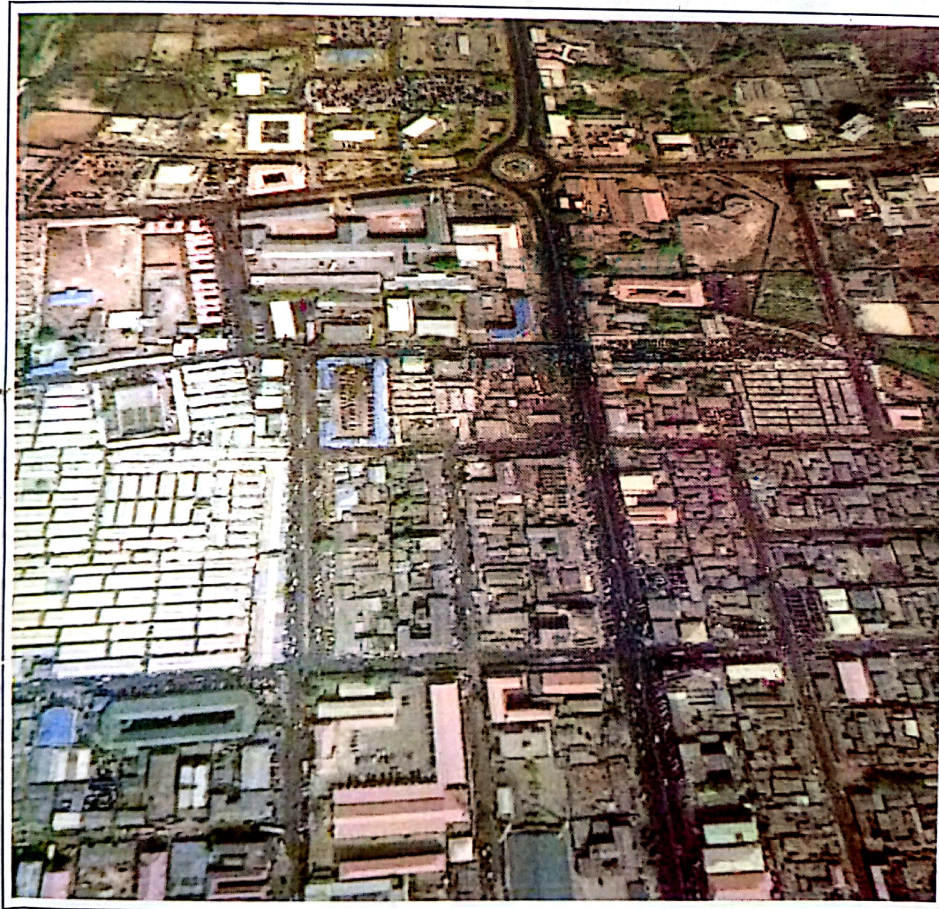
CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY MINNA

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**CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT,
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY,
P.M.B. 65 MINNA, NIGER STATE**

Idowu Okegbe Owoye
Heritage of God
Lelovay

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In order to fulfill one of the mandates of the Centre, CHSUD produces a journal annually. The journal is focused on settlement development issues and is meant to promote research and development in contemporary issues that affect cities of the 21st Century. The intention is to provide a medium for the dissemination of information on research outcomes and “Best practices” on new approaches and/or strategies for managing human settlements for livability and sustainability. The journal therefore provides a base for the academic community, professionals, policy makers, government officials, practitioners in the built environment and city managers.

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The journal accepts well researched papers, including case studies, from all disciplines in Environmental Sciences and other disciplines or subject areas related to the built environment. However, papers to be considered for a specific volume of the journal should fall within the theme and sub-themes specified. The theme for each volume of the journal will be specified.

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Rental Housing and Crime Perception in Bosso Town of Minna Metropolis, Niger State

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Abstract

The problems of rental housing extend beyond tenure security and rental disputes. It includes the incidence of crime, aggravated by the prevailing environmental situations. The study examines crime perception of renters in relation to existing physical measures. Using the instrument of questionnaires, crime perception data was obtained based on renter's experiences and fears particular to their local environmental conditions. Using the descriptive survey method and scatter diagrams, the results elicited that offenders exploit local conditions such as poor light and water supply to perpetrate criminal acts. The greatest crime against property faced by renters is mobile phones theft, which is intensified by the absence of light. In addition, there is very little trust placed on the local police by the respondents. As such, the most dependable means of security at the disposal of renters is evidenced by the application of physical measures such as fences, security lights, gates and private guards. Given that Bosso town is not free from the incidence of crime; the study concludes that the attraction to live in Bosso is based on quietness as well as proximity and convenience factors.

Key words: Crime, Environment, Perception, Physical Measures, Rental Housing

1.0 Introduction

At the core of housing tenure lie both home ownership and rental housing. It is indisputable that rental housing cannot be erased from the Nigerian urban fabric since it has considerably balanced housing demand arising from migration. Rental housing is seen as a vital component in accommodating large number of families in both developed and developing countries. In Benin City, 65% of the populace live in rented houses Ballesteros (2004). In Lagos state, the quantity of rental housing equals that of home ownership at about 49% apiece (UN-HABITAT, 2003). Despite the substantial significance gained by rental housing as a major carrier of residential mobility, it is still fraught with problems of crime.

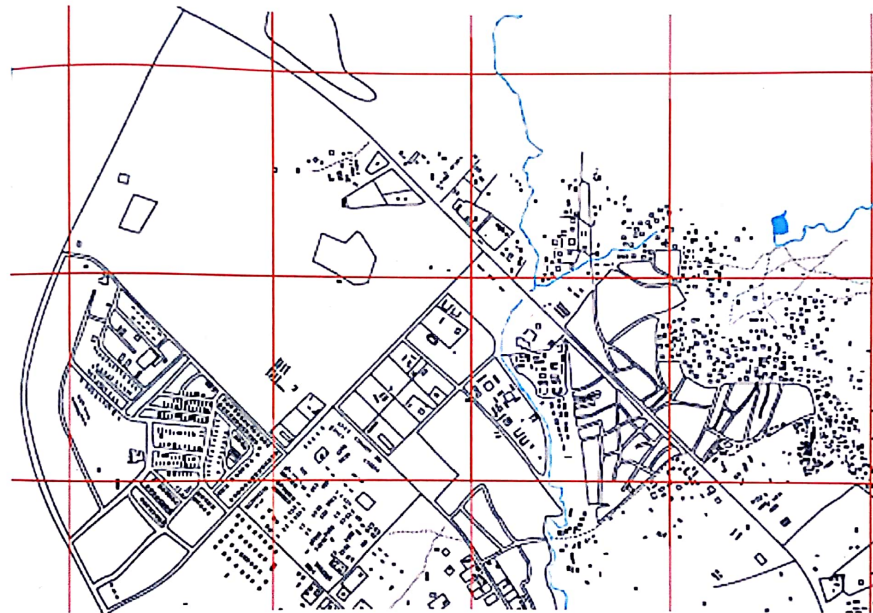
Except for the development of forms of self-defence and new social practices, the

consequences of crime are negative, evidenced by the creation of insecure feelings; which result in the abandonment of certain neighbourhoods, development of an "architecture of fear", stigmatisation of districts or communities and withdrawal or refusal to invest in some cities (Vanderschueren 2000). Specific to renters, these tendencies begin with feelings of discontentment about environmental features that erode their confidence with regards to safety. Finally, crime perception becomes prominent in the way the built environment is designed and demarcated. For instance, the prevalence of huge fences capped with barbed wires is indicative of a security conscious environment, but not necessarily a crime free environment.

Notwithstanding the causes, effects and interventions against crime perception, it is observed that there is a high attraction

for renters towards residing in Bosso town of Minna, Niger state. More so, the structure of rental housing in Bosso town presents numerous kinds of environmental and social conditions. These tendencies leave more to be desired as to whether renter's attraction to Bosso is based on the perception that it is a crime free environment. It therefore

becomes necessary to isolate rental housing in order to determine incidences of crime. This paper is therefore aimed at carrying out a survey on crime perception of renters in Bosso town, with the purpose of using the results to discuss relationships between crime rate and existing physical measures.



1.1 Brief Description of the Study Area

Fig.1.1: Layout map of Bosso town indicating linear arrangement of streets; adapted from Minna Base Map

source: UKR Dept. Federal University of Technology, Minna

Bosso town is located within Bosso Local Government Area of Minna, the capital city of Niger state. It lies between

longitudes $6^{\circ}30'0E$ and $6^{\circ}33'0E$ and latitudes $9^{\circ}98'30"N$ and $9^{\circ}100'00"N$. Its strategic location along the major traffic

routes account for a spill of some major business facilities from the city centre into its environs. This serves as a good attraction for the working class and business men. The town is arranged mainly in a linear pattern and is connected to the city centre via a major traffic spine. On the right flank of the major traffic spine there are slightly organized layouts; poor structural and social amenities; relatively uneven population distribution and clusters of residences accompanied by relatively low rental rates. Some noteworthy features present on this flank are the chief's palace, a small market and few public schools. Its expansion possibilities are limited since it abuts with large rock outcrops. Conversely on the left flank of the major traffic spine, there are better planned linear streets with relatively good roads, having about 70% of its major streets lined with street lights. There are better social amenities (for example, hospitals and schools); there is more even population distribution and better housing conditions accompanied with relatively high rents. Some of its noteworthy features are the Government House, Police Headquarters, the temporary campus of the University and a large Federal housing estate which were sold on owner occupier. Expansion possibilities are more feasible on this part of the town, because its peripheral

features abut at with a major ring road and vast virgin land.

2.0 Literature Review

Among several investigations centred on rental housing, only few researchers have pointedly addressed the subject of crime perception. One of the most explicit surveys that isolated rental housing was carried out in UN-HABITAT (2003). Based on the concept of ontological security, UN-HABITAT (2003) following Hiscock et al. (2001) and Saunders (1990) inferred that people need more than just adequate sustenance and shelter to live happy and fulfilled lives. The home, which satisfies the purposes for a secure base is expected to guarantee among others a place against trouble or fatigue and it has been argued that home owners are supposed to feel safe and secure while renters are not. Conversely in crime survey carried out in Dar Es Salaam, Robertshaw et al. (2000) found that renters are not the most vulnerable in all cases of crime (table 2.1), and he posits that dealing with perceptions of crime, particularly anxiety and fear of crime, is as important as reducing crime levels. Thus, subverting the adequacy of rental housing in safeguarding against crime is as limiting to renters as the incidence of crime is limiting to the suitability of residential neighbourhoods.

Table 2.1: Victim profile for home burglary in Dar Es Salam

Victim Characteristics	High risk (% people in each category that were victimised)	Low risk (% people in each category that were victimised)
Home Ownership	Home Owners (47.2 %)	Non-home Owners (35.3 %)
Age	Over 40 (45.5 %)	15-25 (31.6 %)
Employment Status	Informal employ. (45.8 %)	Income Depend. (38.7 %)
Educational Status	Post High School (48.3 %)	Secondary (39.4 %)
Area of Residence	Established Sub. (53.7 %)	Rural Area (26.0 %)
	New Suburb (51.0 %)	Inner City (28.2 %)

Source: Robertshaw et al. (2000)

Crime perception and safety have been measured among residential dwellings in (Minnery and Veal 1981; Evans 1992, Butterworth 2000; Robertshaw et al 2000; Bello et al. 2008; Khalil and Nassif 2009). Through various analytical methods, they have converged on the idea that satisfaction with features of the local built environment, degenerative infrastructure or a total lack of infrastructure leading to neighbourhood deprivation serve as strong indicators for crime perception. Using the instrument of questionnaires for data collection and regression analysis, a similar conclusion was drawn in Ojikutu (2008) while studying neighbourhood deprivation and self rated health in Lagos state. He found that 72.9% of the respondents lived in rented apartments and felt insecure mostly at night. This suggests that local environmental conditions around rental housing still compromise the expectation of intervening urban structures designed to control crime.

Invariably, individuals (or households or firms) will maximize their resources subject to a stated constraint; whereby an increase in crime rate accounts for a corresponding decrease in property value and will thus exert negative influences on renter's willingness to pay (Bello et al.

2008). However, it is not quite certain if willingness to pay on the part of renters may be effective in reducing crime levels as compared to restoring proper environmental situations. Meanwhile, it is assertive that crime perception is spatially coincident with the most common indicators of urban deprivation, and that a prompt refurbishment of the environment through designs is inevitable in order to control crime (Minnery and Veal 1981; Herbert and Darwood 1992 following Hope and Shaw 1988; Kaltho 2008).

In view of Jane Jacobs' mechanism of natural policing; security through the presence of others (Hillier 2004a); defensible spaces of Oscar Newman that favoured enclosed private space with limited access to strangers to create a sense of community (Khalil and Nassif 2009); and gated communities or fortified enclaves that characterize residential developments by physical security measures (Grant and Mittelsteadt 2004); Hillier (2004b) proposes a holistic set of approach based on urban design and crime prevention strategies. According to Hillier (2004b), one way of envisaging how particular configurations of existing and planned features in a location might affect crime is to think how criminals

might react to, or exploit the use, of layout and development of land. This strategy is flexible in the sense that it pays attention to local situations peculiar to differing environments. As such it can be used to create or modify existing

layouts to suit safe and sustainable groups of residences. In order to accomplish these set of goals, Hillier (2004b) proposes a set of underlying questions (table 2.2).

Table 2.2: Think criminal

Questions that planners can ask or seek advice on:

- Who is the local offender — given the features of the locality, what types of crime are most likely to be committed?
- How much effort does it take the offender to commit the crime — and how can we use planning decisions and advice to increase the perceived effort and discourage the offender — e.g. making buildings physically more secure?
- How much risk does the offender perceive when contemplating a particular crime — and how can we heighten that perceived risk and deter the offender — e.g. by increasing natural or other forms of surveillance, and empowering preventers to identify and challenge potential offenders?
- How much reward does the offender anticipate — can we reduce this and discourage crime, e.g. removing graffiti quickly so the offender gets no kicks, or cut down on the value of materials such as piping stolen from buildings?
- What resources does the offender have for committing crime (tools, weapons, modus operandi, time) — and how can we deny access or use of those resources (for example by restricting availability of tools, or designing security features to standards which anticipate their misuse)?

Source: Hillier (2004b)

Finally, the questionnaire form of gathering data on crime perception is highly reliable and would be useful in gathering data for the purposes of the study. In terms of assessing and reducing crime levels based on the situation of the environment, a lot depends on strengthening local conditions through environmental design. Thus in addition to victimisation survey based on renter's experiences and fears of crime, perspectives from Hillier (2004b) on how offenders may react to exploit existing built environmental conditions will in turn consolidate the basis to further discuss crime perception and controls around rental housing.

3.0 Materials and Methods

Description of Data

A survey based on renter's experiences and fears of crime was initiated to gain an understanding of the levels of crime in Bosso town. The cluster sampling technique was used to obtain primary data: whereby Bosso town was subdivided into six neighbourhoods. Thirty questionnaires were randomly distributed within each neighbourhood subdivision. This amounted to 180 questionnaires; out of which 160 were completed and returned. The instrument of data collection was divided into two major sections. The composition of questions in the first section placed

emphasis upon the victims, their experiences and fears. In addition to questions about sex, age and occupation; information was sought on the duration of stay in Bosso, mode of acquisition of dwelling, reason for accepting present dwelling, number of tenants within each compound, pattern of dwelling arrangement and annual rent paid. The second section comprised questions on how offenders may react to exploit existing built environmental conditions. The questions were modified to fit the description of the study area. Consequently, findings were limited to only the categories of crimes analysed in the surveys.

4.0 Results

This study adopted a descriptive analysis to elicit salient features of the population under study. This provided information with which to consider relationships between existing features and frequency of incident crime.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Bosso Town Data

A total of 160 individuals participated in the study. Out of these, 6.25% were below 17 years, 18.75% were between 17 - 24 years of age while, 75% were in the 25 – 54 years age old group. It is to be noted that about 62.5% of the respondents were in the working class group in various income categories. The others (37.5%) were predominantly students, petty traders and business people. There was apparently more

access to male respondents (62.5%) than females (37.5%).

Residential Mobility and choice of dwelling

The survey reveals that 68.75% of the respondents had moved into Bosso town, while 31.25% had not. Among those who had moved, convenience factors and better housing conditions (27.5% apiece) were mostly responsible for their choice of present dwelling (see Table 4.1).

Perception of crime levels

Based on the general assessment of crime, 25% of the respondents concluded that the incidence of crime in Bosso town was serious, while 75% observed that it was less serious. On the whole, 25% based their opinion about crime perception on reports from within the neighbourhood and friends, 12.5% based their fears on the basis that others had been affected, 6.25% on the fact that family had suffered and 56.25% based their opinion on having no experience of crime.

Greatest crime problems

The greatest crime problems in Bosso town were differentiated as 'crime against person' and 'crime against property'. When respondents were asked to rate the greatest crime problems against persons, spying ranked highest (18.75%) and assault least (6.25%). In the case of crime against property, theft ranked highest (56.25%). In addition, majority of the respondents (49.75%) considered mobile phones theft to be the greatest form of theft (Fig 4.1).

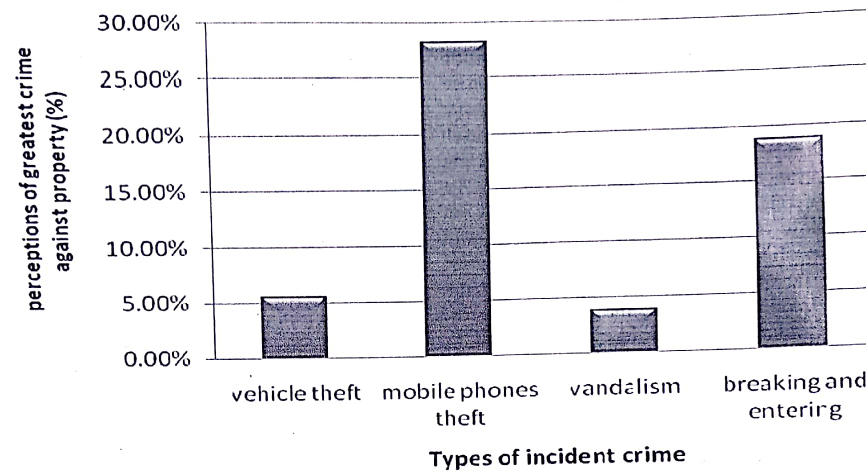


Fig 4.1 Perceptions of greatest crime against property

Physical measures and Perceptions of safety

When the respondents were asked to rate how many hours of light supply was available between 6pm and 6am, 50% went for 6-7hours, 0.75% went for 10-11 hours and none went for 12-13 hours. On the whole, a quarter (25%) of the respondents had their feeling of a more secure environment strengthened by the presence of street lights. Also, 37.5% of the respondents acknowledged the introduction of street signage out of which 6.25% equated this with having a sense of community. 65% of the

residences were fenced and as a result, 56.25% of the respondents felt more secure. The fences were differentiated according to their characteristics as follows: High fence with sandcrete block (32.5%), high fence with barbed wires (3%), dwarf fence with barricades (18%) and dwarf fence without barricades (9.75%) Also, 6.25% felt secure with the refurbishment of their gates while 6.25% had no assurance of more secure environment; the reason being that none of these facilities were made available to them.

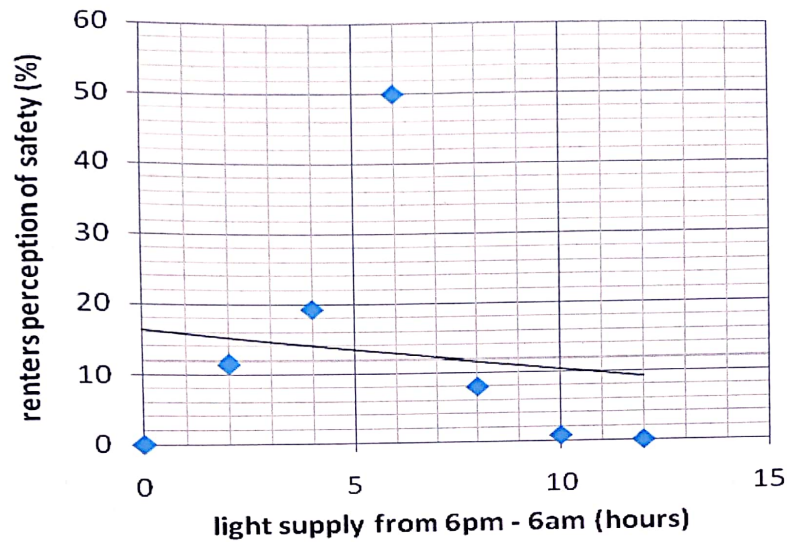


Fig 4.2: scatter diagram showing relationship between renter's perception of safety and hours in which there is light supply

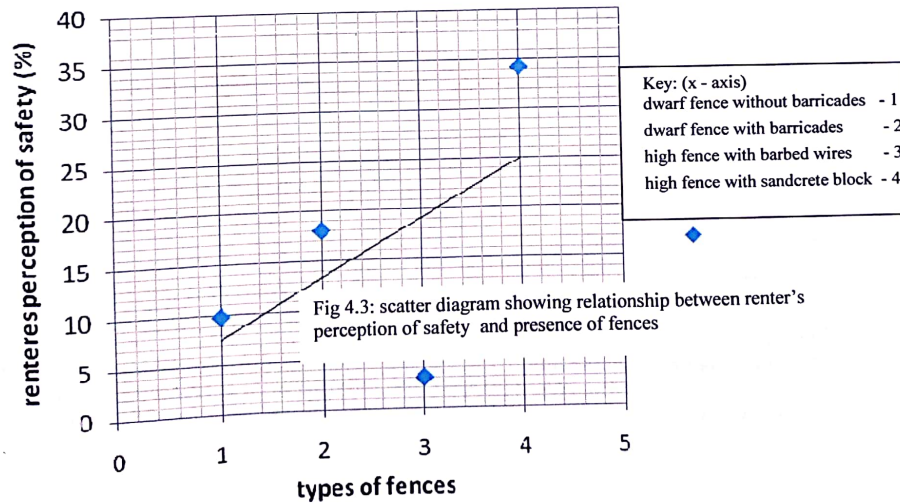


Fig 4.3: scatter diagram showing relationship between renter's perception of safety and presence of fences

Building clusters and configurations

With regards to the cluster of families or rented buildings within most compounds, 37.5% had four buildings, 6.25% had six buildings, 18.75% had seven buildings and two buildings apiece and 6.25% were completely single detached buildings. Although most of the compounds were fenced (65%), residential clusters having four buildings and above (mostly configured as double rows, U-shape and L-shape) considered the incidence of theft to be a great problem arising from people who were familiar with their environment. In addition, they had common entrance and exit points that were relatively visible to majority of the occupants.

Reporting to the police

Vehicle thefts (5.5%) followed by breaking and entering (18.75%) were the offences against property most likely to be reported to the police. Although theft

ranked highest (56.25%), out of these, 31.25 % had no trust in the police and 25% saw no reason why the police should be involved. Furthermore, when asked about alternative security arrangements, majority had more confidence in communal vigilante groups and partook in contributing towards engaging them.

Attractive and Unattractive Elements

Lastly, respondents were asked to mention positive things and negative things about Bosso town. Quietness (31.25%) and proximity and convenience (20.62%) rank the highest as positive things in Bosso town while lack of regular water supply (33.15%) and erratic power supply (26.25%) rank the highest as negative things in Bosso town. The tables below provide the summaries of their comments.

Table 4.1: List of positive things about Bosso town

S/n	Issues	No of responses	% of responses
1	Amenities	5	3.12
2	Character of the built environment	25	15.62
3	Planning	13	8.12
4	Quietness	50	31.25
5	People and community feeling	27	17.0
6	Proximity and convenience	33	20.62
7	Public transport and access	7	4.37
Total		160	100

Source: Authors' survey (2009)

Table 4.2: List of negative things about Bosso town

S/n	Issues	No of responses	% of responses
1	Characteristics of the population	10	6.25
2	Obnoxious begging	8	5.0
3	Erratic power supply	42	26.25
4	Lack of regular water supply	53	33.15
5	High rental rates	37	23.12
6	Recreational facilities	7	4.37
7	No bad points	3	1.87
Total		160	100

Source: Authors' survey (2009)

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The study found that Bosso town is not completely free of crime. However, based

on the fact that vandalism rates (6.25%) and other heinous crimes against persons are quite low, majority of the respondents

who live in rental housing consider the environment to be relatively peaceful and do not see violence as a potential threat to their stay in Bosso. Furthermore, the attraction to live in Bosso is largely determined by quietness (31.25%) as well as proximity and convenience factors (20.62%) and not necessarily by their perception of incident crime.

One of the greatest crime problems in Bosso town is mobile phones theft. It occurs both at home and on the streets. Majority (56.25%) of the respondents felt a lot safer with the presence of fences (fig 4.3). Although consistent light supply is expected to increase surveillance and make crime a high risk activity, there is a weak relationship between the introduction of street lights and renter's perception of safety (fig 4.2). This is due to the fact that light supply is inconsistent and paths leading to residences are not properly lit by the street lights. Hence, it is probable that offenders capitalize on

dark alleys to perpetrate criminal acts. Comparing the import of introducing streetlights and fences, respondents feel safer with the introduction of fences.

The lack of trust in the local police contradicts the presence of police outfits within Bosso town and this was responsible for majority of the respondents' recourse to other means of ensuring safety. These include the engaging private and or communal security outfits. The efficacy of natural surveillance resulting from patterns of building configurations and clearly defined entrance and exits are compromised. The reason is that offenders come under the cover of water peddlers to get as close as possible to houses. These are indications that provision of pipe borne water and light supply including other basic amenities should become major priorities for the Government

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