

ASSESSMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN URBAN BLIGHT AND HOUSING QUALITY IN MINNA

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Abstract

The study assessed the relationship between urban blight and housing quality in Minna Niger State. The specific objectives of this paper include the examination of the condition of housing in the study area, causes of urban blight on one hand and its relationship with housing quality in Minna on the other. In carrying out this study, both primary and secondary data were sourced. The instruments of data collection employed in this study include personal observation and structured questionnaires. A total of 400 households were randomly selected across five communities in the study area based on the proportion of the estimated household population. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using frequencies, percentages and regression. The results revealed that high incidences of rural-urban and urban-urban migration, poverty, lack of maintenance and poor enforcement of planning laws are the most significant factors responsible for the emergence of urban blight and poor housing quality in the study area. The regression analysis result shows a significant relationship between urban blight and housing quality. It can be seen from the result that of the 9 independent variables included in the regression model, 7 were significant predictors of housing quality. The research recommends maintenance and provision, improvement of infrastructural facilities, implementation of planning laws so as to guide development and also improve the quality of housing in order to reduce urban blight.

Keywords: Assessment, Blight, Housing, Quality and Urban.

1.0 Introduction

Urban growth is one of the processes of urban development (Bhatta, 2009). The most striking feature of rapid urban growth process on the global scale is the increasing agglomeration of world population. While, in the past, urban areas have been and still are places of opportunities, today, they are described as hotspots of crime and numerous challenges (Wamsler and Brink, 2014). The urban environment is highly complex in terms of growth and development (Bolay, 2006). In the developing world, there is a high rate of migration to urban areas which has further worsened the situation. Couch (2013), noted that the high rate of urbanisation due to ever-growing population exerts powerful forces on urban residential areas, making them undergo internal spatial restructuring in response to social, environmental and economic pressure.

According to the United Nations (2006) estimates, the population living in urban areas exceeded 50% of the world total in 2006 and will approach 60% in 2020. Most if not all of this growth is taking place in developing countries (Saeed, 2011).

In Nigeria just as in many other developing countries, the problem of high population growth rate has created severe housing problems, resulting in overcrowding, inadequate dwellings and a situation in which many Nigerians can be said to be living in slum and blighted areas (FGN, 2012). Urban blight in the country is manifested in the form of social decay, decline in economic activities and opportunities and physical environmental degradation amongst others (Oluwasola, 2014).

Urban blight is described as the social depreciation of real property beyond which its existing condition or use is unacceptable to the community. From this context urban decay can be defined in relation to the community's acceptable standards. The minimum acceptable standards in the community depend on the social values of the community and may vary greatly due to differences in the cultural orientation, history and most significantly, the income of the communities (Oluwasola, 2014).

In cities experiencing urban blight like Minna, the study area, built-up structures degenerate in quality with age and obsolescence, the high rate of neglect and consequent deterioration of housing have made urban blight a common feature in many cities of Nigeria. However, if good quality housing implies its possession of good attributes, then the reality of housing situation in Nigeria is below ideal (Adeleye *et al*, 2014).

2.0 The Study Setting

Minna is the capital of Niger State. The study area lies on Latitude 9° 33' North, and Longitude 6° 29' East on a geological base of undifferentiated basement complex of mainly gneiss and magnetite. At the North-East corridor of the town lays a continuous steep outcrop of granite. In the present political zoning system, Minna is within the North Central Zone, and occupies an area of about 884 hectares. It is about 145 kilometres Southeastwards by road to Abuja, the Federal Capital of Nigeria.

Minna metropolis covers many wards, which are Bosso, Tungan-Danboyi, Chanchaga, Maitumbi, Maikunkele, Kpakungu, Saiko, Sauka-kahuta, Kongila, Katern-Gwari, Dutsen-kura, etc. Minna metropolis is a growing regional capital of Niger State, with an estimated population of 307,414 (NPC, 2006).

Due to the increasing population in Minna metropolis, the largest percentage of the land is used for residential houses, offices, schools and other institutions to accommodate the rising population. A high percentage of the land is also used for construction of township roads for ease of movement. These are processes of urbanisation which are on the increase due to population pressure, and are exerting more pressure on the natural vegetation. Therefore, Minna town is a fast growing urban centre which accommodates all level of income earners; the high, low and medium income earners (Niger State Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Assessment of the Relationship between Urban Blight and Housing Quality in Minna



Figure 1: Niger State, Nigeria.

Source: Niger State Environmental Protection Agency (2018).

Aim of the Research

The aim of this study is to assess the relationship between urban blight and housing quality in Minna, Niger State with a view to evolving a sustainable urban management framework in the study area.

Objectives of the Research

The specific objectives of the research are to:

- Examine the housing condition of the study area.
- Determine the causes of urban blight in Minna.
- Determine the relationship between urban blight and housing quality in Minna.

3.0 Review of Related Literature

3.1 The Concept of Housing

Housing is defined as the total residential neighbourhood/environment or micro-district including the physical structure, all necessary services, facilities and apparatus for the total health and social wellbeing of the individual and family (Salau, 1992) as cited by Ibem (2011). It is seen as the physical environment in which the family and society's basic units must develop. Housing structures are enclosures in which people are housed for lodging, living accommodation or even work places. According to Owoeye and Omole (2012), "housing is not only a shelter but also part of the fabric of the neighbourhood life and of the whole social milieu". It touches upon many facets of economic activity and development. Thus, housing provides social contacts, good image, a sense of belonging and an indicator of social status. For many

house owners, housing serves as a significant asset in their portfolio (Liman et al, 2015). The 1992 National Housing Policy for Nigeria identified shelter as the most essential human need after food. While adequate housing is crucial for effective performance of man, a considerable proportion of Nigerians live in sub-standard and poor housing as well as deplorable unsanitary residential environments Onibokun (1985), cited in Omole (2010). To this end, one can deduce that housing is the process of providing a large number of residential buildings on a permanent basis with adequate physical infrastructure and social services in planned, decent, safe and sanitary neighbourhoods to meet the basic and social needs of the population and is intended to provide security, comfort and convenience for the users (National Housing Policy, 2004; Osuide, 2004).

Housing (adequate shelter) is recognised worldwide as one of the basic necessities of life and a pre-requisite to survival of man (Agboola, 2004, UN–Habitat, 2006; Anofojie and Adeleye, 2011). Rapoport (2001) defines housing as a system of settings within which a certain system of activities takes place and, therefore, housing is more than the dwelling, the neighbourhood and its environmental quality profiles. In the traditional African setting, in particular, housing is, in fact, one of the greatly cherished material properties.

3.2 *Housing Quality*

A normative definition of quality of housing or housing quality standards generally refers to the grade or level of acceptability of dwelling units and their associated and immediate residential environment, including the design and functionality of housing structures, building materials used, the amount of internal and external space pertaining to the dwelling, housing utilities, and basic service provision (Mengand Hall, 2006). The definition of quality of housing embraces many factors which include the physical condition of the building and other facilities and services that make living in a particular area conducive. The quality of housing within any neighbourhood should be such that satisfies minimum health standards and good living standard, but should also be affordable to all categories of households (Okewole & Aribigbola, 2006). However, the quality of housing is a rather more complex concept with broader social and economic meaning. It accounts for both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of residential units, their immediate surroundings, and the needs of the occupants.

3.3 *Urban Blight*

The concept of urban blight in the context of urban planning is synonymous to that of urban decay and/or urban decline, and is subject to a number of definitions, connotations and interpretations that make it hard to distil. According to Lind & Schilling (2015), the term 'blight' originally comes from the field of plant pathology, but was adopted by urban reformers in the mid twentieth century to label the escalating urban malady associated with overrun, poor, working class neighbourhoods. In 1918, a Philadelphia planner, as cited in Gordon (2003), described a blighted urban area as one that is not what it should be. Gold & Sagalyn (2011) argued that considering its half-century of use, the concept itself has become a well-worn term of art.

Nevertheless, because its application to different contexts is so subjective and pliable, it is nonetheless acceptable to generally contain it on a paradigm underpinned by the edict that its judgment is in the eyes of the beholder. Justifiably, this is in parallel with the assertion by Robick (2011) that without a standard metric, every one judgment of blight would possibly redefine the concept. With that said, it therefore becomes of utmost importance to find common ground in that despite its universality, the crux of the concept remains rationally engrained on the contention that urban blight can be generally defined as a label for suggesting hostile urban conditions.

These are conditions where a previously well-functioning city, or part of it is dilapidated and fallen into disrepair (Robick, 2011). In this sense, the most blatant form of urban blight often presents itself in the form of a physically deteriorated or decayed conditions in an urban area, caused by any number of circumstances that worsen over time due to human neglect and disinvestment among other factors (Robinson & Cole, 2007). According to Durden (2013), these are conditions that literally pose a threat to the health and safety of not only the residents of the blighted area, but also the general public exposed to such conditions. On the bigger picture, these conditions also depress an area's quality of life, and jeopardise the social and economic viability of an area. From a valuation point of view, Robinson & Cole (2007) thus describe urban blight as a result of unguided urban growth and arguably an indiscriminate mixture of not only homes but also factories, warehouses, junk yards, and stores that in turn result in depressed property values.

Urban blight manifests itself in many dimensions, which can be grouped into different forms of either physical blight, frictional blight, functional blight or economic blight, or a combination of these depending on the context (Chetty, 2014). Justifiably, this traditional classification nonetheless provides a starting point for the development of a framework for measuring blight and determining blight eradication strategies, as they are understood to relate to specific elements of the environment.

4.0 Research Methodology

In carrying out this study, both primary and secondary data were used. The primary include the physical/structural condition of houses, socio-economic characteristics of residents of the study area as well as the housing and environmental conditions of the areas. The secondary data include map of Minna (sourced from the Niger State Ministry of Land, Works and Housing) and the population data of the study area (sourced from documents provided by National Population Commission). Variety of published and unpublished articles in reputable journals, dissertations, textbooks and seminar papers that deal directly with housing, blight and related issues were consulted. The sample size in this research was 400 respondents and purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the areas where the questionnaires were administered within Minna, while simple random sampling was used in picking the respondents in the selected areas. 350 questionnaires were returned and the response collected from field was subjected to statistical analysis using descriptive statistics; frequency distribution table with percentages. The evaluation of relationship between dependent and independent variables was carried out using the multiple regression models.

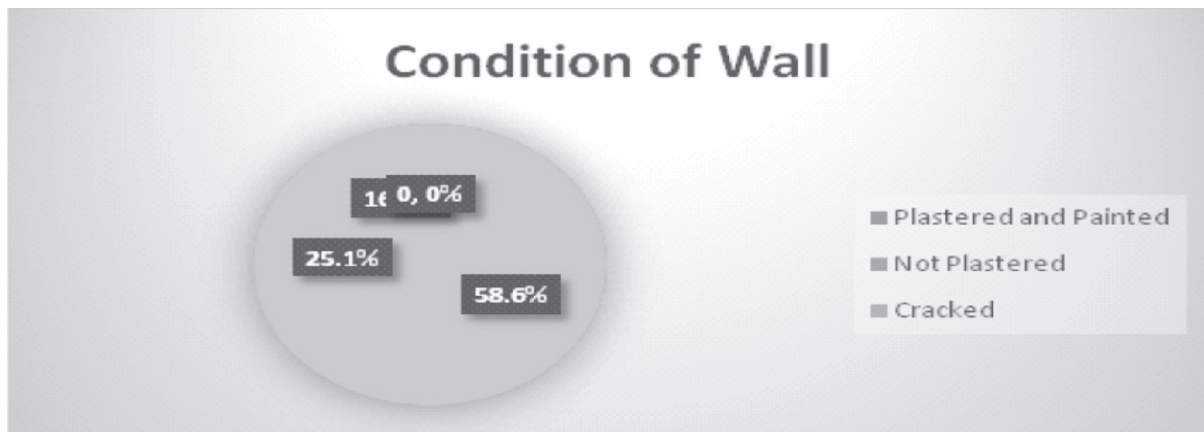
5.0 Discussion of Findings

5.1 Condition of Housing

On the condition of housing in the study area, five housing components were considered which included wall, window, doors, roof and floor.

5.1.1 Condition of Wall

As shown on Figure 2, 58.6% of the total number of the building walls in the study area were plastered and painted, another 25.1% were not plastered while 16.3% were cracked. Though some walls that were painted and plastered still looked old and rough which affected the



Source: Author's Field Survey, 2020.

5.1.2 Condition of Windows

The study revealed that 57.4% of the windows in the study area were intact, 37.7% were cracked or broken while 4.9 % were removed as shown in Table 1. This means that there were houses without windows. Mats, sack or corrugated iron sheets were used as window materials in these houses.

Table 1: Condition of Windows

Window Condition	Frequency	Percentage
Intact	201	57.4
Cracked/Broken	132	37.7
Removed	17	4.9
Total	350	100

5.1.3 Condition of Doors

The result of the study on the condition of doors as revealed in Figure 3 shows that 86% were intact while 14% were removed. Majority of the respondents also considered their door condition to be very good out of those doors that were intact. This shows that most of the doors in the study area were at good state which is because door is one of the most needed components of a house for security reasons.

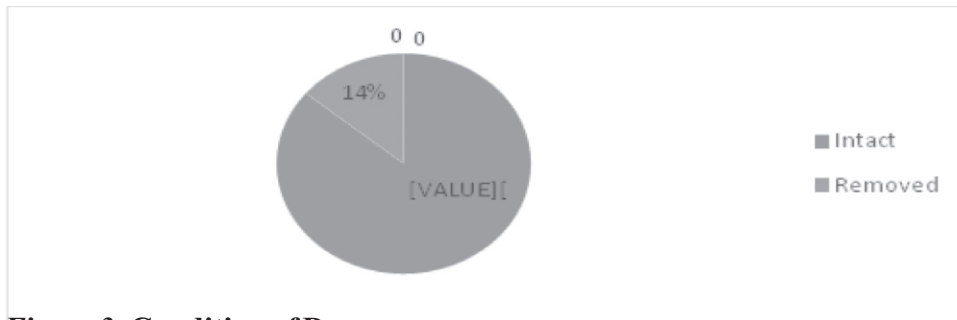


Figure 3: Condition of Doors

5.1.4 Condition of Roof

The study revealed that 30.6% of the roofs were intact, 60% were rusty while 9.4% were sagging as shown in Table 4.8. This indicates that most buildings in the study area were old because some of the rusty roofs were leaking.

Roof Condition	Frequency	Percentage %
Intact	107	30.6
Rusty	210	60
Sagging	33	9.4
Total	350	100

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2020.

5.1.5 Type of Floor

The study revealed in Figure 4 that 90% of floors were made up of concrete while 10% were made up of mud floor although some floors in some buildings were cracked and do not meet the functional requirements in terms of strength and stability, resistance to weather and ground moisture, and also durability.

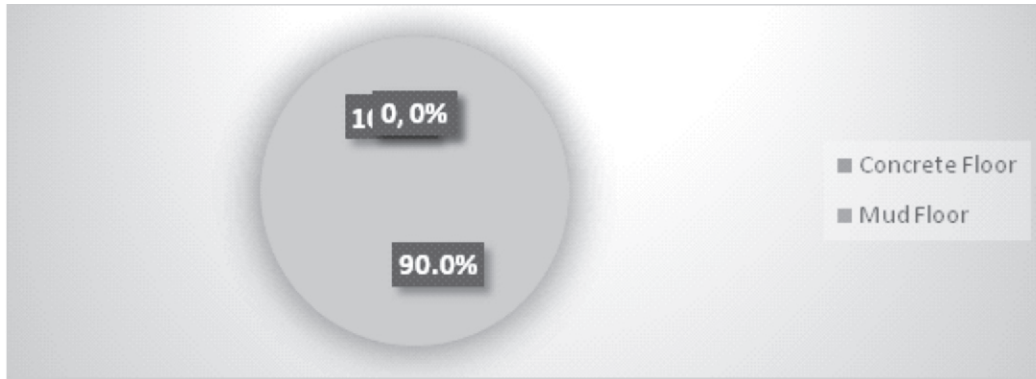


Figure 4: Type of Floor

5.1.6 Condition of Housing Facilities

In the study, 45% of the buildings had poor access roads which were in bad condition. There was little or no provision being made for air spaces between buildings, 70% of the buildings had no adequate air spaces. The condition or state of the buildings in the study area was either fair or bad as revealed in Table 4.7. Toilets, bathrooms and kitchen in most of these buildings seemed to be in critical condition with most of them located outside the buildings but within the compound.

Table 3: Condition of Housing Facilities

S/N	Housing Facilities	Very good %	Good %	Fair %	Bad %
1.	Accessibility	10%	15%	30%	45%
2.	Air space of buildings	5%	10%	15%	70%
3.	Toilet	5%	5%	30%	60%
4.	Kitchen	5%	10%	55%	30%
5.	Bathroom	15%	10%	25%	50%

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2020.

5.1.7 General Housing Condition

According to the data gathered, the general housing condition in the study area was classified as being good, fair or bad. It was discovered that the majority of the houses in the study area were in fair condition with 47.0% of the total number of houses that were sampled. Bad housing condition accounted for 34.0%. Only 14.0% and 5.0% of the houses in the study area were in good and very good condition respectively as depicted in Figure 5. Buildings that were considered to be very good were buildings that were structurally sound with functional housing facilities and no maintenance needed. The houses that were good were structurally sound but old.

Houses with fair condition were those houses that had little problems with or lacked some housing facilities with some of the housing components needing replacement or a lot of maintenance. Houses that were in bad condition were houses that were old and dilapidated with inadequate facilities.

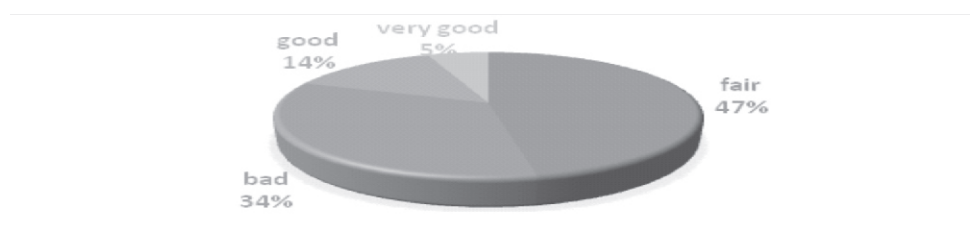


Figure 5: General Housing Condition.

5.2 Causes of Urban Blight

This section of the study reports the results of analysis carried out in pursuance of the second objective, which is to identify the causes of urban blight in the study area. It was also gauged through the use of Mean Score analysis to know the most important cause that is responsible for its formation. Causes of urban blight ranked from 1st to 12th as presented in Table 4; High incidences of Rural or Urban– Urban Migration was ranked 1st (MS = 3.86), Lack of housing maintenance and inadequate infrastructure was ranked 2nd (MS = 3.83). Inadequate provision of site and services, eviction and poor resettlement programme by the government were considered to be the least important causes of urban blight (ranked 11th and 12th, MS = 3.60 and 3.55) in the study area. The average mean score for the overall causes of urban blight was 3.69, which corresponded to “very significant” of influence of causes.

Table 4: Causes of Urban Blight

<i>Cause of Urban Blight</i>	<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>StdDev</i>	<i>Rank</i>
High incidences of Rural or Urban– Urban Migration	3.86	0.72	1
Lack of housing maintenance and inadequate infrastructure	3.83	0.65	2
Poor enforcement of planning laws	3.81	0.66	3
Inadequate development control by planning agencies	3.72	0.78	4
Lack of affordable housing	3.69	0.73	5
High incidences of urban poverty	3.67	0.91	6
Housing shortage	3.65	0.79	7
High density of development and overcrowding	3.65	0.87	7
Inadequate neighbourhood facilities and services	3.63	0.91	9
Inadequate sanitation	3.62	0.82	10
Inadequate provision of site and services	3.60	0.93	11
Eviction and poor resettlement programme by the government	3.55	0.81	12
Overall Level of Cause of Urban Blight	3.69		

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2020.

5.3 Analysis on Relationship between Urban Blight and Housing Quality

Presence of urban blight was carried out using the optimal scaling method as the dependent variable and structure, finishing, aesthetics, accessibility, open space, materials used, toilet, kitchen and bathroom as predictors (independent variables). The result shows that much of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the regression model with Multiple R = 0.620, Adjusted R Square = 0.400 and the R Square value of 0.445. This implies that the regression model used explains about 44.5% of the variance in housing quality. The result (F=6.010, P=0.000) also implies that the result is statistically significant at P<0.0005. Table 5 shows the level of contributions of each predictor in explaining the dependent variable. It can be seen from this result in table 3 that of the 9 independent variables included in this regression model, 7 were significant predictors of housing quality. The variables in order of importance are materials used (Beta = 0.351, F=90.586; P value=0.000); this suggests that the use of standard materials is the strongest predictor of housing quality and thus a key contributor to explaining urban blight in this survey. Next to it is structure (Beta=0.138, F=10.890, P=0.000). Others are accessibility (Beta=-0.086, F=6.017, P=0.002), Bathroom (Beta=0.09, F=6.140, P=0.000), and Finishing (Beta=0.068, F=3.933, P=0.002) as well as Open space (Beta=0.088, F=4.074, P=0.018). Attributes such as Kitchen (Beta = 0.034, F=0.912, P=0.34 do not make significant contribution to the housing quality.

	Standardised Co-efficients		Df	F	Sig.
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta	Std. Error	Beta
Structure	-0.138	.042	3	10.890	.002*
Finishing	-0.068	.034	5	3.933	.000*
Aesthetics	0.051	.036	11	1.957	.000*
Accessibility	-0.086	0.35	6	6.017	.000*
Open space	0.088	.044	2	4.074	.000*
Material used	-0.351	.037	2	90.586	.018**
Toilet	-0.048	.036	1	1.850	.000*
Kitchen	0.034	0.36	1	.912	.340
Bathroom	0.090	0.36	4	6.140	.000*

Table 5: Regression Coefficients of Predictors of Overall housing quality

*Statically significant at P<0.005, ** Significant at P<0.005

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2020

Conclusion/Recommendation.

This study assessed the relationship between urban blight and housing quality in Minna, Niger State. The major causes of urban blight in the study area are high incidences of rural or urban–urban migration, lack of housing maintenance/inadequate infrastructural facilities and poor enforcement of planning law. Finally the regression analysis result shows that there is significant relationship between urban blight and housing quality. It can be seen from this result that of the 9 independent variables included in this regression model, 7 were significant predictors of housing quality. The research recommends housing maintenance and provision/improvement of infrastructural facilities, proper enforcement of planning laws and development control so as to guide development and also improve the quality of housing.

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LIVELIHOOD IMPACTS OF WOOD FUEL TRADE AND CONSUMPTION IN NIGERIA:
A REVIEW

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Abstract

Energy poverty is a universal problem, where a substantial proportion of the world population rely on unclean and unsustainable source of energy for attaining their households' energy need and satisfying energy demands. This trend has post difficulty in achieving Goal 1 and 7 of the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the consumption of this woodfuel has boosted the trade of fuelwood and charcoal which have direct impact on the livelihood of the traders. This study aimed at examining the trade and consumption of fuelwood and charcoal, with a view of investigating the livelihood impact of the traders. The objectives are to determine the socio-economic characteristics of the woodfuel sellers and consumers, the nature of charcoal and fuelwood consumption and to ascertain the livelihood characteristics of woodfuel sales. The thematic review approach was adopted for this paper. It was discovered that the low availability of clean energy sources, coupled with the low income status of majority of the urban households has engendered the high rate of consumption of unsustainable domestic energy sources, including wood fuels. This has led to the increasing rate of demand for wood fuels (that is, fuelwood and charcoal). This demand has created a market niche in the informal sector for the trade of wood fuel products. As a result, a substantial number of urban households are engaged in wood fuel trade as their source of livelihood. Particularly, this study has revealed that women and new immigrants are the major traders and consumers of wood fuels. It is, therefore, suggested that efforts should be made by the government at all levels, non-governmental organisations, and philanthropists to provide clean and sustainable domestic energy sources at subsidised rates. More so, there is a need for in-depth scientific research on alternative ways of using wood fuels without constituting negative environmental and health impacts. The study also recommended that the woodfuel traders (who are mainly women) should be empower in order to boost their financial capital. Finally, formal sector employment opportunities should be created in order to minimise the influx of the citizens into the informal sector.

Keywords: Consumption, Energy poverty, Livelihood, Woodfuel, Trade

I. Introduction

Biomass energy especially fuelwood is the most common and prominent traditional domestic energy in Nigeria. The majority of wood and charcoal users are the poor and mid-income poplations, in which the use of power or cooking gas is no longer affordable owing to the