



Land Allocation Patterns and Gender Inclusiveness for Residential Property Development in North Central Nigeria

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Abstract

Land allocation is a critical issue in residential property development, influencing economic empowerment, housing security, and overall well-being. In North Central Nigeria, access to land is shaped by a combination of statutory laws, customary practices, and socio-economic factors, which disproportionately favor men over women. This paper explores the gender inclusiveness in land allocation, focusing on the socio-cultural, economic, and legal barriers that hinder women's access to land for residential development. Through an analysis of existing frameworks such as Nigeria's Land Use Act of 1978 and customary land tenure systems, the study identifies the key obstacles that limit women's participation in property ownership. The primary objective of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework that explains these land allocation patterns and identifies strategies for promoting gender inclusiveness in land distribution. Drawing on recent research and policy developments, the study outlines potential legal reforms, socio-cultural changes, and economic interventions necessary to ensure that women have equitable access to land. The paper recommends that the Nigerian government, in collaboration with local authorities in North Central Nigeria, should reform land policies to ensure gender inclusiveness, such as introducing quotas for women in land allocation and the paper concludes that equitable land distribution is essential for women's economic empowerment and for achieving broader development goals in North Central Nigeria.

Keywords: Land allocation, Gender, Residential property, North Central, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Land is a critical resource for development, particularly for residential property. In North Central Nigeria, as in many parts of Africa, land allocation has historically been influenced by socio-cultural, economic, and legal factors, which have often marginalized women (Akinola, 2021). In North Central region, land allocation patterns have historically been shaped by a combination of statutory, customary, and religious laws. These frameworks often privilege men over women, reinforcing patriarchal norms that limit women's access to land, a situation that has been perpetuated despite various legal reforms (Aina and Aluko, 2022). Access to land for residential development is critical, as it not only provides housing but also serves as a major source of wealth accumulation and social security, especially in a developing economy like Nigeria (Ogunbiyi and Adewumi, 2021).

The study covers Niger and Kwara State in North Central Nigeria, focusing on women land allocation for residential property development. The selection of Niger and Kwara states as the geographical scope for land allocation patterns and women inclusiveness for residential property development is that, Niger and Kwara states exhibit distinct socio-cultural norms and practices regarding land ownership and land allocation decisions, because Kwara norms is more of south western and Niger give a clear representation of the north and gender norms may restrict women's access to land in both states (Onyekuru and Akangbe, 2021). Customary practices often place land under the control of male family heads, making it difficult for women to own land in their own right, even though they are key players in agricultural production and household management (Olawale, 2023).

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the growing recognition of women's roles in economic development, gender disparity persists in land allocation patterns, particularly in residential property development (Ogunleye-Adetona, 2022). This imbalance has

socio-economic implications, limiting women's access to housing and land-based wealth creation. Therefore, understanding the factors shaping these patterns is essential for formulating policies that promote inclusiveness (Olawale, 2023). Women, who represent a substantial portion of the population, continue to face systemic barriers in accessing land for residential property development due to socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, and legal obstacles (Adesina, 2023). These challenges undermine efforts towards achieving gender equality, as mandated by Nigeria's commitment to international conventions like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and hinder the economic empowerment of women, which is crucial for overall national development (United Nations, 2022).

Research has shown that when women have secure land rights, they are more likely to invest in the land, resulting in better development outcomes such as improved housing, increased agricultural productivity, and enhanced livelihoods (World Bank, 2022). In contrast, the exclusion of women from land ownership not only perpetuates poverty but also exacerbates gender inequalities, as land ownership is a primary means of wealth creation and economic security (Amadi and Udeh, 2022). This issue is particularly urgent in North Central Nigeria, where urbanization is accelerating and the demand for residential property is growing rapidly (Ajayi, 2022). Without addressing the gender disparities in land allocation, the region risks reinforcing socio-economic inequalities and hindering sustainable development.

1.3 Research Objective

The objective of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework that explains land allocation patterns and highlights the factors affecting gender inclusiveness in residential property development in North Central Nigeria.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Feminist Land Tenure Theory

This theory argues that land tenure systems are socially constructed and often reflect patriarchal structures that marginalize women (Agarwal, 2010). Applying this theory in the Nigerian context helps to analyze the socio-cultural barriers that restrict women's access to land for residential development.

2.2 Gender and Development Theory

Gender and development theory examines how gender inequalities are constructed and maintained through social, economic, and political processes. It highlights the importance of gender mainstreaming in development policies and interventions to address disparities in land ownership and housing rights (Amole, 2012).

2.3 Economic Empowerment Theory

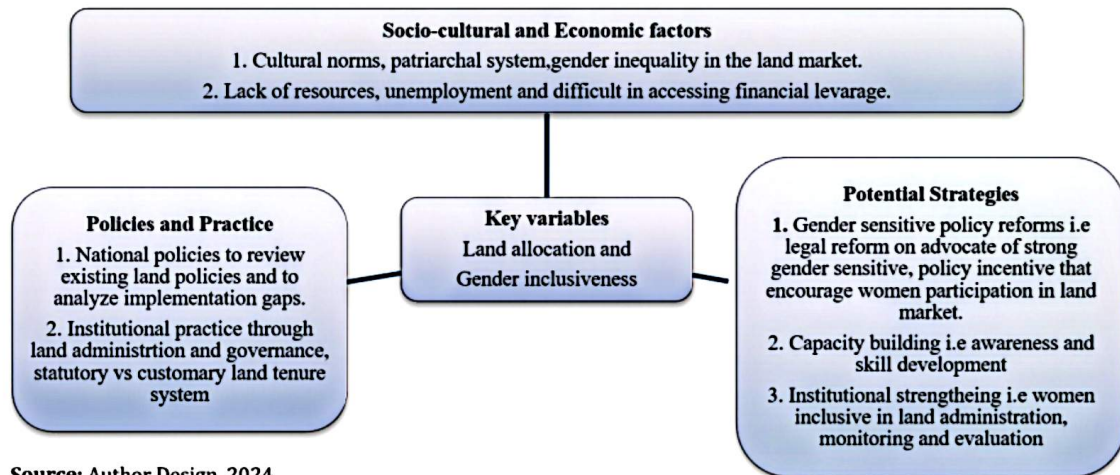
The theory suggests that equal access to land resources enables economic independence, particularly for women, by promoting entrepreneurship and investment in residential properties (Kabeer, 2019). Understanding the economic aspects of gender inclusiveness in land allocation is key to addressing the income disparity between genders in Nigeria.

2.4 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Framework

Goal 5 of the SDGs emphasizes gender equality, while Goal 11 focuses on sustainable cities and communities (United Nations, 2020). Gender-inclusive land policies for residential development align with these global goals, ensuring that both men and women benefit from urban and rural development.

3. Land Allocation Patterns in North Central Nigeria

3.1 Conceptual Framework for Land Allocation and Gender Inclusiveness



Source: Author Design, 2024

The conceptual framework shows the factors and policies that affect women inclusiveness in land allocation pattern for residential property development. It goes further to outline the strategies for promoting women inclusive in land allocation in North Central, Nigeria.

3.2 Historical Perspective

Land allocation in Nigeria, especially in North Central, has been influenced by colonial land tenure systems that predominantly favored men (Okoli, 2017). Customary laws also contribute to gender disparities, as they often limit women's inheritance rights.

3.3 Current Policies and Legal Framework

The Nigerian Land Use Act of 1978 regulates land ownership, giving the government control over land allocation. While the law is gender-neutral on paper, its implementation often reflects male dominance, as women face challenges such as lack of access to financial resources, customary bias, and inadequate representation in decision-making bodies (Ukajeiofo, 2020).

4. Gender Inclusiveness in Residential Property Development

4.1 Socio-Cultural Factors

Patriarchy, religious beliefs, and traditional norms play a significant role in land allocation. In North Central Nigeria, women are considered secondary to men in property ownership, limiting their ability to own or inherit land (Adamu, 2023). These cultural barriers affect women's participation in property development.

4.2 Economic Factors

Economic constraints such as lower income levels and limited access to finance further hinder women's ability to engage in residential property development. Many women are unable to meet the financial requirements for land acquisition and construction, limiting their opportunities for land ownership (Amadi, 2021).

4.3 Legal Factors

While Nigeria has ratified international conventions on gender equality, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), implementation gaps remain. Women still face challenges in asserting their legal rights to land due to weak institutional frameworks (Olawale, 2023).

5. Recommendations

1. **Policy Reforms:** The Nigerian government, in collaboration with local authorities in North Central Nigeria, should reform land policies to ensure gender inclusiveness, such as introducing quotas for women in land allocation (Ogunleye-Adetona, 2022).

2. **Economic Empowerment:** Financial institutions should offer gender-sensitive credit facilities to women, ensuring they can participate in land acquisition and property development (Amadi, 2021).
3. **Awareness and Advocacy:** Grassroots movements and NGOs should focus on educating communities about the importance of gender equality in land allocation and addressing socio-cultural barriers (Adamu, 2023).
4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Continuous assessment of land allocation patterns and gender inclusiveness to measure progress and adjust strategies accordingly (Nwankwo, 2022).

6. Conclusion

This paper has presented a conceptual framework for understanding the land allocation patterns and their implications for gender inclusiveness in residential property development in North Central Nigeria. By analyzing socio-cultural, economic, and legal factors, the paper highlights the need for a multifaceted approach to achieving gender equivalence in land allocation. Sustainable development in Nigeria depends on inclusive land policies that empower both men and women to contribute equally to property development.

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