



Property Abandonment and the Nigerian Real Property Rental Market: The Emerging Issues and Challenges in the Osogbo Real Estate Market

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Abstract. Property abandonment has emerged as a critical challenge within the Nigerian real property rental market, reflecting deep-rooted socioeconomic, legal, structural and aesthetic value issues. This phenomenon, characterized by the non-utilization or better still, the total neglect of the performance and contribution of rentable residential and commercial properties, contributes significantly to the current state of urban decay; declining rental revenue for property owners; and a distortion of housing supply chain exacerbating urban housing shortages. The drivers of property abandonment as highlighted in previous literature include the lack of feasibility appraisal, haphazard real property management strategies, protracted land disputes and legal actions, insecurity, high maintenance costs, and policy inconsistencies among others. In many Nigerian urban centers, particularly in states like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, abandoned properties exacerbate housing deficits and reduce investor confidence in the real estate sector. The paper explores the mixed research methodology to unearth the causes, implications, and the systemic challenges associated with property abandonment in Osogbo, an emerging city center and its impact on the city's property rental market. The

study further evaluates the perceptions of the respondents and proposes the need for an integrated reform on financial, legal and operative policies of the state government on housing as part of sustainable strategies to revitalize underutilized assets and enhance urban housing delivery.

Keywords: Property abandonment, property rental market, housing deficit, real estate, policy reform.

1. Introduction

Property abandonment particularly, residential and commercial real estate investments are increasingly becoming typical issue in many urban centers across cities in Nigeria, including Osogbo, an emerging city center. Despite its unprecedented historical significance and strategic role as an emerging growing city and a state capital in south-west Nigeria, Osogbo metropolis is prone to the challenges of a rising trend of underutilized and neglected property abandonment in both the residential and commercial real estate rental market subsector. The abandoned properties do not only have the consequential effect of the distortion of the city's aesthetical appeal but also signal deep-

rooted institutional and socioeconomic challenges that affects the city developmental structure, urban housing deficit or availability, affordability issues and sustainability. It was observed by earlier scholars that, real property abandonment in Osogbo and most parts of south-west Nigeria was largely influenced by the combination of persistent and prolong land ownership disputes and inheritance issues resulting in protracted litigation, death, economic downturns, rising poverty levels, insecurity, distorted city planning, and weak regulatory framework (Ankeli, 2024; Lawanson & Olanrewaju, 2012, Ogunba and Aluko, 2011). Nevertheless, Oloyede (2010) attributed the observable upward trend in property abandonment and the incapability or reluctance of most property owners to maintain, complete or let their properties out to the intense rising costs of refurbishment, unresolved legal disputes on property titles and family inheritance issues. Other causes for property abandonment and real property investment viability deterrence identified in the study are the late realization of poor demand for property in the city neighbourhood with high rate of abandoned properties, deficient infrastructure and taste variation.

The lack of authentic or comprehensive property database or the near absent of abandoned properties inventory in Osogbo limits the power of local authorities to develop strategic interventions. The importance of a proactive urban governance, improved property taxation policies, and reinforced land administration systems to mitigate abandonment and ensure efficient use of real estate assets was emphasized by Ibem and Amole (2013) and Oladapo and Ojo (2019). However, without concerted efforts from stakeholders, there is every likelihood that, the situation of real property abandonment in the city of Osogbo may continue to take an upward trend, thereby hinder urban regeneration and revitalization efforts, thereby worsening the existing housing situation, reducing urban housing aesthetics and property values. As an emerging rental market, the need for the understanding of the actual dimensions and the drivers of real property abandonment in the Osogbo evolving real estate market is crucial for the formulation of effective policy responses. Hence, this study investigates the inherent causes, implications, and possible solutions to real property abandonment, particularly, abandoned residential and commercial property developments in the Osogbo metropolis, with the aim of contributing to a more resilient and functional rental housing subsector of the state real estate market.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Property Abandonment, Concept, Causes, Consequences, Strategies and Policy Responses

As a multidimensional concept, issues on real property abandonment often attracts a far-reaching implication for housing availability and affordability, urban development, urban aesthetics, security and socioeconomic stability. Previous scholars have explored this phenomenon across various contexts, distinguishing its divers causes and consequences. In the Nigerian context, Lawanson and Olanrewaju (2012) and Oloyede (2010) asserted that property abandonment situation in the country is exacerbated by weak regulatory frameworks, weak planning standards enforcement as well as socioeconomic instability. Also, Ajayi and Omole (2015) further agreed that secondary cities as Osogbo are equally increasingly experiencing similar cases of building abandonment challenges with the negative effect of urban blight that is typical of bigger cities as Lagos, Abuja, Ibadan, Kano and Port Harcourt.

Conceptually, Pagourtzi et al., (2003) see property abandonment as the state where building development projects are left unoccupied, underutilized, or neglected for an extended period, resulting in structural decay and loss of value. Properties in such state often fall out of the formal rental market; hence, cease to contribute meaningfully, either economically, socially, or physically to the urban fabric. Ibem & Amole (2013) therefore concluded that, situation as this in the Nigerian discourse, is often a critical phenomenon due to issue of urban housing challenges, particularly, in the area of urban housing deficit, where demand for affordable housing far outpaces its supply, thereby causing chaotic rental market.

Several factors have been identified and isolated to be the drivers of real property abandonment in most major cities across Nigeria. Issues as the continuous rising inflationary trend and other economic constraints, gender issues, prolong litigation emanating from land ownership right dispute, unemployment, inheritance among others (Ankeli *et al.* 2020, Aluko, 2011 and Ogunba, 2005). However, Ogunba (2011) was specific to mentioned that the protracted legal dispute resulting from familial and communal land ownership systems rendering properties uninhabitable for a substantial period are often reasons for building abandonment in Osogbo. Yet another persuasive factor identified in previous literature is the deficient urban planning laws across the country. Most residential neighbourhoods are

poorly planned with deficient social infrastructural amenities and even where planning policies existed, the political will to enforce such policies are lacking. Egbu *et al.*, (2008) submitted that, the defective planning policies in most Nigerian cities have made neighbourhoods unattractive to potential tenants and investors, resulting in high vacancy rate and the eventual building project abandonment. In line with this assertion, Agunbiade *et al.*, (2012) posited that, issues of insecurity, be it in the form of vandalism, theft or total social unrest, has been a major factor discouraging the habitation or maintenance and the completion of some building projects, particularly in the highly crime prone areas. Olatoye and Sanusi, (2016) attributed the reason for the recent trend of the rapid urban expansion in Osogbo, without corresponding infrastructural upgrade or development to population influx that has created pockets of underserved zones, leading to slum settlement formation and diminishing property demand. Furthermore, the current economic hardship in the country and specifically, in Osun, a purely civil servant state, has led to, not only job losses but also disincentive or the lack of interest by potential tenant or property purchaser to enter into lease or sale agreement. The present inflationary rate in the country has further reduced the purchasing power of property market participants; meaning only very few tenants will be able to afford rents, leading to increased vacancy rates. Also, issues relating to speculative development and the new trend of hiding proceeds of corrupt practices in real estate development. Recently, real property investment is seen in Nigeria, as an ease avenue through which proceeds of corruption can be stored without suspicion from the public. Hence, those with such proceeds invest in building project development not with the intent of immediate completion but for speculation or as a cover up. Hence, Nubi (2008) concluded that, investment in real property as this will remain idle as such investment will fail to materialize as expected or achieve its aim of rental returns appreciation.

Building project abandonment has both direct and indirect consequences on the citizens and the nation at large as it is a major source for housing stock reduction/shortages engendering worsening housing deficit. Akinmoladun and Oluwoye, (2007) observed that abandoned real property projects often serves as abode for most people with questionable character or criminal tendencies and sites for criminal activities and illegal occupation, thereby exacerbating urban insecurity. It further adds up to city deterioration or urban decay giving rise to aesthetic problem, slum formation and city blight. The consequences of these

are the negative effects it has on the overall city aesthetics with the eventual decline in the surrounding property values and public health risks due to environmental degradation. More so, the confidence of investors in the real property market are often undermine, knowing that there exist serious cases of building project abandonment in a particular neighbourhood. Property abandonment is usually seen as a systemic weakness that could discourage investment flow into an emerging city as Osogbo. It is on record that cities have lost significant tax revenues due to property abandonment; hence, affecting municipalities ability to meet up with infrastructure and service needs (Mallach, 2010).

Cities across the globe have device series of methods or approaches through which issues of real property abandonment can be resolved. Since it is not a one size fit all situation for all cities, Mallach (2010) opined that, some cities have addressed their abandonment issues through targeted intervention as tax incentives for property renovation, compulsory acquisition for redevelopment, and public-private partnerships for affordable housing. Nonetheless, scholars as Ajayi and Omole, (2015) and Oladapo and Ojo, (2019) had observed the existence of policy inconsistency or a very weak policy responses as the basic challenge exacerbating property abandonment issues in the Nigerian; hence, had advocated for alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, integrated land management systems, urban renewal policies and a streamlined property registration system to revive abandoned assets.

Notwithstanding the opinions of the previous studies, this study is of the view that property abandonment problems in Osogbo will be better tackle through the adoption of a collaborative efforts between the state and local government organs, professionals as urban planners, estate surveyors and the other stakeholders in the built environment. Furthermore, critical mapping of the area through the introduction of spatial data system that will present a stronger and better opportunity, thereby, creating further incentives for redevelopment and positively enhancing the city aesthetics, housing market and urban resilience.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-method research design combining both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of property abandonment and its impact on the rental market in Osogbo, Nigeria. The mixed-method research approach was used to allow for data

triangulation, hence, enhancing the research reliability and its depth of findings.

The city Osogbo in this study was used in its generic context to mean Osogbo Capital Territory. Though, the city is not as densely populated as other bigger Nigerian cities as Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt or Abuja, but gradually beginning to exhibit similar pattern of real property abandonment, especially, in both the aging neighbourhoods and the peri-urban areas of the city. In Osogbo, several estates and commercial complexes remain largely unoccupied years after construction due to poor location or lack of supporting infrastructure.

The rationale for picking Osogbo, the capital of Osun state, Nigeria, as the case study area was due to its rapid urbanization rate which Ankeli et al, (2023) attributed to cheap land and living cost, housing market expansion, and noticeable increasing trend in underutilized or abandoned properties in the recent time. The study therefore grouped building project abandonment into two. First, those projects that have no form of work/activities on site for between one year to five years are considered as partial abandonment, while, the study considered the second group to include, projects left unattended to for over five years as total abandonment; hence, falls within the scope of the current studies.

To gather adequate data on the subject matter, the study adopted a descriptive survey research design for the quantitative research component, while key informant interviews was used for the qualitative aspect of the research. The combination was intended to capture both statistical trends and contextual factors influencing property abandonment in Osogbo. The targeted respondent for this study are owners/representatives of the abandoned properties, intending tenants/residents within the neighbourhood, practicing estate surveyors and valuers within Osogbo, Osun State Ministry of Lands and Physical Planning staff, and local government authorities.

The study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique as the selected residential neighbourhoods were first, intentionally delineated based on some observed incidence of property development project abandonment. The selected neighbourhoods are Oke-Fia/Alekuwodo, Dada Estate/Hallelujah and Ota-Efun. Thereafter, one hundred and fifty (150) respondents from among property owners or their representatives and tenants and residents of the areas were selected using stratified random sampling technique. Additionally, ten (10) key informants who are professionals in the real estate subsector and those

involved in the city planning and urban housing development from the public sector were interviewed. Property types considered for this study are abandoned residential properties and purpose-built commercial properties in the study area. The instruments used for data collection are structured questionnaires administered to property owners or their representatives and tenants or residents of the neighbourhoods to gather information on the frequency and condition of abandoned properties; the causes of abandonment; impact of the abandonment on rental value and the aesthetics of the neighbourhood. On possible suggestions for project abandonment remediation, the study adopted a semi-structured interview format which were conducted with practicing estate surveyors and valuer and public service officials to ascertain their perceptions on regulatory, economic, and planning-related challenges exacerbating real property development abandonment. Field Observation was used to document the physical condition and locations of the selected abandoned property development projects.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores (quantitative data), while qualitative data from interviews were subjected to thematic analysis, which involved coding and categorizing responses into key themes such as causes, effects, and potential solutions.

Real estate surveying and other urban studies academic experts were consulted to review the contents of the questionnaire before there were administered to the respondents. A pilot study was conducted in a proximate city of Ede with twenty (20) respondents in order to refine the adopted research instrument. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with a coefficient of 0.81 indicating acceptable internal consistency. This methodology provided a robust framework for assessing the scope, causes, and consequences of property abandonment on rental values in Osogbo, and for proposing actionable policy and planning recommendations.

4. Results and Discussion of Findings

The results from the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the field were presented and interpreted within the context of existing literature in this section. The crux of the study centered on the causes, spatial distribution, impacts, and the perceptions of the stakeholder on property development project abandonment in the Osogbo rental market.

4.1 Causes of Property Development Project Abandonment

In order to determine the actual cause of property development project abandonment in the selected study locations, a total of one hundred and fifty (150)

questionnaires was administered on the respondents. The breakdown of the location-by-location questionnaire administration and the multiple causes of property development project abandonment identified by the respondents and isolated for the study are summarized and reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents and Causes of Property Development Abandonment

Category	Oke-Fia /Alekuwodo (N = 50)	Dada Estate / Hallelujah (N = 50)	Ota-Efun (N = 50)	Total	% Rate
Gender					
Male	40	30	35	105	70
Female	10	20	15	45	30
Total	50	50	50	150	100
Age Group					
18 – 30	10	20	10	40	27
31 – 45	15	15	15	45	30
46 + years	25	15	25	65	43
Total	50	50	50	150	100
Causes of Abandonment					
Ownership disputes and inheritance issues	5	4	7	16	10.7
Economic/financial reasons	12	18	11	41	27.3
Poor demand due to bad location/insecurity	5	7	5	17	11.3
High cost of building Materials	10	10	8	28	18.7
Speculative landholding	6	4	3	13	8.7
Government acquisition and demolition notice	4	2	6	12	8.0
Policy inconsistencies	8	5	10	23	15.3
Total	50	50	50	150	100

Source: Field survey, (2025) *No = Number; Admin = Administered; % = Percentage; Retri= Retrieved*

Table 1 present the analysis of the total number of questionnaires administered on the targeted respondent in the various locations. In all, the one hundred and fifty questionnaires administered to the respondents at the various locations (Oke-Fia/Alekuwodo, Dada Estate/Hallelujah and Ota-Efun) was done equally. That is, each of the locations got fifty questionnaires. Male gender constitutes the bulk of the respondents that provide answers to the questions asked in the questionnaire with about 70% response rate. The most influencing causative factors across the various locations are economic/financial reasons and high cost of building materials with scores of 27.3% and 18.7%, while Government acquisition and demolition notice is the least critical factor for property abandonment in the study location.

However, one of the novelties of this study is the fact that, inheritance and unresolved ownership dispute often considered to be a major cause of project abandonment in most cities in south-west, thus a critical factor is not a very strong factor for project abandonment in the study locations. Hence, the findings of the study negate the assertion of Ogunba (2005), who noted that, traditional inheritance practices in Yoruba communities often create long legal stalemates that delay decisions on property usage frequently leading to abandonment. The finding of this study rather tend to aligns more with Aluko (2011) who emphasized the impact of economic hardship on property upkeep and as a beam for project abandonment.

4.2 Spatial Distribution and Condition of Abandoned Properties

The study conducted a physical field inspection survey to enable the researchers have a first-hand observation and account of the abandoned properties. The inspection survey revealed that the inner-city neighbourhood of Oke-Fia/Alekuwodo and the peri-urban fringe of Ota-Efun have the highest number of purposes built residential and commercial properties abandoned. The nature of the abandoned properties in these zones was found to be at varying degree of disrepair, as some have overgrown vegetation with visible structural deterioration, while miscreants or squatters had converted others to makeshift shelters. This is congruent with the findings of Olatoye and Sanusi (2016), who reported that, the trend of urban expansion in the city of Osogbo has often outpaced infrastructural delivery, thereby leading to a relatively low demand in some of the new layouts and decay or decline in older part of the city that had no rehabilitation plans. Table 2 shows the spatial distribution of the identified properties abandoned in the various locations.

Table 2: Spatial Distribution of Abandoned Residential Buildings in Selected Areas of Osogbo

Location/Area	No of Abandoned Buildings	% Rate	Period of Abandonment
Okefia/Alekuwodo	31	21	More than 5years
Dada Estate/Hallelujah	54	36	More than 5years
Ota-Efun	65	43	More than 5years
Total	150	100	

Source: Field survey, (2025)

Bar Chart of Abandoned Residential Buildings by Location

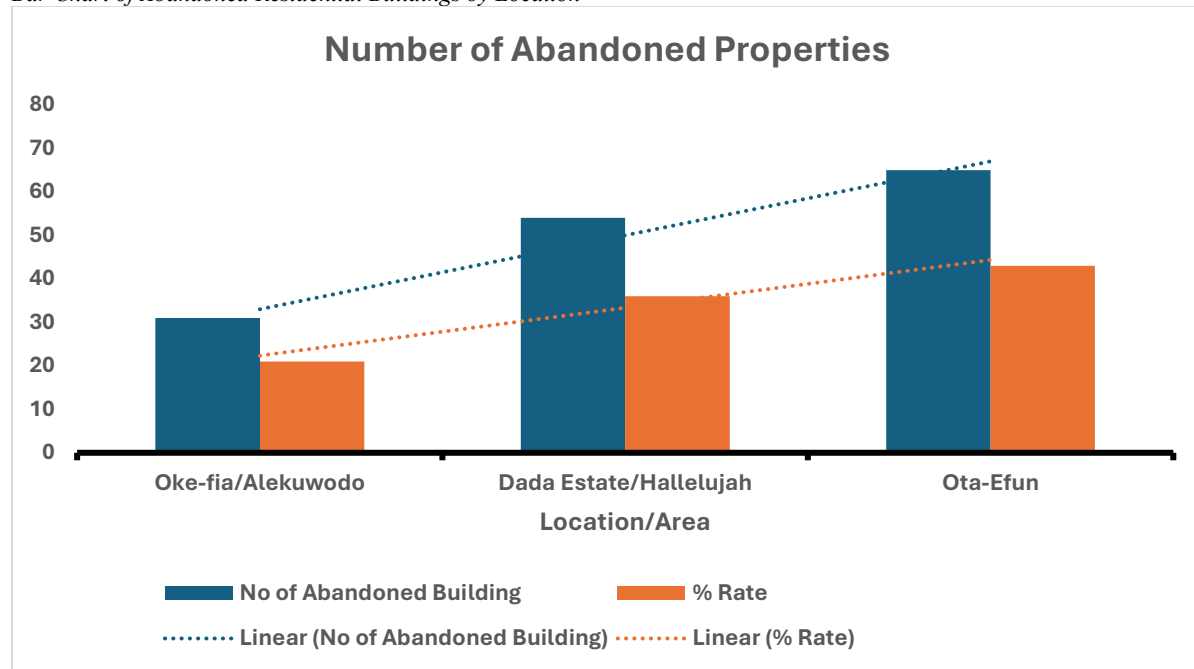


Fig. 1: A Bar Chart showing the comparative percentage rate of abandoned property

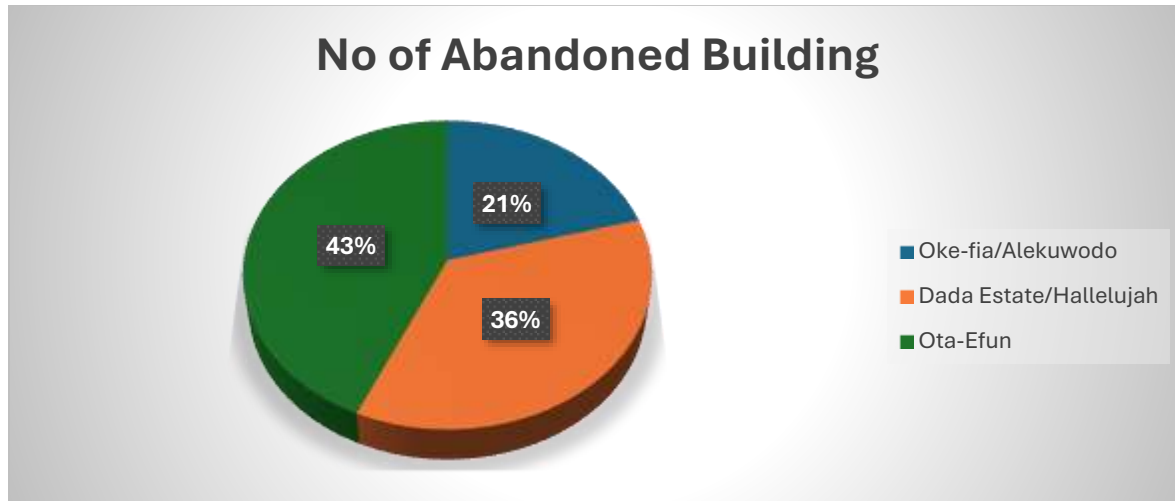


Fig. 2: Pie Chart showing the percentage rate of property abandonment

Table 2, fig 1 and 2 (bar and pie charts) revealed the percentage rate of abandonment in each of the study locations. Ota-Efun (a developing urban fringe) has the highest concentration of abandoned purpose-built residential properties (43%). The reason for the high-level residential building abandonment in the area was attributed to speculative housing development, particularly as the city core is already drenched with competing urban land uses. This further align with the thought of Olatoye & Sanusi (2016) who are of the view that speculative urban housing development often occurs in urban fringes that lack basic urban infrastructure as water, motorable roads and electricity which deters occupancy despite new construction. Dada Estate/Hallelujah area also recorded moderate high levels of property abandonment rate (36%). In these areas, economic downturns and the high cost of building material have led some property owners to suspend or dropped the idea of continuing with their construction work. Some property owners believed the current high construction costs and the low investment returns discourages them from continuing their projects.

Oke-Fia/Alekuwodo are two of the city's older neighbourhoods in the city center with relatively high rental values and has one of the least incidences of real property abandonment (21%). These areas are characterized by modern houses but with aging structures in the core areas often caught in family or inheritance disputes. Buildings in the core areas are typically traditional family houses that have been left vacant due to poor maintenance or conflicts over ownership; hence, align with the view of Ogunba (2005) on customary tenure issues.

Generally, the spatial distribution pattern of real property development project abandonment in the study location suggested a combination of the neglect of properties in the core urban area and the rapid peri-urban expansion putting excess pressure on the few available infrastructure.

4.3 Effects on the Rental Market

All the respondents agreed that real property development project abandonment has significant impact on the property rental market in the neighbourhood. Out of the variables identified in literature, four of the key variables were isolated and presented to the respondents. This was done to test the respondent's psychometric proficiency and the applicability of the variables in the study areas. Table 3 present the key variables items tested and the submission of the respondents based on their perceptions on the effects of each of the variables.

Table 3: The Effects of Abandoned Property on Rental Market of Residential Properties in the Study Area

Variables	Frequency	% Rate
Depreciation of surrounding property values	93	62
Negative perception of neighbourhoods' safety	77	51
Reduced demand for nearby rental units	72	48
Loss of revenue through unpaid property taxes	56	37

Source: Field survey, (2025)

The responses as presented in Table 3 support the findings by Akinmoladun and Oluwoye (2007), who detailed how abandoned real property developments contribute positively to urban blight and slum formation, and the reduction of investment attractiveness in the areas so affected. The qualitative data collected revealed that, property owners and tenants of nearby occupied houses frequently complained of the presence of derelict buildings as a deterrent to leasing, especially where such buildings became informal shelters for illegal squatters and criminals.

4.4 Stakeholders' Perceptions on Abandoned Projects Policy Intervention in Osogbo

The cognitive and affective workings of the stakeholders' thought towards the existing policy intervention of the government on real property project abandonment in Osogbo, the capital city of Osun state was tested using Relative Importance Index (RII), which is a suitable tool for the prioritization of indicators/variables rated on Likert type scale similar to that used by Ankeli (2023). It provided evidence on a predictors' relative importance and allows for the identification of the essential criteria based on the respondents' responses. The adoption of Likert scale become necessary as it helps in the measurement of the attitudes of the respondents by asking the respondents to provide relevant answers to series of questions contained in the questionnaires based on their conviction on the research topic concerning their extent of acceptance or otherwise; hence, tapping into the cognitive and affective workings of the respondents' attitudes.

Several recurrent themes on policy interventions of the concerned government emerged from the qualitative interviews engaged with the ten (10) key informants who are estate surveyors and valuers, local urban and regional planners, and ministry officials. From the interaction with the key informants, four specific area of interest where the respondents centered their discussions were identified. Issues in these areas were presented and their responses is presented in Table 4. it is important to note that, during the interview, a respondent from the Ministry of Lands and Physical Planning made a remark that:

"Most of the properties abandoned in Osogbo are in legal contestation that have being ongoing for decades, without any alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in place. This has contributed to these classes of properties wasting away and affecting the aesthetic of Osogbo metropolis."

This resonates with Ajayi and Omole (2015), who suggested the need for mediation and land tenure reform to be a key aspect of any meaningful housing policy in the nations' urban centers. Table 4 present details of the stakeholders thought on government policy inventions on abandoned property development project in Osogbo.

Table 4: Relative Importance Index (RII) on Policy Intervention on Abandoned Projects in Osogbo

Policy Intervention	5	4	3	2	1	Σw	RII	Ranking
Lack of an accurate inventory, databank or registry of abandoned properties	90	40	10	10	0	660	0.88	3 rd
Absence of a specific state-level policy on property revitalization	100	50	0	0	0	700	0.93	2 nd
Absence of specific financial incentives for private investors to refurbish or redevelop abandoned buildings	130	20	0	0	0	730	0.97	1 st
Need for mediation frameworks for resolving family disputes quickly.	60	40	30	5	15	575	0.77	4 th

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

4.5 The Proposed Solutions to the Challenges of Property Abandonment.

Several proposals have been put forward in literature on how to solve this and other similar issues.

Project abandonment, particularly, issues relating to the abandonment of real property development is a global phenomenon but more pronounced in developing economies. Mallach (2010) documented proposals that mirror the international best practices aimed at solving issues relating to property abandonment, and that have been adopted in the United States of America. Property rehabilitation incentives and land banking system was introduced in Cities in the United States to curb the issues of property abandonment. Some of these interventions were presented to the respondents whose positions on each of the variable are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Proposed Solutions to the Challenges of Property Abandonment

<i>Proposed Solutions to the Challenges of Property Abandonments</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>% Rate</i>
Government-led rehabilitation grants or tax waivers	87	58
Alternative dispute resolution units in local government offices	78	52
Compilation of a digital registry of abandoned properties	65	43
Conversion of abandoned buildings to social housing or public facilities	54	36

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

Table 5 revealed that the respondents were more comfortable with tax waivers for owners of abandoned projects and that government should give abandoned projects rehabilitation grants. This variable got 58%. The idea of converting abandoned projects to social housing or public facilities was not favoured by most of the respondents; hence, scored 36%.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study's findings confirm that real property development project abandonment in Osogbo is driven by several factors. Among the factors are economic and financial hardship. Financial limitations and the near absence of proactive land governance, coupled with sociocultural challenges as land ownership contestation and inheritance disputes, has a profound effect on the rental market. The consequences range from increasing vacancies, deteriorating properties leading to aesthetical issues, decline in both capital and rental values of properties in the neighbourhood to the reduction in government revenue, and the systemic impediment of urban housing development.

The study therefore recommends the urgent need for a comprehensive urban renewal strategy, adoption of a contemporary land administration system that incorporate innovative policy intervention mechanism tailored towards the realities of cities in the secondary categories like Osogbo, the Osun state capital. Further, the integration of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (ADR), spatial data capturing systems and targeted financial incentives can serve as practical entry points for reform.

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