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EVALUATING HOUSING QUALITY AND LIVEABILITY IN JOS NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study examines Housing Quality and Liveability in Jos North Local Government Area: implications for health and urban development. First, it explores the concept of liveability and housing quality, as well as liveability in Nigerian urban environments; secondly, it explores liveability vis-à-vis health; and finally, it analyses its implications for health and urban development. A quantitative approach was employed, and primary data focusing particularly on two districts, Utan Village and ECWA Staff Neighbourhood, were employed, and data were collected by administering questionnaires to selected households. The survey covered perception of safety, distance to health facilities, satisfaction with health services, health issues, and implications for urban development. Key outcomes show variations in housing quality and its impact on health, such as respiratory and water-borne diseases, amongst others. Key outcomes reflect variations in the quality of housing and liveability of the people living in both neighbourhoods vis-à-vis implications for health and urban development. The study accentuates the

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need for sustainable housing guidelines, infrastructure development, and equitable urban planning to deal with these issues and enhance the standard of living in Jos North LGA. The study recommends promoting quality housing, improving infrastructure, supporting inclusive urban policies, and expanding healthcare access in underserved areas, among others.

Introduction

Urbanisation in developing countries, particularly in Africa, has led to several challenges in managing housing standards and urbanisation, as urban populations are growing at a rapid pace (Ezeanah, 2024). In Nigeria, which is one of the fastest urbanising countries in the world, urban housing issues have emerged, creating severe shortages as well as deplorable living conditions. This trend is evident in Jos North Local Government Area (LGA), where the combination of high population growth, rural-urban migration, and inadequate infrastructure has worsened the housing situation. These problems have profound implications for health, urban development, and overall quality of life among residents (Ezeanah, 2021b; Kudu, 2022).

The Nigerian and other developing countries' urbanisation experiences have been followed by an increase in slums and informal settlements with poor access to essential services such as water, sanitation, and electricity (Akatch & Kasuku, 2002; Parienté, 2017; Mtapuri & Myeni, 2019). There has been a housing crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa, which has led to an increase in inadequate housing and unhealthy settlements that result in poor living conditions for the people and grossly impact their well-being. In Nigeria, for instance, the long-term housing deficit—totalling over 16 million units in the 2000s—stemmed from a complex crisis underpinned by such factors as high prices of construction materials, fragile financial markets, and ineffective government interventions (Ezeanah, 2020, 2021c; Gbadegesin, 2018; Obi & Ubani, 2014). The demand for quality shelter is still on the rise with the increasing urbanisation, thereby generating more demands outstripping available supplies, with most of them ending up in informal and low-quality living conditions without minimal amenities (Kudu, 2018).

The quality of housing in Jos North LGA is weakened by a lack of adequate and sustainable materials to use for building, rising construction costs, and limited access to affordable housing finance. These tend to affect liveability in cities

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negatively, leading to overcrowding of neighbourhoods, depreciating infrastructure, and overall poor health and wellbeing of the populace (Jechoniah & Folasade, 2014; Ezeanah, 2018, 2021a, 2021c). Shelter plays a critical role in the establishment of settled communities and social inclusion, but the majority of residents in Jos North have no alternative but to use self-help measures that end up resulting in low-quality shelter and environmental degradation (Emankhu & Ubangari, 2017). The environment is also adversely affected by weak building control enforcement and no incentives for urban planning, hence resulting in urban sprawl and overpopulation (Awe & Afolabi, 2017; Ezeanah, 2024).

The urban liveability and health of housing are not only matters of structural stability but also more general health issues. Poor housing conditions, as defined by overcrowding, poor sanitation, and lack of basic services, are most directly linked with several health risks, including the spread of disease and mental illness. Housing conditions in the Jos North LGA impact not only individual well-being but also the overall urban development of the area. Therefore, it is essential to understand how housing quality is related to urban liveability and health outcomes so that sustainable urban policy for the needs of the growing population can be developed.

Additionally, current research literature, such as in Ogun State (Asiyanbola, Raji, & Shaibu, 2012), emphasises the need for site-based studies on liveability and housing in Nigeria to better capture the localised issues of varied urban spaces. In Jos North LGA, the urban spread has been wide and rapid to the point of fostering an informal spatial structure that is typified by overcrowded settlements, inadequate amenities, and extensive dissemination of shanty townships. While liveability has been important in housing studies, local determinations of urban liveability and quality of housing in Jos North are scarce. Studies highlight those additional comprehensive examinations of the adequacy of infrastructure, housing preferences, and the social character of cities must be analysed to provide the basis for policy interventions (Haruna, Zubairu, Olagunju, & Akande, 2023; Jiboye & Omoniyi, 2013).

This study aims to evaluate the liveability and housing quality in Jos North LGA, with specific focus on the influence on health and urban development. First, the research examines the concept of liveability and housing quality, as well as liveability in Nigerian urban environments; secondly, it will explore liveability vis-à-vis health; and finally, it will analyse its implications for health and urban

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development. By analysing the housing challenges faced by residents in Jos North LGA, this study will provide practical suggestions that can inform urban development policy and improve the quality of life of the residents. This study will contribute to the nascent literature on liveability and housing in the city, laying out the agenda for developing sustainable housing solutions that can be developed and applied in the particular context of Jos North and other contexts within Nigeria.

The concept of liveability

Liveability is a complex notion that assesses the total quality of life in metropolitan regions by considering various economic, social, environmental, and governance issues (Khorrami, Ye, Sadatmoosavi, Mirzaee, Fadakar Davarani, & Khanjani, 2021; Paul & Sen, 2020). It emphasises the intricate interaction between the built environment and socioeconomic determinants of health, highlighting the significance of including these components in urban planning and housing design (Lowe et al., 2013). Environmental sustainability, socio-cultural cohesiveness, economic stability, and availability of basic services such as healthcare, education, and public transit are all key liveability indicators used in urban evaluations (Khorrami et al., 2021).

Liveability research often uses a range of evaluation methodologies, including the analytical hierarchy process, factor analysis, and spatial multi-criteria decision-making (Khorrami et al., 2021), to identify and prioritise essential aspects influencing the overall quality of life in urban contexts. Liveability is especially important in higher-density urban environments, particularly in developing nations, where cities face increasing urbanisation and resource restrictions. Urban planners may reduce the hazards associated with urban growth while increasing the effectiveness of public investments by prioritising aspects such as accessibility, safety, and environmental quality (Kraatz et al., 2021; Ezeanah, 2022). However, there is still a problem in establishing strong, context-specific indicators that can account for the unique lived experiences across different metropolitan locations and link these experiences to health outcomes.

Housing Quality and Liveability in Nigerian Urban Environments

Recent housing liveability studies in Nigeria have concentrated on low-income public housing estates, where difficulties such as overcrowding, inadequate

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sanitation, and insufficient infrastructure are common. Many metropolitan areas, especially Jos North, have inadequate housing due to the widespread use of inferior materials and poorly constructed houses that do not fulfil basic health and safety requirements (Babalola, Ibem, Olotuah, Opoko, Adewale, & Fulani, 2020; Omang & Bisong, 2020). These housing quality issues not only jeopardise residents' comfort but also contribute to significant health risks and social instability, as overcrowded and poorly maintained dwellings provide limited access to essential amenities such as clean water, sanitation, and electricity (Muianga, Kowaltowski, da Silva, de Carvalho Moreira, Granja, Oliva, & da Silva, 2021; Ezeanah, 2021d).

Research on liveability in Nigerian cities, especially Jos North, indicates the interdependence between housing quality and the larger urban environment. Inadequate public services, environmental deterioration, and a lack of access to economic possibilities all have a negative impact on the liveability of metropolitan places. Common liveability concerns in Jos North include inadequate waste management, air pollution, and insufficient recreational facilities, all of which have a detrimental influence on inhabitants' health and well-being (Weje, Worahu, & Ndukueze, 2018). These challenges are aggravated by high crime rates, inadequate healthcare facilities, and restricted transit options, all of which contribute to the region's poor quality of life (McMillin & Carbone, 2019).

While economic possibilities and home quality frequently impact people's housing satisfaction, several studies (Weje et al.,2018; Ezeanah, 2021a) find concerns about inadequate neighbourhood facilities, social isolation, and safety issues. Furthermore, many low-cost housing complexes in Nigeria continue to fail to fulfil liveability criteria, with inhabitants citing limited satisfaction with poorly constructed flats and dangerous environs (Ezeanah, 2020, 2021d; Saidu & Yeom, 2020). Including the opinions and cultural backgrounds of residents in the design and decision-making processes is an important way to address these issues, which can lead to better satisfaction, appeal, inclusiveness, and lasting success of housing complexes.

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative approach. Data were collected using questionnaires from 331 households across two neighbourhoods: Utan Village and ECWA Staff Neighbourhood. Utan Village is located within Jos North Local

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Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. It lies within the peri-urban fringe of the LGA, between latitudes 9°55'00"N and 10°00'00"N and longitudes 8°50'00"E and 9°00'00"E (see Figure 1) (Google Earth Pro 2024; OpenStreetMap, 2024). It is characterised by informal housing developments, with many residents building homes without adhering to formal planning or construction standards. The settlement typically reflects challenges associated with urban sprawl, including limited access to essential utilities such as potable water, electricity, and sanitation facilities. Utan Village frequently constructs its housing structures from low-quality materials, paying little attention to their durability or environmental sustainability. Overcrowding is common, as is the presence of unpaved roads and poor waste management, which contribute to a degraded living environment (Plateau State Government, 2021).

The ECWA Staff neighbourhood is also situated within the Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. It is located closer to the city centre, between latitudes 9°57'00"N and 10°01'00"N and longitudes 8°50'30"E and 8°55'00"E (Google Earth Pro 2024; OpenStreetMap, 2024). The neighbourhood lies approximately 2 kilometres from the central business district of Jos (see Figure 2). It is a planned residential area primarily inhabited by staff members of ECWA and their families. The neighbourhood features more organised housing layouts, indicating compliance with formal planning regulations. Homes in this neighbourhood are generally constructed with higher-quality materials, and the area is better served with utilities such as water, electricity, and sanitation (Plateau State Government, 2021).

The survey assessed perceptions of safety, access to health facilities, and common health issues Statistical analyses were performed to identify disparities and correlations between housing quality, liveability, health outcomes and their implications for health and urban development (Ezeh et al., 2017). This approach ensures that the findings are both valid and reliable, offering a holistic view of the study area (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

A quantitative approach was employed for this study, and primary data was collected by administering questionnaires to selected households in the ECWA Staff School and Utan neighbourhoods (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Babbie, 2020). The survey asked questions about perception of safety, distance to a health facility, satisfaction with health services, health issues, and implications for health

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and urban development. These questions are essential because they tap into core dimensions of urban liveability and public health (Pacione, 2003; Ezeh et al., 2017). The population for the study will consist of residents from the ECWA Staff School and Utan neighbourhoods (Google Earth Pro, 2024). Using Google Earth imagery, the total number of housing units in these neighbourhoods is estimated at 734 and 918, respectively. An average household size of eight people was used to estimate the total population, yielding an estimated 5,872 residents in ECWA Staff Neighbourhood and 7,344 in Utan Neighbourhood. To determine the appropriate sample size, a 20% sample was selected based on Wells (1975) guidelines, resulting in 331 households being surveyed. The sample size was distributed proportionally between the two neighbourhoods, ensuring that the data collected reflects the population distribution.

The collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, to identify trends and relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The findings were presented using tables, ensuring clarity and accessibility (Babbie, 2020). This methodological approach allows for a comprehensive evaluation of housing quality and liveability, with implications for improving urban development and public health in Jos North LGA.

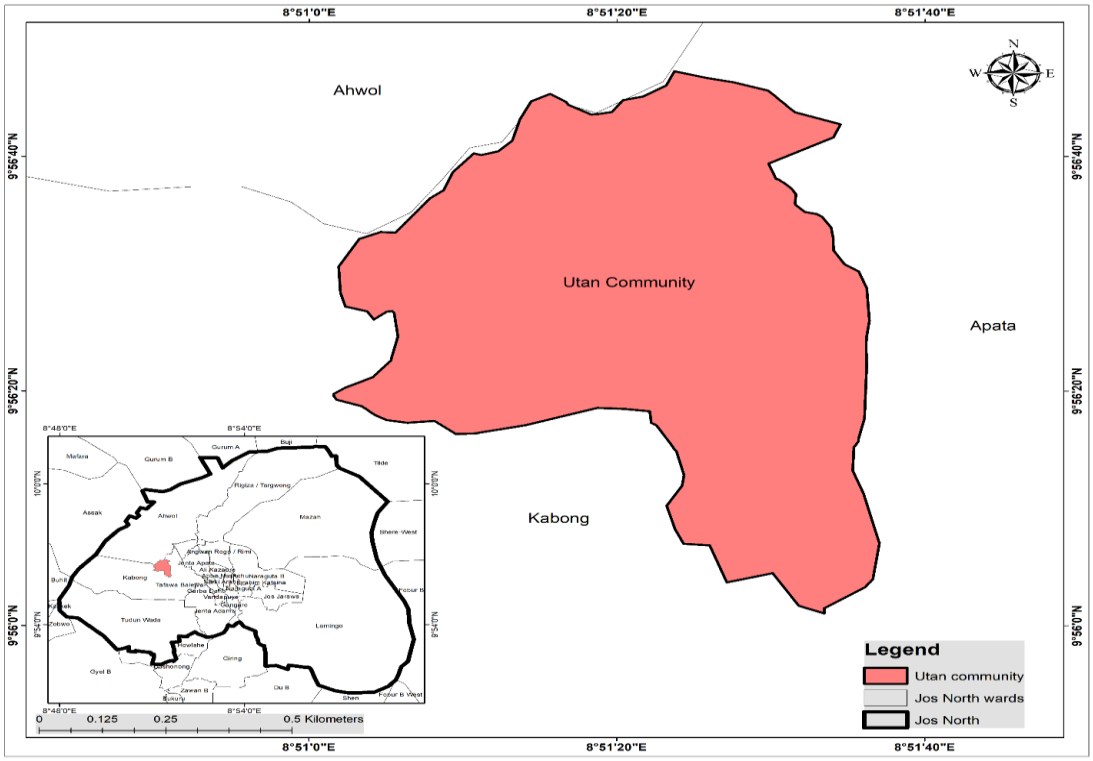


Figure 1: **Map of Utan Village** Source: **Authors fieldwork 2024.**

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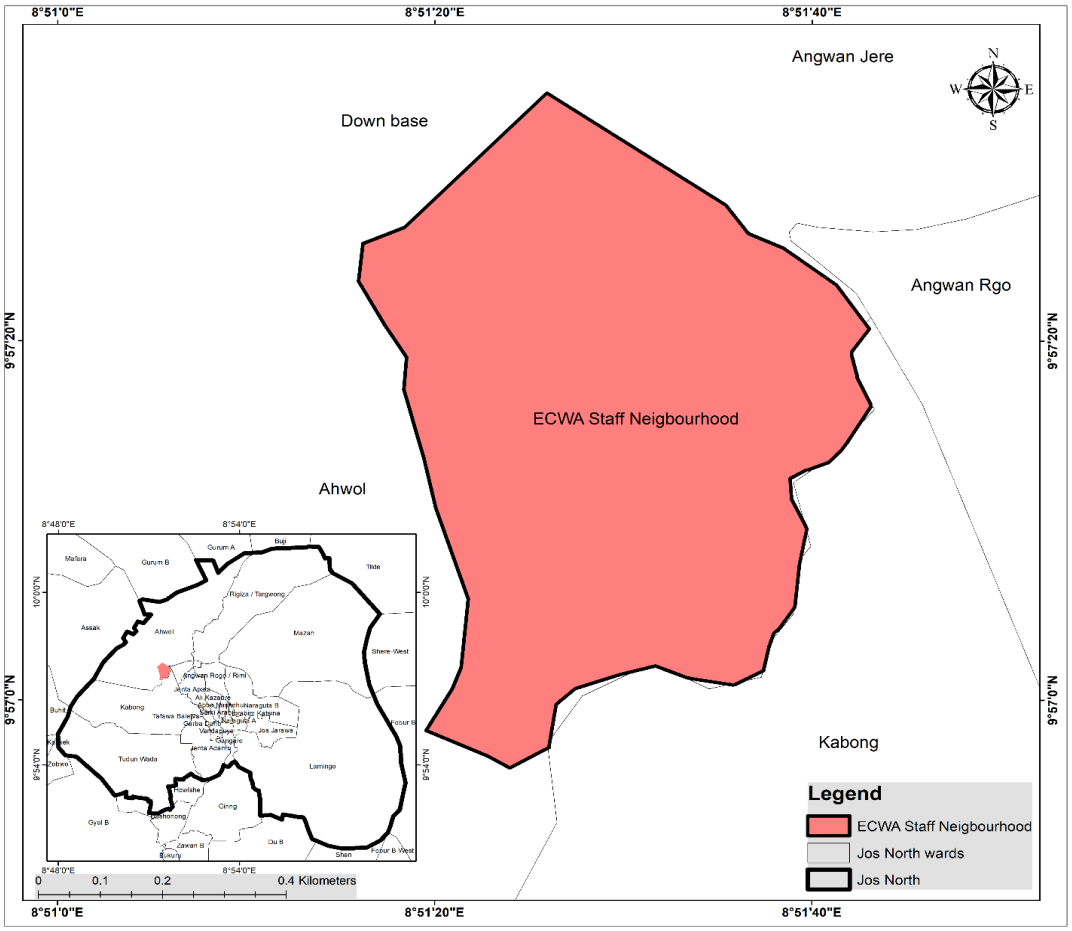


Figure 2: **Map of ECWA Staff Neighbourhood.** Source: **Authors fieldwork 2024.**

Results and Discussion

Liveability and Health

This section presents the findings on the perception of safety, accessibility to health facilities, level of satisfaction with health services, and common health issues experienced across two neighbourhoods in Jos North Local Government Area: Utan Village and ECWA Staff Neighbourhoods and their implications for health and urban development.

Perception of Safety in the Neighbourhood

Perceptions of safety play a critical role in determining the quality of life in a neighbourhood. As shown in Table1, there is a marked difference in the perception of safety between Utan Village and ECWA Staff Neighbourhood. In the ECWA Staff Neighbourhood, 90% of respondents felt safe (with 16% reporting they felt "very

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safe" and 74% reporting they felt "safe"), whereas only 45% of residents in Utan Village reported feeling safe, with 52% considering the neighbourhood unsafe and 3% feeling very unsafe. This stark contrast is indicative of the differing environmental and socioeconomic conditions in these neighbourhoods.

This finding aligns with the work of Mohit & Sule (2015) and Iyanda (2015), who argue that perceptions of safety are vital to both housing quality and overall community well-being. In line with Carbone & Clift's (2021) research, it can be inferred that safer neighbourhoods are more likely to foster better social integration, leading to improved mental health outcomes and greater urban development. The greater sense of safety in the ECWA Staff Neighbourhood suggests that residents might experience lower levels of stress and better mental health, further emphasising the need to prioritise the physical environment and infrastructure improvements, particularly in areas like Utan Village, where safety concerns are prevalent.

Table 1: Perception of Safety in the Neighbourhood by Neighbourhoods

Perception	Utan Village	ECWA Staff Neighbourhood	Total
Very Safe	12 (6%)	24 (16%)	36 (10.88%)
Safe	71 (39%)	108 (74%)	179 (54.08%)
Unsafe	95 (52%)	15 (10%)	110 (33.23%)
Very Unsafe	6 (3%)	(0%)	6 (1.81%)
Total	184	147	331

Source: Authors field work 2024

Distance to Nearest Health Facility

The proximity to healthcare services is another critical factor influencing health outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations. As shown in Table 2, both neighbourhoods have health facilities within 2 km, but a higher percentage of ECWA Staff Neighbourhood residents (78%) live within 1–2 km of a health facility compared to 61% in Utan Village. While both neighbourhoods fall within an acceptable range of accessibility, the higher proportion of ECWA Staff residents living within closer proximity to healthcare services may reduce the risk of delayed or inadequate medical attention.

Rojas-Gualdrón & Caicedo-Velázquez (2017) argue that the distance to health facilities can significantly impact health outcomes, particularly for children under

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five. The relatively greater distance to health services in Utan Village could be associated with poorer health outcomes, including delayed medical attention, particularly in the event of emergencies. This disparity emphasises the need for improved healthcare infrastructure and better access to services in neighbourhoods like Utan Village, which may require additional healthcare facilities or enhanced transportation options to reduce the risks associated with greater distances. Living in close proximity to health facilities will foster or enhance liveability within such homes and neighbourhoods (Ezeanah, 2021d)

Table 2: Distance to Nearest Health Facility (Km) by Neighbourhoods

Length (Km)	Utan Village	ECWA Staff Neighbourhood	Total
Less Than 1 Km	72 (39%)	33 (22%)	105 (31.7%)
1 – 2 Km	112 (61%)	114 (78%)	226 (68.3%)
3 – 4 Km	- (0%)	- (0%)	- (0%)
5 Km and Above	- (0%)	- (0%)	- (0%)
Total	184	147	331

Source: Authors field work 2024

Level of Satisfaction with Health Services

Table 3 reveals a high level of contentment and satisfaction among residents in both neighbourhoods. In Utan Village, 77% of respondents reported being satisfied, while 82% of ECWA Staff neighbourhood residents expressed satisfaction. Dissatisfaction rates were relatively low, with only 4% of Utan Village residents and 6% of ECWA Staff neighbourhood residents expressing dissatisfaction.

This general satisfaction aligns with Emankhu & Ubangari (2017), who assert that housing and community services, including health facilities, significantly impact residents' well-being. The high satisfaction rates observed in both neighbourhoods suggest that the health services provided largely meet residents' expectations, which is also echoed by Jiboye (2010). However, the small percentages of dissatisfaction indicate that some residents perceive room for improvement, which is consistent with the findings of Ezeanah, Simon, & Dawan (2021a), who emphasise the need for continuous assessment and improvement of services to meet evolving needs.

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Table 3: Level of Satisfaction with Health Services by Neighbourhoods

Perception	Utan Village	ECWA Staff Neighbourhood	Total
Very Satisfied	36 (19%)	18 (12%)	54 (16.3%)
Satisfied	141 (77%)	120 (82%)	261 (78.8%)
Dissatisfied	7 (4%)	9 (6%)	16 (4.8%)
Very Dissatisfied	- (0%)	- (0%)	- (0%)
Total	184	147	331

Source: Authors field work 2024

Respiratory Problems

Table 4 shows that 22% of respondents in Utan Village and 14% in ECWA Staff Neighbourhood reported respiratory issues. The higher incidence of respiratory problems in Utan Village can be attributed to several factors, including poor housing quality, inadequate ventilation, and overcrowded living conditions. Emankhu & Ubangari (2017) and Riggs, Keall, Howden-Chapman, & Baker (2021) argue that substandard housing conditions contribute to respiratory problems due to poor air circulation and the use of low-quality building materials. In contrast, ECWA Staff Neighbourhood's lower incidence of respiratory issues could reflect better housing quality, including proper ventilation and cleaner environmental conditions, which is consistent with the findings of Ezeanah (2018) and Ademiluyi (2010).

Table 4: Respiratory Problems by Neighbourhoods

Response	Utan Village	ECWA Staff Neighbourhood	Total
Yes	40 (22%)	21 (14%)	61 (18.4%)
No	144 (78%)	126 (86%)	270 (81.6%)
Total	184	147	331

Source: Authors field work 2024

Waterborne Diseases

Waterborne diseases were significantly more prevalent in Utan Village, with 83% of respondents reporting such illnesses, compared to only 10% in ECWA Staff Neighbourhood (see Table 5). This stark contrast is indicative of the poor infrastructure and inadequate sanitation systems in Utan Village, which have been associated with higher risks of waterborne diseases in the literature (Adegoke, et

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al., 2023). In contrast, ECWA Staff Neighbourhood benefits from better water and sanitation infrastructure, resulting in lower rates of waterborne diseases.

The significant disparity underscores the need for urgent interventions in neighbourhoods like Utan Village, where access to clean water and proper waste management is limited. Improvements in infrastructure, including the provision of clean water and effective sanitation systems, are crucial to improving public health outcomes in these areas.

Table 5: Waterborne Diseases by Neighbourhoods

Response	Utan Village	ECWA Staff Neighbourhood	Total
Yes	152 (83%)	15 (10%)	167 (50.4%)
No	32 (17%)	132 (90%)	164 (49.6%)
Total	184	147	331

Source: Authors field work 2024

Skin Diseases

Table 6 shows that 22% of Utan Village residents and 20% of ECWA Staff Neighbourhood residents reported skin diseases. This difference may be linked to environmental and housing conditions, as poor housing quality and inadequate sanitation are known to contribute to the spread of skin diseases (Emankhu & Ubangari, 2017). However, the relatively low prevalence of skin diseases in both neighbourhoods suggests that these issues are not as widespread as other health concerns, such as respiratory problems or waterborne diseases.

Table 6: Skin Diseases by Neighbourhoods

Response	Utan Village	ECWA Staff Neighbourhood	Total
Yes	40 (22%)	30 (20%)	70 (21.1%)
No	144 (78%)	117 (80%)	261 (78.9%)
Total	184	147	331

Source: Authors field work 2024

Implications for Health and Urban Development

This section delves into the implications of the findings for health and urban development, emphasising the need for targeted interventions based on the disparities identified between Utan Village and ECWA Staff Neighbourhoods. The

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table below summarises key health and urban development implications, drawn from the analysis of safety, accessibility to health services, housing quality, and common health issues in these two neighbourhoods.

Table 7: Implications for Health and Urban Development

Indicator	Utan Village	ECWA Staff Neighbourhood	Implications for Health and Urban Development
Perception of Safety	45% Safe	90% Safe	Unsafe neighbourhoods and houses contribute to poor mental health. Improvement in safety is essential for psychological well-being. Urban policies should focus on enhancing security through better infrastructure and community engagement.
Distance to Health Facility	61% ≤ 2 km	78% ≤ 2 km	Proximity to healthcare facilities is a key determinant of health outcomes. Despite relatively good access in both neighbourhoods, policies should aim to reduce distances and improve healthcare facilities in underserved areas like Utan Village.
Satisfaction with Health Services	77% Satisfied	82% Satisfied	High satisfaction indicates adequate health service delivery but also reveals areas of improvement. Development efforts should focus on enhancing service quality and addressing minor gaps in health service delivery especially within houses located in Utan Village.
Respiratory Problems	22% Affected	14% Affected	Respiratory problems in Utan Village highlight the need for improved housing conditions and better air quality. Urban development should prioritize ventilation, sanitation, and reducing air pollution.
Waterborne Diseases	83% Affected	10% Affected	The disparity in waterborne diseases is alarming. Investment in clean water supply, sewage systems, and proper waste management is crucial for reducing health risks, particularly in informal settlements like Utan Village.

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Indicator	Utan Village	ECWA Staff Neighbourhood	Implications for Health and Urban Development
Skin Diseases	22% Affected	20% Affected	Skin diseases are an indicator of poor sanitation and overcrowding. Urban development strategies should include improving waste management systems and promoting hygiene education, especially in high-density areas.

Source: Authors field work 2024

The health disparities between Utan Village and ECWA Staff Neighbourhoods illustrate the impact of urban expansion, particularly in informal settlements, on health outcomes. The findings indicate that hazardous living circumstances, inadequate healthcare access, and deficient infrastructure contribute to health challenges in these areas.

The results indicate significant disparities in health and urban development between Utan Village and ECWA Staff Neighbourhood, impacting both mental and physical well-being. Residents of the ECWA Staff Neighbourhood report a 90% sense of security, but Utan Village occupants express just a 45% sense of safety, underscoring the significance of crime prevention and environmental safety for mental health. Urban policy should emphasise security via infrastructure, law enforcement, and community initiatives to mitigate chronic stress and anxiety. Healthcare is easily accessible in both communities, with more than 60% of individuals located within 2 miles. Nonetheless, mobility and economic challenges in informal settlements such as Utan Village necessitate equitable healthcare provision and mobile health initiatives. Elevated satisfaction with health services indicates effective provision; nonetheless, infrastructure deficiencies necessitate further enhancements. Utan Village experiences elevated respiratory illnesses due to inadequate housing, overpopulation, and environmental issues, highlighting the necessity for improved ventilation, more spacious living conditions, and stricter pollution controls. Deficiencies in water and sanitation in Utan Village lead to a prevalence of waterborne diseases. Underserved communities require investments in clean water, sewage, and waste management to enhance public health. These communities also experience dermatological conditions resulting from insufficient sanitation and overcrowding. Enhanced sanitation, hygiene

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education, and waste management must be integral to urban development initiatives to reduce preventable diseases.

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

This study emphasises the critical need for localised and integrated approaches to address housing and liveability challenges in Jos North LGA. By prioritising sustainable development and inclusive urban planning, policymakers can significantly enhance the quality of life and healthcare outcomes for residents. The findings from this study provide crucial insights into the relationship between housing quality, safety, and health outcomes in urban communities. ECWA Staff Neighbourhood generally performs better across most indicators, including safety perception, healthcare accessibility, and the prevalence of health issues like respiratory and waterborne diseases. In contrast, Utan Village faces significant challenges in these areas, which may be attributed to poorer housing conditions, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to healthcare services.

These results emphasise the need for targeted interventions in neighbourhoods like Utan Village to improve housing quality, infrastructure, and access to essential services. Urban planning policies should prioritise the development of safer, healthier, and more equitable living environments, particularly for underserved communities.

Policy Recommendations

1. Housing quality should be enhanced by promoted through the use of quality materials and adherence to building regulations to mitigate health risks.
2. Enhance infrastructure provision within both neighbourhoods should be enhanced by developing water supply systems, sanitation facilities, and waste management to reduce health disparities.
3. Urban planning that focuses on implementing inclusive policies that integrate community needs and ensure equitable access to services should be supported.
4. Healthcare accessibility should be increased by Building additional health facilities in underserved neighbourhoods and improve transportation to existing centers.

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