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Assessing The Implications Of Land Ownership Pattern On Housing Development In Major Cities In The Niger Delta Region, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: This study examined land ownership pattern and its implications on housing development in major cities of the Niger Delta Region, Nigeria. The study used the cross-sectional research design. Data revealed that customary ownership was dominant, with 38% strongly agreeing and 34% agreeing that land is primarily acquired through traditional rights (WM = 3.86). Family inheritance followed closely (71% agreement, WM = 3.84), while land purchase accounted for moderate support (55% agreement, WM = 3.33). Communal ownership (59%, WM = 3.51) and allocation by traditional rulers (60%, WM = 3.47) also play significant roles, whereas government allocation (36%, WM = 2.80) and leasing (WM = 2.89) were least utilized. Formal documentation scored higher (62%, WM = 3.54), though accessibility to titles remained low (WM = 3.03). Data was analyzed using the Kruskal Wallis test. The implications of land ownership on housing development were profound with more than 83% of respondents affirming that land tenure patterns affect availability (WM = 4.24) and that customary systems limit large-scale projects (WM = 4.28). Family disputes (80%, WM = 4.23), high land costs (88%, WM = 4.42), and difficulties in obtaining titles (WM = 4.36) were identified as major barriers. Gender disparities were also evident, with 80.5% affirming that limited access for women reduces participation (WM = 4.20). The Kruskal–Wallis test, revealed no statistically significant differences (at $p > .05$), indicating uniformity of perceptions across respondents. These findings underscore systemic constraints in land ownership and housing development, requiring holistic policy reforms that integrate customary systems and strengthen infrastructure provision.

Key words: Land Ownership Pattern, Housing Development, Allocation, Traditional Tenure

I. Background

Land, a solid part of the earth's surface with many other attributes like soil, topography and vegetation is a resource that is very important in building houses. In other words, land is regarded as unconsolidated, loose materials on the surface of the earth serving as medium for building houses (Asabare, 2017). Housing is one of the three basic needs of man and it is the most important factor for physical survival of man after provision of food; thus, a deficiency in housing can profoundly affect the health, welfare and productivity of man. Therefore, it is an indispensable necessity without which man's survival is impossible. Housing, the act of providing shelter or lodging ensures that members of society have a place to live, whether it is a home or some kind of physical structure for dwelling, lodging or shelter and it includes a range of options from apartments and houses to temporary shelters and emergency accommodations. According to Bala & Bustani, (2017), the world population has risen to over 6.3 billion people and by 2030 over 60 percent of the world's population is expected to be living in houses that are mostly in cities. Population growth is one of the underlying factors for the housing demand, without new supply of dwellings; it pushes up the prices for both renting and purchasing dwellings (Ayedun & Oluwatobi, 2011), the problem is further compounded in many of the large cities with a change in living preferences that has resulted in a rise in household rates. Hence, more housing supply is needed to meet the unprecedented growth in demand.

Land ownership essentially is concerned with having a bundle of rights over a piece of land, including the ability to exercise control over the land for an extended period of time. Aniyom, (2018) highlighted that these rights can vary in duration and can be acquired through various means, such as purchase, inheritance, or by being born into a community. Consequently, the concept of landuse refers to collection of rights to use and enjoy property, including right to transmit it to others, while ownership conveys full right over property, while possession involves intentionally exercising control over something, whether actual physical control or constructive control. The housing development in Nigeria can be examined from landownership pattern perspectives in the rural and urban areas. In the urban centres the situation is characterized by acute shortage exacerbated by the rapid rate of urbanization with its associated high population growth rate. This problem of housing development can be attributed to lack of affordable housing finance, high costs of urban land and weak tenure security. Rising construction costs, and prevalence of slums are major challenges to efforts to alleviate the continent's housing crisis. Housing delivery is one of the most serious developmental challenges confronting the region as there is problems of inadequacy of the building materials and inaccessibility. Housing demand in Niger Delta is a manifestation and reflection of different household desires to live in an urban centre especially in cities is increasing at an alarming rate. Accordingly, Aniyom (2018) attributed it to an increasing taste for urban living and these reasons include employment opportunity, urban amenities and utilities consumption opportunities. This situation has consequently led to housing shortage and most people are also found living in indecent building apartments due to their socio-economic background which cannot cope with an ever - increasing price of decent houses. Babalola, (2019) asserted that housing is used to describe any place people live that provides the basic human need for shelter and that housing demand has witnessed unprecedented increase in the past decades, while land ownership pattern, low level of economic development, physical, social and cultural factors have created, among others, immense obstacles to housing development to the majority of population. The population growth rates are faster than the provision of new houses and housing infrastructure. This has resulted in intensive usage of the existing stock of housing and deterioration of housing environments. Some of the manifestations of housing and residential land use intensification are increasing room occupancy levels, housing adjustments involving physical changes in housing space and housing space conversion (Ball, 2022).

The right to decent housing is a Human Right that was recognized in 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and affirmed at the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlement in 1976. However, all over the world, experience has shown time and again that the realization of this right is difficult. It is estimated that one-fifth of the world's population does not have adequate shelter whatsoever, while more than a million people, mainly children, die daily because of lack of adequate housing, and majority of these are found in the developing world (Akinbamijo, 2012). Every society has policies on land administration and housing development to address the effect of acute shortage of decent and adequate housing for the people both in the urban and rural areas. Majority of the states in the Niger Delta Region namely, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Edo, Delta Ondo and Rivers states are besieged with housing development challenges arising from land ownership arrangements, cost of building materials, access to infrastructure, deficiency of housing finance arrangements, stringent loan conditions from mortgage banks, time to process legal documents and inadequate government housing policies. It is on this account that this study intends to examine land ownership pattern and its implication on housing development in the Niger Delta.

II. Materials and Methods

The Niger Delta with an estimated area of about 70,000 km^2 is one of the World's largest deltas and it is located on latitudes 4° 0' to 8° 0' N and longitudes 4° 0' to 9° 0' E (Figure 1). It is bounded to the south by the Atlantic ocean, to the east by Cameroun Mountain, to the west the region is bounded by states of Osun and Ogun, while to the north the region is bounded by Kogi, Anambra and Ebonyi states. The Niger Delta is located along the Atlantic coast which forms the southern boundary of Nigeria, and it is the entrance of River Niger into the ocean through a web of dstributaies. It is the largest wetland in Africa and the third largest in the world, with about 2370 square kilometres of rivers, creeks and estuaries. Its vegetation is predominantly of the forest type with 8600 square kilometres of swamp forest and about 1900 square kilometres of mangrove forests (Alagoa, 2005). The geographic Niger Delta includes the littoral States of Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta Cross River and Akwa-Ibom and has an area of about 67,284 square kilometres with a combined population of 16,331,000 persons. Additionally, Abia, Edo, Imo, and Ondo states, with a total area of 112,110 square kilometres of land as at 2006 is also part of the Niger Delta politically which make the region represents about 12% of Nigeria's total surface area (NDDC, 2006).

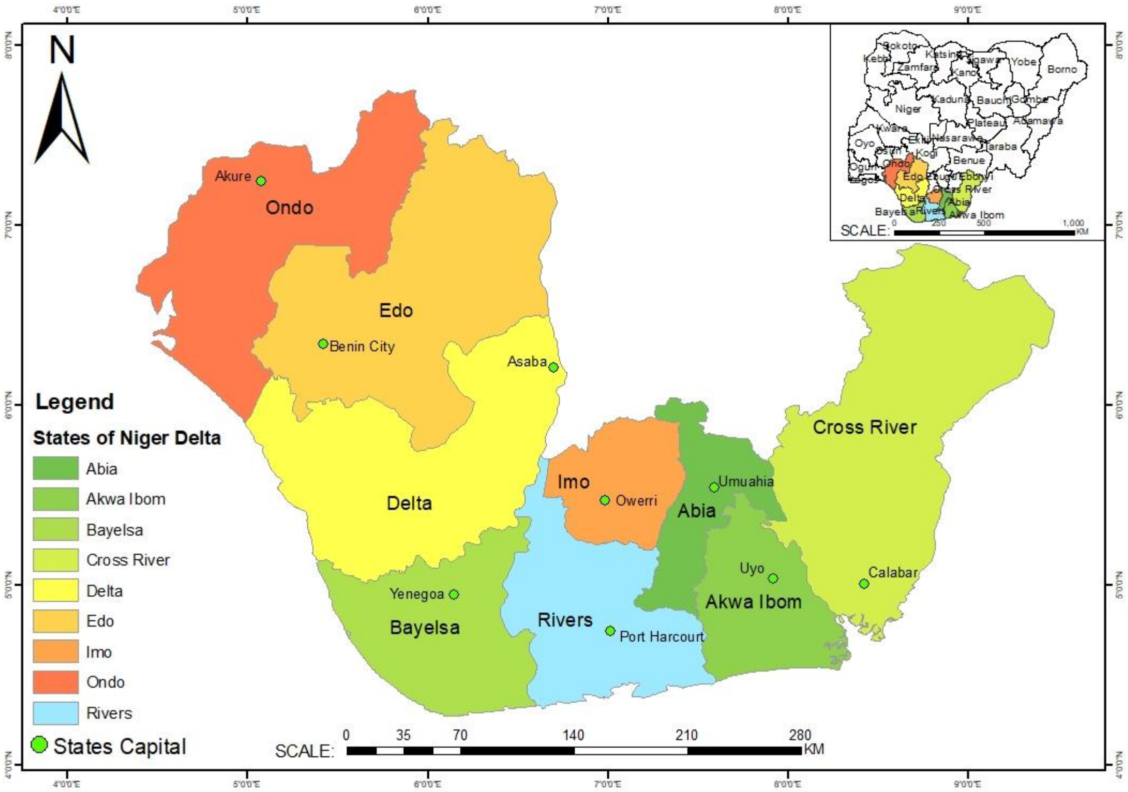

Figure 1: Niger Delta Region showing the States

The population of the study consists of all the nine states in the Niger Delta Region which are; Abia State, Akwa Ibom State, Bayelsa State, Cross River State, Delta State, Edo State, Ondo State, Imo, and Rivers State, and total of a 22,989 household heads sampled. The Taro Yamane's (1967) and Kumar (1976) stratum allocation formulas were applied accordingly to derive the sample size and the stratum of the cities as shown in Table 1:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where n = sample size
N = Overall population size (22,989)
e = 0.05
n= 400
nh = $n(N_H)/N$……………(2).
Where nh = stratum allocation
n = sample size (400)
N = Overall population (22,989)

Table 1: Population and Sample Size of the study

S/N	Names of States	Urban Area	Households	Sample Size
1	Akwa Ibom	Uyo	2,700	47
2	Bayelsa	Yenagoa	2,800	49
3	Cross River	Calabar	2,760	48
4	Delta	Warri	2,742	48
5	Edo	Benin	2,970	52
6	Ondo	Akure	2,200	38
7	Rivers	Port Harcourt	3,000	52
8	Imo	Owerri	1875	33
9	Abia	Umuahia	1942	34
	Total		**22,989**	**400**

Source: Researcher's Field Work Computation (2025)

III. Presentation and Discussion of Results

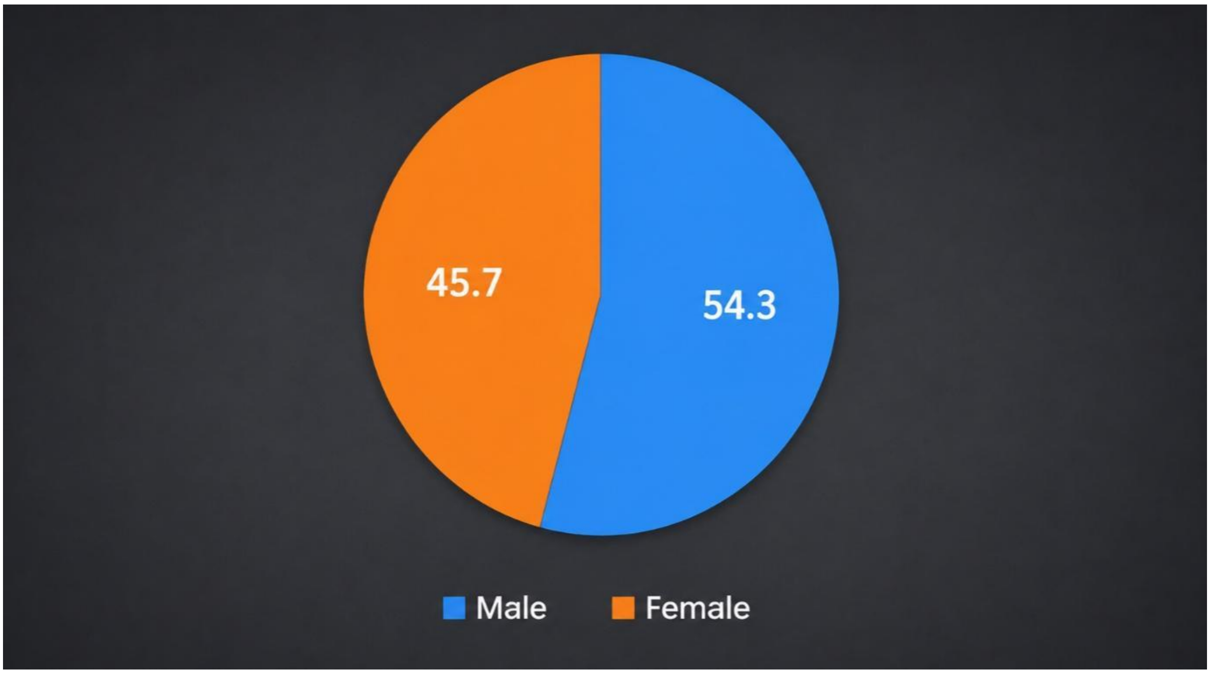

Figure 2. Gender distribution of the respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents presents a clear picture of the social and economic realities that shape housing development in the study area. The data shows in Figure 2 that males slightly outnumber females, with 54.3% male and 45.7% female respondents. This near balance suggests that housing issues are not gender-exclusive but affect both men and women almost equally. However, given that women often encounter additional barriers in land and housing acquisition, the presence of a significant female population among the respondents signals that gender-sensitive approaches must be considered in housing development planning.

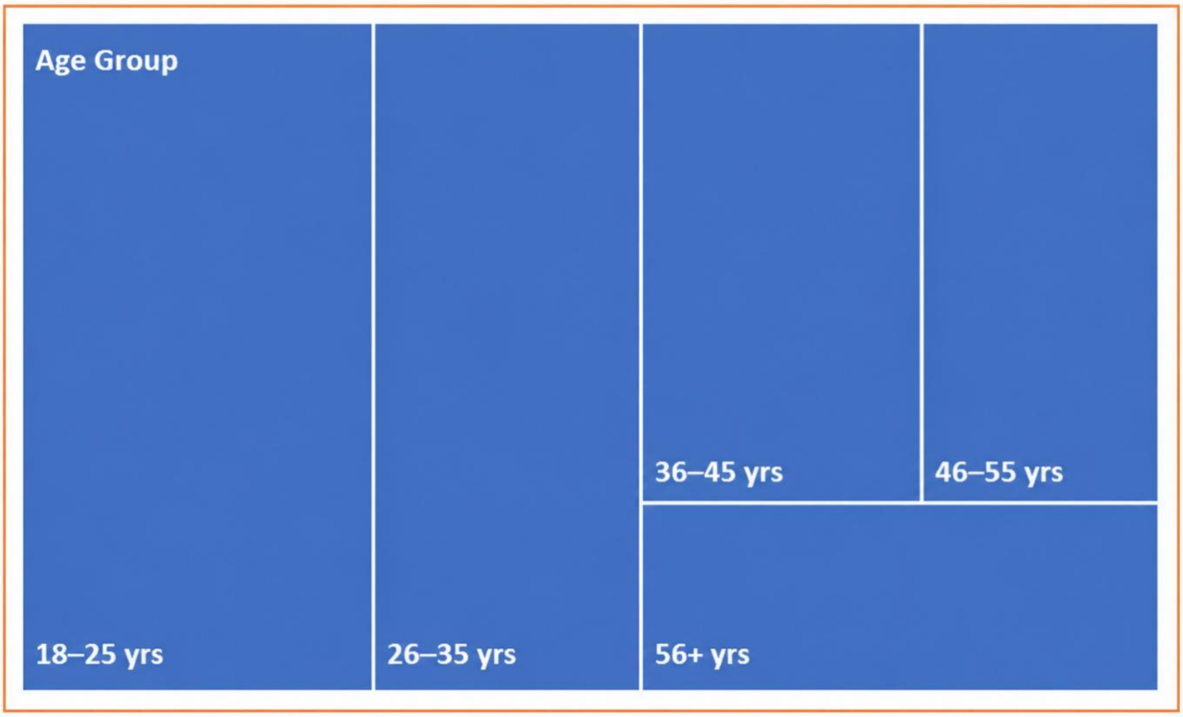

Figure 3. Age distribution of the respondents

The age distribution reveals in Figure 3 that the population is dominated by the active working-age group. Those between 26 and 35 years make up 45% of the respondents, while 25% fall within 36 to 45 years.

Together with the 20% who are between 18 and 25 years, it becomes clear that housing demand is being driven largely by young adults and middle-aged individuals who are in the process of establishing households or stabilizing their family living conditions. By contrast, only 10% are aged 56 years and above, indicating that the burden of housing need falls mainly on the younger population. This explains the mounting pressure on available land and housing units in the area.

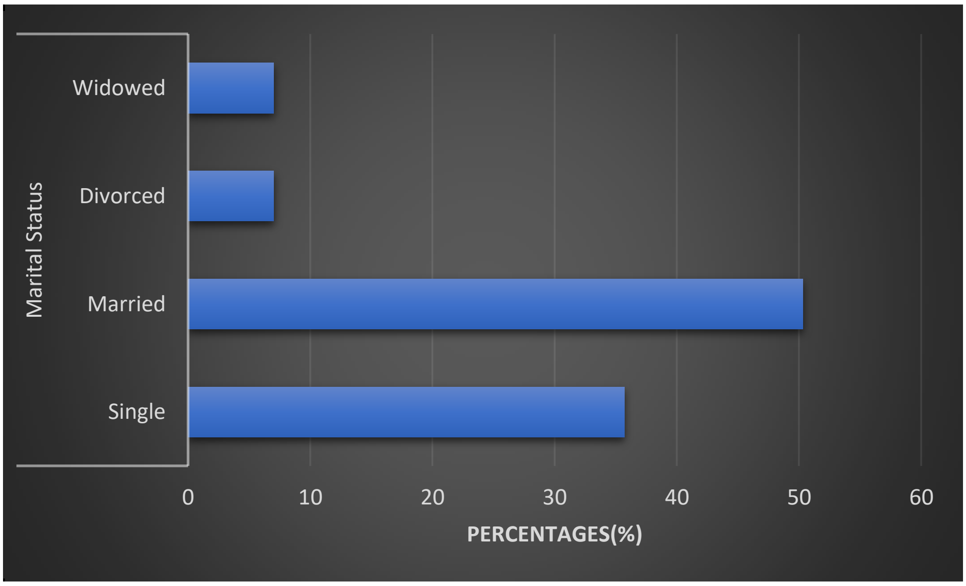

Figure 4. Marital status of the respondents

The marital status of respondents in Figure 4 clearly revealed that married individuals constitute more than half of the sample with 50.3%, while 35.7% are single. Smaller proportions (7%) are divorced or widowed. The high proportion of married people shows a growing demand for family-oriented housing, as households with children and dependents require larger and more stable housing compared to single-person households.

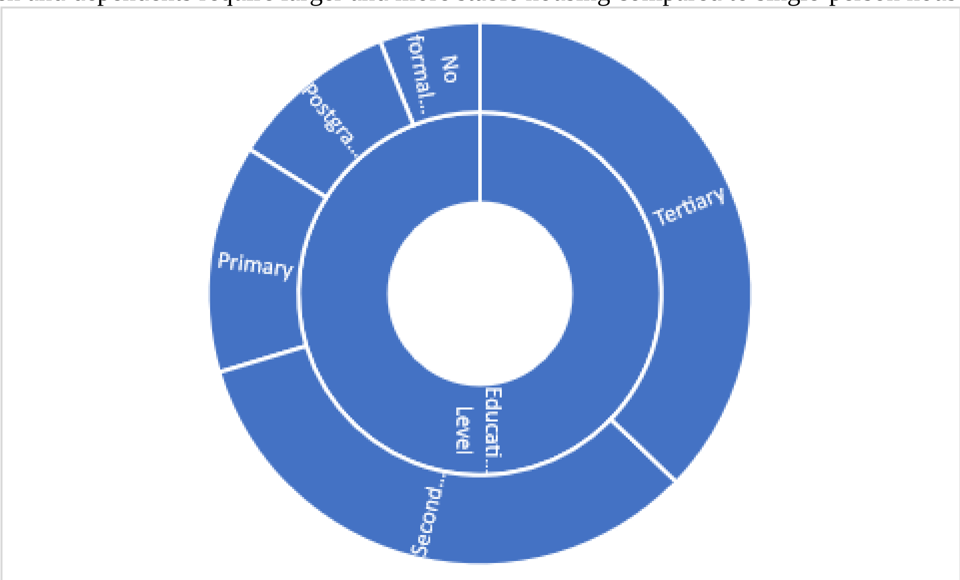

Figure 5. Education levels of the respondents

Education levels among respondents are relatively high (Figure 5). The majority have either tertiary education (37.2%) or secondary education (33.2%). Those who had primary and post graduate education were 13% and 10.6% respectively. Only 6% reported having no formal education. This level of education implies an awareness of housing standards, land rights and the need for better living environments. It also points to a population that aspires toward modern housing, which in turn increases the pressure on existing housing systems.

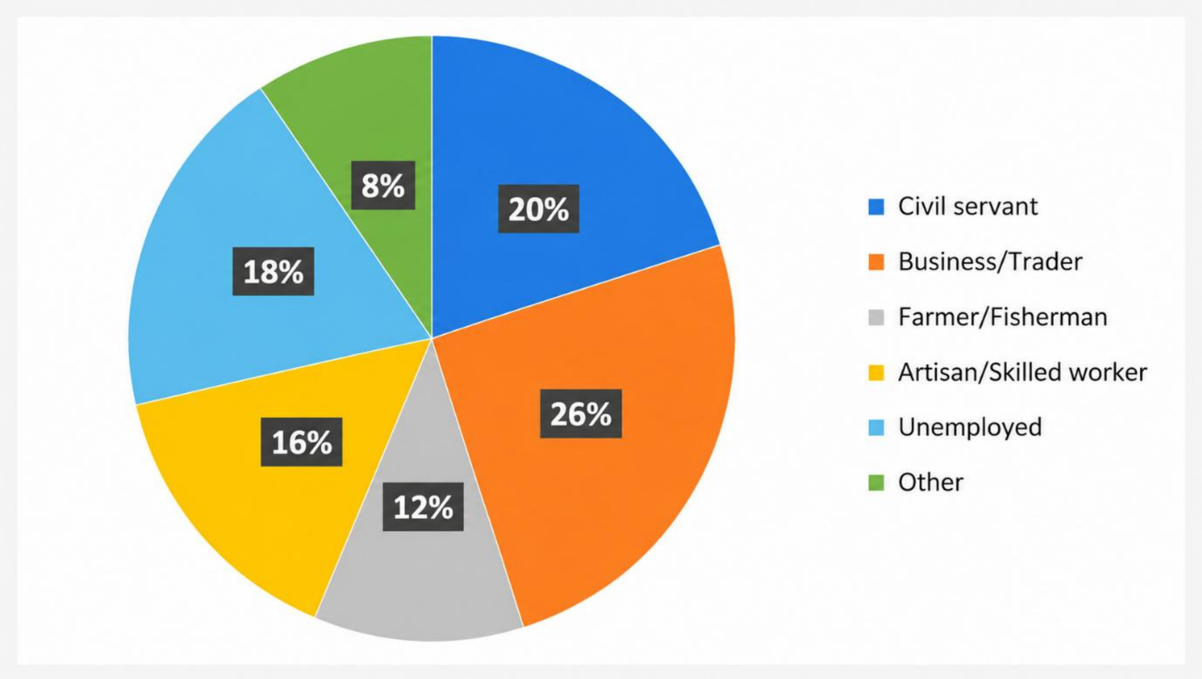

Figure 6. Occupation distribution of respondents

Occupationally, the respondents cut across different economic activities (Figure 6). Business and trading account for the largest share with 26%, followed by civil servants at 20% and artisans at 16%. Farmers and fishermen make up 12%, while a significant 18% are unemployed and others accounted for merely 8%. The relatively high unemployment rate and the dominance of informal or low-income occupations indicate that a large portion of the population lacks the financial stability to access formal housing markets. This has implications for affordability and contributes to dependence on informal housing arrangements.

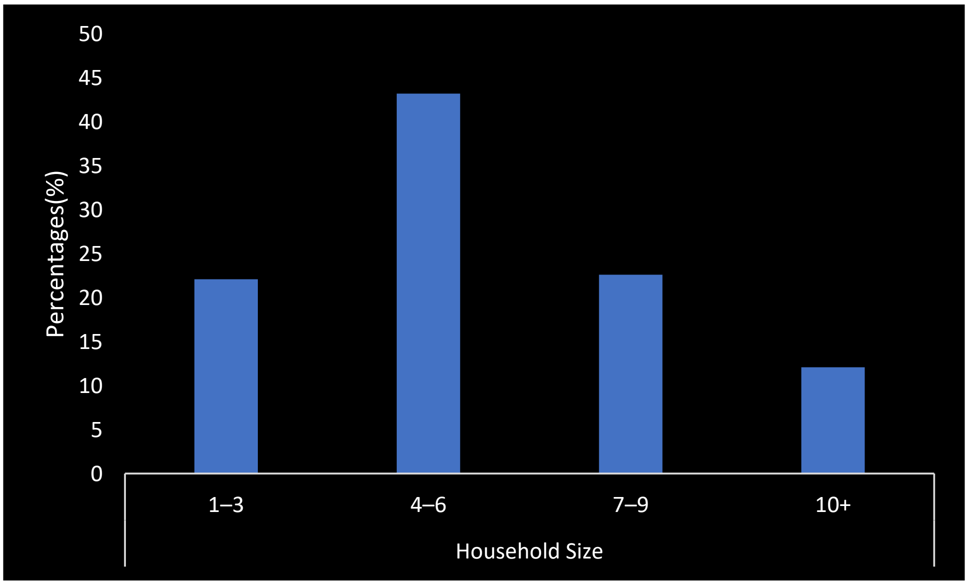

Figure 7 Household sizes in the study area.

Household size further amplifies the housing challenge (Figure 7). Most respondents live in households of four to six members (43.2%), with another 22.6% living in households of seven to nine members. Alarmingly, 12.1% reported living in households of ten members and above whereas those who agreed to living in households within one to three members accounted for 22.1%. This prevalence of large households underscores the problem of overcrowding and the inadequacy of existing housing stock in meeting the needs of the population.

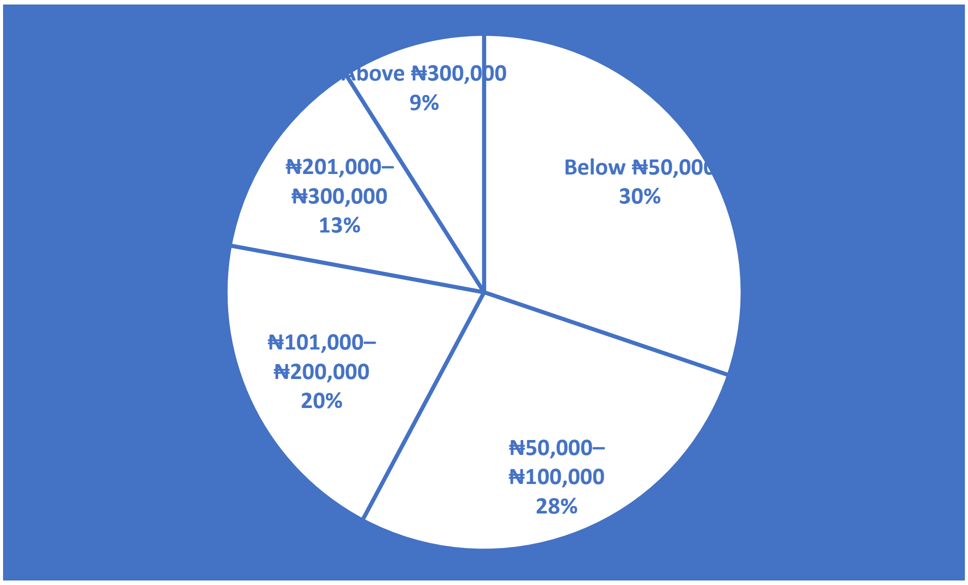

Figure 8. Income distribution of the respondents

The income profile of respondents aligns with this picture (Figure 8). Nearly one-third of the respondents (30%) earn less than ₦50,000 monthly, while another 28% earn between ₦50,000 and ₦100,000. Only 20% reportedly earns between ₦101,000 -₦200,000 and 13% earning between ₦200,000 -₦300,000 while only 9% earn above ₦300,000, a figure too small to significantly influence housing market trends. This distribution shows that the majority of households fall within low-income categories and are unable to afford formal housing without some form of subsidy, intervention or assistance. The income–expenditure mismatch highlights the reason many people are locked out of the formal housing market.

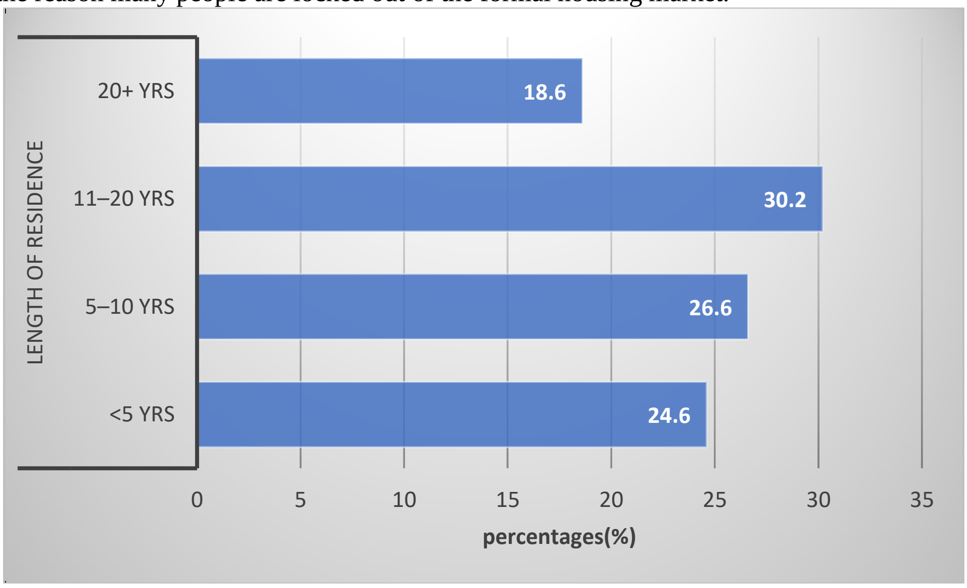

Figure 9. Years of residency in the region

The length of residence (Figure 9) reveals that 30.2%t of the respondents have lived in the area for between 11 and 20 years, 26.6% for 5 to 10 years, and 24.6% for less than 5 years. For those who have lived in the area for over 20 years was 18.6%This suggests that the community is a mix of long-term settlers and newer residents. Such a mix often fuels competition for land and can lead to disputes, particularly where land transactions are informal and poorly documented.

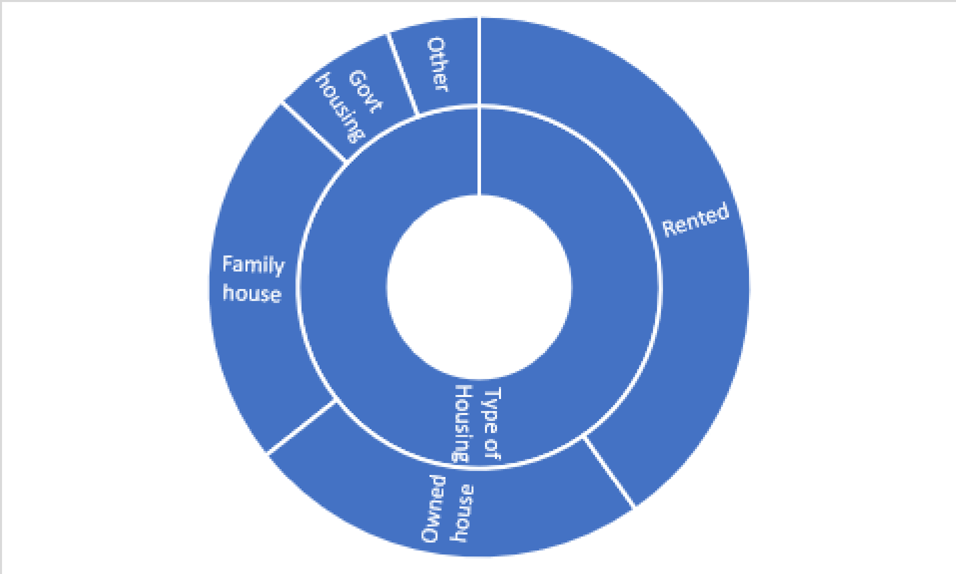

Figure 10. The type of housing occupied by respondents

The type of housing occupied by respondents in Figure 10, presents one of the clearest indicators of the poor housing situation. Rented accommodation dominates with 40.2%, while only 24.1% own their homes and 22.6% live in family houses. Government housing accounts for a mere 7.5% and the remaining 5.6% were those living in houses other the housing types mentioned. This imbalance reflects the failure of government housing schemes to adequately meet demand, leaving the majority of people dependent on rental housing, which is often unaffordable and of poor quality.

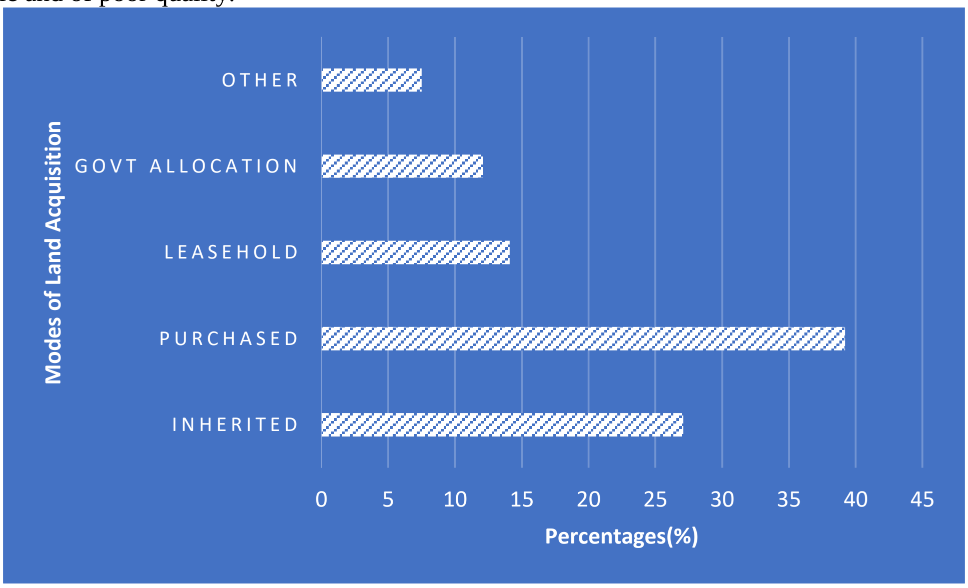

Figure 11. The mode of land acquisition by respondents

The mode of land acquisition in Figure 11, mirrors this pattern. The majority of respondents, 39.2%, acquired land through purchase, while 27.1% inherited theirs. Only 12.1% obtained land through government allocation, and 14.1% through leasehold while 7.5% acquired their own land through other modes not properly documented. This dominance of purchase and inheritance reveals a housing system driven largely by private arrangements, which are frequently informal and unregulated. Such a situation creates vulnerability to land disputes, insecure tenure, and high transaction costs.

Generally, the demographic characteristics of respondents paint a troubling picture of housing development in the study area. The community is young and expanding, dominated by low-income earners living in large households, with most relying on rental housing and informal land acquisition. The combination of limited government intervention, weak land administration, and a mismatch between income levels and housing costs has produced a serious housing deficit. Affordability remains out of reach for many, overcrowding is common, and land tenure insecurity persists. These realities underscore the depth of the housing crisis and the urgent need for comprehensive policies and strategies that can address the structural challenges highlighted by the data.

Table 2. Types of land ownership in the Niger Delta Region

Statement	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	U(%)	Total (%)	WM
Land in this area is mostly acquired through customary ownership (traditional rights).	151 (38)	135 (34)	48 (12)	24 (6)	40 (10)	398 (100)	3.86
Family inheritance is a common way of owning land here.	143 (36)	139 (35)	44 (11)	24 (6)	48 (12)	398 (100)	3.84
Individuals in this community prefer to purchase land for personal use.	88 (22)	131 (33)	80 (20)	48 (12)	52 (13)	399 (100)	3.33
Communal land ownership is still widely practiced in this area.	111 (28)	123 (31)	72 (18)	36 (9)	56 (14)	398 (100)	3.51
Government allocation is a significant means of acquiring land here.	48 (12)	96 (24)	127 (32)	72 (18)	56 (14)	399 (100)	2.8
Leasing land is a popular practice in this community.	40 (10)	88 (22)	143 (36)	80 (20)	48 (12)	399 (100)	2.89
Most people in this area rely on traditional rulers for land allocation.	104 (26)	135 (34)	72 (18)	40 (10)	48 (12)	399 (100)	3.47
Individual land titles are easy to obtain in this community.	56 (14)	96 (24)	127 (32)	80 (20)	40 (10)	399 (100)	3.03
Land ownership through marriage or dowry arrangements is common here.	48 (12)	80 (20)	143 (36)	88 (22)	40 (10)	399 (100)	2.92
Residents have confidence in formal documentation of land ownership.	96 (24)	151 (38)	72 (18)	32 (8)	48 (12)	399 (100)	3.54

The results on types of land ownership in the Niger Delta region reflected in Table 2 paint a complex picture of how land is accessed, transferred, and controlled, reflecting both traditional and modern systems of tenure. The data reveals that customary ownership dominates, with 38% strongly agreeing and 34% agreeing that land is mostly acquired through traditional rights. This high weighted mean of 3.86 suggests that despite urbanization and modernization, traditional landholding systems remain deeply entrenched. Family inheritance follows closely with a weighted mean of 3.84, as 71% of respondents affirmed that inherited property is a common means of ownership. These findings show that access to land in the region is still heavily shaped by kinship ties, lineage, and customary practices. Purchasing land is less dominant compared to inheritance and customary ownership. Although 22% strongly agreed and 33% agreed that individuals prefer to purchase land, 45% were neutral or disagreed. The weighted mean of 3.33 indicates a moderate preference, but not enough to outweigh traditional practices. This highlights limited affordability or weak confidence in direct land purchases, which may be linked to legal ambiguities and risks of disputes.

Communal ownership also plays a significant role, as 59% agreed that communal landholding is widely practised. With a weighted mean of 3.51, this pattern demonstrates that land is often collectively controlled by communities or clans, which could hinder individual investment and complicate urban housing development. Similarly, reliance on traditional rulers remains strong. About 60% of respondents agreed that traditional rulers allocate land, yielding a weighted mean of 3.47. This reinforces the idea that local authorities and customary institutions remain gatekeepers of land access, which can sometimes create delays or disputes when modern formal systems attempt to override traditional ones. On the other hand, government allocation is perceived as a weak channel for acquiring land. Only 36% agreed with this statement, while 64% were neutral or disagreed, producing a weighted mean of 2.8. This low value suggests that government-driven allocation is not significant, either due to bureaucratic bottlenecks, corruption, or limited availability of land designated for public schemes. Leasing practices follow a similar trend, with a low weighted mean of 2.89, as 56% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that leasing is popular. This shows that temporary tenure systems are not the preferred means of securing land, as residents may prefer ownership that aligns with cultural identity and long-term security.

Formal land documentation receives some support but remains inconsistent. While 62% expressed confidence in documentation, 38% were neutral or disagreed. The weighted mean of 3.54 shows that there is some recognition of the value of legal titles, yet trust in the system is not universally strong. Similarly, the ease of obtaining individual land titles scored only 3.03, with 52% neutral or disagreeing. This indicates persistent challenges in land administration, where bureaucratic red tape and disputes limit accessibility. Marriage and dowry as channels of land acquisition scored the lowest (WM = 2.92), with 58% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that this is common. This implies that while culturally acknowledged, such practices are no longer dominant in shaping land tenure patterns. Overall, the data paints a scenario where customary and family-based systems continue to dominate land ownership in the Niger Delta, while government, leasing, and formal documentation remain secondary or less trusted. This reliance on traditional systems has major implications for development. It slows down housing provision, discourages private investors, and fosters land disputes. The persistence of communal ownership and reliance on traditional rulers can make land acquisition for large-scale housing projects difficult, as negotiation must move through multiple layers of authority. Meanwhile, weak government allocation and challenges with documentation create further insecurity, making residents skeptical about investing in formal transactions. The bad situation implied here is that despite modernization, the dominance of traditional tenure systems creates a rigid land market, where access is based more on inheritance and lineage than on transparent legal frameworks. This limits equitable access, discourages affordable housing development, and makes urban planning chaotic. Without stronger integration of formal systems, the persistence of customary landholding will continue to constrain sustainable housing and infrastructural growth in the region.

Table 3. Kruskal Wallis test summary of types of land ownership in the study area

Statement	N	df	Kruskal Wallis H	Asymp. Sig	Remark
Land in this area is mostly acquired through customary ownership (traditional rights).	398	397	4.112	0.249	No significant difference
Family inheritance is a common way of owning land here.	398	397	3.874	0.285	No significant difference
Individuals in this community prefer to purchase land for personal use.	398	397	4.563	0.202	No significant difference
Communal land ownership is still widely practiced in this area.	398	397	3.991	0.262	No significant difference
Government allocation is a significant means of acquiring land here.	398	397	4.335	0.228	No significant difference
Leasing land is a popular practice in this community.	398	397	3.647	0.302	No significant difference
Most people in this area rely on traditional rulers for land allocation.	398	397	4.781	0.189	No significant difference
Individual land titles are easy to obtain in this community.	398	397	4.226	0.24	No significant difference
Land ownership through marriage or dowry arrangements is common here.	398	397	3.982	0.259	No significant difference
Residents have confidence in formal documentation of land ownership.	398	397	4.518	0.209	No significant difference

The Kruskal Wallis test was conducted to examine whether there were significant variations in the types of land ownership within the study area. The results, as presented in Table 3, showed that none of the statements recorded statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level. For instance, the acquisition of land through customary ownership ($H = 4.112$, $p = .249$) and family inheritance ($H = 3.874$, $p = .285$) did not significantly differ among respondents. Similarly, the preference for land purchase ($H = 4.563$, $p = .202$) and the practice of communal land ownership ($H = 3.991$, $p = .262$) also demonstrated no significant variations. Government allocation as a mode of land acquisition yielded a non-significant result ($H = 4.335$, $p = .228$), while leasing of land showed a comparable outcome ($H = 3.647$, $p = .302$). Reliance on traditional rulers for land allocation ($H = 4.781$, $p = .189$) was also statistically non-significant, indicating consistency in responses across groups. Likewise, individual land titles ($H = 4.226$, $p = .240$) and land ownership through marriage or dowry arrangements ($H = 3.982$, $p = .259$) revealed no significant differences in distribution. Confidence in formal documentation of land ownership followed the same pattern, with a non-significant test result ($H = 4.518$, $p = .209$).

These findings indicate that perceptions regarding the different modes of land ownership are relatively uniform within the study area. The absence of statistically significant differences suggests that respondents share broadly similar views on the dominance of customary and family inheritance systems, the persistence of communal ownership, and the influence of traditional rulers. The results further imply that while other mechanisms such as government allocation, leasing, or dowry-based land ownership exist, they do not generate divergent opinions across the sampled population. This uniformity highlights the entrenched cultural and administrative systems governing land ownership in the region, and it underscores the limited variability in how respondents perceive the availability and legitimacy of these ownership types.

Table 4. The implication of land ownership on housing development in the Niger Delta Region

Statement	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	U(%)	Total(%)	WM
Land ownership patterns influence the availability of land for housing development.	210 (52.8)	120 (30.2)	34 (8.5)	20 (5.0)	14 (3.5)	398 (100)	4.24
Customary land ownership limits large-scale housing projects in this area.	225 (56.5)	105 (26.4)	36 (9.0)	20 (5.0)	12 (3.0)	398 (100)	4.28
Family land disputes delay housing development projects.	208 (52.3)	118 (29.6)	40 (10.1)	20 (5.0)	12 (3.0)	398 (100)	4.23
Difficulty in obtaining land titles discourages private housing investment.	238 (59.8)	106 (26.6)	26 (6.5)	16 (4.0)	12 (3.0)	398 (100)	4.36
Government acquisition of land promotes housing estate development.	70 (17.6)	102 (25.6)	100 (25.1)	90 (22.6)	36 (9.0)	398 (100)	3.2
Informal land transactions lead to legal conflicts that affect housing development.	220 (55.3)	120 (30.2)	30 (7.5)	18 (4.5)	10 (2.5)	398 (100)	4.31
Women's limited access to land reduces their participation in housing development.	200 (50.3)	120 (30.2)	44 (11.1)	24 (6.0)	10 (2.5)	398 (100)	4.2
Communal land ownership makes it hard to implement urban housing plans.	230 (57.8)	110 (27.6)	34 (8.5)	16 (4.0)	8 (2.0)	398 (100)	4.35
High cost of purchasing land discourages affordable housing development.	240 (60.3)	110 (27.6)	30 (7.5)	12 (3.0)	6 (1.5)	398 (100)	4.42
Land tenure insecurity affects investors' confidence in housing development projects.	215 (54.0)	120 (30.2)	38 (9.5)	15 (3.8)	10 (2.5)	398 (100)	4.29
Traditional land allocation systems slow down housing approval processes.	210 (52.8)	118 (29.6)	40 (10.1)	20 (5.0)	10 (2.5)	398 (100)	4.24
Availability of government-allocated land encourages organized housing schemes.	80 (20.1)	105 (26.4)	110 (27.6)	75 (18.8)	28 (7.0)	398 (100)	3.32
Lack of clear land documentation increases the risk of housing project abandonment.	225 (56.5)	110 (27.6)	40 (10.1)	15 (3.8)	8 (2.0)	398 (100)	4.32
Land inheritance practices limit the expansion of modern residential areas.	210 (52.8)	115 (28.9)	40 (10.1)	20 (5.0)	13 (3.3)	398 (100)	4.23
Access to land ownership is a key determinant of housing quality in this community.	220 (55.3)	110 (27.6)	34 (8.5)	20 (5.0)	14 (3.5)	398 (100)	4.27

The data in Table 4 presents a comprehensive assessment of how land ownership patterns shape housing development in the Niger Delta region. The findings reveal a consistent pattern in which land tenure, customary practices, and socio-economic barriers strongly constrain housing growth and sustainability. The weighted mean values, which mostly fall between 4.2 and 4.4, indicate strong agreement across most statements, suggesting that respondents clearly perceive land ownership structures as a central obstacle in housing provision. The results show that land ownership patterns significantly influence the availability of land for housing development, with 52.8% strongly agreeing and 30.2% agreeing, leading to a weighted mean of 4.24. This indicates that the structure of ownership is a critical determinant of whether land can be released for development projects. A related dimension is customary land ownership, where 56.5% strongly agreed and 26.4% agreed that it limits large-scale projects, with a weighted mean of 4.28. This highlights the difficulty of consolidating land for modern estates under traditional tenure systems.

Family land disputes also present major barriers, with over 80% of respondents acknowledging their role in delaying housing development (WM = 4.23). Similarly, the difficulty of obtaining land titles was identified as a strong discouragement for private investors, as 59.8% strongly agreed and 26.6% agreed, producing one of the highest weighted means at 4.36. Without secure titles, the risk to investors is too high, slowing the pace of housing delivery. Government acquisition of land received more mixed responses. Only 17.6% strongly agreed and 25.6% agreed that it promotes estate development, while 47.7% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, producing a relatively low weighted mean of 3.2. This suggests that government interventions in land acquisition have not translated into tangible benefits for organized housing in the region. A similar pattern was observed in availability of government-allocated land, which had a weighted mean of 3.32, further reflecting skepticism about state-driven land allocation processes.

On the other hand, informal land transactions were widely seen as disruptive. A combined 85.5% agreed they lead to conflicts that hinder development (WM = 4.31). This aligns with the equally strong perception that lack of clear documentation raises the risk of project abandonment (WM = 4.32). Both findings show that formalization of land records is a fundamental necessity for improving housing security. Gender disparities also emerge, with 80.5 percent of respondents agreeing that women's limited access to land reduces participation in housing development (WM = 4.2). This shows that cultural and structural inequalities further exacerbate the housing crisis. Moreover, communal land ownership was seen as a major hindrance to urban planning, with 57.8% strongly agreeing and 27.6% agreeing, giving a high weighted mean of 4.35. The most pressing constraint identified is the high cost of purchasing land, which had the highest weighted mean at 4.42, with 60.3 percent strongly agreeing and 27.6 percent agreeing. This underscores affordability as the greatest barrier, particularly for low- and middle-income earners who form the bulk of the population. Similarly, land tenure insecurity (WM = 4.29) and traditional allocation systems that slow approval processes (WM = 4.24) add to investor hesitation and bureaucratic delays. Finally, the perception that land inheritance practices limit modern residential expansion (WM = 4.23) and that access to land is a key determinant of housing quality (WM = 4.27) points to the entrenched role of ownership systems in shaping housing outcomes.

Generally, the results present a clear picture that the land ownership structure in the Niger Delta is one of the strongest determinants of housing underdevelopment. Customary practices, disputes, insecure tenure, bureaucratic hurdles, high costs, and inequities in access combined to create an environment where housing projects are delayed, scaled down, or abandoned.

IV. Discussion of Results

4.1 Types of land ownership in the study area

The findings on types of land ownership in the Niger Delta highlight the persistence of traditional tenure systems despite ongoing modernization. Customary ownership was the most dominant, with 38% strongly agreeing and 34% agreeing that land is primarily acquired through traditional rights, yielding a weighted mean (WM) of 3.86. This aligns with Udo (2018), who observed that customary tenure continues to structure land relations in southern Nigeria, often taking precedence over statutory frameworks. Similarly, family inheritance (WM = 3.84) was affirmed by 71% of respondents as a key mode of acquisition, reflecting the enduring role of kinship ties and lineage in determining land access (Aribigbola, 2011). Purchasing land, while increasingly visible in urban centres, remains secondary to inheritance and customary channels. With only 55% of respondents affirming its dominance and a WM of 3.33, the findings support Aluko and Amidu (2006), who argue that affordability constraints, coupled with legal ambiguities, reduce confidence in outright land purchases. These ambiguities often stem from overlapping claims between customary and statutory systems, which discourage private investment (Fabiyi, 2014). Communal land ownership also remains significant, with 59% agreement (WM = 3.51). This result is consistent with Otubu (2018), who emphasized that communal tenure, while culturally resilient, often complicates large-scale urban development because land cannot be alienated without collective approval. Similarly, the role of traditional rulers (WM = 3.47) as allocators of land reinforces their status as key gatekeepers, echoing Ogedengbe and Oyedele (2019) argument that traditional institutions still mediate most rural and peri-urban land transactions.

Government allocation of land, in contrast, was relatively weak (WM = 2.80), with only 36% of respondents agreeing that it is a common mode of acquisition. This corroborates the findings of Owei et al. (2008), who documented bureaucratic bottlenecks, corruption, and limited designated land parcels as barriers to government allocation effectiveness. Similarly, leasing (WM = 2.89) and marriage/dowry (WM = 2.92) were the least significant, reflecting cultural shifts away from temporary or marital transfers as dominant tenure systems. Formal land documentation showed some support (WM = 3.54), with 62% expressing confidence, yet skepticism persists due to bureaucratic inefficiency. The relatively low mean for ease of obtaining individual land titles (WM = 3.03) confirms Okpala's (2016) observation that weak administrative capacity and costly titling processes continue to discourage residents from embracing formal registration systems. Statistical evidence from the Kruskal–Wallis test further reinforced these patterns. For example, acquisition through customary ownership ($H = 4.112$, $p = .249$) and family inheritance ($H = 3.874$, $p = .285$) did not significantly vary across groups. Likewise, government allocation ($H = 4.335$, $p = .228$) and leasing ($H = 3.647$, $p = .302$) were non-significant, suggesting a uniform perception among respondents. The consistency of these non-significant results implies a shared cultural and experiential understanding of land tenure across the study area, where traditional mechanisms dominate and statutory alternatives remain underutilized. Overall, these results emphasize that land ownership in the Niger Delta is still heavily rooted in customary practices, kinship structures, and communal institutions. While modern mechanisms such as government allocation and titling exist, they remain secondary due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and weak trust in formal systems. The implication for housing development is profound: the persistence of customary systems slows down access, discourages private-sector investment, and complicates urban planning (Adeniyi, 2017). Without stronger integration between formal and traditional systems, the rigid land market will continue to constrain sustainable housing delivery in the region.

4.2 The implication of land ownership on housing development in the Niger Delta Region

The findings from Table 4 reinforce the argument that land ownership patterns are among the most critical constraints on housing development in the Niger Delta. With weighted mean (WM) values mostly between 4.2 and 4.4, the results show strong consensus among respondents that tenure systems, disputes, and socio-economic barriers directly hinder housing provision. This is consistent with the position of Mabogunje (2011), who argued that the persistence of customary land tenure systems in Nigeria continues to obstruct large-scale, modern housing projects. Customary tenure, which received a WM of 4.28, was highlighted as a major impediment because of the difficulty in consolidating fragmented parcels under lineage-based control. This finding supports Otubu (2018), who emphasized that communal and customary land systems prevent effective land assembly for urban development, particularly in oil-producing regions where land is deeply tied to identity and culture. Similarly, the prevalence of family land disputes (WM = 4.23) echoes earlier work by Udo (2018), who described intra-family conflicts as a recurring factor delaying housing and agricultural projects. Land titling challenges emerged as one of the strongest barriers, with 86.4% of respondents agreeing that difficulty in obtaining titles discourages private investors (WM = 4.36). This aligns with Okpala (2016), who stressed that insecure tenure raises risks for developers and restricts access to formal credit markets. Without secure documentation, projects face abandonment or litigation, undermining housing delivery (Aribigbola, 2011). Government acquisition and allocation were perceived as weak, reflected in lower WMs of 3.20 and 3.32. This suggests a disconnect between state-led interventions and practical outcomes in housing supply. Owei et al. (2008) similarly noted that government land acquisition is often mired in bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and limited availability, reducing its effectiveness.

Informal land transactions (WM = 4.31) and lack of documentation (WM = 4.32) were also seen as disruptive, producing conflicts and abandonment risks. This is in line with Fabiyi (2014), who argued that informal dealings create overlapping claims that destabilize urban housing markets. The gender dimension is also critical, as 80.5% agreed that women's limited access to land (WM = 4.20) reduces their participation in housing development. This resonates with Yaro (2010), who noted that patriarchal inheritance structures limit women's ability to engage in real estate or land-based investments. The affordability constraint stood out as the strongest barrier, with the highest WM of 4.42. The high cost of land was identified by 87.9% of respondents as a deterrent to development, a finding consistent with Aluko and Amidu (2006), who reported that affordability is a key determinant of urban housing access in Nigeria. This challenge is compounded by tenure insecurity (WM = 4.29) and delays from traditional allocation systems (WM = 4.24), which create a rigid and uncertain land market. The results confirm that land ownership in the Niger Delta is a structural bottleneck for sustainable housing. Customary practices, disputes, insecure tenure, and affordability barriers converge to delay or stall housing projects, while government interventions remain weak and insufficient. Extant literature supports these findings, emphasizing that without stronger integration of formal land administration systems and reforms in tenure security, the region's housing challenges will persist (Adeniyi, 2017).

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

Land ownership patterns emerged as a major structural bottleneck to housing development in the Niger Delta Region. The persistence of customary tenure, family disputes, insecure titling systems, and affordability challenges collectively inhibit effective housing delivery. Weak state led allocation processes and unreliable informal transactions further intensify risks for developers and residents alike. Meanwhile, recommendations proposed for urgent implementation were

1. Government collaboration with traditional institutions to harmonize customary and statutory land systems.
2. Comprehensive land reforms should be prioritized over affordability and tenure security.
3. Large-scale, affordable mass housing programmes supported by both government and private developers.

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