

Understanding Residential Mobility

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ABSTRACT Residential mobility refers to the movement of people from one residence to another within a given local area. It is distinguished from migration which involves moving from one labour market to another and from one housing market to another. Residential mobility is generally referred to as local move or an intra-metropolitan move. Such movement tendencies may be associated with residential stress caused by a mismatch between a household's residential needs and the characteristics of its current housing situation. The objective of this paper is to explore and evaluate the reasons for people's mobility from one residential house to another within the same environment aiming at understanding why it occurs in urban setting. In-depth interviews were conducted among heads of household to gather information regarding reasons for movement from one house to another. Then the data gathered were recorded, clustered and analysed using research question as a guide. The study reveals that limited space in a house, sharing of utilities in multi-family houses and conflicts which arise due to sharing are among the reasons for moving. Therefore the study recommends that construction of residential houses (by both public and private developers) should be guided to meet minimum requirement of household in terms of size and design.

KEYWORDS: residential mobility, urban settlement

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I INTRODUCTION

It is normal for people living in cities to move from one town to another or from one neighbourhood to another. They may also move from one house to another within the same cluster of houses. It is also common to see people moving to and away from the same settlement. Sometimes people move within the same area (i.e. from one house to another) or several kilometres from their previous dwelling. The process of moving to a new house/housing cluster or neighbourhood is an integral part of the process of urbanization, which also involves urban development and most importantly socio-economic and cultural changes that an individual or household undergoes. The wish to move is usually deliberated upon by individuals desiring to move and conceptualise as an initial step in the residential mobility process [1].

Colonialists managed to control rural-urban migration hence the urban areas remained to be only for people who were formally employed as house servants, factories and construction. While cities in the developed countries experienced urbanization coupled with economic growth, many African cities have had urbanization which is not parallel with economic growth [2,3]. This situation has led to current urban challenges such as shelter provision, the provision of public services as well as land management challenges. A study by Rossi on *why families move* indicates that mobility is the process by which families adjust their housing to the housing needs that are generated by shifts in family composition that accompany lifecycle changes[4]. It is argued that residential mobility is associated with life stage factors, which relates to the household attributes, housing characteristics, housing market, and access to amenities[5]. The concept of lifecycle changes among families results in changes to housing needs which in turn influences the mobility of people in the city.

Households adjust their housing consumption to fit their changing needs as they progress through the life-cycle [4]. This idea was an important step in the introduction of the deficit concept which was introduced by Morris and Winter[1]. The concept proposes that normative housing deficit is a condition that propels

adjustment behaviour of people [1]. Residential mobility is among adjustment behaviours whereby individuals seek to attain their aspirations.

II RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY CONCEPT

Mobility and migration are two similar terms but they can be distinguished. Migration refers to the relocation processes which involve individuals shifting from one geographical origin to a certain destination while mobility refers to ability of an individual to change residential location in a given period of time [6]. Residential mobility can sometimes refer to the actual number of movers over a given period regardless of scale. It is also used to represent the proportion of households in a given geographical area that change their residential location in a given period [6].

Another distinction can be drawn from the nature and scale of moves. Residential mobility is often regarded as a shift of household within the same geographical area for example within the city while migration refers to a residential move across geographic areas, for example between countries or states. The meaning of residential mobility is also described as the up and down movement of a household depending on the socio-economic status scale [6].

Clark and Onaka have discussed residential mobility types and grouped them into the following[8]:

- *Upward mobility* which refers to movement to improve oneself. It is associated with optimism and control and it is triggered by things such as job opportunity and desire for a safer area.
- *Voluntary mobility*: this occurs in the context of an individual household's preference or choice, cost, tenure and space. Change in house type and quantity of housing consumption in terms of neighbourhood and accessibility leads to mobility.
- *Forced mobility*: this is necessitated by events such as government evictions, bankruptcy, and natural disasters such as floods and other factors of climate change.
- *Lifestyle mobility*: refers to a pattern of movement which is associated with the desire to change an existing dwelling or to experience a different neighbourhood.

Foote and others identify other types of mobility being intra-community mobility and inter-community mobility. Whereby intra-community move is chiefly housing motivated and is primarily dominated by dissatisfaction with the residence. Inter-community mobility is mainly job motivated and is dominated by attractiveness of positive pulls of the new location such as economic opportunity and healthier climate[8].

2.1 MOBILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

While the aspect of climate change have not been discussed at length in this paper, it suffices to mention that the authors acknowledge that urban mobility is also affected by climate change. When climate change negatively impacts on the livelihoods of communities, in turn the affected communities employ adaptation strategies that may include migration or mobility [9]. Many poor people in urban settlements face several environmental and development challenges that affect their health and productivity and hence the choice of housing they access. At the same time, the urban poor have limited adaptive capacity to environmental hazards, including climate variability and climate change, they are hence susceptible to effects of storms, constraints to water supply and food price rises [10]. This tends to further exacerbate their mobility which in turn increases pressure to urban housing.

III THE STUDY FRAMEWORK

The framework of this study is focused on examining the variables associated with social aspects of housing and housing profiles that contribute to explaining the moving intentions among households in Tabata - Dar es Salaam.

Social aspects referred to are lifestyle, marriage, household size as well as residential space. The relationship between social aspects in housing and residential mobility is important but remains unclear [11]. It controls households' aspirations and obstructs actions which are shared between personal motives, resources and limitations [12]. It has been argued that larger households are mature, with children, and have stable situations that have them prone to stay in place for longer durations[13]. However, a single person who is not tied with daily activities and household activities finds it easy and is more likely to move compared to a married couple. However, as others argue, residential mobility is often higher when the family size increases[14].

Furthermore, literature shows that socio-economic aspects such as income level, distance from working place and rental charges trigger movement in a way that household adjust to meet their preferences [15]. Mobility in the city of Brazzaville, for instance, is mainly caused by inadequate rental fees, lack of legal contract between the landlords and tenants and distance between homes and workplaces [16].

In this study, the aspect of housing profiles such as location and neighbourhood status are associated with the households' mobility tendency, home ownership, housing choices. Majority of residents prefer

homeownership as a means to indicate their landownership, property investment and locational advantages [17, 18, 16]. Residents living in their own houses rarely move. The stay in own house is seen to enhance self-esteem, neighbourhood stability and future heritage to children. Residential location choices are done self-consciously whereby home seekers use a variety of resources to meet their residential aspirations [3].

1.1 METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In this study, a case study area was selected within the most urbanized city in the country in Ilala municipality in Dar es Salaam City. The area is located about 10 kilometres from the city centre where part of this residential area is a newly planned residential area. The rapid population growth as well as the socio-economic condition of the city attracts more people to reside in the city hence more information regarding residential mobility can be better captured in Dar es Salaam than in other urban centres in the country because of the diversity of the population. The unit of analysis being households and heads of households, an in-depth interview was carried among 14 respondents who were selected using purposeful sampling technique complimented by snowballing.

IV UNDERLYING REASONS FOR RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY IN TABATA

The information gathered from the household interviews were organized, analysed and general thematic relationships in response to why households move from one residential house to another were revealed. In some cases, the responses are presented using quotations from the respondents in order to illustrate the content and context of the respondent. The following are reasons for residential mobility captured from a study on Tabata-Tenge residents. The reasons are clustered and coded as shown in Table 1 below. The percentages of occurrences shown in the table are on the basis of 93 responses on reasons for each move a respondent has made.

The study across Tabata-Tenge shows that residents normally move from one location to another and from one residential house to another. The common types of residential mobility found in the case study area are voluntary mobility and upward mobility.

Findings revealed that there have been eight moves within Tabata –Tenge residential area and six moves from outside the area. Respondents gave reasons for each move and there were recurring statements expressing the need for space, a house which does not have shared utilities and the aspect of rent increase. Respondents also cited the need for services such as water and their aspiration to move to a good and secure neighbourhood. Aspects of insufficient space, location of work and shared space in multi-family housing units were among the high ranking reasons for moving. Other reasons for moving included change in marital status, household size, neighbourhood security, traffic situation, poor access to services such as water and roads and flooding especially those close to the valley.

This study also revealed that there are residents who shared small rooms of small sizes and the insufficient number of rooms in a multi-family house, a situation which triggers their movement. Moreover, changes in the lifecycle of respondents at different stages of life made them realize the insufficiency of their residential space. For instance, a 38 year-old employed respondent who had stayed in the area for ten years expressed his need for space that resulted in several moves across Tabata –Tenge residential area, he said;

“I decided to look for a house in this area because by then (year 2002) it was cheap and I rented a single self contained room. After three years I felt that I needed more space so I moved to a house with one bedroom, toilet, shower and a small sitting room which is just nearby the former room. Two years later, I had to accommodate my young sisters and young brothers who came in the city for college. So I moved to this house which has 3 bedrooms. After four years my relatives were done with college and they decided to move to their own places and I was left alone again. I attempted to look for a smaller house across this area and it was hectic that’s why I am still in this house.”

The sharing of utilities was seen to be another major reason that pushes residents from one house to another. Findings indicate recurring statements expressing the need for a house which is free from the sharing of utilities such as power. Other respondents said that the sharing of utilities has been a problem in many houses across the case study area as it is difficult to collect money from other tenants to pay for the cost of the shared utilities. Additionally, this study revealed that in some cases mistreatment by landlords has resulted in moving.

Table 1: Reasons for residential mobility across the case study area

s/n	Reasons	Percentage of occurrences
1	Socio-economic	15%
	-level of education	
	- location of work place	
	- low income	
	- rent increases	
2	Social aspects of housing	48%
	- insufficient in-house space, house design, preference and value	
	- too much in- house space	
	- sharing of rooms in the same house(eg. wash rooms, sitting and kitchen)	
	- sharing of common utilities	
	- conflicts (between tenants, domestic helpers and with landlords)	
	- poor maintenance of the house	
3	Social-demographic reasons	10%
	- marriage	
	- household size	
	- lifestyle	
4	Location, Physical and environmental reasons	27%
	- unsecured neighbourhood	
	- poor provision of services(e. g. water, power and access roads)	
	- flood prone areas	
	- traffic jams	
	- dusts from nearby roads	

V ANALYSIS OF MOBILITY REASONS

In spite of financial limitations facing some respondents, the need for in-house space was found to be among the cause of mobility tendencies across the case study area. In some cases, respondents needed a more spacious house unit though they were limited by their financial capability. This study reveals that socio-economic variables related to income of the household determines the size and design of house unit which individuals opt for. Individuals with higher income rent a bigger house.

Another emerging theme related to house design is the issue of multi-family houses. Availability of this house design/type determines mobility in that sharing spaces such as the corridor, sitting room, toilet and shower pushed respondents out of the house units they were living in. Respondents were also concerned about sharing utilities such as electricity. This study reveals that households move to seek house units which have minimum sharing of spaces and utilities. However, multi-family houses provide options for low income people such as the option to rent a room or two rooms, thus enhancing mobility tendencies

VI CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, recommendations are made with regard to mitigation of residential mobility scenarios that were identified among urban residents. The common reasons for moving identified are insufficient space in a house and the aspect of shared utilities. Another reason that came up for deciding to move is the rent increase which the tenants feel is not commensurate to house size/design. This study recommends that both private and public developers should carry out a survey to capture the desires of individuals. Research on people's preferences should be done and accommodated during construction of residential houses. This will give users the opportunity to choose the design of house they desire.

This paper suggests that there is a need to have a regulatory unit which would guide landlords-tenant relationship especially on matters regarding rent vis-a-viz standard of housing. The existing situation whereby landlords decide to increase the rent anytime they wish to do so result in unprecedented movement. A mechanism by which the governing authority can regulate the rent charged by landlords in relation to house condition, type and design may mitigate the moving tendencies.

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