

## Challenges of Building Construction and Property Ownership in Oreyo Igbobo Ikorodu Lagos: The Power of Omo-Onile (Land Owners/ Grabbers)

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### Abstract

*Developers and investors in residential real estate are finding it increasingly difficult to deal with the omo-oniles' (Land Grabbers') activities, which are driving up construction costs and dimming prospects for individual home ownership in Oreyo, Igbobo. In light of this, a study is being conducted to assess the effects of increased omo-onile activity on building construction in the research area. 50 respondents were chosen at random for the study's sample. The study's designed questionnaire was intended to gather data on the socio-demographic traits of the respondents, the accessibility of residential plots and the security of ownership, the causes of land loss to land grabbers (omo-oniles), a general assessment of the activities of land grabbers, as well as other difficulties faced by property owners. According to the study's findings, 32% of respondents are single, 60% of respondents are married, and 68% of respondents are men. It demonstrates the predominance of men in land ownership in Africa. Similar findings were observed in earlier investigations by Jimoh (2018) and Alalade et al. (2016). The study also demonstrates that the omo-activities onile's in the study region vary from the imposition of illegitimate taxes on real estate developers, the seizure of land, the destruction of property, and the suspension of activity at the construction site, to violent conflict attacks. The most significant causative factors for omo-onile activities were economic and illiteracy, with weighted mean values of 4.87 and 4.67, respectively. Thus, the study urges the need for strict measures to put a stop to land grabbers' insane activities and their newly discovered misbehavior that is detrimental to building construction, real estate growth, and investment.*

**Keywords:** Challenges, Building Construction, Power, Omo-Onile, Property, Land Owners/ Grabbers

### INTRODUCTION

Like in every other country in Sub-Saharan Africa, the practice of land speculators known as "Omo-oniles" has recently become more extreme and cruel, with negative effects on the economy, the ecology, and human rights (Adarkwah, Anna, Anyamesem-poku, Santiago, 2018; Jimoh, 2018 and Odoemene 2015). The omo-onile plague, however, is not unique to Nigeria in its behavior and operations; rather, it has a geographical distribution that is comparable across the African sub-region, with varied nomenclatures used to address its activities. Land grabbing is the main activity of the omo-oniles, and there is no overarching description of this activity. Housing is a basic human need in all societies and the fundamental right of every individual. In advanced countries, housing is more accessible to all categories of people including the poor and the needy as a result of subsidies from the government. The majority of the time, their approach entails extensive land appropriations or acquisitions that violate the rights of users or landowners (Christian, Oladipo, Fredrick and Olufemi 2023). This type of land arrogance is frequently connected in Nigeria to the obas, chiefs, government, and the select few powerful individuals. Similar practices were found in other African nations like Madagascar, Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, and Mozambique, according to earlier investigations. The population growth rate along with the ever-increasing search or need for land resource utilization make it increasingly clear that the current land rush or grabbing, especially by a small number of powerful and influential people, may last in the continent for a much longer time.

The conflict for land and natural resources is one factor in the issue that threatens African peace. Several structural, historical, and social elements are at the heart of this crisis. Additionally, it is fueled by escalating urbanization, land grabbing, population pressure, weak property rights, and disparate land tenure regimes. The journal's focus is on problems with land in Lagos, Nigeria, one of Africa's megacities with a population of over twenty million, according to estimates. It looks at the main effects of the actions of a group of conflict actors known as OmoOnile (sons of the original landowners), who claim to be the rightful owners of the land because they are native to Lagos.

The OmoOnile movement, which describes itself as the indigenous residents of neighborhoods in Lagos, has existed for a while. However, as the Lagos metropolis has grown quickly, they have become increasingly obvious. Some OmoOnile asserts the right to trade with and extort money from anyone they view as settlers, non-indigenous people, or renters. In one of Africa's fastest-growing cities, these OmoOnile behave like land squatters, employing coercion, intimidation, and threats to acquire access to and control over increasingly scarce land. They play a significant role in escalating conflicts, such as those between landowners, buyers, and private investors.

The OmoOnile frequently encroaches on land that has been lawfully obtained by others and sells the same area of land to many customers. In other instances, they demand unlawful payments, threaten or assault building site workers, and make it impossible for land buyers to take control of their property after purchase. These illicit actions can result in significant losses for local and foreign private businesses and pose a growing threat to peace, security, and urban development.

Ajagungbale (armed land grabbers), according to respondents in my fieldwork, are known to operate in rural areas of Lagos State, where land conflicts have frequently resulted in the destruction of lives and property as well as the eviction of residents. Respondents told me about the actions of Ajagungbale gangs, which have frightened locals and forcibly evicted them from their ancestral lands, in various rural areas in Lagos state's Ikorodu division.

### **Problem Statement**

As land-grabbing activities take place in Nigeria's other larger cities, it is progressively growing as a trend in the country's medium-sized and smaller cities, including Oyo, Igbobo, and Ikorodu in Lagos State. It is believed that the new 4th mainland bridge will pass through Oyo, making it the most active district in Lagos State for road construction and other activities. The cost of land has doubled, and the area is rapidly and widely developing. The omo-onile (literally, "landowner's children") operations, which subject land buyers/investors to the payment of absurd incidental billing that is collected through various antics or techniques, have been brought about by the resurgence of interest in Oyo land ownership. Several land development plans have been cut short as a result of these operations, and property owners have lost control of land and structures worth billions of naira. For instance, the recurrence of the omo-onile syndrome in Lagos and Oyo states has prompted the state governments to enact strict regulations, such as the Lagos State Properties Protection Law 2016 and the Oyo State bill, H.B. No. 03/2016. According to Gbonegun (2019), the Lagos state administration, for example, just enacted a bill that aims to outlaw land grabbing in all of its manifestations. He added that Section 2(1) forbids occupying landed property by force, self-help, or any other action inconsistent with the owner's proprietary right. Any additional "illegal" intrusion on people's property is prohibited by law.

However, the growing pattern of the omo-oniles' activities is increasingly problematic for those who develop or invest in residential real estate, contributing to the high cost of construction and dwindling prospects for individual homeownership in Oyo, Igbobo. In light of this, a study is being conducted to assess the effects of increased omo-onile activity on building construction in the research area.

## **Goals and Purpose**

This study's main goal is to assess the effects of increased omo-onile activity on building development in OreyoIgbobo, Ikorodu, Lagos state. To determine the impact of their operations in the study region, the following objectives were investigated:

Examine the trend of Omo-Onile activities in Oyerolgbobo, Ikorodu.

To assess the impact of Omo-Onile activities on building construction.

## **Review of Literature**

Land serves important social purposes in addition to being used for economic, environmental, and productive purposes, according to Jacovetti and Kone (2016). The land is where societies and natural resources were created, and man has given it two very important uses. The first function, which includes activities like hunting, fishing, picking, and caring, is nourishing. The second function, which is spiritual, proposed a sequence of locations that serve different purposes, some of which are essential for the initiation and others of which are banned.

Different definitions of "land ownership" can be found in the literature. According to Utuama in Jimoh (2018), the "right of occupation" (also known as the right to hold and occupy a piece of property) or the "maximum rights or interests existing over any piece of land" are equivalent to land ownership. Therefore, ownership has more flexibility because it includes possession and other related sub-rights over any land. Landed property can be individually owned, jointly owned by two or more people, or even cooperatively owned, according to Onalo (2016), Nicola and Robert (2018). However, according to Ankeli, Nuhu, Popoola, Ankeli, and Ojeniyi (2020), land can be owned by the state, a clan, a family, or an individual in a typical Nigerian environment. As a result, its ownership is comprehensive since it includes a variety of rights over any given piece of land, including the ability to lease, sell, grant easements, hold, usufruct, charge, have actual or constructive possession of the land, and prevent trespassers from entering. Thus, Ankeli et al. (2020) cautioned that land ownership should and must be free of all sorts of discrimination since it serves as the poor's main source of income, a vehicle for investment, the foundation for wealth growth, and a source of divinity for others. The Nigerian real estate market co-exists with two distinct basic markets, which it is vital to highlight.

### **The Land Markets, both Official and Unofficial.**

According to Jimoh (2018), people's interest in the informal land market has soared as a result of this. This has also opened up the progressions and approaches to the informal form of land ownership, which is land grabbing. Using a survey research approach, Jimoh (2018) assesses the effects of land grabbing on residential real estate development in six wards of the Eti-Osa Local Government Area in the state of Lagos. The study found that land accessibility has an impact on real estate growth in the study area; as a result, strict legislation is required to prevent land grabs, which is detrimental to real estate development. By defining land grabbing and laying out its fundamental principles based on international idealism, Odoemene (2015) explores the nature of the socio-political economy and dynamics of government-driven land purchases in Nigeria since 2000.

The study found that the environment that eventually gave rise to aggravated problematic land acquisition patterns was the result of a combination of internal and external variables that contributed to the re-emergence of the emergence and escalation of land acquisition trends in the nation. Through case studies of three government-led land acquisitions, the study highlighted the many dynamics and candid experiences of the local populaces. The report defined the underlying lessons and growing realities of land grab practices in Nigeria in addition to outlining the grab's patterns.

### **Building construction in Nigeria and land-grabbing**

In several communities in Nigeria, land grabbers' operations have ruined peaceful coexistence, resulted in the deaths of many innocent people, produced land disputes or contestations, and destroyed law and order. Numerous anti-land grabbing bills have been passed into law in some states in Nigeria as a result of the nefarious, careless, illegal, and ruthless actions of the grabbers or omo-onile who extort money and violently strip innocent property owners of their land rights, deterring investment in real estate. Most nations experience a high number of land disputes brought on by omo-onile, or land squatters, who are viewed as the authorities and have endangered their communities. According to several studies (Jimoh, 2018; Alalade, Adedapo, Awoyemi, and Adebo (2016); Ankeli, Dabara, Omotehinshe, Lawal, Odeyomiand Adebowale 2017; Babette, 2018), the need to use land resources, poverty, weak land market institutions, greed, rapid population growth, scarcity, and land value appreciation are some of the factors that support o Land subdivision and private property ownership are results of modern civilization's unchecked urbanization and rapid population increase. The idea of private land ownership disproves the ancient Greek legends of peaceful and harmonious cooperation. Due to this, Adarkwah et al. (2018) claimed that it is unlikely that land grabbing will end because it has become a global issue, the ever-increasing and rapid population growth, and the emergence of free trade policies in the global setting.

In a similar vein, Udoekanem (2017) noted that the severe increase in demand for housing accommodations as well as other related services and infrastructures in Nigeria is unquestionably the result of the country's rapid population growth. The omo-oniles' promotion and operation of the land rush has intensified land dispute conflicts with significant detrimental effects on sociopolitical, economic, ecological, and spatial development. The worst affected are typically the developing countries or those in transition, which often have weak land market structures, a lack of land access for the poor, and a high prevalence of illicit means of accessing chances for employment. Particularly in impoverished African nations where the majority of the population lives in utter poverty, illiteracy, and other social problems, land grabbing and the conflicts that result from it can have disastrous impacts on people, groups, and even entire nations (Jimoh, 2018; Ndi, 2017).

### **Lagos-based OmoOnile**

In Lagos, people often refer to themselves as "omonile," especially new homeowners. For many years, there has been a love-hate connection between land grabbers known as "omoonile." The phrase isn't just applied to Lagos State; some cities in southwestern Nigeria are also currently dealing with the threat posed by these criminals who go by the name "omoonile." These so-called "land owners" have an outlandish feeling of entitlement. You are required to pay them when you want to begin building your home (foundation fees), when you are going to begin roofing the building, as well as for the installation of windows, flooring, plastering, and plumbing as well as for the offloading of building supplies.

Omoonile is simply translated as "landowner" in Yoruba. These moonies, who received the lands from their ancestors, are indeed the true owners. Before there was any considerable development in these locations, these lands were handed down through the generations. The family then decides to sell the property once these areas begin to develop and businesses and residential areas start to appear a few miles distant from these places. Problems emerge when a side of the family is left out in the sale of the land because most families in the past were polygamous. The family members excluded from the land sale may even be the ones who possess the actual land documents. This is when we hear tales of landowners being ordered to sell their property again (at a price that may even be higher than the original purchase price), or in some circumstances, being ordered to completely evacuate the property.

Some jobless miscreants masquerade as omooniles in addition to the omooniles who assert to be the land's original proprietors. They conceal themselves by claiming to have the state of Lagos' approval to collect fees. Every time you are about to have anything done on your land, these criminals only demand outrageous payments. When starting their building project, these individuals felt it was their job to irritate hardworking Nigerians.

The omoonile is a threat throughout all of Lagos, although you might encounter them more frequently in some specific regions. Ikorodu, Ogudu, Idimu, Ejigbo, OkoAfo in Badagry, and Ibafo (this area is not totally in Lagos, but many Lagosians reside and own property here) are the areas in Lagos that have been most severely affected.

What you ought to understand regarding land grabbing in Lagos

- The majority of them are the offspring of early or first-generation residents who own and trade inherited land.
- With the help of their informants, these omooniles scour the neighborhood for ongoing construction projects or brand-new structures. Land speculators also have the support of the police and attorneys. After the construction of his project was established, there was a case of a man refusing to pay these land squatters. The police were notified after a corpse was discovered there the next day.
- Don't be scared to argue and yell at them.

### **Methodology**

To achieve the study's goal of evaluating the emerging trend of land grabbing and its likely effects on building construction in the Oreyo settlement to expose the factors necessitating land grabbers' activities in the study area, both primary and secondary data sources were investigated. Gaps were identified in the literature on land grabbing, real estate development and investment, and omo-onile activities in our communities. Physical inspections and oral interviews were done, along with the distribution of questionnaires and the analysis of the information contained in papers and other pertinent sources deemed important for the study. 50 respondents were chosen at random for the study's sample. The study's designed questionnaire was intended to gather data on the sociodemographic traits of the respondents, the accessibility of residential plots and the security of ownership, the causes of land loss to land grabbers (omo-oniles), a general assessment of the activities of land grabbers, as well as other difficulties faced by property owners. Frequency Distribution Tables, Mean, and Likert Scale was used to analyze the data. The reasons for omo-onile activities in the research areas were rated by respondents using a five-point Likert scale. Strongly not a factor, Not a factor, Fairly Not a Factor, A Factor, and Strongly a Factor are the replies that were used for the scale. Strongly not a factor (SNF) = 1, Not a factor (NF) = 2, Fairly, not a factor (FNF) = 3, A factor (F) = 4, and strongly a factor (SF) = 5 were the additional codes assigned to each response. The replies were classified as Strongly Disagree (SDA) = 1, Disagree (DA) = 2, Undecided (U) = 3, Agree (A) = 4, and Strongly Agree (DA) = 5 quantify and rate the respondents' perceptions of the impact of the omo-onile's activities on building construction in the research areas.

### **Results and Discussion**

Data collected and analyzed are presented and discussed in this section. Table 1 presents the administration of the questionnaire and the percentage retrieved.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents**

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	34	68
Female	16	32
Total	50	100
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	16	32
Married	30	60
Divorce	4	8
Total	50	100
<b>Age</b>		
25-34	5	10
35-44	12	24
45-54	31	62
Above 55	2	4
Total	50	100
<b>Education Level</b>		
Tertiary Education	29	58
Secondary Education	14	28
Primary Education	7	14
No Formal Education	-	-
Total	50	100

**Source: Field Survey, 2022**

Most of the respondents (68%) are men, as evidenced by the socio-demographic profile of the respondents in table 1 above, which demonstrates male dominance in land ownership and as household heads in the research area. Additionally, it supported Olayiwola and Olaitan's claims (2019). 60% of the respondents are married, 32% are still single, and 8% are either divorced or separated, according to the respondents' marital status. The age distribution of the respondents reveals that 62% of the sampled landowners are in the 45–54 age range. The age range represents the working-age population that is actively participating in society. It demonstrates that the majority of landowners are engaged. According to the respondents' educational profiles, 58% had tertiary, 28% had secondary education, and 14% had primary education.

**Table 2: The Nature of Operation of Omo-oniles in the study area**

Variables	Weighted mean	ranks
The Imposition of levies/extortion	4.50	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Seizing/ Grapping of Land	4.38	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Destruction of buildings on land	4.22	4 <sup>th</sup>
Reselling of Land	4.13	5 <sup>th</sup>
Stop work on site	4.01	6 <sup>th</sup>
Violent conflict on site	4.87	1 <sup>st</sup>

**Source: Field Survey, 2022**

Average weighted cumulatively = 3.0 (Fair level of satisfaction).

NB: The casual factor ranges from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest.

The omo-oniles' activities in the studied region range from the imposition of illegitimate levies on real estate developers, land seizure, property destruction, and halting construction progress, to violent conflict or attack. Calamities frequently result from failure to pay or settle the bill or fulfill the requirements of the omo-oniles. Table 2 showed that the omo-onile in OreyoIgbobo either trespassed onto others' property and sold that plot of land to several gullible buyers or

violently took it from the owner and demanded that they buy it back. These criteria were the most often used, with mean scores of 4.87 and 4.50, respectively. Others include armed clashes on the job site, halting of work, imposition of levies or taxes, extortion, and destruction of buildings on the job site.

**Table 3: Residents' Perception of Causal Factors of Omo-Onile in the Study Areas**

Factors	mean	ranks
Economic Hardship	4.67	1 <sup>st</sup>
Illiteracy/ Backwardness	4.41	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Greed / Political Influence	4.17	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Drug/PeerInfluence	4.03	4 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of Family Cohesion	3.92	5 <sup>th</sup>

**Source: Field survey Data (2022)**

Table 3 displays the respondents' opinions of the research area's causal factor for omo-onile syndrome. All the elements studied are contributory factors, as indicated by the mean summation of the weighted mean values, which is 4.2. Economic hardship and illiteracy/backwardness were shown to have the most significant effects, with weighted mean values of 4.67 and 4.41, respectively, placing them first and second. With weighted mean values of 3.92, 4.03, and 4.17, respectively, and ranked fifth, fourth, and third in that order, greed/political influence, drug/peer influence, and a lack of family togetherness are further characteristics that contribute to the omo-onile scourge in the research locations.

**Table 4: Respondents' Perceived Effects of Omo-onile activities on Residential Real Estate Development**

Variables	mean	ranks
Discourages Real Estate Development	4.9	1 <sup>st</sup>
It reduces Land Value	4.1	4 <sup>th</sup>
It Leads to a loss in Rent	4.4	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Lead to land right Insecurity	4.7	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Breakdown of social interaction	3.7	5 <sup>th</sup>
Mean $\sum WM = 4.4$		

**Source: Field survey Data (2022)**

The respondents' perceptions of the difficulties posed by the omo-building onile's construction operations in the research region were shown in Table 4. According to the interviewees, building construction and real estate development are omo-oniles' main activities in the research area. With a weighted mean value of 4.9, it is rated as the top variable and the most crucial one. The perception is consistent with Deininger and Castagnini's (2016) argument that disputes over land ownership result in the loss of economic resources. The respondents also believed that the omo-oniles' activities contributed to the study area's high level of individual land right insecurity. With a weighted value and weighted mean total of 4.7, the variable came in second.

Others include its capacity to cause a loss in rent since prospective tenants are hesitant to occupy vacant areas because of their dread of the omo-onile's operations resulting in a void period and a loss of rent in the real estate market. The study area's landowners no longer engage socially because of Omo-Oniles' land grabbing operations and activities. Many of the landowners who have come into contact with omo-oniles who have either sold their parcel of property to several buyers, been forcibly evicted from their land, been forced to pay numerous arbitrary levies

imposed on them, or been assaulted are afraid to communicate with other landowners openly. With a weighted mean of 3.7, it came in fifth place. The variables attained an acceptable level of 4, according to the respondents' perceptions as a whole.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study looked at the new pattern and problems with omo-oniles (land snatchers) during building construction in OreyoIgbobo, Ikorodu, Lagos State. According to the study's findings, 32% of respondents are single, 60% of respondents are married, and 68% of respondents are men. It demonstrates the predominance of men in land ownership in Africa. Similar findings were observed in earlier investigations by Jimoh (2018) and Alalade et al. (2016). The study also demonstrates that the omo-onile's activities in the study region vary from the imposition of illegitimate taxes on real estate developers, the seizure of land, the destruction of property, and the suspension of activity at the construction site, to violent conflict attacks. The most significant causative factors for omo-onile activities were economic and illiteracy, with weighted mean values of 4.87 and 4.67, respectively. More specifically, the study showed that omo-onile activities hinder real estate development, decrease the value of the land, and cause rent loss, and instability regarding land rights, among other things. The results are in line with those of earlier research conducted by Adarkwah et al. (2018), Jimoh (2018), and Alalade et al (2016). Therefore, the analysis suggests the following:

- The necessity of putting an end to land grabbers' maniacal behavior and their newly appearing antics that are detrimental to building construction, real estate development, and investment through strict measures
- Encouraging homeowners in the study areas to change their purchase agreements to more acceptable records like Certificates of Occupancy or Right of Occupancy

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