



The Consequences of Tenant Eviction in Ilorin, Nigeria: Estate Surveyors and Tenants' Perspectives

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Abstract

This paper examines the consequences of tenant eviction in property management practice with a view to suggesting measures aimed at reducing its incidence. The 16 registered estate surveyors and 114 evicted tenants in the study area were surveyed with a structured questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using frequency distribution tables and frequencies. The study revealed that the most vulnerable categories of tenants are within the lower income bracket. In spite of the substantial qualitative and quantitative housing problems in Nigeria, the impact of eviction can be severe. Eviction resulted in homelessness for the displaced tenants; it led to enmity, loss of income and time wastage for litigation and also bad reputation for the manager especially where the case was lost. Evictions when inevitable should be undertaken with a degree of concern and care must be taken to avoid waste of resources. The paper observes that it is necessary to create a national database of detailed information on evictions to help determine the scope of the problem, bring national attention to eviction issues, and develop housing policies and programs that might decrease the occurrence and impacts of evictions.

Keywords: Property Management, Tenant, Tenant Eviction, Premises Recovery, Tenancy, Ilorin, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

A tenancy is a contract between a landlord and tenant which contains the terms and conditions of the rental. It cannot be changed while it is in effect unless both parties agree (Boulder, 2012; Williams, 2000; Spitzer, 2003). A very important aspect of the activities involved in property management is dealing with leases and most importantly, dealing with tenants to facilitate a good landlord-tenant-manager relationship (Kyle and Kennehan, 1979). The term 'eviction' describes the practice of involuntary removal of person(s) from their homes. It is frequently associated with a range of related terms such as premises recovery, ejection, forced removal, relocation, dislocation, expulsion and displacement (Leckie, 1995; Microsoft Encarta, 2009). Although the causes of tenant eviction can be varied, in most instances, it arises as a response of landlord to unruly violation of the lease by tenant. Different methods have also been used in different places.

Both the landlord and tenant have some obligations to respect under the tenancy agreement. Whenever there is a conflict between the landlord and tenant arising from

breach of lease terms, eviction may be inevitable especially when other forms of settlement are not feasible (Ojo, 2007). Property management problems would reduce considerably if all tenants comply with the rules, covenants and conditions of a tenancy. Even where this is possible, some other reasons would make it imperative to terminate some tenancies. In property management, tenant eviction is almost inevitable although there are several precautions that may be taken to avoid it. It is a global phenomenon, occurring in all parts of the world, both developing and developed countries (COHRE, 2004, 2006).

The consequences of premises recovery are highly disturbing, particularly for self – help methods, and when we look more closely at its local impacts– on individuals, families and communities (Leckie, 1995; Momah, 2011; Landlord and tenant Board, 2012 and Moneke, 2009). Also of great concern is the impending eviction of thousands of families living in various categories of rental properties across the country. In Ilorin particularly, hapless Nigerians suffer untold hardships in the hands of

some greedy and wicked landlords who employ different tactics including self-help to eject tenants who are unable to meet with absurd and perverse increments of rent (Moneke, 2009). Many tenants needlessly suffer grave hardships for lack of knowledge of the protections which the relevant laws confer on them. Therefore, this study is set to examine the various impacts of eviction on property manager and evicted tenants. Given the nature of this study, the specific research questions which should be answered include – What category of people is mostly affected by eviction? In what type(s) of properties is tenant eviction mostly prevalent? What are the consequences and implications of tenant eviction? What can be done to prevent evictions? The paper provides answers to these questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Tenant Eviction

Ordinarily, eviction means removing a tenant from the premises in which they live by legal proceedings, for a particular reason known to the Landlord. Its professional meaning is given as “a legal proceeding by a lessor (landlord) to recover possession of property” (Friedman et al., 1997). When a tenant fails to comply with the lease agreement, the landlord may seek eviction of the tenant to terminate his rights to use the property. Eviction was defined as a legal process by which a landlord forces a tenant to move out of the landlord's property involuntarily and usually permanently (Microsoft Encarta, 2009; Momah, 2011 and Serving Hennepin County, 2012).

Texas Low Income Housing Information Service (2006) refers to eviction as “a lawsuit filed by a landlord to remove persons and belongings from the landlord's property”. In Texas law, these are also referred to as “forcible entry and detainer” or “forcible detainer” suits. There are hundreds of cases filed every day with Texas justice courts (also called justice of the peace or J. P. courts). In British Columbia Canada, eviction, also known as “unlawful detainer”, “summary possession”, or “forcible detainer” in some jurisdictions, is the removal of a tenant from rental property by a law enforcement officer. Before a tenant can be evicted, a landlord must win an eviction lawsuit. In Australia, Residential Tenancies Act 1995 and Regulations described eviction as a legal process to force the tenant to leave the rented premises (South Australia Central, 2006). “An eviction is a court action a landlord must use to remove a tenant from an apartment or room”. (The Legal Assistance Resource Center of CT, 2006).

In some areas, landlords can evict their tenants without cause. In other areas, the law requires landlords to have a “just cause”, which usually includes non-payment of rent or damaging the property. There is a general trend towards requiring just cause for eviction and this portends danger for efficient housing delivery

(Carroll, 2008) In Nigeria, just cause is necessary for an eviction suit to favor the landlord (ACN, 2011; Lagos State Government, 2011; Nigeria Property Centre, 2012).

Eviction can be actual, constructive, partial or retaliatory in nature (Friedman et al, 1997; RHOL, 2006): Actual eviction exists where one is removed from the property either by force or process of law. When it is by the process of law it is called Legal eviction (Aaron, 2003). It requires that a proper notice is served requiring the tenant to vacate the apartment within a specified time interval, and court process is used to follow up when the tenant dishonors the notice. Constructive eviction exists when, through the fault of the landlord, physical conditions of the property renders it unfit for the purpose for which it was leased. A tenant who has been constructively evicted has a number of legal recourses. He may be able to terminate the lease, order constructive eviction, and end liability for future rent payments (Burke and Snoe, 2008). Partial eviction exists where a tenant is deprived of a portion of the property for example, where a substantial modification is required on one side of the building, the landlord and the tenant may agree to a partial eviction from the property because of the disruption to be caused by the work. The tenant's rent will be reduced accordingly. Retaliatory eviction according to Aaron (2003) and RHOL (2006) occurs when a landlord attempts to evict a tenant in response to some (legal) action taken by the tenant. Eviction suit could be dismissed if the tenant provides reasons to convince the court that it is retaliatory.

Reasons for Tenant Eviction

Although the reasons for evicting tenants can be varied, some of the common factors identified from literature as grounds for tenant eviction in real estate practice are non-payment of rent, violation of other lease covenants, health and safety issues, criminal acts, unruly behavior and requisition of the premises for personal use by the landlord (Aaron, 2003; Amos, 2006; Ojo, 2007; Lagos State Government, 2011; Land Registry for England and Wales, 2012; Government of Dubai, 2007; Nigeria Property Centre, 2012; e-How, 2013; Department of Commerce, 2012, Minnesota Judicial Branch, 2013). These are common to all countries and states.

Non-payment of rent: On any day following the day the rent was due, when the tenant failed to pay, the landlord can serve a termination notice to be effective ten days after the date the notice was served. The tenant may within five days after receipt of the notice pay all rents due and the notice of termination is then void (University of British Columbia, 2004). If the tenant refuses to pay or move out, eviction procedure may commence. Rent arrears is the commonest of all the reasons for tenant eviction (ACN, 2011; Nigeria Property Centre, 2012; Topham, 2012, Land Registry for England

and Wales, 2012; MBIE, 2013; Michigan Legal Aid, 2012; Hartman and Robinson, 2006; Mitchell, 2003; and Amos, 2006). The vast majority of residential evictions are for non-payment of rent, which are usually treated as a summary proceeding and do not require a trial of fact (RHOL, 2006). Regarding rent arrears in Scotland, non-payment of rent for a period exceeding three months is sufficient grounds for a Sheriff Court to grant a repossession order whether the lease is an assured tenancy or a short assured tenancy (The Housing (Scotland) Act 1988). However, the law in England and Wales regarding private sector tenancies, the Housing Act (1988) provides that if the tenant owes more than two months or eight weeks rent, then the Judge must award a repossession order (HowTo/Books, 2006). For non-payment of rent, the tenant must be fourteen (14) days in arrears before a landlord serves the notice.

Eviction for cause: The identified grounds on which a landlord can terminate a tenancy agreement for cause are disturbance of other tenants, extraordinary damage to the property, abuse of the property, failure of tenant to pay security deposit within 30 days of signing tenancy agreement, knowingly misrepresented the property to a prospective tenant or purchaser, serious infringement on safety and other lawful right or interest of landlord or other tenants, unreasonable number of people occupying the premises, breach of reasonable term of agreement, frustration of the agreement, assignment or subletting of premises without landlord's consent, break a serious law like prostitution, or buying and/or selling drugs; and government's order to vacate the premises relative to safety, health, fire prevention or zoning (University of British Columbia, 2004; Spitzer, 2006; Chavis, 2006; U. K. Deputy Prime Minister, 2005, Kyle and Kennehan, 1979 and Carroll, 2008). Where there is a breach of the agreement by the tenant, he must be given at least seven (7) days to remedy the breach and then at least a further seven (7) clear days to vacate, if the breach is not remedied.

Requisition of premises for personal use by the landlord: Whenever the landlord requires the property for his personal purpose, the tenant may be required to vacate the property. A landlord may terminate the tenancy agreement on the ground that he requires the property for his personal use but proper notice must be given to the tenant (Aluko, 1998; University of British Columbia, 2004).

Holdover: Where the term granted under a lease expires, the tenant is expected to vacate the premises, or renew the tenancy with the consent of the landlord. In absence of any of these, the tenant overstays so the landlord may evict to recover possession (Spitzer, 2006).

Consequences of Eviction

Concerns about 'tenancy failure' have prompted a range

of research work, often practically oriented, that has tried to explain why it happens and so to produce practical recommendations as to how landlords might tackle the problem. It has been discovered that high rates of tenancy breakdown leading to termination, in the private and social rented sectors have increasingly been identified as problematic both in the UK and elsewhere (Pawson and Munro, 2007). This concern reflects various perspectives of landlord's failure, tenant's failure or market failure. First, Tenancy breakdown generates significant costs for landlords, as each additional property falling vacant incurs revenue costs in relation to the repair, cleaning and re-servicing of the property as well as the costs in lost rent while it remains empty and the costs of re-letting the property to another tenant. Second, social costs are imposed on the individuals and households directly experiencing tenancy breakdown, particularly to the extent that it is symptomatic of a broader failure to establish a stable, sustainable or secure lifestyle (Pawson and Munro, 2007). Third, neighborhoods subject to high rates of tenancy failure experience social costs. Specifically, the fabric of social cohesiveness in such localities is likely to be undermined by rapid turnover which means that residents may never come to know or even recognize their neighbors, far less build relationships characterized by mutual trust and respect. In this way tenancy breakdown can undermine further neighborhoods that are already relatively disadvantaged and fragile (Pawson and Munro, 2007). In this line, Nottingham City Homes (2012) identified and classified the consequences of tenancy breakdown into three categories i.e. personal, social and financial cost.

Whatever the causes of termination, the consequences can be harsh and severe. Homelessness damages people's capability through loss of skills, through an inability to think about employment whilst worrying about housing, and through their health becoming impaired whilst homeless (Crises, 2008). Homelessness also damages people's resilience, self-esteem and self-confidence. Cases involving claims for illegal eviction could potentially increase legal costs, create an entitlement to compensation and cause damage to the landlord's reputation (Stroud DC, 2012). Poor housing can affect a person's health, work, education, relationships and life chances (www.equalityhumanrights.com). In summary, the consequences can be brutal having personal, social, political and financial consequences on landlord, tenant and manager. These studies were conducted in developed countries mainly in Europe countries and mostly using social housing as case studies. The present study is concerned with private rental houses and in a developing country.

The Study Area – Ilorin

Ilorin is located on Latitude 8°30'N and Longitude 4°35'E.

It lies in the transitional zone of the middle belt and serves as a gateway city between the north and south-western part of the Nigeria. It is the capital of Kwara State and lies along the Lagos – Kaduna highway, 306 kilometers from Lagos, 600 kilometers from Kaduna and about 500 kilometers from Abuja. The 2006 population census figure revealed that there are 2,371,089 people in Kwara State with growing rate of 6.2% (NPC, 1991 and 2006; Odeniyi, 2007). Out of this, 1,012,894 representing 42.72% of the state total population lives in Ilorin. The state capital is experiencing a very high rate of population growth over the time. The metropolis is divided politically to form parts of five local government areas. One urban – Ilorin West Local Government, and four rural – Ilorin East, Ilorin South, Moro and Asa Local Government Authorities.

The Ilorin property market can be classified into three viz: the residential, commercial and industrial property markets. The residential property market is characterized by various types of houses present all over the city. The traditional centre of the city (Oke – Iele, Pakata, Adangba, Omoda, Ajikobi, Oloje, Gegele, Sanni-Okin, Eruda, Balogun Fulani, Alanamu, Ita – Adu, etc) comprises mainly old compound and tenement houses interspersed with block of flats all of high-density category. Medium density housing estates are found at Oloje, Kulende, Adewole, Irewolede and the Mandate estates. They are characterized by two, three and four – bedroom bungalows, and extensions and modifications to create extra spaces to accommodate more people. Low-density areas are found in the GRA, Taiwo and parts of Adewole areas where the houses are mainly detached bungalows of two to five bedrooms, duplex and masionettes.

Commercial properties consist mainly of shops, open markets and offices. Shops are generally available at all locations and neighborhoods to provide shopping facilities. They however, attract higher values at the city centers and main business districts. They range from small cubicles or kiosks patronized by small-scale traders, to open markets and stores. Office refers to buildings that provide ample room spaces and facilities to support a good working condition for people. They include those occupied by private professional offices of lawyers, chartered accountants, surveyors, consultants, hospitals, etc and corporate organizations like banks, insurance companies, etc.

Commercial buildings dominate the properties along Taiwo, Yoruba, Murtala and Unity Roads. Most of the buildings that were hitherto designed for residential purposes along these roads have been converted to either offices or shops. Multi-purpose built offices and shopping complexes are also very common. Along other roads are found residential, convenience shops and stores. Although there are owner-occupied properties, the commercial and residential property markets are active in Ilorin. This is evidenced by the number of quacks apart

from professionals engaged in real estate business.

There is little concentration of industrial properties as industrial development in the city is very low. Few industrial premises are found along Asa Dam Road, Gaa – Imam along Ajase – Ipo Road and Western Reservoir Road. Examples of the available industries are Global Soap and Detergent, Dangote Flour Mills, Sawmills, Kwara State Metal and Chemical Industries, Delta Cables, 7-UP and Coca Cola plants. Cases of isolated small-scale industries (food, drink, leather and furniture products) are also found scattered all over the city. Most of the industrial premises are owner-occupied and there are few cases of tenancy in industrial property, so the market is not quite active.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Ilorin metropolis in 2010. The focus group for the research work was the estate surveyors and valuers and the tenants that were evicted from residential properties between 2001 – 2010 in Ilorin metropolis. The estate surveyors are custodians of properties and are often involved in management of landed properties. They are the real estate consultants professionally recognized in Nigeria to conduct property management activities (FGN, 1975). All the 16 firms that were practising in Ilorin as at 2010 were surveyed by questionnaire administration. The responses of the estate surveyors indicated that there were 1,446 evicted tenants during the period; 10% (144) evicted tenants were selected by stratified method using property types as criterion to ensure that all categories of residential properties are fairly represented in the study. Questionnaires which were a combination of closed and open-ended questions were administered on the subjects. Each respondent was asked to complete a questionnaire by answering questions concerning their socioeconomic status and the effects the eviction had on them. However, only 114 questionnaires (representing 79.17% response rate) were completed, returned and found useful for the study were retrieved from the evicted tenants while the surveyors indicated 100% response rate. Data collected were analyzed and presented in frequency distribution tables and percentages.

RESULTS

The findings relating to the sample characteristics of the respondents and impacts of eviction from the perspectives of the estate surveyors and evicted tenants are presented in this section. The data involved were mutually as well as non – mutually exclusive options which results in multiple responses for some of the variables.

Table 1. Sample characteristics for Estate Surveyors

Estate Surveyors (16)		
Age	Less than 40 Years	18.75%
	41 – 50 Years	25.00%
	Over 50 Years	56.25%
Positions in their firms	Principal	62.50%
	Branch Manager	12.50%
	Estate Surveyor	25.00%
Years of experience	3 – 5 Years	12.50%
	6 – 10 Years	18.75%
	11-15 Years	31.25%
	16 – 20 Years	18.75%
	Over 20 Years	18.75%
Academic and Professional Qualifications	B.Sc	50%
	HND	31.25%
	M.Sc / MBA	18.75%
	Probationer	6.25%
	ANIVS	62.50%
Professional Services	FNIVS	31.25%
	Property valuation	100%
	Property management	100%
	Estate Agency	100%
	Feasibility study	50%
	Property development	43.75%

SOURCE: Author's field survey, 2010

Sample characteristics of Estate Surveyors

The sample characteristics for the practising firms of Estate Surveyors and Valuers that were surveyed are shown in Table 1 (Appendix). A total number of 16 firms that were practising in Ilorin were all considered for the study. All the 16 questionnaires administered were duly completed and returned giving 100% response rate. 56.25 % of the respondents were over 50 years old, 21% average 41-50 years while 18.75 were less than 40 years old. 62.5% were the principal partners in their firms, 25% were estate officers while 12.5% were branch managers. 37.5% have more than 15 years experience of the practice, 31.5% have between 11 and 15 years, 18.75% have 6 – 10 years while 12.5% have less than 6 years experience in the practice of estate surveying. 50% had BSc degree, 31.25% had HND while 18.75% had additional qualifications at masters level. 62.5% were associates, 31.25% were fellows while only 6.25% were probationer members of the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers. The scope of practice of the respondents indicated that all (100%) engaged in property valuation, management, estate agency, 50% engaged in feasibility appraisals and 43.75% engaged in property development.

Sample Characteristics for Evicted Tenants

The sample characteristics for the evicted tenants that participated in the study are shown in Table 2. A total number of 114 evicted tenants were sampled by questionnaires but 114 usable questionnaires were retrieved (a response rate of 79%). About 40% of the evicted tenants averaged 51-60 years old, 38% were between 41-50 years of age, 10% were between 31-40 years, 4% were above 60years while the remaining 7% were inconclusive. About 74% were married, 10% single and the remaining 16% divorced. 30.70% attained primary education, 44.74% secondary education while 22.8% had tertiary education. 62% were civil servants while about 32% worked in private sector. 69% earned below ₦10,000 monthly. 17% earned between ₦10,000 – ₦30,000, 2.6% earned between ₦30,001 and ₦50,000, 3.5% earned between ₦ 50,000 and ₦100,000 while the remaining 7% were inconclusive. 40% occupied tenement property types, 26% flat, 12% bungalow while only 2% occupied duplex. 7% were on monthly tenancies, 10% quarterly, 52% half yearly, and 31% yearly. The study further revealed that 33% represents those that paid less than ₦10,000, 43% paid between ₦10,000 – ₦30,000, 21% paid ₦30,000 – ₦ 50,000 while only 2,6%

Table 2. Sample Characteristics for Evicted Tenants

Evicted Tenants (114)		
Age	31 – 40 years	10.53%
	41 – 50years	37.72%
	51 – 60 years	40.35%
	Above 60years	4.39%
	No response	7.01%
Marital Status	Married	73.68%
	Single	10.53%
	Widowed	7.01%
	Divorced	3.51%
	No response	5.26%
Education Level	Primary School	44.74%
	Secondary School	30.70%
	Tertiary Institutions	22.81%
	No response	1.75%
Occupation	Private sector	31.58%
	Civil servant	62.28%
	Retired	1.75%
	Unemployed	4.39%
Income Level per month	Below ₦10,000	69.30%
	₦10,000 – ₦30,000	17.54%
	₦30,001 – ₦50,000	2.63%
	₦50,001 – ₦100,000	3.51%
	No response	7.02%
Property Types Occupied	Tenement	33.99%
	Flat	26.14%
	Bungalow	12.42%
	Duplex	1.96%
	Monthly	7.02%
	Quarterly	9.65%
Tenancy Type	Half Yearly	51.75%
	Yearly	30.70%
	No response	0.87%
Rent Paid Per Annum	Below ₦ 12,001	33.335
	₦ 12,001 – ₦ 36,000	42.98%
	₦36,001 – ₦ 60,000	21.05%
	More than ₦100,000	2.63%

SOURCE: Author's Field Survey, 2010

paid over ₦100,000 as rent per annum. These indicate that the incidence of eviction is higher on lower rental properties, as the majority of the evicted tenants were civil servants holding periodic tenancies and earning less than ₦10,000 per month.

The Consequences of Eviction

From the review of theoretical and empirical studies as discussed earlier in this study, certain problems are found

to trail eviction practice. The surveyors as well as the evicted tenants were asked to select from the list of non-mutually exclusive options, the problems experienced from evictions in the past. Their responses shown in Table 3 revealed that the main problems suffered were enmity (17.20%), loss of income (17.20%), time loss (16.13%), repairs (15.05%), disgrace (11.83%), and void (8.60%). Other problems are delayed execution (7.53%), intimidation (4.30%) and re-letting of premises after eviction (2.15%). Table 3 also shows that the responding evicted tenants suffered tremendously from such

Table 3. The Consequences of Tenant Eviction

Estate surveyors = 16; evicted tenants = 114.		
Estate Surveyors' Problems with eviction	Enmity	17.20%
	Loss of income	17.20%
	Time loss	16.13%
	Repairs	15.05%
	Disgrace	11.83%
	Void	8.60%
	Delayed execution	7.53%
	Intimidation	4.30%
	Re-letting	2.15%
	Enmity	18.43%
Evicted Tenants Problems with eviction	High cost of resettlement	18.43%
	Disgrace	16.64%
	Resettlement problems	17.29%
	Loss of personal properties	15.33%
Estate Surveyors: Benefits derived from eviction	Dislocation of family members	13.87%
	Opportunity to select better tenants	42.11%
	Opportunity to fix higher rent	26.32%
	Experience	21.05%
	Rest of mind	10.52%

SOURCE: Authors' Field Survey, 2010

problems as enmity (18%), high cost of resettlement (18%), disgrace (17%), resettlement problems (17%), and loss of personal properties (15%), and (14%) also suffered dislocation of family members after eviction. It is clear that all the tenants suffered numerous problems when they were evicted from houses. The surveyors were also asked about the benefits if any, derived from tenant eviction. Their responses shown in table 3 revealed that the benefits are the opportunity to select better tenants (42.11%), the opportunity to fix higher rents (26.32%), experience (21.05%); and rest of mind especially when a bad tenant is evicted (10.52%).

CONCLUSION

The impact of evictions can be severe as observed above: It can result in homelessness and can generate negative changes in the lives of the displaced, it may lead to enmity, loss of income and time wastage for litigation and it may also earn bad reputation for the manager especially where the case is lost. The qualitative and quantitative housing problems remained substantial in Nigeria. Eviction is a hidden problem that confronts many stakeholders and constitutes a major problem for most productive men and women in the society. However, excessive regulations or tenant protections prolong the eviction process and lead to large income losses and high expenses for small property owners as well as promote dysfunctional environments in rental properties

where bad tenants are allowed to remain. The majority of private investors who look up to real estate as a viable investment would be discouraged and may lead to shortage of housing on the long run. Evictions are not always bad, it can benefit individuals especially the landlord in that bad tenant can be evicted to pave way for selecting a better one who will pay higher rents, carryout proper maintenance of the property, live amicably with neighbors and have respect for the terms of the tenancy. It is true that the current legal system protects the legitimate interests of tenants. It is necessary to note that the problem is not the eviction itself but the potential outcome for individual stakeholders. Hence, this calls for urgent attention of the government at various levels to bring succor to the practice and the stakeholders.

It is necessary to create a national database of detailed information on evictions. This would help to determine the scope of the problem, bring national attention to this issue, and develop housing policies and programs that might decrease the occurrence and effect of evictions. It is also necessary to organize at the state and local levels, improved legal system that will create policies to reduce the impact of involuntary moves on the most vulnerable tenants. While evictions may be inevitable in certain circumstances, they should be undertaken only as a last resort for terminating tenancies. Evictions should involve a degree of concern and care must be taken to avoid waste of resources.

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