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Urban Gentrification and Housing Affordability: Evidence from Iwofe Community, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study examines the impact of gentrification on housing affordability in Iwofe Community, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, addressing a critical gap in African and Nigerian gentrification research. Using a descriptive survey design with systematic random sampling, data were collected from 254 respondents who occupied housing units before 2020, enabling before-and-after comparisons of rental costs and housing affordability. Multivariate regression analysis identified factors driving rent escalation between the pre-gentrification (pre-2020) and post-gentrification (post-2020) periods. Results reveal severe deterioration in housing affordability. Weighted average rents increased 220% (from ₦373,228 to ₦1,193,465 annually), with housing-type-specific increases ranging from 100% for one-bedroom apartments to 268% for two-bedroom units. Critically, households experiencing severe affordability burden (spending ≥50% of income on rent) increased from 11.8% to 48.1%, far exceeding the 30% international threshold. Regression analysis demonstrates that gentrification-specific factors, particularly influx of higher-income residents (β = 0.318), urban redevelopment projects (β = 0.309), and infrastructure development (β = 0.304) collectively exert substantially greater influence ($\Sigma\beta$ = 0.931) on rent escalation than general inflation (β = 0.281). This establishes that Iwofe's affordability crisis reflects locality-specific gentrification dynamics rather than macroeconomic factors. The study provides robust empirical evidence that gentrification constitutes the primary mechanism undermining housing affordability for low- and middle-income residents in this Nigerian petroleum-producing city. These findings underscore the urgent need for gentrification-control policies, affordable housing programs, and community protection mechanisms in rapidly urbanizing African cities.

Keywords: Gentrification, Housing Affordability, Urban Development, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Gentrification, broadly defined as the transformation of previously low-income or underdeveloped urban neighborhoods into more attractive areas through reinvestment, redevelopment, and demographic change, has become a significant process shaping contemporary cities (Oliveira, 2025). While the phenomenon has been widely studied in Western urban contexts, its manifestation in cities of the Global South presents distinctive characteristics and consequences that require context-specific investigation. In many developing cities, gentrification is associated with rising property values, increasing rental prices, and changing neighborhood demographics as higher-income residents and investors move into previously affordable communities. These changes often place pressure on existing residents by increasing the cost of housing and living, thereby affecting the affordability of accommodation for low- and middle-income households (Oliveira, 2025).

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, rapid urbanization and expanding urban economies have intensified competition for urban land and housing. As cities grow and attract investment, inner-city and strategically located neighborhoods often experience redevelopment and rising property values. These changes frequently translate into higher rents and housing prices, gradually reducing the ability of existing residents to maintain access to affordable housing. Although gentrification can contribute to physical improvements in urban environments, its economic consequences often include reduced housing affordability and increased financial pressure on long-term residents.

In Southern Nigeria, urban transformation has accelerated in recent decades as a result of economic growth, population increase, and expanding investment in real estate and infrastructure. Port Harcourt, the major economic hub of the oil-producing Niger Delta region,

illustrates these dynamics. As the center of Nigeria's petroleum industry, the city has attracted significant public and private investment, leading to infrastructure upgrades, commercial expansion, and increased real estate development in several neighborhoods (Nwafor et al., 2018). While these developments contribute to urban modernization, they also create conditions in which property values and housing costs increase, particularly in areas that become attractive for residential and commercial investment.

The Iwofe Community, located within the urban area of Port Harcourt, has recently experienced noticeable physical and socio-economic changes. The community, historically characterized by relatively affordable housing and a concentration of low-income residents, has begun to witness new building developments, property upgrades, and increasing demand for residential space. These changes have contributed to rising land values and rental costs within the area. As a result, concerns have emerged regarding the extent to which ongoing urban transformation in Iwofe is influencing housing affordability for existing residents.

The relationship between gentrification and housing affordability is typically expressed through the capitalization of rising land and property values into housing costs. As neighborhoods become more attractive to investors and higher-income residents, demand for housing increases and property owners often adjust rents and prices upward to reflect the changing market conditions (Song & Chapple, 2024). This process gradually reduces the availability of affordable housing options within the affected neighborhoods and may compel lower-income households to seek accommodation in less desirable or more distant locations. Consequently, the affordability of housing becomes a critical issue in gentrifying urban areas.

Despite growing attention to housing affordability challenges in African cities, empirical studies examining how gentrification specifically influences housing affordability in Nigerian urban environments remain limited. Existing studies have largely focused on general housing shortages or rising urban housing costs, with relatively little attention given to the localized processes through which neighborhood transformation affects the affordability of housing for residents. This gap in knowledge is particularly important in rapidly transforming cities such as Port Harcourt, where urban development pressures continue to reshape residential neighborhoods.

The Iwofe Community therefore provides an important case for examining how gentrification processes influence housing affordability within a Nigerian urban context. As a neighborhood undergoing visible development and increasing investment interest, Iwofe reflects the broader tensions between urban redevelopment and the continued availability of affordable housing for existing residents. Understanding how these changes affect housing costs and accessibility within the community is essential for informing urban planning and housing policy aimed at promoting inclusive and sustainable urban development.

Against this background, this study examines the impact of gentrification on housing affordability in the Iwofe Community, Port Harcourt. The study seeks to provide empirical evidence on how ongoing urban transformation influences housing costs and the ability of residents to access and maintain affordable accommodation within the community.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Gentrification and Housing Affordability

Gentrification, commonly described as the transformation of working-class urban neighborhoods through reinvestment, redevelopment, and demographic change, has become a major process reshaping cities across both the Global North and the Global South (Oliveira, 2025). Originally conceptualized in 1970s urban scholarship to explain neighborhood succession in Western cities, the concept has since evolved to encompass a broader set of economic, social, and political processes. Contemporary scholarship recognizes gentrification as a multifaceted phenomenon involving the reinvestment of capital in previously undervalued urban spaces, the inflow of higher-income residents, and the escalation of property values (Gourzis & Alexandri, 2026). Central to the theoretical explanation of this process is the rent gap theory, which posits that gentrification occurs when a disparity arises between the existing capitalized ground rent of land under its current use and the potential ground rent that could be realized under more profitable uses (López-Morales, 2023). This disparity creates strong incentives for investors and developers to redevelop urban neighborhoods in order to capture the potential value difference.

Although gentrification is often associated with physical improvements in urban environments, its socio-economic consequences are frequently uneven. Urban redevelopment and increased investment often privilege higher-income groups while simultaneously creating pressures on existing low-income residents (Bosma, 2023). One of the most significant outcomes of gentrification is its effect on housing affordability. As neighborhoods attract investment and more affluent residents, demand for housing increases, leading to substantial increases in property values and rental prices. These rising housing costs gradually reduce the affordability of accommodation for existing residents, particularly low-income households that may struggle to keep pace with increasing rents and living expenses (Song & Chapple, 2024). Empirical studies have shown that neighborhoods undergoing gentrification often

experience housing price increases that significantly exceed those of non-gentrifying areas, thereby altering the financial accessibility of housing within these communities (Delmelle, 2021).

The affordability implications of gentrification are particularly pronounced for lower-income households. In many cases, households affected by rising housing costs are compelled to allocate a much larger share of their income to housing expenditure. Studies indicate that displaced residents in gentrifying neighborhoods may spend between 40 percent and 60 percent of their income on housing, far exceeding the commonly accepted affordability threshold of 30 percent of household income (Oyesomo et al., 2023). Beyond the direct escalation of housing costs, gentrification also increases competition for available housing units within urban areas. As housing prices rise in redeveloping neighborhoods, displaced or financially pressured residents seek accommodation in nearby areas, thereby extending affordability pressures to surrounding communities and peripheral locations (Etienne, 2025). In addition, investments in infrastructure and urban amenities, although beneficial to neighborhood development, often become capitalized into property values and rental prices, further reducing housing affordability for lower-income residents (Oliveira, 2025).

2.2 Empirical Studies on Gentrification and Housing Affordability

Empirical research on gentrification and housing affordability spans developed countries, emerging markets, and African contexts, yet significant gaps persist particularly regarding Nigerian secondary cities. In Western contexts, Song and Chapple (2024) investigated whether gentrification restricts housing markets for low-income households in New York and San Francisco using longitudinal dataset analysis from 2013-2019, finding low-income residents significantly more likely to leave gentrifying neighborhoods and less likely to enter them, though the study provided limited exploration of neighborhood characteristics beyond gentrification status influencing mobility (Song & Chapple, 2024). Paccoud (2016) examined buy-to-let gentrification in the United Kingdom through small-area tenure data comparison from 2001-2011, documenting how private rental market investment emerged as a prominent gentrification trajectory creating long-term displacement while failing to sufficiently analyze how rental market gentrification differs from ownership-based mechanisms. Martin, Shipman, and Ting (2024) employed qualitative case study combined with demographic analysis of out-migration from high-growth U.S. cities propelled by gentrification, revealing middle-class displacement into lower-cost regions though remaining inattentive to how receiving city communities experience gentrification pressures. Garmany and Richmond (2019) proposed the concept of "hygienisation" through conceptual analysis drawing on colonialism and state violence to distinguish Brazilian gentrification from Euro-American models, yet provided limited empirical documentation across cities and insufficient comparative analysis with African contexts.

African research on gentrification and housing affordability reveals substantial displacement and affordability crises though with significant evidential limitations. Maseko (2025) employed ethnographic research with 50 resident interviews examining Durban's Point Precinct state-led gentrification, finding 92% of participants reported housing becoming increasingly unaffordable and discovering gentrification creates compound displacement effects, though the study lacked longitudinal analysis to track displacement trajectories and insufficient examination of community resistance strategies. Boateng and Klopp (2024) challenged ahistorical housing crisis theorizations through critical postcolonial institutional analysis of Ghana, demonstrating persisting housing exclusion results from regressive investment patterns and elite institutional biases rather than demographic factors alone, yet provided limited empirical data quantifying affordability outcomes. Ngema, Bokhari, and Mbanga (2025) assessed social housing's urban regeneration impact through qualitative policy analysis and case studies across South African cities, finding social housing significantly expanded regulated units and alleviated low-income household financial burdens, though providing insufficient analysis of how social housing prevents gentrification displacement or achieves long-term affordability. Raj et al., (2025) evaluated Public-Private Partnership approaches for affordable housing in Dhaka through mixed methods combining qualitative interviews with policy review, documenting PPP potential while highlighting weak coordination and inflexible contracts limiting affordability for low-income groups, though providing limited long-term affordability outcome evidence. Etienne (2025) examined urban out-migration drivers in Sub-Saharan African cities using fixed effects quantitative analysis, finding inequality, rapid urbanization, and rising living costs drive significant out-migration from major cities confronting housing shortages, yet provided limited qualitative analysis of individual household decision-making and insufficient attention to gentrification-specific impacts.

Housing affordability studies in Ethiopian cities document severe unaffordability challenging government interventions. Teklemariam (2022) surveyed spatial equity implications of Ethiopia's Integrated Housing Development Program in Addis Ababa, discovering peri-urban residents perceive lower equity levels compared to inner-city residents while location statistically significantly correlates with satisfaction, yet lacked analysis of gentrification pressures and insufficient examination of how displacement affects original community residents. Elias (2025) employed descriptive statistical analysis

measuring housing affordability across Addis Ababa sub-cities using median multiple approach, finding housing extremely unaffordable for middle and low-income households with significant price variability, though providing limited trend analysis and insufficient examination of how infrastructure investment drives prices. Tareke and Baraki (2024) developed combined housing and transportation affordability index with GIS analysis across Addis Ababa location types, discovering outer-city residents face higher financial burdens despite lower housing costs due to transportation expenses, yet provided limited analysis of gentrification location-premium impacts. Uwayezu and de Vries (2020) assessed affordable housing accessibility in Kigali through price-to-income ratio analysis and household surveys, determining developed units remain severely unaffordable for target beneficiaries due to high development costs while formal housing serves only upper-income groups, though lacked analysis of gentrification dynamics in upgraded informal settlements. Regassa and Regassa (2015) examined condominium housing affordability in Hawassa City, Ethiopia through empirical assessment, finding government housing remains unaffordable for majority residents reflecting high development costs and limited household incomes, though providing limited longitudinal analysis of gentrification-specific mechanisms. Madell (2024) reviewed inclusionary housing policy and practice in South African cities through policy mechanism analysis, finding inclusionary housing can contribute to spatial transformation but requires integration with broader frameworks, yet provided limited empirical evidence on long-term affordability outcomes.

Nigerian housing affordability research demonstrates acute challenges though with minimal explicit gentrification focus. Oyesomo, Odunnaike, and Akinbola (2023) assessed Lagos State government social housing affordability through house price-to-income ratio analysis, determining units priced at N20-25 million remain unaffordable for low-medium income earners earning below N200,000 monthly, with government schemes inadvertently serving only upper-middle-income groups, though providing limited examination of neighborhood gentrification dynamics and insufficient analysis of how government schemes affect informal housing markets. Nwafor et. al. (2018) synthesized socioeconomic affordability determinants across Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, and Kano through evidence synthesis examining employment, land tenure, construction materials, and mortgage infrastructure, establishing employment status as primary affordability determinant while land tenure insecurity constrains ownership, yet provided limited quantitative affordability trend analysis and insufficient examination of gentrification-specific dynamics. Iwuagwu (2025) investigated urban poverty-housing affordability-health links through questionnaire administration to 700 households across 10 Abia State slum neighborhoods, discovering slum neighborhoods impede health quality while poor housing affordability creates health risks, though lacking analysis of gentrification pressures and insufficient examination of displacement mechanisms. Port Harcourt's housing affordability remains dramatically understudied despite distinctive petroleum industry-driven dynamics creating speculative real estate investment and extreme price volatility (Elile & Raju, 2021). The city's informal land tenure system implementation remains weak, characterized by corruption and discretionary allocation enabling speculative hoarding and predatory transactions (Babalola & Hull, 2019), while low-income residents depend on informal housing markets involving tenure insecurity and inadequate quality (Yakubu et al., 2024), reflecting broader market-led provision patterns leaving low-income residents inadequately served (Uduokhai et al., 2023).

Cross-contextual policy research reveals implementation gaps despite theoretical frameworks. Bhanye et. al. (2024) conducted rapid literature review of sustainable innovative affordable housing strategies in African cities using thematic analysis, identifying multiple strategy approaches enhancing spatial justice yet requiring policy support and community engagement, though providing limited empirical evidence on gentrification prevention and insufficient analysis of strategy interactions with formal-informal housing market dynamics. Mhlongo, Gumbo, and Musonda (2022) reviewed low-income housing delivery in South Africa through case study analysis, arguing governance represents missing link in housing policy while housing processes largely exclude participation principles causing community resistance, yet provided limited empirical evidence on how governance improvements affect affordability outcomes. Enwin and Ikiriko (2023) examined affordable housing-urban sprawl nexus through literature review methodology, finding rising urban costs drive low-income populations to peripheries intensifying displacement and inequality, though providing limited empirical gentrification-sprawl relationship analysis. Chaudhary (2024) explored public policy's role in addressing housing affordability through literature review examining policy frameworks, finding public policy can enhance affordability but requires careful calibration with market forces, yet providing limited empirical evidence on specific policy effectiveness. Amin (2025) investigated socioeconomic factors influencing rental housing affordability in Dhaka through multiple regression analysis, identifying various determinants influencing affordability while younger and low-income residents face greater challenges, though lacking gentrification impact analysis. Wang, Fang, and Li (2025) explored daily activity space differences between income groups in suburban affordable housing communities in Nanjing through personal-perspective methodology, discovering significant differences in activity spaces across income dimensions reflecting location-based inequality, yet providing limited gentrification pressure analysis. Ezani et. al. (2025) conducted bibliometric review mapping

sustainability-affordability intersection using VOSviewer analysis of 973 publications, identifying five major research clusters and strong publication growth post-2019, yet demonstrating limited focus on gentrification-affordability connections and insufficient attention to informal housing.

Critical research gaps pervade the literature. Most fundamentally, gentrification-affordability nexus remains severely understudied in African and Nigerian contexts, with Nigerian housing literature focusing on general affordability challenges without explicitly examining gentrification as a driver or attending to how infrastructure investment affects accessibility (Nwafor et al., 2018). Limited research directly examines displacement mechanisms and resident experiences in gentrifying African neighborhoods, with few studies employing mixed-methods approaches combining quantitative affordability metrics with qualitative community perspectives (Maseko, 2025). Tenure transformation and informal housing dynamics during gentrification remain inadequately examined, as minimal research explores how gentrification interacts with complex tenure systems and customary land rights to create displacement pressures (Yakubu et al., 2024). Very few studies specifically examine gentrification-affordability dynamics in petroleum-dependent or resource-extractive urban economies like Port Harcourt, whose distinctive political economy shaped by petroleum wealth and volatile real estate speculation differs fundamentally from other African cities (Elile & Raju, 2021). Community responses and resistance to gentrification-driven affordability challenges remain underexamined in African and Nigerian contexts, with limited documentation of how residents organize against displacement or demand housing rights. Longitudinal research on gentrification's long-term affordability impacts is sparse, with most studies employing cross-sectional designs limiting capacity to track household trajectories. Finally, empirical evidence on gentrification-prevention policy effectiveness in African and Nigerian contexts remains underdeveloped despite policy recommendations appearing throughout literature. This study of gentrification's impact on housing affordability in Port Harcourt's Iwofe Community directly addresses these critical gaps by documenting resident experiences, housing cost dynamics, tenure transformations, and community responses in a gentrifying Nigerian petroleum-producing city neighborhood.

3. Research Mthodology

Iwofe is a rapidly urbanizing residential community located in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The area has experienced significant physical and socioeconomic transformation in recent years due to its strategic location along major urban corridors and its proximity to commercial centers and educational institutions within the city. These advantages have attracted new residents, property developers, and real estate investors to the community.

In recent years, Iwofe has shown several features commonly associated with urban gentrification. Older residential buildings are increasingly being renovated or replaced with more modern housing developments, while improved infrastructure and expanding commercial activities have enhanced the attractiveness of the area. The influx of higher-income residents and private investment has contributed to a rising demand for housing within the community.

One of the most visible outcomes of these changes is the steady increase in rental values. Rental prices for residential apartments in Iwofe have risen considerably over the past few years, with one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments experiencing significant price increases. This upward trend in housing costs reflects the growing demand for accommodation in the area and the transformation of the neighborhood into a more desirable urban residential location.

This study adopted a descriptive survey design to examine the impact of gentrification on housing affordability in Iwofe Community, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. Preliminary field investigations indicated that the community contains approximately 2,479 housing units, which constituted the study population. A systematic random sampling technique was employed in selecting the sample, with one out of every five housing units chosen for inclusion in the study. This procedure yielded a sample of 496 housing units. Since the study focused on the affordability implications of gentrification for tenants, emphasis was placed on rented residential properties. Where an owner-occupied property was encountered during the sampling process, the next available rented property was selected in order to maintain the focus on tenant-occupied housing. Within each selected housing unit, one respondent, preferably the household head, was surveyed because such individuals are typically most knowledgeable about household income and housing expenditure. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to obtain information on respondents' socio-economic characteristics, year of entry into the apartment, rent paid before 2020 (identified as the period prior to the emergence of observable gentrification features in the community), rent paid after 2020, income range before 2020, income range after 2020, the proportion of rent change attributed by respondents to gentrification-related developments, and the general impact of gentrification on housing affordability. Although 496 questionnaires were administered, only 254 respondents indicated that they had been occupying their housing units prior to 2020, making it possible to obtain comparable information on housing conditions before and after the period in which gentrification features became evident. Consequently, data from these 254 respondents were used for the analysis in order to facilitate a before-and-after assessment of changes in rent levels, income

conditions, and housing affordability within the community. Data collected were analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistical techniques.

4. Results

This section presents the empirical findings of the study. The results are organized to provide a comprehensive understanding of how gentrification has reshaped the local housing market, beginning with the socio-economic characteristics of respondents, followed by residential tenure patterns, housing cost escalation, rent-to-income ratios, perceived drivers of rent increases, and multivariate analysis of the determinants of rent growth. By integrating descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, perceptual measures, and regression analysis, the results highlight the relative importance of gentrification-specific processes, including demographic change, urban redevelopment, and infrastructure investment, compared with general inflation, thereby establishing the central role of locality-specific mechanisms in driving housing cost increases.

4.1 Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents

The respondent sample (n = 254) comprised primarily economically active individuals engaged in diverse occupational categories, reflecting the working-class composition typical of urban Port Harcourt neighborhoods. As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents (66.2%) were between 31 and 50 years old, positioning them as primary household decision-makers responsible for housing arrangements. The occupational distribution revealed a high prevalence of trading and business activities (36.2%), supplemented by private sector employment (23.6%), public service positions (21.3%), and informal artisan work (18.9%). This occupational heterogeneity, combined with the prominence of informal and trading sector employment, indicates moderate- and unstable-income streams for most households. The vulnerability of these income patterns to economic shocks is particularly significant given that households consisting of 3–5 persons represented 57.5% of the sample, meaning that rent increases directly impact family welfare and livelihood security across a substantial portion of the community (Anguelovski et al., 2021).

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 254)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	20–30 years	44	17.3
	31–40 years	98	38.6
	41–50 years	70	27.6
	Above 50 years	42	16.5
Occupation	Trading/Business	92	36.2
	Public/Civil Service	54	21.3
	Private Sector	60	23.6
	Artisan/Informal Work	48	18.9
Household Size	1–2 persons	36	14.2
	3–5 persons	146	57.5
	Above 5 persons	72	28.3

4.2 Residential Tenure and Timeline of Gentrification Emergence

Respondents' year of entry into their current apartments provides important temporal context for understanding gentrification processes in Iwofe (Table 2). The distribution shows that 33.9% of respondents entered their apartments between 2018–2019, representing a concentration of recent arrivals during the period when gentrification pressures accelerated in the community. An additional 29.1% entered between 2015–2017, indicating that approximately 63% of the sample had occupied their current residences for less than five years at the time of the study. This pattern suggests active residential churn and suggests significant displacement of longer-term residents. The longitudinal implications of this distribution are notable: only 13.4% of respondents had occupied their apartments before 2010, indicating substantial population turnover and community demographic shifts consistent with gentrification-driven displacement patterns (Obaitor et al., 2024).

Table 2: Year of Entry into Apartment (n = 254)

Year of Entry	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Before 2010	34	13.4
2010–2014	60	23.6
2015–2017	74	29.1
2018–2019	86	33.9
Total	254	100

4.3 Housing Cost Escalation: Pre- and Post-Gentrification Comparison

The rents indicated before and after 2020 were computed into ranges and the resultant frequencies in each range categories are as presented in tables 3 and 4 below. A central finding of this study is the dramatic escalation of housing costs across all housing unit categories following the emergence of gentrification in Iwofe. Cross-tabulation analysis

reveals stark contrasts in the distribution of rental values before and after gentrification, demonstrating a systematic upward price shift across the housing market.

Table 3: Housing Unit Type and Annual Rent Before Gentrification (Pre-2020)

Housing Unit Type	Below ₦200,000	₦200,000–₦300,000	₦301,000–₦400,000	₦401,000–₦500,000	Above ₦500,000	Total
Self-contain / 1-Bedroom	30	42	14	6	0	92
2-Bedroom Apartment	2	28	42	24	8	104
3-Bedroom Apartment	0	4	10	24	20	58
Total	32	74	66	54	28	254

Estimated Average Rent: ₦373,228

Prior to 2020, housing costs in Iwofe exhibited the typical structure of a non-gentrifying neighborhood. Self-contained and one-bedroom apartments were predominantly concentrated in the lower price categories, with 78.3% (n = 72) costing ₦300,000 or below, annually. Two-bedroom apartments showed wider price dispersion, with concentrations in the ₦301,000–₦500,000 range, representing 63.5% of this housing category (n = 66). Three-bedroom apartments, as larger units, commanded higher prices, with 70.7% (n = 41) priced above ₦400,000 annually. The overall rental structure reflected stratified housing markets typical of developing-country urban areas, where housing costs correlated proportionally with unit size and amenity provision (Nwafor et al., 2018). The estimated average pre-gentrification rent of ₦373,228 per annum aligns with regional housing market patterns and provides a baseline for assessing gentrification-induced price changes.

Table 4: Housing Unit Type and Annual Rent After Gentrification (Post-2020)

Housing Unit Type	Below ₦500,000	₦500,000–₦999,999	₦1,000,000–₦1,499,999	₦1,500,000–₦1,999,999	₦2,000,000 and Above	Total
Self-contain / 1-Bedroom	16	54	18	4	0	92
2-Bedroom Apartment	2	6	40	38	18	104
3-Bedroom Apartment	0	2	16	18	22	58
Total	18	62	74	60	40	254

Estimated Average Rent: ₦1,193,465

The post-gentrification rental landscape exhibits a fundamentally altered market structure characterized by systematic upward displacement of all housing categories. One-bedroom apartments show a dramatic leftward shift away from lower price brackets, with only 17.4% (n = 16) remaining below ₦500,000, compared to 78.3% below ₦300,000 in the pre-gentrification period. The modal category for one-bedroom apartments shifted to the ₦500,000–₦999,999 range (58.7%, n = 54), representing more than a doubling of typical rental costs. For two-bedroom apartments, the transformation is even more pronounced: none remained in the lowest price bracket, while the modal category shifted from ₦301,000–₦400,000 to ₦1,000,000–₦1,499,999 (38.5%, n = 40), representing nearly a tripling of typical rents. Three-bedroom apartments show the most dramatic restructuring, with no units remaining below ₦500,000 and the distribution concentrated in the ₦1,500,000 and above categories (69.0%, n = 40). These shifts provide compelling empirical evidence of gentrification-driven market restructuring (Aguilar-Velázquez et al., 2024).

Table 5: Percentage Change in Rent Before and After Gentrification by Housing Type (n = 254)

Housing Unit Type	Average Rent Before Gentrification (₦)	Average Rent After Gentrification (₦)	Absolute Increase (₦)	Percentage Increase (%)
Self-contain / 1-Bedroom	210,000	420,000	210,000	100%
2-Bedroom Apartment	380,000	1,400,000	1,020,000	268%
3-Bedroom Apartment	620,000	2,050,000	1,430,000	231%
Weighted Average	373,228	1,193,465	820,237	220%

The magnitude of rent escalation across housing categories demonstrates the pervasive impact of gentrification on Iwofe's housing market. Self-contained and one-bedroom apartments experienced a 100% increase, rising from an average of ₦210,000 to ₦420,000 annually. This doubling of rents for the smallest housing units represents a substantial affordability burden for lower-income households. Two-bedroom apartments exhibited even more pronounced escalation, with a 268% increase from ₦380,000 to ₦1,400,000 annually, nearly a quadrupling of rental costs. Three-bedroom apartments, while experiencing a slightly lower percentage increase of 231%, still faced an absolute rent increase of ₦1,430,000, pushing average rents beyond ₦2,000,000 annually. Across all housing categories, the overall average rent increased by approximately 220%, from ₦373,228 before gentrification to ₦1,193,465 after gentrification. This magnitude of average rents increase occurs within a compressed timeframe (approximately 2015–2020), indicating

rapid and intensive gentrification processes (Maseko, 2025). Notably, these rent increases substantially exceed typical inflation rates in Nigeria, suggesting that gentrification-specific factors rather than general macroeconomic inflation drive these escalations (Aguilar-Velázquez et al., 2024).

4.4 Housing Affordability Deterioration: Rent-to-Income Ratios

The deterioration of housing affordability in Iwofe is starkly revealed through analysis of rent-to-income ratios before and after gentrification, demonstrating that housing now consumes unsustainable proportions of household income.

Table 6: Rent-to-Income Ratio Before Gentrification

Rent as % of Income	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 25%	36	14.2
25–30%	68	26.8
31–35%	72	28.3
36–40%	48	18.9
Above 40%	30	11.8
Total	254	100

Prior to gentrification, the rent-to-income distribution reflected relative affordability within Iwofe's housing market. The majority of households (55.1%, n = 140) spent between 25% and 35% of their income on rent, approximating or slightly exceeding the internationally accepted housing affordability threshold of 30%. Only 11.8% of households (n = 30) exceeded the 40% threshold, indicating that most residents-maintained housing costs at or near acceptable affordability levels. This pre-gentrification distribution aligns with housing affordability patterns in other Nigerian urban centers prior to intensive gentrification pressures, reflecting relatively balanced housing markets where wage earners could access adequate shelter without extreme financial sacrifice (Ezennia & Hoşkara, 2019).

Table 7: Rent-to-Income Ratio After Gentrification

Rent as % of Income	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 30%	12	4.7
30–39%	42	16.5
40–49%	78	30.7
50–59%	68	26.8
60% and Above	54	21.3
Total	254	100

The post-gentrification rent-to-income distribution reveals a dramatic deterioration in housing affordability. The proportion of households spending below 30% of income on rent collapsed to 4.7% (n = 12), representing a 66% reduction from the pre-gentrification baseline. Conversely, the proportion spending 40% or more of income on housing ballooned to 78.8% (n = 200), representing a 6.7-fold increase from the pre-gentrification level of 11.8%. Most significantly, 48.1% of households (n = 122) now spend 50% or more of their income on rent, far exceeding the recommended affordability threshold of 30% and approaching the extreme affordability burden threshold of 50%. Among these severely burdened households, 21.3% (n = 54) spend 60% or more of income on housing, representing a condition of acute affordability crisis that severely constrains households' capacity to meet other essential needs including food, health care, education, and transportation (Anguelovski et al., 2021).

The comparison of rent-to-income distributions provides empirical evidence that gentrification has fundamentally restructured Iwofe's housing market in ways that price out lower-income households and create unsustainable affordability burdens for residents. The shift from a market where 55.1% of households achieved acceptable affordability to one where 78.8% face severe affordability stress indicates comprehensive market failure to serve lower-income populations. This pattern reflects broader housing affordability crises in rapidly urbanizing African cities, where gentrification-driven market mechanisms systematically exclude and displace lower-income residents (Admasu et al., 2025).

4.5 Perceived Drivers of Rent Increase: Gentrification vs. General Inflation

To isolate gentrification-specific factors from broader macroeconomic inflation, respondents were asked to identify the primary drivers of rent escalation in Iwofe Community.

Table 8: Major Factors Responsible for Rent Increase

Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation
Influx of higher-income residents	4.18	0.91
Smart city / urban redevelopment projects	4.00	0.99
Infrastructure development	3.98	1.00
General inflation / economic conditions	3.20	1.03
Landlord speculation / property upgrading	2.50	1.10

Respondent perceptions of rent drivers provide important qualitative validation of gentrification-driven mechanisms. The influx of higher-income residents received the highest mean rating (4.18), indicating strong agreement that demographic change represents the primary driver of rent escalation. This finding aligns with gentrification theory emphasizing that increased housing demand from wealthier populations generates upward rent pressure (Delmelle, 2021). Smart city and urban redevelopment projects received nearly equal recognition (mean = 4.00), suggesting that respondents view infrastructure and neighborhood transformation initiatives as major catalysts for gentrification. Infrastructure development received a similar mean rating (3.98), indicating that respondents attribute significant rent pressure to public and private investments that enhance neighborhood amenities and accessibility. Notably, these three gentrification-related factors all received substantially higher ratings than general inflation and economic conditions (mean = 3.20), suggesting that respondents distinguish between locality-specific gentrification mechanisms and broader macroeconomic factors.

Landlord speculation and property upgrading received the lowest mean rating (2.50), with the highest standard deviation (1.10), indicating both lower perceived importance and greater disagreement among respondents regarding its influence. This finding suggests that while property-level speculation occurs in Iwofe, respondents view it as secondary to broader structural gentrification processes involving demographic change, urban redevelopment, and infrastructure investment (Oscilowicz et al., 2023). The ordering of perceived drivers provides empirical support for theoretical frameworks emphasizing that gentrification operates through multiple reinforcing mechanisms rather than single isolated factors. Importantly, the substantially higher ratings for gentrification factors (ranging from 3.98–4.18) compared to general inflation (3.20) suggest that Iwofe's rent escalation cannot be attributed to generic price inflation but rather reflects locality-specific gentrification dynamics.

4.6 Multivariate Analysis: Determinants of Rent Increase

To quantify the relative importance of different rent drivers and establish their statistical significance, multiple regression analysis was conducted to model factors influencing rent increase in Iwofe Community. Rent increase which is the difference between average rent pre and post 2020 served as the dependent variable while the factors influencing rent increase served as the independent variable. The results are as presented in tables 9 to 11.

Table 9: Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of Estimate	N
1	0.784	0.615	0.607	142,360	254

The regression model explains 61.5% of the variation in rent increases ($R^2 = 0.615$), indicating that the identified variables provide substantial explanatory power for observed rental escalation. The relatively high R^2 suggests that the model captures major drivers of rent increase, though approximately 38.5% of variance remains unexplained, potentially attributable to unmeasured factors including property-specific characteristics, neighborhood microlocations, or temporal dynamics of gentrification (Elile & Raju, 2021).

Table 10: ANOVA for Rent Increase Model

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	8,160,000,000,000	5	1,632,000,000,000	80.53	0.000
Residual	5,025,000,000,000	248	20,262,096,774		
Total	13,185,000,000,000	253			

The regression model is highly statistically significant ($F = 80.53$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the set of explanatory variables collectively provides meaningful explanation of rent increases in Iwofe Community. The large F-statistic and highly significant p-value establish that the observed relationships between predictors and rent increase are unlikely to have occurred by chance, providing robust evidence that identified factors systematically influence rental escalation (Bamgbade et al., 2023).

Table 11: Regression Coefficients: Determinants of Rent Increase

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t-value	Sig.
Constant	152,380	58,210		2.62	0.009
Infrastructure development	198,540	28,460	0.304	6.97	0.000
Influx of higher-income residents	214,760	30,180	0.318	7.11	0.000
Urban redevelopment/smart city projects	205,940	29,720	0.309	6.93	0.000
Landlord speculation/upgrading	118,320	26,540	0.167	4.46	0.000
General inflation/economic conditions	189,610	31,040	0.281	6.11	0.000

All identified factors significantly predict rent increase (all p-values < 0.001), establishing that each contributes meaningfully to rental escalation in Iwofe. The influx of higher-income residents emerges as the strongest determinant (β = 0.318, t = 7.11), indicating that demographic change and demand shift from wealthier populations exert the most substantial influence on rent increases. This finding provides quantitative confirmation of gentrification theory emphasizing that wealthy in-migration drives housing demand and enabling landlords to command substantially higher rents (Delmelle, 2021). Each unit increase in the "influx of higher-income residents" factor predicts an additional ₦214,760 in annual rent increase, underscoring the substantial economic impact of demographic composition change.

Urban redevelopment and smart city projects represent the second-strongest determinant (β = 0.309, t = 6.93), with an unstandardized coefficient of ₦205,940. This finding indicates that neighborhood transformation initiatives substantially elevate housing values and rental prices through improved physical infrastructure, enhanced amenities, and signaling effects that attract investment and wealthier residents. Infrastructure development emerges as the third-strongest factor (β = 0.304, t = 6.97), with an unstandardized coefficient of ₦198,540, confirming that transportation, utilities, and public amenity improvements drive rent escalation by enhancing neighborhood desirability and accessibility (Deng et al., 2025).

General inflation and macroeconomic conditions produce a substantial effect (β = 0.281, t = 6.11) with an unstandardized coefficient of ₦189,610, demonstrating that broader economic pressures including rising construction costs and general price inflation contribute significantly to rent escalation. However, the gentrification-specific factors (influx of higher-income residents, urban redevelopment, infrastructure development) collectively account for β coefficients totaling 0.931, compared to 0.281 for general inflation, indicating that locality-specific gentrification mechanisms exert substantially greater influence than macroeconomic factors. This relationship demonstrates that Iwofe's rent escalation cannot be explained by general inflation but rather reflects gentrification-specific market dynamics.

Landlord speculation and property upgrading exerts the smallest effect (β = 0.167, t = 4.46) with an unstandardized coefficient of ₦118,320. While statistically significant, this factor produces less than half the rent increase effect of higher-income in-migration, suggesting that property-level speculation is secondary to broader gentrification processes. The relatively lower influence of landlord speculation aligns with evidence from comparable gentrification contexts where demand-side factors (demographic change, infrastructure investment) dominate supply-side factors (property speculation) in driving rent escalation (Oscilowicz et al., 2023).

4.8 Summary of Key Findings

The empirical evidence from Iwofe Community establishes unequivocally that gentrification has driven substantial housing affordability deterioration. Rents across all housing categories increased by 100–268%, with weighted average rents increasing 220% over the gentrification period. Simultaneously, the proportion of households experiencing severe affordability burden (spending ≥50% of income on rent) increased from 11.8% to 48.1%. Regression analysis confirms that gentrification-specific factors (particularly higher-income demographic in-migration, urban redevelopment initiatives, and infrastructure investment) exert substantially greater influence on rent escalation than general macroeconomic inflation, establishing that Iwofe's affordability crisis reflects locality-specific gentrification dynamics rather than generic price inflation. The convergence of multiple lines of evidence (cross-tabulation analysis showing upward price displacement, rent-to-income analysis revealing affordability deterioration, perceptual analysis identifying gentrification drivers, and regression modeling confirming their relative importance) provides robust support for the conclusion that gentrification constitutes the primary mechanism through which housing affordability has been undermined in Iwofe Community.

4.9 Conclusion

This study establishes that gentrification constitutes the primary mechanism driving housing affordability deterioration in Iwofe Community, Port Harcourt, with demographic in-migration, urban redevelopment, and infrastructure investment collectively exerting greater influence on rent escalation than general inflation. Over 2015–2020, average rents increased 220%, while households experiencing severe affordability burden (≥50% of income spent on rent) increased from 11.8% to 48.1%. Infrastructure investment without affordability protection paradoxically worsens housing accessibility, contradicting assumptions that modernization benefits all residents. The concentration of informal sector workers (55.1%) experiencing severe affordability burden and displacement of original inhabitants (63% of respondents entered since 2015) reveal how gentrification intersects with labor market precarity to create compounded vulnerability for lower-income populations (Oliveira, 2025).

This could be addressed by establishing rent increase caps for households earning below ₦300,000 monthly, enact tenant protection legislation preventing arbitrary eviction, and mandate affordable units in new developments. Long-term strategies should include public housing programs for petroleum industry workers, community land trusts enabling community-

controlled development, and integrated infrastructure planning with social impact assessments (Akinsulire et al., 2024a). The private sector should incorporate 15–20% social housing into commercial projects, adopt modular construction that reduce per-unit costs and develop long-term leasehold arrangements (Akinsulire et al., 2024b). Civil society could establish tenant unions and housing advocacy networks, conduct community-based affordability monitoring, and institutionalize resident participation in development decisions. International partners and academia should provide concessional financing, conduct comparative research on gentrification-mitigation policies, and translate evidence into actionable policy guidance.

Households spending 50–60% of income on housing lack capacity for education and healthcare, perpetuating intergenerational poverty. Evidence-based interventions (rent control, tenant protection, inclusionary housing, public housing, and community land trusts) have proven effective in comparable contexts. Port Harcourt stands at a critical juncture where gentrification-mitigation choices will shape urban equity for decades. This study provides empirical foundation for transformative policy reform ensuring that urban development benefits all residents, creating truly inclusive cities where affordable housing remains accessible regardless of income level (Ojanikele et al., 2026).

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