

SUSTAINABLE RETIREMENT FUNCTIONAL HOUSING FOR THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ENUGU, NIGERIA: A PATTERNED COMMUNITY APPROACH

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Abstract

This study examined indoor and outdoor environment suitable for the patterned life of a priest, taken special cognizance of their age and targeted towards improving the health condition of the retired priests of the Catholic Church using the Diocese of Enugu as a case study. This study analyzed a questionnaire survey of 50 senior and retired priests in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Enugu, Nigeria using descriptive statistics. The findings showed that there was no retirement home for the retired priest, and the parish house was not conducive for a retirement home. The result revealed that only about (18%) of respondents would like to be in a retirement home when they retired, while (27%) of the respondents would prefer to remain in the parish house. The study showed the life pattern of the priest and the functional space that should be provided. The library and study should be given prominence in the design, followed by chapel among others. The following; viewing green landscape/ relaxation, rearing animals, sports and games, gardening, strolling in the garden, and chatting with friends are the outdoor activities/ environment found suitable for the aged priest. The provision of a conducive and sustainable functional retirement home with green architectural design is recommended for a healthy environment and welfare of the aged.

Key words: Retirement home, Patterned community, Indoor, Outdoor Environment, Sustainable building, Health environment.

INTRODUCTION

Retirement home for the retired priests of the catholic diocese of Enugu is a specialized retirement home, due to the specialized function that this retirement home will be to the retired priests. It is designed to accommodate the patterned life of the priests.

Retirement home can be referred to as an old people's home or a nursing home (Tanyi et al., 2018). In the real sense, a retirement home is not similar to a nursing home, particularly concerning medical care offered. A nursing home can be seen as a residence for persons who can neither care for themselves nor be cared for at home. A retirement housing or aged

people home is a multi-residence housing amenities proposed for senior or elderly citizens, where individual within the housing has an apartment-style room or suite of rooms with more amenities provided for example, amenities for meals, gatherings, recreation activities also hospice care. An apartment in a retirement home or housing can be rented, or bought in perpetuity as a condominium (Alwajud-Adewusi, 2022)

From the first century to the sixteenth century, priests were allowed to marry. Their marriages were governed by some rules and regulations he council "refused to assert the necessity of usefulness of clerical celibacy (O'Malley and John, 2013). The Council of Trent states that celibacy and virginity are superior to marriage. It was the council of Trent that instituted firmly the celibate life of priests which gave rise to the establishment of priests' retirement home. This retirement home will guard against priests on retirement to slip into a community where adaptation becomes difficult, aging fast and stronger ones starts depreciating in health and being out of the sight of their colleagues and most often not maintaining a patterned life of celibacy lived throughout their active year of ministry. To a greater extent losing them will affect the growth of the church. Some retired priests are strong, experience and gifted to serve the church. Consulting is one of the common duties for some business executives that impact their expertise and experiences with younger executive types. Most of the successful retired priests could be consultants to serving young pastors. Rectors and teachers of the seminary college could invite some retired priests to interact and share parish experience with seminarians, for better analogical technique to the teaching/learning process in seminary college.

The presence of support systems helps the ageing people's ability to cope with some ageing problems. Support systems for elderly people are factors that could promote the well-being and improve the quality of life. A good support system promotes health living and longevity. Lack of support can lead to quick deterioration of physical and mental health among the elderly (Clark, 2005). The manner in which the elderly is maintained and helped is also part of the support system (Buckholz, 2014). The feeling of being wanted, useful, and respected enhances the elder's or aged self-esteem and dignity, thus contributing positively to their well-being.

Thekkedath and Joseph (2009), opined that the feeling of being useful, wanted and respected enhances the aged self-esteem and dignity, which contribute to their well-being. Provision of a suitable home or housing design; living arrangements including congregate housing, residential care and other living facilities in community settings like adult daycare and health centers are essential part of aged care. (Wysocki, et al. 2012).

Most times the problem of not having a good functional retirement home may not be seen for a younger diocese due to the fact that all the priests within the diocese may be young and bubbling with life. However, when they begin to age, the question for the coordination and care of the aged ones becomes a challenge for the diocese. The ageing of populations within and outside the globe is a reality, and in the nearest future of around 2050, there may be more increase of elder people (Pelser, 2012; UNDESA, 2013). The retired priest who is also refers to as seniors needs functional retirement housing and care in the sense that the aged are associated with health challenges (Oladeji, 2011). According to the Population Reference Bureau, (2012), the retirement age from active public service is 65 years and above in both developed and developing countries, where life expectancy at birth is low, while the United Nations Population Fund and Help Age (2012) considered aged 60 years and above as elderly. However, in the catholic church the priest retires at age 70. Notwithstanding, the services of these old priests could be employed for the reason of historic formulates of the church. In addition, these men of God that has taken the oath of celibacy will not be practically allowed to mingle into the ordinary community haven lived a patterned life throughout their life time. Incidentally, the absence of a functional retirement home in the diocese of Enugu that will help to alleviate these problems is not in place.

Though some studies have been done on old peoples' home, for Tanyi et al., (2018), study on old peoples' home, centered on policy lacuna, Oyinlola et.al., (2017), and Alwajud-Adewusi (2022) study on old peoples' home, considered care of the aged. Little or no study has been done on sustainable retirement home considering the patterned life of the priest. The study on the priest retirement home is therefore necessary because of their important role in the

society. This study therefore examines the indoor and outdoor environment that will be suitable for the patterned life of a priest taking special cognizance of their age and targeted towards improving the health condition of the retired priests. The study objectives include; i) to examine the patterned life of a priest and that of the retired ones, and (ii) to determine the functional spaces that makes for a good priest's retirement home. (iii) to discover the indoor and outdoor activities/environment suitable for the design of a conducive and sustainable retirement home. This study will provide baseline information on the need for the coordination of the retired priests by not allowing them to mingle with the community they have denounced with the oath of celibacy. It also serves as a road map for the provision of a sustainable retirement home for senior (aged) men of God and a reference for further study.

Report from Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Population Division [UNDESA], 2015) revealed that in the last decade the rapid growth of the aged affected the industrialized and developing areas, and an expected 22% increase by 2050. Also, in Nigeria and other African countries, the aged who are about 65 years and above is fast increasing by about 3.1% which represents about 600,000 increases in the last 5-year period 2012–2017 (Population Reference Bureau, 2012; National Council on Ageing 2016). Ageing in Nigeria, is fast occurring against the background of socioeconomic hardship, poverty, among other resultant illness including the cultural pattern of extended family structure (Adebanjoko and Ugwu, 2014). The Population Reference Bureau, (2017) and the United Nations Population Division & United Nations Statistical Division, (2015) noted some causes of increased longevity such as improved health, sanitation, and particularly a decrease in fertility rate which has been on the decrease since the 1980s, for instance in 2017, the fertility rate registered at 5.5 compared with 6.8 in 1980. A great triumph of human development is ageing though an ageing population has some implications which is very limited access to sufficient health care, social and economic development particularly in Nigeria, (Abanyam, 2013; Okoye, 2012, Tanyi, et.al. 2018). Provision of a suitable home or housing design; living arrangements including congregate housing, residential care and other living facilities in

community settings like adult daycare and health centers are essential part of aged care. (Wysocki, et al. 2012).

Green Architecture for Sustainable Retirement Home

The concept adapt in the design of a retirement home is the green architectural concept. There are other related names to this concept which includes: development, Eco-design, or natural architecture. Raghiq, et.al. (2006) opined that the concept of sustainability is the interest of various disciplines. The go on to say that “The Concept of Green Architecture or “green building,” is an art or science of buildings designed and constructed in relation to environmentally friendly principles which reduce resources used for the building, and harm done to the environment through the emission of its components. Jackie Craven in her article says that “Green architecture, or green design, is a building technique which reduces adverse effects on man and the surrounding. Green architect aim to safeguard air, water, and earth by choosing *eco-friendly* building materials and construction practices. Jackie Craven (2016), outlined some characteristics of green building which includes: ventilation systems designed for efficient heating and cooling, use of recycled architectural salvage and efficient use of space, among others. Thomas (2009), summarize the key principles of green building to create a health ecosystem and bio-diversity support into five elements such as; indoor environmental quality, sustainable site design; water conservation and quality; energy and environment; and conservation or preservation of resources.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study Area

The study area is Enugu situated at 6°27'9.60"N 7°30'37.20"E, eastern part of Nigeria. it covers an area of about 73 square kilometers. According to the 1991 census, the city houses a population of 463,514 people. This gave rise to the increased population of the Catholics. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Enugu (Latin: *Enuguensis*) is located in the city of Enugu in the Ecclesiastical province of Onitsha in Nigeria, which cathedral is the Holy Ghost Cathedral in Enugu. The Roman catholic diocese of Enugu gave birth to Diocese of Nsukka, Abakaliki, Makurdi, Oturkpo, Ogoja, and Enugu. As at 2006, the total

population of Enugu was 2,118,298. The Catholics were 1,270,979 in number which is (60%) of the population.

Methods

The survey and descriptive research design was adopted for this study. Data were collected from primary sources. The population was drawn from the priest of the Roman catholic diocese of Enugu, and the study population comprises of the retired and senior priests. This is because they are in the best position to provide vital information on the priest retirement home. The estimated number of priests above 60 years was about 50, which is used as the sample size for this study. The material used for data collection was a structured questionnaire, which was designed by the researchers to elicit a response from the respondents. The 'odd-even' and 'product moment' correlation statistics were used to examine

the reliability of the instrument. The co-efficient index was calculated, and the score obtained was 0.89. Employing simple random and purposive sampling techniques about 50 questionnaires were distributed to the retired and the senior serving priest to obtain information on the environmental condition of retired priest home. The questionnaire was administered and retrieved while the respondents were sitting in the conference room for a diocesan meeting by one of the researchers with the help of two junior priests in 2020. This was to ensure a high rate of return. The distribution and retrieval of the questionnaire was done in one day, so there was a 100 % response. The researchers also had an oral interview with 2 of the retired priests. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. These descriptive statistical tools are necessary for such analytical study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The data in Table 1 show that 50 respondents responded to the questionnaire, and the result

revealed there was no retirement home for the retired priest in the diocese of Enugu.

Table 1. Availability and Condition of Retirement Facilities for Priests in the Diocese

Question	Response Frequency Percentage (%)		
Is there a retirement home for the priest in the Diocese?	YES	0	0%
	NO	50	100%
Is there a conducive place for the retired priest in the Diocese?	YES	15	30%
	NO	35	70%

Source; Author's field Research

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that there is currently no dedicated retirement home for priests in the diocese, as 100% of respondents reported its absence. Instead, retired priests are accommodated in parish houses. However, the suitability of parish houses as retirement residences is a matter of concern. According to the survey, 70% of respondents stated that the parish house is not conducive for retired priests, while only 30% considered it conducive. These findings indicate a significant gap between the intended function of parish houses and the specific needs of retired clergy. Parish houses are designed to support active pastoral duties, not the lifestyle and support requirements of retirement. Repurposing them as retirement homes may compromise the well-

being of aging priests and falls short of providing the dignity and comfort they deserve in retirement.

The results, thus, the need for the diocese to consider establishing a purpose-built retirement home that meets architectural and social standards for elder care. Such a facility would ensure that retired priests can enjoy a safe, supportive, and fulfilling retirement.

As shown in Figure 1, 18% of respondents expressed a preference for residing in a retirement home upon retirement, while 27% indicated they would prefer to remain in the parish house. An additional 5% selected other options, suggesting preferences outside of both the retirement home and parish house models. The

researchers observe that the preference for parish houses may stem from a lack of exposure to or understanding of what a well-designed retirement home offers. Many priests may view retirement homes merely as isolated facilities for the elderly, rather than as supportive and dignified living environments. Furthermore, some respondents may not have given much thought to retirement yet, being still actively engaged in ministry and unaware of the

physical, emotional, and social challenges that can emerge, particularly within the context of celibate life in old age. This presents a challenge and an opportunity: to raise awareness about the purpose and benefits of dedicated retirement facilities. Increased understanding could lead to greater acceptance and support for the establishment of such homes, helping to ensure that priests can enjoy a comfortable and dignified retirement.

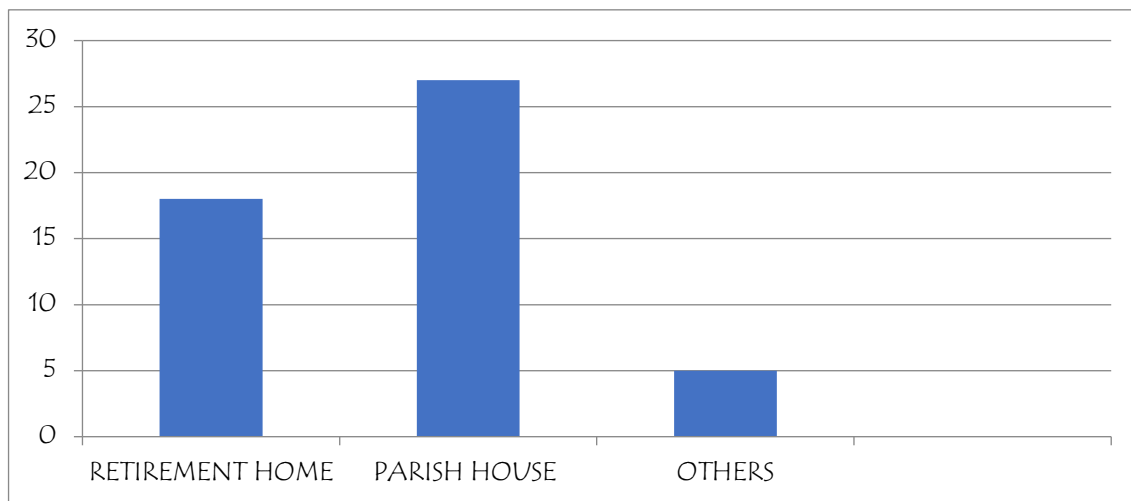


Figure 1. Where to spend retirement
Sources: Authors survey

Working Life Patterns and Functional Spaces for an Ideal Priest's Retirement Home

Figure 2 illustrates the working life patterns and the functional spaces considered essential for an ideal retirement home for priests, based on responses from the survey. This analysis helps to prioritize the types of spaces that should be included in the retirement home, reflecting both their importance and expected frequency of use. It also assists in estimating occupancy levels in different areas at various times, informing decisions on spatial volume and quality during the design process.

According to the findings, the library and study area emerged as top priorities, indicating a continued

interest in reading, reflection, and intellectual engagement during retirement. These were closely followed by the chapel, emphasizing the centrality of spiritual life. Other functional spaces followed in importance. All respondents agreed that these spaces must be conducive, accessible, and located close to their living quarters. The concept of green architecture emphasizing natural light, ventilation, greenery, and sustainable materials was identified as a key factor in creating a supportive and comfortable environment for elderly residents. The result represented in fig 2, shows the working life patterned and the functional space that makes for a good priest's retirement home.

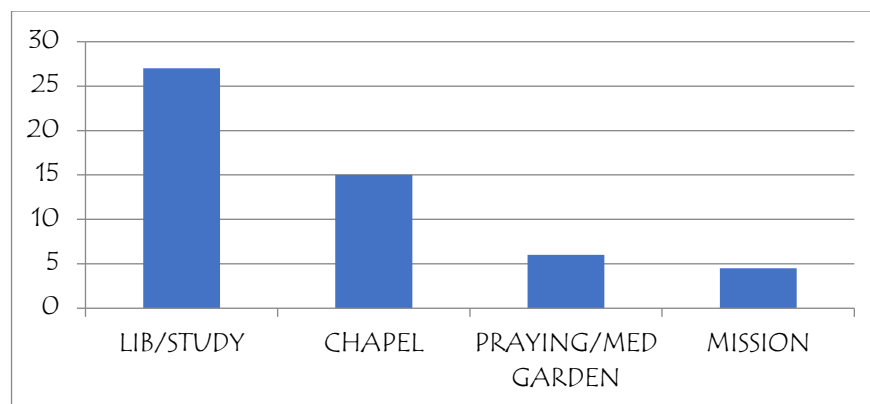


Figure 2. Working life pattern/functional space

Source: Authors survey

This is to help know the other of importance in the likely spaces that should be provided in the retirement home. It will equally help in determining the number of people that may be found at a particular space at a time and then give the space the volume and the quality required. Therefore, from this chart, library

and study should be given prominence in the design, followed by the chapel and the rest. All the respondents opined that these spaces should be conducive, around and nearer to them. The factors that bring about conducive on the elderly people home is green architecture.

Table 3. Outdoor activities liked to involve in.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES LIKED	Frequency	Percentage (%)
VIEWING GREEN LANDSCAPE /RELAXATION	19	38
REARING ANIMALS	4	8
SPORTS AND GAMES	9	18
GARDENING	7	14
STROLLING IN THE GARDEN	3	6
CHATTING WITH FRIENDS	8	16

Source: Authors survey, 2020

In designing outdoor activities for senior priests, green landscapes should be prioritized. These natural settings promote relaxation, improve mental well-being, and support light physical activity. Sports and games will follow in importance, with provisions for both green play areas and hard courts for various outdoor exercises. These elements will contribute to a well-rounded and effective design for the home's outdoor environment, aligning with the health and social needs of elderly residents.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the continued use of parish houses as retirement residences for priests should be strongly discouraged. The health and well-being of retired priests are of vital importance to the Church,

as they serve as repositories of experience, history, and spiritual guidance for younger clergy.

A purpose-built retirement facility, grounded in green architectural principles, is essential for promoting the health, comfort, and dignity of retired priests. Such a facility should not resemble a hospital or nursing home, but rather a true home—a place where elderly priests receive not only medical attention but also emotional, social, and spiritual support. The design should promote social interaction, mental stimulation, and meaningful routines that reflect the structured lifestyle of priesthood. The chapel must remain central to their lives, and while open to a limited number of external visitors, it should help reduce pastoral burdens on retired priests. The diocesan bishop's support especially in financing the operation and management of the facility is crucial.

Every diocese in Nigeria should begin to consider retirement homes as a vital benefit, aligning with the constitutional right of retirement care offered in other sectors. If well implemented, such a facility will ensure that priests enter retirement with dignity, purpose, and joy, free from loneliness and regret, and affirmed in their lifelong commitment to vocation.

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