

Performance of Informal Settlement Upgrading Projects in South Africa: The Case of Soshanguve Extension 3, City of Tshwane

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Abstract: Despite the adoption and implementation of upgrading and the delivery of mass public housing in South Africa, the number of informal settlements is still swelling. It is against this background that the paper intends to provide critical analysis of the upgrading projects beneficiaries' perceptions regarding the general performance of an informal settlement upgrading project in Soshanguve Extension 3. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach to capture perceptions of informal settlement upgrading beneficiaries concerning the impact of such upgrading in their lives and livelihoods. A household survey questionnaire was utilised with 60 randomly sampled households for the quantitative aspect of the research. Purposive sampling was applied for the qualitative aspect with one focus group discussion and one in-depth interview with a community leader. The key study findings revealed that the upgrading in Soshanguve Extension 3 presented a generally acceptable access level to certain basic services and housing infrastructure. Furthermore, the upgrading project in Soshanguve Extension 3 deviated from certain key principles acknowledged by Turner and adopted in South Africa housing upgrading policies, such as: limiting dweller participation and freedom to build; as well as failure to improve dwellers' economic standing. The main study recommendation is the augmentation for the freedom to build and dweller control in the housing provision facilitated through self-build in which government create enabling environment for dwellers to build their own houses

Keywords: Dweller control, Informal settlement upgrading, In-situ upgrading, Progressive upgrading

1. Introduction

The advent of World War II and its consequent increase in industrialisation prompted a radical increase in housing demand, particularly in developing countries (Van Ballegooijen & Rocco, 2013; Ntema, 2011; Arku, 2006). Soaring housing shortages among poor urban families has resulted in the proliferation of informal settlements (Hasgül, 2016; Turner, 2007). Furthermore, the mass provision of public housing has become the most dependable solution to the cumulative housing demand, while more efforts has also been exerted towards demolition of informal settlements to thwart their expansion (Lin, 2012). Consequently, both the mismatch between housing supply and demand on the one hand, together with the antagonistic informal settlement approaches on the other, have initiated a radical paradigm shift in the provision of housing to informal settlement upgrading spearheaded by Abrams (1964) and Turner (1968) between the 1950s and 1960s (Ntema, Massey, Marais, Cloete & Lenka, 2018). To a greater effect, Turner's writings and Latin American experiences has disrupted the housing *status quo* and transformed the thinking

on housing provision alternatives in the form of progressive informal settlement upgrading (Harris, 2003; Turner, 1967, 1968). Unlike the informal settlement antagonists, Turner regarded such settlements as a viable solution to housing challenges facing most developing countries. He understood these informal settlements may first appear as sham-bolic breeding grounds of ill-health and criminal activities, but gradually improved to conventional communities over time. Proponents of informal settlement rehabilitation primarily advocated for in-situ upgrading against resettlement because the latter disrupted dwellers' cultural, social, and economic lifestyles (Van Ballegooijen & Rocco, 2013). Differing from State-driven housing methodologies defined by extreme bureaucratic top-down approaches, Turner argued for informal settlement dwellers to gradually build their houses while the State concentrates on providing infrastructure and services such as land; which dwellers cannot provide for themselves without cost-recovery expectations (Napier, 2002). Accordingly, this progressive upgrading approach presented a conducive environment for Turner's three main principles: "*housing by people*" (active engagement/involvement), "*dweller control*"

(dwellers as decision-makers during planning, design and construction processes), and "*freedom to build*" (dwellers' latitude to build or appoint builders). The State can only undertake supportive responsibilities unlike an absolute provider, and only provide aspects such as land, credit and land tenure; which dwellers are mostly unable to provide themselves (Ward, 1982; Marais, Ntema & Venter, 2008; Wakely & Riley, 2011).

International literature confirms some wide shortcomings in most upgrading projects regarding the provision of adequate housing and improvement of dwellers' lives (Danso-Wiredu & Midheme, 2017). In practice, informal settlement upgrading is prevalent also in most developing countries, yet very few have documented positive and successful outcomes. It is against this background that the paper presents a critical analysis of the performance of informal settlement upgrading in South Africa; as well as (presenting) a comparison of the extent of (dis)satisfaction among beneficiaries of public and self-help housing (those who erected their own dwellings through active participation in the planning, design and construction processes) in the informal settlement upgrading projects. Therefore, Turner's most recognised ideas fundamentally guide this paper's discussions, which also draw from South Africa's unique upgrading thinking that premises largely on both the public and self-help housing modes to thwart the informal settlement housing challenges. In that regard, the paper focuses on the following questions:

1. How satisfied are beneficiaries of both public and self-help housing?
2. How has upgrading improved residents' standard of living in terms of employment and livelihoods?
3. What are residents' perceptions of the provision of basic services after upgrading?

2. Historical Background of Upgrading

The State's historic participation in housing provision precedes World War II and the era of rapid urbanisation. Most governments in developing countries were extensively reliant on mass production of public housing as a major weapon against the cumulative housing demand amongst the poor urban groups (Rondinelli, 1990). Simultaneously, most governments applied aggressive and hostile

tactics against the emergence of informal settlements by demolishing existing ones (UN-Habitat, 2004). Despite overwhelming proof of the unsuccessful public housing models to match housing demand, most governments continued to regard informal settlements as disorganised, unhealthy and criminal havens (Gupte, Te Lintelo, Patel, Rao, McGregor & Lakshman, 2019; Majale, 1998). Therefore, Turner's determination and industrious work stimulated governments' focus away from their conventional perceptions to the recognition of the need to develop informal settlements (Harris, 2003).

Turner supported informal settlement upgrading as a viable solution to the pervasive housing challenges found in most developing countries (Malinga, 2000; Rico, 2013; Van Ballegooijen & Rocco, 2013). Arguably, Turner is considered as forerunner to enhancement of low-income urban groups' rights and homeownership prospects by allowing them to plan, build and manage their dwellings and surroundings (Fegue, 2007; Venter, Marais & Morgan, 2019). His viewpoint shaped most people-centred housing policies that strategically allocate such rights and prospects amongst poor urban dwellers. Fundamentally, upgrading came as a policy alternative to the failed public housing model that accentuated entrenched in-situ orientations, what Turner termed 'progressive development'. In other literature sources, the latter term is consistently equated to 'progressive' and 'incremental' housing and 'service infrastructure development' (Harris, 2003; Landman & Napier, 2009; Ziblim, & Sumeghy, 2013). In their support of the "dweller control" and "freedom to build" idea in incremental upgrading, Moreno Oyebanji, and Mboup (2010) and Harris (2003), highlighted limited State involvement, but empowering dwellers with decision-making in designing, constructing and managing their houses for maximum end-users satisfaction. As such, upgrading is then considered a gradual activity allowing dwellers' savings and local resources in building their dwellings gradually unprecribed by time and practises.

3. Assessment of Informal Settlement Upgrading in Developing Countries

Copious literature sources consulted indicate that the phenomenon of informal settlement upgrading projects was cumulatively incorporated in the housing policy regimes of most developing countries. However, the outcomes of such projects were

not as successful in developing countries, where improved infrastructure should be a developmental forte for low-income urban dwellers. Be that as it may, there are some few exceptional projects that successfully addressed informal settlement ills. Studies in Jakarta, Tanzania, and the Philippines have established that effective provision of basic services and infrastructure enhanced informal settlement dwellers' quality of health and safety. Improved health infrastructures such as clean and safe water supply, storm drainage and sanitation in Hanna Nassif Upgrading (Tanzania), Zonal Improvement Programme (Philippines) and the Kampung Improvement Programme (Indonesia) contributed to reduction in water-borne illness (Buckley & Kalarickal, 2006). To be specific to South African context, post upgrading, Imizamo Yethu projects in Hout Bay, Cape Town (Barry, 2005; Shortt & Hammett, 2013) and Ntuzuma D Section in eThekweni (KwaZulu-Natal) (Mbambo, 2013), established to have documented a great reduction in the infectious and communicable diseases. Subsequent to upgrading in Imizamo Yethu projects, TB cases diminished effectively because of improved housing conditions that protect dwellers from wet, damp, and cold conditions (Shortt & Hammett, 2013). Physical lighting infrastructure in the Cali Upgrading Project (Bogotá), Vijaywada Upgrading (India), Imizamo Yethu Settlement (South Africa) and PRIMED (Colombia) explicitly improved dwellers' anxiety, conditions and safety perceptions because of reduced crime (Bolton, 2020). However, Corburn and Sverdluk (2017), argue that upgrading does not necessarily translate to improved safety measures amongst dwellers, citing Mogappir (India) which reported declining safety conditions after upgrading.

Some governments replicated the World Bank's cost-recovery upgrading approach, whose continuation engendered challenges and criticism in several African countries (Rakodi, 1991; Gulyani & Connors, 2002; Lindgren, 2012). Predominantly in Asia, few projects successfully recovered infrastructure development costs. In Mumbai and Chennai, increased growth of fully serviced plots effected maximum cost-recovery before the project's completion, with Mumbai recording a favourable surplus for duplication (Owens, Gulyani & Rizvi, 2016).

Contrastingly, factors such as poverty, unemployment and poor government enforcement rendered cost-recovery ineffective in Africa. Project upgrading

through replication in Zambia, Tanzania and Senegal were impoverished because of beneficiaries' inability to concurrently pay for municipal services and cost recovery. For instance, upgraded projects in Tanzania failed to repay their bills by 20%-36% (Kombe, 1994), 50% in Zambia (Bamberger, Sanyal & Valverde, 1982; Keare & Parris, 1982); and only 10% of total cost recouped in Senegal. While poverty could be the cause in Zambia, there is subtle narration of politicians' reluctant to enforce payments because they gained little or nothing from the projects (Keare & Parris, 1982). This corroborates Turner's argument of the unsustainability of encumbering poor people with financial responsibilities for their dwellings and developing their surroundings.

An assessment of the influences of upgraded settlements on dwellers is widely evaluated and distinguishable by improved livelihoods, housing situation, social amenities and access to basic infrastructure services. However, most upgrading projects failed in the latter regard. There are few upgrading projects that positively changed the inhabitants' standard of living and incremental extension of their dwellings. As highlighted by Van Noppen (2012) and Bolton (2020) respectively, very few exceptions of upgrading projects in KIP (Jakarta) and Dandora (Kenya) have effectively improved dwellers' income and quality of life in respect of better employment rates and subletting opportunities. Such improvements would allow progressive upgrading of dwellings and position dwellers to benefit from, and afford additional expenditure such as municipal services. It could be argued that additional upgrading costs (e.g. municipality services) that do not correspond with dwellers' livelihoods, are an affordability deterrent that affects their living standard.

What has been reliably established from the consulted literature is that many upgrading projects have not become successful poverty-reduction instruments amongst the indigent urban populace. The *favelas* in Brazil are emblematic of the many upgrading instances where residents had very limited prospects of being employed (Jaitman & Brakarz, 2013). Despite the various measures to redress the socio-economic ills of informal settlement through upgrading, the Mavoko upgrading project (Kenya) reported a high unemployment prevalence of 72% amongst project beneficiaries (Pedersen, 2008; UN-Habitat, 2005). The Machakos' condition conveys the impression that most of the active

population's livelihoods evolve around informal economic activities, which explains most upgrading residents' constraints to secure housing improvement and extension credits/loans from any formal financial institution (Pedersen, 2008). An Egyptian study found that poor livelihoods translated into very low occupancy rates since residents could not secure the requisite backing from financial institutions. Consequently, most beneficiaries sold their dwelling and returned to the informal settlements (Arandel & Batran, 1997).

Dweller participation (or Turner's "*dweller control*") is another important attribute affecting the occupation rate and smooth upgrading operation. From Turner's perspective, dwellers are regarded as experts of their situation. Therefore, empowering them with effective decision making in the housing processes (designing, planning, construction, and management of their dwellings) is fundamental to resolving upgrading complications. Therefore, disempowering dwellers' decision-making authority regarding building materials and building standards suiting their financial position is tantamount to creating adversity. For instance, upgrading projects in Ismailia (Egypt) and Dar es Salaam' Phase I and Phase II upgrading projects in Tanzania led to most dwellers selling their serviced stands and returning to the informal settlements due to high State-imposed building standards too expensive to the low-income earners (Soliman, 1988; UN-Habitat, 2011). Given such a state of affairs, the determination to improve the lives of poor urban dwellers regresses miserably. Dispossession of dwellers' participation then threatens the anticipated satisfaction with the final products. The Kisumu (Kenya) situation exemplifies government's infrastructure provision without paying attention to the needs of the targeted group, the undesirability of which caused poor cost-recovery and widespread dwellers dissatisfaction among the Muslim group (Bassett, Gulyani & Farvarque-Vitkovik, 2002).

South Africa's upgrading model is still defined by the State's model of housing model and its very limited participation approach (Bailey, 2017). Accordingly, contrary to Turner's beliefs, South Africa's modalities of upgrading appeared to be problematic. For instance, a study by Manomano and Tanga (2018) found that approximately 93.6% of the public housing beneficiaries in Eastern Cape have weak, cracking and collapsing walls, and only 6.5% were satisfied with the walls. National government spent

R2 billion just for rectifying these structural flaws (Mokgalapa, 2012; Jeffery, 2015). In 2013, were over 5000 complaints of poor-quality housing reported to Public Protector Madonsela in which some houses had faults that necessitated demolition and rebuilding (Baily, 2017). Academics and scholars find the imbalance or absence of beneficiaries' participation in designing and construction in the South African housing delivery system to be a substantial contributor to poor quality housing (Bailey, 2017; Sabela & Isike, 2018; Sobantu & Nel, 2019). Eventually, such apparent absence is detrimental to the success of housing development and delivery. This study reports on the level of satisfaction of dwellers who received public housing and those who progressively build their own houses.

4. Research Design and Methods

4.1 Context of the Study

The study took place in Soshanguve (Pretoria), where an upgrading project was undertaken to thwart the erstwhile apartheid-induced trend of ethnic residential segregation (Mashabela, 1988). The name 'Soshanguve' reflects the township's two-fold historical provenance Firstly, the name derives from the reincorporation of the Eastern part of Mabopane into South Africa by both the former apartheid and Bophuthatswana governments, and renamed it Soshanguve (Ntema & Van Rooyen, 2015). Secondly, Soshanguve reflects the combination of various ethnic populations; as such, it stands for So=Sotho, Sha=Shangani, Ngu=Nguni and Ve=Venda (Lemon, 1991).

4.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining both the qualitative and quantitative methods for broadened understanding of the Soshanguve Extension 3 upgrading dynamics. Employing multiple data sources produced more comprehensive views and understandings of the upgrading phenomenon (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Clark, 2017). The quantitative aspect was implemented through a structured household survey questionnaire, whereas the qualitative aspect employed focus group discussions (FGDS) and in-depth key informant interviews, with both using an interview guide. Random probability sampling was applied to afford the household survey respondents an equal chance of being selected

systematically through the ArcGIS sampling tool (Maduekwe & de Vries, 2019). The researcher applied non-probability purposive sampling for the focus group discussion and in-depth interviews for complementarity in tandem with the adopted mixed-methods approach. Participants were selected based on their suitability to inform the research questions and enhance understanding on housing issues.

One mixed gender (males and females) focus group discussion comprising 10 participants and one in-depth interview were conducted at Soshanguve Extension 3. The choice for the number of participants conforms to the specification by Mack et al. (2005) and Mishra (2016), that FGD participants should be 8 (eight)-12 in number. For the in-depth interview, one community leader who is living in Soshanguve Extension 3 since its founding was interviewed. For the household survey, there were 60 participants. These were property owning household heads in charge of their households' income and expenditure. Questionnaires were administered to each of the sampled households. The survey sought to document the various household beneficiaries' demographic and socio-economic attributes.

An in-depth interview was employed to acquire detailed formation from informed community members. The primary aim of these key informant interviews was to collect relevant information from a broad range of informed stakeholders, including community leaders, professionals, and committee members who have explicit knowledge about the community. It is their broad knowledge and understanding of community issues that provided insights into the nature of problems and possible solutions (UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 1989; Kun, Kassim, Howze & MacDonald, 2013). Accordingly, one Soshanguve community leader was interviewed to explore the knowledgeable and perceptions concerning the upgrading and provision of basic services in their community.

Content analysis was used to organise, identify, synthesise and categorise patterns and themes within the data accruing from both the FGD and in-depth interviews (Braun, Clarke & Terry, 2014). The raw data was transcribed, coded and clustered into workable and manageable categories, which enabled the subsequent description and detailing of data stages involved in reducing data into

manageable parts (Guthrie, Yongvanich & Ricceri, 2004). Themes were developed individually and in groups of patterns identified through graphic display of thematic relationships (Hickey & Kipping, 1996). Most researchers consider content analysis beneficial for capturing details of meaning within a data set. It involves interpretation of meaning and insight into the participants' worldview (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Bengtsson, 2016). On the other hand, questionnaire responses were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 21.

The researcher adhered to the following stipulated ethical standards to earn the trust and respect of the participants and general public. Participants' involvement was not coerced, and they were allowed the right to withdraw at any stage of the data collection process, and no false promises or material inducement were made to lure their involvement in the study. The sensitivity of data collected, necessitated that the possible invasion of participants' privacy and substantial risk to their safety should be circumvented by keeping them anonymous (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Therefore, their names were not used. Instead, numeric identifiers were used to represent them (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). In this study, any sensitive information shared between the researcher and the participants was not shared with any third person to ensure confidentiality.

5. Results and Discussion

A total of 60 respondents were involved in this survey study, the majority of whom (75%) were female, and 25% were males. The composition of more female household heads is attributable to two interstitial variables. Firstly, the majority (54%) of the total number of female respondents were widowed, never married, or divorced. Secondly, the miniature representation of South African society (particularly among black females) as historically segregated and marginalised in job opportunities, and resort to informal settlements for alternative housing (UNFPA, 2007; UN-Habitat, 2015; Statistics South Africa, 2020). However, the effect of the paucity in sustainable economic activities transcends gender boundaries, as most upgrading projects are synonymous with poor livelihoods, but mostly affect (black) women in particular (UNFPA, 2007; Avis, 2016). Comparably, the economic situation in the upgraded Soshanguve Extension 3 area is not

exceptional. At the time of conducting this study, 58% of the respondents were unemployed, and only 42% were employed. Figure 1 below is a depiction of the different dwellings in which the respondents live.

Despite Turner's view on progressive upgrading, the survey revealed that 65.52% of the people were living in the instant development (State-driven housing) known popularly as 'RDP houses' incorporated into the 'Breaking New Ground' housing policy in South Africa. Surprisingly, less than 33% of the respondents lived in houses they incrementally built themselves. Turner placed the "*freedom to build*" and '*dweller control*' as the fundamental approach to dwellers' satisfaction and a great sense of attachment to both the dwellings and community (Fichter, Turner & Grenell, 1972; Ballegooijen & Rocco, 2013; Cohen, 2015).

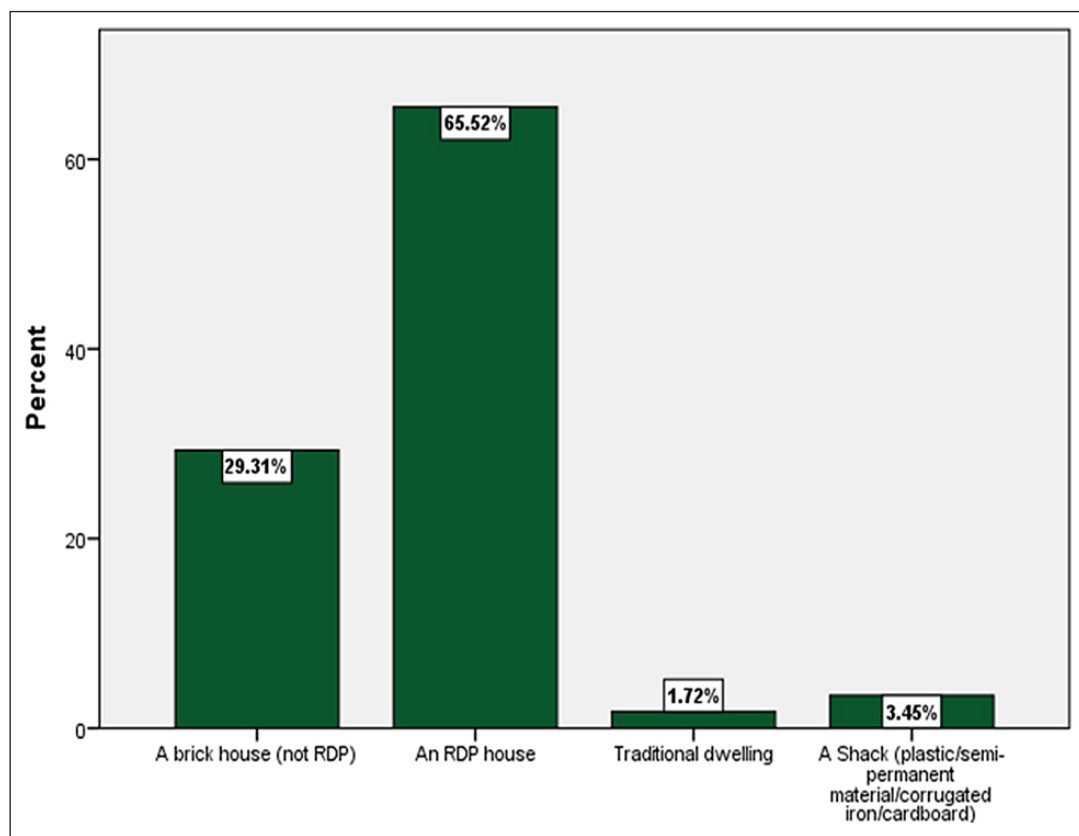
The Soshanguve Extension 3 upgrading shows that the State-driven housing system customarily constrains dwellers' participation and precedes immense dissatisfaction amongst beneficiaries.

As shown in Table 1, very few respondents (8.62%) have the freedom to appoint their own builder or even erect their own houses. Self-build is helpful because it liberates dwellers to follow different construction approaches unfettered by specific building standards. Therefore, it is unsurprising to have very poor participation in the housing design, planning and construction phases propelled by very autocratic upgrading approaches. Table 1 indicates the minimal participation of RDP recipients in key decision-making in building a house.

Whereas Table 1 focuses on individual household responsibility, Table 2 is reflective of community-wide responsibility in house-building decisions.

With 65.5% of respondents currently living in RDP housing built by the State-appointed contractor (Table 1) and non-participation by respondents in key housing aspects (Table 2), it is unsurprising for respondents to express moderate levels of satisfaction with their houses (Table 3). The evidence in Table 3 implies that respondents are denied participation in both the general construction of

Figure 1: Type of Dwelling Unit in the Upgraded Phase in Soshanguve Extension 3



Source: Author

Table 1: Responsibility for Building the House

State-appointed contractor	65.52%
Self-appointed local contractor	24.14%
Myself	8.62%
Others	1.72

Source: Author

Table 2: Level of Community Participation in Soshanguve Extension 3 Upgrading

Household participation (decision-making)	Participation (Yes) (%)	No participation (%)
Designing of dwellings process	11.86%	88.14%
Construction of housing units	15.25%	84.75%
Construction of infrastructure	3.39 %	96.61 %
Location of the house	11.86%	88.14 %
Employment and income-generating activities	17.24 %	81.03 %
Average Participation	11.92 %	87.73%

Source: Author

Table 3: Level of Satisfaction with Dwelling Structure and Design

Item	Satisfied (%)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)
Position of the house	59	5	36
Design/layout of the house	46	5	49
Quality of the roof	41	5	54
Quality of floor	66	5	29
Quality of the wall	54	5	41
Size of the yard	56	5	39
Number of rooms	39	6	61

Source: Author

their housing, as well as the infrastructure planning and development in their neighbourhood. Correspondingly, the quantitative findings in this study revealed that participation in the construction of housing units was very low.

The qualitative findings also supported the quantitative results. One participant in the focus-group averred: "By the time they started building, we just saw the contractor coming here to build. I still remember, they came to me to say: "Ok, we leaders we are going to build – to build housing without even informing us"". This was also supported by the community leader interviewed in the in-depth interview, who stated: "Leaders and residents were not involved in the process of designing and construction of RDP houses. The contractor just notified us regarding the construction of the houses just a week before they

could start, but they had already camped in our community. They just informed us so that we can alert our people to be present in their homes during construction". Another focus-group participant also alluded to the fact that the government overlooked them in the construction process. The participant stated: "They never told us anything, they just came as contractors and then they have never communicated with the community before. They just took their decision and started building, and even when they were giving their sub-contracts, they were hiring on their own. They were not selecting those who were unemployed from our community. They recruited by knowing one another".

It seemed that only those provided with State-driven housing were the complainants concerning participation. Contrarily, two of the focus group participants who built their own houses corroborated

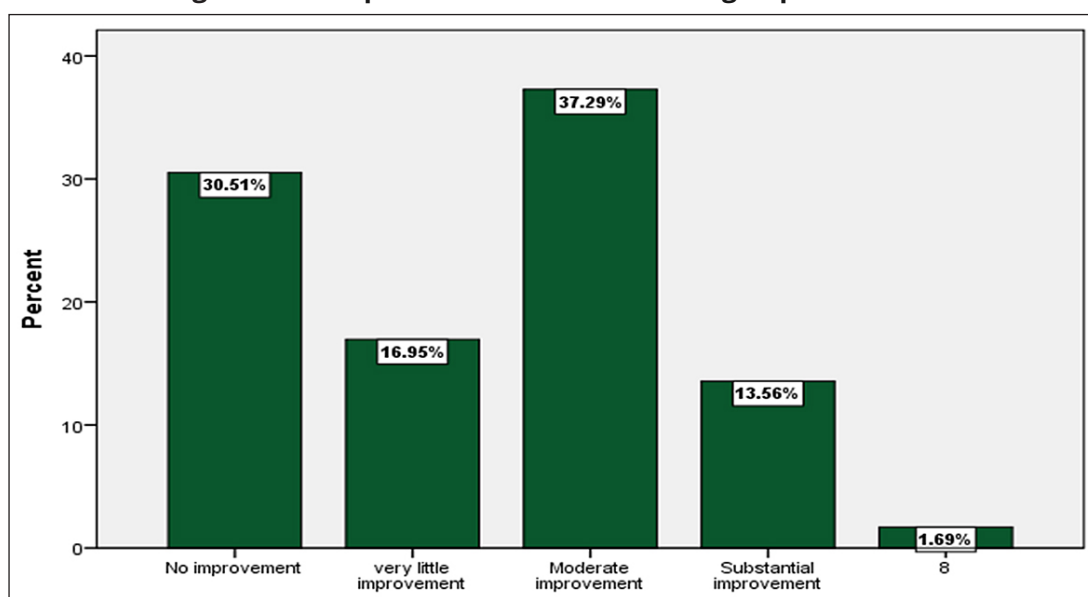
Turner's assertion by showing contentment with the designing and construction process of their houses, stating: *"Since I'm a builder myself, I built my house and plan myself, so I cannot complain. All I can complain about is the poor drainage and roads we are having here"*. Another participant intimated further that: *"My house was built by the builder I appointed and was built according to my instruction as I was also present during the whole construction process"*.

The respondents' perception of conditions of their dwelling unit differed considerably in respect of both the degree of satisfaction/dissatisfaction and structure/design of the house. Floor quality registered the highest satisfaction level (66.1%), followed by the position of the house (59.32%), and quality of the roof (40.68%). Correspondingly, residents are dissatisfied with the number of rooms (61.29%), quality of the roof (54.24%), and the design and layout of the house (49.15%) respectively. General discontentment with the roof quality installed by the contractor was reflected by one of the focus group participants, who stated: *"Since I started living in that RDP, when I leave, I must leave the key of my house with the neighbours and say when it rains they must watch out because my roof is leaking like am outside. These contractors have done [a] half-job"*. In corroboration, another participant mentioned: *"They are leaking these [RDP] houses [which] leak like you are outside. Have you ever seen yourself running from a house back to a shack? Running from a house ... they have built for you is not good"*.

The same was confirmed by another self-build beneficiary in a focus group discussion who reiterated: *"My roofing is good – the person who roofed my house [is] qualified and I ha[d] to inspect the house before I could pay him"*. In this regard, the findings underline the importance of Turner's (1976) "dweller control".

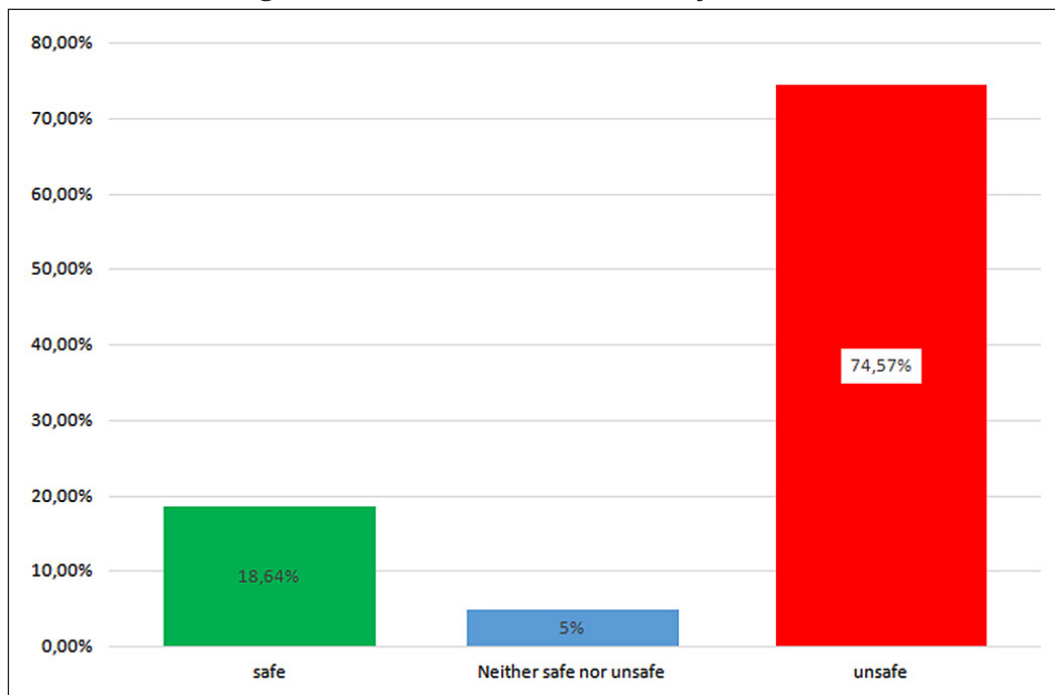
Figure 2 shows that a slight majority (52.54%) viewed the upgrading project's provision of infrastructure and services as having dignified their lives somewhat (moderate improvement and substantial improvement). In contradistinction, 47.46% viewed the upgrading intervention as not significantly improving their lives (no improvement and minor improvement). The main reason for the dissatisfaction with the standard of living premises on the fact that about 58% of the residents are poor due to unemployment; a situation compounded by the financial obligation of paying for services, which were unpaid before upgrading. In this regard, one of the focus group discussion stated: *"We pay too much money for water. The electricity, we buy it with too much money. We used to have free water and electricity. Our paraffin stoves were not this expensive"*. These findings confirm a broad context of complications induced by the financial implications that are attendant to upgrading projects. Furthermore, it appears the implication of poor housing conditions associated with RDP houses triggered unintended consequences and caused more harm than the relief it brought. In some instances, RPD houses failed to improve dwellers' housing conditions.

Figure 2: Perceptions on Standard of Living Improvements



Source: Author

Figure 3: Extent of Residents' Safety Concerns



Source: Author

To that effect, a respondent in the focus group discussion attested: *"I see that our lives have not changed because ... just like living in the squatter camps, these RDP's are leaking, water is flooding in our yards, our shacks were not giving us these problems"*.

As observed in Figure 2, upgrading in Soshanguve Extension 3 failed to improve dwellers' standard of living. To some extent, this could be attributed to the skewed and unfair competition between local and expatriate spaza (tuckshop) owners. The disintegration of local spaza shops affects local people's livelihoods in two ways. Firstly, local people will lose income as people from outside the community dominate the business. To that effect, one respondent summarised the situation thus: *"So, here in Extension 3 there is no business that is owned by blacks that exist because of unfair competition. So, we end up closing or renting our spaza shops because of unfair completion competition with the Indians shop owners"*. Secondly, the extant inability of these spaza shops to create employment for the local people was mentioned volubly by one respondent thus: *"We lose job opportunities and in turn, Indians and those who run spaza shops in our area continue to employ mainly their foreign counterparts"*.

The poor condition of the houses created safety challenges, as indicated in Figure 3 above.

Extrapolated from Figure 3 above is that about 75% of the Soshanguve Extension 3 residents feel unsafe due to criminal activities in the area, but a few (18.64%) felt safe. That most respondents felt unsafe in their homes means residents were mostly vulnerable in the settlement, which constrained their interaction and mobility outside their homes. Evidently, the qualitative data related supports the residents' concerns with crime and safety induced by the lack of security in their area.

The unsafe environment in Soshanguve Extension 3 can be ascribed to three factors. Firstly, the poor lighting infrastructure, which was confirmed by a key informant who stated: *"Our high-mast lights are almost off most of the time. That's when these nyaope (woonga) boys rob us"*. Secondly, drug abusers in the community indulge in theft and housebreaking to support their addiction, which was supported by one of the respondents thus: *"... the crime we experience here in our community is theft and housebreakings by those smoking nyaope [who] are dominating in our community"*.

Lastly, ineffective community services also contribute to criminal activities in the community, which was stated by one of the residents thus: *"Crime is not so much but police fail us. There are many cases which are reported and they take time to respond or*

decide not to attend the crime. Like, we reported the case of fighting siblings and police did not come".

6. Discussions

The findings show that the upgrading of South Africa's informal settlements follows two modalities (the self-help and public housing model), with public housing being the most prevalent. This, despite the BNG and its accompanying ISUP support for the incremental housing process in ameliorating housing problems for the urban, poor group. However, survey findings from Soshanguve Extension 3 paint a different picture. Findings affirmed Newton and Schuerman's (2013) assertion and what is common in the literature, that upgrading in South Africa is mainly a once-off approach (instant development), by a state-provided housing system. Evidence from Soshanguve Extension 3 also shows that in a short period, a significant percentage (66 percent) of residents moved from being shack owners to a four-roomed house instantly, provided by the state through state-appointed contractors. Therefore, few respondents from the survey incrementally build their houses either through self-appointed builders/contractors or by themselves. Since dwellers' participation enhances dweller control, the high dissatisfaction with some housing aspects is associated with poor processes in most upgrading projects in developing countries (Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2012, 2013; Bailey, 2017). Emphasising this narrative, both through quantitatively and qualitatively obtained data, reveals that the actual implementation of upgrading in Soshanguve Extension 3 disregarded the "dweller control" perspective in public housing delivery, as most RDP beneficiaries' views were not incorporated into the designing and construction of their houses. Therefore, the absence of "freedom to build" caused beneficiaries' high dissatisfaction with housing conditions, due to their exclusion from key decision-making processes by state-appointed contractors, whose poor quality of work was demonstrable by the leaking roofs. Such a situation is substantiation of Turner's assertion that the State should play a supportive role and create a conducive environment for the low-income groups to gradually build their own affordable houses and not become mere occupiers of a finished product (Turner & Fichter, 1972; Harris, 2003; Mathebula, 2021). Turner (1972:158) further mentions that the best results are "obtained by the user who is in full control of the design, construction, and

management of his own home". On the positive side, the findings correspond with Turner's contentions because dwellers who gradually build their houses appeared to be satisfied with their product because of the enhancement of dweller control and the freedom to build. Beneficiaries' perceptions and (dis)satisfaction with their dwelling structure and design were sought in this study.

El Menshawy, Aly and Salman (2011) and Tuner (1972), show that upgrading not only concentrates on the provision of housing units but is also tasked with poverty reduction and the improvement of the dwellers' standard of living. It is evident that most upgrading projects failed to improve the livelihoods of the poorest urban dweller, but in Botswana and Kenya upgrading projects showed a correlation between upgrading and improved livelihoods that essentially prompted poverty reduction amongst the dwellers. Therefore, improved livelihoods enabled dwellers to extend their dwellings and generate extra income by renting out extra rooms (Kigochie, 2001; Bassett, Gulyani & Farvarque-Vitkovik, 2002). In terms of the respondents' perceptions and standard of living before and after upgrading, there are three major issues of concern to the beneficiaries in Soshanguve Extension 3. First, the lack of employment opportunities in the area remained a concern of many residents, who were not recruited for employment during the construction of the houses. Most are still not employed in Soshanguve, which could be attributed to the settlement's distant location from most economic zones, the closest of which is about 27km away from the community. Second, there are no business opportunities for local people, except for spaza shops and their attendant unfair competition from foreign owners who excel at renting most of the spaza shops in the area. According to Charmen, Petersen and Piper (2012a; 2012b), most local spaza shops collapse because unfair competition compels the locals to rent their residential premises to foreign spaza shop owners, particularly those of Somalian, Ethiopian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi origin. Third, the combined effect of high unemployment and the lack of business opportunities in the community has shaped most residents' belief that their living standards have not improved at all but have become poorer since the upgrading. This perception was substantiated by the difficulty of defraying municipal services, such as electricity, levies, sewage, and water. Accordingly, these findings are supported by Brown-Luthango, Reyes and Gubevu (2016), who

confirmed that some residents in upgrading projects struggle to defray services, such as electricity, levies, water and sewage, given the high unemployment rate and a lack of strategies for alternative livelihoods. These perceptions illustrate that not all upgrading interventions significantly improve dwellers' lives. Instead, livelihood together with the physical upgrading of dwellings must be accomplished simultaneously, not one at the expense of the other.

Despite upgrading taking place, residents perceived the settlement as an unsafe place. The sporadic absence of lights in the community exacerbates this lack of safety, which is compounded even further by the vulnerability to the criminal activities of the 'nyaope boys'. These assertions cohere with Amnesty International (2010), Corburn and Hildebrand (2015), and Gonsalves et al. (2015), who found these unsafe environments to be the result of factors, such as late police intervention and poor lighting infrastructure. Most disheartening is the fact that policing in the area is a retrogressive factor caused by the perceived inactivity and ineffectiveness in addressing criminal activities in Soshanguve Extension 3. Again, the issue of criminal activities caused by drug abuse, appears to be pervasive and sustained by the need to support citizens' addiction. A study by Pierce, Hayhurst, Bird, Hickman, Seddon, Dunn and Millar (2017) also showed a strong link between drug abuse and several criminal activities that have the potential to provide financial rewards to sustain substance addiction.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The results cohere with Turner's literature-based upgrading perspectives, in terms of which both the State and the dwellers should play collaborative roles in housing poor, urban dwellers, particularly those in informal settlements. The South African upgrading modality overlooks the freedom to build and dweller control in the housing delivery landscape. Having the freedom to appoint contractors/builders to build their housing units or the active involvement of the residents themselves is central to dweller satisfaction. The provision of housing units and basic infrastructure without sustainable livelihoods cannot be equated to sustainable human development, because the principal aim of any upgrading is to eradicate poverty and enhance sustainable livelihoods, among other things. In Soshanguve Extension 3, upgrading failed to realise

the above-mentioned aims, because the approach mainly concentrated on providing dwellings without paying attention to the livelihoods of the dwellers. High unemployment and the absence of locally operated business activities support this livelihoods exegesis. Despite the purported upgrading changes, residents have the additional burden of paying municipal services for which they had not been paying before upgrading. The maximum provision of basic infrastructure services, such as electricity, streetlights and fully functioning sanitation can increase safety and the general health of the residents in any community. It should also be considered that the upgrading of an informal settlement (i.e. provision of progressive housing and essential infrastructure), coupled with both social and economic development, should improve residents' satisfaction with their living conditions.

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