

Validating the Psycho-social Challenges Associated with the Current RDP Houses: The Case of Golf Course 2011-2013 Study, Eastern Cape

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ABSTRACT This paper sought to validate the psycho-social challenges experienced by residents of Golf Course RDP housing project in Alice township. This study triangulated both qualitative and quantitative approaches with the qualitative approach being the dominant one, while the quantitative was less dominant. The study utilized an interview guide with unstructured questions as a data collection tool for one-on-one in-depth interviews, while a likert scale designed questionnaire was utilized for the questionnaire interviews. Findings from this study indicated the poor state of houses epitomized by cracking floors, walls emitting dust, weaker doors and windows, falling roofs; unreliability of water and other important social amenities. These researchers recommended to the government to consider renovating and escalating the provision of water to the houses to give them a dignified phase for human living. It is also essential for the social work role to be expanded in order to offer therapeutic interventions to the psychologically drained RDP dwellers.

INTRODUCTION

The apartheid regime in South Africa exacerbated poverty in South Africa through their discriminative and oppressive policies that were not in favor of the majority blacks (Republic of South Africa 1994; Patel 2005). This condition and state of apathy explains why the Post Apartheid government took to their toes to try and improve the lives of the black South Africans. Among the imbalances surrounded the question of housing as most South Africans lacked access to proper qualitative and adequate housing (Zegeye and Harris 2003; Radebe 2013; Tomlinson 2015). Thus, post apartheid government made promises to its people to deliver adequate and qualitative housing among other social services (Republic of South Africa 1994; Hohmann 2013). These houses were under the project known as the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) that was introduced in 1994. However, the program is an ongoing one umpteenth. But despite the fact that the government has not respected or managed to honour the timeframe in many parts of the country, to the government's score, so many houses have been finished and given to the needy.

To the contrast, so many people, still living in shacks and ghettos are still waiting for their

turn with abated breadth. Another interesting dimension to these houses is the fact that for those who have been given the houses, they have been heartbroken because of the various deplorable conditions surrounding or associated with houses. The houses have attracted an array of complaints with apparently no machinery to address them. This has been a source of psychological and emotional loss (Lemanski 2009; Chakuwamba 2010). These and other issues have compelled these researchers to validate the psycho-social challenges associated with the current RDP houses.

Problem Statement

The Post-apartheid South African Government has gained worldwide accolade about its impressive domestic or local policies for its once marginalized millions of the Black South Africans. Among these policies is the RDP housing project that targeted to provide adequate and qualitative houses to redress the harsh nightmares of squatter settlements and conditions of severe shelter deprivations that most black South Africans were exposed to. However, both researched and subjective information suggest possibilities of immense psychological and emotional loss that most RDP beneficiaries could be

facing. This is because of the deplorable and nauseating conditions surrounding these houses. For example, the houses have weaker roofs that permeate water during rainy seasons, poor walls, and acute water supply. This whole host of problems forms possibilities of subjecting the dwellers to undue psycho-social challenges they are going through. This paper, therefore, seeks to validate the dynamics and magnitude of this psycho-social challenges associated with the current RDP Houses in Golf Course with the hope of making possible solutions to the quagmire.

Study Aims and Objectives

Though this study has been derived from a broad research study whose aim and objective was to explore the perceptions of the RDP housing beneficiaries on the extent to which the program meets their housing needs; the aim of this paper is to explore and validate the psycho-social challenges associated with the current RDP houses with a case of the 2011-2013 study in the Eastern Cape.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The researcher utilized the triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Triangulation was especially important as it increased result reliability and validity as both methods served to confirm and affirm one another (De Vos 2005; Barbour 2008). Qualitative method was very important as it gave the researchers the chance to collect the information that taps on the views, opinions, attitudes and belief systems of the participants (Creswell 1994 as cited by Kang'ethe 2010). On the other hand, the quantitative method was very important to obtain the quantitative magnitude of the perceptions of the participants (Neuman 2006). The quantitative approach took the form of a mini survey while the qualitative approach took the form of a case study. The design was explorative, explanatory and descriptive in nature.

Research Instruments

This study adopted an interview guide with unstructured questions to facilitate one-on-one in-depth interviews with one social worker, one RDP housing administrator and 22 RDP housing beneficiaries. The researcher also utilized a lik-

ert designed questionnaire to collect the perceptual levels of the 50 residents of RDP houses.

Methods of Data Collection

The qualitative enquiry utilized a one-on-one in-depth interview; while the quantitative enquiry utilized a questionnaire interview.

Units of Analysis

22 beneficiaries of RDP Houses, one RDP housing administrator and one social worker were interviewed (with the latter two as key informants) using the one-on-one in-depth interview method, while 50 residents were subjected to a questionnaire interview administered by one of the researchers. The social worker was very important as social workers are concerned with the welfare and the wellbeing of the people. They are a link between the government and the people and therefore their voices are critical in this study. The RDP housing administrator was very important as he was knowledgeable about the RDP housing program.

Sample Selection

74 was the total sample size. This study utilized both random and non random sampling methodologies to select its participants and respondents. Non-probability sampling methodology included the purposive sampling technique that was utilized to select participants that carried the research desirable attributes and characteristics (Neuman 2006; Babbie 2007; Moule and Goodman 2009). This sampling technique was utilized to select the participants for one-on-one in-depth interviews. The random sampling methodology included the stratified and simple random sampling technique. The stratified sampling (population was divided into five strata using the existing feeder roads between houses then samples of four houses were randomly selected using the simple random sampling technique from the strata) was especially important because it enabled the study to minimize the probability error while the simple random sampling technique was important as it enabled generalization of the results (Moyé 2007; Peck et al. 2008; Finkelstein 2009; Black 2011).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The researcher was assisted by one research assistant from the Department of Social Work who also doubled as an interpreter in collecting data as most data was collected in Isi Xhosa. All the data from the interviews was audio taped using a tape recorder after having obtained informed consent from the participants. The data from the interviews was transcribed later on after the interviews. The qualitative data was analyzed using the content thematic analysis whereby raw data was re-arranged, categorized and ordered into themes as depicted by the emergent perceptions raised by the participants of this study. On the other hand, the quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and translated into graphs, tables and pie charts for presentation and for clearer meaning.

Research Domain

The data were collected in November 2012 in the Golf Course Estate in Alice Town in the Eastern Cape Province. The total number of RDP houses is 1233. The beneficiaries were interviewed from the comfort of their RDP houses while the social worker and the RDP housing administrator were interviewed from their offices in Alice and Fort Beaufort respectively. The Eastern Cape Province was chosen by these researchers because it is one of the poorer provinces in South Africa and hence the researchers considered an empirical investigation in the program an ideal one.

RESULTS

Biographic Data

The findings from this study revealed that 88 percent of the study participants were Blacks whereas 12 percent were colored (See Table 1). The findings also indicated that 62 percent of

Table 1: Gender of the study participants

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Black	44	88.0	1	Male	19	38.0
2	Coloured	6	12.0	2	Female	31	62.0
	Total	50	100.0	3	Total	50	100.0

the study participants were females whereas 38 percent of the study participants were males (see Table 1). These findings indicate that Blacks outnumbered the coloured which depicts the characteristic profile of the South African population. The females also outnumbered the males and this agrees with reliable statistics that reveal that females outnumber males in South Africa. In such a state and condition, it would be ideal to afford especially the South African females and Blacks generally with affirmative action programs to uplift them from the state of poverty they have sunk into.

Marital Status

The findings from this study indicated that 60 percent of the study participants were single; while 28 percent of the study participants were married; 6 percent were widowed; and those that were either divorced, windowed, or separated constituted 2 percent each respectively (See Table 2). These findings revealed that most people residing in these houses were single people pointing to an association between being unmarried and poverty in South Africa. This points to the dire need to direct more efforts on social security and protection towards this category of the population.

Table 2: Marital status

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Single	30	60.0
2	Married	14	28.0
3	Divorced	1	2.0
4	Widowed	3	6.0
5	Windowed	1	2.0
6	Separated	1	2.0
	Total	50	100.0

Employment Status

The findings from this study indicated that 52 percent of the study participants were unem-

ployed; while 32 percent of the study participants were employed; 8 percent were students; 6 percent were casual labourers; while 2 percent were self-employed (See Table 3). These perceptions were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from housing beneficiaries:

“Sometimes it almost gives you a headache to think of what you are going to eat because we do not have jobs; we are crying to the government to remember us because we need jobs”. Our situation is worsened by these houses; the stress is just all over.”

The findings revealed that most beneficiaries were bemoaning the state of unemployment that they faced. Incontrovertibly, life without a job creates feelings of aggression, desperation, as well as invoking suicidal feelings. This can also prompt people adopting other illicit means of survival such as being involved in crime, and engaging in prostitution. It therefore becomes pertinent that the government considers and invests in various ways of helping these people come out of their un-employability condition. Such options, there researchers contend could include funded educational options as well as vocational based training among other things. Campaigns by social workers are also welcome as a way of strengthening them with critical life skills and coping mechanisms towards uncertain conditions that may prevail in life.

Table 3: Employment status of study participants

S. No.	Employment status	Frequency	%
1	Employed	16	32.0
2	Unemployed	26	52.0
3	Casual	3	6.0
4	Self	1	2.0
5	Student	4	8.0
Total		50	100.0

Stress Associated With Lack of Water

The findings indicated that 92 percent of the study participants revealed that they had no access to clean water supply while 8 percent indicated that they had access to clean water supply (See Table 4). These findings were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the study participants.

“It is quite stressing because we do not have water and we have been waiting for it for a long time; sometimes there are these tanks that come, but the queues that we have to wait to fetch water are just painful and some of us are old people.”

“We do not understand why connecting water and other sanitary services have taken so many years. We wonder whether the government is committed to the policy of redressing the imbalances created by the apartheid.”

These findings indicated that most beneficiaries were dissatisfied with the lack of water supply in their houses. This problem was a perpetual cause of stress on them because there is nothing they can do without water. Though sometimes water tanks came but the price of waiting to get their turn to fetch the water was cumbersome and severely disturbing. It invoked feelings of despondency, frustrations, and had an impact of people feeling lowly esteemed. Apparently, people while answering the questions appeared overwhelmed, psychologically drained, and bitter. This, in these researchers’s thinking could be driving the younger generation to engage in various types of drug taking. These researchers in reaction to the psychological stalemate that the participants appeared to have delved into encouraging the government to put in place mechanisms towards ensuring that these people residing in these houses have access to reliable clean water supply in their houses. It could also have a tremendous positive impact if government can fund and support NGOs to take the responsibility.

Table 4: Provision of clean water

S. No.	Access to clean water services	Frequency	%
1	Provided	4	8.0
2	Not Provided	41	92.0
Total		50	100.0

Stress and Distress Associated with Size and Spacing of the RDP Houses

The findings from this study indicated that those who indicated the space of the house was inadequate, adequate, and very adequate were 80 percent, 16 percent and 4 percent respectively. On house space, those who indicated the space was very small, small and large were 32

percent, 64 percent and 4 percent respectively (see Table 4).

"There is no privacy between me and my wife and children and if visitors come to our house, it makes our life very complicated,"

"We are just packed in this house like animals without any room for relaxing; it pains me a lot and this can even cause high blood pressure when one ponders over the issue. It is difficult to bring up a child in this environment. It is psychologically very draining."

The findings from this study indicated that the beneficiaries were experiencing immense stress and distress because of the small size and spacing of their houses. It limits their privacy between their children as well as get embarrassed when visitors come to visit them. Apparently, the research participants were worried about the future of their children because the housing space and lack of privacy presented a hallowing and a psychologically draining challenge. With such a serious challenge of the space, this could prompt children to enjoy being outdoors. These therefore, open doors to illicit behaviour of the children. It was no wonder then, to suggest that the scenario was a fueling factor driving many young people to indulge in behaviours such as drug abuse and high levels of alcohol intake. No wonder, drug abuse, prostitution and high levels of alcohol intake in Golf Course was a common phenomena. To the youth and parents, the issue of house spacing presented an unacceptably higher levels of distress, stress and psychological loss.

Stress Associated with the Poor Quality Windows

The findings indicated that 74 percent of the study participants revealed that windows were poor; 10 percent revealed that they were fair while 16 percent of the study participants revealed that the quality of the windows was good (see Table 4). These perceptions were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the study participants:

"The windows are not strong as you can see; we are forced to put wire to hold them and you can imagine if visitors come and discover that our windows are held by wires; its so embarrassing and painful."

The findings revealed that the beneficiaries were embarrassed with the unfortunate state of

their windows as some were broken and some cannot properly close prompting them to use wires to hold them together. They therefore felt that the houses compromised their dignity and self esteem. The situation causes psychological and emotional loss. It is quite necessary that the government should do something to restore the dignity of these people by ensuring proper windows are installed, or ensure though and effective repair thereof.

Emotional Loss Associated with Toilets

The findings indicated that 58 percent of the study participants revealed that the toilets were poor; while 26 percent indicated that they were fair while 16 percent revealed that they were good (see Table 4). These findings were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the study participants:

"The fact that these toilets were put in the same one room causes severe problems because if we use them we do not even know what to do because of the smell filling the whole house,"

"The toilet seats and chambers are not strong and we are just very angry with the government for letting us down because that was not what we expected."

"Without water connected to the toilets, the use of these toilets poses immense challenges"

These findings indicated immense psychological loss because of the quality of the toilets, the lack of water connected to them and the fact of the house space. The situation, no doubt compromises human dignity and quality of life. The issue of toilets causes daily disappointment. In these researchers' contention, perhaps these toilets could have been mounted outside the houses, or should the government opt to rebuild the houses, they should consider building bigger spaced houses to allow proper location of these toilets. It could also be meaningful to provide these houses with stronger toilets as a means of ensuring that developmental exercises are sustainable and durable.

Emotional Turmoil Associated with Weak House Walls

The findings from this study indicated that 76 percent of the study participants revealed that the walls of their houses were poor; 8 per-

cent indicated that the walls were fair whereas 16 percent of the study participants indicated that the walls were good (see Table 4). These perceptions were supported corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments:

"We are so stressed to be honest with you because these walls allow a lot of wind and rain to penetrate especially during winter; we get so cold in these houses and no wonder we suffer from many illnesses."

The findings indicated that the beneficiaries were not happy with the walls of their houses. They thought that the human dignity had not been factored when constructing the houses. The walls were not withstanding the effects of both the winds and the rains. The situation, therefore, made the RDP dwellers vulnerable to an array of diseases especially during winter. This was psychologically very destabilizing. It therefore raises questions as to whether the government had ever considered the quality of the work that was done on these houses. It is therefore pertinent that the government considers or revises its contracting system for the RDP houses or any other house related contract.

Discrepantic and Falling Roofing

The findings indicated that 72 percent of the study participants indicated that the roofing was poor and falling; 18 percent indicated that it was fair, while 10 percent indicated that it was good (see Table 5). These findings were supported by the following qualitative sentiments from the research participants.

"These roofs can fall if winds are strong and we were forced to put stones to keep them from falling; this is an embarrassing state of affairs. These stones can fall anytime and cause accidents to our children. It's psychologically very nauseating."

It is apparent that the state of the roof was not pleasing. The beneficiaries were thus forced by the circumstances to place huge stones as a measure to protect their goods and themselves as well. The stones however come with a lot of embarrassment for these beneficiaries because anyone who looks at these houses will also look down upon these people. The houses did not have a human face attached to them. It was demoralizing, upsetting and psychologically very disturbing. These researchers advocate for replacement of these roofs with better ones that

will protect these people as these ones are very difficult to live with. The program should have a strong maintenance unit.

Anger Associated with Cracking Floors

The findings from this study revealed that 72 percent of the study participants indicated that the floors were poor; 14 percent indicated that they were fair; while 14 percent revealed that they were good (see Table 4). These findings were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

"These floors hurt my foot because they are cracked and my grandchildren always injure themselves in this house and you can't leave out the dust and how it affects us"

"I don't think their (government officials) houses are like this, then why would they let us live in these deplorable houses. Things have been wrong from contracting and building. Our country is full of corruption."

The state of the floors, apparently appears to be "a thorn in the flesh" of the dwellers. They give the impression of people who are perpetually disturbed by the floors. The cracks are a result of poor quality of the builders and possibly inadequate concoction of building materials. There was an indication that such builders or contractors wanted to save some of the materials and therefore personally benefit from them. This was due to their corrupt nature. It is also unfortunate because a nation full of anger is likely to be engaged in wrong and unlawful exercises and no wonder the level of crime is very high also in Golf Course houses.

Insecure and Exposed to Fear Because of Weak Doors

The findings from this study revealed that 80 percent of the study participants indicated that the doors were of poor quality; 10 percent revealed they were fair while 8 percent indicated that they were good (See Table 5). These findings were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

"These doors are not strong as you can see and we wonder why the government would let us live with such kind of doors; down there you can see that they can allow water to flow into

the houses and where they are put is not even where they should. With many thieves and sexual molesters around Golf Course, it becomes easy for them to break into to our houses."

Due to the fact that Golf course was crime laden, the fact of poor doors that could easily be broken was giving the dwellers sleepless nights. This was exacerbated by reports of increased number of rapists in the estate. Besides the doors being poor, there was perception that the direction or positioning of the doors were wrong and thereby allowing water to easily get into their houses. The situation was very disturbing.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicated that there was skewed gender discrepancy in that females outnumbered the males. These statistics are also echoed by national statistics that indicate that there are more females (52%) than males (48%) in South Africa (Statistics South Africa (SSA) 2010). Moreover, the findings revealed that Blacks outnumbered the coloreds. This mirrors, or is a true reflection of the national statistics that reveal that Blacks

outnumber coloreds. More so, there were more beneficiaries who were single than those that were, married, divorced, windowed, widowed or separated. This scenario concurs with the fact that most people affected by poverty are single people in South Africa (Rodgers 2006 as cited by Manomano 2013).

The findings indicated that most beneficiaries were unemployed. This is a national crisis that the Government agrees will not relent in the near future (Balfour 2015). It is in this vein that the Governor of South Africa indicated that the pervasiveness of unemployment in South Africa poses chances of lasting for some decades to come (Sapa 2013a). It is also commendable that the governor made bold steps to seek a helping hand from other stakeholders to give employment to the youth (Sapa 2013b). However, these initiatives should be complimented by other innovative approaches aimed at alleviating or mitigating the effects of unemployment. For example, South Africa needs to borrow a leaf from countries such as Kenya that have been able to mitigate states of unemployment through encouraging and supporting the growth of the in-

Table 5: Size and Spacing as well as quality of material making the RDP houses

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Quality of windows</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Quality of roofing</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Good	8	16.0	1	Good	5	10.0
2	Fair	5	10.0	2	Fair	9	18.0
3	Poor	37	74.0	3	Poor	36	72.0
4	Total	50	100.0	4	Total	50	100.0
<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Quality of windows</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Quality of roofing</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Good	8	16.0	1	Good	7	14.0
2	Fair	13	26.0	2	Fair	7	14.0
3	Poor	29	58.0	3	Poor	36	72.0
4	Total	50	100.0	4	Total	50	100.0
<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Quality of windows</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Quality of roofing</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Good	8	16.0	1	Good	4	8.0
2	Fair	4	8.0	2	Fair	5	10.0
3	Poor	38	76.0	3	Poor	41	82.0
4	Total	50	100.00	4	Total	50	100.0
<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Quality of windows</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Quality of roofing</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Very Adequate	2	4.0	1	Large	2	4.0
2	Adequate	8	16.0	2	Small	32	64.0
3	Inadequate	40	80.0	3	Very Small	16	32.0
4	Total	50	100.0	4	Total	50	100.0

formal sector. In Kenya, the informally driven sector is called *Jua kali* (in the sun) sector. This is because the business is usually done in the open spaces, or unsheltered sites (Daily Maverick 2013).

The findings also indicated that there is myriad psycho-social challenges associated with deplorable situations of their houses, ranging from poor windows, doors, floors, roofing, walls, toilets and lack of clean water as well. This is an indicator that the government machinery of putting up RDP houses has largely compromised the RDP tenets and policy of putting up good and dignified houses for the needy. This is a serious state of affairs that could also be a pointer of possible malpractices in contracting these houses. It is due to this state of houses that the beneficiaries of RDP houses in Sakhisizwe Local Municipality complained to the Public Protector about their houses being built without provision of water facilities and other social amenities. These are some of the reasons that have contributed to psychological and emotional loss to the RDP dwellers across the country (Phakathi 2013). To this end, literature indicates that the beneficiaries of RDP Houses in Bethulie are very disgruntled and disappointed about some of their houses without roofs, doors and windows. Unfortunately they cannot afford to complete these houses and they are in a state of stress and psychological drawback because some are still residing in shacks whereas they are officially expected to have moved in to their houses (Seleka 2012). Furthermore, beneficiaries of RDP houses in Delft, Cape Town, have been reported lamenting that due to the walls of their houses emitting dust continually, they were increasingly prone to contracting TB and other lung infections (Fortuin 2012). More so, the beneficiaries of RDP houses in Tembisa, Gauteng, were also angry over the size and spacing of their RDP houses as they cannot accommodate their families while those in Sekhulune are so disillusioned and disenchanted by the state of their RDP houses to an extent of feeling they were better off in the shacks (Nabudere 2013).

CONCLUSION

The government of South Africa should be commended for introducing the RDP housing program for the needy and vulnerable in South Africa. It is however disappointing that the prob-

lems associated with the quality of material making these houses, the quality of the buildings, as well as lack of access to clean water make the dwellers experience severe psychological and emotional loss. It is hoped that the results from this study will provoke the government, policy makers, NGOs and other stakeholders to promulgate ways of addressing these challenges to mitigate the psycho-social challenges affecting these beneficiaries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above findings, the researchers would like to recommend the following suggestions for these RDP houses. It is hoped that having seen the negative effects of inadequate houses on children as well as parents, it is pertinent for renovation of these RDP houses to be carried out by professionally qualified builders/contractors. The mistakes such as the positioning of the toilets needs to be corrected. All the weaker components of the houses such as the doors, windows, the walls need immediate replacement. They need to be strong enough to ensure ample security. The houses should have water connection as soon as possible. Water is a critical resource whose lack contributes greatly to stress, dependency and both psycho-social challenges. The services of social workers should be strengthened in order to address the psycho-social challenges of many RDP dwellers. Therefore, it is pivotal for the government to work towards instituting these services in these houses.

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