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COLLECTIVE EFFICACY AND PERCEIVED SECURITY IN OFF-CAMPUS STUDENT ACCOMMODATION: THE ROLE OF RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS AMONG UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN UNDERGRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

Due to the institutional infrastructure's inability to keep up with the skyrocketing enrolment, Nigeria's rapid development of higher education has resulted in a serious housing crisis for university students. Within the framework of the sociological phenomena of "studentification" and "collective efficacy," this study investigates the various difficulties encountered by University of Ibadan (UI) off-campus residents. Based on a wealth of material, the study identifies a "total package" of vulnerabilities in areas like Agbowo, Orogun, Ajibode and Samonda, such as outrageous rents, deteriorating environmental conditions, and systemic insecurity. How these groups fill the governance void created by the state is at the heart of the investigation. The results show that in order to handle security and basic infrastructure, residents and students mostly rely on "communitization" tactics and Residents' Associations. Although community-based crime prevention (CBCP) strategies are frequently successful, their effectiveness is mostly dependent on the degree of collective efficacy—that is, the citizens' willingness to participate for the common good and their shared trust. However, these attempts are sometimes undermined by the student population's transience and the existence of competing municipal authorities. In order to ensure the safety and academic success of the Nigerian student population, this study concludes that addressing the off-campus crisis necessitates a paradigm shift from neglected adaptation to institutional integration, requiring clear housing policies, regulated tenancy rights, and strengthened community-police collaborations.

Keywords: *Studentification, Collective Efficacy, Communalization, Student Housing, Ibadan.*

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria is currently facing a daunting macro-structural housing crisis, characterized by an estimated deficit of 28 million housing units that would require over ₦21 trillion to bridge. This national emergency is acutely mirrored in the educational sector, where successive civilian governments have failed to prioritize the development and maintenance of public hostels. At the University of Ibadan (UI), an explosion in student enrollment has far outpaced internal residential capacity, leading to a policy shift that displaces a significant proportion of the undergraduate population into the surrounding urban fabric. This process has triggered the "studentification" of peripheral neighborhoods such as Agbowo, Orogun, Samonda, and Ajibode, fundamentally altering the socio-economic and security dynamics of these areas.

The transition from a sheltered campus environment to the unregulated private market represents a dramatic decline in the quality of life for students. Off-campus living is often described by students as a "survival ritual" rather than a choice. Quantitative assessments reveal that while only 12.4% of on-campus residents experience high residential density, this figure jumps to 83.4% for those living off-campus. Environmental conditions are equally disparate; 86.3% of on-campus housing provides adequate air space and ventilation, compared to only 19.5% off-campus. Furthermore, the lack of protective window nets in 68.7% of off-campus apartments increases students' exposure to vector-borne diseases like malaria, which affects 40.3% of off-campus students compared to 23.3% on-campus.

The "total package" of concerns for the off-campus community includes severe logistical burdens. Students residing in areas like Agbowo face an average transit time to class of 59 minutes, nearly four times the 15-minute average for on-campus residents. This "war of rush hour" at the university gate forces students to leave home as early as 6:30 am to avoid being locked out of

8:00 am lectures. The transportation crisis is exacerbated by the selective nature of tricycle (keke) riders, who often ignore "first come, first serve" rules to prioritize convenient destinations, leaving students stranded for long periods. In the evenings, the scarcity of transport after 7:00 pm forces students into dangerous treks through darkness, creating a "quiet fear" of insecurity, particularly for female students.

Security remains the most debilitating challenge for the off-campus student community. Agbowo, in particular, has become a "hotbed of crime" where students live in constant fear of armed robbery. Criminal elements, often referred to as "street guys," frequently operate in large groups of up to 20 individuals, launching raids on student lodges between 1:00 am and 2:00 am. These robbers target items essential for academic life, such as laptops, smartphones, and power banks, often using violence or the threat of it to subdue victims. The psychological impact of such trauma is profound; victims report an inability to concentrate on examinations, and the general atmosphere of "panic" undermines the mental wellness necessary for academic excellence.

The economic dimension of the crisis is defined by the exploitation of students by "treacherous" house agents and landlords. Rent prices consume over 50% of the average worker's income in Nigeria, and for students, these costs are often unjustifiable given the substandard nature of the housing provided. Landlords frequently take advantage of high demand to impose arbitrary rent hikes and evictions, while the enforcement of tenancy laws remains weak. The Students' Lodging Bureau (SLB) and the Students' Union leadership have been criticized for their consistent failure to intervene in these burdening housing experiences, leaving students to suffer in silence.

In response to this systemic failure of the state and university management, communities have been forced to create alternative institutions to meet their basic needs. This has led to the rise of Residents' Associations and Community Development Associations (CDAs) that manage security, provide potable water through boreholes, and maintain electricity infrastructure. These non-state actors have moved into the vacuum created by the rupture in state-citizen relations, employing "communitisation" strategies to protect their constituents.

Ultimately, the off-campus crisis at the University of Ibadan is not merely a logistical or housing issue but a crisis of governance and security. The reliance on community-based models, while effective in some contexts, highlights the state's abdication of its primary responsibilities. To bridge this gap, there is an urgent need for institutional responses that prioritize the construction of affordable public hostels, regulate the off-campus housing market, and provide reliable logistical support to ensure that the "untold odyssey" of off-campus students is finally addressed.

2.0 Literature Review
2.1 Student Housing, Safety Perceptions, and Criminal Victimization in Higher Education Institution
University campuses are globally recognized as centers for learning and socio-cultural development; however, they also function as residential homes for thousands of students, faculty, and staff. Ideally, these environments should be sheltered from harm to foster a student's latent potential. Despite this, many institutions suffer from an "ever-exacerbating trend of victimization," leading to a spotlight on campus safety and security. This literature review examines the intersection of student housing policies, the prevalence of criminal victimization, and the theoretical frameworks utilized to understand these phenomena within African university contexts, particularly in Nigeria and South Africa.

2.2 The Theoretical Framework of Campus Security
The primary theoretical lens through which campus crime is analyzed in the literature is Routine Activity Theory (RAT), formulated by Cohen and Felson (1979). RAT asserts that criminal

victimization is not distributed randomly but is linked to individual lifestyles and daily routines. According to this theory, a predatory crime occurs when three elements converge in time and space: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian.

In a university setting, students are often identified as "suitable targets" due to their possession of high-value, portable items such as laptops and smartphones. The "absence of a capable guardian" may refer to a lack of physical police patrols, inadequate CCTV surveillance, or poor environmental design, such as insufficient lighting. Furthermore, Collective Efficacy Theory suggests that the willingness of residents to intervene informally and collaborate with law enforcement is vital for reducing local crime.

2.3 Comparative Assessment of On-Campus and Off-Campus Housing
A persistent challenge for institutions like the University of Ibadan is the explosion of the student population, which has necessitated the adoption of off-campus housing policies. Research indicates a stark disparity between the experiences of students living on-campus versus those living in adjoining residential neighborhoods.

Health and Academic Performance On-campus students generally report better academic performance (with average CGPAs of 4.2 compared to 3.5 for off-campus students) and better health outcomes. Off-campus students are more likely to suffer from illnesses such as malaria, catarrh, and typhoid, largely due to poor housing quality, inadequate ventilation, and high residential density. Furthermore, off-campus students face significant "distance indicators," spending an average of 59 minutes in transit compared to just 15 minutes for those on campus.

Security and Victimization The literature suggests that students residing off-campus are significantly more vulnerable to criminal behavior. At the University of Limpopo and the University of Venda, the majority of students feel that on-campus life is safer than off-campus life. Off-campus accommodations often lack proper security mechanisms like "battler doors," and landlords are frequently viewed as being more interested in rent than in student safety. Students off-campus also suffer at the hands of treacherous real estate agents who have become a root cause of housing concerns.

2.4 Patterns of Student Victimization
Victimization on campus manifests in various forms, including theft, robbery, and physical assault. Data from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) between 2010 and 2012 highlighted theft as the most prevalent crime, though serious incidents like rape and armed robbery remained troubling.

Sexual Victimization and Gendered Fear Gender play a critical role in perceptions of safety. Female students report higher levels of fear and a greater sense of vulnerability compared to their male counterparts. Statistics indicate that one in five female students may experience some form of sexual assault during their college years. Female students often employ "avoidance strategies," such as not walking alone at night or staying away from specific campus areas. Research at the Universities of Limpopo and Venda found that female students were significantly more concerned about sexual harassment and rape than males.

Risk Factors: Alcohol and Drugs A major proximate cause of student victimization identified in the literature is the prevalence of alcohol and drug use. High quantities of campus rapes are attributed to student populations engaged in regular underage drinking or "partying" lifestyles. Individual consumption of alcohol can lead to a loss of control, making students "suitable targets" by increasing their accessibility to motivated offenders. Moreover, perpetrators often prey on

students during the first few weeks of their freshman year, a period when they are less likely to recognize signs of trouble.

2.5 Urban Neighborhood Security and Community Policing
The security of university students is inextricably linked to the characteristics of the surrounding urban neighborhoods. Institutions are often located in areas described as "hot spots" for crime, where poverty and social disadvantage are prevalent.

Gated Communities and Privatized Security In cities like Ibadan, there is a growing trend toward "gated communities" as a response to urban violence. Residents in these communities feel significantly safer than those in non-gated areas, driving movement into these high-security zones. This shift reflects a widening gap between public security and private privacy in the modern urban landscape.

Community Policing Initiatives Community policing has emerged as a strategy to bridge the "trust deficit" between the public and formal law enforcement. In the Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos, the introduction of community policing led to a significant decline in reported crime. Successful community policing hinges on culturally sensitive strategies, youth engagement, and the involvement of informal social control mechanisms, such as traditional leaders and local vigilante groups. However, the success of these programs is often hindered by a lack of institutional trust, lingering police brutality, and inadequate funding.

3.0 METHODOLOGY
In order to investigate the relationship between residents' associations, perceived security, and collective efficacy among undergraduate students residing in off-campus communities near the University of Ibadan, this study used a cross-sectional survey approach. Students who live in these neighbourhoods and are immediately impacted by local security systems and unofficial social control mechanisms made up the population. The sampling strategy employed was multi-stage. Major off-campus neighbourhoods were purposively identified, following which 200 students were randomly sampled. A systematic questionnaire with five sections—demographic data, perceived security, collective efficacy, the role of residents' associations, and open-ended questions on security challenges and improvement strategies—was used to gather the data. A five-point Likert scale was used to assess the items that measured the essential variables. Inferential statistics (correlation and regression) and descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, averages, and standard deviations) were used in the data analysis process using SPSS. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Table 1- Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	N	%
Age (years)	16–19	67	19.0
	20–23	196	56.0
	24–27	73	21.0
	28 and above	13	4.0
Gender	Male	189	54.0
	Female	154	44.0
	Prefer not to say	7	2.0
Level of Study	100 Level	52	15.0
	200 Level	74	21.0
	300 Level	84	24.0
	400 Level	88	25.0
	500 Level	35	10.0
	600 Level	17	5.0
Duration of Residence	Less than 6 months	63	18.0
	6–12 months	112	32.0
	1–2 years	126	36.0
	More than 2 years	49	14.0
Type of Accommodation	Private apartment	151	43.0
	Hostel-style rental	102	29.0
	Shared house	80	23.0
	Other	17	5.0

Source: Author's field Survey, 2025

The demographics of 350 undergraduate students residing in off-campus housing near the University of Ibadan are shown in Table 3.1, along with the consequences for neighbourhood security and collective efficacy. According to the findings, the majority of respondents are mid- to senior-level students, young adults between the ages of 20 and 23, and the gender distribution is fairly balanced. A sizable percentage have lived in their neighbourhoods for more than a year, demonstrating residential stability that fosters the growth of interpersonal relationships and community engagement.
These traits point to favourable circumstances for collective efficacy since mutual trust and informal social control can be strengthened by social engagement, familiarity among inhabitants, and shared experiences. Additionally, the degree of resident engagement varies depending on the type of housing. Overall, the results show that in off-campus student areas, residents' associations may be crucial for boosting perceived security and community cohesion.

Table 2- Descriptive Statistics for Collective Efficacy in Student Residential Neighborhoods

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. People can be relied upon to help each other	3.72	0.94	Moderate–High
2. Residents can work together to solve problems	3.65	0.98	Moderate–High
3. Neighbors are willing to intervene when rules are broken	3.21	1.05	Moderate
4. Residents trust each other	3.48	0.99	Moderate
5. Sense of shared responsibility for safety	3.59	0.92	Moderate–High
Overall Collective Efficacy Score	3.53	0.78	Moderate–High

Source: Author's field Survey, 2025

Table.2 provides the descriptive statistics on collective efficacy among University of Ibadan undergraduate students residing in off-campus housing. The research communities' total collective efficacy score (M = 3.53, SD = 0.78) shows a moderate–high degree of social cohesion and informal social control. Respondents expressed comparatively strong views of shared responsibility and mutual support, indicating that locals understand a feeling of shared responsibility for upholding law and order and promoting communal well-being. The presence of interpersonal trust and cooperative involvement among student residents is reflected in the moderate–high mean scores of indicators like helping behaviour, shared responsibility, and neighbour trust. Although there is social cohesion, inhabitants may not be as inclined to aggressively enforce community norms, as evidenced by the somewhat lower score for willingness to intervene in rule-breaking instances. All things considered, the results imply that off-campus student communities have a solid basis of collective efficacy that can sustain perceived security. On the other hand, enhancing institutional frameworks like residents' associations could facilitate the conversion of current social cohesiveness into better neighbourhood safety and more efficient informal social control.

Table 3- Descriptive Statistics for Students' Perceived Security in Off-Campus Accommodation

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Safety during the day	4.02	0.88	High
2. Safety at night	2.96	1.10	Moderate
3. Concern about theft/burglary	2.71	1.14	Moderate Concern
4. Concern about harassment/personal attacks	2.85	1.08	Moderate Concern
5. Trust in neighbors for safety	3.41	0.97	Moderate
Overall Perceived Security Score	**3.19**	**0.83**	**Moderate**

Source: Author's field Survey, 2025

Table 3 provides descriptive data on how undergraduate students who live off campus at the University of Ibadan feel their level of security. The respondents' overall perceived security score (M = 3.19, SD = 0.83) shows a modest degree of safety perception. Although most students do not consider their neighborhoods to be extremely unsafe, their perception of safety differs based on certain circumstances, especially the time of day. According to the findings, kids feel much safer during the day, with daytime safety having the highest mean score. This is likely due to increased social interaction and environmental observation. On the other hand, nighttime perceptions of safety are lower, which may increase feelings of vulnerability due to decreased visibility and social presence. Moderate levels of theft and harassment concerns were also recorded, suggesting knowledge of possible hazards in off-campus settings.
The moderate score for trust in neighbors emphasizes how social interactions influence people's sense of safety. Overall, the results indicate that although there is a certain degree of

neighborhood cohesion, enhancing community coordination mechanisms—like residents' groups and collective security initiatives—may improve perceived safety, especially at night.

Table 4-Descriptive Statistics for the Role of Residents' Associations in Promoting Neighborhood Safety

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. There is an active residents' association in my neighborhood	3.62	1.02	Moderate–High
2. The association organizes safety-enhancing activities	3.28	1.07	Moderate
3. Safety information is communicated effectively	3.14	1.05	Moderate
4. The association encourages collective action for safety	3.46	0.96	Moderate
5. The association makes me feel safer	3.33	1.01	Moderate
Overall Residents' Association Role Score	**3.37**	**0.84**	**Moderate**

Source: Author's field Survey, 2025

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 4 investigates how respondents view the function of resident associations in fostering security and neighbourhood cohesion in off-campus student housing. The overall mean score (M = 3.37, SD = 0.84) shows a moderate degree of perceived efficacy, indicating that while resident associations exist and support neighbourhood organization, their influence on security outcomes is not entirely maximised.
The existence of active residents' associations, which are thought to promote cooperation among residents and offer some degree of assurance regarding neighbourhood safety, was generally acknowledged by respondents. However, only moderate scores were given to tasks like planning safety campaigns and disseminating security-related information, suggesting that these tasks might not be performed regularly or with enough exposure.
Overall, the results indicate that in off-campus neighbourhoods, residents' associations are helpful in promoting community cohesion and group action. However, they may be better able to convert current social cohesion into more effective informal social control and better perceptions of neighbourhood security if their operational capabilities, communication mechanisms, and resident participation are strengthened.

4.5 Open-Ended Responses on Security Challenges and Improvement Measures

The respondents' qualitative comments identified important security issues and offered solutions for improving neighbourhood safety in off-campus housing. Theft, poor lighting, harassment, and poor community cooperation were all frequently mentioned by students as major issues. These problems are consistent with theoretical frameworks that highlight how social organization and environmental factors influence perceived security. Routine activity theory suggests that crimes such as stealing are more frequent where suitable targets exist, capable guardians are absent, and environmental supervision is poor (Cohen & Felson, 1979). In a similar vein, inadequate lighting and a lack of community cooperation discourage informal guardianship and foster an environment that encourages opportunistic crimes.
A number of remedies were proposed by the respondents, such as more patrols, better communication, infrastructure improvements, and encouragement of group responsibility. These recommendations take into account both the social and structural aspects of collective efficacy. Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997) assert that when citizens have cohesive relationships, mutual trust, and a willingness to step in for the common good, collective efficacy arises. While communication channels and the encouragement of group responsibility build social cohesiveness and coordination, increased patrols and infrastructure upgrades, such greater lighting, operate as environmental supports that bolster residents' ability to take action. The interaction between social cohesiveness and unofficial social control is highlighted by the open-ended data. One issue noted is poor community coordination, which raises the possibility that current social networks are either underutilised or inadequately formalised. This result is

consistent with Hipp's (2016) finding that perceived security and collective efficacy are significantly influenced by neighbour communication and trust. Students may be more inclined and capable of participating in cooperative problem-solving, reporting, and intervention behaviours if formal resident engagement platforms are established, such as active residents' associations or digital communication networks. Additionally, the replies show that students emphasise shared responsibility by acknowledging their personal position as co-producers of neighbourhood security. This is consistent with the main idea of collective efficacy theory, which holds that security is co-constructed through coordinated community activity rather than being exclusively the result of formal policing (Sampson et al., 1997). The focus on proactive measures, such as patrols and better communication, indicates that students believe there is a gap between the best security standards and the current informal procedures, which highlights chances for residents' associations to close this gap.

In conclusion, the quantitative findings of moderate–high collective efficacy and moderate perceived security are supported by the open-ended responses. The theoretical idea that social cohesiveness, coordinated intervention, and environmental supports all work together to affect perceptions of safety is supported by students' suggestions for structural and social improvements. In order to translate collective efficacy into real security outcomes in off-campus student neighbourhoods, it is crucial to strengthen resident groups, facilitate communication lines, and encourage shared accountability.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study show that the University of Ibadan's off-campus student residents have moderate-to-high collective efficacy, especially when it comes to shared responsibility, social cohesiveness, and mutual support. This implies that pupils understand the value of informal monitoring and cooperative behaviour as strategies for upholding neighbourhood order. Such cohesiveness offers the social basis required for controlling disorder and improving perceived safety, in line with collective efficacy theory (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997), even while the desire to actively intervene in rule-breaking is still relatively low. Although perceived security is generally modest (M = 3.19), it varies significantly throughout time, with high levels of safety during the day and noticeable vulnerability at night. These results are consistent with routine activity theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979), which emphasises that perceptions of risk are increased at night because to decreased guardianship and environmental visibility. Students showed modest anxiety about theft and harassment, demonstrating that social cohesion alone is unable to entirely minimize situational insecurity without complementing structural supports.

It was discovered that residents' associations had a moderate impact on safety by offering organisational venues for participation, information sharing, and group action coordination. However, poor communication, partial engagement, and underuse of formalised frameworks restrict their efficacy. According to collective efficacy frameworks (Hipp, 2016; Sampson et al., 1997), improving these associations' operational capacity through improved coordination, visible security initiatives, and regular resident participation could convert current social cohesion into stronger informal social control and better perceived security outcomes. Lastly, perceptions of safety and group efficacy are greatly influenced by demographic criteria, such as academic standing, length of stay, and kind of housing. Longer residential experience was associated with better levels of trust, cohesiveness, and knowledge with neighbourhood norms among mid- to senior-level students, underscoring the function of social embeddedness in promoting informal regulation and community engagement.

In conclusion, the study shows that off-campus student neighbourhoods at the University of Ibadan have the fundamental components for collective efficacy; yet, chances for focused interventions are indicated by residents' associations' partial effectiveness and moderate felt security. A workable strategy to improve perceived security, build community resilience, and

strengthen collective neighbourhood action is to integrate social cohesion with organised institutional processes, such as active residents' groups, safety patrols, and good communication.

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