

# The Shift of Commercial Properties Development from High-Rise to Medium and Low-rise in Kaduna Metropolis

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**Abstract**

*The development and management of high-rise commercial buildings involves a lot of complex decision making process that requires skilled manpower. Most of these decisions are concerned with the application of appropriate skills, technology, man power, and market tools to harness returns on investment. In many situations the problems of these decisions are not friendly to the structure, tenants and the environment of our high rise commercial buildings, which causes shift in demand of accommodations by the increasing number of the potential tenants to other buildings that are non-high-rise and rendered high-rise properties investment less profitable. The study investigated the reasons behind the decrease in high-rise real properties investments in Kaduna metropolis. Data collection was achieved through the use of structured questionnaire, field survey and inspection, informal interview and literature sources. Data obtained from the study were analysed in tabular forms, and narrative description. Parts of the results includes: higher rate of interest on the borrowed capital couple with the longer period of time covered by the development, lack of technical know-how,*

*insufficient plants and machineries to undertake the development and about 28% of the existing high-rise buildings are not prove to be properly insured against hazards and disaster. Some of the recommendations include; soft loan at lower interest should be made available to the developers, stakeholders in building industry should be adequately train on the new development techniques and government should ensure all high-rise buildings are properly insured with registered insurance agencies.*

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### **Introduction**

A ‘tall building’ is a multi-story structure in which most occupants depend on elevators (lifts) to reach their destinations. The most prominent tall buildings are called ‘high-rise buildings’ in most countries and ‘tower blocks’ in Britain and some European countries. The terms do not have internationally agreed definitions, (Challinger, 2008). However, a high-rise building can be defined as buildings reaching 75 feet (23meters) to 100 feet (30meters) tall or seven to ten stories are considered to be high-rise structures. These types of structures will in most cases have depths of 150 feet with enclosed stairways and elevator shafts which are protected by stand-pipes, (Knoke, 2006).

For most purposes, the cut-off point for high-rise buildings is around seven stories. Sometimes, seven stories or higher define a high-rise, and sometimes the definition is more than seven stories. at times, the definition is stated in terms of linear height (feet or meters) rather than stories. The exact height above which a particular building is deemed a high-rise is specified by fire and building codes for the country, region, state, or city where the building is located, (Knoke, 2006). However, for the purpose of this research and with the consideration of the Nigerian context, the cut-off point considered (for high-rise) was five storeys and above. While medium-rise contains between two to four storeys and one storey was considered as low-rise buildings.

The uniqueness and complexity in the nature of high-rise buildings in view of their design, development and management possess a great challenges, hence the difference in their construction and management with other properties, (Oyekole, 2004). The high cost of land acquisition caused by scarcity has given

rise to a vertical development of multi-storey buildings in many cities in Nigeria.

The city of Kaduna witnessed many high-rise developments in the early nineteen sixties up to the late eighties, which were developed by public authorities, private investors and corporate bodies for one purpose or another. However, it is the experience nowadays that such kind of developments are no more taking place in the metropolis, in other words it is very rare to find new site for high-rise development within the city. The development of medium and low-rise buildings becomes paramount, majority of the developers (public authorities, private investors, and corporate bodies) shift from development high-rise buildings to medium and low-rise buildings. This manuscript intends to present the reasons behind the shift and proffer solutions for better real estate investment in Nigeria.

#### **NATURE OF HIGH-RISE COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS.**

High-rise usually built with lightweight materials and frames such as steel and precast concrete materials which are highly resistant to axial and rotational forces and have high load bearing capacity due to the nature of the soil and overall weight of the building, it is recommended that deep pile foundations should be used during erection of such buildings.

The design of high-rise commercial buildings both for single or multiple occupations requires the incorporation of services necessary to support the building and its inhabitants. Designing a high-rise building that is to be constructed in phases requires many special considerations that would not normally be required for a single phased building. Most of these houses suffered void for a long period at the initial stage of occupation that is after all aspects of construction has been completed especially the upper floors resulted to huge losses on the part of the overall investments (Pearson & Wittels, 2008).

The reasons for such void period vary from one building to another which may be connected to lack of enough parking spaces to serve the staff and visitors, too much fault of the lift system, designed deficiencies, poor management and unacceptable locations. In any of the above mentioned cases; problems pertaining to management of the buildings can arise. It can equally be arguably held that most of the problems currently being faced in the buildings, even though now fully or mostly let, derived their roots from the above inferences.

The summary is that there are inadequate pre-investment studies which were carried out or that none was carried out at all, (Kuye, 2000).

The current trend for constructing office buildings is to build higher and higher, and developers tend to compete with one another on heights. Tenants also appreciate a landmark address and politicians are conscious of the symbolic role of high-rise buildings. The international and high technology styles have accompanied nearly all new tall buildings and became landmark of our cities (McNeill and Tewdwr-Jones, 2003). Nonetheless high-rise office buildings are more expensive to construct per square meter, they produce less usable space and their operation costs are more expensive than conventional office buildings. The increasing rate in the construction of medium and low-rise commercial buildings now experiencing in Kaduna metropolis has been fundamentally caused by many factors which are related to; financial, technological, protection against natural disaster, problems of management and maintenance, and so on, which in turn changes the interest of the potential developers from high-rise buildings developments. Majority of the present day high-rise buildings in the town was constructed 25 to 40 years ago, and they still served as the only landmarks used in the city.

### **HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS**

More than 150 years ago, cities looked very different from the way they look today. The buildings that housed people and their businesses were rarely over the height of a flagpole. Urban landscapes tended to be flat and uniform in pattern, apart from monuments, temples, and town halls; and cathedrals (adorned with domes, spires, or towers) which “towered above everything else in a city or town; they were visible from miles away” (Schmidt, 2001).

The emergence of tall buildings began in the nineteenth century in the United States of America. The intense rural – urban population drift and the ensuing pressure on the limited land resources have greatly inspired modern city building development efforts. Over the years, the development of any kind of structure has always depended on the available construction materials, construction technology and the services needed for the use of the building. The socioeconomic problems that accompanied industrialization in the nineteenth century and the increasing demand for land in urban cities were the driving forces for tall building construction, (Ali and Moon, 2007 in Ede, 2014).

According to the Institute of Real Estate Management (1985); the modern office building was created in response to rapid population increases and industrialization that occurred during the late nineteenth century. Between 1870 and 1920, during which the population of the United States doubled, and demand for office space increased fivefold. The first commercial structures were in the east of the country (United States), but with railroads and a dynamic economy spurring national expansion, office buildings soon appeared in the Midwest, particularly in Chicago.

The 10-story (180-foot or 55 meters) Home Insurance Building built in Chicago in 1885 is generally considered to be the world's first skyscraper, (Shepherd, 2003). At the turn of the century, tall buildings began to spring up in New York City, such as 22-story Flatiron (Fuller) Building, 285 feet (87 meters) high; in 1903, the 50-story Metropolitan Life Insurance Building, 700 feet (213 meters) high; in 1909, and the 57-story Woolworth Building, 792 feet (241 meters) high; in 1913. The American tall building development got to its crowning point in 1931 with the 102-storey braced steel frame of Empire State Building that attained the height of 381m. After a period of about 40 years in 1973, this great edifice was superseded by the 442m tall, 110-storey framed-tube World Trade Centre Twin Towers in New York and quickly followed in 1974 by the 442m tall bundled-tube Sears Tower in Chicago, (Ede, 2014).

Recently, the tallest completed buildings include Taipei, the 101 story, 1670 foot (509 meters) mixed-use, pagoda-style structure completed in Taipei, Taiwan, in 2004. This building is followed by Shanghai World Financial Center, the 101storeys, 1641 foot (492 meters) mixed-use building completed in Shanghai, China, in 2008. Burj Dubai located in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates; contain over 160 storeys with an estimated height of over 800 meters or 2600 feet, it is the tallest structure in the world as at 2009. The Burj Al-arab (millennium building) since it construction in the year 2000 becomes the world's tallest building with height of 321metres (1,053ft).

## **TYPES OF HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS**

There are different types of high-rise buildings classified according to their primary use, some of which include the following:

**Office Building:** An office building is a structure designed for the conduct of business, generally divided into individual offices and offering space for rent or lease.

**Hotel Buildings:** The term ‘hotel’ is an all-inclusive designation for facilities that provide comfortable lodging and generally, but not always food, beverage, entertainment, a business environment, and other ‘away from home’ services, (Beaudry, 1996).

**Residential and Apartment Buildings:** A residential building contains separate residences where a person may live or regularly stay. Each residence contains independent cooking and bathroom facilities and may be known as an apartment, a residence, a tenement, or a condominium. An apartment building is a building containing more than one dwelling unit. Apartment buildings are those structures containing three or more living units with independent cooking and bathroom facilities, whether designated as apartment houses, condominiums, or garden apartments, (Bush, 2008).

**Mixed-use Buildings:** A mixed-use building may contain offices, apartments, residences, and hotel rooms in separate sections of the same building. Hotel residences are another type of mixed-use occupancy. The hotel residences trend is notably different from its predecessors such as fractional/time share hotel units, which are not wholly owned, or condo hotels, which are wholly owned hotel rooms without, for example, kitchens. Not only do hotel residences have kitchens and everything else an owner would expect in a typical abode, they also include amenities such as maid and room service, plus restaurants, spas and gyms. Typically, (these) residences are on the top floors of hotels, (Olmsted, 2008).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The data required for this study were gathered through the use of structured questionnaire, field survey and inspection, informal interview and literature sources. No any aspect of laboratory test relating to soil type and it bearing capacity, and so on was conducted as the issues were considered in the design of questionnaire and interview. The nature of the data required for the research, the classification of the respondents and their number needed in each category was the reasons behind the adoption of this method of data collection. A sample of 150 tenants, 15 property owners, and 25 Property development companies were selected, for the administration of both questionnaire and interview which took place simultaneously.

A random sampling technique was employed to get the sample of tenants as a result of their larger number and the importance of their experiences over time.

The exercise was designed to collect data across all the floors of the buildings that served as case studies for proper data collection. Purposive sampling was used for the property owners and developers due to the nature of information needed from them and there are few of them operating within the study area. Some staff of Kaduna State Urban Planning and Development Authority (KASUPDA) and that of Kaduna State Development and Property Cooperation (KSDPC) were interviewed on relevant questions in form of discussion. It was aimed at obtaining their views based on their personal experiences in respect of the past and present conditions of commercial property developments in the metropolis.

Physical inspection was also carried out to ascertain the nature of developments, population, design, repairs and maintenance, utilities, services, tenant's occupation, waste management, and working conditions were some of the issues considered during the inspection. The data collected were analysed in tabular form, narrative and descriptive methods.

**Table 1: Some High-rise and Low-rise Buildings Studied**

<i>BUILDING</i>	<i>NO OF FLOORS</i>	<i>ESTIMATED HEIGHT (meters)</i>
<i>Investment House</i>	5	20.10
<i>Turaki Aliyu House</i>	5	20.75
<i>Ali Akilu House</i>	6	23.43
<i>Nagwamatse House</i>	10	37.05
<i>Abdullahi Yaro House</i>	5	21.50
<i>Hamza Zayyad House</i>	7	26.85
<i>Ahmad Talib House</i>	9	34.25
<i>El Ibadan street</i>	3	12.06

**Source: Field Survey, 2019.**

## **FINDINGS**

Many factors have been identified as causes of the shift from high-rise buildings to medium and low-rise buildings developments in the study area, some of the major ones are as follows:

- **Financial:** The construction costs for high-rise buildings often run into hundreds of millions of naira. The huge capital required for the development and the longer period of time it takes before completion are

obvious to the high-rise building developers. The owners of these buildings will rarely be willing or able to bear these costs without outside assistance, (Challinger, 2008). They depend on the financial institutions and other sources to raise capital for the developments under higher rate of interest and strong terms of agreement that are predominantly unbearable.

Building lease is another source of financing high-rise commercial building developments where the owner of the land places his land at the disposal of a contractor who then erects a building on it. The contractors nowadays are not willing to organize the project's financing themselves, be it with own funds or with the aid of loans.

- **Technology:** Although the world has witness greater advancement in technology at the present time, especially in building and construction industries which make things that are impossible some decades ago achievable today, a lot of problems still exist in the Nigerian construction industry particularly in high-rise buildings developments; our industry strongly depend on foreign experts and ideas over a long time, use of unskilled and inexperienced experts, lack of technical know-how, modern plants and machineries are lacking in many industries, developers in many instances are not adhering to the building rules, corrections observed by the planning and development authorities on the original designs are ignored, use of cheap and substandard materials during construction to increase profit, and so on. As a result many high-rise building projects fails or collapse and becomes abandoned which lead to the loss of the total investment and withdrawals of investors from high-rise buildings developments.
- **Management and Maintenance Problems:** Property management and maintenance are part and parcel of high-rise living but the standard of management service provided by most of the property managers and developers are questionable. Most of the property managers are not professional, lacking in experience, too profit oriented and not knowledgeable in managing high-rise commercial complex, (Ling, 2014). There were a growing number of complaints among the tenants of high-rise commercial buildings against the owners and property managers related to management in Nigeria as compared with other

countries. Most of these houses suffered void for a long period at the initial stage of occupation, that is after all aspects of construction has been completed especially the upper floors, resulted to huge losses on the part of the overall investments (Pearson & Wittels, 2008).

An investigation shows that, 34.44% of the high-rise buildings studied have vacant spaces (unoccupied spaces) in their upper floors. Although reasons for the vacant space vary from one building to another which may be connected to lack of enough parking spaces to serve the staff and visitors, too much fault of the lift system, tenants dispute, unacceptable locations, lack of repairs and maintenance, poor services, designed deficiencies, and so on, many of these problems are related to poor management which eventually force tenants to relocate to other buildings and increase the demand for medium and low-rise buildings.

Lack of proper record keeping is another problem affecting the functions of the property managers. Majority of them have no past management records and other important information of the buildings they are currently managing. This make them handicap in using the previous information on management problems encountered by the preceding managers in forecasting the future problems and plan it solution before it occur. As a result many problems tend to repeat itself several times causing discomfort to tenants and others users of the buildings.

- **Protection against Natural Hazards:** The national insurance Act 2003, make it compulsory by law for all owners or occupiers of public buildings whether private or public, to insure their properties for the protection of third parties and the general public. However, the Nigerian public to a very large extent has a negative perception about insurance. Although the sector is changing for the better, it has not been easy to convince Nigerians, (Onuoha, 2013). An investigation shows that only 72% of the high-rise commercial buildings studied are proved to be insured by the recognizable (registered) insurance companies, and over 22% of the seating tenants of high-rise commercial buildings are feeling unsecured being in upper floors, especially in an event of disaster. This may be the reason for relocation of some tenants to non-high-rise buildings, and increase the demand for medium and low-rise commercial buildings in the area, thereby creating more vacant spaces in the upper

floors of the existing high-rise buildings which adversely affect the profit of those investments.

- **Other Risk Involved:** High-rise buildings do not normally allow phasing of the investment or changes in the development strategy during the construction period. It is not possible to interrupt the construction process without significant costs or to finish only part of the project as a reaction to unforeseen circumstances. This exposes the developer to a higher degree of risk which is unbearable to most developers; they therefore, stay out of high-rise development. Other risks closely associated with high-rise buildings, though occur very rarely, but possible to occur in the area of study is terrorism. High-rise buildings with their distinguishing profile in a city's skyline not only represent a magnet for tenants, customers and guests, but unfortunately also become a popular, sometimes inadvertent target for terrorist attacks. This kind of fear pushes some tenants out of high-rise buildings especially those in upper floors.
- **Scarcity of Land:** Land as a factor of production is a fixed asset; its value is appreciating with time, and the exponential increase of population coupled with high rate of rural-urban migration leads to excessive demand for this very important factor of production in towns and cities for various commercial purposes, the scarcity of land and its nature of limited supply give rise to an option of vertical development. However, the area required for high-rise commercial developments is very extensive to accommodate the main structure, parking, external works and other activities. This area is mostly needed within the central business area of towns and cities. The high scarcity of land coupled with individual small land holdings that are unwilling to part away or dispose their interests in land in the central neighbourhoods constituted another problem for high-rise commercial buildings developments.
- **Stakeholder's Limited Competition:** The limited pool of building contractors and specialist, sub-contractors with expertise in constructing high-rise buildings in Nigeria reduce competition among the stakeholders for high-rise developments in the country. It also serves as an obstacle to the prospective investors capable of financing high-rise

developments, this leads to a cost premium due to greater dependence on foreign experts.

- **Government Policy:** The change of government strategy in infrastructural development which leads to its withdrawal from high-rise commercial developments has brought changes to real estate investment. Nowadays government at different levels (federal, state, and local government) preferred medium and low-rise developments than high-rise projects for some reasons. Investigations have shown that about 30% of the high-rise commercial buildings studied were developed by the former regional government (Northern Nigeria) in the sixties through partnership with other organisations.

## CONCLUSION

With provision of soft loan to the developers at lower interest rate, increasing the number of qualified professionals in the indigenous building industry through training, use of modern plants and machineries, change of government policy in infrastructural development and ensuring proper insurance of high-rise building against disasters will lead to an increase in high-rise commercial property investments that will accommodate the present rapid increase of commercial activities experiencing in Kaduna metropolis.

Partnership of the stakeholders in high-rise development will make the dream of many developers attainable. Since High-rise commercial buildings allow many commercial activities to be housed under one roof, and more people could work at exactly the same location, and various goods and services could be made available to consumers within the high-rise building, thereby intensively utilizing the land area.

However, it is also important to realize that the multiplicity of problems faced by the tenants of high-rise buildings due to poor management and maintenance will continue to force some of them to relocation to medium and low-rise buildings which if allow to persist will rendered the investment in the existing high-rise buildings profitless and consequently worsen the investment. This will force more potential investors to consider alternative of shifting to non-high-rise investments, it is therefore important to tackle these problems appropriately.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Issue of Finance:** There should be soft loan at lower interest rate and simple terms of agreement from financial institutions for the developers and other real estate investors to access in order to obtain enough funds for high-rise commercial developments in the area. Government through its development authorities should reduce the taxes paid by the high-rise commercial property developers (investors) to lessen their financial burdens and where possible joint hand with them in form of public private partnership (PPP) to sponsor commercial high-rise developments in the area. In the same vein, more contractors and developers can be encouraged to embark on financing high-rise commercial developments in the area through enlightenment campaign and conferences by showcasing the variety of benefits they stand to gain from this kind of investment.
- **Technological:** There is need for the professional bodies presiding over the construction industries and other professionals involved in the high-rise commercial buildings development in Nigeria to ensure that only skilled professionals are employed and used in the construction industries for all purposes, and designs and specifications originally approved by the development authorities are strictly adhered to.

There are needs for favourable conditions for the developers to import modern plants and machineries used in the construction industries nowadays which ease and accelerate construction activities in order to reduce the lengthy period taken by high-rise commercial developments and assure the delivery of qualitative and standard buildings in the country. Also government should ensure the development of technical education in the country, right from the secondary school levels up to institutes of higher learning to reduce the dependency on foreign experts and ideas.

- **Issue of Property Management and Maintenance:** High-rise commercial buildings are complex properties comprising of different individuals, facilities, utilities and services. Therefore, it should be handled by professional property managers who are well trained and certified to practice property management profession. It is therefore, the duty of the professional bodies such as National Institute of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV), Estate Surveyors and Valuers

Registration Board of Nigeria (ESVARBON) and International Facilities Management Association (IFMA) Nigerian branch and so on. To ensure that high-rise commercial buildings are managed by qualified persons, who manage buildings not for profit making and/or social benefits alone, but also preserving the property so that it can continue to serve the purpose for which it was built as well as enhancing aesthetic for the satisfaction of both the occupants and other users of the buildings.

For effective management, competent skilled and unskilled workers should be employed to take care of different services provided in all high-rise commercial buildings (100%). Technician, maintenance officer, cleaners, security personnel and so on should be adequately employed. On the other hand, if any of the services is to be contracted or out source, the managing firm should ensure that local companies with good records and reputations are selected to do the service. A good plan on how to assess and respond to sudden breakdown of services should be devise to meet service delivery promptly. This can be achieve by adopting a standard maintenance strategy where preventive and corrective maintenance could be use to take care of all facilities failure at an early stage before it get worst and increase the cost of maintenance.

A proper records keeping system should be design and all information relating to the building which includes, owners, insurance, managers, tenant's records, repairs and maintenance, disaster if any, and so on should be intact to guide the future decisions on the buildings.

- **Protection against Natural Hazards:** Government through the developmental authorities should provide an enforcement plan that will ensure all owners of public buildings insured their properties during construction and after completion before it is occupied by tenants, in order to guarantee the safety of occupants, their investments, the property, and other users of high-rise commercial buildings from unforeseen disasters such as fire outbreak, flooding, earthquake, storms and collapse of buildings. Emergency unit should be established in all the high-rise buildings which will comprise different professionals required to response to emergencies at all times.

The penalty for non-compliance as provided by the national insurance Act 2003, which is payment of one hundred thousand naira only (₦100,000), plus one year imprisonment, and sealing-off or demolition of the building in events of bodily

injury, death and property damage to the business, users and members of the public in the event of building collapse, fire, storm or flood (Onuoha, 2013), should be strictly enforced where the developer or owner is found guilty without bias of any kind.

- **Other Risks Involved:** The higher degree of risks which developers are exposed to as a result of changes in the development strategy during the construction period can be minimized when the tasks involved are adequately and carefully programmed. Government especially at state level should join hands with the developers through public private partnership in high-rise commercial building developments to reduce the extent of risks burdened by the developers. Security of high-rise buildings should be intensified by assuring that only the services of qualified security agencies are employed.
- **Competition in High-rise Developments:** Competition ensures efficiency and quality; there should be a special training for the contractors, sub-contractors, and other professionals in the Nigerian building industry on the new techniques of high-rise developments within the country and abroad in order to increase the number of building contractors and specialist sub-contractors capable of undertaking the task. Government should provide an enabling environment that will attract competition in high-rise developments.
- **Issue of Scarcity of land:** The difficulties experienced by the developers in obtaining the available land for high-rise commercial buildings development in the city can be reduced through urban renewal strategy. The public authority should consider comprehensive redevelopment of the slum areas in the central neighbourhoods of the city, and vertical developments (high-rise) should be given consideration in the re-planning and re-development of the area.
- **Government Policy:** There is need for government especially at state and federal levels to consider the option of vertical development in its subsequent plan for infrastructural developments and completely participate in the construction of high-rise office and commercial buildings or jointly with private developers to enhance the supply of high-rise commercial buildings in the metropolis.

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