

ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE IN SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY

A focus on South Africa, Soweto's urban development.

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Summary

This paper explores sustainable practices in social housing delivery in Soweto, South Africa, and their influence on urban development. The research aims to assess the current state of sustainable practices and identify challenges and opportunities for enhancing sustainability. Through interviews with government officials, community leaders, young residents, and construction experts, this paper shows existing sustainable initiatives, such as solar panels and recycling, driven by government policies. However, challenges, including budget constraints and the need for community education, persist. Recommendations emphasize collaboration, clear communication, community engagement, and local resource utilization. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on sustainable urban development, offering insights that can guide Soweto toward a greener and more inclusive future.

Keywords: social housing, sustainability, urban development, Soweto, community engagement

A FENNTARTHATÓ GYAKORLAT ERŐSÍTÉSE A SZOCIÁLIS LAKÁSÁLLÍTÁSBAN

Összefoglalás

Ez a tanulmány a szociális lakhatás fenntartható gyakorlatait tárja fel a dél-afrikai Sowetóban, és ezek hatását a városfejlesztésre. A kutatás célja a fenntartható gyakorlatok jelenlegi állapotának felmérése, valamint a fenntarthatóság fokozásának kihívásainak és lehetőségeinek azonosítása. Kormányzati tisztviselőkkel, közösségi vezetőikkel, fiatal lakosokkal és építési szakértőkkel készített interjúkon keresztül bemutatjuk a meglévő fenntartható kezdeményezéseket, például a napelemeket és az újrabasznosítást, amelyeket a kormány politikája vezérel. A kihívások azonban továbbra is fennállnak, beleértve a költségvetési korlátokat és a közösségi oktatás szükségességét. Az ajánlások az együttműködésre, az egyértelmű kommunikációra, a közösségi szerepvállalásra és a helyi erőforrások felhasználására helyezik a hangsúlyt. Ez a tanulmány hozzájárul a fenntartható városfejlesztésről folyó diskurzushoz, és olyan betekintést nyújt, amely egy zöldebb és befogadóbb jövő felé irányíthatja Sowetót.

Kulcsszavak szociális lakhatás, fenntarthatóság, városfejlesztés, Soweto, közösségi szerepvállalás

Introduction

Sustainable housing practices and regulations are crucial elements of urban development, notably in South Africa (Nkosi & Beukes, 2018). Due to the ongoing issues of housing shortages and fast urbanization, South Africa has emerged as a key location for the investigation of sustainable techniques in the provision of social housing. In addition to critically analyzing their significant effects on the landscape of urban growth, this study focuses on the subtleties of applying sustainable practices in social housing in Soweto, South Africa.

Background

Soweto, nestled within the Johannesburg metropolitan municipality, serves as a captivating case study in the pursuit of sustainable urban development through social housing initiatives (Nkosi & Beukes, 2018). It dates back to the dark days of apartheid, a period marked by the harsh enforcement of racial segregation. Since those challenging times, Soweto has undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving from a racially divided settlement into a multifaceted urban landscape that embodies the complexities of South Africa's journey towards democracy (Crush & Williams, 2019). The transition of political power from the Apartheid regime to democracy in 1994 ushered in a renewed commitment to addressing historical injustices, including housing disparities (Todes, 2020).

Over the years, a variety of housing and development policies have been introduced to rectify these historical wrongs, propelling Soweto towards a more equitable and sustainable urban future (Berrisford, 2017). These policies have aimed not only to provide dignified housing for residents but also to stimulate broader urban development, nurture socio-economic growth, and champion environmental sustainability (Mangold & Turok, 2016, Priatmoko et al., 2021).

It is essential to emphasize the significance of sustainable housing practices in the context of urban development. This is because sustainable housing aligns with global objectives, as outlined in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UNDP, 2021). Attaining sustainability in housing is therefore paramount for curbing carbon emissions, addressing social disparities, and ensuring the long-term vitality of our urban centres (Brown & Jones, 2019).

Research Questions

This study embarks on an exploration guided by the following research questions:

Question 1. What are the existing sustainable practices and policies implemented in Soweto's social housing delivery, and how have they influenced urban development in the area?

Question 2. What are the major challenges faced by stakeholders in achieving sustainability in social housing initiatives in Soweto, and what strategies can be recommended to address these challenges effectively?

Research Objectives

The overarching objectives of this research are to:

Objective 1. Assess the current state of sustainable practices in social housing delivery in Soweto, South Africa.

Objective 2. Identify key challenges and opportunities for improving the sustainability and effectiveness of social housing initiatives in Soweto's urban development.

Rationale of the study

This study's rationale focuses on the effects of sustainable practices in social housing delivery on urban development in Soweto. As urbanization continues to reshape the dynamics of cities across South Africa, it becomes increasingly crucial to examine how social housing policies and practices contribute to the overall well-being of urban residents and the sustainable growth of communities (Ntshangase & Muswema, 2020).

Todes, (2020) states that the complex nature of urbanization in South Africa, accompanied by persistent housing disparities and socio-economic inequalities, promotes the importance of this research. By analyzing existing practices, challenges, and potential strategies for enhancing sustainability in Soweto's social housing sector, this research aims to provide valuable results to policy-makers, urban planners, and other relevant stakeholders (Coetzee et al., 2019). The study further endeavours not only to contribute to academic discourse but also to offer practical recommendations as well for the development of sustainable housing solutions in the township of Soweto and beyond (Ndaba, 2018).

Methodology and Material

The research approach chosen for this study is qualitative. It is aimed at providing an in-depth understanding of sustainable practices in social housing delivery within Soweto, South Africa, and their implications for urban development. Qualitative research was found suitable due to its capacity to capture the diverse perspectives of stakeholders involved in social housing initiatives (Cresswell & Poth, 2017).

Participant Selection

The process of participant selection was purposeful. It was designed to encompass a spectrum of eight (8) viewpoints relevant to social housing and urban development in Soweto. Four categories of participants were engaged:

Department of Housing Officials: Two officials from the South African Department of Housing were selected. This was for their expertise in housing policies and their influential roles in shaping social housing practices in Soweto.

Senior Community Leaders in Soweto: Two seasoned community leaders from Soweto were chosen. They were selected because they would be well-acquainted with the intricacies of the community, and as such contribute their perspectives on the topic.

Young Residents of Soweto: Two young residents of Soweto were also selected to represent a demographic that is often most affected by social housing initiatives. They were included to provide the perspective of beneficiaries.

Construction Experts: Two experts in the field of construction with substantial experience in social housing projects were also chosen. This was not limited to Soweto as the topic can be generalizable. In any case, they were part of the sample as they brought technical insights, enriching the research with their expertise.

Data Collection

The primary data collection instrument that was used was online, semi-structured interviews with the selected participants. The online interviews were selected because they can transcend geographical constraints as the author of this paper is currently in Hungary while facilitating the in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and viewpoints (Bryman, 2016). These interviews were carefully designed to foster open discussions. This was done through creating open-ended questions to extract accurate information from the participants and as such, allowing a nuanced understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were paramount. Informed consent was sought and obtained from all participants, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity were provided (Creswell, 2013).

It is essential to acknowledge potential limitations in this research. Qualitative research inherently involves a smaller sample size, which may limit the generalizability of findings. However, qualitative research primarily aims to provide context-specific insights rather than broad generalizations (Bryman, 2016). Additionally, the subjective nature of qualitative research means that findings are influenced by the researchers' interpretations, underscoring the importance of a rigorous and transparent approach to data analysis, which in this study was conducted by the author (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

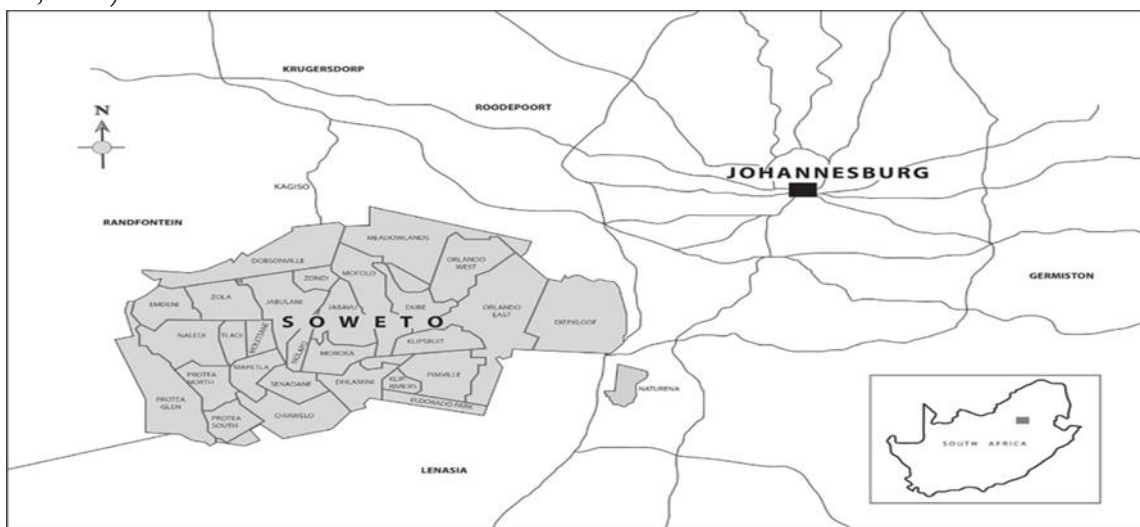


Figure 1: Study area

Source: Bridger, 2021

Results

Table 1: Questions and Answers for the Department of Housing Officials

<p>Q1. Could you provide insights into the sustainable practices and policies implemented in social housing delivery in Soweto as observed by the Department of Housing?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>Of course. We've been doing things like using solar panels to save electricity and using special systems to save water. We've also been teaching people in the community how to recycle and reduce waste.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>We're trying to make it easier for people to use buses and trains instead of cars. We're also learning from experts to make sure we're doing things the right way to help the environment and the community.</i></p>
<p>Q2. From your perspective, how have these sustainable practices influenced urban development in Soweto, and what changes or improvements have been observed?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>Well, using solar panels and saving water means people can have cheaper electricity and more water. Teaching recycling helps keep the area cleaner, and better public transportation means less traffic and pollution.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>These practices have made life more comfortable. People save money on electricity and water bills, and there's less pollution from cars. Also, community members have more job opportunities through our projects.</i></p>
<p>Q3. What challenges has the Department of Housing encountered in implementing sustainable social housing practices in Soweto, and how have you addressed them?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>Challenges include the cost of installing eco-friendly systems and getting everyone on board with recycling. Also, some people still prefer to use their cars instead of public transport.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>Cost is a challenge because some eco-friendly systems can be expensive to set up. Getting everyone to recycle can be tricky, and we're still working on making public transportation more convenient for everyone.</i></p>
<p>Q4. Are there specific strategies or initiatives that the Department of Housing has undertaken to enhance sustainability in social housing projects, and what results have been achieved?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>In the future, we want to use even more solar power, improve recycling programs, and make public transportation even better. We also plan to work closely with the community to make sure everyone benefits.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>We're looking to expand the use of solar power because wind energy generation is not possible, promote recycling of course, and make public transportation more accessible. Collaboration with the community is a big part of our plans to ensure a sustainable and green future for Soweto.</i></p>
<p>Q5. How do you envision the future of sustainable social housing in Soweto, and what are the key priorities for further development?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>In the coming years, we see more homes powered by the sun, more people recycling, and improved public transport. Our top priority is to make sure these changes benefit everyone in Soweto and create a healthier and cleaner place to live.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>Our vision for the future is to have sustainable housing that is affordable for everyone. We want to keep making progress in saving energy and water while creating more jobs for the community.</i></p>

Table 2: Questions and answers for senior community leaders in Soweto

<p>Q1. From your experience as community leaders, what are the most significant sustainable practices in social housing delivery that you have observed within Soweto?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>Well, you know, we've seen some houses with those shiny blue things on the roofs. I think they're for saving electricity or something. And there's talk about people not throwing stuff on the ground. That's good, I guess. But honestly, we're not experts in all this eco stuff.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>I think some houses have, you know, special toilets that use less water. And maybe there are some bins for putting plastic stuff. But to be honest, we are not entirely sure how it is making a big difference, although we have heard it is better for the environment.</i></p>
<p>Q2. How have these sustainable practices contributed to the overall development and well-being of the Soweto community?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>I think those shiny roof things might make it not so hot in the summer. And, you know, less trash on the streets is always good. But I'm not sure how much it's really changing things for us, though it's supposed to be healthier.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>Well, less water in the toilets means we pay less for water bills, I guess. And less plastic around is nice. But I can't say for sure how much it's improving our daily lives besides saving us money, although I've heard it's better for the environment.</i></p>
<p>Q3. What challenges or concerns have arisen in the community related to social housing, and how have you addressed them?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>I think some people don't know how to use those fancy things on the roofs, and it can be confusing. And not everyone gets why we shouldn't throw stuff on the ground when there are more pressing problems like few buses and trains to get to work. It's a bit challenging to get everyone on board with these eco-friendly ideas.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>Well, it's not easy to get everyone to do this eco stuff, and some of those new toilets can be a bit tricky. But we're trying our best to educate and motivate the community to adopt these practices, even though we're not experts.</i></p>
<p>Q4. In your view, what role does community engagement play in ensuring the sustainability of social housing projects, and can you share any successful examples?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>When people from the community are involved, they can take care of things like those roof panels and recycling. But we do not have a big success story to share, just that it is good when people work together.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>Having the community involved is important because it makes people feel responsible. We've seen cases where the community helped keep the area clean and used new eco-friendly things correctly. But we don't have a big success story to tell, just small steps in the right direction.</i></p>
<p>Q5. What recommendations do you have for improving the collaboration between the community, housing authorities, and other stakeholders to enhance sustainable social housing initiatives in Soweto?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>We think it's a good idea for everyone to talk more and share ideas. The government could explain things in an easier way so everyone can understand. Also, if there are any good things for the community, they should tell us clearly.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>We believe it's important for everyone to come together and have open discussions. Housing people can have meetings with us to explain things better, and we, as community leaders, can help connect everyone. It's important to show the good things from these eco-friendly ideas to the community.</i></p>

Table 3: Questions and answers for young residents of Soweto

<p>Q1. As young residents of Soweto, how have you perceived the social housing projects in the area in terms of sustainability?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>Well, we've noticed some houses with cool things on the roofs, and we heard they save electricity. And there are bins for plastic stuff, which is better for the environment. So, we think it's good, but we don't know all the details.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>Yeah, we've seen those roof things, and they're supposed to be good for the planet, we think. And we like that there's less trash around. But we're not sure how much it's changing things for us, even though it's supposed to be good.</i></p>
<p>Q2. What benefits or challenges have you experienced or observed as a result of these housing projects?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>Well, some houses have solar panels installed, which is neat. It might help with electricity bills. And having less litter around is definitely better. But it's hard to say exactly how it's affecting our lives because we are still jobless and most of us don't even have houses to begin with.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>Using less water could save money, we guess. And less plastic trash is always good. But we're not sure how much it's improving our daily lives, even though it's better for the planet. It only benefits wealthy tenderers who get these projects and corrupt government people. We usually get temporary jobs but as soon as the work is done, we go back to unemployment.</i></p>
<p>Q3. Are there specific sustainability features or amenities in social housing that you find particularly important or lacking?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>We like the idea of using the sun's power with those roof things. But we're not sure if everyone knows how to use them. And maybe having more recycling bins would be nice.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>Yes, those solar panels sound good, but not everyone knows how to use them. And it'd be better if there were more places to recycle stuff like plastic and we got some money out of recycling, we think it's important for the environment and we will also have something to eat.</i></p>
<p>Q4. How do you see the long-term impact of social housing on your generation and the broader community in Soweto?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>We hope it means we'll have cleaner air and less trash. We also want more of us to get the houses from government and move from our informal houses because they are not safe. And maybe we can learn to use eco-friendly things better. But we're not sure about the long-term yet.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>Yes, we want a cleaner place and maybe cheaper bills. And we hope the community learns more about being eco-friendly. But it's hard to know for sure what's coming in the long run, hopefully with stable employment so we can feed our families.</i></p>
<p>Q5. What recommendations or ideas do you have for making social housing initiatives more inclusive and responsive to the needs of young residents?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>We think it'd be good if they explained things in a simple way, like how those roof things work. And maybe there could be events or workshops to teach us more about being eco-friendly.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>Yes, they should make things easy to understand, especially for young people. And having events or classes to learn about being eco-friendly could be helpful, we also want more of use to have access to these houses. We want to be part of it, too.</i></p>

Table 4: Questions and answers for construction experts in Soweto

<p>Q1. Could you share your insights into the technical aspects of sustainable construction practices in social housing projects in Soweto?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>Sure, sustainable construction means building homes that don't harm the environment too much. We use special materials and designs to save energy and water. It's like building in a way that's nice to the Earth.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>Sustainable construction is about making houses that use less energy and water. We use things like good insulation and solar panels to save electricity. It's important for making homes eco-friendly.</i></p>
<p>Q2. 2. From your expertise, what have been the key challenges in implementing sustainable construction methods in Soweto's social housing developments?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>Well, sometimes it costs more to build in a sustainable way. And not all construction workers know how to do it. We also need to make sure the materials we use are eco-friendly.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>One challenge is that it can be more expensive to build with sustainability in mind. Also, not all construction workers are trained in these methods. We have to be careful about the materials we use, too.</i></p>
<p>Q3. What innovative construction techniques or materials have you observed or used to enhance sustainability in housing projects?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>We've seen innovative stuff like using recycled materials to build, which is great for the environment. Also, using special paints that save energy by keeping homes cooler or warmer.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>Innovative techniques include using materials made from recycled stuff, which is good for the Earth. We also use paints that help keep houses at the right temperature without using too much energy.</i></p>
<p>Q4. In your experience, how have sustainable construction practices affected project timelines, costs, and overall project outcomes?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>Sustainable construction can take a bit longer because we need to plan carefully. It might cost a bit more upfront, but it can save money on energy bills later. Overall, it helps make houses better for people and the planet.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>Sustainable construction might take a bit more time to plan and cost a bit more at first. But in the long run, it can save money on energy and water bills. The result is homes that are better for everyone.</i></p>
<p>Q5. From a construction perspective, what recommendations do you have for optimizing sustainability in future social housing initiatives in Soweto?</p>
<p>Answer 1: <i>We should train more construction workers in eco-friendly methods. Also, use local materials to cut down on transportation pollution. And plan well from the start to avoid surprises.</i></p>
<p>Answer 2: <i>It's important to train construction workers in eco-friendly ways of building. Using materials from nearby can reduce pollution from transporting stuff. And careful planning helps prevent unexpected issues.</i></p>

Summary of participants' perspectives

In this section, the study presents a synthesis of the insights gathered from the different participant groups. While the participants' perspectives vary in their level of understanding, they collectively provide a comprehensive view of the challenges, benefits, and recommendations associated with sustainability in social housing in Soweto. It is found that government officials emphasized the importance of eco-friendly practices, such as solar panels and water-saving technologies, in promoting sustainability. They further recognized the role of community engagement and providing public transport in seeking to reduce environmental impact. There were some challenges including the cost of implementing eco-friendly systems in the township and the need for continuous community education about reduced carbon footprints. The officials further enlightened the study that plans centred on expanding the use of solar power in the area as the climate permits. Finally, they mentioned promoting recycling.

The senior community leaders demonstrated a limited understanding of sustainability concepts but acknowledged the presence of solar panels and recycling initiatives. They then further highlighted the challenges of getting everyone in the community to adopt these eco-friendly practices and recommended simpler explanations and improved community involvement in the form of communal meetings. Future plans revolved around incremental steps, such as increasing recycling and encouraging responsible energy use although they didn't seem to know exactly how. The young residents also noticed sustainable features but also seemed to lack in-depth knowledge. They expressed hope for a cleaner environment and cost savings but remained uncertain about the long-term impact. Their recommendations from the young people also revolved around simplified explanations and educational workshops to involve young residents in eco-friendly practices.

The construction experts on the other hand provided more technical insights into sustainable construction practices. They were constantly emphasizing the use of recycled materials and energy-efficient designs. They acknowledged that sustainable construction might require more time and upfront costs but highlighted long-term benefits, such as reduced energy and water expenses. Recommendations included training construction workers in eco-friendly methods and prioritizing the use of local materials.

Synthesis of the participants' perspectives

Across the participants as a whole, this study safely deduces that there was a shared recognition of the importance of sustainability in social housing. While government officials and construction experts demonstrated a deeper understanding of eco-friendly concepts, community leaders and young residents highlighted different levels of familiarity. The challenges that were highlighted by the data generally included cost considerations, the need for community education, and the importance of simplifying explanations.

The collective recommendations give the study the view that it is very important to engage in the significance of community engagement, education, and collaboration among stakeholders before installing sustainable features to social houses or erecting new structures. This is especially important because everyone will be on the same level of knowledge on how to remain sustainable in the operation of these houses. Ultimately these insights emphasize the potential for improved sustainability practices in Soweto's social housing.

Discussion

Research background revisited.

This chapter discusses the connection between the contextual background, objectives, and the outcomes of this research. The study's primary focus revolved around examining sustainable practices in social housing delivery within Soweto, South Africa. Their influence on the broader landscape of urban development in the area was also a key component of the study. The objectives also involved assessing the state of sustainable practices in Soweto's social housing delivery and identifying the challenges and opportunities for enhancing sustainability in such initiatives. These objectives guided the exploration of research questions and the subsequent interviews with the participants.

Addressing the Research Questions

Research Question 1: *What are the existing sustainable practices and policies implemented in Soweto's social housing delivery, and how have they influenced urban development in the area?*

Government Officials: Government officials played a significant role in explaining the existing sustainable practices and policies implemented in Soweto's social housing delivery. Their insights revealed several noteworthy initiatives, including the installation of solar panels on rooftops, the incorporation of water-saving technologies, and efforts to enhance public transportation. These practices most certainly align with broader sustainability goals aimed at reducing energy consumption, conserving water resources, and improving mobility. Even though the government officials did not go into specific urban development outcomes during the interviews, this study safely inferred that these sustainable practices contribute to a cleaner and more energy-efficient urban environment.

Senior Community Leaders: The senior community leaders interviewed on the other hand contributed to the study by mentioning solar panels and recycling initiatives. Their perspectives highlighted the presence of eco-friendly practices at the community level. However, the interview did not provide explicit connections to urban development as a whole because they were only knowledgeable about their own area of residence.

Young Residents: The two young residents recognized the presence of solar panels and recycling bins as well and emphasized a cleaner environment as a potential outcome. However, they remained uncertain about the broader urban development impact just as their elderly community leaders.

Construction Experts: Construction experts brought a technical perspective to the discussion, emphasizing the use of recycled materials and energy-efficient designs in sustainable construction practices. While they did not explicitly address urban development outcomes, their insights implied that sustainable construction practices contribute to a greener urban environment.

Research Question 2: *What are the major challenges faced by stakeholders in achieving sustainability in social housing initiatives in Soweto, and what strategies can be recommended to address these challenges effectively?*

The exploration of challenges and recommendations highlighted the complex landscape of achieving sustainability in social housing initiatives and emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts and community engagement.

Cost Considerations: All the participants consistently recognized the starting cost associated with implementing sustainable systems and construction methods as a significant challenge. One contractor mentioned that eco-friendly technologies, such as solar panels and energy-efficient building materials, often require a larger initial investment, which can deter some housing projects from adopting sustainable practices, particularly when faced with budget constraints.

Community Education: The need for comprehensive community education emerged as a significant challenge that was not only recognized by government officials, but also by the community leaders, and young residents. This then translates to this study taking the view that promoting eco-friendly practices and ensuring residents' understanding of these practices remain critical hurdles. Community members must grasp the benefits of sustainability and the steps they can take to actively participate in green initiatives.

Behavioural Factors: Government officials highlighted the challenge of persuading residents to embrace public transportation over private vehicles. Changing entrenched behaviours and preferences can be a formidable task, particularly when personal vehicles are deeply ingrained in daily routines.

Recommendations for Addressing Challenges

Collaboration and Communication: This study recommends Collaborative efforts as a means of addressing the challenges associated with sustainability. Stakeholders, including government authorities, community leaders, and construction experts, should work together to develop holistic solutions for Soweto. Moreover, clear, and simplified communication strategies should be employed to share information regarding sustainable practices, benefits, and incentives with all community members.

Training and Capacity Building: Another recommendation is the importance of training construction workers in eco-friendly methods and sustainable construction techniques. A skilled workforce is vital for the successful implementation of sustainable building practices.

Use of Local Resources: To mitigate costs associated with sustainability, stakeholders must consider using locally sourced materials and resources, reducing transportation emissions, and simultaneously supporting the local economy.

Community Engagement: The need for community engagement and education emerged as a recurrent theme. This paper therefore recommends hosting workshops, events, and educational programs that can help raise awareness and instill eco-friendly behaviours among residents. Moreover, involving the community in decision-making processes and sustainability initiatives can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Addressing the Objectives

Research Objective 1: *To assess the current state of sustainable practices in social housing delivery in Soweto, South Africa.*

The study effectively achieved its first objective by providing an overview of the current state of sustainable practices in social housing delivery within Soweto. The interviews conducted showed the presence of various sustainable initiatives, from solar panel installations to water-saving technologies and eco-friendly construction methods.

These findings demonstrate that Soweto has taken steps toward incorporating sustainability into its social housing initiatives. However, the results also highlighted a critical aspect: the varying levels

of awareness, understanding, and involvement among different stakeholder groups. While government officials and construction experts exhibited a deeper comprehension of eco-friendly concepts, community leaders and young residents demonstrated a more limited knowledge base. This disparity underscores the need for more targeted and inclusive education and engagement strategies within the community.

Research Objective 2: To identify key challenges and opportunities for improving the sustainability and effectiveness of social housing initiatives in Soweto's urban development.

The second objective sought to identify challenges and opportunities associated with enhancing sustainability in social housing projects in Soweto. The findings have unveiled critical challenges, such as cost considerations, the need for community education, and behavioural factors related to transportation preferences. These challenges represent hurdles that, if unaddressed, could impede the successful implementation of sustainability measures.

Simultaneously, the study identified several opportunities for overcoming these challenges effectively. Collaborative efforts emerged as a central theme, emphasizing the importance of stakeholders working together to develop holistic and feasible solutions. Furthermore, clear, and simplified communication strategies, local resource utilization, and community engagement were recommended as strategies to promote sustainability in social housing initiatives.

In summary, the discussions have generated a nuanced understanding of the state of sustainable social housing practices in Soweto. While the presence of sustainable initiatives is evident, varying levels of awareness and expertise among participants suggest the need for tailored education and engagement approaches. The recommendations put forth by the participants underscore the significance of collaboration, training, and community involvement in promoting sustainability.

Conclusion

Through conversations with government officials, community leaders, young residents, and construction experts, this paper has highlighted the community's ongoing journey toward sustainability. As this research concludes, it is observed that Soweto does seek to strike a balance between its sustainability aspirations and the realities it confronts of inadequate housing.

The existing sustainable practices in Soweto encompass solar panels, recycling initiatives, public transport use and the incorporation of energy-efficient construction methods. Government officials have emerged as important stakeholders in shaping policies to advance a cleaner, more energy-efficient urban environment. Nevertheless, community leaders and young residents, while recognizing the significance of sustainability, require targeted education and engagement for full participation while maintaining a low and affordable cost of living.

Summarizing the recommendations emerging from this study, it is evident that collaboration is key. Collaborative efforts between government, community, and experts should be fostered to tackle the challenges posed by sustainability. Clear and straightforward communication strategies are important to ensure that all understands sustainability concepts. Finally, the effective use of local resources can help mitigate the financial constraints associated with sustainability.

In closing, this study provides valuable insights into the state of sustainable practices in Soweto's social housing. By following the path laid out by these findings and recommendations, Soweto can move a step further its journey toward a greener, more sustainable future, where sustainability aspirations align seamlessly with the present-day realities.

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