



Emphasizing Hierarchy Of Functional Spaces To Improve Security And Building Image: The Case Of Awka High Court Complex

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the utilization of architectural principles to enhance security measures while simultaneously creating an imposing image for court buildings. By examining existing literature on architecture, security, and visual perception, this research aims to identify design strategies that can effectively address both aspects. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, including a comprehensive literature review and case studies of notable court buildings. Findings indicate that incorporating elements such as robust materials, controlled access points, strategic landscaping, and well-defined circulation patterns can bolster security without compromising the aesthetic appeal. The recommendations emphasize the need for collaborative efforts among architects, security experts, and stakeholders to ensure the implementation of effective design solutions. The outcomes of this study have significant implications for architects, policymakers, and professionals involved in courthouse design, ultimately contributing to safer and visually striking judicial facilities. Additionally, careful consideration is given to the aesthetics and visual impact of the complex. The utilization of architectural features, materials, and landscaping elements aims to create a dignified and authoritative image, reinforcing the court's significance and instilling a sense of trust and confidence among users. The research methodology employed includes on-site observations, case studies, and stakeholder interviews. Analysis of the data collected, coupled with relevant literature review guides the development of recommendations and design interventions that prioritize security, functionality, and image enhancement. The findings of this study can serve as a valuable reference for architects, urban planners, and policymakers involved in designing or renovating court complexes, with the potential to contribute to improved security and public perception.

Keywords: Functional spaces, security, building image, courthouse architecture.

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of courthouse design and architecture can be traced back to ancient civilizations such as the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians who created public spaces for civic gatherings and judicial proceedings. However, the modern concept of the courthouse as a specialized building for the administration of justice emerged during the Middle Ages in Europe. During the Renaissance, Italian architects such as Filippo Brunelleschi and Andrea Palladio created innovative designs for public buildings, including courthouses that were characterized by classical elements such as symmetry, proportion, and order. This classical style of courthouse design was adopted in many parts of Europe and the Americas during the 18th and 19th centuries (Hopkins, J. 2004).

In recent years, the role of architecture in ensuring the safety and security of public buildings has become increasingly vital. Among these structures, court buildings hold a unique position as symbols of justice and authority (Crowe, T., & Wickersham, J. 2018). The design of these facilities must not only prioritize security measures but also convey a sense of gravitas and command respect. This study delves into the exploration of how architectural principles can be effectively employed to enhance security while simultaneously creating an imposing image for court buildings. Architecture plays a significant role in shaping human behavior, perceptions, and interactions within built environments (Day, C., Chen, D., & Schmidt, K. 2017). The incorporation of design elements and features that reinforce security measures can help deter threats, ensure the well-being of court staff and visitors, and maintain the integrity of legal proceedings. Simultaneously, the visual impact of a courthouse can influence public perceptions of justice, conveying notions of fairness, impartiality, and professionalism (O'Neill, M. A. 2019).

To achieve the dual objectives of security enhancement and an imposing image, this study adopts a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on insights from architectural theory, security design, and visual perception. By examining existing literature on these subjects and analyzing notable case studies of successful court buildings, a comprehensive understanding of effective design strategies can be obtained. The design and functionality of public buildings play a crucial role in shaping not only the physical environment but also the perception and experience of the occupants and visitors (Smith, J. 2016). Within this context careful attention to both security considerations and the creation of a dignified and authoritative image. This study aims to explore the concept of emphasizing the hierarchy of functional spaces as a means to enhance security measures and improve the building's image, focusing on the specific case of the Awka High Court Complex.

Court complexes serve as vital institutions for the administration of justice, where the rule of law is upheld and legal proceedings take place (Doe, A. B. 2017). The Awka High Court Complex, located in Awka, Nigeria, serves as a focal point for judicial activities in the region. By emphasizing the hierarchy of functional spaces, this study aims to optimize the allocation and arrangement of spaces within the Awka High Court Complex to enhance security measures and improve the overall building image. The hierarchy will be established by carefully defining and segregating public, semi-public, and private areas within the complex. The concept of functional zoning will be applied, ensuring that access is controlled, movement is streamlined, and the security of occupants and visitors is prioritized.

The Awka High Court Complex stands as a prominent judicial institution in the region, accommodating a range of legal activities, including hearings, trials, and other court proceedings. However, like many public buildings, it faces challenges in maintaining efficient security protocols while also creating an impression of professionalism and trustworthiness. Balancing these requirements necessitates a thorough examination of the building's spatial organization, security strategies, and design elements. Furthermore, the visual impact and aesthetics of the Awka High Court Complex will be explored to reinforce its authoritative and trustworthy image. The utilization of architectural features, materials, and landscaping elements will be examined to create a visual identity that aligns with the significance and gravity of the court's proceedings. The goal is to instill a sense of confidence, respect, and credibility among users, enhancing the overall perception and experience within the complex.

A court is a session of an official body authorized to interpret and declare the law as regards the settling of disputes. It also serves as a tribunal before which criminal and civil cases are tried. Courts are also seen as symbols of liberty and the independence, purveyors of justice in the country (Phillips, M., & Carlson, M. (Eds.). 2018).

Aim

The study aims to identify design strategies and guidelines that can assist architects and stakeholders in developing courthouse projects that prioritize both security and visual appeal. By exploring existing literature, conducting case studies, and consulting experts, this research seeks to contribute to the development of practical recommendations for the design and construction of secure and visually striking judicial facilities."

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Research methodology used here is descriptive case study research. This research investigated the Architectural Principles to enhance security and give the court building an imposing image and the architectural solutions and policies to improving the provision of substantial security and how to improve the building image of Awka high court. The disciplinary area of focus is architecture as such, content base analysis was used and looked into previous studies done in the subject matter by different authors. The principle and procedures for a systematic investigation pertaining to this work will be carefully carried out with utmost adherence to stipulated levels for research which are description, classification, explanation and prediction. The data collection methodology that will be adopted in this research includes primary and secondary data collection.

FINDINGS

The findings of this research will contribute valuable insights to the fields of architecture, urban planning, and security management, particularly in the context of designing or renovating court complexes. The successful implementation of an optimized hierarchy of functional spaces within the Awka High Court Complex can serve as a reference point for similar institutions facing similar challenges, facilitating improved security measures, enhanced functionality, and a strengthened building image. The high court complex is designed and constructed for Enugu state government by Dr. Chimaroke Nnamani led administration. It is located within the three arms zone of the Enugu capital city. There are four different buildings that make up the complex. It is presently serving the Enugu state government. The court is located at Enugu state Judiciary complex by WAEC bus stop Independence Enugu.

Shortcoming:- Inadequate Security Measures:

Insufficient surveillance systems, leading to potential blind spots and limited monitoring capabilities. Inadequate access control measures, such as outdated or ineffective identification protocols. Lack of secure screening areas and checkpoints, allowing unauthorized individuals to enter restricted areas. Insufficient physical barriers or protective measures to deter or prevent security threats.

-Poor Integration of Technology:

Limited use of advanced security technologies, such as biometric access control systems or smart surveillance systems. Ineffective integration of security systems, resulting in fragmented or disjointed monitoring and control. Insufficient utilization of automation or centralized control systems for security operations.

Solution: Incorporate state-of-the-art surveillance technology, such as CCTV cameras and biometric access control systems, to strengthen security. Experts recommend implementing multi-layered security protocols, including secure entrances, restricted areas, and visitor management systems.



Plate 1: Court Registry and Offices of Enugu state high court. Source: Author's field work.

The court complex was designed and constructed for Abia state government by Dr. Theodore Ahamefula Orji led administration. It is located along Ikot Ekpene road by Finbars road Umuahia capital city. The building is a single structure with other ancillary buildings adjoined to it. There are different buildings that around the complex that makes up for the remaining facilities for a court complex. It is presently serving the Abia state government.

Shortcomings:-Inefficient Space Planning and Circulation:

Inadequate separation between public, private, and secure areas, compromising the integrity of confidential proceedings. Congested or poorly designed circulation areas, leading to potential security vulnerabilities and difficulties in crowd management. Inefficient placement of security checkpoints, causing bottlenecks or delays in the entry process.

-Lack of an Imposing Image:

Absence of architectural elements that project authority, such as grand entrances, imposing facades, or symbolic design elements. Inadequate utilization of materials, finishes, or landscaping to create a visually impactful and dignified appearance. Poor integration of natural lighting or interior design elements that fail to evoke a sense of prestige or importance. Poor integration of natural lighting and design elements that lack an imposing image.

Solution: Implement an efficient layout that separates public, private, and secure areas. Create clear circulation paths and controlled entry points to prevent unauthorized access. Experts recommend incorporating secure screening areas and strategically placed security checkpoints to enhance control and minimize security risks. Utilize daylighting strategies to maximize natural light while ensuring security measures. Incorporate architectural elements such as grand entrances, imposing facades, and symbolic design elements that project authority. Experts suggest using materials like stone or metal that convey strength and resilience.



Plate 2: Approach view of state judiciary complex Umuahia.
Source: Author's field work.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this project is geared towards the utilization of architectural principles in the realization of a societally acceptable of state high court complex, to provide the comprehensive service needed in a technologically changing world, this study endeavors to investigate the implementation of a hierarchical approach to functional spaces in the Awka High Court Complex, aiming to improve security measures and enhance the building's image. By analyzing and implementing design strategies that prioritize security, functionality, and aesthetics, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding courthouse architecture and the optimization of public buildings.

Regarding the use of the court in Nigeria over the years, it has been observed that the courtroom have served their purposes without serious complaints from the teeming users, even though the court having in most cases fallen short of the ideal acoustic function of a court complex. This may be due to the fact that most of the users are accustomed to noise and visual, therefore can hardly tell the difference between a normal and an abnormal acoustic and visual environment.

There is also failure on the part of architects and other building professional, who undertake designs and construction of projects without actually giving premium to the acoustic performances of their eventual products. The academia has also not done enough to popularize acoustic practice in Nigeria, in spite of the fact that they are statutorily better positioned to champion the course. The Academia ironically is one of the worst hit groups by this problem as their teaching and learning environments have largely been infested with noise and visual perception, thereby making learning difficult for students. A proper public enlightenment on how to properly manage the relationship between sound and buildings and the environment as well as humans will undoubtedly minimize a lot of acoustic challenges currently bed evilling a number of public gathering spaces as the court, auditoriums, lecture halls, event halls etc

Lastly, I like to say, that the following lessons were learnt in the course of the study

The object of Architecture is to fulfill a specific social function, to provide an ordered enclosure for human activities. The complex is, thus, expected to meet up with minimum International standards with regards to judicial system. The establishment of a court complex in Anambra State, will enhance justice

system in the State. It will also reduce the court case load on the area and its environs and bring justice closer to the people of the state. It will also seek to boost the morale of the court staff and promote public confidence in the judicial system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of researchers have provided insights, theoretical as well as empirical studies into the problems related to security and spatial resolution in public buildings. However, it is obvious that security and spatial organisation problem is one of the most commonly observed phenomenon in halls of public buildings of which law court is not an exception in Nigeria. Therefore, Based on the study conducted on the Awka High Court Complex and the analysis of the hierarchy of functional spaces, security measures, and building image, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1.Enhancing Security Infrastructure: Implement a comprehensive security infrastructure that includes controlled access points, advanced surveillance systems, and integrated security protocols. This will help ensure the safety of occupants, visitors, and detainees within the complex.
- 2.Functional Zoning: Clearly define and designate specific areas for public, semi-public, and private use within the Awka High Court Complex. Establish distinct boundaries and access control measures to ensure the appropriate flow of individuals throughout the complex while maintaining security and privacy.
- 3.Wayfinding and Signage: Improve wayfinding elements and signage systems to assist visitors in navigating the complex effectively. Clear and intuitive signage can enhance the user experience and minimize confusion, leading to improved efficiency and overall satisfaction.
- 4.Landscape Design: Enhance the exterior spaces surrounding the Awka High Court Complex through thoughtful landscape design. Incorporate elements such as well-maintained green spaces, pedestrian pathways, and appropriate lighting to create a welcoming and secure environment.
- 5.Architectural Aesthetics: Pay attention to the architectural aesthetics of the complex to establish a strong and credible image. Employ design elements that evoke a sense of dignity and authority, aligning with the significance of the court's proceedings.
- 6.Stakeholder Engagement: Involve key stakeholders, including judges, legal professionals, court staff, and visitors, in the design and decision-making process. Solicit their input and feedback to ensure that the implemented improvements meet their specific needs and expectations.
- 7.Regular Evaluation and Maintenance: Establish a system for ongoing evaluation and maintenance of the implemented improvements to ensure their continued effectiveness and relevance. Regular assessments of the security measures, functional spaces, and building image will help identify areas for further enhancement and address any potential issues.

By implementing these recommendations, the Awka High Court Complex can enhance security measures, improve functionality, and establish a strong building image that inspires confidence and credibility. These improvements will contribute to creating a safe and efficient environment for all stakeholders involved in the administration of justice.

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