

Toward Measuring The 3As Qualities Of Public Cemetery Effectiveness In Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

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Abstract

The need for efficient and effective planning, development and administration of public cemetery has been given prominence in the research discourse. However, it is appalling to assert that not much has been achieved in the reality of events. It is therefore the intention of this research to critically examine and measure the 3As (Accessibility, Affordability and Availability) qualities of public cemetery effectiveness in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria with a view to enhancing better cemetery planning, development and management by both the private and public sectors alike. The use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches of research were adopted. Use of literature review was used to formulate the questionnaire while data analysis was based on the use of Relative Importance Index (RII). The study area (Ado-Ekiti) was chosen being the capital city of Ekiti State. The results of the research findings revealed that the 3As Qualities of public cemetery effectiveness, that is, accessibility, availability and affordability, were rated very low, pointing out to the poor response of both private and public sectors to issues relating to cemetery planning, development and administration. The implication of this on city planning and management can be devastating, hence, both private and public sectors were implored to pay better attention to cemetery planning and administration through the introduction or enforcement of family and public cemeteries; more research on cemetery planning, development and management. The government was also enjoined to create a department either within the Ministry of Environment or Housing Development to look into issues relating to cemetery planning, development and management.

Keywords: Accessibility; Ado-Ekiti; Affordability; Availability; Cemetery; Measuring; Public.

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I. Introduction

Over the past 50 years, Nigeria's urban population has grown rapidly and is expected to continue increasing swiftly in the decades ahead (Aliyu & Amadu, 2017; Enoguanbhor *et al.*, 2022; Auwalu & Bello, 2023). This increasing population growth has intensified pressure on land use in most cities of Nigeria. Among the less studied but critical urban services affected is the provision of burial spaces through public cemeteries. As the living population increases, so too does the demand for cemeteries that are accessible, available, and affordable. However, evidence suggests that in many Nigerian cities, public cemeteries fail to keep pace with these demands, resulting in social, environmental, and economic challenges for residents (Komolafe & Akinbogun, 2024; Oyeleke & Oloukoi, 2024).

The studies by Olajide *et al.* (2013) and Ashton (2019) emphasized on the problem of housing both the living and the dead. While they empirically proved that both the living and the dead suffered qualitative and quantitative housing. They recommended that both the private and public sectors should make planning, development and management of public cemetery a priority through qualitative and quantitative provision.

Empirical studies have documented problems associated with cemeteries in Nigeria (Adeboye, 2016; Iroham *et al.*, 2022; Komolafe & Akinbogun., 2024). A study by Ibadode *et al.* (2017) found that available cemetery in Benin City, comprised only 1.68% of what would be required (~702.75 hectares) to meet future burial needs over a 50-year period, based on population projections. Similarly, the world witnesses unprecedented demographic growth, coupled with a proportional urbanisation rate, land space is becoming scarce; hence leading to a surge in property prices which drives housing unaffordability and societal inequity. This serious shortfall implies that many communities must contend with overcrowded cemeteries or seek burial space outside regional bounds. Similarly, research on urban cemetery management in Kumasi, Ghana by Allam (2024) revealed that insufficiency of basic facilities such as road access, limited land for burial, and inadequate financial resources impede the capacity of cemeteries to serve growing urban demand. These findings highlight that the issues of availability and accessibility are not unique to Nigeria but reflect broader challenges in and across the globe.

On the question of affordability, media reports from Lagos show that burial costs at public cemeteries have risen steeply, placing heavy financial burdens on many families (Sobair Mohammed, 2023). Costs of burial at some cemeteries now run into millions of naira, partly as a result of increased maintenance needs and rising

overheads. Such increases may put formal cemetery services out of reach for low-income households, prompting them to utilize cheaper/unregulated sites, or take informal measures. The accessibility of an urban cemetery as revealed Oyeleke & Oloukoi (2024) noted that many cemeteries in Nigerian cities are poorly integrated into transportation networks, lack good access roads, and have signage and administrative procedures that reduce their use by marginalized communities.

Sequel to the above, the writers had thought it expedient to measure the Three (3) qualities, (Affordability, Accessibility and Availability) of Effective public cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria with a view to ensuring equitable provisions for both the living and the dead in the areas of qualitative and quantitative housing provision. The research is also expected to boost the advocacy on the need for effective and efficient planning, development and administration of public cemetery in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State in particular and Nigeria in general.

Ado-Ekiti (the study area) is one of the oldest towns in Nigeria. Its history dates back to a period before the advent of Ewi dynasty in 1310 A.D. Ado-Ekiti had being a town of repute in the Southern part of Nigeria. The growth and development of Ado communities started in 1940s. Gradually, the forest areas separating sections of the towns were built up towards the end of 1950s built-up area went beyond Ajilosun Stream, Ado-Ilawe road, Opopogboro opposite Christ school, Ado-Iyin road, Ado-Iworoko road and Enu-Odi along Ado-Ilawe road. Ado-Ekiti is the headquarter of Ekiti people and it became the headquarter of Ekiti division council in 1996. In 1996 during the creation of state, Ado-Ekiti became the state capital establishing cultural administrative and political hegemony over the whole Ekiti land. As population increased, the city began to face poor planning, development and administration of both private and public cemeteries. Hence, the dire need for this research,

II. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection of quantitative data from a defined population to examine opinions, perceptions, and experiences regarding the accessibility, availability, and affordability of public cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti. The population of this study comprised land surveyors, estate surveyors, builders, architects, quantity surveyors, and urban planners. These experts were selected as a result of their knowledge on land management, construction, and spatial planning, making them suitable respondents for evaluating cemetery effectiveness. A total of 300 respondents were purposively and snowball-sampled from the identified professional groups. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that only relevant practitioners with expertise in environmental and land management issues were included in the study. Snowball sampling was adopted to reach additional professionals within these networks, thereby expanding the scope of participation. Out of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 284 were duly completed and returned, representing a 94.67% response rate. This high return rate enhanced the reliability and representativeness of the data.

Data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using both descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and mean scores) and the Relative Importance Index (RII) techniques. The RII was adopted because it is a widely recognized method for ranking variables according to their relative significance as perceived by respondents (Gebrehiwet & Luo, 2017; Khatib *et al.*, 2020; Genc, 2023). This makes it particularly suitable for assessing and prioritizing the factors affecting accessibility, availability, and affordability of public cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti.

The RII was computed using the formula:

$$RII = \frac{\sum W}{A \times N}$$

Where: W is the weight assigned to each variable by respondents (ranging from 1 to 5), A is the highest possible weight. N is the total number of respondents. The RII values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater perceived importance.

III. Discussion

Demography of the Respondents

The gender profile (Figure 1) shows a higher proportion of male respondents (75%) compared to females. This reflects the broader trend in urban planning and land-related discourses in Nigeria, where men tend to dominate decision-making processes relating to land use and burial practices due to cultural and socio-economic roles (Adeboye, 2016; Iroham *et al.*, 2022). Nonetheless, the inclusion of female respondents ensures that gender perspectives on affordability and accessibility of cemeteries are adequately represented. Respondents were fairly distributed across the different age categories (Figure 2), ranging from 18–30 years to above 60 years. The highest proportion was concentrated within the 31–45 years bracket, representing the economically active population who often bear responsibility for family decisions, including burial arrangements. This finding corroborates Ibhadode *et al.* (2017), who observed that issues of cemetery access and affordability are primarily of concern to middle-aged individuals, given their socio-economic obligations. Educational attainment (Figure 3) indicates that a

majority of respondents held tertiary qualifications (HND/BSc), while smaller proportions attained ND/NCE and MSc/PhD degrees. The relatively high literacy level of the respondents reflects the urban character of Ado-Ekiti and suggests a populace capable of engaging critically with issues of land management and cemetery planning. Previous studies (Komolafe & Akinbogun, 2024; Oyeleke & Oloukoi, 2024) highlight that education significantly influences awareness of land scarcity, urban development challenges, and the governance of burial spaces in Nigeria. The professional distribution (Figure 4) reveals that respondents were drawn from diverse occupational categories, including architects, urban planners, builders, estate surveyors and quantity surveyors. Such diversity enhances the robustness of the study, as it captures the perspectives of professionals with both technical expertise and socio-cultural awareness. According to Lopez Duarte (2023), professional experience in the built environment sector shapes perceptions of cemetery management, particularly in relation to planning efficiency, affordability, and long-term sustainability.

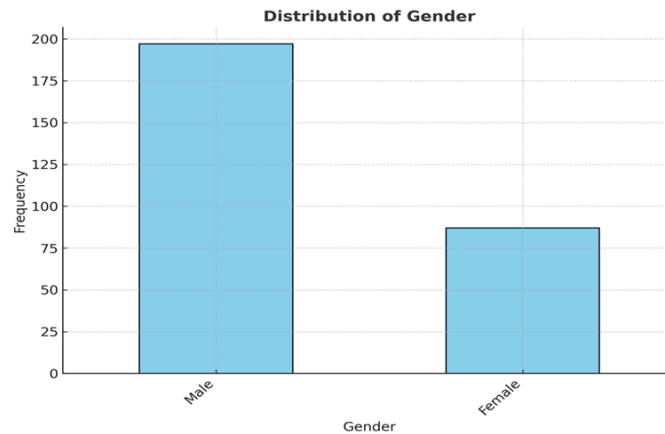


Figure 1: Distribution of gender
Source: Authors compilation, 2025

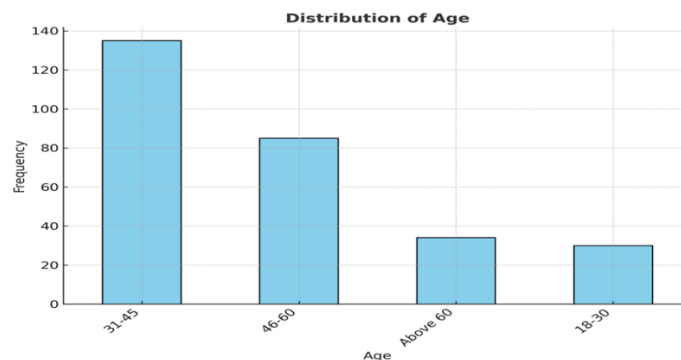


Figure 2: Distribution of Respondent's age
Source: Authors compilation, 2025

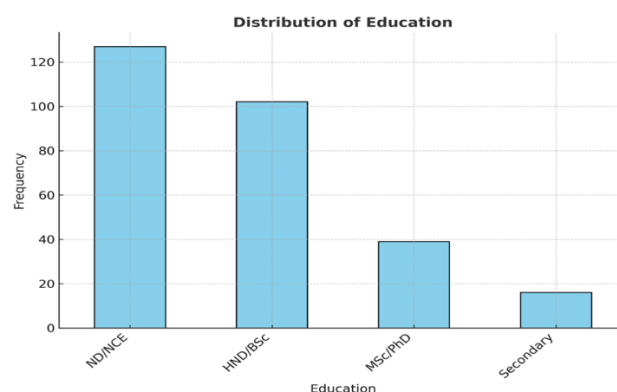


Figure 3: Distribution of Respondent's Educational Status
Source: Authors compilation

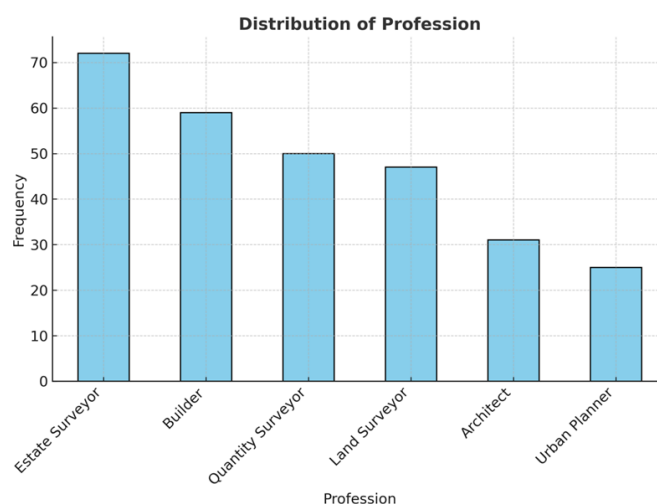


Figure 4: Distribution of Respondent's Profession
Source: Authors compilation, 2025

Effectiveness of Public Cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State.

The findings from Table 1 reveal that accessibility to public cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti is highly constrained. A significant proportion of respondents disagreed with statements indicating that cheap cemeteries and public burial lands are accessible. For example, 75.8% (42.3% strongly disagree; 33.5% disagree) rejected the claim that cheap cemeteries were accessible in Ado-Ekiti. Similarly, 66.9% disagreed that low-income residents could easily access public cemeteries, while 72.2% believed that land acquisition for burial remains an obstacle. These results suggest a widespread perception that public cemeteries are difficult to access, particularly for vulnerable groups. The Relative Importance Index (RII) results in Table 2 corroborate this conclusion. Accessibility indicators of public cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti recorded values below 0.50, showing low effectiveness. The lowest RII score (0.391) concerned the accessibility of cheap cemeteries, underscoring that affordability and accessibility are intertwined. The highest RII (0.447), which assessed the effectiveness of cemetery planning and administration, still fell within the "low effectiveness" threshold. This demonstrates that structural issues pertaining to planning and governance and economic barriers such as affordability undermine cemetery accessibility in the study area. These findings align with existing literature on burial space accessibility in rapidly urbanizing state capitals in Nigeria (Adewoyin, 2024; Clarkson *et al.*, 2024; Oyeleke & Oloukoi, 2024;). Oyeleke & Oloukoi, (2024) reported that Nigerian cities face severe challenges in cemetery access due to weak urban planning frameworks, rising land prices, and competing land uses. Sobair (2023) observed that low-income households in Lagos State encountered exclusion from formal cemetery spaces, pushing them to rely on relocation to family lands. Similarly, Mbatha (2017) in Durban, South Africa, documented that overcrowding, long distances to cemeteries, and lack of affordable options disproportionately affected marginalized populations. On a global scale, Kong (2012) found that cemetery accessibility is increasingly restricted in high-density cities like Singapore, where land scarcity limits equitable access to burial grounds.

The study further showed that respondents perceive the availability of cemeteries in the study area as grossly inadequate (Table 3). A large majority disagreed with statements suggesting a high level of availability. For instance, 68.6% (29.9% strongly disagree; 38.7% disagree) rejected the idea that cemeteries are sufficiently available in the city. Similarly, 72.2% disagreed that there is an adequate supply of public cemeteries for the masses, while 72.7% dismissed the claim that low cost of acquisition characterises cemetery access in Ado-Ekiti. Furthermore, 74% did not agree that securing cheap cemeteries is relatively easy, underscoring how scarcity and inaffordability jointly restrict access. These results are further reinforced by the Relative Importance Index (RII) results in Table 4. RII values below 0.50, confirmed the low to very low effectiveness in cemetery availability. The lowest RII (0.408) was associated with the statement that securing cheap cemeteries is relatively easy, highlighting the widespread difficulty faced by residents in accessing affordable burial grounds. Similarly, both the adequacy of public supply and low-cost acquisition recorded very low effectiveness (RII = 0.419 each). Government provision of cheap cemeteries (RII = 0.430) remains in the "low effectiveness" category. This suggests that neither public nor private actors are adequately addressing cemetery provision in the city. Alimi (2025) found that the shortage of burial grounds in Lagos has created socio-economic and cultural tensions, with families often compelled to seek alternative burial sites in peri-urban areas. Global evidence also suggests that cemetery availability issues are structural (Neckel *et al.*, 2017; Amoah *et al.*, 2025; Page & Besco, 2025). Amoah *et al.* (2025) argued that in land-scarce cities like Singapore, state regulation of cemeteries has shifted towards

efficiency-driven approaches such as shorter lease periods for graves, reflecting the growing challenge of balancing cultural needs with limited urban land supply. The quantitative measure of severity of cemetery availability in this study demonstrates that cemetery availability in Ado-Ekiti is severely constrained by inadequate supply, high acquisition costs, and weak government intervention (Table 4). The low RII scores suggest that residents' dissatisfaction is not incidental but systemic, rooted in a failure of both policy and urban land management. This outcome mirrors broader challenges in Nigerian cities, where rapid urbanisation and poor planning have intensified competition for land, leaving socially sensitive needs such as cemeteries under-prioritised.

Moreso, the findings from Table 5 indicate that public cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti are widely perceived as unaffordable. A majority of respondents (70.5%) disagreed that public cemeteries are affordable to the masses, while 72.2% rejected the claim that private cemeteries are within the financial reach of most residents. Similarly, 73.9% disagreed that the cost of accessing cemeteries is generally cheap, underscoring the economic burden associated with burial expenses. Furthermore, 70.4% disagreed that residents experience ease in burying their dead, while 72.2% did not believe private cemeteries are affordable. Even in the case of family cemeteries, which are sometimes considered alternatives, 70.5% of respondents disagreed that they are commonly available, suggesting that affordability challenges extend across all cemetery types.

The Relative Importance Index (RII) results in Table 6 reinforce these findings. All indicators recorded values below 0.50, confirming both low and very low affordability. The lowest RII (0.408) was associated with the cost of accessing cemeteries, showing that high burial expenses are a critical challenge in Ado-Ekiti. Private cemeteries, too, were ranked very low in affordability (RII = 0.419), indicating their inaccessibility to most residents. Even family cemeteries, which should normally offer some relief, were scored low (RII = 0.430). The overall pattern demonstrates that affordability remains a significant barrier to cemetery effectiveness in the city.

A reconnaissance survey within Ado-Ekiti environs showed a space for burial at private cemetery going for between ₦1,500,000 to ₦10,000,000 depending on the facilities provided. It was also discovered that access to Public cemetery was absolutely negative as Governments at the Three Tiers were yet to show serious concern in the planning, development and management of public cemeteries.

Table 1: Accessibility of Public Cemetery in Ado-Ekiti (n = 284)

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Cheap cemeteries are accessible in Ado-Ekiti	120 (42.3%)	95 (33.5%)	40 (14.1%)	13 (4.6%)	16 (5.6%)
2	Ado residents, especially the low-income earners, easily access public cemeteries	80(28.2%)	110 (38.7%)	55 (19.4%)	21 (7.4%)	18 (6.3%)
3	Accessibility to land for burial is not an obstacle to residents in Ado-Ekiti	100 (35.2%)	105 (37.0%)	50 (17.6%)	20 (7.0%)	9 (3.2%)
4	Public cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti are fairly accessible	90 (31.7%)	110 (38.7%)	55 (19.4%)	23 (8.1%)	6 (2.1%)
5	Residents benefit from adequate access to affordable cemeteries.	85 (29.9%)	115 (40.5%)	55 (19.4%)	18 (6.3%)	11 (3.9%)
6	There is effective planning, development, and administration of cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti	70 (24.6%)	120 (42.3%)	60 (21.1%)	25 (8.8%)	9 (3.2%)

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

Table 2: Relative Importance Indices (RII) for the accessibility of Public cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti

S/N	Statement	RII	Interpretation
1	Cheap cemeteries are accessible in Ado-Ekiti	0.391	Low effectiveness
2	Ado residents, especially the low-income earners, easily access public cemeteries	0.444	Low effectiveness
3	Accessibility to land for burial is not an obstacle to residents in Ado-Ekiti	0.412	Low effectiveness
4	Public cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti are fairly accessible	0.423	Low effectiveness
5	Residents benefit from adequate access to affordable cemeteries.	0.426	Low effectiveness
6	There is effective planning, development, and administration of cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti	0.447	Low effectiveness

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

Table 3: Availability of Public Cemetery in Ado-Ekiti (n = 284)

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	There is high level of availability of cemetery in Ado-Ekiti	85 (29.9%)	110 (38.7%)	55 (19.4%)	25 (8.8%)	9 (3.2%)

2	There is adequate supply of public cemetery for the masses in Ado-Ekiti	90 (31.7%)	115 (40.5%)	50 (17.6%)	15 (5.3%)	14 (4.9%)
3	Low cost of acquisition characterised access to cemetery in Ado Ekiti	95 (33.5%)	105 (37.0%)	55 (19.4%)	20 (7.0%)	9 (3.2%)
4	Securing cheap cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti is relatively easy.	100 (35.2%)	110 (38.7%)	45 (15.8%)	16 (5.6%)	13 (4.6%)
5	Availability of cheap cemetery in Ado-Ekiti has positive impact on the residents	85 (29.9%)	115 (40.5%)	55 (19.4%)	15 (5.3%)	14 (4.9%)
6	Government is doing enough in the provision of cheap cemetery to Ado-Ekiti residents	80 (28.2%)	120 (42.3%)	55 (19.4%)	10 (3.5%)	19 (6.7%)

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

Table 4: Relative Importance Indices (RII) for the Availability of Public cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti

S/N	Statement	RII	Interpretation
1	There is high level of availability of cemetery in Ado-Ekiti	0.433	Low effectiveness
2	There is adequate supply of public cemetery for the masses in Ado-Ekiti	0.419	Very low effectiveness
3	Low cost of acquisition characterised access to cemetery in Ado Ekiti	0.419	Very low effectiveness
4	Securing cheap cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti is relatively easy.	0.408	Very low effectiveness
5	Availability of cheap cemetery in Ado-Ekiti has positive impact on the residents	0.426	Low effectiveness
6	Government is doing enough in the provision of cheap cemetery to Ado-Ekiti residents	0.43	Low effectiveness

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

Table 5: Affordability of Public Cemetery in Ado-Ekiti (n = 284)

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Public cemeteries are affordable by the masses in Ado-Ekiti	105 (37.0%)	95 (33.5%)	50 (17.6%)	9 (3.2%)	25 (8.8%)
2	Private cemeteries are affordable by the masses in Ado-Ekiti	90 (31.7%)	115 (40.5%)	39 (13.7%)	20 (7.0%)	20 (7.0%)
3	Cost of accessing cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti is generally cheap.	100 (35.2%)	110 (38.7%)	45 (15.8%)	11 (3.9%)	18 (6.3%)
4	Residents of Ado-Ekiti experience ease in burying their dead.	85 (29.9%)	115 (40.5%)	51 (18.0%)	24 (8.5%)	9 (3.2%)
5	Private cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti are generally affordable	90 (31.7%)	115 (40.5%)	40 (14.1%)	15 (5.3%)	24 (8.5%)
6	Family cemeteries are commonly found in Ado-Ekiti	80 (28.2%)	120 (42.3%)	55 (19.4%)	8 (2.82%)	21 (7.39%)

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

Table 6: Relative Importance Indices (RII) for the affordability of Public cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti

S/N	Statement	RII	Interpretation
1	Public cemeteries are affordable by the masses in Ado-Ekiti	0.423	Low affordability
2	Private cemeteries are affordable by the masses in Ado-Ekiti	0.419	Very low affordability
3	Cost of accessing cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti is generally cheap.	0.408	Very low affordability
4	Residents of Ado-Ekiti experience ease in burying their dead.	0.426	Low affordability
5	Private cemeteries in Ado-Ekiti are generally affordable	0.419	Very low affordability
6	Family cemeteries are commonly found in Ado-Ekiti	0.43	Low affordability

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

IV. Conclusion

This study establishes that cemetery management in the study area is characterised by low accessibility, inadequate availability, and poor affordability; all of which undermine the effectiveness of burial spaces in meeting the needs of residents. The findings demonstrated that public cemeteries in the urban region are constrained by structural, economic, and governance challenges. Accessibility remains limited, with a majority of respondents rejecting claims of cheap and easily accessible burial spaces. Relative Importance Index (RII) scores, all below 0.50, confirmed low effectiveness in accessibility, underscoring the intertwined challenges of affordability and planning inefficiencies. Similarly, the availability of cemeteries was found to be grossly inadequate, with respondents highlighting the absence of sufficient public supply and the difficulty of securing cheap burial plots. The consistently low RII values reinforced the perception that government and private sector interventions have not been sufficient to address the shortfall.

Addressing these challenges will require deliberate policy interventions, including improved urban planning frameworks, government investment in affordable public cemeteries, and innovative land management strategies that balance cultural needs with urban land scarcity. Without such measures, cemetery access in Ado-Ekiti will remain inequitable, exacerbating social and economic inequalities in the city.

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