

Evaluation of Urban Land Tenure Security in Ethiopian Cities: the case of Addis Ababa and Adama

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Abstract

Secured land tenure is validated when land rights gain recognition from the state and landowners are not evicted from their land. However, in many developing countries there is no formal recognition of tenure rights for residents. Unsecured land tenure may impede socioeconomic development, and result in poverty, starvation, and conflict. By establishing land registration and information institutions, the Ethiopian government has put policies in place to safeguard the security of land tenure. The security of urban land tenure in Addis Ababa and Adama, two cities in Ethiopia, was assessed in the format of a case study. Data were acquired through key informant interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions. Questionnaires were distributed to 305 landowners. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyse the quantitative data thus collected, and the interpretative skills of the researchers were exploited to analyse the qualitative data. The study found that most landholders were aware of the institutions from which they could acquire landholding certificates. Furthermore, most of the landholders had confidence in their tenure arrangements. Most were not anxious about being evicted from their land and disagreed that corruption was rife in the acquisition of landholding certificates; however, a large proportion agreed that the protection meted out by the local authorities gives them minimal protection. The study concluded that the ongoing work in land registration and information around this administrative measure in both cities is playing a significant role in ensuring tenure security in the two study areas. The study recommends that the Ethiopian government should support the ongoing efforts of streamlining the cadastral system in Addis Ababa and Adama.

Keywords: Ethiopia, Land tenure, Security, Urban land, Land registration

1. Introduction

According to the World Bank Report, 70% of landowners across the world have not formally recorded the title deeds to the land they own, and 90% of the land owned in Africa is not officially recorded (GIZ, 2019). Around 70% of the land in developing nations was found to be either unregistered or thought to be insecure in 2016 (McDermott *et al.*, 2018). In developing countries, 30% of the urban population in 2014 resided in slums, where there is no formal recognition of tenure rights. According to the data mentioned above, most people

worldwide live under unsecured tenure arrangements. Insecure land tenure may well be a cause for eviction of peoples from their land and their subsequent migration. This could result in poverty, hunger, conflict, and underpin a lack of socio-economic development (Antonio *et al.*, 2021).

Currently, the land tenure system in Ethiopia is nationalized, with people having only usufruct rights. This gives the state control over the land and its related resources. In Ethiopia, the traditional land tenure system still exists, particularly in the Afar and Somali regions. It is the community leaders and clan heads who exercise great power in the allocation and enforcement of rights in those areas (Reda, 2014).

The Ethiopian government has given attention to urban land through the amended Proclamation No 818/2014 on urban landholding registration (FDRE, 2014). Based on this proclamation, Land Registration and Information Agencies were established. One of the objectives of the proclamation was to grant land tenure security to landowners. Currently, these agencies have initiated land registration and certification in Addis Ababa and Adama. However, few empirical studies have been undertaken to evaluate the ongoing efforts of the Land Information and Registration Agencies to improve tenure security in these two cities. Therefore, the study was focused on assessing urban land tenure security in Addis Ababa and Adama.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Area

This study was conducted in the cities of Adama and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Figures 1 and 2). Geographically speaking, Addis Ababa lies between latitudes 08°49'55"N and 09°05'54"N and longitudes 38°39'18"E and 38°54'34"E. It lies at an altitude of between 2,326 and 3,000 meters above mean sea level and is close to Bole International Airport in the South and Entoto Mountain in the North. Hills and mountains surround the city. Adama town is one of largest towns in the Oromia region, in the East Shewa zone. Its locational coordinates lie between longitudes 39°12'15" and 39°19'45"E and latitudes 08°26'15" and 08°37'00"N. The settlement is situated at an average altitude of roughly 1712 meters above mean sea level.

Addis Ababa and Adama were chosen as the study area for this research because of the landholding registration practices currently in operation in these two cities and the need for the researchers to verify them. For this purpose, the researchers sought information from the Land Registration and Information Agency in Addis Ababa, which has offices in each of its ten sub cities, and the Urban Land Tenure Registration and Land Information service, launched in Adama City in 2017, which deals with these issues.

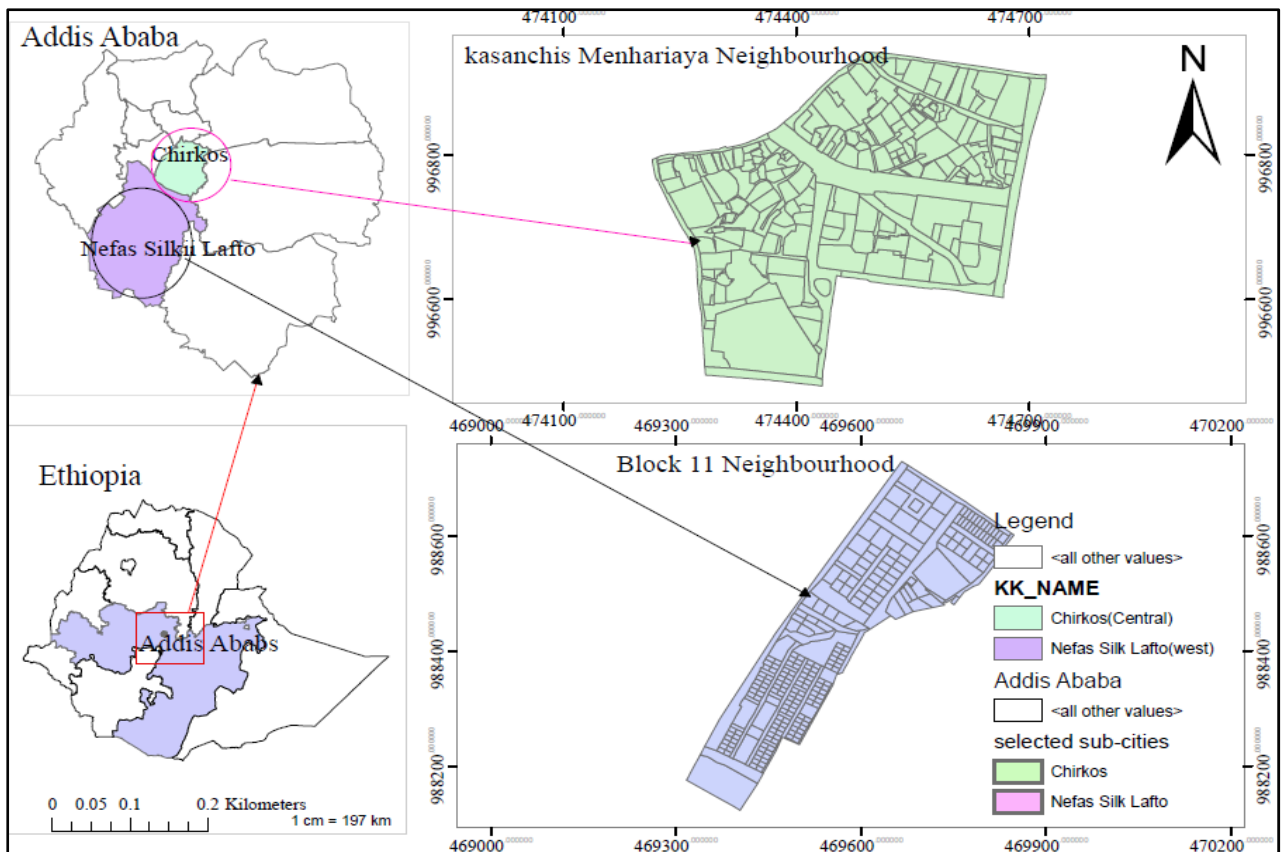


Figure 1: Map of study area: Addis Ababa City

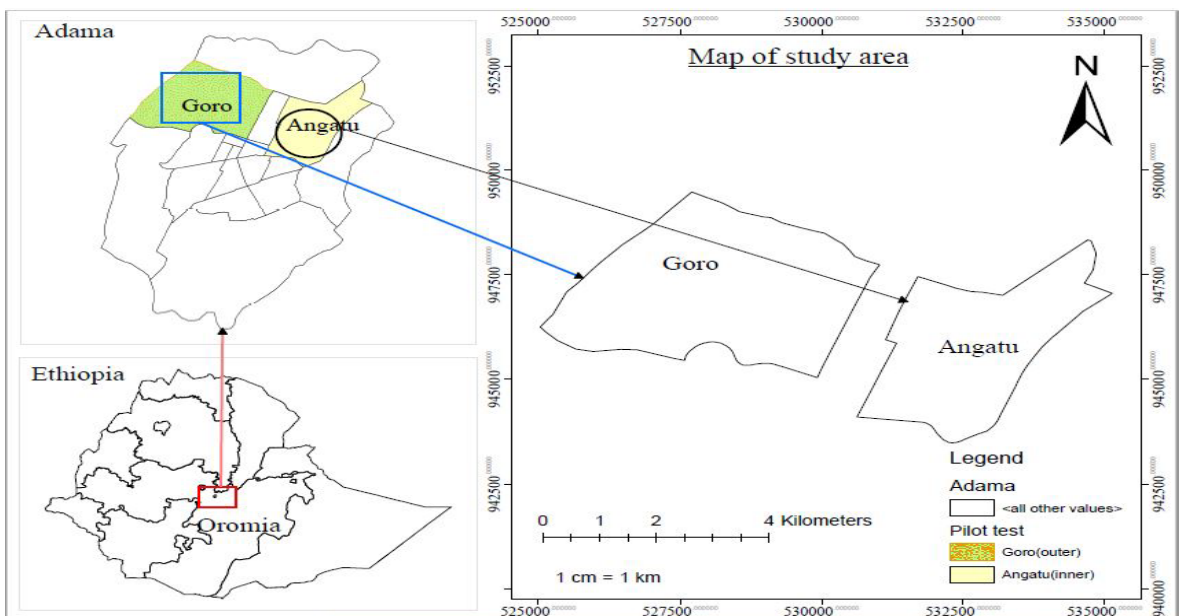


Figure 2: Map of study area: Adama City

2.2. Data Collection Tools

The study employed focus discussion groups, interviews, and questionnaires to collect the relevant data. The questionnaires were presented in English. Before being sent out to the

landowners, however, they were translated into the local language (Afaan, Oromoo, or Amharic). Nine interviews with key informants were performed in both urban settlements. Key informant interviews were conducted based on a set of interviewing criteria. Two focus discussion groups were created for this study, each involving five participants. A checklist containing predetermined open-ended questions was compiled beforehand to guide and facilitate the focus group discussions (FGDs).

2.3. Sampling Techniques

This study used both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling methods. The probabilistic sample technique was used for the random selection of respondents. The choice of the two Ethiopian cities, based on several factors, was carefully considered, with purposive sampling being the method of choice. In all, four pilot studies were carried out, with two pilot tests per city in terms of the unique characteristics of their location. In the case of the ten subcities of Addis Ababa, Nefas Silk Lafto was chosen from the city's peri-urban area and Chirkos from the inner city (see Figure 1). The study selected Block 11 and the Kasanchis Manhariya neighbourhood from the Nefas Silk Lafto and Chirkos subcities, respectively (see Figure 1). For Adama City, Angatu, in the inner city, and Goro, in the peri-urban area, were selected from the city's 18 wards (see Figure 2).

2.4. Sample Size

The Yamane formula (1967) was used to determine the size of the sample for this study. It proved an appropriate method to employ in the tenure verification process since one district, namely, Ketene, contained no more than 1,000 parcels of land and no more than five neighbourhoods (sefere). The Yamane formula is presented in Equation 1 below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \text{ ----- (1)}$$

Where N is 1284 and n is 305.

The study was able to select 305 landowner respondents by applying the Yamane formula to the data for the four wards.

2.5. Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyse the data. SPSS software was used to analyse the quantitative data gathered from the 305 landowners, with the findings of this statistical investigation displayed in tables and described in terms of percentages. On the other hand, interpretation techniques were used to examine the narratives (qualitative data) issuing from the key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Landholding certificate-issuing institutions

Throughout the world, different institutions issue landholding certificates to landowners. These certificates may be digital or manual. Manual landholding certificates were used for a long period in Ethiopia. However, in recent times, the government is prioritizing the use of digital landholding certificates (Chekole *et al.*, 2021). Table 1 presents the landholding certificate-issuing institutions.

Table 1: Landholding certificate-issuing institutions

Institution	Frequency		Total
	Addis Ababa	Adama	
Municipality	16	55	71
Zone	1	7	8
Wards/Kebele	4	22	26
Sub-city	176	15	191
Others	8	1	9
Total	205	100	305

As Figure 3 shows, two different results were obtained for the two cities. Most of the respondents (86%) from Addis Ababa city obtained their landholding certificates from the subcity. In Adama, the municipality played a more significant role in that it provided 55% of the landowners with landholding certificates (see Figure 3). In this respect, the role of zone proved to be less significant in both Addis Ababa (0%) and Adama (7%). According to Figure 3, most of the respondents –191 (63%) – obtained their landholding certificates from the subcity. This implies that most of the respondents were aware of where land-holding certificates could be acquired. At Addis Ababa, the Land Registration and Information Agencies are the role players in land registration and in providing digital landholding certificates at the subcity level. At Adama, on the other hand, landholding certificates are obtained at the city level.

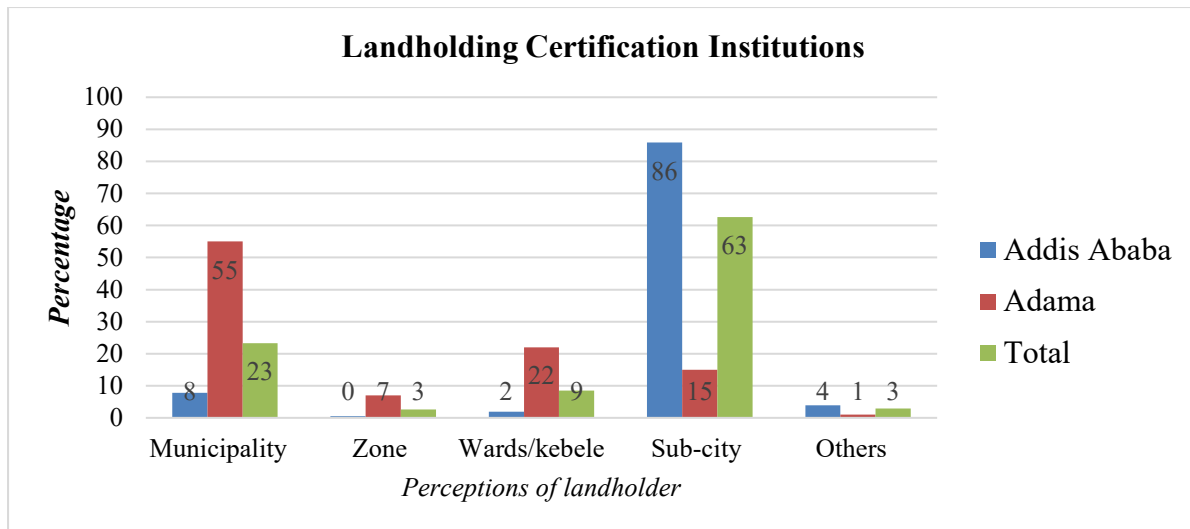


Figure 3: Percentage Landholding certificate-issuing institutions

3.2. Corruption in the Acquisition of Landholding Certificates

Corruption may be defined as a dishonest or fraudulent action that involves a person gaining services or favours through the payment of money (bribery) to either an individual, or a private or public institution. In many ways, corruption erodes the social, political, and economic integrity of a country, weakens democratic institutions, strangles economic growth, and contributes to political instability (Ibodullaevich & Bahromovna, 2020). Although corruption is witnessed in almost every country in the world, it is prevalent in Ethiopia, especially in the land sector (Rahman & Kirya, 2018). Table 2 shows the perspectives of the sampled landowner respondents as to the extent of corruption in the acquisition of landholding certificates.

Table 2: Corruption in the acquisition of landholding certificates

Perception of corruption	Frequency		Total
	Addis Ababa	Adama	
Strongly agree	5	12	17
Agree	35	32	67
No idea	56	22	78
Disagree	74	25	99
Strongly disagree	35	9	44
Total	205	100	305

As seen in Figure 4, the level of corruption witnessed in Addis Ababa differs from that in Adama. This is due to different factors. Most of the Addis Ababa respondents disagreed with the fact that corruption was rife in the acquisition of land-holding certificates. However, most of the Adama respondents agreed that this was the case in their city. The Adama respondents indicated that it was common practice for a landowner in Adama city to obtain a landholding

certificate after a long waiting period subsequent to submitting an application. In fact, they admitted to bribing the officials/ authorities to expedite the matter of acquiring a certificate. According to Figure 4, most of the respondents’ –99 (32%) - disagreed that the acquisition of landholding certificates was associated with corrupt practices. The results presented in Figure 4 show that 27% of the respondents agreed, 27% had no idea, and 46% did not consider corruption as an issue in the acquisition of landholding certificates.

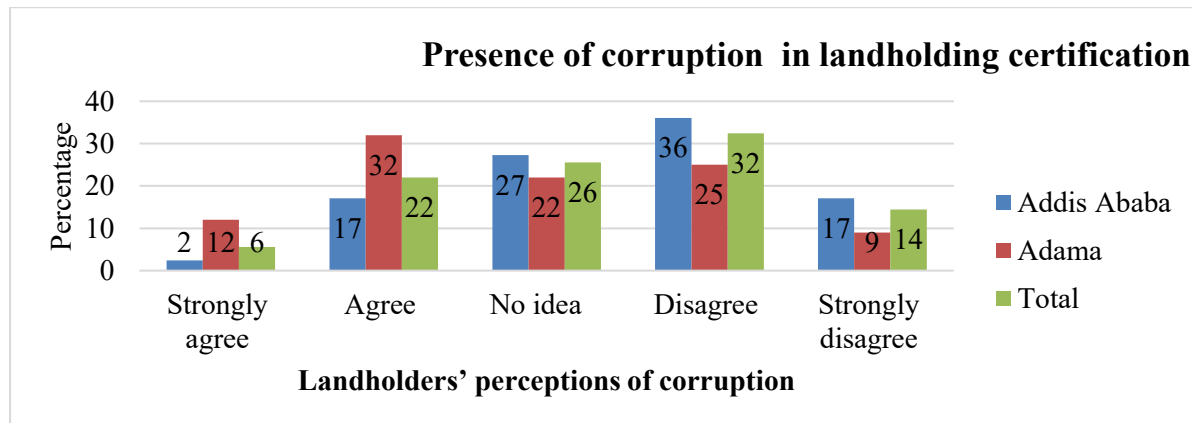


Figure 4: Percentage of Corruption in the acquisition of landholding certificates

In the focus group discussion, the participants from Addis Ababa city debated the nature of the challenges in accessing land tenure certification. Most of them agreed that only some of the officials in the land administration department are corrupt and that they themselves had never seen any of the guilty parties being punished. According to the data collected from the focus group discussion at Addis Ababa, some officials in the land administration department were thought to be involved in corruption, but not generally thought to be punished.

3.3. Level of Security on Tenure

Land tenure is secured when the rights of an individual or group of people to the land that they own or are occupying are protected by the government/ community so that they might not be forcibly evicted. Those whose land tenure arrangements are insecure face a higher risk of losing their land (Dadashpoor & Somayeh, 2019). Table 3 shows the research respondents’ perceptions of the level of security on land tenure in Addis Ababa and Adama, respectively.

Table 3: Level of security in respect of land tenure in Addis Ababa and Adama

Level of security	Frequency		Total
	Addis Ababa	Adama	
Very secure	27	19	46
Secure	92	44	136
Not sure	14	7	21
Less secure	40	22	62
Not secure	32	8	40
Total	205	100	305

As Figure 5 shows, most of the respondents (44.6%) in both Addis Ababa and Adama feel secure in their land tenure arrangements. The percentage of respondents who chose "secure" was similar for both cities. The results in Figure 5 indicate that 60% of the respondents indicated, "Secure" in respect of their land tenure arrangements, seven percent (7%) "Not sure" and 43% "not secure". This result implies that generally the landowners felt they had security of tenure.

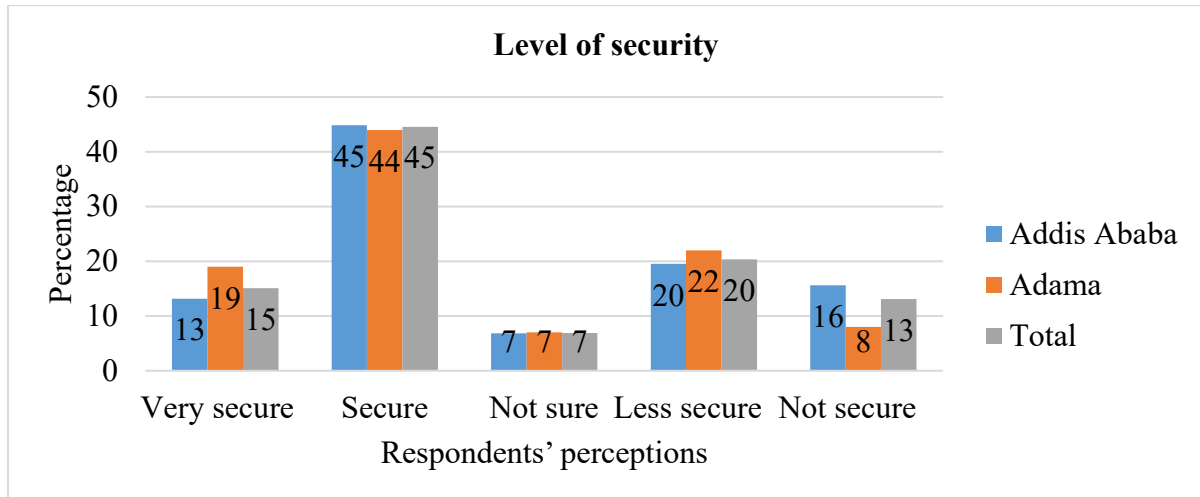


Figure 5: Level of security in respect of land tenure

What level of security do you now have on your tenure? was a question posed to the focus group participants from Addis Ababa. They responded that they regard their tenure as currently secure. However, at a later stage, they would not know what would happen in this respect as they are of the opinion that the government has the power to evict them from their land at any time and that they could be evicted through expropriation. Based on the views of the members of the focus group discussion, it can therefore be said that the land tenure arrangements of the respondents are secure for the present time but unsure for the future. In their interviews on "the perspectives ("feeling") of the landowners on their tenure", the officials at the land registration agencies in both cities indicated that the landowners felt secure in their land tenure arrangements. However, they also expressed concern about the possibility of being evicted from their land in the future. This result implies that the officials at the land representation agencies are aware that although landowners have a sense of security in this respect, there is still an underlying fear of eviction.

3.4. Respondents' Concerns about Possible Eviction from their Land

Eviction is the forceful removal of an individual from his/her land (Olatunde *et al.*, 2021). In Ethiopia, people were evicted from their land through expropriation, which refers to the acquisition of land by the state from private individuals for public purposes (Dires *et al.*, 2021). Table 4 shows respondents' concerns about possible eviction from their land.

Table 4: Respondents’ concern about possible eviction from their land

Worry about eviction	Frequency		Total
	Addis Ababa	Adama	
Very high	28	10	38
High	27	11	38
Moderate	18	6	24
Not sure	26	6	40
Low	62	37	99
Very low	44	22	66
Total	205	100	305

As Figure 6 indicates, in both cities, the level of anxiety about possible eviction was low. According to Figure 6, most respondents – 99 (32.5%) – were not worried about eviction from their land. About 24% of respondents indicated high levels of anxiety 8% moderate, 13% were not sure, and 54% were not worried as to the threat of being evicted from their land. These results imply that most landowners were not very worried about being evicted from their land.

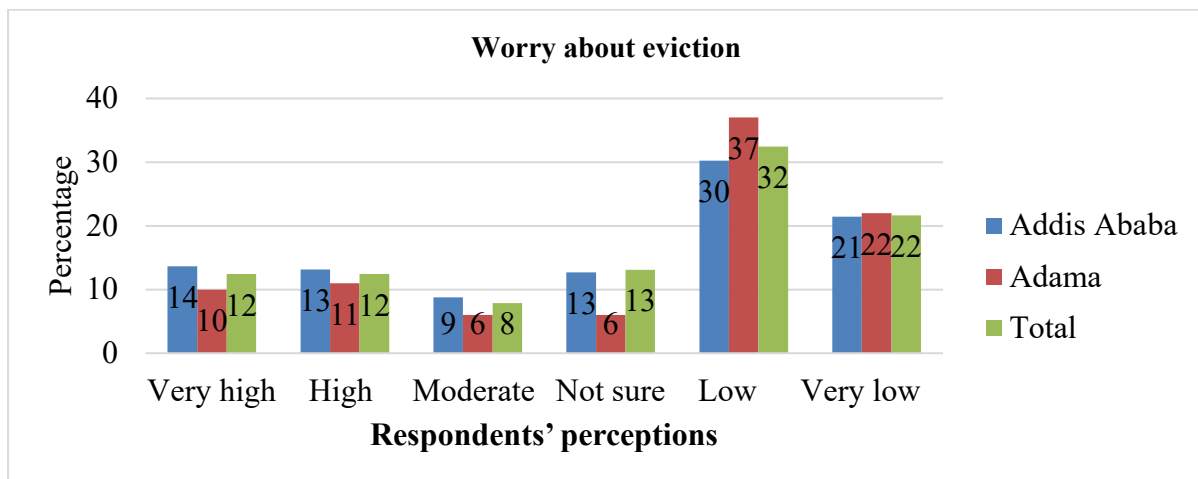


Figure 6: Respondents’ concerns about possible eviction from their land

3.5. Level of Protection of Landowners from Local Authorities

Local authorities are those organizations entrusted with the responsibility of providing public services in particular areas. Differently structured local authorities throughout Ethiopia address different municipal issues. The government is differentiated into, amongst others, land administration sectors at the local level that are responsible for land issues. The primary aim of the local authorities is to serve the public and offer local people land tenure protection. Table 5 shows the level of protection meted out by the local authorities to landowners.

Table 5: Level of protection of landowners from local authorities

Level of protection	Frequency		Total
	Addis Ababa	Adama	
Very protected	18	13	31
Protected	44	23	67
Not sure	51	15	66
Less protected	64	23	87
Not protected	28	26	54
Total	205	100	305

As Figure 7 indicates, different results were obtained. Most of the respondents in Addis Ababa perceive that the level of protection from the local authorities is limited, while those in Adama feel that they are not being protected. According to Figure 7, most of the respondents – 87 (28.5%) – feel less protected by the authorities. Figure 7 shows that 32% of respondents believe themselves to be protected, 22% are not sure, 29% feel less protected, and 18% feel that they are not protected.

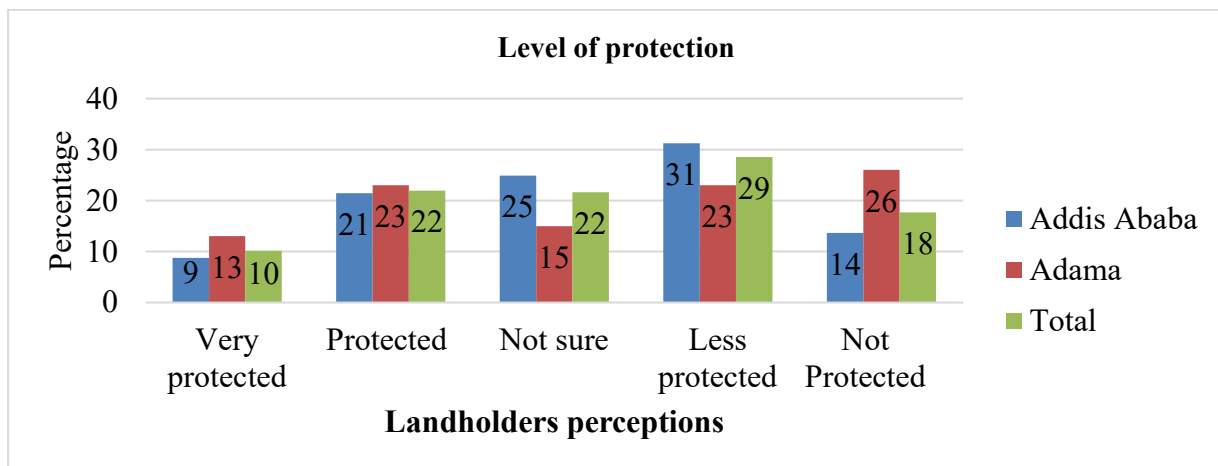


Figure 7: Level of protection of landowners from local authorities

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The government of Ethiopia enforced measures to promote land tenure security by establishing the Land Registration and Information Agencies. The main aim of establishing these agencies was to register all parcels of land and ensure tenure security for landowners. The result of the study showed that most (63%) of the respondents were aware of the institution from which their landholding certificates could be obtained. Most (60%) of the landholder respondents had complete confidence in their security of tenure; most (54%) were unworried about being evicted from their property; 46% did not agree that corruption prevailed in the process of obtaining their landholding certificates; and 29% agreed that the protection from the local authorities was minimal.

Considering the findings of this study, it is recommended that a permanent land registry institution that registers land and issues digital landholding certificates to ensure tenure security be established. By regularly enforcing rules and regulations to minimize corruption and making landowners aware of the demerits of corruption in this regard, improvements can be brought about in the digital landholding certificate/cadastral system; –landowners can then become more confident of their land tenure security, and the forceful eviction of individuals from their land can be avoided. The implementation of rules and regulations, and their enforcement can allow the landowners to feel that the local authorities are protecting them.

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