

Evaluating the Factors Contributing to Unethical Practices by Quantity Surveyors in Nigerian Construction Industry

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Abstract

Ethics are moral principles that direct or influence peoples' attitude and conduct. It also has an incontrovertible impact on legitimacy and value standard of any profession. However, there has been lots of questions raised on low level of ethical standard among Quantity Surveyors in Nigeria. Due to the development, this study aims to identify and analyze factors contributing to unethical conduct among Quantity Surveyors in the construction industry. Well-structured questionnaire covering the various factors contributing to unethical behavior by Quantity Surveyors were administered to the construction professionals. 228 legitimate reactions were retrieved and analyzed using Mean Item Score (MIS) and Factor Analysis (FA) respectively. It was revealed from the study that excessive love for money (greed), salaries of workers are delay and economic downturn were the top three factors contributing to unethical conduct by Quantity Surveyors in the construction industry. Furthermore, Factor Analysis was employed in reducing these factors to six major contributing factors. Thus, the study recommended that there should be total enforcement of the code of conduct on Quantity Surveyors by the professional bodies. Results from this study give adequate confirmation and helpful pointers in clarifying some misinterpretations about factors contributing to unethical conduct by Quantity Surveyors in the construction industry and possible solution.

Keywords

Unethical, Quantity Surveyors (QS), Factor analysis, Construction, Professional.

1.0 Introduction

Vee, & Skitmore, (2003) defines ethics as an intermediate rule which regulate or influence the man's action. Ethics in profession have a certain effect on the reputation and economic viability, which influence the personal protection of such profession. According to Ameh and Odusami (2010), professional ethics is an arrangement of ethical practices or behavior guidelines that characterizes work standards. Codes of ethics

are reports which express the major behavioral standards and the qualities grasped by an organisation (Oladirin and Ho, 2014). Codes of ethics have turned out to be regular routine in the present business world which must be followed. It was noticed as of late that unethical practices are common in Nigerian construction industry, which are mostly caused by professional unfortunate behavior and professional carelessness, ethical misconduct of honing professionals is on increase among professionals in Nigeria (Akinrata, 2019). The abnormal state of defilement/dishonesty in the construction subsector signals significant deviation from consistence with the professional sets of principles and codes of conduct (Ayodele, Ogunbode, Ariyo, Ibrinke and Alabi, 2011). Ibrahim et al. (2019) expressed that professional ethics have been gotten in the rodent race by debasement, this revolting face of corruption in the construction business had come about to the infringement of professional codes of ethics of the various professions in the industry. As indicated by Akinrata (2019), some of the unethical activities reported in the building industry by Quantity Surveyors (QS) are: collusion, bribery, collusive tendering, removal of contract bids, bid hunting, payment games (e.g. holding due payments), claim games (e.g. exaggerated charges, fraudulent claims), coercion and intimidation, conflict of interest, technical incompetence, and neglect.

Ethics in Quantity studying profession is a substantial issue which cannot handle levity hand. Ethical standard is very vital in any profession. In light of this fact, Quantity Surveyors need to stationed themselves great inside the web of interrelationships among other professionals in the construction environment in ethical standard (Adeniyi, Adegbembo and Ojo, 2018). Ethical standard is a yardstick in running any business/organization, since it furnishes establishment with applied rules on the most proficient method to act in their undertaking. Unfortunately, all-encompassing understanding and general use of ethical code of conduct remains an issue for worry among Quantity Surveyors while improving moral gauges among stakeholders is additionally a test (Akinrata, Ogunsemi and Akinradewo, 2019). With regards to ethics in construction industry, various researchers have considered and studied wide on this zone. Ibrahim et al. (2019); Ameyaw et al. (2017); Shah and Alotaibi (2017); Inuwa, *et al.* (2015); Oladirin and Ho, (2014); Nawaz and Ikram, (2013); Akinrata, (2019) have all completed explores on general moral/ethical practices among professionals in the construction industry. So far, the attention on unethical conduct of Quantity surveyors was not completely dealt with especially in the developing countries. Unethical conduct in the construction business has been created by the savage rivalry among and between professionals, this aggressive conduct among Quantity surveyors and members in construction improvement has trigger moral unfortunate behaviors in the relationships between professionals, their clients and supply chain (Bowen, *et al.*, 2007 and Akinrata. and Ogungbile, 2018). Thusly, this paper intends to assess the factors contributing to unethical conduct among Quantity Surveyors in the construction industry. The paper will show all the academic down to earth ways to deal with moral evaluation of Quantity Surveyors in the construction industry in an approach to improve moral standard among them.

2.0 Literature review

According to Allen (1990), ethics has been defined as conforming to accepted professional standards of conduct. It is a system of moral principles governing the appropriate conduct for an individual or a group. Ethics is used in determining what is right in a given situation and then following through with actions to implement what is right (Scalza, 2008). As stated by Scalza (2008) construction companies must gain and keep loyal customers, just like any other company. Their ability to acquire and maintain customers is directly related to how those customers see the company's ethical standards from both management and employees. Delbridge, et. al., 2000) opined that ethics comprises the rules of conduct, against which human behaviour and the moral principles portrayed by an individual can be judged accordingly (However, lack of quality is a major concern for construction industry. It is perceived that human factors, especially lack of professional ethics, causes majority of quality related problems. There are various factors stimulating unethical conduct in the construction sector. As indicated by Transparency International (2005), couple of factors making construction industry inclined to unethical level are ferocious competition for contracts,

abundant levels of formalities for acquiring official approvals and permits, prospect for delays as well as time and budget overruns.

Based on questionnaire survey, Alutu and Udhawuve (2009) recognized the different factors that could have led to unethical practices in Nigeria construction industry, and the most unethical conducts which ranked top are that most professionals in the construction are greedy for money and economic pressures. According to Donaldson (2001), ethical practices that promote economic efficiency have to include respect for intellectual property, engaging in fairer competition, avoiding monopolies, nepotism, bribery and crony capitalism, not abusing government relationships, providing accurate information to the market, respect for the environment, and honouring contracts, promises and other commitments. Usman et al. (2012) observed that absence of punishment for corruption, loss of contract money due to change in government, lack of continuity in government programmes, availability of loopholes in project monitoring, collusion by contractors, lack of loyalty to government, job insecurity, the fear of losing a job and not getting another, fear of status relegation after retirement were the major cause of unethical practices on the management of construction projects in North Eastern (NE) states of Nigeria.

Another factors stimulating unethical conduct by Quantity Surveyors in the construction business is quackery. As indicated by Olusegun *et al.*, (2011), quacks flourish in the construction industry in Nigeria. Moreover, another factors prompting unethical conduct by Quantity Surveyors in the construction industry is discrimination between workers [Dabson *et al.*, 2007; Alutu and Udhawuve (2009); Mason (2009) and; Abdul-Rahmam *et al.* (2011)]. Findings from Aigbavboa *et al.* (2016), demonstrated that poverty and others unethical conduct and practices in construction industry are caused by: destitution level, intemperate love for money, governmental issues in honor of agreement, professional indiscipline, dishonesty. Reasons for these unethical conduct and practices were also found in Olusegun et al., (2011) that legislative issues in honoring agreement and pointless love for cash/covetousness. These findings buttressed Arowolo (2008), who highlighted the two factors among others as factors that induce degenerate practices into the construction industry. These literatures reviewed and other related academy journals were able to deal with ethical issues in the construction industry. Nevertheless, more attention need to be given in addressing the factors contributing to unethical practices among Quantity surveying in the construction industry.

3.0 Methodology

This study examines various opinions of construction professionals on the factors contributing to unethical practices by Quantity Surveyors within construction industry in Nigeria. In order to achieve the purpose of this study, well-structured questionnaire covering the main factors contributing to unethical practices by Quantity Surveyors were sent to the construction professionals in Nigeria. In setting up the questionnaire, Archival information used were obtained from literatures reviewed. The questionnaire for this research was designed in two sections. Section A was designed to obtain the respondent's personal profile to guarantee the reliability and genuineness of the information, while section B was a rundown of 26 factors gotten from the literatures. Thus, the respondents were told to rank these factors on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5 representing strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Purposive sampling techniques was embraced in reaching out to the respondents, because this study utilized the opinion of experienced construction professionals. A total of Two hundred and seventy-six questionnaires were administered on professionals involved in the selected projects. Most of the questionnaires were self-administered while some were sent via electronic media to the professionals and were also dully sent back. The aggregate response received was two hundred and twenty-eight (83% response rate) this include Quantity surveyors (32.5% of respondents), Builders (20.2% of respondents), Architects (23.7% of respondents), and Engineers (23.6% of respondents). Data collected were evaluated through the help of Statistic Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 19), and these analyses were done in

two different ways; Reliability Test (RT) and Factor Analysis(FA). The general Cronbach's α for RT for the 26 factors used for this study was 0.796, which indicated that the instrument used is reliable. Factor Analysis outcome for this study will be fully explained in next section.

4.0 Results and Discussion of Findings

As shown in Table 1, construction professionals were asked to rank the contribution factors of unethical practices Quantity Surveyors based on their experience and level of awareness. All factors ranked have MIS value ranging from 3.70 to 4.29, demonstrating that respondents were generally not in disagreement with these factors. "Excessive love for money (greed)" with the highest MIS value of 4.29 was considered as an extremely influential factor contributing to unethical practices by Quantity Surveyors in the construction industry. According to an adage, "*The excessive love of money is the root of all evil.*" Everybody likes money, but excess of it among construction professionals in study area create the most contributing factor to unethical practices among the QS. This agreed with Ehsan *et al.* (2009) result, love of money (greed) and absence of pertinent standards usually cause the person carless about the national interest, this prompt negative effect on society. 'Excessive love for money (greed) also consistent with Akpomemie *et al.* (2018); Olusegun *et al.* (2011); and Hamzah *et al.* (2010). FMI/CMAA (2004) as greed is the major cause of behave unethically in construction industry. "*Salaries of workers been delayed*" and "*Economic downturn*" were also ranked top. These findings agreed with previous studies by Abdul-Rahmam *et al.* (2011); Olusegun *et al.* (2011); Ameh and Odusami (2010); Vee and Skitmore (2003) and Adah (2020). It was noted in the analysis that the respondents agreed that 'Salaries of workers are delayed' be ranked second which is in connection with Alutu and Udhawuve (2009), this also concurred FMI/CMAA (2004) who found that delay of workers' salaries ranked from the first five important factors cause unethical practices. These factors were the top ranked Factors contributing to unethical practices by Quantity Surveyors in the Nigerian construction industry.

Table 1. Factors contributing to unethical practices by Quantity Surveyors in the construction industry

Item	Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1	Excessive love for money(greed)	4.29	0.435	1
2	Salaries of workers are delayed	4.22	1.343	2
3	Economic downturn	4.20	0.764	3
4	Competitiveness between contractors	4.13	0.543	4
5	Professional indiscipline	4.11	0.721	5
6	Political system	4.08	0.654	6
7	Construction industry culture	4.08	1.084	7
8	Poverty	4.07	0.435	8
9	Availability of loop holes in project monitoring	4.06	0.236	9
10	Discrimination between workers	4.04	0.354	10
11	Illegal award to contract	4.03	0.745	11
12	Inability supervision to control those behavior	4.00	0.874	12
13	Project complexity	3.99	0.997	13
14	The absence of strict contractual law	3.99	0.645	14
15	Lack of transparency	3.95	1.008	15
16	Lack of high executive control	3.94	0.654	16
17	Favoritism	3.94	0.341	17
18	High cost of obtaining redress in count of law	3.93	0.734	18

19	Profit maximization by contractor	3.93	0.765	19
20	Under pay most of consultancy fees	3.92	0.997	20
21	Insecurity of job	3.90	0.563	21
22	Insufficient legislative enforcement	3.87	0.743	22
23	Overlapping between personal and professional ethics	3.87	0.364	23
24	Loss of contract money due to change in government	3.87	0.264	24
25	Insufficient education from professional institution	3.87	0.645	25
26	Personal culture or personal behavior	3.70	0.744	26

Factor analysis of the factors contributing to unethical practices by Quantity Surveyors in their services delivery was also undertaken. This analysis was done to detect underlying relationships among the factors, and describe them in less, but in more concise and comprehensive factors. Factor Analysis (more properly *exploratory factor analysis*) is concerned with whether the covariance or correlations between a set of observed variables can be explained in terms of a smaller number of unobserved constructs known either as *latent variables* or *common factors* (Yap, 2013). The reliability of factor analysis for usage is dependent on sample size and number of variables (Field, 2005 cited in Khalid, 2010 and Yap, 2013). For sampling adequacy test, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO, 0.635) in Table 2 showed that data collected were adequate for the analysis and the Bartlett's test of sphericity for correlations adequacy between the variables was highly significant. So therefore, factor analysis is appropriate for these data. Since the value of the test statistics for sphericity is large (Bartlett's test of sphericity = 826.594) and the associated significance is small ($p = 0.000$), suggesting that the correlation is an identity matrix. Observation of the correlation matrix show that all the items listed have significant correlation at the 5% level, suggesting no need to eliminate any of the variables for the principal component analysis, and therefore exploratory factor analysis is appropriate.

The correlation matrix of the 26 variables constituting the factors contributing to unethical practices by Quantity Surveyors was done. Since one of the goals of factor analysis is to obtain factors that help explain this correlation, the variables must be related to each other for the factor model to be appropriate. About 53% of the total variance is attributable to the first six items. The remaining twenty items together accounts for only 47% of the variance. The analysis of correlation matrix for factor extraction revealed nine (9) underlying factors with Eigen values greater than 1.0. However, the last 3 factors were dropped because it explained the proportion of variation in only one of the items; hence the item would not be sufficient to identify the name of the factor. Thus, a model with six items may be adequate to represent the factors contributing to unethical practices by Quantity Surveyors. The factor grouping based on the varimax rotation is shown in Table 2. Each variable weighs heavily on to only one of the factors, while the loading on each factor exceeds 0.40. The high communalities also indicate that the extracted components represent the variables well. Stevens (2009) cited in Yap (2013) recommends interpreting only factors loadings > 0.4 for substantial importance of a variable to a factor. Therefore, factors loading < 0.4 are not displayed in Table 2.

The result in Table 2 showed the varimax orthogonal rotation of Principal factors. Before interpretation of the six (6) extracted factors, it is essential to name them. The naming is subjective. It depends on the background and training of the analyst. There is no specific scientific procedure for naming the factors. Therefore, the thoughtful naming of these factors were deemed to be appropriate for this study: i) personal behavior, ii) professional indiscipline, iii) political and profit maximization, iv) poverty, v) competitiveness, and vi) economic downturn. The interpretation of the factors was inspired by existing literature relating to this study such as Nawaz and Ikram, 2013; Abdul-Rahmam *et al.* (2011); Hamzah *et al.* (2010); and Aigbavboa *et al.* (2016).

Table 2: Rotated component matrix (loading) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of the factors contributing to unethical practices by Quantity Surveyors in their services delivery

Factors	Component						Com
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	
1) Personal culture or personal behavior							
Personal culture or personal behavior	.729						.734
Lack of transparency	.721						.664
Favoritism	.686						.674
Insufficient education from professional institution	.684						.572
Availability of loop holes in project monitoring	.594						.781
2) Professional indiscipline							
Professional indiscipline		.691					.592
Illegal award to contract		.635					.740
Loss of contract money due to change in government		.600					.711
The absence of strict contractual law		.511					.658
Excessive love for money(greed)		.489					.673
Lack of high executive control		.431					.788
3) Profit maximization							
Profit maximization by contractor			.718				.660
Inability supervision to control those behavior			.587				.757
Political system			.528				.648
Overlapping between personal and professional ethics			.489				.667
Salaries of workers are delayed			.482				.545
4) Project complexity							
Project complexity				.663			.790
Insecurity of job				.605			.696
Poverty				.543			.662
Under pay most of consultancy fees				.532			.783
Construction industry culture				.488			.629
5) Competitiveness between contractors							
Competitiveness between contractors					.698		.654
High cost of obtaining redress in count of law					.648		.704
Discrimination between workers					.617		.648
6) Economic downturn							
Economic downturn						.635	.725
Insufficient legislative enforcement						.627	.545
Percentage of variance explained	17.673	9.561	7.122	6.704	5.721	5.445	
Cumulative variance %	17.673	27.234	34.356	41.060	46.787	52.227	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO)							
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.635						
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square				826.594		

	Df	325
	Sig.	.000

Personal behaviour

This first principal factor account for the largest measure of total variance (17.67 percent). It contains five component factors which are; personal culture, insufficient education from professional institution, lack of transparency, favoritism, and availability of loop holes in project monitoring. The findings concurred with Adeniyi *et al.* (2018) and Ameh, (2018). Ameh and Odusami (2010) stated that there are various factors that support unethical practices in Nigeria and the most unethical conduct which positioned the most elevated by respondent is that individuals want to acquire wealth by all means to enhance public status followed by people are driven by their inherent greed for money, contractors get indispensable data on the agreement by paying concurred aggregates of cash to officers of awarding organizations. This finding bolsters the position of Adnan *et al.* (2012) who analyzed a few reasons why professionals are engaged with unethical practices, which demonstrates that lacking administrative implementation, savage rivalry, the economic downturn, inadequate moral instruction from schools and professional establishments, social changes and high unpredictability of construction works were the factors contributing to unethical practices in the industry.

Professional indiscipline

Professional indiscipline amount for 9.56 per cent of the entire variance. Its consist of six factors (professional indiscipline, excessive love for money, illegal award to contract, loss of contract money due to change in government, absence of strict contractual law, lack of high executive control). The assortment of these six factors strongly affirmed the current factors contributing to unethical conduct by Quantity Surveyors in their administrations conveyance. For instance, unwarranted love for money (greediness) concurred with Ehsan *et al.* (2009) result, that affection for cash (avarice) and other unethical practices have tarnished the good image of the construction industry. Moreover, Illicit honor to contract; loss of contract money due to government change in power; professional indiscipline and absence of high official control; among others will hasty unethical conduct by Quantity Surveyors in the Nigerian construction industry.

Profit maximization

Contributing 7.1 per cent of the total variance, this principal factor (profit maximization) is made up of five factors. These factors loading for the variables are profit maximization by contractor, political system, inability supervision to control those behavior, overlapping between personal and professional ethics and, salaries of workers are delayed. The construction business in Nigeria has been widely criticized for low profit on paper but high profit marginal in reality. According to ENR Staff Writer (1993), seventy-nine percent of all contractual workers in construction industry make under 5% yearly. An AGC profit margin study, published in the Engineering News Record, recognized contractors that make over 5% yearly as "high-benefit" firms. Therefore, numerous construction professionals in the developing nations like Nigeria discover all way to amplify their profit/overhead, leaving out ethical conduct guiding their professions.

Project complexity

This fourth principal is named ‘project complexity’ contributing 6.7 per cent of the total variance. The factors recorded in this vital factor are: project complexity, insecurity of job, poverty, under pay most of consultancy fees, and construction industry culture. The combination of these five variables affirms that project complexity gives room for unethical behaviour by Quantity Surveyors in their services delivery. According to Adnan, Hashim, Yusuwan, & Ahmad (2012), the construction procedure might be viewed as the most complex endeavor in any industry, however the construction business has created awesome trouble in adapting to the expanding multifaceted nature of real construction ventures which oblige more unethical practices among professionals. This is upheld by Stansbury, & Stansbury, (2018) who depicts that the construction business standout amongst other sectors as the most unique, risky, challenging business and

goes ahead to state that the industry has an extremely poor notoriety for overseeing hazard, unethical practices, with numerous significant projects neglecting to meet due dates and cost targets.

Competitiveness among contractors

The fifth factor contributing to unethical practices by Quantity Surveyors in their services delivery which accounts for 5.7 per cent is labelled 'competitiveness between contractors'. This factor contains three variables: competitiveness between contractors, discrimination between workers, and high cost of law redress. The high danger of competitiveness between contractors in the industry may prompt unethical practices in the construction business not forgetting Quantity Surveyors play an important role in this situation. Some portion of this issue identifies with exceedingly competitive culture within the construction industry, which makes an atmosphere of mystery; most minimal cost mindset and low gainfulness of the industry (Phoebe 2006). This prompts driving offers down to the detriment of the nature of the project, information leaking, bribery and unwillingness to repay those organisations that pass up a great opportunity when tendering, especially on a tender for the costs of submitting a tender. Chiocha (2009) detailed that the industry has its own trademark techniques for project acquirement which are unique in relation to different industries. These procedures end up being competitive and construction experts expect that their odds of being granted a specific contract are exceptionally thin henceforth enjoy unethical practices to acquire contracts.

Economic downturn

The last loaded factor accounts for the least total variance of 5.4 per cent, it contains two variables, economic downtown and insufficient legislative enforcement. The findings buttressed Fan *et al.* (2001) statement that the punitive economic circumstance in the country presently and coupled with non-accessibility of employments can inspire professionals to conflict with the implicit rules and carry on unethically. Fongoqa (2008), expressed that subsidence can achieve awkward nature of demand and supply limit in construction; as Architect, QS, Contractors and other construction professionals are compelled to act unprofessionally and unethically by bring down delicate costs with a specific end goal to remain aggressive notwithstanding while working expenses go up. Fongoqa (2008), additionally expressed that in the meantime, Economic downturn may impact delays in project completion and even cancelation at times since clients miss the mark concerning funds, cost acceleration because of raising information expenses. As indicated by NBER (2008), 2008/2009 global economic meltdown emergency/meltdown brought about most private utilizations fall without precedent at about 20 years which shows the profundity and seriousness of the present emergency. As indicated by Hamimah (2012), the economic downturn, deficient legislative implementation, savage rivalry, inadequate moral instruction from higher institutions like polytechnics & university and professional establishments, social changes and high multifaceted nature of professionals in the construction industry are numerous reasons why professionals are engaged with unethical practices.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

Moral values in the quantity survey profession is a significant concern that has a crucial role to play in achieving project success and fostering the positive reputation of the construction industry as a whole. Ethics has such an indisputable effect on the legitimacy and monetary viability in quantity surveying profession. Recently, there has been lots of questions raised on low level of ethical standard among Quantity Surveyors in Nigeria. Based on this, a complete investigation of the factors contributing to unethical conduct by Quantity Surveyors in the construction industry was exhibited in this study. Straight from the poll review held with some construction professionals in Nigerian construction industry, major factors contributing to unethical were recognized by factor analysis. Six main factors were highlighted from twenty-six factors created through a blend of past research and the opinions from professionals in the construction industry. From this research, the six factors contributing to unethical conduct by Quantity Surveyors are: Personal behavior; professional indiscipline; profit maximization; project complexity; competitive between contractors and; economic downturn. In spite of the fact that the investigation was

carried out within the construction professional in Nigeria, it was indicated that the outcomes bring forth true reflection, positive hypothetical and pragmatic experience about the factors contributing to unethical conduct.

The result displayed in this research will provide adequate proof and helpful information in order to clear up a few misinterpretations about factors contributing to unethical conduct in the construction industry in a developing world. It will also attract regard for the deficient rules on ethics administration among Quantity Surveyors in Nigerian construction industry. Thus, the study recommended that there should be total enforcement of the code of conduct on Quantity Surveyors by the professional bodies (Nigerian institute of Quantity Surveyor (NIQS) and Quantity Surveyor Registration Board of Nigeria (QSRBN)). Moreover, apposite punitive move must be made by professional authorities once unethical behavior is revealed among the members. This study also suggested that there should be regular seminars, lectures and symposiums on rules/conducts guiding the profession so as to sensitize the Quantity Surveyors and other construction professionals about the negative effect of unethical practices on the construction industry at large. Subsequently, there is need that legitimate various activities to uphold the code of conduct, which must be taken by applicable experts and professional bodies to guarantee ethical standard. This study can also be carried out among other professions in the construction industry for comparison and further study. Moreover, additionally studies may deploy more strategies in collecting reliable data from respondents. In this paper, questionnaires were used in gathering vital information from the professionals, additional use of other techniques like interview will make the result more adaptable and precise. Despite the fact that this research provided helpful information in regards to factors contributing to unethical conduct by Quantity Surveyors, the study is restricted by the population of the study which is limited to Nigeria. Further studies can also be carried out in other developing countries whose project execution are similar to Nigeria.

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