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Assessment of Project Management Ethical Practices and Building Performance Indicators in Lagos State of Nigeria

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Abstract: *The word ethics is known to bring sanity and sanctity to every field of human endeavour. It helps to know the rights and wrongs of every human activities. Ethical practices in the construction industry are seen as very important due to the nature of the activities and the effects it could have on building performance. This study examines the level of adherence to ethical practices and its effect on building performance indicators in Lagos, Nigeria. The descriptive research design of survey type was employed in this study. The descriptive research design helps to describe the condition of the distribution or population under study. A well-structured questionnaire was employed as research instrument used in obtaining the data used in this study. A total 400 sample were randomly selected from the study population. The data were collected from building construction professionals which includes Nigerian Institute Builders, Nigerian Institute of Civil Engineers, Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors and Nigerian Institute of Town Planners. Data obtained were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations were computed to determine the level of adherence to ethical practices while multiple regression analysis was carried out to examine the influence of Ethical Practices on Building Performance indicators at 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that the level of adherence to Ethical Practices (Ethical Honesty and Accountability, and Standard Ethical Practices) are generally not acceptable and below expectation or what is needed to achieve a sustainable Building Performance. It was also revealed that Project Management Ethical Practices significantly influence cost (t=2.117, p<.05), time (t=1.895, p<.05), quality (t=4.211, p<.05), and health and safety (t=4.877, p<.05) and interactively (F=6.114, p<.05). Hence, the need to put adequate measures in place to ensure that all Project Managers and Team Members strictly adhere to the Ethical Practices and Standards.*

Keywords: Ethical Practice, Building Performance, Ethical Accountability, Ethical Honesty and Standard Ethical Practice

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

The word ethics cuts across every aspect of human endeavour which indicates the moral or generally agreed upon principles that governs an activity. Ethics attempts to set a clear difference from what is right and wrong or the right way of doing things. Ethics clarifies the moral quality or character of pre-determined behaviors. According to Rezende (2019), ethics are key and significant components of every successful business and sector. This is also accurate in terms of how ethics enhance project management, particularly in terms of building performance. According to Usman et al. (2018), the performance of the building sector depends on ethics. There is no widely agreed definition of ethical behavior in literature (De, & Blackwell, 2019).

Fairness, honesty, integrity, objectivity, and dependability are the moral traits that one must consciously acquire in order to be ethical (Mason, 2009). In general, there are disincentives for professionals and construction workers to conduct themselves fairly and honestly in business. Instilling ethical ideals in construction industry professionals during their educational and occupational trainings receives little attention (Waychal, 2015). The cornerstone of the construction industry's professional ethics practices serves as a platform for performance improvement (Dindi, 2016). The practices of a culture of professional ethics are based on the values of expected behavior, legality, openness, integrity, and responsibility (International Ethics Standard, 2016).

According to Larson and Gray (2014), ethical difficulties are frequently not reported in projects, particularly when the project appears to have satisfied the time, cost, and quality requirements. In reality, meeting these conditions might conceal flagrant ethical violations that, if made public, could damage project members' reputations. Corruption and unethical behavior are commonplace around the

world, but particularly in Nigeria. It is a severe problem that the construction industry needs to take into account (Al-Sweity, 2013). Ogbu and Asuquo noted that corruption costs up to 30% of project prices in many countries. Despite the seriousness and high prevalence of unethical construction procurement practices, little has been done in investigating its effects on building performance, hence, a motivation for this research.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to assess the effect of project Management Ethical Practices on Building Performance indicators. Specifically, the study:

i. investigates the level of adherence of Project Management to Ethical Practices in construction of buildings in Lagos State of Nigeria;
ii. examine the effect of Project Management Ethical Practices on Building Performance indicators (cost, time, quality, health and safety).

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study provides up-to-date information on adherence to Project Management Ethical Practices as it relates to the construction of buildings and how the Ethical Practices influences Building Performance indicators which will guide key decision makers to make sustainable decisions that improves project performance in Lagos State of Nigeria.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Ethical Practices in Construction Industry

Different researchers approach Ethical Practices (EP) in the building business from various angles (Usman, et al., 2018: Dindi, 2016; Rezende, De, & Blackwell, 2019). From respective vantage points, three categories—management/business ethics, professional ethics, and personal ethics—are used to describe ethical actions. The expected behavior of a person directed by management or business principles in a group within an industry is known as management/business ethics. Additionally, professional ethics is the anticipated conduct of a person guided by a set of professional practice norms in an industry (Ibrahim, 2018). Personal ethics are also moral standards of conduct that are determined by individual choices (Dindi, 2016). The accepted ethical standards as Services provided by practitioners, employees, and assistants must be based on their expertise and suitability to do so, according to IES (2016). Practitioners must demonstrate effective leadership within their team. To conceptualize Ethical Practices, according to Atanda and Olukoya (2019), they include public expectations regarding responsibilities and a commitment to serve the public interest while possessing high competencies. The ability of the general public to demand honest and high-quality services from professionals in the business ensures the survival of the common bond that unites the building industry and the numerous publics. According to Sharpe (2019), dishonesty in the construction industry has led to public criticism of the professionalism of building construction experts with relation to professional ethics.

Accountability is a key ethical principle in project management. Accountability refers to accepting full responsibility for the services rendered and must be exercised by experts. The rights and interests of the client, stakeholders, and other parties are upheld. Additionally, environmental and societal factors should be taken into account (IES, 2016). Therefore, there must be transparency, accessibility, and availability of pertinent documents and other materials in a language that practitioners can understand. Additionally, professionals and the services they provide must not deceive, seek to mislead, conceal information, or spread false information. Public accountability refers to the idea that the public can see the actions of the government, organizations, and their employees. Records of government actions should be accessible to the public, unless they are necessary for national security (Okagbueet al., 2018).

Honesty is also a key virtue of Project Management Ethical Standard required in the construction industry. Since construction industry has the key responsibility of shaping national development through the provision of infrastructure, manpower development, resource employment, fixed capital formation and improvement of the gross domestic product (Atanda & Olukoya, 2019).
Honesty is a rare virtue especially in the construction industry where dishonesty and unfair conduct mostly occur in the bidding, contract negotiation and signing and project construction phases. Consequently, it is expected that construction professionals should discharge their professional duties with utmost compliance to professional ethical standards, or to be honest and accountable in their dealings with clients and other stakeholders (Okagbueet al., 2018). Honesty is manifested in the conduct of professional ethics, which is the justification of standards of behavior against practical tasks, not necessarily limited to technologies, transactions, activities, pursuits and assessment of institutions. It rather involves practical conceptualization of public expectations in the interest of responsibilities, willingness to serve public interest with high competencies (IES, 2016: Sharpe, 2019).

To enhance accountability in construction, Nigeria has recently enacted stronger regulations for government and organizational projects. When government projects are publicized on official portals, for instance, open tendering procedures are followed, allowing

for honesty, accountability, and the removal of any biases that might exist when and where the selected list is compiled (Nwokike, 2021). The return will be evaluated by Tender Evaluation (TEC) using the following standards: (1) proof of incorporation; (2) the company's audited financial statements for the previous three years; (3) proof of tax clearance for the previous three years; (4) proof of financial strength and/or banking support; (5) records of prior projects; and (6) the experience and technical expertise of key personnel (Oyebamiji, 2018).

With improved accountability, attention to ethics and cultural considerations and reduced corruption, it is possible to construct, operate and maintain adequate quality and quantity of infrastructure on a more sustainable basis and thereby improve construction practice (Oyebamiji, 2018). In the end, accountability initiatives in construction of building projects in Nigeria can be of benefit to the public as well as the private sector (Buba, et al., 2020: Ibrahim, 2018).

2.2 Building Performance Indicators

Building Performance means the performance of building as it relates to the durability of the structure, the level of comfort the inhabitants derive from the building and how it supports their health. De Wilde (2019) was of the opinion that building performance was originally used to refer to indoor air quality, fire safety, thermal efficiency and noise control. Although not holistic in perspective, the definition of building performance here focuses majorly on how it supports the health of the inhabitants. A more holistic definition of building performance includes the physical performance of a building and as a whole or in its component elements (Chendo & Obi, 2015). This definition touches all aspects of the physical structure of the building and how it relates to the comfort and health of those benefiting from it.

Several performance measures for building projects have been promoted by corporate organizations and private citizens. For instance, Alumbugu et al. (2019), Elzomor and Parrish (2016), and other researchers found that the most crucial Building Performance indicators are cost, time, quality, and health and safety. They contend that in order to increase performance, building construction management needs to place a strong emphasis on these measures. Building Performance will therefore be studied for the purposes of this study from the perspectives of cost, time, quality, and health and safety as performance indicators in the construction business.

The overall cost to complete such a construction project serves as a cost indication of performance in such projects. Cost as an indicator of performance in a construction project places an emphasis on finishing a construction project within the project's estimated budget. A construction project's cost is determined by comparing the anticipated cost with the actual cost (Bello, 2017). In their proposal, Ali and Rahmat (2010) defined the cost performance indicator as the degree to which project completion is improved by general conditions within the predicted budget. The cost of a construction project in terms of performance is the cost that results in a high-quality, on-time project that satisfies the client.

Furthermore, time performance indicator has impact on quality of construction project. Li, et al. (2019) asserts that time performance indicator can be achieved in construction project through reduction in loss of average time to site closures, readily availability of resources at site, payment of valuations promptly, reduced percentage of late orders delivery, proper time planning of construction, and average delayed claim approval and orders variation implementation. Time performance indicator is influenced by the procurement method employed by a particular construction project. Several studies have employed time as indicator in construction project (Alkan & Bullock, 2020).

Quality is very important for construction project (construction industry institute (CII), 2015). One of the performance indicators identified by CII as it was established in 1983 is quality. The identification of quality and other indicators as parameter for performance by Construction Industry Institute (CII) gave North American construction companies global advantage. Furthermore, Project Management Institute identifies quality as one of the construction project key performance indicators (PMI, 2018). According to PMI construction project quality can be achieved through quality planning, quality assurance and quality control performance.

The health and safety of construction project personnel as well as building occupants is one of the key performance metrics in construction projects (Bello-Schünemann & Porter, 2017). The degree to which a construction project is completed without severe injuries, either directly or indirectly to project personnel, based on the general circumstances of the construction project, is a measure of performance, making health and safety a crucial indication. Numerous academics focused on quality, cost, and time; nonetheless, health and safety are crucial since they affect the cost and timing of construction project delivery (Alumbugu, et.al. 2015). For instance, a building project devoid of accidents or injuries might prevent or delay claims for mishaps at the site (Bello-Schünemann & Porter, 2017). Additionally, the quality and productivity of a construction project are influenced by the health and safety of the workers (Bello-Schünemann & Porter, 2017). The performance of a construction project is improved overall by a good health and safety program on the job site, which raises quality, lowers costs, and promotes timely delivery. Construction project performance is improved by including a culture of health and safety. In order to optimize the performance of the construction project, it is

necessary to implement health and safety policies at the construction site. Health and safety have been used as a performance factor in building projects in a number of studies. The goal of this project is to use health and safety to enhance building performance (BPM) and reduce building construction collapse in Nigeria's Lagos state.

2.3 Ethical Practices (EP) and its Impacts on Building Performance (BPM)

In establishing a connection between Project Management Ethical Practices and Building Performance, the study of Clark (2017), the Global Economic Crime Survey studied/examined 184 construction companies in 44 countries and suggest/found that one third of those examined had experienced economic crime in some way; therefore, bribery and corruption pose a significant threat to the sector. Evidence came from many different nations around the world, including the United States (Clark, 2017), Malaysia (Abdul-Rahman, Wang, & Yap, 2010), Kenya (Mathenge, 2012), Pakistan (Nawaz & Ikram, 2013), the United Kingdom (Mason, 2009), China (Zou, 2006), and Nigeria (Ameh & Odusami, 2010), which revealed the extent of unethical behavior manifesting at various levels. According to Vitalievich, et al. (2018), ethics is often characterized as a set of moral rules that allow people to determine whether or not their acts and proposals are good or bad (being right or wrong). Additionally, it indicates the moral convictions of a person as well as the accepted codes of behavior for a group of human behaviors.

Unquestionably, ethics affects an organization's legitimacy and financial viability as well as the moral fiber of the professionals who work there (Ibrahim, 2018). There is a growing belief in the construction sector that unethical behavior, including corruption, is widespread. However, ethics in construction emphasizes the principles of value-based leadership, highlighting the need for shared values, integrity in the contracting and bidding processes, a shared comprehension of professional practice, partnering, balancing risks with rewards, and creating long-lasting, trustworthy relationships (Ibrahim, 2018). Project managers are under a lot of pressure to generate growth in today's fiercely competitive business environment.

The building sector considers ethics to be a hot concern. Because it parallels the adage "throwing stones in a glass house," ethical behavior in the construction business is a topic that is rarely discussed publicly (Miller, 2011). Although many countries' economies are largely driven by the construction sector, the sector faces a number of ethical challenges related to behavior, such as bid shopping, payment games, lying, unreliable contractors, claims games (such as false claims, inflated claims), threats, collusion, conflict of interest, fraud, and professional negligence (Ibrahim, 2018).

3.0 RESEARCH METHODS

The descriptive research design was employed in this study. The descriptive research design helps to describe the condition of the distribution or population under study. A well-structured questionnaire was employed as research instrument used in obtaining the data used in this study.

The Ethical Practice Assessment instrument designed by Vee and Skitmore (2003) and International Ethics Standards, 2016) using the five-point Likert (5, strongly agree to 1, strongly disagree). On the Building Performance, the Yang el al., (2010) and Nnaji (2015) were employed and measured using 1, strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. The instruments were used to elicit information on the effect of Ethical Practices on Building Performance. A total of 400 sample were randomly selected from the study population. The data were collected from building construction professionals which includes Nigerian Institute of Builders, Nigerian Institute of Civil Engineers, Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors and Nigerian Institute of Town Planners. The strata used were categorized as Builders, Civil Engineers, Quantity Surveyors, and Town Planners. Data obtained were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations were computed to determine the level of adherence to Ethical Practices while multiple regression analysis was carried out to examine the influence of Ethical Practices on Building Performance indicators at 0.05 level of significance.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 I. Adherence to Ethical Practices

Table 1: Ethical Honesty and Accountability

Item	Ethical Honesty and Accountability	Mean	SD
EHA1	Honesty and integrity are required of Project Manager and Team Members'.	3.19	0.521
EHA2	Efficiency and effectiveness of Building Construction Process requires honesty and integrity.	3.31	0.464
EHA3	Honesty and integrity are required in cost estimation and completion of Building Construction Project.	3.41	0.595
EHA4	Honest and integrity positively influence Building Project Quality.	3.32	0.637

EHA5	Honesty and integrity positively influence Building Project Delivery time and system.	3.31	0.594
EHA6	Project Manager and Team Members' are required to account for professional services rendered in Building Construction Project.	3.19	0.614
EHA7	Project Manager and Team Members' are accountable for decision taken in respect of Building Construction Project.	3.34	0.602
EHA8	Project Manager and Team Members' are accountable for cost and quantity of building construction materials.	3.14	0.637
EHA9	Building construction professionals are accountable for the quality of building they construct.	3.11	0.703
EHA10	Building construction professionals are accountable for estimated time of delivery.	3.34	0.659

Survey, 2022 Avg Mean: 3.27

The descriptive result presented in Table 1 on the Ethical Honesty and Accountability revealed that there exist some level of Ethical Honesty and Accountability observed in building constructions in the study area. The result showed that building construction professionals are more accountable for estimated time of delivery and decisions taken in respect of building construction project. The overall average mean=3.27 suggests that although there is some level of Ethical Honest and Accountability, for the most part, the choices of the respondents were neutral. This score is not acceptable and considered quite low to award a desired level of honesty and accountability among the Project Managers and Team Members'. Hence, the need for improvement if a sustainable Building Performance must be attained. In line with the findings of Ibahim (2018) who identified that Ethical Practices are not usually adhered to in Nigeria as corruption is the order of the day even in the construction sector. Lack of honesty, accountability, trust and adherence to Standard Ethical Practice with the sector often comes with their dire consequence which does not only affect the physical structure but also possess serious health and safety risks to people associated with the building.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Standard Ethical Practices

Item	Standard Ethical Practices	Mean	SD
ESP1	Standard Practice is required of Project Manager and Team Members'.	3.20	0.591
ESP2	Standard Practice emphasized on competency, efficiency and effectiveness of Project Manager and Team Members'.	3.32	0.645
ESP3	Standard Practice emphasized on ethics than personal beliefs in building construction.	2.91	0.631
ESP4	Standard Practice emphasized on efficiency in cost of completing building project.	3.25	0.594
ESP5	Standard Practice emphasized on timely completion of building project.	3.12	0.543
ESP6	Standard Practice emphasized on building construction quality.	3.29	0.528
ESP7	Standard Practice reduces the rate of accident in building construction site.	3.43	0.561

Survey, 2022 Avg Mean: 3.22

The descriptive result on the Standard Ethical Practices used by the Project Managers and Team Members' in Table 2 revealed that significant percentage of the respondents agreed That Standard Practice reduce the rate of accident in building construction site (Mean=3.43), competency, efficiency and effectiveness of Project Manager and Team Members (Mean=3.32) and building quality (Mean=3.29). However, considering the overall average mean of the choices of the respondents on the adherence to Standard Ethical Practices, the mean value (Mean=3.22) indicates that many of the respondents think it is not sufficient enough and lots still need to be done to achieve a desired Standard Ethical Practice.

4.2 II. Effect of Project Management Ethical Practices on Building Performance Indicators (cost, time, quality, health and safety)

Table 3: Regression Summary Table

Building Performance Indicators	Beta	Std. Error	T	p
Cost	0.114	0.028	2.117	.034
Time	0.287	0.121	1.895	.037
Quality	0.403	0.252	4.211	.004
Health and Safety	0.180	0.207	4.877	.001

$F = 6.114$, $p<.05$

Independent Variable: PM Ethical Practices

Result presented in Table 3 on the effect of Project Management Ethical Practices on Building Performance indictors revealed that Project Management Ethical Practices significantly influence cost ($t=2.117$, $p<.05$), time ($t=1.895$, $p<.05$), quality ($t=4.211$, $p<.05$), and health and safety ($t=4.877$, $p<..05$) and interactively ($F=6.114$, $p<.05$). Hence, Project Management Ethical Practices plays significant role in influencing Building Performance indicators. This corroborates that of Clark (2017) who identified the need for Ethical Project Management Practices to achieve a desired Building Performance. It is also obvious from the result that health and safety as a Building Performance indictor seem to be a major factor that Ethical Practices influence. This is in tandem with that of Alumbugu et al., (2015) whose study revealed that Project Management Ethical Practices mainly influences health and safety since it affects other factors (quality, cost, and time).

5.0 CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

This study assessed the adherence of Project Managers and Team Members' to project management Ethical Practices and how it affects Building Performance indicators in Lagos State. The study discovered that the level of adherence to Ethical Practices (ethical honesty and accountability, and standard ethical practices) is generally not acceptable and below expectation or what is needed to achieve a sustainable Building Performance. It was also revealed that Ethical Practices significantly influence building indicators (time, cost, quality and health and safety) with more emphasis on health and safety. It is therefore recommended that Government should put adequate measures in place to ensure that all project managers and team members strictly adhere to the Ethical Practices and Standards required in the construction industry when constructing building projects and those property managers should ensure that they do not compromise the evidence of the adherence to Ethical Practices.

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