

An Exploratory Study on Managerial Ethics in Facility Management and Building Projects in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the impact of unethical delivery practices by professionals on facilities management and building projects in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the role of managerial ethics. An exploratory research approach was used, gathering data from literature reviews, expert opinions, and field observations. The study found that a lack of corporate social responsibility observance, corruption and bribery, contract inflation, and environmental pollution are the main sources of unethical practices in facilities management and building projects in Nigeria. To mitigate these practices, the study recommends the establishment of monitoring mechanisms by professional bodies and the provision of capacity-building training programmes for facilities and building project managers. This research provides valuable insights into the importance of ethical leadership and compliance in the construction industry in Nigeria. By highlighting the significance of adhering to ethical standards, the study contributes to the growing literature on managerial ethics and its impact on the construction industry, ultimately promoting sustainable development and improving the quality of building projects and facilities management.

Keywords: Buildings, Ethics, Facility Management, Projects, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The construction industry, particularly in Nigeria, is experiencing transformative and structural changes (Singer, 2020), and as such, it necessitates the establishment of robust ethical foundations. Unethical practices in the industry can have significant impacts on both the economy and human lives. Examples of unethical behaviors in the sector include collusive tendering, proprietary breach, bribery, environmental breach, substandard quality, and specifications (Abd, 2008; Ameh & Odusami, 2010). In addition, management in the construction sector has been criticized for not adhering to ethical standards, such as concealing construction errors and negligence. Thus, there is a need for a high level of professional and managerial conscience (Mohr *et al*, 2018) and leadership with good ethical behavior in the construction sector, as the project leader's influence on the team and project outcomes is significant (Mohr *et al.*, 2018).

Ethics, or moral philosophy, is a discipline that concerns what is morally good and bad, and right and wrong (Singer, 2020). It also applies to any system or theory of moral values or principles (Lőrinczy *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, ethics is not merely a set of rules to be followed blindly, but a guideline to lead one to behave with integrity (Lőrinczy and Sroka, 2017).

Facility Managers (FM) must act in a professional manner in all their dealings. However, it is interesting to speculate on what the nature of their ethics might be (Donaldson and Fafaliou, 2018; Grimshaw, 2017). As more FM professionals consider themselves to be "professional," ethical

awareness within the conduct of facilities management practice cannot be avoided (Grimshaw, 2019). Therefore, this paper presents the facts and challenges of managerial ethics in facility management and building projects in Nigeria.

Facilities Management and construction project

There are many definitions of facilities management and a whole range of approaches trying to make sense and conceptualize the understanding facilities management (FM) generally (Alex, 2014; Ayat, 2013). These approaches vary from environmental determinism, where the physical environment causes user behavior, to social constructivism, where the social context determines user behaviors (Dimitriades, 2019).

One approach to facilities management frequently used and, could be argued, closer to environmental determinism, describes FM as an integrated approach to operating, maintaining, improving, and adapting the buildings and infrastructure of an organization in order to create an environment that strongly supports the primary objectives of that organization (Paswan, 2017).

Salehi, Saeidinia, and Aghaei (2019) suggested that the facility managers must emphasize ethical behavior in all dealings with stakeholders and reduce or eliminate any condition likely to encourage unethical behavior in project work. Project Managers must be innovative, make expeditious decisions which require that they are grounded in strong ethical values such as integrity, respect, trust and fairness otherwise; it could lead to unethical behaviors. The project leader affects the project processes and performance by his decisions and behavior that are critical in every phase of the project (Sankar and Bhattacharya, 2018).

Facility management, therefore, is a term which is closely associated with building management (Alex, 2014). More broadly, facility management should not only be understood as general building management connected with everyday building operation but it should also include long term planning and focus on its users (Ayat, 2013). This should already be essential in the preparatory phase of investment process focused on construction of building itself.

Managerial Ethics

For project or facility managers, one of the basic components of their profession is the thought of ethics and social duty (Mohr *et al.*, 2018). There ought to be no contention amongst profound quality and great administration (Lőrinczy *et al.*, 2019). "It is imperative that project and facility managers direct their work in an ethical approach" (Fisher & Lovell, 2019). This citation affirms the extent of legitimate moral direct required by project and facility managers.

Construction contractors are additionally anticipated that would act in a moral way. A recent study of development professionals demonstrated the huge part moral direct plays in development contracting (Garret, 2018), an obvious reality considering that individuals working in the construction industry are twice as liable to manage noteworthy damage and five times more prone to be killed, than the normal for all enterprises (Jamnik, 2017). Being straightforward and practical is likewise said to be a principal part of professional respectability, particularly when making cases and gauges (Mohr *et al.*, 2018; Lőrinczy *et al.*, 2019). It is also true that the satisfaction of key project stakeholders is the overriding measure of project success (Jamnik, 2017). To achieve these critical decisions which frequently demand ethical sensitivity, clear-cut guidelines are required.

Previous Studies on Unethical Practices in Facility Management and Building Projects

Various researchers have identified several factors that contribute to unethical behavior among individuals and managers. For instance, Kerzner (2006) suggests that self-interest among managers can impinge on individual ethics and result in unethical behavior. Salehi *et al.* (2019) see the overbearing corporate emphasis on maximizing shareholders' value without regard to the effect of their actions on all stakeholders as one factor influencing unethical behavior.

Lőrinczy and Sroka (2017) suggest that unethical behavior has been observed among construction professionals, such as concealing construction errors, overpricing, colluding in tendering, fraud, negligence, substandard quality, and unethical professional practice. Fischer and Lovell (2019) further mention conflict of interest as one of the unethical issues that affect professional ethics and the discharge of obligations and responsibilities, which often manifest in white-collar crimes.

Mullerat (2019) opines that corruption forms a basis for unethical practice, while Paswan (2017) suggested that faulty research data, bribery, and monopoly are also major causes of unethical practices in facility management. Steele and Cleverdon (2020) agree with the findings of Paswan (2017) and Mullerat (2019) that theft, fraud, and so on are also pointers to unethical behaviors among facility managers.

These unethical behaviors have significant negative impacts on the well-being of the individual, the business, and the community (Mohr *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, facilities managers should adhere to the code of ethics for best global practices in the Construction Industry to minimize the occurrence of such unethical behaviors.

Rationale

The construction industry in Nigeria is currently undergoing significant changes and transformation, making it imperative for the industry to have strong ethical foundations to ensure its sustainability. Unethical practices in the industry not only have negative impacts on the economy but also on human lives (Usman *et al.*, 2021). Such practices include substandard quality and specifications, collusive tendering, conflict of interest, unfair conduct, proprietary breach, bribery, and environmental breaches (Goel and Ramanathan, 2017; Kraisomsuthaswee, 2019). In addition, unethical behaviors in facility management, such as concealing construction errors and negligence, have been criticized in the construction sector (Usman *et al.*, 2021).

To address these issues, there is a need for a high level of professional and managerial conscience, as well as leadership with good ethical behavior in the construction sector (Mullerat, 2019; Kraisomsuthaswee, 2019). Project leaders have a significant influence on the team and project outcomes, making it important for them to exhibit ethical behavior (Steele and Cleverdon, 2020). Unfortunately, the construction industry has been plagued with unethical behaviors by both construction company managers and workers (Usman *et al.*, 2021), resulting in embarrassing incidents and negative impacts on the industry's image, such as frequent building failures (Paswan, 2017). Common unethical practices in the industry, according to Paswan (2017), include bribery and corruption, contract inflation, environmental pollution, and lack of a clear corporate social responsibility policy. Given the above arguments, it is essential to conduct a study to promote the growth of ethical practices among facility managers for the future sustainability of the construction industry.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts an exploratory research design, which is commonly used to gain knowledge and collect data for solving managerial problems (Ojo-Fajuru and Adebayo, 2018). According to Windapo, Oboirein, and Omeife (2021), exploratory survey is a limited scope design that can be used independently. Furthermore, exploratory research is often used as a stand-alone design for providing information (Goel and Ramanathan, 2017). In this study, the exploratory design is employed as a stand-alone design to provide information on managerial ethics in facility management and building projects in Nigeria for sustainable practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Managerial Ethics in Facility Management and Construction Projects

Fisher and Lovell (2019) and Goel and Ramanathan (2017) suggest that ethics is a crucial aspect of a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR). Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on sustainability and environmental concerns in construction makes it necessary for facility managers and construction companies to apply ethical standards to their activities (Usman *et al.*, 2021).

According to Windapo *et al.* (2021) and Mullerat (2019), personal ethics are shaped by beliefs, values, personality, and the environment, while an organization's ethics must be instilled by its culture and leadership. Ethical failures in an organization can often result from poor promotion of ethical practices by managers, as individuals' ethics become overshadowed by the wider non-observance of professional ethics (Mohr *et al.*, 2018).

In 2003, the Society for Construction Law considered the issue of ethics in the construction industry. The organization's report highlighted ethical principles that should be followed by all construction industry professionals. Steele and Cleverdon (2020), Mullerat (2019), Salehi *et al.* (2019), and Sankar and Bhattacharya (2018) have all identified these ethical principles, which include honesty, fairness, fair reward, reliability, and objectivity. The Code defines unethical conduct as a deliberate or reckless disregard for ethical principles recognized as the practice in the profession.

Fundamental Principles of Ethical practices in the Code of Practice

The code of facilities management is grounded in ethical practice, professional excellence, responsibility to the public, and customer-centric practice (Windapo *et al.*, 2021; Mullerat, 2019). Usman *et al.* (2021) suggested that the code of professional and leadership ethics includes practicing ethics, where site managers should be guided by the highest standards of managerial honesty and integrity in all processes. Construction managers must act honestly, responsibly, ethically, and legally to promote the honor, reputation, and value of the profession. Website operators must avoid conduct or practices that mislead the public or create actual or perceived conflicts of interest. Site operators must respect the rights of others and must not discriminate on the axes of race, color, sex, marital status, religion, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation or knowingly violate any law. Site managers should strive to create a diverse workforce, and site owners must have a zero-tolerance policy for all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment and bullying.

ii). Professional Excellence

Construction Managers must adhere to a high standard of competence and qualification when providing their services. They are expected to contribute to the growth of the program, project, and construction management profession through the use of best practices, continued professional education, and by aiding in the development of the next generation of professionals.

iii). Responsibility to the Public

Construction Managers should hold paramount the health, safety, and welfare of the workplace and the public. Construction Managers should guide and aid in defining and meeting objectives for environmental sustainability and resiliency throughout a project's life cycle.

iv). Client-Centered Practice

Construction Managers should ethically represent the best interests of the owner or client, as consistent with the code of practice.

Benefit of Ethical Practices in Facility Management and Building Projects in Nigeria

Some of the advantages which can result from being ethical in facility management and building project as suggested by various work by (Salehi, *et al.*, 2019, Mohr, *et al.*, 2018, Garret, 2018 and Sujova and Mazinekova, 2019; Singer 2020) include:

- a) improved public image, relationships, reputation and increase in the range of customers which will lead the business to gain greater profit.
- b) Moreover, the ambiance of the workplace can improve and the business can prosper more rapidly through employee growth as the employee motivation will also increase due to having pride in their work for being ethical.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that honesty, fairness, equitable compensation, reliability, integrity, and ethical practices are key factors that influence managerial ethics in facility management and building projects. Therefore, project managers must agree to contracts with the objective of fulfilling all requirements in accordance with the employer's needs and best interests. Construction facility managers should not attempt to influence the actions of consultants or officials through any form of encouragement or engage in any unfair or unethical practices.

It is recommended that all stakeholders in the construction industry develop both their managerial and technical competencies and ethics in their respective areas of operation within the industry or facility management. Relevant professional bodies should ensure that no one is tempted into exploring opportunities for unethical acts. Furthermore, the establishment of strict monitoring mechanisms to prevent unethical practices in facilities management and building projects cannot be overemphasized. Capacity building courses should also be implemented to enable facilities managers and building project managers to stay up to date with their professional ethics, which is crucial for long-term sustainability.

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