

LITERATURE ON THEORY AND PRACTICE ON UNETHICAL PRACTICES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF PROJECTS: A CASE OF AN EMERGING ECONOMY

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Abstract

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The construction of projects is mostly symbolised by the extraordinary levels of unethical practices and this has ruined the image of the industry. The delivery of good quality infrastructure projects in some emerging economies is continuously, disrupted because of unethical practices. This paper was, initiated to identify the most dominant unethical practices in the construction of projects, using most recent and comprehensive literature ranging from 2011 to 2017. Twenty unethical practices in the construction of projects were, identified. From this, the study observed that the most dominant unethical practices are corruption, bribery and collusive tendering. The least unethical practices revealed by this study are the lack of safety, overstatement of capacity and falsification of experience. Findings indicate that in order to redesign the future landscape of the industry, there is need to educate the workforce on the effects of unethical practices as well as the need to implement stronger policies. Based on these findings, further empirical studies are necessary. This article also presents recent challenges and trends of unethical behaviour that needs acknowledgement in order to assist the construction industry. In conclusion, this study proposes twelve possible solutions that could assist the construction community in the reduction of unethical practices.

Keywords: Construction Projects, Ethics, Unethical Conduct

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Transparency International (2011), the construction industry has one of the highest levels of unethical practices due to corruption amongst other industries. Corruption lures undesirable publicity to the industry, and it is one of the many unethical practices that is, experienced within the construction industry. It therefore, has permanent unfavorable effects on the individuals in the industry whether they are involved in corruption or not, the society and the industry at large. Unethical practices have a number of harmful effects on the individual, company and the industry, and these include blackmail, criminal prosecutions, fines, blacklisting and reputational risk (Adnan, Hashim, Mohd and Ahmad, 2012). As mentioned earlier, the industry is the most corrupt in the world and perhaps embracing tactics from other trades on this issue may be a necessity in solving the problem. However, the reason why the industry is the most corrupt may be, attributed to many factors such as

the uniqueness, and the many processes, which occur specifically to this industry and leads to unethical practices (Ahiaga-Dagbui and Smith, 2014). Therefore, introducing other industries' strategies might not be relevant. According to Frynas (2010), the inducements for unethical practices are highly lucrative and this is a major reason that might be extremely tempting to some employees, and thereby making it more difficult to deal with the problem. There is accord in the industry on the detrimental effect caused by an unethical practices, and this has resulted in some companies adopting and composition code of ethics in attempt to resolve unethical issues. However, despite the available codes of conducts, unethical practices among participants in the construction industry is on the increase (Matthew, 2014) and has become a rampant problem all over the world.

Researchers all over the world in different fields have attempted to find out the many issues that relate to unethical practices. For example, unethical practices have been identified across all

industries and have been, reported in the food services, higher education, oil, gas, insurance, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and media (Woods, Christodoulidou, Yavas and Vardiabasis, 2013; Ahamefule, 2014; Gupta, 2017; Prakash and Gupta, 2013; Yeslam, Burmeister and Weckert, 2015 and Owusu, 2011) amongst others. However, unethical practices are more prevalent and on the increase in the construction industry. Various studies on the subject matter comprise of, ethics and its impact on quality (Abdul-Rahman, Wang and Yap 2010), contractors' viewpoint (Adnan et al., 2012), effects of unethical practices (Inuwa, Usman and Dantong, 2015) and consequences (Moagi, 2015) amongst others. Other studies attempted to provide ways to improve ethical practices in construction (Hawkins, 2013; Beeri, Dayan, Vigoda-Gadot, and Erner, 2013; and Spielthener, 2015). However, there has been limited number of studies that have managed to identify the most dominant unethical practice in the construction industry. Therefore, it creates a gap between theory, practice, and a challenge in formulating relevant and better codes of ethics. This gap between theory and practice on ethics is increasing and has therefore, compelled the initiation for this study.

1.1. Significance of the paper

The purpose of this article is to identify unethical practices that exist in the construction of projects. Therefore, this article intends to contribute to the body of knowledge by identifying the most dominant unethical practices in the construction of projects with reference to emerging economies and South African situation. Findings from this study will help construction companies in emerging economies assist to develop and implement proper policies and systems that scale up to any type of unethical practices in the long, run. This is because it is extremely essential for practitioners to stay up to date in this field in both the research and implementation of ethics.

1.2. Organisation of the study

The rest of this article's sections have, been arranged in the following sequence: literature on unethical practices, the research methodology, the results and findings, the discussions, challenges and trends and lastly the conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The construction of projects embodies different types of stakeholders that have diverse levels of ethical consciousness, education and adherence. According to Adnan et al. (2012), the industry is distinctive and has a multifaceted nature that provides for the perfect atmosphere for various ethical dilemmas. However, depending on the circumstances, and the moral values of employees these ethical dilemmas may create unethical decisions. According to Oyewobi, Ganiyu, Oke, Olawo and Shittu (2011), employee's unethical practices have escalated persistently overtime because moral values have drastically declined. Therefore, this has also affected employees in the construction industry and resulted in negative

reputation of the industry (Babatunde and Pheng, 2015). Some unethical practices in construction of projects are, deliberated below.

Review of related empirical literature: Nawaz and Ikram (2013) examined unethical practices in the Pakistan construction industry using survey questionnaires. Nawaz and Ikram (2013)'s study revealed that the lack of education in ethics, dishonesty, bribery, and unreasonable behaviour to be the key unethical issues, and recommended high quality training to address the problems.

In Australia, Stramarcos and Cattell (2013) established that the unethical practices of item pricing was a wide spread phenomenon in the construction industry, and that other researchers had viewed it as an unethical practice. However, Stramarcos and Cattell (2013) argued that item pricing was not unethical in other industries, but an unethical practice in construction, This could be because since, the industry already has the highest rate of corruption and other unethical practices than other industries this particular practice is viewed undesirable, which is somehow biased to the industry. In Sweden, unethical conduct was, reported to cause significant impact on the quality of constructed projects (Matthew, 2014). Since, quality is one of the major factors for project success as well as a competitive strategy (Mallawaarachchi and Senaratine, 2015) therefore the impact on quality affects other factors such as cost and time. In China, Le, Shan, Chan and Hu (2014) found that poor professional ethical standards seemed to be the most influential ethical issues in the construction industry. Asamoah and Dercardi-Nelson (2014) discovered that in Ghana, unethical practices, such as corruption, and that politician occasionally prejudice nepotism and partial conduct. In India, unethical practices in the metropolitan home market was extremely persistent (Mukhopadhyay, 2014), and lucrative because a large number of people required accommodation nearer to their workplaces to avoid high transportation costs. Mathenge (2012) uncovered high corruption activities in the construction of buildings and of roads in Kenya. In Nigeria, corruption is so rampant such that a 10% kick back on total project cost is a compulsory payment (Usman et al., 2012). According to Usman et al. (2012), corruption in Nigeria has gone to an extent where by professionals such as doctors requested for bribes in order to treat patients in public hospitals. Another Nigerian study by Inuwa et al. (2015) observed that, the exposure to frequent job maintenance in the construction industry was the major consequence of not adhering to professional ethics and therefore resulted in corruption. The study advocated for more openness and responsibility in contract management as highly effective remedies for curbing unethical professional practices. A Malaysian study by Abdul-Rahman et al. (2010) revealed that about 74% of the construction participants in the industry were, engrossed in many unethical practices. In South Africa, Bowen, Edwards and Cattell (2012) revealed corruption to be the most prominent of all unethical practices in the industry. This revelation was as a result, of many court cases of construction corruption, bribery and collusion that was uncovered from the construction of the 2010 world cup stadiums. Five major construction companies namely, Aveng, Murray &

Roberts, Group Five, Wilson Bayly Holmes-Ovcon (WBHO) and Basil Read, were the major contractors in the building of the main stadiums and other various related infrastructure projects, from which these companies made sizeable unfair profits from unethical practices. However, all five companies were subsequently fined a total of R1.5 billion (US\$152 million) (Cottle, Capela and Meirinho, 2013).

It is therefore, obvious from the above dialogue that unethical practices are an enormous challenge for the construction world. This is, worsened because the industry is multifaceted and chaotic, becoming even harder to honestly, work in it. According to Adnan et al. (2012), there are countless unethical practices in every stage of a construction project. For example, a bribe maybe requested so that a project can take off, another one when the project has to pass a certain stage for inspection, addition to that another for other stages and the list is endless. Another example is when partakers in a construction are regularly faced with all types of pressures to accept pleasant gifts in exchange for unethical practices. However, the problem is that participants in construction of projects do not always act in the way they should, since matters are rarely black or white (Hawkins, 2013). This problem of ambiguous matters can be credited to many a number of issues and reasons. According to Hawkins (2013), weak governance, regulatory systems and institutional capacity are the reasons that attribute to the failure of employees to act

accordingly. Therefore, there is a need to effectively, assist partakers in matters concerning ethics and to instill acceptable conduct in them in order to avoid unethical practices and the many consequences that come with unethical practices. On the other hand, there are several reasons and effects of engaging in unethical practices for the construction stakeholders.

A company's success and sustainability maybe negatively affected when unethical strategies and policies put in place fail to curb unethical practices (Ukessays, 2017). However, in order to curb unethical practices the root causes need to, ascertained first. To ascertain these practices companies will have to depend on the most current research and development for answers on unethical practices. The problem though is that many researchers have not completely agreed on the causes of unethical behaviour and practices. For example, Ogundele, Hassan, Idris and Aliu (2013), considered unethical behaviour as an integral part of human culture. Kaynak and Sert (2012) believed that unethical practices are, caused by certain moral values. However, Hoyk and Hersey (2008) argued that psychological traps triggered unethical practices. These disagreements in the root causes of unethical practices do nothing much in assisting construction companies in eliminating unethical practices. Nonetheless, some of the reasons why employees engage in unethical practices are summarised in table 1.

Table 1. Causes of unethical conduct

<i>Cause of unethical practice</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Source</i>
Empathy and indirect responsibility	Experimental research was used to identify causes of unethical practices	Hoyk and Hersey (2008)
Mandatory quieted and unfairness	Kang (2010) explored the linkage between ethical conflict and job satisfaction. 105 participants answered questions from an online survey	Kang (2010)
Gaps or loopholes	Ermongkonchai (2010) employed interviews among 8 human resource managers in order to identify the causes of unethical practices. Tsegba, Uppa and Tyoakosu (2015) utilized survey design with a sample of 212 respondents. Both authors came to the same conclusion.	Ermongkonchai (2010), Tsegba, Uppa and Tyoakosu (2015)
Insufficient ethical education	55 structured interviews were employed by Abdul-Rahman, Wang and Saimon (2010) to identify unethical practices in construction industry. The study managed to develop two models of disciplinary procedures to deal with unethical conduct, mainly for serious and for minor offences.	Abdul-Rahman, Wang and Saimon (2011)
Economic downturn	Refer to previous above	Abdul-Rahman et al. (2011)
Culture	Ermongkonchai (2010)- see above Oke (2016) adopted survey design and structured questionnaires to collect data on causes of unethical practices from respondents Appelbaum, Deguire, and Lay, (2005)- Literature review Hershfield, Cohen and Thompson (2011)- used a survey 147 participants	Ermongkonchai (2010), Oke (2016), Appelbaum, Deguire, and Lay, (2005), Hershfield, Cohen and Thompson (2011), Al-Sweity and Enshassi (2013)
Weakening of self-control	Belle and Cantarelli (2017) - used a three-step procedure and 172 most recent articles on unethical behavior.	Belle and Cantarelli (2017), Al-Sweity (2013)
Lack of training	Refer to previous above	Abdul-Rahman et al. (2011)
Fierce competition	Refer to previous above	Abdul-Rahman et al. (2011)
Insufficient legislative enforcement and unhealthy management	Abdul-Rahman et al. (2011) --Refer to previous above Yeslam et al (2015) applied a survey monkey of approximately 18 600 members was used to investigate the causes of unethical practices. This was followed by in-depth interviews with 43 participants. The third and final phase of data collection involved focus groups.	Arain (2008), Abdul-Rahman et al. (2011), Yeslam, Burmeister and Weckert (2015)
Construction industry culture	Refer to previous above	Abdul-Rahman et al. (2011)
Unrealistic targets and fixed deadlines	Nkundabanyanga, Mpamizo Omagor and Ntayi (2011) employed a cross-sectional and correlational method to find what the unethical practices are in Uganda. They employed a questionnaire on 169 marketers from five cosmetic companies.	Nkundabanyanga, Mpamizo Omagor and Ntayi (2011)

<i>Cause of unethical practice</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Source</i>
Poor communication	Refer to previous above	Yeslam, Burmeister and Weckert (2015)
Pressures and social influences	Oke (2016)– Refer to previous above	Oke (2016), Omolewu (2008), Belle and Cantarelli (2017)
	Omolewu (2008) employed literature to identify unethical practices. Belle and Cantarelli (2017) – Refer to previous above	
Greed and Poverty	Refer to previous above Usman et al. (2013) selected 140 participants through stratified random sampling technique Inuwa et al. (2015) employed explorative and questionnaire survey methods to obtained data from literatures, interviews and construction professionals on unethical practices.	Oke (2016), Usman et al. (2013), Belle and Cantarelli (2017), Inuwa et al. (2015)
Political influence	Refer to previous above	Oke (2016), Inuwa et al. (2015)
Lack of high executive control	Refer to previous above	Oke (2016)
Weak levels of supervision	Refer to previous above	Oke (2016), Usman et al. (2013)
Lack of transparency	Refer to previous above	Oke (2016)
Ethical framework	Three sources of data was employed by these authors which comprises of: general literature review, design survey and ethics Interviews with 26 professionals. A documentation study provided an overview of approaches chosen among 25 major organisations. Ten contractors were selected a top 100-list	<u>Lohne</u> , <u>Svalestuen</u> , <u>Knotten</u> , <u>Drevland</u> , and <u>Lædre</u> , (2017)
Over close relationships	Literature review	Ling and Tran (2012)
Absence of deterrence	Web-based questionnaire survey was utilised to come to this conclusion.	Bowen et al. (2012)
Self-justification	Refer to previous above	Belle and Cantarelli (2017)
Egocentrism	Refer to previous above	Belle and Cantarelli (2017)

Source: Author's compilation

Each cause of unethical practice has a negative impact on the project, and to the stakeholders of the project who are both internal and external to the project itself. The impact of unethical practices is devastating to all project stakeholders. For example, some unethical practices have taken a high toll such as the loss of lives, financial and redirection of resources. (Azhar, Selph and Maqsood, 2011). Concurring with Azhar, Selph and Maqsood (2011), Adnan et al. (2012) went further to include factors such as economic damage, intimidation, criminal prosecutions, penalties and blacklisting. Other adverse effects of unethical practices on construction project performance include but are not limited to the following; desertion and breakdown of buildings, clashes, lawsuits, poor workmanship, underutilisation of resources and susceptibility to regular maintenance (Adebanjo, 2012; Oyewobi et al., 2011; Ayodele, Ogunbode, Ariyo and Alabi 2011; Inuwa, 2015). Therefore, construction companies may feel all these effects in either short, medium or long term depending on other variables. According to Adnan et al. (2012), in the long term, the effect of unethical practices on construction companies' include reputational damage and the company's capability to entice new businesses. It is therefore, vital for construction companies to circumvent such damages through proper preparation in advance and by managing unethical practices accordingly.

Curbing unethical practices in the projects should, be emphasised at all times, as it is beneficial for construction companies. In this regard, companies should be able to turn down businesses if it is impossible to work there without engaging in some form of corruption (Ho, 2011). Employees should, be trained and systems put in place to curb unethical practices. To achieve this, project managers need to be attentive in reviewing controls for combating new and old types of unethical practices in order to curb all kinds of unethical

practices and for harmony to prevail in the construction industry. According to Adebanjo (2012), several companies have legislated against unethical practices and others have developed and adopted codes of ethics (CoE) in an attempt to address the issues of unethical behavior. However, despite having CoE's employees in the construction industry still experience high levels of unethical behaviours either directly or indirectly. This might be because for many construction firms, there is simply no way to avoid unethical behaviour because it has become so persistent and is now part of construction.

The persistence of unethical practices in construction of projects signifies an unresolved problem. A number of studies have also weighed in on the reasons for the persistence of unethical practices in construction. For example, Le et al. (2014) discovered that companies that had insufficient penalties, lack of meticulous supervision, close relationships with contracting parties and project complexity increased the chances for unethical practices to take place. On the other hand, Usman et al. (2013) revealed that not reprimanding corruption and the availability of loopholes in project monitoring were some of the factors that influenced the persistence of unethical professional practices in construction projects. While Al-kasim, Søreide and Williams (2013) uncovered levels of contestation and poor governance as the bases of continued unethical practices. Al-kasim, Søreide and Williams (2013)'s findings were in agreement with Wells (2015) who went further to add weak capacity to the growing list of factors that promote unethical practices. Despite all this knowledge, unethical practices persist as reflected in Table 2, which is a summary of identified unethical practices encountered in the construction industry. However, it is imperative to firstly, identify unethical practices so that it may

assist employees in making ethical decisions when faced with unethical situations.

Literature revealed a number of unethical practices that were identified from different countries, projects and using different

methodologies. These unethical practices are, tabled, in table 2, and reveals the most common unethical practices that have been experienced in construction of projects between the periods of 2011 to 2017.

Table 2. Unethical practices in construction projects between the periods of 2011 and 2017

Unethical practices in construction	Sources															
	Ho (2011)	Adnan et al. (2012)	McCarthy (2012)	Bowen, Edwards and Cattell (2012)	Usman et al. (2013)	Nawaz and Ikram (2013)	Al-sweity (2013)	Matthew (2014)	Asamoah and Decardii-Nelson (2014)	Adjei, Sarfo and Sam (2015)	Wells (2015)	Inuwa, Usman and Dantong (2015)	Babalola and Ojo (2015)	Babatunde and Pheng (2015)	Katun, Idris, Zakari & Richard (2016)	Gupta, (2017)
Negligence						X	X	X	X	X						X
Conflict of interest	X						X	X	X							X
Financial accounting integrity						X	X	X								
Fraud	X					X	X	X								
Corruption				X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X
Bribery	X			X	X	X	X	X	X						X	X
Unfair conduct		X				X	X	X						X		
Embezzlement								X								
Harm of environmental							X									
Cover pricing		X								X						X
Bid cutting		X								X						X
Poor documentation		X										X				
Late and short payments		X			X											
Lack of safety					X											
Bureaucratic government		X														X
Collusive tendering			X				X	X	X	X					X	
Overstatement of capacity		X														
Falsification of experience		X														
Falsification of qualifications to secure work		X														

Source: Author's compilation

Table 2 illustrates twenty unethical practices. Some of these studies' findings shows lack of consensus however, some of the studies shows consensus on the opinion that unethical practices are unhealthy for business. Literature review revealed a number of unethical practices that occur in the construction of projects. Table 2 reveals information extracted from literature between the periods of 2011 and 2017. The following is an analysis of each unethical practice that was identified in table 2.

Negligence- five out of sixteen studies in this study identified negligence as a form of unethical practice. Negligence has been identified by the law handbook of 2013, as the failure to take reasonable caution in order to evade loss, injury or harm. The finding of negligence as an unethical practice in this current study insinuates that if construction participants abide by the rules of construction, negligence could be avoided. Therefore, strong supervision is, needed in order to ensure that employees are not negligent in their assigned duties. This aspect of unethical practice can be unlearned through training and the provision of information to employees. However, Bowen et al. (2007) mentioned that negligence arises mainly from poor documentation, and therefore, this makes poor

documentation a factor that also needs special attention. In this study, poor documentation has, been mentioned by two out of sixteen studies as an unethical practice. This conclusion implies that there, are some, unethical practices that are interlinked and the effect of one factor can have a domino effect on other factors.

Conflict of interest - according to Adnan et al. (2012) conflict of interest is a situation where, a person is faced with professional or personal interest that make it difficult for the person to fulfil their duties. Five out of sixteen studies branded this aspect as an issue related to unethical practice. This result suggests that if policies that deal with conflict of interest are in place and employees sign documents in this regard after understanding consequences very well, this unethical practice could be, eliminated.

Financial accounting integrity - three out of sixteen studies recognised this as a characteristic of unethical practices. Integrity cannot be taught but, maybe enforced through consequence management. The occurrence of financial accounting integrity implies that the type of employees employed are not vetted enough to eliminate this and that there are weak systems in place that can be manipulated. This factor is similar to the embezzlement of funds,

which has been, identified in this study by one out of sixteen studies.

Fraud - can occur as, a result of less self-control and self-justification. It occurs when deception is, used to gain a dishonest advantage, which is often financial, over another person (ActionFraud 2016). Four out of sixteen studies classified this as an unethical practice in the construction of projects. Fraud is, closely linked with the type of individuals employed by the organisation and the background checks that are, conducted before employing people. This outcome alludes that it can be, eradicated by top managers through policies that can detect fraud before employing individuals as well as after employing them.

Corruption - nine out of sixteen studies pinpointed corruption as an unethical practice. This is, identified as the most dominant of all the twenty unethical practices found in this study. Corruption takes two main forms, either its petty or grand (Transparency International, 2015). However, whatever form it takes or occurs corruption is also difficult to report because some of it is highly sensitive and may result in loss of lives. To eliminate corruption, employees should, be trained and educated on the consequences of corruption organisations should implement policies that will force employees to refrain from corrupt activities. The dominance of corruption, insinuates that weak systems are in place and that the justice system is can be, manipulated.

Bribery - seven out sixteen studies found bribery to be an unethical practice. This observation indicates that it might be difficult to do business in certain areas if there is no bribery. Well written company policies would assist employees on how to, deal with issues of bribery. This is because there are times when it has to be, done otherwise the company may lose business. However, the problem is that once top management gives it, it will be a bad example for employees who are being, forced to act ethically.

Unfair conduct - can be, found in competition and business practices (Adnan et al., 2012). In this study, six out of sixteen studies unearthed this feature to be an unethical practice. This discovery suggests that by involving themselves in unfair conduct, companies would want to gain advantage over their competitors at all cost. This can be, eliminated through country laws, good business practices as well as companies that have control and power to eliminate unfair business conduct.

Harm of environmental - one out of sixteen studies. Companies that do not abide by the environmental policies of where they operate find themselves harming the environment through many different ways. This revelation indicates that companies that engage in such acts disregard the law and set bad example for upcoming companies. This type of behaviour can be, eliminated through harsher punishments and fines for those that break the law.

Late and short payments - this unethical practice affects those who are receiving the payments and might lead to bad relationships amongst the parties to a contract. Two out of sixteen studies stated this factor. However, good and proper financial management techniques can assist in

eliminating this unethical practice. The occurrence of this factor indicates that the company has incompetent and inexperienced financial managers. This can be, corrected through good employment practices as it is within the company's control.

Bureaucratic government - this issue is, acknowledged by two out of sixteen studies. Companies might not have control over this factor but, to compile with the law. This revelation indicates that if the government officials are corrupt, and nothing is done about it, it enforces companies to do the same whether they want to or not, in order to survive.

Collusive tendering - is defined by Khumalo, Nqojela and Njisane (2010) as an act whereby opponents successfully inflate prices in markets through soliciting tenders. It is also known as bid rigging or cutting, which has been mentioned by three out of sixteen studies as a form of unethical practice, while six out of sixteen studies mentioned collusive tendering. This result suggests that these two factors are similar and are, used interchangeably but at the same time occur less frequently when compared to corruption and bribery that have higher number of studies identifying them as unethical practices in construction.

One out of sixteen studies identified overstatement of capacity, falsification of experience and qualifications to secure work and lack of safety - each of these factors. This implies that these four issues have very low unethical activities and practices being, used in construction.

As detected from the literature review, the construction projects are an inherently risky to undertake and unethical practices have become part of construction. The overview of past findings as indicated in table 2, shows how widespread unethical practices are in the construction projects and the type of the unethical practices that are taking occurring. However, according to the table, corruption, bribery and bureaucratic government are the unethical practices that are mostly, found in recent years.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desktop approach to identify the most dominant unethical practices in construction projects. Google Scholar was, used to search for relevant literature, which was restricted to peer-reviewed articles. Databases employed for the search comprise of the ASCE Library, Business Source Complete, and the Academic Search Premier. The keywords for the search included the following: construction projects, unethical conduct, ethics in construction, behaviour in construction. These words have, also been utilised in other articles on ethical related issues in several journals.

Well-regarded construction papers in the area of ethics were, explored. Some of these journals included the Journal of Business Ethics, the Journal of Architecture Engineering and Construction, Construction Management and Economics (CME), as well as the ASCE Journal of Construction Engineering and Management (CEM). Fifty published articles ranging from 2005 to 2017 from different journals related to ethics in the construction industry were analysed. From these, only 35 articles reported directly on ethics. From these thirty-five

articles, twenty unethical practices were identified. The next section presents this study's findings on unethical conduct in construction of projects.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The exhibition of this article's findings are, discussed in this section. This article employed a broad analysis of literature to identify unethical conduct in construction of projects. Table 1 depicts the causes of unethical conduct and table 2 illustrates the actual unethical practices in the construction industry. Table 2 summarises the unethical practices that were identified from the period of 2011 until 2017. The results of this article are, related only to the identification of unethical practices.

The unethical practices identified in literature between 2011 and 2017 have been, recorded in Table 2. These comprise of the following; negligence, conflict of interest, financial accounting integrity, fraud, corruption, bribery, unfair conduct, embezzlement, violation of environmental ethics, cover pricing, bid cutting, poor documentation, late and short payments, lack of safety, unfair treatment of contractors, collusive tendering, overstatement of capacity, falsification of experience, falsification of qualifications to secure work and bureaucratic government. The unethical practice in each study is marked with an x, and the number of occurrences of each practice countered to determine the most influential practice. The review of literature acknowledged corruption as the most dominant unethical practice in construction of projects amongst other practices. Therefore, corruption accounts for most of the unethical practices in construction, considering the results of table 2. This means that it can occur at any stage or phase of the construction process. As illustrated in Table 2, out of the 16 studies on ethics, nine highlighted that corruption was the most dominant unethical practice in the construction industry. Thus, the most dominant unethical practice is, discussed below.

Corruption: is the most dominant unethical practice and a growing challenge for the construction industry as evidenced by the findings of this study. This is sustained by the World Bank (2011)'s investigations, which found that infrastructure projects are intrinsically exposed to corruption throughout their lifecycles. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2008) corruption, is the misappropriation of public power, or authority for private benefit through aspects such as bribery, extortion, influence peddling and nepotism. Corruption maybe divided into two categories, namely petty corruption and grand corruption. Petty corruption refers to everyday abuse of entrusted power by low and mid-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens. Grand corruption refers to acts of corruption committed by relevant institutions such as government and courts (Transparency International, 2015). Concerning the two categories of corruption, mentioned above, petty corruption is the type of corruption that is commonly and extremely rife in the construction of projects.

Corruption causes the most negative impact on the project regardless of the stage of the project lifecycle in which it occurs. Some of the negative

impacts of corruption activities include; overruns, poor quality (Wells, 2015), low returns (Lehne, Shapiro and Eynde, 2016), distorted priorities, and neglected maintenance (Garcia, 2015) amongst others. However, corruption might be difficult to quantify, and impossible to arrive at plausible and accurate figures. Nevertheless, the World Bank (2011) revealed that corruption contributed between 10 to 30% of losses in the world economy or more than \$5 trillion a year in the construction industry. Therefore, in order to be more ethical, the industry must specifically consider corruption but this does not mean that the rest of the unethical practices must or should, be, ignored.

As mentioned earlier, corruption has, been, revealed as the most influential unethical practice and bribery and collusive tendering follow it. While the least dominant unethical practice are lack of safety, overstatement of capacity, falsification of experience and falsification of qualifications to secure work. The findings of this study echoes the observation from the following studies: Gupta (2017), Katun et al. (2016), Babatunde, and Pheng (2015) amongst others who also identified corruption as one of the most dominant unethical practices in the construction of projects. However, the findings of this study are also inconsistent with the findings of Adnan et al. (2012) and McCarthy (2012) amongst those, who did not find corruption as the most dominant unethical practices in construction. Therefore, corruption should be recognised, and acted upon by every construction company. Although, some construction companies do recognise that corruption is a challenge and have put CoE in place in order to assist employees in making good decisions in this regard, other have not managed to do so effectively. The problem is that some of the CoE have not assisted in eradicating most of the unethical practices completely. This has resulted in the performance of construction projects being continuously and seriously affected by unethical practices that are persistent and have become challenging to control. Some of these challenges are, summarised below:

- Ethics is an individual choice and therefore, should not, be forced on people however, it can be taught and those who want to change will do so when they are ready to do so.

- Getting all employees to be on board on issues of ethics at the same time is a challenge since people have different goals and morals. Others might be unethical to an extent that they can either, be stopped nor do not know how to stop.

- Dealing with unethical practices needs the employment of more resources and companies are not always in a position to spend extra resources.

- The corrupt will always find loopholes in the system so, as to use to their advantage therefore, project managers should keep up to date with newfound ways. However, this might be costly for the companies involved.

- Currently no tools that can manage to measure accurately and track unethical practices in construction.

- The lack of transparency and as well as complexities in projects create challenges in identifying and bringing down corruption. For example, if one employee is in charge of all the stages from the beginning to the end by themselves

without the involvement of other employees, it will give that employee an opportunity to be corrupt and be able to cover their tracks at the same time. Therefore, job rotation and having more than one employee taking charge of a particular phase can eradicate some unethical practices.

- Increasing employees' wages and salaries to fight unethical practices such as bribery maybe recognised as a good initiative however, it is not a guaranteed that corruption will be, eradicated by doing this.

- When corruption is acceptable in business dealings by those that an organisation is involved in business with. The dilemma becomes whether to continue the business or not. If the company continues business with such a partner then employees will have not learnt good ethical behaviour from their leaders. However, if the company does not pay a bribe it losses the business. This is a big challenge that companies should decide on which course of action is better for them.

- Recovering what has been lost through unethical practices can be a big challenge for companies. However, it can also be a revelation and a deterrent for other employees.

Unethical practices will continue to be custom for certain employees instead of an exception in the industry if these challenges are, not attended to and given the priority it deserves. Therefore, there will always be a gap between the theory and the practice and hence, managers need to be, well, informed at all times of the trends and challenges that exist. Different trends have emerged over the years in the construction of projects. According to table 2, corruption showed a strong front from 2012 and grew until it worsened in 2016 and 2017. Previously, corruption had been, overtaken by factors such as cover pricing and poor documentation among other issues. Another observable trend shows that from 2013 to 2015, there was a larger number of unethical practices that were, experienced compared to the previous years.

However, the high trend of corruption and bribery that emerged in 2012 is gradually rising in the construction industry as evidenced in table 2. The persistence of unethical practices is due to opportunities for unethical behaviour, which is a huge problem in construction and an indication of weakness on both the employee and management. For the employee, the companies that fail to deal with unethical behaviour because of two reasons, firstly the company itself does not care to assist employees. secondly the employee themselves are beyond help or assistance no matter what management does. For management, it is because company polices are weak and no training being, provided, for employees. Therefore, this makes it a very big challenge for the industry to combat as long as these opportunities exist.

On the other hand, corruption is no longer acceptable in most construction companies because of increased media reports on corruption. Most companies want to keep a good image therefore, they attempt to do so by enforcing CoE. The pressure being, put on decision makers to ensure transparency is also growing and makes a huge impact in combating unethical practices. This can be,

witnessed through the creation of anonymous, whistle blowing systems implemented by many companies. The movement towards centralising procurement is another trend showing that organisations are tightening up to curb corruption.

5. LIMITATIONS AND IDEAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This article might possess some limitations, is grounded purely on a literature review, and this possesses limitations. For example, Tsaurai (2015) found that there are difficulties when using literature based review studies. However, it offers a starting point and a basis for further empirical investigations and validation within the context of different emerging economies in the construction industry. Although the research objectives of this paper were, accomplished, some additional research direction was, identified in the process. This includes the following:

- A detailed study can, be conducted to evaluate the unethical practices on a specific type of construction project, such as a highway, a dam or a building in order to find out if unethical practices differ with project type.

- Another study can, be conducted to examine at what stage of a construction project does the most unethical practices take place.

- A detailed study can, also be conducted to assess the amount of losses that is attributed to unethical practices of each project type.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main aim of this article was to identify the most dominant unethical practice in the construction of projects. Unethical practices across construction projects all over the world were analysed and the reasons for unethical practices were, listed. Twenty unethical practices were uncovered from literature, with corruption leading the list and lack of safety being the least dominant practice. Some of the studies that investigated ethics in the construction industry included, but are not limited to, Inuwa, Usman and Dantong (2015), Asamoah and Decardi-Nelson (2014), Nawaz and Ikram (2013) as well as Bowen, Edwards and Cattell (2012) were analysed.

This study also unpacked and debated on challenges and recent trends in unethical practices in construction of projects. The major issue found in this study was that about 74% of construction participants in the industry were, engrossed in many unethical practices. It was, also revealed that from these many unethical practices, corruption was the most dominant of the twenty unethical practices found in construction. This is supported by the recent trends that indicate corruption as increasing (see table 2) in the past few years. The possible reasons in recent trends may be, attributed to greed and poverty (table 1). Literature also revealed that corruption had become uncontrollable and a major challenge for all construction projects. A review of current literature further shows that in some locations corruption was a way of doing business and therefore, acceptable and demanded.

Taking into account the discoveries made by this paper, numerous policy mix suggestions are applicable to emerging economies. In addition to

this, the ongoing disagreements on unethical practices in construction projects need to be resolved. Some recommendations are, suggested as follows:

- Provide CoE policy to all employees, giving clarity to all possible grey areas of the policy.
- Leaders should be exemplary and focus on promoting ethical behaviour by dealing with those issues that they can control.
- Deeper background check up on employees is required with specific attention to morality before hiring employees should, be initiated.
- Educate and train employees on ethics on an ongoing basis.
- Management should avoid pressurising employees and create a good relationship, where employees are heard and assisted, when they need, private assistance.
- Continuously inform employees of the consequences of being unethically and that they are, being monitored at all times.
- Rewarding those employees who are ethical at all times can encourage ethical behaviour for those who struggle to be ethical.
- Practical internship for employees to find out how they react to unethical practices, as well as secretly testing employees.

- Update surveillance systems and improve on all tracking and monitoring techniques. According to Welsh and Ordenez (2014) employees who know that they are, being monitored tend not to engage in unethical practices.

- Install tighter security procedures and provide employees with safe whistle blowing platforms

- The formation of anti-corruption teams or construction ombudsman

- Encourage job rotation and for employees to take leave rottenly.

In conclusion, a thorough understanding of human behaviour is of utmost importance and should be a priority before implementing any of the above recommendations. This study also commends construction companies to apply effective strategies that impede employees from being tempted to committing unethical acts. This article contributed to the literature on unethical practices affecting construction projects. It is, anticipated that this article's findings will lead to solutions in managing ethics in the construction projects. However, more research in the area of education and avoidance of unethical practices is, needed.

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