

Mitigating Professional Interference for Sustainable Growth in the Nigerian Construction Industry

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Abstract: The Nigerian construction industry is a dynamic sector with various professional roles and rivalries, crucial for economic development and stability. However, professional interference can hinder its sustainable growth and expansion. A multi-faceted approach involving multiple stakeholders, including government bodies, industry associations, professionals, and the public, is needed to create an environment that promotes professionalism, accountability, and quality in the industry. Understanding the implications and consequences of professional interference is crucial for sustainable growth in the Nigerian construction industry. A qualitative research study identified the core roles of NIA, NIS, and NSE and the causes of professional interference. According to our study, it is recommended that the Federal Republic of Nigeria create regulatory councils for professional organizations in the construction sector to define their boundaries, tasks, and obligations. Stringent regulations and enforcement of laws are necessary to prevent professionals from overlapping roles and responsibilities, to avoid potential repercussions like losing their practice licenses, tarnishing their reputation, and legal consequences under media scrutiny.

Keywords: Mitigation of Professional Interference, Nigerian Construction Industry, Professional Interference, Regulatory Reforms, Sustainable Growth.



1. Introduction

The construction industry in the 21st century has become so diversified and unique that it has ultimately created an environment for continuous cooperation and expertise from each party involved. Construction projects within the industry have also become more complex, and client expectation is that of; bigger and better, but to be completed in a fraction of the time that similar projects had previously been completed. All these advancements have put immense pressure on the project team to exceed expectations [1].

The construction industry is unique, complex, and often fragmented. Construction activities involve conceptualizing, designing, managing, organizing, and coordinating project requirements including time, money resources, technology, and methods [2]. All these must be integrated in the most efficient manner possible to complete construction projects on schedule, within the estimated budget, and following the required quality and performance expected by the client as established by [3]. The construction industry is grappling with numerous challenges, including institutional weakness and professional rivalry, which are prevalent worldwide [4].

A professional as described by [5], is someone who has a career in a particular profession. The term can also be used to describe an individual who has achieved certain educational and training standards that provide them with the knowledge, expertise, and skills necessary to carry out their role effectively. Professions are generally occupations that require a prolonged period of education and training. They are often overseen by professional bodies that may accredit educational establishments and qualified professionals and Professional bodies may set standards of ethics, performance, competence, insurance, training and so on that must be met to remain within the profession. These are typically set out in a code of conduct. Professionals will generally hold Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) and are required to undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to ensure their skills and knowledge remain up-to-date.

The construction of a building project of any kind involves the services of many people, directly, who design, construct, and maintain it from inception to completion, and to terminal demolition [6]. It requires the involvement of various professionals and specialists who work together to achieve a common goal of required project delivery. However, the professionals in the construction industry are those professionals who undergo academic training and are qualified to offer advice in the field of construction [3]. These professionals include Architect, Quantity Surveyor, Builders, Land Surveyors, Engineers comprising of civil, structural, mechanical, and electrical engineers, Estate Surveyors and Valuers, and Town and Regional planners [8] who are involved in the process of construction and plays a very important role in the construction industry and they are all regulated by their professional institutions.

Construction professionals will want to have a hands-on approach when it comes to project developments or by opportunism try to optimize their position at the expense of another hence, this hands-on approach of the professionals can and often results in interference which leads to conflict among the professionals in the construction industry [1].

On the other hand, Interference can be defined as “any obstruction that prevents planned or normal usage or operations” [9]. Events and actions that disturb the construction program and common interruptions that influence the flow of work in the project are referred to as interference according to [10]. In other words, Professional interference in the construction industry refers to any actions or behaviors that disrupt the normal course of professional activities within the sector. There are rivalries among professionals in the construction industry refer to the degree to which professionals in the construction industry respond to the competitive moves of other professionals in the industry [11].

This interference results in rivalries and can come from various sources, including government regulations, industry standards, unethical practices, or external influences. Understanding the implications and consequences of professional interference is crucial for sustainable growth in the construction industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Professionals of the Construction Industry

Professionals are the backbone of the construction industry, playing a crucial role in achieving construction activities [12]. They have received high-standard training, knowledge, and skills, and are qualified with a valid registration and licensed by a professional body [13]. These professionals represent clients and contribute their specific knowledge and experience for successful project completion. Collaboration among these professionals is essential for delivering high-quality buildings

and infrastructure that meet client requirements while adhering to regulatory standards. The three core professionals within the built environment are identified, working throughout various stages of construction work and procurement of building projects. The purpose of identifying these professionals is to examine if there are overlapping roles or if they are closely related to each other. The purpose of identifying these professionals is to examine whether there are overlapping roles that these professionals arrogated to their profession or due to the nearness of the roles of one another.

An architect is a professional who plans, designs, and oversees the construction of buildings, working closely with clients to understand their needs and preferences. They create detailed plans and drawings that outline the layout, appearance, and functionality of the structure. The architect is responsible for translating user needs into the builder's requirements and must understand building and operational codes. They are generally considered the project team leader and coordinator, responsible for the design of the construction project according to the client's specifications [14].

The architect's roles include producing detailed architectural designs, ensuring buildability, project coordination, organizing site meetings, and visiting the site regularly to ensure work is diligent and conforms to the design. During the post-contract stage, the architect issues instructions to the contractor, issues interim certificates for work done, and issues final certificates. Interior designers are partly architects who are involved in the interior designs of the volume of the building.

Quantity surveyors are professionals who have been trained as construction cost consultants. They are the accountants in the construction industry. They can also be referred to as construction economists or cost engineers. They are in charge of planning and managing costs for construction projects from the start of the project to its completion [15]. A Quantity Surveyor (QS) is a cost expert trained to maintain project costs within an approved budget, ensuring employers get value for their money. They provide professional services such as preliminary cost advice, cost planning, tender document preparation, contract type and method, contractor negotiations, work valuation, and final account settlement [16].

The role of the quantity surveyor in general terms is to manage and control costs within construction projects at the pre-contract and post-contract stage of a project and may involve the use of a range of tools to achieve this goal. The methods employed may include feasibility studies, cost-benefit analysis, cost planning, value engineering, cost estimation, and valuation [14].

Engineers: Engineers as practitioners of engineering are professionals who invent, design, and analyze structures and complex systems to fulfill functional objectives and requirements while considering the limitations imposed by practicality, regulation, safety, and cost (Wikipedia). There are many branches of engineering, each of which specializes in a technical portion of the project [17]. That includes:

- A structural engineer designs building structures, including foundations, load calculations, and material strength. They also calculate the safe with standability of construction and factor in building materials. A civil engineer plans and oversees infrastructure construction and maintenance, including roads, railways, airports, bridges, harbors, dams, irrigation projects, power plants, and water and sewerage systems. They design exterior site works and determine earth suitability for construction.
- An electrical engineer designs the electrical portion of a project, installing and maintaining electrical control systems. A mechanical engineer designs air conditioning, water supply systems, and plumbing, and installs and maintains mechanical machinery and components in buildings. A soil engineer tests soil and develops recommendations for proper earth preparation for civil and foundation work.
- Environmental engineering uses various fields to protect people, and ecosystems, and improve environmental quality. It involves understanding biology, chemistry, ecology, geology, hydraulics, hydrology, mathematics, and microbiology to develop solutions for environmental issues like wastewater treatment, pollution control, waste disposal, recycling, and public health. They work closely with architects to integrate structural and functional requirements of the building into the overall design and ensure that these structures are safe, durable, and compliant with regulatory standards.

2.2. Professional Interference in the Construction Industry

The Nigerian construction industry faces challenges related to professional interference, which can hinder sustainable growth. Professional interference in the construction industry encompasses a wide range of factors that disrupt normal professional activities within the sector. Various professionals

work together to ensure the successful completion of projects. Professional interference refers to the actions of individuals or groups that disrupt or impede the proper functioning of professionals within the construction industry. This interference can manifest in various forms and conflicts and rivalries can arise between architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, contractors, and other stakeholders involved in the construction process. Interference can occur due to a variety of reasons, including conflicting roles and responsibilities, miscommunication, lack of coordination, and differing priorities. Understanding the roles and potential areas of interference among professionals in the construction industry is crucial for mitigating these challenges and ensuring smooth project execution [18].

2.3. Causes of Professional Interference in the Nigerian Construction Industry

Professional interference in the construction industry can arise from various causes. Here are some common factors that contribute to professional interference [12]. The construction industry faces numerous challenges due to various factors, including lack of regulation and enforcement, client preference, government policies, ego and power struggles, time constraints and deadlines, market competition and cost pressure, and inadequate professional collaboration. These factors can lead to conflicts, disruptions, and the collapse of structures. Client preference often favors one professional over another, which can cause conflicts and rivalries among professionals. Government policies also contribute to interferences by not bringing together professional bodies to define roles and responsibilities, especially in government projects.

Ego and power struggles can also contribute to professional interference, as some professionals may feel the need to assert their authority or expertise, while others may feel threatened by the involvement of others in their area of expertise. Time constraints and deadlines can create pressure and lead to interference among professionals, leading to hasty decisions that can cause problems later on. Intense market competition and cost pressure can drive some clients or contractors to seek cheaper alternatives, including engaging unqualified individuals, which compromises the involvement of qualified professionals and paves the way for professional interference. Inadequate professional collaboration can create gaps or opportunities for interference, leading to disputes and conflicts of interest. The implications of professional interference in the construction industry are multifaceted and can impact different stakeholders involved in a project. It can lead to the collapse of structures, safety concerns, financial losses, reputation damage, legal and regulatory consequences, diminished industry standards, impaired professional collaboration, and a culture of mediocrity [11].

In addition, professional interference can result in legal actions, fines, and penalties for those involved, potentially leading to disciplinary actions by professional licensing boards or associations. It can also create a culture of mediocrity, devaluing the importance of qualifications, experience, and professional ethics, contributing to a decline in industry standards. In conclusion, professional interference in the construction industry can have significant consequences for various stakeholders, including the collapse of structures, safety concerns, financial losses, reputation damage, legal and regulatory consequences, and impaired professional collaboration. By addressing these issues and promoting professional integrity, the construction industry can work towards a more harmonious and successful future.

2.4. Mitigating Professional Interference in the Nigeria Construction Industry

The Nigerian construction industry, like many others, faces challenges related to professional interference. Mitigating professional interference in the Nigerian construction industry requires a multi-faceted approach that involves various stakeholders including government bodies, industry associations, professionals, and the public. Mitigating professional interference is crucial for fostering a conducive environment that supports sustainable growth in the Nigerian construction industry.

The following were identified mitigating professional interference in the Nigeria construction industry [19] [20]:

- **Regulatory Reforms and Enforcement**

One of the primary ways to mitigate professional interference in the Nigerian construction industry is through regulatory reforms and enforcement. Strengthening existing regulations and introducing new ones can help create a more robust framework for overseeing construction projects. This may involve scrutiny of licensing requirements, and inspection procedures to ensure compliance with industry standards. Additionally, strict enforcement of these regulations is crucial to deter professionals from engaging in corrupt or unethical behavior. Establish clear

guidelines for professional responsibilities and penalties for professional interference in other professionals' roles and responsibilities to deter unscrupulous professionals.

- **Collaboration with Professional Bodies**
 Collaborating with professional bodies and associations can also contribute to mitigating professional interference in the Nigerian construction industry. These organizations play a vital role in setting industry standards, promoting best practices, holding their members accountable for their conduct, and disciplining members who engage in professional interference. By working closely with these bodies, regulatory authorities can leverage their expertise and influence to foster a more ethical and responsible construction sector. Collaboration among construction stakeholders and firms is pivotal to embracing dynamism, and a viable tool to reduce resistance to change in the industry [21].
- **Promoting Ethical Standards**
 Professional bodies and industry associations can play a pivotal role in promoting ethical conduct among their members by fostering a culture of professional ethics and integrity within the construction industry through education, training, and awareness programs and disciplinary measures for misconduct and emphasizing the importance of ethical behavior, professional responsibility, and the negative consequences of professional interference. Upholding ethical conduct within the construction industry is essential for mitigating professional interference.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns**
 Raising public awareness about the impact of professional interference on construction projects is crucial for garnering support for mitigation efforts. Educating the public and clients about the importance of engaging qualified professionals and the risks associated with professional interference. Promote awareness campaigns that highlight the benefits of working with licensed professionals and the potential consequences of engaging unqualified individuals. Public pressure can serve as a powerful force for driving positive change in the behavior of construction professionals.
- **Professional Training and Development and Enhanced Responsibilities**
 Training is crucial for the development of construction professionals, enhancing their awareness and application of innovative methodologies. Investing in training helps professionals uphold ethical standards and reduce vulnerabilities to interference. Training programs can focus on ethical conduct and fostering a culture of professionalism. Enhanced supervision by regulatory bodies and government agencies can identify instances of professional interference and take corrective actions. Legal remedies should be strengthened to address professional interference effectively, with clear provisions for accountability and specialized courts for construction-related disputes. Whistleblower protection should be implemented by regulatory bodies and government agencies, ensuring confidentiality and protection for whistleblowers. This encourages professionals to report incidents of interference without fear of reprisal.

3. Methodology

The research was carried out using a qualitative method of research, and the research design is a literature review and interviews. Journal articles on related literature on the roles of professionals, conflict, and rivalry among Professionals in the Construction Industry in Nigeria were reviewed with emphasis on three key professionals in the construction industry. Case Studies there are some works previously done as case studies leading to successful mitigation strategies in other countries which were reviewed to enhance the sustainability of the Nigerian construction sector. Outsourcing literature emphasizes the importance of contracts and risk awareness in managing outsourcing ventures [22]. However, there is a lack of theoretical foundation regarding the impact of risk and contract design on outsourcing success. This research aims to answer the questions:

1. How does the design of the outsourcing contract impact on outsourcing risk?
2. How, in turn, does outsourcing risk affect outsourcing success?

The research focuses on the importance of understanding the risk profile, causes, and consequences to set up an effective contract for outsourcing success. Contracts are considered the pivotal point in outsourcing arrangements, protecting and dealing with daily actions, results, disputes, or termination of the relationship. The research aims to close the gap by analyzing selected contract clauses and their impact on each other to mitigate outsourcing risks.

The causes and mitigation strategies of project delays in Tanzanian power construction projects [23]. It found that in successful projects, both parties weighed similar causes like vandalism and permits, suggesting close project supervision and proper logistics management. However, in unsuccessful projects, contractors weighed causes like scope changes, poor supervision, and delays in approval more than owners. The findings can help project managers develop better solutions for delay management in developing countries [24] [25] [26]. The study explores risk management practices in construction projects, focusing on early stages [24]. The study examines perceptions of risks, benefits, limitations, and the "0 errors" vision, highlighting the importance of risk management in project delivery. Risk assessment is crucial in construction projects, identifying hazards, evaluating impact, and implementing mitigation measures [27]. It enhances planning, resource allocation, safety, and stakeholder collaboration. Regular assessments and updates are essential, as demonstrated by successful projects like Burj Khalifa and Heathrow Terminal 5.

This text provides an overview of successful risk mitigation strategies across various industries, emphasizing the importance of a proactive approach to risk management. It discusses the ABC Bank Index Analysis and its use in identifying and addressing potential cyber threats. Case studies of XYZ Company, ABC Bank, and PQR Manufacturing demonstrate the practical application of these strategies. Case studies are particularly useful in treasury receipt investments, where strategies such as diversification, due diligence, risk assessment and monitoring, hedging techniques, collaborative partnerships, stress testing, and strengthening cyber security measures are employed. These strategies help organizations mitigate operational risks, minimize data breaches, and protect their reputation. The text also emphasizes the need for robust cyber security measures to safeguard sensitive customer data and prevent financial losses.

4. Finding and Discussion

Every professional within the construction industry is an emphatic specialist in their field and contributes their knowledge as a part of the whole for a successful construction project. The findings from the extant literature and interview reveal the respondents' position of the study.

The findings as evident from the reviewed literature and interview responses revealed that various professionals play crucial roles in ensuring the successful planning, design, execution, and completion of construction projects. These roles are diverse and specialized, each contributing to different aspects of the construction process and there are no overlapping roles of the professionals. The architect's role is to translate the user's needs into the builder's requirements, the engineer is most concerned with the calculation of load and grade requirements, and materials stress points to ensure that the structure can withstand stress, while the quantity surveyor is mostly concerned with management and control of costs on construction projects with there are overlapping roles are.

The construction industry is a unique, complex, and often fragmented industry involving various professionals working together, hence the construction professionals will want to have a hands-on approach when it comes to project developments or by opportunism try to optimize their position at the expense of another. These hands-on approaches of some professionals can and often result in interference. such the causes and implications of professional interference as identified include; ego and power struggles where some professionals may feel the need to assert their authority over other professionals, weak or inadequate regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms, poor collaboration and communication among professionals within the construction industry which can create gaps or opportunities for interference and so on. Its implications are not far-fetched as it undermines the reputation and credibility of construction firms and professionals involved, eroding trust among clients, financial losses, safety concerns on resultant structural failures, and subsequent building collapse.

Mitigating professional interference in the Nigerian construction industry is a complex undertaking that requires concerted efforts from various stakeholders. Through regulatory reforms by scrutiny of licensing requirements, professional development programs to enhance the skills and knowledge of professionals so that they are better equipped to uphold ethical standards and reduce vulnerabilities to interference, collaboration with professional bodies, and public awareness campaigns that highlight the benefits of working with licensed professionals and the potential consequences of engaging unqualified individuals, improve the oversight and supervision of construction projects by regulatory bodies and relevant government agencies, it is possible to address the root causes of interference and promote a culture of integrity within the industry.

5. Conclusion

This study provides insights into the roles of professionals in construction projects, highlighting the tendency for role interference. The fragmented industry requires collaboration among professionals to achieve a common goal. The study examines the causes and implications of interference and identifies mitigating strategies. Professional interference can negatively impact project timelines, budgets, and quality. The identified strategies will guide professionals to uphold professionalism, deter unscrupulous individuals, and prevent overstepping boundaries and encroachment on other professionals' roles.

This qualitative research examines the roles of professionals in the Nigerian construction industry, focusing on three key professionals: architect, engineer, and quantity surveyor. The study highlights the importance of risk management in project delivery, focusing on early stages. Risk assessment is crucial in construction projects, identifying hazards, evaluating impact, and implementing mitigation measures. Successful risk mitigation strategies across various industries are highlighted, emphasizing the need for robust cybersecurity measures.

The construction industry is unique, complex, and often fragmented, involving various professionals working together. However, these hands-on approaches can result in interference, which can undermine the reputation and credibility of construction firms and professionals, erode trust among clients, and lead to financial losses and safety concerns. Mitigating professional interference in the Nigerian construction industry requires regulatory reforms, professional development programs, collaboration with professional bodies, public awareness campaigns, and improved oversight and supervision by regulatory bodies and relevant government agencies. The Federal Republic of Nigeria should establish councils for the regulation of professional bodies in the construction industry, ensuring clear boundaries, duties, and responsibilities. Strict regulations and implementation of laws should prevent overlapping among professionals, and professionals should avoid other roles and responsibilities to avoid long-term consequences such as withdrawal of practice licenses, bad reputation, and legal consequences under media scrutiny.

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