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INFLUENCE OF CONSTRUCTION PROFESSIONALS' SOFT-SKILLS ON PROFESSIONAL'S PERFORMANCE IN ABUJA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL (AMAC), NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Soft-skills are paramount to construction professional's performance which ensure full derivation of potentials of the industry. The study investigated the influence of construction professionals' soft-skills on professional's performance in Abuja Municipal Council (AMAC), Nigeria. 3 specific objectives to: ascertain the level of construction professionals' performance in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria; assess the level of construction professionals' soft-skills in the study area; as well as, determine the significant influence of construction professionals soft-skills on construction professionals' performance in the study area were used to achieved the main aim of the study. A quantitative research

design particularly descriptive survey was adopted with structured questionnaire designed that revealed an overall high internal consistency of 0.78 for primary data collection from the 327 construction professionals in AMAC comprised of Architects, Builders, Civil Engineers and Quantity Surveyors as the population of the study. The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods of data analyses, with SPSS software employed as the tool for analysis. The study finding revealed that construction professionals soft-skills enhance professional's performance in the construction industry. However, based on the study objectives, it was concluded that, the level of construction professionals' performance is high in AMAC, Nigeria with communication to overcome institutional barriers, client satisfaction, as well as project efficiency and profitability as the highest performances; the level of construction professionals soft-skills is high in AMAC, Nigeria with communication skill, integrity skill, and self-management/time-management skill as the highest construction professionals soft-skills; as well as construction professionals soft-skills has strong positive significant influence on construction professionals' performance with ($r = 0.811$, $n = 327$, $p < 0.05$). The study recommends that, construction industry is dynamic in nature and to maintain performance in the industry, the policy makers should always document and use the outcome of each project activity continually to improve level of performance of the construction professionals; construction professionals should stress and practice soft-skills in their daily endeavours to ensure construction success and project delivery; and, let there be collaboration among all the stakeholders in the construction industry to ensure robust soft-skills are acquired to stimulate professional's performance in order to derived the full potentials of the industry in terms of employment generation and infrastructural development.

KEYWORDS: Construction professionals' performance; Professionals' Soft-Skills and Construction Activities in Construction Industry;

INTRODUCTION

Globally, construction firms are found to be a vital drive for rapid economic development as there is increased demand for construction of infrastructure and facilities (Haron et al., 2017). Global study on soft-skills in the construction industry found that 87% of professionals believe that soft-skills play a crucial role in construction practices (Ghaleb & Sundram, 2024; van Heerden et al., 2023). However, is faced with several challenges which affects numerous stages of construction projects including the company's financial stability, the professionals'

psychological well-being as well as their soft-skills (Araya et al., 2024). Limited knowledge exists regarding the impact and know-how of these skills challenges required in construction by the construction professionals. Projects form part of organisational activities and have a direct impact on the organization's results and performance (de Moura et al, 2018). Mertens et al. (2018) revealed that project success is related to the goals and benefits that are provided in a project.

According to Olatunji, Akinola, Oke and Osakuade (2014), building construction professional's performance is one that can be evaluated based on numerous factors such as project management which is the ability to plan, coordinate, and deliver projects on time, within budget, and to the required quality standards; technical expertise which is the knowledge and skills in construction methods, materials, and technologies; communication and stakeholder management which is the effectiveness in communicating with clients, contractors, and other stakeholders; problem-solving and adaptability which is the ability to navigate unexpected challenges and changes in project scope or timelines; as well as the quality control and assurance which is the attention to detail and commitment to delivering high-quality work. Smallwood (2020) highlighted by international studies that the importance of soft-skills are enormous and acquire direct impact on construction project's successful achievement. Like in the United States and worldwide, the excellence of soft-skills competencies among construction professionals has become a priority task of education (Jaser, 2016). Therefore, many soft-skills are needed to be acquired by the construction professionals to enable them withstand the challenges of changing environment and to facilitate effective interaction between specialists since many professionals are involved in construction projects (Araya et al., 2024). The ability to act according to the pre-defined goals of an organization and related to practicality is known as skills (de Moura et al., 2018). Therefore, soft-skills play an ultimate role for a construction professional to execute and deliver project successfully certain soft-skills are highly require like teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, communication, time management, and adaptability are crucial for fostering a positive work environment and achieving project objectives (van Heerden et al., 2023).

According to Olatunji et al. (2014), construction professionals are a group of people responsible for the planning, designing and construction of a project. The professionals in the industry include the Architects, Quantity Surveyors, Engineers (Civil, Mechanical, Structural, Electrical) the Building Contractors, Artisans and the suppliers. All these professionals

perform different roles in order to enhance the success of any construction project. In Nigeria, construction projects often face challenges like delays, cost overruns, and poor quality. However, professionals with strong soft skills can mitigate these issues (Kerzner, 2017). Communication effectively within the project's stakeholders ensures everybody is carried along to ensure project goals is intact, misunderstandings and errors are reduced.

Construction professionals' soft-skills play a crucial role in ensuring construction project effectiveness in Abuja, Nigeria with communication, responsibility, integrity, teamwork, and work ethic as the soft-skills essential for construction professionals to deliver projects efficiently. In Abuja, construction projects often face challenges like delays, cost overruns, and poor quality but issues mentioned can be mitigated professionally by effective communication to ensure stakeholders are fully aware and on the same lane with the project goals, reducing misunderstandings and errors (Iroha et al., 2024). By prioritizing soft skills development, construction professionals in Abuja can improve project effectiveness, reduce errors, and enhance overall project outcomes.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Professionals in the Construction Industry influence the construction projects products positively or negatively as a result of their soft-skills which significantly impact their performance in building construction. Lack of soft-skills of construction professionals can become a disaster to the construction industry which will led to the none-achievement of organisational goals. According to Müller (2017); Smith (2017), professionals' soft-skills helps construction professionals to perform effectively to realised construction project effectiveness.

Oladapo (2016) reported that, construction projects in Africa are often plagued by low delivery. Also, Ogunsanmi (2017) reported that, there is low performance of construction professionals in Nigeria as their delivery is often characterized as low.

This led to the current research in the study area to investigate the influence of construction professionals' soft-skills on professional's performance in Abuja Municipal Council (AMAC), Nigeria.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of construction professionals' soft-skills on professionals' performance in Abuja Municipal Council (AMAC), Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research aim was achieved through the following specific objectives:

1. To ascertain the level of construction professionals' performance in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria.
2. To assess the level of construction professionals' soft-skills in the study area.
3. To determine the significant influence of construction professionals soft-skills on construction professionals' performance in the study area.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the level of performance of construction professionals in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria?
2. What is the level of construction professionals' soft-skills in the study area?
3. What is the significant influence of construction professionals soft-skills on construction professionals' performance in the study area?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Professional's Soft Skills and Construction Activities in Construction Industry

Construction needs adoption of new construction methods with new technology due to ever changing facet and a very vibrant field (Farooqui et al., 2010). Thus, construction managers need to be equipped with various essential skills as to be able to prosecute projects. Construction management literature has also indicated that there are so many diverse essential skill requirements for the construction manager (Ogunsanmi, 2016). People are the important machinery in the aspects of construction projects with underlying soft-skills as the essential means for project success, while a study by Durão et al. (2017) concluded that soft-skills exerts more impact on the success of a projects than technical skills have. Generic qualities that are most valued by employers was reviewed by Cicekli (2013), and determined that many of the skills sought by employers are generic or soft-skills; such soft-skills are termed to be organizational effectiveness, teamwork, time management, communication, ability to deal with ambiguity and change, flexibility, motivation, ownership and sense of achievement, leadership, and interpersonal and persuasive (Durão et al. 2017). A gap was

perceived between what educational institutions are offering and what is needed to deal in projects in the ever-increasingly complex work environment, especially regarding soft skills (International Project Management Association (IPMA), 2015; Ramazani & Jergeas, 2015). According to Kollmann, Deshati and Legowik-Malolepsza (2023), fostering a wider range of soft-skills is not only beneficial but also imperative as can be validated by illustrating the necessity for employers to embrace future-oriented talents as a means of effectively responding to the rapidly increasing pace of change within the business landscape. The implications of the solution's findings suggest that the matter of managerial and professional abilities within the building sector is presently relevant, essential, and holds social significance.

According to Gulati (2021), soft-skills also contribute to project management. For example, motivating a team, keeping a team together, being emphatic, and resolving conflicts in a professional manner are all essential for managing a team. The importance of selecting a suitable project manager is widely discussed but equal attention needs to be given to their soft-skills, especially those skills that have a direct impact on the project manager's project success. More means of reinforcing students to get prepared to managed projects should be explored by educational institutions with emphasize on the project preparation phase such as scope, WBS, risk management, as well as soft-skills (Hefley & Bottion, 2021). This will enable students to demonstrate soft-skills proficiency in practical projects during their academic preparation. Therefore, there are wide range of skills according to Stine (2018), that a project professionals must develop and learn to use at the appropriate time as listed below:

1. Information gathering skill of a professional

A right information is paramount for gathering skill professionals as man-power in the construction industry so much believed that having a right information at the right time and how to utilize it is an added advantage for it served as a weapon (Chudasama & Bhavsar, 2021). To actualise a construction project that can meet client's satisfaction, many information regarding the said project must gathered by the professionals to avoid project abandonment and waste of resources. Process of gathering an information in construction industry is the procedure of collecting and analysing data for an in-depth insight that enable in solving problems, make decisions, such act involves various methods to include research, interviews, surveys, observation and data analysis. For feasibility analysis, information gathering remain a very key part in the process, and that enables any analyst to prepare a

precise software for solving a particular problem in an organization due to the information from the fact-finding techniques understood by user (Canals, 2017).

2. Risk appreciation skill of a professional

Risk appreciation planning of a project is paramount as all projects either small, medium or large projects is inherent to risk. Peter (2023) stated that, executing project needs to the project manager to create a risk management plan to enable them identify, assess and control risk. Once a project manager has the capacity of managing a risk, then there exists a high chances project success. Risk is the product of exposure to occurrence of loss or gain and its respective magnitude. If the probability of the occurrence is 100% then an event is said to be certain, however, if the probability of occurrence is 0% then is referred to as totally uncertain. Therefore, in between these extremes, the uncertainty varies rather widely. Risk in construction industry, these days the risk is assessed through different means and particular type of information (Bon-Gang et al., 2014). This signify that for decision-making process in construction industry, risk analysis and management skills are very vital (Shahid et al., 2015).

3. Dealing with conflict skill of a professional

Conflict is bound to happen in any construction work as development of relationships by human beings on the basis of their operation (Manuel, 2018). Any project incurs its conflict and the need for each stage of construction work to be engaged with the right expertise to operate in that capacity of the life cycle of the project as well as the elements or WBSs of the project. A group of more than one individual are called group and that attracts conflicts. If this conflict is not managed properly, it escalates to even destroy the project team, disrupt operations of the entire group and disrupt the process of achieving the laid objectives. A project manager with an improper conflict management skill may turn out to be harassment by the project team members which can demotivate the project team members (Manuel, 2018).

4. Budgeting skill of a professional

It takes lots of money to successfully execute a construction project and lots of stages to its completion, for healthy project costs estimate and budget creation is paramount as it formed part of the planning stage of project management. Project budget ensures the project to avoids cost-overrun and that is a skill needs to possess by the project manager because a project budget, and use budget management skill enable control of costs through the execution stage (Peter, 2023). Any project professionals must undoubtedly, master to complete projects

within budget during the project life cycle (Henkel et al., 2019; Jones, 2018). Planning, budgeting, organising, staffing, controlling and directing for project is the task conducted by the project manager. These tasks in relation to what needs to be done for the success of the project, has its breakdown such as when is it supposed to be done, how much resources are needed for each task based on the available resources that can efficiently use or is acquired to effectively perform these outlined tasks by the project managers.

5. Planning skill of a professional

Reflecting on the historical dictum of Dwight Eisenhower which stated that plans are nothing, yet planning is everything. This means that for a project success to be achieved, the initial original plans with the project goals must be changed to address the dynamics caused by uncertainty during project execution. Project manager with the skill of planning ensures project performance and project success (Shahzad et al., 2018). With the dynamic nature of construction environment and project, change is inevitable. When changes occur, plans also change, as different reasons cause changes in project either due to client or due to project team members as a result of new and better ideas or due to the dictate of a new manager which initially was not there but comes at a later stage to impose their own twist to the project (David et al., 2019). Pedro (2013) opines that planning process create a project plan that consists of 48% of all the processes which performed by the project manager during the project life cycle.

6. Stakeholder management skill of a professional

Stakeholders in construction project can be individuals or groups/organisations that partly have some right or ownership in the proposed project and can contribute to it. That can incur or justify the perceived the benefit or loss directly due to the works during the project or the outcome of the project after the project (Jurbe, 2014). Management of stakeholder in the construction industry is one of the key vital building professional contacts to improve their service. In education, work with the stakeholders to develop a strong skilled workforce for the industry to achieve its goal. In pursuing their interests and expectations on projects, stakeholders can behave in different ways including cooperative potential, competitive threats, opposite position and neutral attitude (Yang et al., 2014). Therefore, stakeholder involvement and management should not stop at the front-end project planning stage or at any stage at all but continue throughout the entire lifecycle of the project.

7. Communication skill of a professional

Communication as one of the vital soft-skill of project managers helped to overcome many challenges in the ever-increasing construction environment, as that help keep in-check thereby bringing all the stakeholders to align with the project's goals and maintain an important relationship with employees, customers, suppliers, and other involved parties. Communication is a learned skill, and it is important to develop good communication skill in order to become proficient at working in the construction industry. According to Alison (2022), as a professional (leader) in a construction industry, you need to be able to clearly and succinctly explain to your employees everything from organisational goals to specific tasks. Professionals (leaders) must master all forms of communication, including one-on-one, departmental, and full-staff conversations, as well as communication via the phone, email, video, chat, and social media. Crucially, project professionals must have the capacity to lead and guide the project team members by interacting them efficiently and influence other stakeholders (Manuel, 2018).

8. Time managing skill of a professional

Project management refers to meeting deadlines and getting task done towards deliverables within time; the art of planning effectively within time management skill (Satellizer, 2016). In construction projects, one of the triple constraints and very important to successful delivery is time. Without time management skills, delay is bound to happened and can cause worst impact to construction delivery (Peter, 2023). Construction project managers must be experts to effectively managed time properly including time of their teams with overall time of the project (Peter, 2023). The major key effective project management is time management so lack of it is termed as weaknesses which will cause delays in project completion (Harold, 2014). Time is what is needs to be controlled in terms of construction projects right from the inception to the completion of the construction process. Therefore, an important soft-skills for project manager is time management for effective work in the construction industry (Aftab et al., 2014). One of the toughest jobs is in the construction industry due to its tight schedules and deadlines of project delivery, and therefore that incur pressures that need man-power (people) that can handle the pressure therein. Working in the construction industry, need the project manager to deeply aligned with the assigned task to ensure the project meets the target period of delivery. Construction industry needs man-power that always track the multiple tasks including different timelines and communicate efficiently the objectives of the project if is inline or not.

9. Gaining commitment skill of a professional

Lack of project management commitment leads to many failures in the execution of projects as well as site casualties. Zwetsloot et al. (2017) emphasize that, safety commitment is one of the extent organizations can go deter accident and promote safety and this forms an integral part of an organizational goals and core values with the morale, beliefs and willingness of organizational leadership to represent the organization. Thus, Abubakar et al. (2020) stated that, performance in safety is a concept of commitment approach based on establishing safety programs to have a distinction to the traditional approach due motivation stems out from adhering to establish regulations, procedures or policies. Conti et al. (2014) generally stated that, professional commitment refers to identifying the profession which includes commitment to the profession, its dedication and acceptance of professional goals and ethics. Samimi (2020) considered the theory of professional commitment as identification of profession and attachment to profession.

10. Setting effective goals skill of a professional

Project's nature encountered by the project managers desires wide coordination to enable for various professionals' work for the success and achievement of the objectives (Manuel, 2018). Professionals in the built environment coordinate the execution of the project, with the helped of different project team members that coordinate and managed different units of the project (Thompson & Wilson, 2015). Project team is supervised by the project leader generally and that enables the leader to coordinates the project activities through the divisional leaders that serves as link between the project team, stakeholders and the senior management (Jowah & Tebele, 2012). Disasters due to last-minute changes occurs at work in construction projects, therefore, leaders need to be flexible to accept the changes that might come in the cause of the work, as the ability to accept changes and creatively solve the problem will be highly appreciated (Alison, 2022).

11. Running good meetings skill of a professional

Coordinating good meetings by the professionals for construction projects by the project managers in a construction industry ensures success. Meeting for the success of any project ensures task are assigned duly to various professionals and that include group maintenance behaviours. Such skills by the project manager allows each participant to be duly updated as due to availability of current information that enhances widespread of understanding and commitment, but this is due to the decisions with transparency and on time make by the

project managers. According to Mesch (2023), in a construction company, meetings can determine whether a building project can actually succeed or fails. On the job site, meetings play a vital purpose in the role of construction company, because these meetings allow parties to discuss and coordinate upcoming project activities, also provide a forum in which the parties can discuss project changes and claims. Therefore, parties to a construction contract in the interest of construction success should always run good meetings.

12. Negotiation skill of a professional

A project manager with a good and strong negotiating skill stands the chance to get many tasks done based negotiation is one of the communication skills, but negotiation deserves its own space separately. Negotiation in project management is a vital skill for conflict resolution and stakeholder management (Peter, 2023). It is highly desirable for a project manager in the construction profession either at lower, middle or top management to do everything possible to become an effective negotiator. The World Economic Forum (WEF) identify negotiation as one of the top 10 skills needed to thrive in the future workforce (Matt, 2019). Therefore, improving negotiation for deal-making skills in the construction industry is paramount as it helps to secure value for your organization when at the round-table negotiating for any cost of construction work or advocating for a higher starting salary or raise.

Construction professionals' Performance in Construction Industry

The construction industry is a wide industry that contributes to the economy of any country; in here there are different types of construction projects an organization can engage in and the aspect of construction determines the specialists or professionals to be involved in the construction process. Construction projects range from building constructions to heavy engineering works. Olatunji et al. (2014) stated that, the construction industry is made up of professionals whose various disciplines are to ensure that construction work is completed as appropriate. Mohamed, Elbarkouky and Fayek (2011) discovered that on frequent occasions, before going into negotiations architects, quantity surveyors and civil engineers do not have enough space of time to prepare accurate aesthetic and structural drawings and quantity take off and billing for the proposed structures due to client's requirements which is most times a very short period of time. In addition, the manner in which construction professionals adapts to this unfavourable working condition depends on the working experience which they have attained over time, this has constituted another problem in the construction industry as most

construction professionals in recent times are fresh graduates who, though might be intelligent does not have the required experience to manage these conditions and perform at the highest level of productivity. Also, Bawa, Mohammed, Zakka, Ishaku and Hezekiah (2025) in their study established the existence of positive strong significant effect of construction professionals soft-skills on construction project effectiveness in AMAC, Nigeria with B-value = 0.867 (86.7%) and $p < 0.000$.

According to Olatunji et al. (2014), the performance of construction professionals is a factor that basically determines the long-term effect of construction works they produce, this factor also boils down to the level of experience and training these professionals have attained over the years. So many issues have over the years constituted problems for construction professionals, most importantly is the issue of time frame for which they have to execute construction works. Employees are always opting out of firms offering construction professional services every year, this results in Nigerian construction industry constantly loosing key employees due to some factors affecting performance of these professionals which are neglected in the management (Mumford, Iddekinge, Morgeson & Campion, 2008). For this reason, firms are forced to train new employees repeatedly spending money on training and recruitment of new employees, overall productivity decreases as a result. Also, when employees are not satisfied with their job, they deal with customers in a cruel and unconcerned manner and hence customer satisfaction is affected in a great extent.

Construction Professionals include architects, builders, engineers (structural and services), and Quantity Surveyors, and there are professional bodies that regulate their activities (Olatunji et al., 2014). However, many researchers like Olatunji et al. (2014), Lea et al. (2020), Darlington and Onuoha (2023), Frefer et al. (2018), Omer (2017), Homthong and Moungnoi (2016), Mukhtar and Amirudin (2016), Ramlee et al. (2016), Project Management Institute (PMI, 2020) asserts that, professional's performances are evaluated by many factors to include: design or construction team, realistic cost of project, human resource development, quality of works to match standards, productivity and profitability, project efficiency and profitability, client satisfaction, cash-flow management, team satisfaction and effective planning performance, contract and administration, ad-hoc problem-solving approach & team work, health and safety, preparing for the future risk, environment and business success performance, communication to overcome institutional barriers, and so on.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative research design particularly a descriptive research design to investigate the influence of construction professionals' soft-skills on professionals' performance in Abuja Municipal Council (AMAC), Nigeria. Descriptive research design was considered appropriate as a result of its to collect quantitative and qualitative data on existing attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions among workers in the formal and informal sectors. Also, its ability to allowed for the identification of relationships among variables without manipulating the study environment made it suitable for this research.

Population and Sampling

The population for the research was the registered construction professionals practiced and domiciled in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) of the FCT, the study area. The population comprised of one-thousand, one-hundred and ninety-six (1,196) registered construction professionals (Architects, Builders, Civil Engineers, and Quantity Surveyors) obtained from the respective professional bodies in Abuja.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample sized comprised of 360 construction professionals out of 1,196 practiced and domiciled in AMAC the study area as determined using the Cochran (1977) guideline percentages of 10–30% for determining sample size as used by Li (2020) in his study soft-skills for construction professionals in Africa and Ogunsemi (2020) in his study impact of soft-skills on construction project delivery in Nigeria due to the fact that the population was finite. For precision, this study utilized 30% to determine the sample size of each registered construction professionals as demonstrated and applied for research in various fields including construction as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Sample frame of the Study.

SN	Professional Bodies	Professionals	Registered	Sample size
1	NIA - Nigeria Institute of Architect	Architects	380	114
2	NIOB - Nigeria Institute of Building	Builders	293	88
3	NIE - Nigeria Institute of Engineers (Civil Engineers)	Civil Engineers	291	88
4	NIQS - Nigeria Institute of Quantity Surveyors	Quantity Surveyors	232	70
		Total	**1, 196**	**360**

Source: Obtained from the respective professional bodies in Abuja (2024)/Researcher (2024).

Simple random sampling technique was adopted to ensure fair representation of all the four professions because the participants had the specific knowledge, experience, and expertise relevant to the research question that was why it was employed to select respondents for the quantitative survey.

Data Collection Instruments

A questionnaire was structured and utilised in order to collect quantitative data primarily. Such questionnaire was structured in line with the research objectives designed with close-ended questions to prompt responses relevant to achieve the aim of the study. The sections of the questionnaire consist of construction professional's performance and construction professionals' soft-skills in the construction industry. The questionnaire was subjected to a 5 Likert-scales for the respondents to rate their degree of agreement with each option provided.

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire served as the tool to collects the primary data of the study was administered to the registered construction professionals (Architects, Builders, Civil Engineers and Quantity Surveyors) in AMAC, with the helped of 4 research assistants trained on the dos and don'ts of administering and retrieving of the questionnaire. 3 days were allowed for the respondents to responds to the given questionnaire which is in line with Chacón (2009) and return them for analyses. This was to allow the respondents to complete the questionnaire at their own convenience and effectively as they think about their responses.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected via the questionnaire were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistical tools such mean score (X) and standard deviation (SD) were utilised in analysing construction professional's performance and construction professionals' soft-skills in the construction industry. While, inferential statistical tool such as Pearson correlation was utilised in analysing significant influence of construction professionals soft-skills on professionals' performance in the study area.

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was subjected for the supervisor and other experts' scrutiny in the Faculty of Environmental Technology of the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi to ensure its validity. 15 respondents were utilised for pilot testing of the instruments in order to make the instrument suitable and ensure it measure what it supposed to measure, and for clarity purpose. The reliability of the questionnaire was achieved by utilising Cronbach's alpha with the construction professional's performance recorded a coefficient of 0.77 and construction professionals' soft-skills recorded a coefficient of 0.79 all indicating high internal consistency; thus, revealing an overall high internal consistency of 0.78.

Ethical Considerations

During the research, the respondents were given verbal or written consent prior to participating. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any point. Personal identifiers were removed from all data sets to maintain confidentiality.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The study administered 360(100%) questionnaires but retrieved 327(90.8%) questionnaires duly filled for analyses [Architects = 103(28.6%), Builders = 80(22.2%), Civil Engineers = 80(22.2%), and Quantity Surveyors = 64(17.8%)]. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), any response rate of 70% and above is termed excellent for meaningful analysis.

Objective 1: To ascertain the level of construction professionals' performance in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria

Descriptive tools such as mean score (X) and standard deviation (SD) were used to analysed the level of performance of construction professionals in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria.

Decision:

0.00–1.49 = No Performance (**NP**); 1.50–2.49 = Less Performance (**LP**); 2.50–3.49 = Moderate Performance (**MP**); 3.50–4.49 = High Performance (**HP**) & 4.50–5.0 = Very High Performance (**VHP**) as adapted from Lea et al. (2020).

Table 2 displays the level of construction professionals' performance in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria. Communication to overcome institutional barriers by the

construction professionals in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria was ascertained with a mean score (X) = 4.28 and standard deviation (SD) = 1.376; client satisfaction was ascertained with (X = 4.24, SD = 1.303); project efficiency and profitability was ascertained with (X = 4.12, SD = 1.014); quality of works to match standards was ascertained with (X = 4.10, SD = 1.168); environment and business success was ascertained with (X = 4.10, SD = 1.168); team satisfaction and effective planning was ascertained with (X = 4.06, SD = 1.287); contract and administration was ascertained with (X = 3.97, SD = 1.208); design and construction team was ascertained with (X = 3.70, SD = 1.104); cash-flow management was ascertained with (X = 3.69, SD = 1.220); health and safety was ascertained with (X = 3.58, SD = 1.180); there was moderate performance in preparing for the future risk as determined with (X = 3.49, SD = 1.455); there was moderate performance in human resource development as determined with (X = 3.49, SD = 1.194); there was moderate performance in ad-hoc problem-solving approach & team work as determined with (X = 3.49, SD = 1.193); there was moderate performance in realistic cost of project as determined with (X = 3.47, SD = 1.180); and also, there was moderate performance in productivity as determined with (X = 3.43, SD = 1.124).

The average mean score revealed a value of X = 3.81 which means that, the performance of construction professionals in AMAC, Nigeria is high.

Table 2: Level of construction professionals' performance in AMAC, Nigeria.

Level of performance of construction professionals	**X**	**SD**	**Decision**
Communication to overcome institutional barriers	4.28	1.376	High Performance
Client satisfaction	4.24	1.303	High Performance
Project efficiency and profitability	4.12	1.014	High Performance
Quality of works to match standards	4.10	1.168	High Performance
Environment and business success	4.10	1.168	High Performance
Team satisfaction and effective planning	4.06	1.287	High Performance
Contract and administration	3.97	1.207	High Performance
Design and construction team	3.70	1.104	High Performance
Cash-flow management	3.69	1.220	High Performance
Health and safety	3.58	1.180	High Performance
Preparing for the future risk	3.49	1.455	Moderate Performance
Human resource development	3.49	1.194	Moderate Performance
Ad-hoc problem-solving approach & team work	3.49	1.194	Moderate Performance
Realistic cost of project	3.47	1.180	Moderate Performance
Productivity	3.43	1.124	Moderate Performance
Average Mean Score = ∑M / 15 = 57.211 / 15 = 3.8141	**3.8141**		**High Performance**

N = 327.

Objective 2: To assess the level of construction professionals soft-skills in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria

Descriptive tools such as mean score (X) and standard deviation (SD) was used to analysed the level of construction professionals soft-skills in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria.

Decision:

0.00–1.49 = Very Low (**VL**); 1.50–2.49 = Low (**L**); 2.50–3.49 = Moderately Low (**ML**); 3.50–4.49 = High (**H**) & 4.50–5.0 = Very High (**VH**) as adapted from Lea et al. (2020).

Table 3 below displays the level of construction professionals soft-skills in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria. Communication skill was assessed to be a construction professionals soft-skill with a mean score (X) = 4.28 and standard deviation (SD) = 1.376; Integrity skill was assessed with (X = 4.24, SD = 1.303); Self-management/time-management skill was assessed with (X = 4.12, SD = 1.014); Teamwork and networking skill was assessed with (X = 3.94, SD = 0.110); Flexibility/adaptability skill was assessed with (X = 3.94, SD = 0.110); Creativity and curiosity skill was assessed with (X = 3.93, SD = 1.121); Negotiation skill was assessed with (X = 3.91, SD = 1.177); Responsibility skill was assessed with (X = 3.78, SD = 1.168); Emotional intelligence skill was assessed with (X = 3.76, SD = 1.119); Problem solving skill was assessed with (X = 3.76, SD = 1.145); Decision making skill was assessed with (X = 3.69, SD = 1.138); Cross-cultural relationships skill was assessed with (X = 3.58, SD = 0.193); Conflict management skill was assessed with (X = 3.58, SD = 0.193); Work ethic skill was assessed with (X = 3.56, SD = 0.160); Courtesy skill was assessed with (X = 3.55, SD = 0.199); Enthusiasm & positive attitude skill was assessed with (X = 3.54, SD = 0.180); Workplace professionalism skill was assessed with (X = 3.54, SD = 0.180); and Client management skill was assessed with (X = 3.52, SD = 0.211).

The average mean score reveals a value of X = 3.79 which means that, the level of soft-skills of construction professionals is high in the study area.

Table 3: Construction professionals soft-skills in AMAC, Nigeria.

Construction professionals soft-skills	X	SD	Decision
Communication skill	4.28	1.376	High
Integrity skill	4.24	1.303	High
Self-management/time-management skill	4.12	1.014	High
Teamwork and networking skill	3.94	0.110	High
Flexibility/adaptability skill	3.94	0.110	High

Creativity and curiosity skill	3.93	0.121	High
Negotiation skill	3.91	0.177	High
Responsibility skill	3.78	0.168	High
Emotional intelligence skill	3.76	0.119	High
Problem solving skill	3.76	0.119	High
Decision making skill	3.69	0.138	High
Cross-cultural relationships skill	3.58	0.193	High
Conflict management skill	3.58	0.193	High
Work ethic skill	3.56	0.160	High
Courtesy skill	3.55	0.199	High
Enthusiasm & positive attitude skill	3.54	0.180	High
Workplace professionalism skill	3.54	0.180	High
Client management skill	3.52	0.211	High
Average Mean Score = ∑M / 18 = 68.1713 / 18	**3.79**		**High**

N = 327.

Correlational Analysis

Objective 3: To determine the significant influence of construction professionals soft-skills on professionals' performance in the study area

Pearson correlation was utilised in determining the significant influence of construction professionals soft-skills on construction professionals' performance in the study area

Table 4 below shows the significant influence of construction professionals soft-skills (CPSs) on construction professionals' performance (CPP) in the study area.

Therefore, from the table it was deduced that, construction professionals soft-skills (CPSs) has a significant influence on construction professionals' performance (CPP) as the correlation coefficient (r) = 0.811(81.1%) with $p < 0.000$ which indicate a strong positive significant influence between the two variables (construction professionals soft-skills and construction professionals' performance). That is as one variable increases (construction professionals soft-skills), also the other variable (construction professionals' performance) tends to increase, because the significance level is very low ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), that the influence is statistically significant. It is stated that, construction professionals soft-skills (CPSs) has strong positive significant influence on construction professionals' performance (CPP) with ($r = 0.811$, $n = 327$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4: Influence of construction professionals soft-skills on professionals' performance in the study area.

		CPSs	**CPP**
Construction professionals soft-skills (**CPSs**)	Pearson Correlation	1	.811**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	327	
Construction professionals' performance (**CPP**)	Pearson Correlation	.811**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N		327
**Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: SPSS version 23 (Output).

DISCUSSION

Objective 1: Level of construction professionals' performance in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria

It was revealed from table 2 above that the level of construction professionals' performance is high in AMAC, Nigeria with an average mean score value (X = 3.81), and the 3 highest performances to include communication to overcome institutional barriers with (X = 4.28), client satisfaction with (X = 4.24), and project efficiency and profitability with (X = 4.12).

The findings validate the assertion of Lea et al. (2020) that a good project manager should be able to spot the red flags of an impending issue and make the necessary adjustments to keep the project on schedule and within budget, and they should be constantly looking for ways to reduce waste and improve productivity. Also, Darlington and Onuoha (2023) that when construction team are contented with their jobs and roles, they tend to put in more efforts to gain more recognition, and that boost performance. The findings also corroborate with the result of Frefer et al. (2018), Omer (2017), Homthong and Moungnoi (2016), Mukhtar and Amirudin (2016), and Ramlee et al. (2016). As Project Management Institute (PMI, 2020) stressed that the performance of construction professionals is crucial to the success of construction projects. Construction (project) planning involves determining what needs to be done in terms of scope and deliverables, how will it be accomplished, who will implement it, what is the duration, how much will it cost and what the risks are. So, level of performance by the construction professionals in AMAC, Nigeria is highly desirable to meet up with the construction project success within time, budget, and required quality.

Objective 2: Level of construction professionals soft-skills in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria

It was revealed from table 3 above that the level of soft-skills of construction professionals is high in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria with average mean score value (X = 3.79), and the 3 highest construction professionals soft-skills to include communication skill (X = 4.28), integrity skill (X = 4.24), and self-management/time-management skill (X = 4.12).

The findings corroborate with the result of van Heerden et al. (2023), Wen (2023), Tahir (2019), van Heerden et al. (2018), Crawford and Dalton (2016), Mahasneh and Thabet (2016), Taylor (2016). This also validates the assertion of Durão et al. (2017) that soft-skills have more influence on projects' success than do technical skills. Because the construction industry is one of the toughest jobs with its tight schedules and deadlines, its professionals need to be able to clearly and succinctly explain to employees everything from organisational goals to specific tasks (Alison, 2022), and they have to be experts in managing their time, their team's time and the overall time of the project (Peter, 2023).

Objective 3: Significant influence of construction professionals soft-skills on professionals' performance in the study area

Table 4 revealed that construction professionals soft-skills (CPSs) has strong positive significant influence on construction professionals' performance (CPP) with ($r = 0.811$, $n = 327$, $p < 0.05$). That is as one construction professionals soft-skills, also the construction professionals' performance tends to increase, because the significance level is very low ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), that the influence is statistically significant.

The finding corroborates with the results of Bawa et al. (2025) that there was positive strong significant effect of construction professionals soft-skills on construction project effectiveness in AMAC, Nigeria with B-value = 0.867 (86.7%) and $p < 0.000$. also, the result of Kollmann et al. (2023) validates that the matter of managerial and professional abilities within the building sector is presently relevant, essential, and holds social significance. Thus, construction managers need to be equipped with various essential skills as to be able to prosecute projects. Hence, it validates the assertion of Gulati (2021) that soft-skills also contribute to project management. Also, soft-skills are essential to employability and retention, if obtained and observed can significantly reduce sector-wide turnover (van Heerden et al., 2023).

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of this study are based on the research findings as follows:

1. The level of construction professionals' performance is high in AMAC, Nigeria with communication to overcome institutional barriers, client satisfaction, as well as project efficiency and profitability as the highest performances.
2. The level of construction professionals soft-skills is high in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria with communication skill, integrity skill, and self-management/time-management skill as the highest construction professionals soft-skills.
3. Construction professionals soft-skills has strong positive significant influence on construction professionals' performance with ($r = 0.811$, $n = 327$, $p < 0.05$).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of this study are based on the research conclusions as follows:

1. Construction industry is dynamic in nature and to maintain performance in the industry, the policy makers should always document and use the outcome of each project activity continually to improve level of performance of the construction professionals.
2. Construction professionals should stress and practice soft-skills in their daily endeavours to ensure construction success and project delivery.
3. Let there be collaboration among all the stakeholders in the construction industry to ensure robust soft-skills are acquired to stimulate professional's performance in order to derived the full potentials of the industry in terms of employment generation and infrastructural development.

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