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Factors Responsible for Non-Compliance to Regulatory Practices in the Nigerian Construction Industry

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Abstract

Non-compliance with regulatory practices in the Nigerian construction industry presents a persistent threat to construction quality, safety, and sustainable development. This study investigates the factors contributing to non-compliance, with a focus on construction professionals in Akure, Ondo State. Despite the existence of frameworks such as the National Building Code and oversight by regulatory agencies, enforcement remains weak due to issues such as limited resources, poor inter-agency coordination, corruption, and inadequate training. Quantitative data was collected through surveys administered to 148 construction professionals. Statistical analysis using SPSS revealed that technological advancement, effective monitoring, and strong communication of regulatory requirements are key drivers of compliance. Conversely, lack of communication channels, poor safety culture, weak enforcement, and ethical lapses were identified as major contributors to non-compliance. The findings underscore the need for a multifaceted strategy to improve compliance, including regulatory integration, stakeholder engagement, enhanced enforcement capacity, and improved training. Addressing these factors is critical to advancing safety, efficiency, and accountability in the Nigerian construction sector.

Keywords: Construction, enforcement, factor, non-compliance, regulatory

1 Introduction

A significant challenge within the Nigerian construction sector is the weak enforcement and implementation of established regulations (Albert *et al*., 2025a; Babalola & Harinarain, 2024). Although frameworks such as the National Building Code (NBC) and oversight by the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing are in place, actual enforcement often falls short (Mazibuko, Simpeh & Smallwood, 2021). Many construction projects ignore key safety and quality standards due to inadequate monitoring and enforcement practices (Ogunde *et al*., 2018). This enforcement gap contributes to structural failures and safety risks, as regulatory bodies frequently lack the resources and updated tools necessary for effective oversight (Ozobu *et al*., 2025; Oyewobi *et al*., 2019). Enhancing enforcement mechanisms, including increasing inspection frequencies and employing modern technology, is crucial for ensuring compliance and improving construction safety (Okoye *et al.,* 2016). The Nigerian construction industry is plagued by fragmentation and poor coordination among regulatory bodies

(Nwachukwu, Oladepo & Avickson, 2024; Ameh & Odusami, 2010). Agencies such as the Nigerian Building and Road Research Institute (NBRRI) and various state authorities often have overlapping duties and inconsistent regulations (Eneh *et al*., 2024; Adebayo, 2020). This fragmentation leads to a disjointed regulatory system where conflicting standards and practices create confusion. The lack of a unified regulatory approach complicates compliance for construction professionals and results in inefficiencies in oversight. Integrating and coordinating regulatory efforts could streamline processes and enhance the effectiveness of oversight (Amucheazi & Nwankwo, 2020). Another issue is the insufficient involvement of industry stakeholders in the regulatory process (Peiroavar & Davoudzadeh, 2025). Professionals and experts within the construction sector frequently have limited opportunities to contribute to the development and revision of regulations (Shooshtarian *et al*., 2022). This lack of engagement results in regulations that may not fully address practical industry challenges (Bal *et al.,* 2013). When key stakeholders are excluded, regulations can become outdated or misaligned with current practices, leading to reduced effectiveness and increased non-compliance (Ebekozien, Aigbavboa & Ramotshela, 2024).

The effectiveness of regulatory practices is also compromised by limited resources and inadequate training for regulatory personnel (Ozobu *et al*., 2025). Many regulatory bodies face financial constraints and outdated equipment, impacting their ability to enforce building standards effectively (Ayedun *et al*., 2012). Additionally, the lack of ongoing professional development for staff means that regulators may not be up-to-date with the latest construction technologies and methods (Dada & Jagboro, 2012). Addressing these resource and training gaps is essential for improving regulatory oversight and enforcement (Ebekozien *et al*., 2023). Inefficiencies and bureaucratic obstacles in regulatory processes present another challenge (Dahiru *et al*., 2012). The process for securing permits and approvals for construction projects is often slow and encumbered by administrative red tape (Fakunle *et al*., 2020). These delays not only extend project timelines but also increase costs, causing frustration among stakeholders and potentially leading to shortcuts or non-compliance (Idowu *et al*., 2021). Streamlining regulatory procedures and reducing bureaucratic barriers could enhance project efficiency and compliance (Osei-Asibey *et al*., 2021). A notable problem is the lack of transparency and accountability within regulatory practices (Olanrewaju *et al*., 2025). The decision-making processes and enforcement actions of regulatory bodies are often opaque, which undermines trust and opens the door to potential corruption (Adeniran *et al*., 2024; Akadiri *et al*., 2012). This opacity can lead to inconsistent enforcement and unequal treatment of projects. Ensuring greater transparency and accountability in regulatory practices is vital for fostering a fair and effective regulatory environment.

Lastly, there is a need for stronger integration of environmental and sustainability standards into regulatory practices (Idowu *et al*., 2020). The Nigerian construction industry often prioritizes immediate economic benefits over long-term environmental sustainability, resulting in practices that may not align with global environmental standards (Ogunde *et al*., 2018). The lack of stringent environmental regulations limits the industry's ability to address issues such as resource depletion and pollution. Adopting robust environmental and sustainability standards is essential for promoting sustainable development in the construction sector.

2 Literature review

Factors responsible for non-compliance to regulatory practices

1. Awareness and Knowledge Gaps: Many in Nigeria's construction sector lack up-to-date knowledge of regulatory requirements. This stems from poor information dissemination, limited access to resources, and inadequate emphasis on regulations in construction education. Consequently, non-compliant practices often occur due to simple ignorance, especially in smaller firms and rural areas (Abiola & Adebayo, 2021; Abolore, 2012).

2. Financial Pressures: The high cost of regulatory compliance poses a significant challenge, particularly for smaller construction companies. In a competitive market with tight profit margins, there's a strong temptation to cut corners on safety and compliance to reduce costs. This issue is more pronounced during economic downturns, with short-term financial gains often prioritized over long-term regulatory adherence.

3. Weak Enforcement Mechanisms: Regulatory bodies in Nigeria frequently lack the resources and resolve to effectively enforce construction regulations (Albert, Shakantu and Ibrahim, 2018). Infrequent or superficial inspections, coupled with inadequate penalties for violations, create an environment where non-compliance is seen as a low-risk option (Abisuga & Okuntade, 2020). Inconsistent enforcement across regions further undermines the perceived importance of regulatory compliance.

4. Corruption Issues: Widespread corruption in the construction industry significantly contributes to non-compliance. Practices such as bribing officials, falsifying documents, and leveraging political connections to avoid penalties are unfortunately common. This not only directly results in non-compliance but also erodes trust in the regulatory system, discouraging honest companies from investing in compliance efforts.

5. Inadequate Safety Culture: Many Nigerian construction companies view safety measures and compliance as unnecessary expenses rather than essential operational components. This attitude, often stemming from top management, creates an environment where non-compliant behaviors become normalized. Workers may hesitate to report safety concerns, fearing repercussions or believing their reports will be ignored.

6. Training and Education Shortfalls: The lack of comprehensive, ongoing training contributes significantly to non-compliance. Many workers enter the field with minimal formal safety training, and companies often fail to invest in regular updates on safety standards and compliance procedures (Albert, Shakantu & Saidu, 2021). The absence of a culture of continuous professional development exacerbates this issue, resulting in a workforce ill-equipped to ensure regulatory compliance.

7. Resource Constraints: Many Nigerian construction companies face significant resource limitations that hinder compliance efforts. There's often a shortage of qualified safety personnel, particularly in smaller firms or rural areas. Additionally, many companies operate with outdated or insufficient safety equipment due to financial constraints or lack of availability. These resource limitations create substantial barriers to achieving and maintaining regulatory compliance.

8. Time Pressures: The construction industry often operates under tight deadlines, leading to shortcuts in safety procedures and compliance efforts. The prioritization of speed over safety is particularly evident in competitive bidding situations, where companies may commit to unrealistic timelines. This not only leads to direct non-compliance but also creates a stressful work environment more prone to accidents and oversights.

9. Regulatory Complexity: The regulatory framework governing Nigeria's construction industry is often complex and frequently changing. This complexity can be overwhelming, especially for smaller companies without dedicated compliance departments. The difficulty in interpreting and applying these regulations, combined with frequent changes, often leads to unintentional non-compliance and creates barriers to consistent adherence across the industry.

10. Poor Risk Assessment: Many construction companies in Nigeria fail to conduct thorough and regular risk assessments. This inadequacy stems from factors including lack of expertise, time constraints, and underestimation of potential hazards. Without proper risk assessment, companies cannot proactively identify and mitigate safety and compliance issues, leading to a reactive approach that increases the likelihood of non-compliance and safety incidents.

3 Research method

This research adopts a quantitative research design to evaluate adherence to construction regulatory practices. Quantitative research focuses on measuring variables that can be quantified and subjected to statistical analysis (Duckett, 2021). It is particularly well-suited for systematically investigating numerical data, making it ideal for identifying trends, patterns, and relationships related to compliance with construction regulations. The study follows a non-experimental design, aiming to provide a numerical description of behaviors, attitudes, and patterns related to regulatory compliance within the construction sector (Mohajan, 2020). This approach is suitable for gathering data from a large sample, offering broad insights into how construction professionals adhere to regulations. The study population

comprises construction professionals, including architects, builders, engineers, estate valuers, quantity surveyors, surveying and geo-informatic, and town planners in Akure, Ondo State. 148 out of the expected 160 questionnaires were received and found suitable for analysis. The study achieved an overall purpose rate of 92.5% which is considered adequate. Baruch & Holtom (2008) analyses response rates across academic studies and found that average response rates for surveys vary by type and audience, with rates between 35-40% being typical for organizational research. This would suggest that 92.5% is indeed adequate for this study. Stratified random sampling was used to select a representative sample of professionals involved in construction regulatory compliance, promoting research validity and reliability. The instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire, serving as the main method for data collection. The questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative information on various aspects of regulatory compliance, including existing laws regulating construction and the effects of non-compliance with construction regulations. The structured questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A collected professional information from respondents. Section B explored factors responsible for compliance to regulatory practices in construction using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Section C assessed factors contributing to non-compliance of regulatory practice, utilizing a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Data analysis was conducted using the Software Package for Social Science (SPSS), and included mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution, and percentage calculations.

4 Results and Discussion

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

		Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
Academic qualification	ND	17	11.5
	HND	35	23.6
	B.Sc	79	53.4
	M.Sc	11	7.4
	PhD	6	4.1
		148	**100**
Professions	Architects	24	16.2
	Builders	32	21.6
	Engineers	30	20.3
	Estate valuers	4	2.7
	Q. surveyors	26	17.6
	Town planners	11	7.4
	Surveying and geo-informatic	21	14.2
		148	**100**

Years of Experience	1-5 years	42	28.4
	6-10 years	62	41.9
	11-15 years	34	23.0
	16-20 years	7	4.7
	21 years above	3	2.0
		148	**100**

Various questionnaires were distributed to professionals in Akure, Ondo State which comprises of Architects, Builders, Quantity Surveyors, Project Managers and Engineers. Out of the 160 questionnaires distributed, only 148 were returned. From table 1 shows the academic qualification of respondents revealed that majority had levels of education in their career with 11.5% having a National Diploma, 23.6% have a higher national diploma, 53.4% have Bachelor's degree, and 11.5% of respondents have advanced degrees (M.Sc and PhD). Respondents in this study have varying professional qualifications with 16.2% were architects, 21.6% were builders, 17.6% were quantity surveyor, 20.3% were engineers, 7.4 were town planners, 2.7 were estate valuers and 14.2% were surveying and geo-informatic. Furthermore, years of experience varied among clients as nearly half of respondents had 6-10 years of experience as shown in the table. Respondents with 1-5 years of experience were about 28.4%, those with 11-15 years of experience were 23% of the total respondents and those with more than 16 years of experience in construction accounted for 6.7%.

Table 2: Factors responsible for compliance to regulatory practices

Variables	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD	R
Technological advancement	1(3.7)%	3(2.0)%	9(6.1)%	60(40.5)%	75(50.7)%	4.385	0.752	1
Communication Regulatory Requirement	0(0)%	4(2.7)%	5(3.4)%	70(47.3)%	69(46.6)%	4.378	0.684	2
Effective Monitoring	1(0.7)%	3(2.0)%	8(5.4)%	68(45.9)%	68(45.9)%	4.357	0.735	3
Client Demand for Regulation	1(0.7)%	3(2.0)%	7(4.7)%	70(47.3)%	67(45.3)%	4.349	0.726	4
Incentive Compliance	2(1.4)%	3(2.0)%	8(5.4)%	64(43.2)%	71(48.0)%	4.346	0.789	5
Strong Communication channel	3(2.0)%	5(3.4)%	4(2.7)%	63(42.6)%	73(49.3)%	4.345	0.854	6
Stakeholder Engagement	2(1.4)%	5(3.4)%	3(2.0)%	68(45.9)%	70(47.3)%	4.345	0.797	6
Regular Training	1(0.7)%	5(3.4)%	4(2.7)%	75(50.7)%	63(42.6)%	4.311	0.746	7
Fear of Legal Consequences	1(0.7)%	7(4.7)%	6(4.1)%	68(45.9)%	68(44.6)%	4.291	0.810	8
Organizational Culture of compliance	6(4.1)%	3(2.0)%	5(3.4)%	88(59.5)%	46(31.1)%	4.115	0.885	9

The Table 2 show that technological advancement ranked highest with mean value of 4.385, follow by communication regulatory requirement, effective monitoring, client demand for regulation and soon with mean value of 4.378, 4.357 and 4.349 respectively. These results corroborate with the study of Tunji *et al*. (2018) that technological innovation plays a vital role in promoting regulatory compliance. The cost of technological advancement in construction could also be a reason for non-adherence to regulatory practices (Albert *et al*., 2025b). Projects that engage stakeholders in regular meetings experienced 50% fewer compliance disputes, as open communication helps address potential issues early (Akinradewo *et al*., 2018). Ogunbiyi *et al*. (2015) emphasize the need for robust enforcement to ensure compliance. Further, when clients actively participate in compliance monitoring, overall regulatory adherence improve by 45%, highlighting the influential role of client involvement.

Table 3: Factors contributing to non-compliance of regulatory practice

Variables	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD	R
Lack of Strong Communication Channel	3(2.0)%	5(3.4)%	4(2.7)%	63(42.6)%	73(49.3)%	4.339	0.843	1
Inadequate Safety Culture	1(0.7)%	5(3.4)%	7(4.7)%	65(43.9)%	70(45.3)%	4.338	0.791	2
Inadequate Enforcement	2(1.4)%	6(4.1)%	7(4.7)%	60(40.5)%	73(49.3)%	4.326	0.851	3
Poor Ethical practices	3(2.0)%	3(2.0)%	9(6.1)%	61(41.2)%	72(48.6)%	4.324	0.844	4
Shortage of Inspection personnel	2(1.4)%	4(2.7)%	9(6.1)%	67(45.3)%	66(44.6)%	4.291	0.814	5
Cost Cutting Measures	3(2.0)%	3(2.0)%	10(6.8)%	68(45.9)%	64(43.2)%	4.265	0.839	6
Cost Pressures	1(0.7)%	6(4.1)%	9(6.1)%	70(47.3)%	62(41.9)%	4.257	0.808	7
Time constraints	3(2.0)%	8(5.4)%	5(3.4)%	85(57.4)%	47(31.8)%	4.186	0.871	8
Complexity of regulation	1(0.7)%	8(5.4)%	9(6.1)%	75(50.7)%	55(37.2)%	4.182	0.818	9
Lack of awareness	3(2.0)%	8(5.4)%	5(3.4)%	85(57.4)%	47(31.8)%	4.115	0.868	10

The factors contributing to non-compliance with construction regulations as revealed by this study in Table 3. It shows that lack of strong communication channels emerged as the highest-ranking factor, with a mean score of 4.339. This suggests that breakdowns in communication, both within organizations and between organizations and regulatory bodies, are a significant barrier to compliance. This also follow by inadequate safety culture, inadequate enforcement of construction regulations and poor ethical practices with mean score of 4.338, 4.326 and 4.324 respectively. This indicates that non-compliance is often rooted in broader issues of organizational culture and industry-wide practices. These findings highlight the complex interplay of organizational, cultural,

and practical factors that influence regulatory compliance in the construction industry. They suggest that a multifaceted approach, addressing both internal company practices and industry-wide systems, is necessary to improve overall compliance rates.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

Non-compliance with regulatory practices in the Nigerian construction industry is a multifaceted problem rooted in a combination of systemic, institutional, and human factors. Key contributors include weak enforcement mechanisms, corruption, lack of awareness or understanding of regulations, inadequate training, and the drive to cut costs and maximize profits at the expense of safety and standards. These factors not only compromise the quality and safety of construction projects but also erode public trust and hinder sustainable development.

To address these challenges, a collaborative effort involving government agencies, construction professionals, industry stakeholders, and the public is essential. Strengthening regulatory frameworks, enhancing enforcement capabilities, promoting transparency, investing in capacity building, and raising awareness about the importance of compliance can create a more accountable and efficient construction sector. Only through such concerted efforts can the industry move toward greater professionalism, safety, and sustainable growth.

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