Editorial

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Biographical notes: Olugbenga Timo Oladinrin is a Chartered Quantity Surveyor (MRICS). He obtained his PhD in Construction Project Management from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, and master's and bachelor's (First class honours) degrees in Quantity Surveying from the Federal University of Technology Akure (FUTA), Nigeria. Currently, he is an Associate Professor (Teaching & Research) at the School of Art, Design and Architecture, University of Plymouth. Formerly, he was a Senior Lecturer in Quantity Surveying at the University of Wolverhampton in the UK, a Postdoctoral fellow at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and a Lecturer at FUTA. He teaches quantity surveying and construction project management both in the UK and abroad. He has a strong track record of research outputs in publications and grants. His research areas include construction ethics, sustainable construction, new working practices, circular economy concept and quantity surveying practices.

Issaka E. Ndekugri is a world-class expert on construction contracts, construction claims and dispute resolution. With advanced degrees in Law, Civil Engineering, and Construction Management from world-class universities and relevant industry experience, he is a well-rounded professional hybrid able to undertake research and consultancy assignments in the design and implementation of procedures for procurement of construction and engineering projects and the resolution of disputes often encountered on such projects. His experience has been built on direct employment as; a contracts engineer exercising roles involving negotiation and contract administration on large infrastructure projects; and an academic with an excellent research track into practical procurement, engineering and construction contract management issues. He has undergone world-class negotiation theory and practice training, membership and chairing dispute boards on major international infrastructure projects, and mediation (by the London-based international Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution).

Onaopepo Adeniyi holds a PhD in Built Environment from the Northumbria University, UK. He obtained his Master's and Bachelor's with distinction and first class respectively in Quantity Surveying from the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria. He is a corporate member of the Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors. He is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and has previously served abroad as an academic before joining Northumbria University, UK. In his career, he has been involved in funded research, teaching, and doctoral and postgraduate research degree student supervision with publications in reputable outlets. He is a member of the Sustainable Construction Future Research Group at Northumbria University, and his research interest covers different aspects of the construction industry including economics, data and digital construction, and resilience in the built environment.

Srinath Perera is a renowned academic and professional, leading the Construction Management group and the Centre for Smart Modern Construction at Western Sydney University, Australia. He has been recognised for his expertise and he is a Fellow of the Royal Society of New South Wales, the Australian Institute of Building, and a Chartered Surveyor. With experience as a consultant quantity surveyor and project manager, he holds a First-Class Honours degree in Quantity Surveying, a Master's in Information Technology, and a Doctorate focused on applying Artificial Intelligence in Project Management. His research interests include construction economics, project management, sustainability economics, and building resilience.

1 Introduction

Companies all around the world were faced with uncertainties in operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Substantially, the distortion in inter- and intra-company connections within the construction business environment affected both local and international supply chains. Consequently, the construction industry's contribution to macroeconomic development was affected. Since a pandemic is a massive and unusual phenomenon, inquiries were launched to help stakeholders better understand and devise measures to build resilience and ensure viability in similar situations. Several pieces of literature anticipated a shift in practice and modes of operation described as 'new normal' and 'next normal' construction practice, while others anticipated a near-complete return

to pre-COVID-19 pandemic modes of practice. Irrespective of an individual's post-pandemic disposition and expectations, the impacts of COVID-19 on companies and the potential of a future similar global experience cannot be denied. Amidst the series of events and research, a critical aspect with the risk of being ignored because of the turbulence introduced by the pandemic is ethics. As a result, a call for research studies in this direction was made towards the publication of a special issue. This special issue aimed to provide some thoughts on handling a variety of ethical issues triggered by disruptions and subsequent changes. A proper ethical climate could help construction organisations manage daily tasks during crisis circumstances and contribute to construction businesses' long-term sustainability. The editors welcomed a wide range of submissions on the COVID-19 pandemic with an ethics perspective. Eventually, five articles were accepted, and the accepted articles offered insights for decision-making mainly from four directions through the lens of ethics. The directions are virtual teams (Aghimien et al., 2024; Oladinrin et al., 2024), effects of the pandemic (Moyanga et al., 2024), productivity (Omotayo et al., 2024), and compliance with standards (Khalil et al., 2024). The papers in this issue will be useful for academics, policymakers, and significantly, for construction industry practitioners to help them adjust their companies for long-term sustainability on ethics issues, specifically in preparation for disturbances similar to COVID-19.

2 Overview of the special issue

In the first paper, Aghimien et al. (2024) examined the challenges facing virtual teams in the South African construction industry. The study adopted a survey approach, conducted the analysis using fuzzy synthetic evaluation and found five groups of impedance to the success of virtual teams. The study concluded that project success through virtual teams can be enhanced through adequate ethical, technical, and administrative focus measures relating to

1 trust and cohesion

2 diversity

3 leadership

4 communication

5 task specifications.

The study provided further insight into the issues affecting the success of virtual team delivery projects in the South African Construction industry.

In the second paper, Oladinrin et al. (2024) submitted that the COVID-19 outbreak brought a new dynamic into team decision-making from face-to-face to virtual. The study examined the severity of ethical issues in virtual environments. Construction professionals were surveyed, and analysis was done with the Kruskal-Wallis H test and modified relative severity value (mRSV). The result revealed that the topmost ethical issues inhibiting virtual team decision-making include technical uncertainties, unpredictable communication, lack of follow-through on ideas, and unequally distributed

information. The authors suggested a thorough collective appraisal of potential glitches before proposing virtual collaborations.

'Characterisation of the effects of coronavirus pandemic on construction projects delivery' by Moyanga et al. (2024) is the third paper. The study was founded on the need to sustain project delivery in the face of disruptions such as COVID-19. It is believed that understanding and categorising the effects of a pandemic on project delivery will facilitate the provision of pragmatic solutions by relevant companies in preparation for similar future occurrences. A firm-based survey was conducted, and 139 copies of the questionnaire were analysed. The result revealed three categories of effects: workforce-related, cost-related, and project-related. Automation of processes and workforce anxiety control mechanisms appear to be very important in managing the effects.

In the fourth paper 'Managing construction delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK construction industry', Omotayo et al. (2024) deployed a qualitative interpretive approach to understand the approach used in construction companies to maintain productivity on projects during the pandemic. The result revealed an apparent disparity in onsite and office productivity levels due to the pandemic, and the study suggested organisation-specific resilience approach development and deployment. Measures must be put in place to bolster workers' efforts to attain deadlines as the thought of triggering a force majeure clause on projects is not sufficient.

In the fifth paper, Nimer et al. (2024) measured the level of compliance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) disclosure requirements and examined the impact of firm characteristics on the compliance level. Three hundred and fourteen companies across the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) market were engaged in the study. The result suggests that leverage and the quality of auditors have a huge effect. Companies with higher leverage ratios comply better with IFRS disclosure requirements. Other firm characteristics such as firm size, profitability and liquidity do not show any significant relationship with IFRS compliance level. Compliance with standards is a professional and ethical requirement expected to be ensured irrespective of the existence of a pandemic or otherwise.

We would like to appreciate the contributing authors for spending their time and other resources to compile the articles and share their insights with the world. We also sincerely appreciate the reviewers, the journal editor-in-chief, and the journal publisher for their support with the review and editorial procedures of this special issue.

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