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Evaluating The Low Performance of Local Ghanaian Construction Firms in The Upper West Region of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

The true functional performance of any country is wholly dependent on the provision of standard and adequate infrastructure. Infrastructure thus plays a pivotal role in the development of every nation of which Ghana is no exception. The participation of local Ghanian construction firms in the execution of infrastructural projects cannot be over emphasized. However, majority of the local indigenous construction firms perform abysmally and poorly as far as quality delivery is concerned. Many projects undertaken by local construction firms experience delays and other substandard performance. The study aims to assess and evaluate the root causes of poor performance of local construction firms. The study adopted descriptive survey design involving the administration of survey questionnaires, interviews and observation to a sample of 71 respondents made of Quantity Surveyors, Architects, Structural engineers, Builders, Steel benders and Electricians. The collected data was analyzed using statistical package for social science (SPSS). The results were presented using percentages and mean values in Tables and charts. The findings of the study suggested that lack of adequate managerial and technical expertise, inadequate equipment and lack adequate skilled labor shortage of materials, improper design, unreliable sub-contractors, complexity of the project, unclear details in drawings, and unavailability of liquidity were the key factors causing low performance of indigenous local construction firms in the Upper West Region. The study recommends that sub-contractors should be selected based on their past experience. Contractors should not be selected only based on their lowest bid and political persuasions. Local construction firms should have competent – spot supervisors to ensure persuasive execution of the project in time. The study finally recommends that local construction firms should ensure they have necessary capital to purchase equipment and machinery for easy and prompt completion.

Keywords: Performance, Evaluating, Assessing, Construction Firms, Local, Contractors, Consultants.

Introduction

The construction industry is an important sector of the Ghanaian economy. It contributes an average of 8.5% of Gross Domestic Product (Ghana Statistical Service). It employed 2.3% of the economically active population in in 2002 Amankwa, (2003). The dynamic nature of client, and the complexity of the construction industry and continuous demand for improved and efficient project delivery have put pressure on construction firms. It has therefore become imperative to access the performance of indigenous local construction firms. This means that in evaluating the performance of construction firms, the set of criteria used should be appreciated by all players in the industry. However, the

significance of the industry in terms of its contribution to the economy are well recognized, there have been constant criticisms on the performance of the major industry players most especially contractors. These criticisms have in the recent past led to a number of studies that focused on assessing the factors affecting the performance of construction firms. Owusu Tawiah (1999), identified two critical and valuable factors affecting Ghanaian owned local construction firms. The two factors were financial and managerial factors. In respect to the financial factors, bureaucratic payment procedures, volatility of the currency, access to capital, delay interim payments certificates, inflation among others constituted critical financial factors confronting indigenous Ghanaian owned local construction firms. Managerial and performance assessment is fundamental to organizational improvement on factors such as poor accounting and financial management, materials control on site, theft and fraud by own employees, project planning, site management and lack of technical expertise among others constituted critical managerial factors confronting Ghanaian local construction firms.

While quantifying the value of management assessment is difficult, it is clear that assessing and evaluating local indigenous construction firms on projects are crucial in determining the value for money (VFM). The subject of evaluation has become more concern to many countries at various levels of socio-economic development. Many have realized the need to improve the performance of construction projects J.H.M. Tah et al. (, 2000).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Ghana, the mandated state agency responsible for the registration of construction firms both building and civil construction divisions is the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing (MOWWH). The MOWWH does this in collaboration with the Registrar General's Department under the company's Act79 (1963) of the companies' registration code. On registration, construction firms are classified based on a number of guidelines, including the following: plant equipment holding, financial standing, previous performance and technical expertise. The MOWWH has two main classifications for contractors: Category 'D' for general building works and category 'K' for civil works.

According to MOWWH bulletin, inclusion of a contractor's name in the Ministry's classification register is not compulsory, but then it is only those who are duly registered who can tender for government contracts. The construction firms for the categories mentioned above are sub-divided into four classes, ranging from class D1, D2, D3, D4 for building construction firms and K1, K2, K3, K4 for civil works.

Class D3/D4 and K3/K4 construction firms are commonly referred to as the small-scale building contractors (SSBCs) and D1/D2 and K1/K2 are typically referred to as big firms.

A feature of local construction firms which are mostly small scale in nature in the Ghana Construction Industry ranking is that, they are often believed to be one-man enterprises, having low financial and capital base and also lacking the requisite managerial skills to adequately face up to the numerous and difficult challenges they constantly have to encounter in a typical developing economy such as Ghana's Ahadzie,(2007).

Notwithstanding the difficulties however, these small firms tend to have a very wide geographical dispersion championing local government development in the many rural and remotest parts of Ghana Amoah, Ahadzie, Divine and Dansoh,(2011**).**

Official statistics indicates that, indeed, these so-called small construction firms represent over 95% of construction companies operating in the economy. In this respect, their activities are useful in

stimulating growth in many rural and deprived communities where the government is rigorously championing local development.

Within the foregoing context, it can also be noted that, the dominant role of small construction firms by classification in the Ghanaian construction sector is not by accident (Ganesan, 1983; Hillebrandt, 1990; Wells, 2007).

Typically, construction is essentially a large industry of small firms in all construction economies Fellows, *et al.*, 1983; Wells, (2007). Among others, this dominance of local construction firms is dictated by particular characteristics of the industry, such as the wide dispersion of the demand, flexibility in the scale of production, lack of standardization of materials, the effect of climatic controls on the use of materials, some of which can be very bulky; the low capital requirement for entry, especially for craft-based jobs (Ganesan, 1983: Hillebrandt, 1990; Wells, 2007).

Most literature in Ghana has identified numerous potential factors that could affect the performance of local contractors on construction projects. For instance, evidence provided by Edmonds and Miles (1984) and Ofori (1984) about three decades ago revealed chronic delay in the payments of contractors for work done, lack of credit facilities for firms, poor communication structures and an unreliable material supply base. In other studies, Ahadzie (1995) also reported evidence of lack of finance and credit facilities for contractors, delay in the payment of contractors for work done, design changes and/or variations, low morale and motivation of craftsmen, poor planning, supervision and low mechanization, as some of the important factors that could be affecting construction performance. In their procurement of audit of Ghana, the World Bank (1996, 2003), Westring (1997), and Crown Agents (1998), have continuously reported documentary evidence of contracts taking very lengthy periods to reach financial closure and also, often subjected to unnecessary delays, poor coordination and communication structures, fiscal constraints and extensive systems of controls and land ownership disputes.

In a recent study, Fugar and Agyarkwa-Baah (2010), synthesized a number of these factors towards highlighting their relevance in contemporary Ghanaian construction practice. They concluded that the factors affecting construction performance could be classified under the following themes: materials, manpower, equipment, financing, environment, changes, government action, contractual relationships and scheduling and controlling techniques.

Indeed, there are a lot of studies on factors affecting construction performance in Ghana. Although these significant bodies of knowledge exist in the Ghanaian context, extant review of the literature suggests that there is a lack of rigorous theoretical and empirical examination to establish the underlying characteristics of the numerous factors identified as affecting the performance of construction firms, especially with regard to the performance of local construction firms. It is contended that, given that small scale construction firms account for over 95% of building firms operating in the Ghanaian Construction Industry (GCI), and also in financial terms contributing substantially to construction GDP at decentralized and Local Government areas in Ghana, their evaluation of the knowledge of the factors influencing performance in the construction industry could be useful in developing a framework towards effective performance management and improvement in a very crucial sector of the Ghanaian Construction Industry.

DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY

The study's research approach is a descriptive survey, which entails watching and documenting a subject's manners without affecting it in any manner. It seeks to gather relevant information about the

subject matter without manipulation and prejudice. The choice for using the descriptive survey method stems from the researcher's use of the survey to collect data. The descriptive survey method is also proper where it is impossible to test and measure a large number of samples needed for a more quantitative type of survey. The result of the descriptive study is a valuable tool for many areas of research; hence it is a choice for the researcher. The respondents were 71 which comprises of 23 registered local firms, 5 respondent each from various consultancies and an average of 12 workers in each construction and consultancy firms working in the Region.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To determine and evaluate the significant low performance of local construction firms and their challenges in the Upper West Region, seven imaginable questions were raised by the researcher for the literate contractors (foremen and artisans), consultants, and clients to rate their level of disagreement, neutral and agreement on all the six category which is clearly stated in the table below.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

	FREQUENCY	
DEMOGRAPHICS	**N**	**%**
Gender		
Female	11	15.0
Male	60	85.0
Age		
18 – 25 years	15	21.1
26 – 33 years	11	15.5
34 – 41 years	20	28.2
42 years and above	25	35.2
Educational qualification		
Basic	13	18.3
Secondary	16	22.5
CTC I and II	20	28.2
Tertiary	22	31.0
Years of practice		
1 – 5 years	15	21.1
6 – 10 years	19	26.8
11 – 15 years	11	15.5
16 years and above	26	36.6
Number of employees (permanent)		
Below 5	5	7.0
6 – 10	30	42.3
11 – 15	17	24.0
16 – 20	11	15.5
21 and above	8	11.2

N=71 Source: Field Survey, 2023

Demographic Profile of Respondent

The results in Table 1 above shows that of the seventy - one participants sampled for the purpose of this project, 11 representing 15% of them were female whilst 60 representing 85% were male participants. This gave a fair idea of the construction industry as a male dominated industry. The 15% female representative was clients and probably some of the unskilled labors. Table 1 further shows that, 26 representing 36.6% were participants who aged 33 or younger. However, majority of the participants 45 representing 63.4% reported to aged 34 years or older. Taking into account the level of education of these participants, 16 being 22.5% were secondary school certificate holders. More than half of the respondents 42 being 59.2% reported to have either attained their tertiary level certificate or holds a CTC level of education whereas 13 representing 18.3% were basic school certificate holders. An investigation into the number of years of these professionals had been in their respectiveprofessions revealed that, almost half of the respondents 34 being 47.9% had been in their profession for 10 years or lesser. Again, about 11 representing 15%, reported to be in their profession for between 11 and 15 years. Participants who reported to have been in the practice for 16 years or more were 26 representing about 36.6%. This suggests that the respondents were really on the field of construction and therefore the information provided will help to ascertain the purpose of this research. Their experience in the construction industry will also contribute to accuracy of information provided.

CLASSIFICATION OF CONSTRUCTION EXPERTS

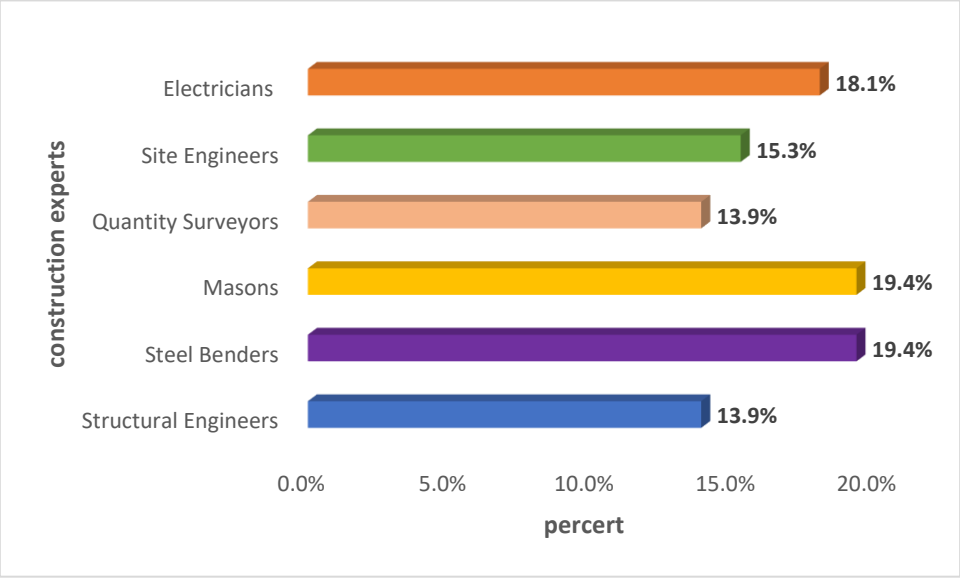

Figure 1 Classification of construction experts

Presented in Figure1 is the classification of construction experts sampled for the study. The information in the Figure 4.1 shows that 12 out 71 representing 18.1% of the construction experts are electricians where as the site engineers constitutes 11 being 15.3% of the total respondents. Again the outcome revealed that there were 10 representing 13.9% each of quantity surveyors and structural engineers. Information from Figure 4. 1 finally shows that, Masons and Steel benders sampled for the study

constitute 14 each representing 19.4% each of the total respondents. These construction professionals were sampled for this study for the fact that almost all construction projects needed these experts at one point in time. They therefore stand high in providing the necessary information needed as far as this study was concerned. This is because they have worked on so many projects and know why some firms were performing better and why others performing poor

Construction firm's Registration

The researcher sought to find out the registration categories of the construction firms in the Municipality. This was to find out the firm's financial standings as well as their technical expertise. The outcome is presented in Figure 2 below

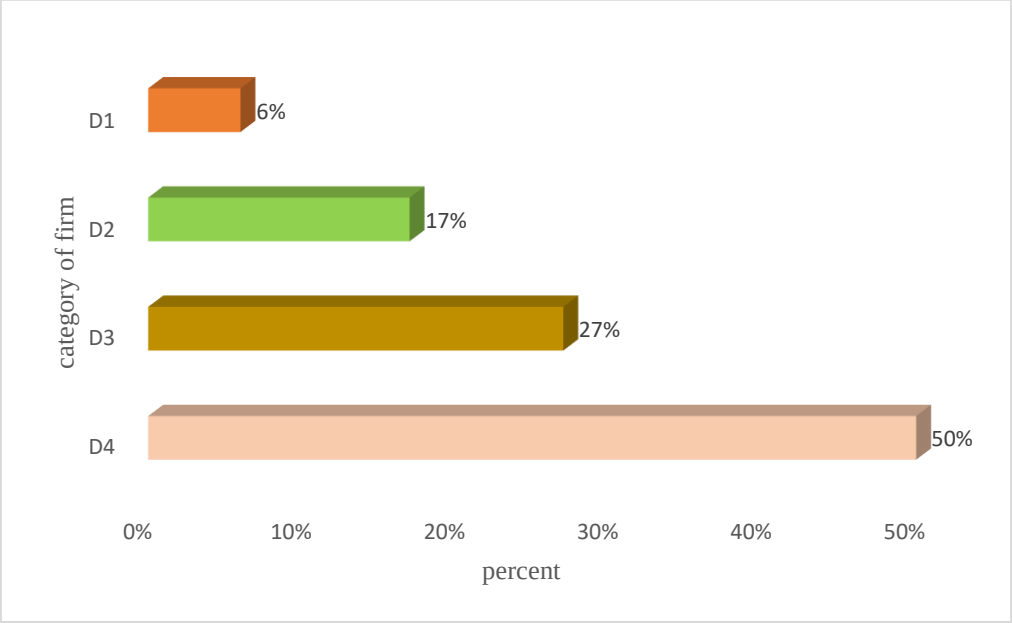

Figure 1 Construction Classification in U/WR

The results revealed that exactly half 9 representing 50% of the construction firms were registered under the category D4. Furthermore 6 equalling 27% were reported to be registered under the D3 category. The category D2 constitute 3 firms whiles category D1 constitutes 1 firm representing 17% and 6% respectively. This suggests that about 77% of the total registered building construction firms in the Region were firms considered as smal scale firms where as 23% of the construction firms were also considered as large firms. These firms were therefore considered to perform much better considering the circumstances such as their financial standings, plant equipment holding, prior enactment as well as their technical capability they offer that led in their classification registration.

Construction firm's Registration

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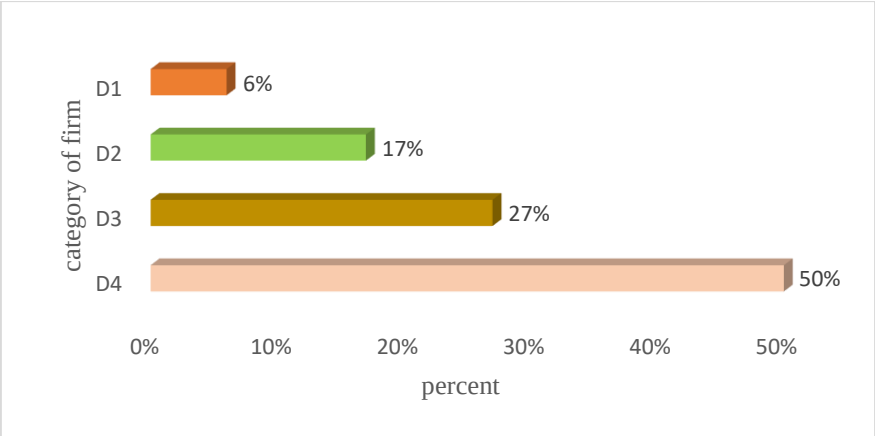

Figure 3 Construction Classification in U/W/R

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Awareness of performance Measurement

In respect to the report given by the respondents as majority of the construction firms are registered under the small-scale category, the researcher further investigated into the level of awareness of performance measurement in these construction firms and also found out if they perform performance measurement on projects awarded to them. Figure 4

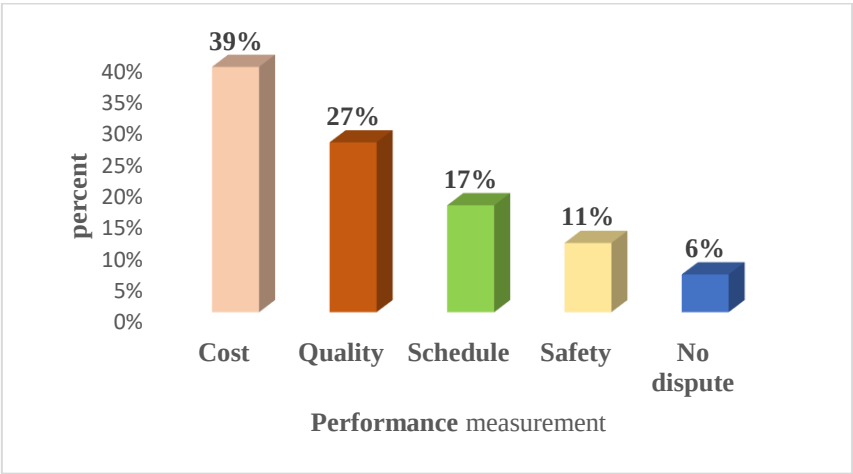

Figure 4 Performance measurements of local construction firms

On the awareness of the performance measurement, majority 17 representing 94% of the firms reported that they were aware of performance measurement in the construction industry. Their higher level of

awareness might be attributed to their high level of education and/or the number of years they have been in the profession.

A further investigation to find out if their high level of awareness would reflect their performance measurement on projects awarded to them revealed that, in spite of the higher awareness of performance measurement on projects, construction firms hardly perform performance measurement on projects. For instances, less than half 7 representing 39% reported that their firms perform performance measurement on cost of projects awarded to them. Furthermore, exactly 5 constituting 27% were also of the view that they carried out performance measurement on quality of the project awarded. However, 3 representing 17% of the small-scale firms, engaged in performance measurement on safety of the projects. On duration schedule, 2 of the firms representing, 11% responded to perform performance measurement. Moreover, on land dispute issues, as well as no-dispute over the project 6% of the construction firms in the Region considered taking performance measurement. This suggests that even with the higher level of awareness of performance measurement by these small-scale firms, most of the performance measurement are not carried out. Hence, their low performance in projects being awarded to them. Moreover, even if performance measurement were carried out, the researcher is of the view that it was not properly carried out. This has contributed to foreign construction firms winning most of the major contracts. This confirms Verma (2010), opinion that expatriate contractors perform better than their indigenous counterparts due to the quality of performance. Ofori (1984), also points out that, local construction firms in the Northern Region of Ghana were only interested in winning bids without considering the performance analysis. As a result, most sub – contracts were awarded them instead of major construction projects.

Available equipment in the construction firms

The accessibility of equipment in a firm, its fiscal eminences as well as the pedantic know - how it can offer were among the innumerable guidelines considered in registering construction firms under different categories. The researcher therefore sought to find out the available equipment in the local construction firms.

Figure 5

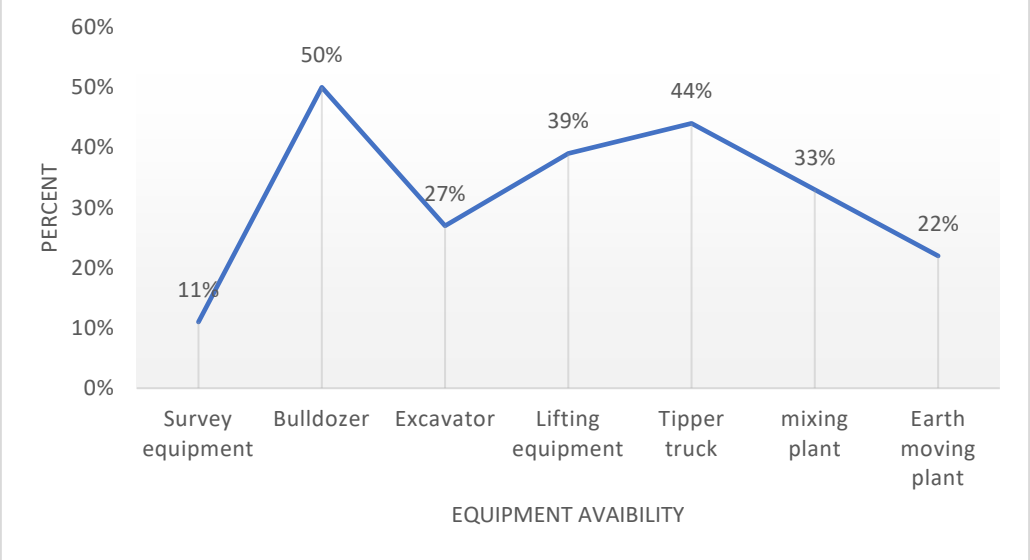

Figure 5 Equipment availability in local construction firms

The repercussion in Figure 4.4 revealed that, most of the local construction firms in the Wa Municipality 8 representing 44% had tipper trucks for their project business. On issues of survey equipment, about 2 constituting 11% reported to have such machines in their firms. A further investigation proved that half 9 representing 50% had bulldozers in their firms. The number of firms which reported to have excavators was 5 representing 27%. Furthermore, 7 and 4 of the local construction firms reported to have lifting equipment and earth moving equipment representing 39% and 22% respectively in their firms. This suggests that availability of equipment that might speed the level of work were inadequate. The financial standings of these firms were therefore awfully insignificant. Firms could not afford to buy the necessary equipment for the enhancement and quality of their work. Perhaps most of these construction firms would have to hire this equipment whenever they were awarded a contract. The cost of hiring this equipment coupled with low technical expertise constitutes to most delays of work as schedule. Again the quality of work is also compromise. Projects been awarded to local construction firms sometimes attracts reworks when indeed it has not even reached anywhere. For instance an Auditorium complex at NJA College of Education which was awarded to a local contractor in April 2010 and completed in August 2012 has its roofing ripped off following a down pour in October 2012. The contractor was called to repair the roofing. The firm will probably incur an addition cost which was not budgeted. The above analysis proves that the performance of local constructions firms in the Region were not soothing.

Results and Discussion of Questionnaire from Structural Engineers

Among the construction experts sampled for the survey were Structural Engineers. The researcher therefore sought to find out the views of Structural Engineers the causes of low performance of local construction firms. Table 2

Table 2 perceived causes of low performance of local construction firms by Structural Engineers

Causes of low performance	Percent	Mean	SD	Rank
Non – adherence to measures and specification	60.0	4.40	.572	1st
Unnecessary pressure from clients	90.0	4.02	.789	2nd
High cost of construction equipment	80.0	4.00	.605	3rd
Late payment of payment certificate	80.0	3.94	.770	4th
Constant equipment breakdown	70.0	3.65	1.332	5th
Lack of skilled Labour	50.0	3.00	1.112	6th
Short delivery time in contract document	70.0	2.54	1.010	7th

N=10 Source: Field Survey, 2023

The respondents were particularly concerned about seven severe causes of the low performance of the local construction firms. Firstly, 6 out 10 respondents, representing 60% were most concerned about non – adherence to measures and specifications (M=4.40, SD=.572). They reported that, structural engineers

and architects as their responsibilities design and specify all specification from foundation to roofing of a building project for the sustainability of the project. However, for the sake of making extra profit, and improper cost benefit analysis, contractors do not stick to original specifications and measurements. As a result different and unreliable measures are used that eventually compromises the quality of the project in question there by resulting poor performance. Ahazie (1995), argues that the sustainability of a construction project depends on the use of correct specifications and measurements. Barrett (1995), further argues that, specifications and measurements of a structural design of a project is the sole pillar of the project hence non- adherence would jeopardize the project there by compromising the quality of work of construction firm in question. Abeysekera (2002), also confirms that, adhering to project specification by structural engineer, was a benchmark of a reliable construction firm

The quality and quantity of labour supply can have major impact on the projects. Most of the workers in the local construction industry are unskilled workers. The wages given them were not sufficient as compared to the skilled labours. These workers at times leave construction sites at any time and never come back. As a result, their work quality is relatively low when compared to local laborers. The low quality and productivity of the unskilled laborers have impact on the project progress and efficiency. Their unannounced departure causes shortage of labor pool in the construction industry. This affects a project in progress subsequently affecting its performance. Furthermore, unnecessary pressure from clients (M=4.02, SD=.759) was also considered as one of the major cause of local construction firms low performance. Clients sometimes mount unnecessary pressure on the firm contracted to construct a project. Even though, there was a stipulated time of commencement and delivery in the contract document, clients especially real estate's companies and the government for the sake of fulfilling a campaign promise as a daily routine mount pressure on the construction firms. To absorb all these unnecessary pressures, firms sometimes use inferior materials and also decrease the desired quantity of materials for the project for early completion. The result of such decision was compromising the quality of work delivery which eventually affects the performance of the firm since one of the major criteria for winning a bid was evidence of previous work done. Affare (2012), confirms this finding that a 2-storey classroom block which was commenced, completed and commissioned within the defeat liability period of 6 months at N.J.A College of Education -Wa in the Upper – west region due to pressure from government officials to fulfilled their campaign promise, had peeled off paints, screed floor and ripped off roofing sheets. Mehra (2009), however disagree that pressure from clients causes poor performance. They argued that clients lack both technical and theoretical know how on the projects. Therefore, it was the contractor and the consultant who were to give technical advice to the client as the implication of the decision he/she was taking. Therefore, the client cannot be blame for pressuring, and pressure cannot necessarily lead to poor performance but other factors.

More so, Table 2. further disclosed that high cost of construction equipment (M=4.00, SD=.605) was rated among the major contributors of low performance of local construction firms in the U/W/R . Due to the small-scale nature, most of the local construction firms could not purchase their own construction equipment. As a result, many of the contractors do not own equipment that is required for the construction work. They rent the equipment when required. During the season when there are many construction projects, the equipment's were in short supply and are poorly maintained. This leads to failure of the equipment's causing the progress to be hampered. Moreover, the prices for hiring those equipment increases when there was high demand. Local firms for the sake of making profit and

meeting the time for the hired equipment; hurriedly go about their duties resulting to poor work done and hence poor performance.

Furthermore, delays in payments by clients was ranked 4th among the major causes of local construction firm's low performance. Construction works involve colossal sums of money and most of the contractors find it very difficult to bear the heavy daily construction expenses when the payments are delayed. Work progress can be delayed due to the late payments from the clients because there is inadequate cash flow to support construction expenses especially for small scale construction firms who were not financially sound. When this happen it affects the performance of the work as delivery time would not be met which may be call for delivery time expansion? This finding was therefore in support Sholet and Frydman (2003) and Tang (2012) notion that clients should make prompt payment for work done to ensure quality of work and prompt delivery.

Additionally, structural engineers were also concerned about constant equipment breakdown (M= 3.65, SD=1.332) as a major contributor of low construction performance. Earlier discussion proved that, most of the local construction firms lack adequate availability of construction equipment. However, the few ones they have and what they hire constantly breaks down due the pressure on them and lack of adequate maintenance. As a result the amount of work to be done on a particular day was not met delaying the entire project progress. Again, when the equipment breaks down, and work was halted, additional funds were needed for maintenance which affects the budgetary allocation of that particular project hence affecting its performance. Even though Maslej (2009), disagrees that equipment breakdown has little impact on performance of a construction firm, Marawar (2013) agrees that unavailability and constant equipment breakdown as well as high cost of equipment spare parts were keen to low construction performance.

Results and Discussion of Questionnaire from Quantity Surveyors

The study also sampled consultants. They were therefore quizzed about the causes of low performance of local construction firms. Table 3

Table *3* perceived causes of low performance of local construction firms by Quantity surveyors

Causes of low performance	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank
Contractors improper planning	80.0	4.00	.087	1st
Poor tendering process	90.0	3.60	.932	2nd
Changes in contract document	90.0	3.55	1.001	3rd
Unreliable suppliers	70.0	3.50	.095	4th
Lack of adequate supervision	60.0	3.00	1.125	5th
Unreliable sub – contractors.	80.0	3.00	1.226	6th

N=10 Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 presents the perceived causes of low performance of local construction firms by quantity surveyors. Contractor's improper planning (M=4.00, SD = .087) was considered the topmost cause of local construction low performance. Local contractors repeatedly fail to come out with a realistic and workable ''work schedule programme'' at the primary planning stage. This inability to draw a work schedule programme, is correlated with lack of systematic site management and inadequate contractor's

experience towards the projects. The consultant only checks and reviews the work programme submitted by the contractors based on experience and instinctual judgment. Improper planning at the initial stages of a project exhibits throughout the project and causes delays at various stages. Only a project that is well planned can be well executed. Furthermore, exactly 8 out of 10, constituting 80% of the quantity surveyors reported that, unreliable sub – contractors was among the causes of low performance of the local construction firms. They reported that typically in huge projects, there are many subcontractors working under main contractors. If the subcontractor is capable, the project can be completed on time as planned. The project can be delayed if the sub-contractor under performs because of inadequate experience or incapability. High degree of subcontracting in the Wa municipality leads to high risk of delays and this leads to inefficiencies in the local construction industry. As a result the local construction firms under performs which leads to their low performance.

Again, poor tendering process (M=3.60), SD=.932) also cause low performance among local construction firms. Sometimes the right process laid down for awarding contracts were not duly followed. As a result, contracts were awarded to incompetent construction firms who in turn construct shoddy projects as a result of their inexperience in the construction industry. Their shoddy work which most at times calls for rework, characterizes their low performance. Moreover, changes in contract documents (M=3.55) was reported among the major cause of local construction firm's low performance. Construction firms plan and commence a project based on the measurements and specification in the contract. The purchase of materials, hiring of unavailable equipment as well as unskilled Labour among others were planned due to contract document. However, when there was a change in the contract document, the material purchase, hiring of equipment and even the commencement date for the project could be changed affecting the necessary arrangement made earlier towards achieving quality performance which subsequently leads poor performance. This finding supports Dainty et al. (2006) who strongly posit that changes in contract document affect an entire project performance. They continued that, in some cases, additional funds were needed and delivery time extension for project delivery. Finally lack of adequate supervision (M=3.30) was yet another major cause of local construction firm's low performance. Local construction Contractor's poor site management is one of the most significant causes in causing the local construction firm's poor performance. The results of this research indicated that, local contractors face scarcity of resources in site planning, execution and controls. A deprived site management results in delays in responding to the issues that arise at the site and causes negative impact on the overall work progress there by resulting into low performance since quality of work was compromised. This finding supports Carlsson et al, (2001) notion that poor supervision on the part of contractors and other site managers constitutes bad attitude of workers which leads to shoddy work.

Results and Discussion of Questionnaire from Site Engineers

Site engineers were among the sampled respondents for this study. They were therefore queried about the causes of low performance of local construction firms.

Table 4 Superficial causes of low performance of local construction firms by Site engineers

	Frequency				
Superficial causes of low performance	**n**	**%**	**M**	**SD**	**Rank**
Poor quality materials	11	63.6	3.90	.865	1st
Low management practices	11	73.0	3.86	1.332	2nd

Lack of adequate skilled Labour	11	91.0	3.40	.815	3rd
Unreliable suppliers	11	45.0	3.30	1.211	4th
Design errors and omission	11	82.0	3.00	.945	5th
Land ownership disputes.	11	73.0	2.00	1.321	6th

N=11 Source: Field Survey, 2023

Comparatively the researcher assessed the causes of low performance of local construction firms from site engineers' point of view. These construction experts attested to about six causes of low performance of local construction firm. The site engineers reported that poor quality materials (M=3.90) was one of the major cause of low performance. Poor quality materials lead to poor quality workmanship, thus an unacceptable product. Most often, the project owners insist that correction be made or that parts of work be completely redone. This automatically affects the firm's reputation and such firms were tagged as been underperformed making it very difficult to win subsequent bids. Furthermore, low management practices were also reported to cause low construction performance. About 8 out of 11 representing 73% of the site engineers attested to this issue. They were of the view that, local Construction firm's employees that are not skilled in project management were not able to manage their project site appropriately, thus, climaxing in faulty work, reworks and delay in completion of tasks and finally affecting the performance of the work done. This finding confirms Culp and Smith (2001), affirmation that local construction firms to maximize project employ employees with little or low management skills to manage project sites. The result of the work of such personnel was shoddy works which subsequently affects project performance of the firm. Kenley (1999), argues that unskilled labour had little effect on local construction firm's poor performance. He argues that these unskilled labour were supervised thoroughly by the management as well as the skilled personnel on sites. However, the outcome from Table 4 shows that lack of adequate skilled labour (M=3.40) was a major cause of poor construction performance. Employment of unskilled personnel at the project sites impedes execution of work to specification and leads to error or mistakes during construction. Time is then spent on alterations and corrections. This therefore refutes Culp and Smith (2001) notion.

Moreover, unreliable suppliers also contribute to the local construction's low performance. Materials such cement, sand, gravels, iron rods among other construction resources were purchased in particular with reference to what the contract document spells out. Construction firms therefore rely on suppliers to supply all the needed materials and resources at the right time and in their right quantity. However, when suppliers were not able to settle their part of the contract due late payment, late order and poor transportation system among others, the project in question might delay which would affect project delivery hence low performance.

Lastly on-site engineer's point of view on causes of low construction performance, they disagreed that land ownership dispute was cause of low construction performance. They argued that an experienced construction firm would seek to settle all disputes regarding project site and even the project before commencement of the project. This they said was done during the performance measurement. Hence, their disagreement.

Measures that can curtail low performance of local construction firms in U/W/R

On the appraisal of the reliefs that can be accrued from better performance of local construction firms, the researcher further scrutinized into strategies which can be put in place to ensure that local

construction firms in the Region perform as such. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree to the strategies as can improve the performance of local construction firms the U/W/R

Table 5 Measures to curb local construction firm's low performance

	Frequency (%)	
Measures	**Strongly agree or agree**	**Strongly disagree or disagree**
There should be prompt honoring of payment certificate	67 (94.0%)	4 (6.0%)
Local construction firms should properly plan their work.	63 (89.0%)	8 (11.0%)
Construction project contracts awarded must have a realistic contract sum	60 (85.0 %)	11 (15.0%)
Project specifications and delivery time should be specified boldly in the contract document	58 (82.5%)	13 (17.5%)
There should effective and efficient supervision and monitoring.	65.0%	35.0%
Local construction firms should adopt material purchasing rather than buying.	58.0%	42.0%
Procurement of project materials should satisfy the standard of Ghana Procurement codes.	55.0%	45.0%
Contracts should made simple and accurate.	52.0%	48.0%

N=71 Source: Field Survey, 2023

Presented in Table 5 are the measures that would curb the low performance of local construction firm's menace. The respondents agreed to all the perceived measures as measures that would improve performance of local construction firms. However, some of the understudied measures were given priority than others. This suggests that the respondents were most concerned about some of the measures as solution to reducing the poor performance than others. For instance, it was evident from Table 5 that 67 out of the 71 representing 94% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agrees to the fact that project clients should promptly honor payment certificates in time. Just a few, 4 representing 6% of the respondents disagree to this notion. This suggests that the performance of local construction firms in the Wa municipality would improve if clients honor their payments in time. This was because once there was a sufficient finance for a project; the project would progress as schedule without delay. Furthermore, exactly 63 constituting 89% of the respondents agreed that the challenges of low performance of local construction firms in the Wa municipality will improve if local contractors plan their work properly. This was because it emerged from earlier discussion that, most of the construction firms lack proper planning. As a result they were not able to provide their entire schedule of their work to their prospective clients. Clients therefore take advantage of this to mount unnecessary pressure on them which leads to their low performance. Again, more than 60 which amounts to 85% of the respondents reported realistic contract sum as a measure to improve low performance in the industry. Construction firms compete for the available contract which was announced for tendering. Some clients quote unrealistic sums in the contract document which indeed might not be sufficient for the said

project. However, local firms compete for such contracts only to get stack somewhere after the project has commence. Some even abandon the entire project. Therefore if clients would indeed allocate reasonable amount to a project taking into consideration all the economic hardship and the trend of affairs as the time of awarding the contract, then construction firms would improve their performance. Again, about 58 representing 82% reported that effective supervision and efficient monitoring will improve low performance. They were of the view that a well-equipped and effective supervision and efficient monitoring team would ensure that proper adherence to guide lines of works were followed appropriately. This would even deter construction firms from using substandard materials therefore leading to an improvement of their work. Finally, the least considered measure to improve local construction low performance was making construction contracts as simple and accurate as ever. Sometimes contract documents were so cumbersome that, one needs to think very deep to understand the terms and specifications spelt out in the contract. Sometimes there were a lot of ambiguities in the contract which all contributes the construction firms under performance. Therefore if the contract is made simple, clear and accurate then local construction firms would understand the terms and condition for executing such project to avoid any shortfalls. The researcher therefore was of the view that if all these measures were put in place the challenges of underperformance of local construction firms in the Wa Municipality would change for the better.

In conclusion, the response rate for the study was high. Most of the respondents contributed fairly with respect to the various items on the questionnaire. It was proven that most local construction firms in the Region perform poorly. The respondents positively attested to the various factors that causes low performance of local construction firms in the Wa Municipality. Moreover, the study also discussed some strategies which could minimize low performance of local construction firms in the Region. This chapter therefore concludes that, the numerous low performances of local construction firms will be minimize if attention is paid to the strategies to minimize the low performance construction firms.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the study, it can be adduced from the evaluation that, most of the local construction firms are small-scale construction firms and the performance on contracts awarded to them are of low values. The local construction firms do not perform performance analysis on contract awarded to them which led to their low performance. It is recommended that; local construction firms should seek for very strong financial backing from reputable financial institutions which will enable them purchase needed construction equipment before they bid for any construction contract. contractors should always adhere to the specifications and measurements spelt out in the contract document. If changes have to be done, the client and the consultant should be notified with reasons. Local construction firms should therefore be given a periodic training and orientation in order to increase their administrative and management techniques of such contractors and their firms in order to enhance value for money.

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