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Citation: Ameyaw, Ernest, Pärn, Erika, Chan, Albert P.C., Owusu-Manu, De-Graft, Edwards, David John and Darko, Amos (2017) Corrupt Practices in the Construction Industry: Survey of Ghanaian Experience. *Journal of Management in Engineering*, 33 (6). 05017006. ISSN 0742-597X

Published by: American Society of Civil Engineers

URL: [https://doi.org/10.1061/\(ASCE\)ME.1943-5479.0000555](https://doi.org/10.1061/(ASCE)ME.1943-5479.0000555) <[https://doi.org/10.1061/\(ASCE\)ME.1943-5479.0000555](https://doi.org/10.1061/(ASCE)ME.1943-5479.0000555)>

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1 **Corrupt Practices in the Construction Industry:  
A Survey of Ghanaian Experience**

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4 Amos Darko<sup>5</sup>

5 **ABSTRACT**

6 Globally, corruption presents a major risk that reduces construction project performance by inflating  
7 costs and reducing the quality of infrastructure commissioned. In developing countries, corruption 8  
9 stifles economic development and engenders social inequality. This paper uncovers the prevalence and  
10 forms of corrupt practices within the developing country of Ghana using a structured questionnaire  
11 survey to elicit direct knowledge and lived experiences of construction practitioners. Research findings  
12 illustrate that habitual corruption and unethical behaviour prevails amongst public officials, contractors  
13 and construction professionals during the bid evaluation, tendering and contract implementation stages  
14 of a construction contract. This research proffers that corruption is driven by a toxic concoction of  
15 high  
16 political connections, excessive and reckless sole sourcing of public construction projects, lack of  
commitment by construction companies to address corruption and the inherently idiosyncratic  
operational environment of the construction sector. The top-five forms of corruption frequently

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17 encountered, in descending order, are kickbacks (extortion), bribery, collusion and tender rigging,  
18 conflict of interest and fraud. The research presents a rare glimpse of construction industry corruption  
19 in a developing country and provides polemic clarity geared to intellectually challenge readers in 20  
government and industry. Future work is required to explore and develop appropriate countermeasures  
21 to address the corrupt practices and behaviours.

22 **Keywords:** Corruption, kickbacks, bribery, construction industry, developing country

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## 22 INTRODUCTION

23 The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2008) defined corruption as: “*the misuse*  
24 *of entrusted power for private gain.*” Corruption represents a major and persistent obstacle to  
25 governments and businesses that seek to achieve sustainable social and economic development  
26 (Pillay 2004; World Bank 1997). According to the World Economic Forum et al.  
27 (2012), corruption accounts for  $\geq 5\%$  of the world’s gross domestic product, which translates  
28 into some US\$2.6 trillion, with over US\$1 trillion paid in bribes annually. The construction  
29 sector in particular has been described as an inherently dishonest industry (Transparency  
30 International 2005, 2011, 2013) and corrupt practices occur at all stakeholder levels and phases  
31 of project development (Brown and Skitmore 2015; de Jong et al. 2009; Shakantu 2006). These  
32 malpractices include fraud, fronting, bribery, kickbacks, conflict of interest, collusion and  
33 bidrigging, nepotism and other unfair/ unethical conducts (Brown and Skitmore 2015; Le et al.  
34 2014; Bowen et al. 2012; Tabish and Jha 2011; Zarkada-Fraser and Skitmore 2000; Sohail and  
35 Cavill 2008). The repercussions of corruption include stifled economic development, absence  
36 of competition in prices and quality and poor workmanship (Sohail and Cavill 2008; Uneke  
37 2010). The industry’s susceptibility to corruption is attributed to its inherently idiosyncratic  
38 characteristics such as: the size, uniqueness and complexity of constructed products; lengthy  
39 and sophisticated construction processes; fragmented structure with multiple contractual  
40 relationships; adversarial culture; and poor professional ethical standards (Sohail and Cavill  
41 2008; Transparency International 2013; Shan et al. 2015).

42

43 The parlous state of developing countries demands effective and efficient construction outputs  
44 to initiate affordable housing and infrastructure to fuel economic growth and circumvent  
45 poverty; yet paradoxically such countries are most vulnerable to corruption (Fanteye 2004). Le  
46 et al. (2014) recommended more empirical research should be commissioned within

47 developing countries that are challenged with addressing corruption. Their review (*ibid*) of 56  
48 pertinent published articles between 1990 and 2012 revealed that more empirical research is  
49 needed to investigate corrupt practices in developing countries. The nature and extent of corrupt  
50 practices varies across countries, owing to differences in maturity and/ or availability of  
51 effective procurement structures and, regulatory and administrative systems (Le et al. 2014;  
52 Heywood and Rose 2014; Sampford et al. 2006; Shakantu and Chiocha 2009). Shan et al.  
53 (2015) reinforces this assertion, reporting that tenuous regulatory structures – underpinned by  
54 inadequate sanctions and negative leadership – have a strong effect on corruption  
55 vulnerabilities. Within the developing country of Ghana, widespread dishonest practices  
56 amongst public and government officials has engendered public disquiet (World Bank  
57 Enterprise Surveys 2013; CDD-Ghana 2000; Mensah et al. 2003). In response, the government  
58 enacted the Public Procurement Act in 2003 (i.e., Act 663) to reform and regulate public works  
59 procurement and combat corruption (Government of Ghana 2003). However, despite the Act  
60 633, corruption remains an importunate and unrelenting issue (Osei-Tutu et al. 2010), for  
61 example, Ameer (2015) recently reported that contractors pay 10–20% of the tender sum in  
62 bribes to secure public contracts. Ghana has not improved its scores on the Transparency  
63 International’s (TI) corruption index and has consistently fallen below the midpoint of TI’s  
64 scale of 0 (highly corrupt) and 100 (very clean). Figure 1 shows Ghana’s ranks and scores on  
65 the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) between 2007 and 2016. The country is described as the  
66 second worst decliner in the 2016 CPI in the Sub-Saharan region, scoring 43 (equivalent to the  
67 global average) on the index. These scores indicate pervasive corruption in Ghana’s public  
68 sector (Transparency International 2016).

69

70 **[Insert Figure 1 around here]**

71 Against this background, an empirical investigation of corruption in public infrastructure works  
72 procurement is conducted in Ghana. Specifically, the research reports upon the personal  
73 experiences of construction practitioners regarding the extent and nature of corruption. This  
74 research will assist policy makers to develop workable anti-corruption strategies that are  
75 formulated upon a cogent understanding of the extent and nature of this omnipresent problem.

## 77 **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### 78 **Corruption and the Construction Industry**

79 The Chartered Institute of Building's (CIOB 2006) construction industry-wide survey indicated  
80 that there was no clear and commonly accepted definition of 'corruption' within the UK  
81 construction industry. Indeed, results showed that the respondents held conflicting perceptions  
82 as to what constitutes corruption. Hence, for this study corruption is defined as the: "*offering,*  
83 *giving, receiving or soliciting, directly or indirectly anything of value to influence the action of*  
84 *an official in the procurement or selection process or in [construction] contract execution*"  
85 (United Nations 2006). Within construction literature, various research studies have  
86 investigated corruption and ethics. In the UK, the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB 2006)  
87 found that 51% of the 1,404 practitioners had direct experiences of corruption and that on at  
88 least one occasion, 41% of the respondents had been offered bribes. The study found that  
89 corruption is "*present in many aspects of the UK construction industry*" (pg. 3) and  
90 recommended that industry and government must do more to eliminate corruption. In response,  
91 the UK government introduced the Bribery Act 2010 (with effect from April 2011) which  
92 requires construction firms to demonstrate their commitment to battling corruption (Bribery  
93 Act 2010; Donohoe 2011). The Bribery Act is extra-territorial and holds senior officials of  
94 companies liable for not fighting corruption.

95

96 In South Africa, Bowen et al. (2012) surveyed the views and experiences of construction  
97 practitioners and clients. They concluded that corruption is pervasive and that contractors,  
98 subcontractors and public officials are actively implicated in such practice; this finding  
99 concurred with the earlier work of Zou (2006). Government officials frequently engage in  
100 nepotism, dishonesty and unfairness, tender irregularities, and extortion of bribes/kickbacks  
101 whilst architects and engineers are guilty of negligence and financial maladministration (Zou  
102 2006; Bowen et al. 2007b). In Australia, May et al. (2000) revealed that bid cutting amongst  
103 main contractors and subcontractors is widely practiced; however, whilst main contractors  
104 regarded bid cutting as perfectly ethical, subcontractors vehemently disagreed. Zarkada-Fraser  
105 and Skitmore (2000) investigated Australian construction professionals' attitudes towards  
106 collusive tendering. Three major collusive tendering practices were identified (*ibid*), namely  
107 submission of cover prices, inflation of tender prices and withdrawal from the tendering  
108 process. Similarly, Vee and Skitmore (2003) surveyed the views and personal experiences of  
109 Australian construction professionals on industry ethics and found that all respondents had  
110 experienced or witnessed corrupt or unethical behaviour. Most recently, Brown and Skitmore's  
111 (2015) exploratory study found that corruption was widespread in the Australian construction  
112 sector and was attributed to personal reward.

113

114 Elsewhere, Tabish and Jah (2011, 2012) studied corruption in public construction project  
115 procurement in India and hypothesized that anti-corruption strategies eradicate corruption. In  
116 the United States (US), a survey found that 84% of the responding construction professionals  
117 have experienced corrupt acts or transactions (FMI/CMAA 2004). Chotibhongs and Arditi  
118 (2012) confirmed the existence of collusive bidding in the US and revealed that five out of 80  
119 bidders were jointly awarded 72% of the contracts, and identified a widespread use of cartel  
120 bidders. Similarly, Bajari (2001) observed bid-rigging in paving, school construction and

121 bridge repair projects in New York City and Chicago. From the industrial organisational theory  
122 perspective, Dorée (2004) discussed the problem of collusion in response to an extensive use  
123 of cartels and structural bid-rigging in the Dutch construction industry. Dorée (*ibid*) linked this  
124 persistent malpractice to the Dutch culture, improper market functioning and changes in  
125 antitrust legislation.

126

127 This synthesis of extant literature illustrates that corruption is a persistent and endemic issue  
128 within the construction industry internationally. Indeed, corruption is so pervasive and  
129 entrenched that it permeates both process and professionalism.

130

### 131 **Forms of Corruption**

132 Corrupt and unethical practices within the construction industry exist in many guises and  
133 include: *bribery* (Gordon and Miyake 2001; Amundsen 2000); *fraud* (Tabish and Jha 2011;  
134 Vee and Skitmore 2003; United Nations 2006); *kickbacks* (Sohail and Cavil 2008; Osei-Tutu  
135 et al. 2010; Aluutu 2007); *collusive tendering and bid rigging* (Chotibhongs and Arditi 2012;  
136 Dorée 2004; Bajari 2001); *embezzlement* (Hartley 2009); *conflict of interest* (Brown and  
137 Skitmore 2015; Bowen et al. 2007b; Osei-Tutu et al. 2010; Vee and Skitmore 2003); and  
138 *fronting* (Le et al. 2014; de Jong et al. 2009).

139

- 140 • *Bribery* is widespread in developing countries and whilst difficult to define, it includes  
141 speed and grease money (payments), gifts and gratuities, hospitality and the use of  
142 intermediaries (Gordon and Miyake 2001; Amundsen 2000).
- 143 • *Fraud* is an economic crime involving acts such as swindle, trickery, misinformation or  
144 deceit (Tabish and Jha 2011; Vee and Skitmore 2003). Fraud represents a false  
145 misrepresentation or concealment of facts for commercial gain (United Nations 2006).



- 146 • *Kickbacks* are illicit economic incentives used to obtain a favourable decision from a  
147 person in a position of power, for example, in contractor selection (Aluutu 2007; Sohail  
148 and Cavil 2008; Osei-Tutu et al. 2010). Kickbacks typically inflate the cost of  
149 construction but rarely the quality (Aluutu 2007).
- 150 • *Collusive tendering* and *bid-rigging* refers to a “secret agreement between two or more  
151 parties for a fraudulent” reason (Le et al. 2014). *Collusive tendering* includes  
152 compensation of unsuccessful bidders, cover pricing, hidden fees and bid cutting  
153 (Chotibhongs and Arditi 2012; Dorée 2004; Bowen et al. 2007a; Zarkada and Skitmore  
154 2000; Bajari 2001). *Bid-rigging* occurs between the tenderer and the tenderee where the  
155 former creates constraints that elevates the preferred tenderee to win a contract (Le et al.  
156 2014).
- 157 • *Embezzlement* occurs when an official (with the client’s organisation) misappropriates or  
158 intentionally misuses project funds for personal rewards or political gain (Hartley 2009).  
159 Repercussions of embezzlement include unfinished projects, delayed or non-payment of  
160 contractors and suppliers, and below-standard workmanship.
- 161 • *Conflict of interest* is frequently cited in construction procurement (Brown and Skitmore  
162 2015; Bowen et al. 2007b; Osei-Tutu et al. 2010; Le et al. 2014; Vee and Skitmore 2003)  
163 and is defined as a clash between the interest of the client organisation and personal  
164 interest of the client organisation’s official (United Nations 2006).
- 165 • *Fronting* occurs when officials within government agencies or client organisations create  
166 front companies to obtain construction contracts. Front companies obtain unfair or illegal  
167 benefits in awarding public contracts because of their owners’ powerful positions in  
168 government (de Jong et al. 2009; Bowen et al. 2007a). These contracts are subsequently  
169 delegated to other construction firms for personal gains.

170  
171

## RESEARCH METHODS

172 **Questionnaire Survey**

173 A questionnaire survey conducted sought to solicit views and personal experiences of  
174 construction practitioners regarding: the extent and forms of corruption; participation in  
175 corruption; causal factors of corrupt acts; and measures needed to fight corruption. This data  
176 collection method was used because it provides valid and reliable information about the  
177 respondents' experiences and knowledge of corruption at a reasonable cost (Hoxley 2008).  
178 Questionnaire surveys can also ensure anonymity of respondents when researching into  
179 sensitive topics such as corruption. The questionnaire design was adopted from Bowen et al.  
180 (2012) but with some modification to suit the current research. The questionnaire comprised of  
181 closed and forced-choice, declarative, multiple-choice and dichotomous questions to elicit the  
182 respondents' experience and views. The responses were captured using five-point grading  
183 scales.

184

185 **Survey Participants**

186 The survey was conducted with practising quantity surveyors, architects, engineers and project/  
187 construction managers from public agencies that sponsor construction projects and construction  
188 and consultancy firms that work for public clients. A selection exercise was first conducted to  
189 select a panel of practitioners who: i) are members of a construction industry professional body;  
190 ii) hold director and other senior management level positions in the public and private sectors;  
191 iii) have more than 10 years working experience in the construction industry; and iv) have  
192 personal experience of corruption. In order to avoid bias in the survey responses, respondents  
193 were selected from private construction companies, professional consulting firms and public  
194 sector agencies/departments (refer to Table 1). This selection strategy was adopted to secure  
195 quality respondents and to guarantee credible and balanced feedback. The selection exercise  
196 yielded thirty-five practising construction professionals from public and private organisations

197 who participated in the questionnaire survey; thirty-four are members of the main industry  
198 professional bodies, namely: Ghana Institution of Surveyors (GhIS); Ghana Institution of  
199 Engineers (GhIE); and Ghana Institute of Architects (GIA).

200

201 Given the contextual sensitivity of corruption, acquiring a larger sample size is problematic  
202 (Brown and Skitmore 2015; Tabish and Jha 2011). Indeed, respondents were initially  
203 concerned with preserving their anonymity and preventing reprisal. To alleviate these concerns,  
204 ethical control measures were implemented and respondents were: given an opportunity to  
205 withdraw from the survey at any stage in the process; given assurances that all data would  
206 remain strictly confidential and would be securely disposed of post survey analysis; and  
207 informed that their personal details would be omitted from the questionnaire. These ethical  
208 control measures ensured that the sample size compared favourably with previous studies; for  
209 example, Vee and Skitmore's (2003) and Brown and Skitmore's (2015) surveys were based on  
210 responses of 31 and 23 respondents, respectively whilst Tabish and Jha's (2011) findings were  
211 based on six respondents. Therefore, the sample size is considered to be sufficient.

212

213 *[Insert Table 1 around here]*

214

## 215 **THE SURVEY RESULTS**

216 Survey results were analysed using descriptive statistics including mean, relative significance  
217 and standard deviation. The mean and relative index were applied as consensus approaches  
218 (Murphy et al. 2105; Jannadi 1996). The results are structured to iteratively report upon key  
219 sections of data collected from the questionnaires, namely: prevalence and forms of corruption;  
220 participation in corruption; facilitators of corruption; and control of corruption.

221

## 222 **Prevalence and Forms of Corruption**

223 Overall, 97% of the survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that corruption is widespread,  
224 with a mean level of agreement of 4.40 (refer to Table 2). This result reinforces TI's corruption  
225 index findings on Ghana, which indicate that the country declined in the 2016 CPI to a score  
226 of 43 from 47 in 2015. As shown in Figure 1, between 2007 and 2016, Ghana's scores on the  
227 corruption index range between 37 and 48, below the midpoint of the scale. When requested to  
228 indicate on a five-point scale the project stages during which they have experienced or observed  
229 various corrupt activities, the respondents overwhelmingly indicated the *tendering* and *bid*  
230 *evaluation* phases, with high frequency indexes of 0.85 (mean = 4.25) and 0.86 (mean = 4.31),  
231 respectively. The tendering and bid evaluation phases are critical in construction contracts,  
232 ranging from invitation to tenders to contracts award. According to European Union (2013),  
233 direct losses resulting from corruption during the tendering process for rail and road transport  
234 construction and urban and utility construction in Europe is estimated at 17% and 20% of  
235 procurement cost respectively. The findings suggest that public officials within client  
236 departments exert influence upon the tender process (tenders and tender results) for personal  
237 reward or political gain. As indicated by Tullock (2001), decision makers favour an individual  
238 construction firm, for example, through a reduction in the number of bidders. Corruption during  
239 tendering and bid evaluation processes mean that tenders are deemed non-responsive for trivial  
240 reasons in order to elevate favoured tenderers; tender prices being leaked in exchange for  
241 payments; government officials abuse their administrative powers to award public contracts;  
242 and projects that are re-tendered in the absence of due diligence. The results also revealed that  
243 the *contract implementation and administration* phase is vulnerable to corruption with a score  
244 of 0.77 (mean = 3.84). Various malpractices occur during this stage of construction projects,  
245 including: approval of shoddy works by consultants; over-measurement of works by quantity  
246 surveyors; over-payment of contractors by corrupt officials; and kickbacks (Dorée 2004;

247 OseiTutu et al. 2010). These survey results illustrate that most industry stakeholders are  
248 actively engaged in various corrupt acts (refer to Tables 3 and 4).

249

250 **[Insert Table 2 around here]**

251 **[Insert Table 3 around here]**

252

253 Regarding *prevalence* of the seven forms of corruption, Table 3 shows that kickbacks (mean =  
254 3.97) is the most prevalent, followed by bribery (mean = 3.91), collusion and bid-rigging (mean  
255 = 3.76), conflict of interest (mean = 3.63), fraud (mean = 3.41), fronting (mean = 3.22) and  
256 embezzlement (mean = 3.00). Kickbacks and bribes are often used to obtain contracts, or secure  
257 a professional appointment and failure to participate in this corrupt practice results in either  
258 unemployment or difficulties in executing the job if employed. The order of prevalence of these  
259 corrupt practices varies across countries; for example, Bowen et al.'s (2012) survey revealed  
260 collusive tendering and bid-rigging, fronting and kickbacks in South Africa.

261

262 ***[Insert Table 4 around here]***

263

264 Table 4 reports upon the forms of corruption experienced and/ or witnessed by respondents.  
265 The analysis indicated that 46–81% of respondents had a personal experience of, or witnessed  
266 various corrupt acts – namely: conflict of interest (81%); bribery (78%); collusion and  
267 bidrigging (78%); kickbacks (77%); fraud (61%); and fronting (52%). These findings illustrate  
268 that the construction supply chain allows greater interactions among upstream (consultants and  
269 clients) and downstream (material suppliers, contractors and subcontractors) stakeholders.  
270 Construction and consulting companies and their executives develop relationships with  
271 government officials and both sides could exploit these for economic benefits (Jamie et al.

272 2009). Conflict of interest, involves the shared interest of consultants and the client on a project,  
273 the consulting engineer working on a project for both the contractor and client, and government  
274 officials awarding public projects to private firms in which they have financial interests (Bowen  
275 et al. 2007a). Some contractors may offer bribes to public officials and consultants in exchange  
276 for tender information to secure contracts. Embezzlement is the least experienced corrupt  
277 practice. This is probably because (public and government) officials often embezzle project  
278 funds without knowledge of other industry participants, hence they are not easily exposed to  
279 the general public.

280

### 281 **Participation in Corruption**

282 The respondents' experiences regarding the parties involved in corruption were also explored  
283 (refer to Table 5). Public and government officials, who serve as clients for public construction  
284 projects, actively engage in corruption (mean agreement = 4.23 or index = 0.85). The next most  
285 corrupt stakeholder groups are contractors and sub-contractors, with a mean agreement score  
286 of 3.79 (or index = 0.76) and 3.90 (or index = 0.79), respectively. Public or government officials  
287 engage in corruption for personal gain while contractors and subcontractors perceive that  
288 winning contracts is more important than observing the rules of procurement or breaking the  
289 law in order to remain in business (Brown and Skitmore 2015; Chotibhongs and Ardit 2012).  
290 Government officials and contractors and subcontractors' active involvement in corruption is  
291 attributed to their extensive involvement in the construction process (Bowen et al. 2007a).  
292 Thus, there is some government-contractor interaction which facilitates corrupt activities. The  
293 amount of time contractors devote in dealing with public/government officials is related to the  
294 extent of corruption (Svensson 2003; Jamie et al. 2009). The analysis further illustrates that  
295 professional stakeholder groups (quantity surveyors, project managers, engineers and

296 architects) are involved in corruption, as indicated by a reasonable level of consensus among  
297 the survey respondents.

298  
299 *[Insert Table 5 around here]*

300 *[Insert Table 6 around here]*

301 Respondents were also requested to indicate the forms of corrupt acts that industry stakeholders  
302 frequently engage in. The survey allowed multiple responses. Table 6 illustrates that  
303 government officials (clients) mostly participate in conflict of interest (22 responses),  
304 kickbacks (21 responses), tender rigging and collusion (18 responses), bribery (16 responses),  
305 and embezzlement (16 responses). These results augment and concur with the survey findings  
306 of Vee and Skitmore (2003) in Australia and instantiate the theory that conflict of interest is a  
307 major concern internationally. Table 7 shows specific corrupt activities of public officials  
308 witnessed or experienced by the respondents. There is a high consensus that they primarily  
309 award contracts for political gains (mean = 4.47); extort bribes as inducement for awarding  
310 contracts (mean = 4.26); leak information to preferred bidders in exchange for payments (mean  
311 = 3.82); and awarding contracts to family members or friends (i.e., conflict of interest) (mean  
312 = 3.74).

313  
314 *[Insert Table 7 around here]*

315 *[Insert Table 8 around here]*

316 *[Insert Table 9 around here]*

317  
318 Contractors are reported to be associated with bribery (21 responses), fraud (17 responses), and  
319 fronting (11 responses) to win tenders, thereby undermining any possibility for competition  
320 (refer to Table 6). Contractors frequently offer bribes in the form of gifts and payments to  
321 obtain government construction contracts (Doh et al. 2003; Gordon and Miyake 2001), or  
322 obtain government approval or permit for a profitable public contract (DeSoto 2000; Jamie et

323 al. 2009). In the latter case, construction firms are more likely to speed up approvals through  
324 corrupt payments (Martin et al. 2007). Table 8 further illustrates that contractors collude with  
325 other contractors, for example, to win contracts (mean = 3.70); produce fraudulent invoices  
326 (mean = 3.67); and manufacture fraudulent timesheets (mean = 3.58). Subcontractors were  
327 found to primarily engage in bribery (Table 6). The respondents have also experienced or  
328 witnessed acts similar to contractors (see Table 9) such as: production of fraudulent timesheets  
329 (mean = 3.58); and collusion with other subcontractors to dictate the market (mean = 3.36).

330

331 Among the professionals, Table 6 shows that quantity surveyors are found to primarily engage  
332 in tender rigging and collusion, and kickbacks, followed by bribery and conflict of interest.  
333 Table 10 reveals that the respondents have experienced or witnessed quantity surveyors being  
334 involved in specific corrupt behaviours such as: working for both client and contractor on a  
335 project (mean = 3.26) which creates conflict of interest; delaying issuance of payment  
336 certificates to contractors (mean = 3.26); and deliberate under-payment of interim payments to  
337 contractors (mean = 3.24). These corrupt behaviours are in expectation of gifts and payments  
338 from contractors for personal gain.

339

340

*[Insert Table 10 around here]*

341

### 342 **Facilitators of Corruption**

343 High political connections is considered to be the most important facilitator of corruption (mean  
344 = 4.28 or index 0.86 - refer to Table 11). This factor is important, because it facilitates secrecy  
345 in the award of public construction contracts in developing countries. The Bowen et al. (2012)  
346 survey reinforces this finding, reporting that the process of awarding construction projects in  
347 South Africa lacks transparency and accountability. Ghana is no exception; award of potentially



348 lucrative public construction contracts is shrouded in secrecy and lacks transparency (Osei-  
349 Tutu et al. 2010).

350  
351

*[Insert Table 11 around here]*

352

353 Excessive and reckless sole sourcing for public projects is also ubiquitous as indicated by a  
354 high consensus mean score of 4.06 (index = 0.81). Excessive and reckless sole sourcing  
355 eradicates competitive tendering and affords ample opportunities for malpractices particularly  
356 inflated prices. Respondents also agreed that a lack of commitment by contractors in addressing  
357 corruption in their activities also provides a platform for corruption (mean = 3.94). This may  
358 be explained by the profit motive of contractors and other professionals, and a lack of ethical  
359 standards in the construction industry. Many construction companies operating in the  
360 construction industry of Ghana lack ethical codes of practice and/ or do not enforce these codes.  
361 In addition, government and public officials do not have a clear code of conduct to check their  
362 behaviour in performance of their duties.

363

### 364 **Control of Corruption**

365 Efforts at controlling corruption start by an individual or organisation experiencing or  
366 witnessing corruption reporting it to the appropriate authorities or persons. Sohail and Cavill  
367 (2008) proposed that accountability initiatives could help to minimise corruption in  
368 infrastructure projects. Similarly, Le et al. (2015) asserted that anti-corruption strategies (e.g.,  
369 rules and regulations, training, leadership, and sanctions) are key to curbing corrupt practices  
370 within public construction projects. However, several barriers that impede the reporting of  
371 corruption are apparent amongst respondents (refer to Table 12); the two highest rated being:  
372 fear of dismissal or imposition of an occupational penalty by the employer (mean = 4.42 or  
373 index = 0.88); and a concern that the ‘whistle-blower’ is not adequately protected and may be

374 exposed (mean = 4.38 or index = 0.88). Three other important barriers indicated by respondents  
375 were: lack of confidence in the national anti-corruption agencies and the judicial system (mean  
376 = 4.22 or index = 0.84); loyalty to friends and organisations (mean = 4.16 or index = 0.83); and  
377 a belief that no serious action will be taken (mean = 4.03 or index = 0.81).

378  
379

*[Insert Table 12 around here]*

380  
381

## **DISCUSSION**

382 Construction industry stakeholders are expected to discharge their duties devoid of corrupt acts  
383 and with honesty and fairness, in order to deliver value for money for public construction  
384 clients (Bowen et al. 2007b). Thus, the Public Procurement Act, 2003 (Act 663) (Government  
385 of Ghana 2003) and ancillary codes of conduct promulgated by various construction industry  
386 professional bodies (GhIE, GhIS, GIA) invoke an expectation on government / public officials  
387 and construction professionals to observe high ethical standards and behaviours. The Act 663  
388 is underpinned by five themes relating to public procurement processes, namely: i) a  
389 transparent legal and institutional framework; ii) clear and standardized procurement  
390 procedures and standard tender documents; iii) independent control systems; iv) proficient  
391 procurement staff; and v) anti-corruption measures (Government of Ghana 2003; Osei-Tutu et  
392 al. 2010, p. 246). Therefore, government/public officials within client bodies, professional  
393 consultants and private sector firms are expected to adhere to procurement laws and  
394 regulations, carry out duties with fairness and competence and avoid or disclose conflict of  
395 interest.

396

397 The general presupposition of the Ghanaian Government is that this legislative framework and  
398 auxiliary codes of professional conduct purge the construction industry of corruption – but this  
399 research points to the habitual use of corrupt activities. These findings support the assertions

400 of previous studies in other countries (Brown and Skitmore 2015; Dorée 2004; Bowen et al.  
401 2012; Tabish and Jha 2011; CIOB 2006; Vee and Skitmore 2003). The prevalence of corruption  
402 is the result of widespread secrecy (or a lack of transparency), from high level political  
403 connections in the award of public construction projects, excessive and reckless sole sourcing  
404 of public contracts, and absence of commitment by contractors in addressing corruption. These  
405 factors have led to intense and unfair competition among professional consultants and  
406 contractors in winning government contracts in order to stay in business (Zhang et al. 2016;  
407 Doh et al. 2003). Unfortunately, such competition maintains high pricing because the motive  
408 is for economic survival rather than economic efficiency. This situation presents opportunistic  
409 corruption – construction and consulting firms resort to offering kickbacks and bribes to  
410 public/government officials in exchange for public contracts (see Table 3 and 5).

411

412 The research findings indicated a high level of pathological corruption amongst government  
413 officials and contractors compared to other construction industry stakeholder groups. Several  
414 reasons include: top-level political connections coupled with excessive sole sourcing breed  
415 secrecy in awarding contracts; the complexity and huge costs of construction projects that  
416 provide opportunity to conceal procurement-related malpractices and their extensive  
417 involvement throughout the construction contract lifecycle – from project planning and design  
418 to contract close-out. As Jamie et al. (2009) observed, membership in, and support for, political  
419 parties serve as a vehicle for promoting willingness to engage in corrupt activities by ignoring  
420 legal proscription on corruption. Consequently, government and public officials are frequently  
421 identified as being inveterate fraudsters by awarding contracts to ‘dummy’ companies or family  
422 and friends of state officials/ politicians. They also abuse their positions of power and influence  
423 to advance political affiliations by using contract awards to extort funds for the ruling party,  
424 especially during elections (Bowen et al. 2012). The perceived high level of corrupt contractors

425 allows them to compete effectively, avoid becoming disadvantaged and/or insolvent, to get  
426 things done and to do business with government/public officials (World Bank Enterprise  
427 Survey 2013).

428  
429 The various corrupt practices and behaviours identified in this research emanate from improper  
430 market function (c.f. Dorée 2004) with concomitant late delivery of projects, sub-standard  
431 workmanship and late payment or non-payment of employees, suppliers and subcontractors  
432 costing more money to the industry stakeholders. Economic growth and social equity can be  
433 achieved by addressing market failures and ensuring a corruption-free society (United Nations  
434 2006; OECD 2006).

435  
436 Culture is a vehicle for corruption (Beets 2005; Husted 1999; Robertson and Watson 2004;  
437 Maingot 1994) and may partly explain widespread corruption in Ghana's construction industry.  
438 In traditional Ghanaian contexts, traditions of gift-giving and gift-taking are 'expressed in  
439 customary exchanges whose functions are primarily symbolic.' Gift-giving involves various  
440 'material and symbolic goods provided as part of the services due a chief [traditional ruler]'  
441 (Le Vine 1975, p. 49). Wrath and Simpkins (1964) and Mends (1970) contend that these  
442 customary practices have been 'abused' (converted to reasons far removed from their  
443 traditional ones) within business environments, and this partly explains the widespread  
444 corruption in society today. For example, World Bank Enterprise Surveys (2013) found that  
445 businesses in Ghana are expected to give gifts to government procurement officials to secure  
446 public contracts. Gifts are used as a mechanism to improve the responsiveness of, and to  
447 enhance and maintain relationships with, government officials for present and future favourable  
448 contract opportunities.

449

450 Further, a strong tradition of familial ties in Ghana could explain the prevalence of corrupt  
451 behaviours. A government official's decisions may be affected by family members or friends,  
452 and there is tendency to favour one's ingroup (i.e., family and friends) in awarding public  
453 construction contracts (Husted 1999; Hooper 1995). This research found that government  
454 officials frequently engage in conflict of interest (Table 7) by awarding contracts to family  
455 members and/or friends. Officials of construction firms with familial ties to these government  
456 officials may engage in corrupt transactions to secure competitive advantage, favourable  
457 opportunities and contract terms (Jamie et al. 2009).

458

459 Maingot (1994) indicates that certain aspects of social structures of some countries provide a  
460 tendency to resort to acts of corruption to attain socially approved status and/or personal gain.  
461 In some cultures, material success is paramount, with little regard to ethics (Gonzalez-Fabre,  
462 1996; Beets 2005; Husted 1999). Adinkrah (2016, pg. 40) notes that a consumerist ethos has  
463 engrossed the Ghanaian society, evident by an uncontrolled pursuit for material prosperity "*and*  
464 *the ostentatious display of opulence in the form of handsomely furnished mansions, luxury*  
465 *automobiles, electronics, clothes, jewellery ...*" This focus on material prosperity is more likely  
466 to lead to a greater willingness of both government officials and construction professionals to  
467 engage in ill procurement transactions in the quest for material riches.

468

469 Again, the prevalence of corrupt acts may be seen as a mechanism to avoid or minimise  
470 uncertainty (Husted 1999), regarding outcomes of contract awards at tendering and bid  
471 evaluation phases of project development. The research findings showed that corruption is  
472 widespread at both phases, and that contractors frequently offer bribes or pay kickbacks to  
473 government officials (see Table 6) to secure a more certain outcome of public procurement  
474 exercises. Rashid (1981) concludes that bribery minimises uncertainty in public utility services

475 contracting in developing countries. Government officials may cause delays and uncertainty in  
476 approving construction permits for potentially lucrative contracts, with the intention to obtain  
477 speed payments from contractors (Martin et al. 2007; DeSoto 2000).

478  
479 To the consternation of both government and the general public, corruption remains a major  
480 concern (CDD-Ghana, 2000; Mensah et al., 2003; Abbey, 2005). Strategies to control  
481 corruption are myriad and include: whistle-blowing facilities and effective protection of  
482 whistle-blowers; increased transparency in government procurement processes; internal audit  
483 and monitoring of public contracts; good governance and accountability; sanctioning corrupt  
484 individuals and companies; and effective implementation of codes of conduct within public  
485 and private organisations (Gordon and Miyake 2001; Osei-Tutu et al. 2010; Le et al. 2015;  
486 Tabish and Jha 2011; Sohail and Cavill 2008). An intricate network of political affiliations and  
487 the personal financial rewards that these offer may prove difficult to eradicate particularly  
488 because government officials are implicated. Nevertheless, and despite immense challenges  
489 ahead, concerted and prodigious effort by both government and industry would radically  
490 change the corruption culture within Ghana's construction industry and in so doing, transform  
491 economic performance and concomitant prosperity.

492

493

## CONCLUSIONS

494 This research presents evidence of widespread corruption within the Ghanaian construction  
495 industry; this is despite the Public Procurement Act and ancillary codes of conduct for industry  
496 professional bodies. Because corrupt officials within government represent the industry's  
497 biggest and most prominent client, contractors are more concerned about placating these  
498 officials to secure business survival than observe procurement rules/ laws. These inextricably  
499 linked political-industry connections and the operating environment of construction projects  
500 restrict competitive pressure in the construction industry to yield poor performance. Based

501 upon a survey of construction industry practitioners, the most endemic corrupt practices were  
502 revealed to be: kickbacks, bribery, tender rigging and collusion, and conflict of interest which  
503 predominantly occur at bid evaluation and tendering phases of project development.

504

505 The results hold practical implications for detecting and tackling corruption in the construction  
506 industry across developing countries. A major observation from this study is the ease with  
507 which corruption occurs (high incidence of corruption) in public infrastructure works  
508 procurement in Ghana. This situation is facilitated by high-level political connections in  
509 awarding contracts, the excessive and reckless sole sourcing for public contracts and  
510 contractor's lack of commitment in tackling corruption. Addressing these challenges requires  
511 improvement in the transparency and accountability environment in public procurements  
512 throughout the project development phases, including a strict enforcement of the Public  
513 Procurement Act (Act 663). This will help to create an environment for fair competition,  
514 enabling contracts to be won and awarded on merit. Another critical issue to tackling corruption  
515 is to give priority to certain aspects of the Ghanaian culture/traditions that influence corruption  
516 in public procurements; these include gift-giving and gift-taking and strong familial ties.

517

518 The results show that the strategies used by project stakeholders to engage in corruption are  
519 wide-ranging, including approving/awarding contracts for political and personal gains, leaking  
520 confidential information for payment (by government officials); collusion among contractors  
521 and sub-contractors, production of fraudulent invoices and timesheets (by contractors and  
522 subcontractors); and delayed issuance of payment certificates, deliberate conflict of interest  
523 situations (by quantity surveyors). The extant literature illustrates that these corruption  
524 strategies are equally applicable to other countries.

525

526 Successful implementation of anti-corruption measures is beyond the scope of the research  
527 reported herein. Hence, given the widespread of corruption, further research is needed to  
528 explore and develop appropriate anticorruption measures to address corrupt practices and  
529 behaviours. The research should also collaborate more closely with public and private sector  
530 organisations provided robust ethical controls and procedures can be implemented. Strategies  
531 to be explored should include adequate protection of whistle-blowers, tightened procurement  
532 procedures, use of codes of conduct and detection of corrupt activities. Controlling the  
533 influence of cultural and traditional practices on corruption in public infrastructure works  
534 procurements in Ghana is currently lacking, and further empirical investigation of its role in  
535 corruption is needed to provide a deeper understanding of corruption and improve efficacy of  
536 anti-corruption strategies.

537

538 The research has some limitations. First, it is exploratory and does not consider any theoretical  
539 or philosophical approach to investigating corruption. Second, the work was based upon direct  
540 experiences of construction practitioners. Hence, hard facts and evidence of corruption are  
541 urgently required to develop and implement effective anti-corruption measures expediently.  
542 Third, the survey sample size was relatively small but adequate for an exploratory research that  
543 deals with a highly sensitive subject (Vee and Skitmore 2003; Tabish and Jha 2011). Future  
544 research will address these issues, and greater collaboration with industry and government will  
545 present the best opportunity to achieve success in this respect and engender much needed  
546 cultural change.

547

#### 548 **Supplemental Data**

549 Table S1 Sample Questionnaire Template is available online on the ASCE Library ([asce.org](http://asce.org)).

550



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718

**Table 1** Respondents’ background and experience in the construction industry

Item	Category	Count	%
Years of experience	1 – 10	0	0.00
	11 – 20	7	20.00
	21 – 30	23	65.71
	Above 31	5	14.29
	Total	35	100
Job level	Director level	19	54.29
	Senior management level	16	45.71
	Total	35	100
Affiliation	Construction company	14	40.00
	Public sector agency/department	12	34.29
	Professional consulting firm	9	25.71
	Total	35	100
Professional association	Ghana Institution of Surveyors (GhIS)	14	40.00
	Ghana Institute of Architects (GIA)	11	31.43
	Ghana Institution of Engineers (GhIE)	9	25.71
	Not indicated	1	2.86
	Total	35	100
Job sector (profession)	Quantity surveying*	11	31.43
	Engineering**	7	20.00
	Project/Construction management***	8	22.86
	Architecture and design****	9	25.71
	Total	35	100

\*Quantity surveyors; \*\*Engineers; \*\*\*Project/Construction managers; \*\*\*\*Architects/designers



**Table 2** Prevalence of corruption in industry and project phases associated with corruption

(a) How widespread is corruption?	Mean	Index	Standard deviation	
Prevalence of corruption	4.40	0.88	0.76	

(b) Project phases	Mean	Index	Rank	Standard deviation
Bid evaluation	4.31	0.86	1	0.95
Tendering	4.25	0.85	2	0.94
Contract implementation and administration	3.84	0.77	3	0.62
Project planning and design	3.03	0.61	4	1.07
Contract close out (final account)	2.91	0.58	5	0.91

Likert scale: (a): 1 – 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree); (b): 1 – 5 (never to very frequently)

**Table 3** Prevalence of forms of corruption ta

<u>Corrupt acts</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Index</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Standard deviation</u>
Kickbacks	3.97	0.79	1	1.16
Bribery	3.91	0.78	2	1.07
Tender rigging and collusion	3.76	0.75	3	1.03
	3.63	0.73	4	1.16
Conflict of interest	3.41	0.68	5	0.90
Fraud	3.22	0.64	6	1.14
Fronting	3.00	0.60	7	0.84
Embezzlement				

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Likert scale: 1 – 5 (Never to Very frequently)

**Table 4** Personal experience and/or witness of corruption

	Conflict of interest	Bribery	Tender rigging and collusion	Kickbacks	Fraud	Fronting	Embezzlement
Yes: 1	25	25	25	24	17	14	13
No: 2	6	7	7	7	11	13	15
Total	31	32	32	31	28	27	28
Yes %	81	78	78	77	61	52	46
No%	19	22	22	23	39	48	54
Rank	1	2	2	4	5	6	7

**Table 5** Industry participants to corruption

Participants                                      Mean      Index      Rank      Standard deviation

Government officials	4.23	0.85	1	0.72
Contractors	3.82	0.76	2	0.86
Sub-contractors	3.79	0.76	3	0.99
Quantity surveyors	3.57	0.71	4	0.87
Material suppliers	3.55	0.71	5	0.86
Project managers	3.49	0.70	6	0.84
Professional architects/engineers	3.43	0.69	7	0.84
Developers/investors	3.31	0.66	8	0.92

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Likert scale: 1 – 5 (Never to Very frequently)

**Table 6** Industry participants' association with forms of corruption

	Government officials	Developers / investors	Project managers	Professional architects	Professional engineers	Quantity surveyors	Contractors	Subcontractors	Material suppliers	Total	%
Fraud	10	9	4	3	4	5	17	12	8	80	10.88
Collusion and bid rigging	18	5	11	10	15	18	9	9	4	104	14.15
Embezzlement	16	1	8	6	3	3	7	7	4	62	8.44
Fronting	7	6	5	6	4	3	11	8	8	61	8.30
Bribery	16	11	15	16	18	15	21	17	15	167	22.72
Kickbacks	21	9	20	16	18	17	14	12	13	155	21.09
Conflict of interest	22	7	11	11	14	14	3	4	9	106	14.42
Total scores	110	48	74	68	76	75	82	69	61	735	
%	14.97	6.53	10.07	9.25	10.34	10.20	11.16	9.39	8.30		100.00
Rank	1	9	5	7	3	4	2	6	8		

**Table 7** Government officials' involvement in corrupt activities

Corrupt acts	Mean	Index	Rank	Standard deviation
Approval/awarding contracts for political gain	4.47	0.89	1	0.65

Extortion of bribes from contractors, sub-contractors or suppliers as an inducement for awarding of contracts	4.26	0.85	2	0.70
Leaking of confidential information to a bidder in return for payment or payment in kind, thereby giving the bidder unfair advantage	3.82	0.76	3	1.01
Awarding contract to a family member, friend or business, where there is conflict of interest	3.74	0.75	4	1.09
Reject qualified contractors, sub-contractors, or suppliers without valid reason	3.61	0.72	5	1.01

---

Likert scale: 1 – 5 (Never to Very frequently)

**Table 8** Contractors' participation on corrupt activities

Corrupt acts	Mean	Index	Rank	Standard deviation
Collusion with other contractors in order to dictate the markets	3.70	0.74	1	1.09
Production of fraudulent invoices	3.67	0.73	2	1.12

Production of fraudulent timesheets	3.58	0.72	3	1.13
Provision of false extra costs to a contract claim as a “negotiation margin” **	3.55	0.71	4	1.23
Employment of illegal workers	3.24	0.65	5	1.26
Refusal to work with a subcontractors or supplier unless some benefit is provided to the contractor	3.21	0.64	6	1.01

\*\*The claimant’s logic in including this margin may be that it believes that the opponent will attempt to reduce the claim, and so a sufficient margin must be added to enable negotiations to arrive at the correct figure. Likert scale: 1 – 5 (Never to Very frequently)

**Table 9** Sub-contractors’ participation on corrupt activities

<u>Corrupt acts</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Index</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Standard deviation</u>
Production of fraudulent timesheets	3.58	0.72	1	1.13
Collusion with other subcontractors in order to dictate the markets	3.36	0.67	2	1.07
Production of fraudulent timesheets	3.27	0.65	3	1.11
Providing lesser standard of work rather than what was stated in the contract specification	3.24	0.65	4	1.10
Employment of illegal workers	3.06	0.61	5	1.20

Likert scale: 1 – 5 (Never to Very frequently)

**Table 10** Quantity surveyors' participation on corrupt activities

Corrupt behaviours	Mean	Index	Rank	Standard deviation
Deliberate delayed issuing of payment certificates to the contractor	3.26	0.65	1	1.02*
Working for both the client and contractor on a project, creating a conflict of interest	3.26	0.65	2	1.08*
Deliberate under-payment of interim payments to the contractor	3.24	0.65	3	1.14
Biased decision-making in the expectation of additional contracts from clients (such as withholding valid payments, or extension of time, or claims to which the contractor is entitled)	3.23	0.65	4	1.10
Willingness to issue improper payment certificates or approve invalid claims and extensions of time, due to fear of repercussion for negligence (e.g. over-measurement)	3.14	0.63	5	1.25



Preparation of unfair final accounts, favouring the client

3.09

0.62

6

1.16

Likert scale: 1 – 5 (Never to Very frequently); \*When different factors have the same mean score, the highest rank is assigned to the factor with the least standard deviation

**Table 11** Facilitators of corruption in the construction industry Corruption facilitators

	Mean	Index	Rank	<u>Standard deviation</u>
High political connections enhance secrecy in the award of public contracts	4.28	0.86	1	0.98
Excessive and reckless sole sourcing for public procurement contracts breeds corrupt practices*	4.06	0.81	2	0.97
The lack of commitment by construction firms in addressing the issue of corruption in their mission statement contributes to the prevalence of corruption within the industry	3.94	0.79	3	0.90
The operating environment of construction projects provides opportunity to conceal corrupt activities	3.88	0.78	4	0.96
Private opening of tenders provides more opportunities for corrupt practices to occur by modifying the result during the tender adjudication period	3.84	0.77	5	0.91

The lack of accountability through the use of internal auditing on construction projects is a reason for the existence of corruption within the industry	3.81	0.76	6	0.98
Lack of transparency in awarding of contracts (no reason provided for unsuccessful bidders in a non-competitive procurement system)	3.75	0.75	7	1.03
The absence of high competition between locally-based foreign and Ghanaian firms promotes corrupt practices	3.44	0.69	8	1.00

\*e.g., inflated cost prices

Likert scale: 1 – 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree)

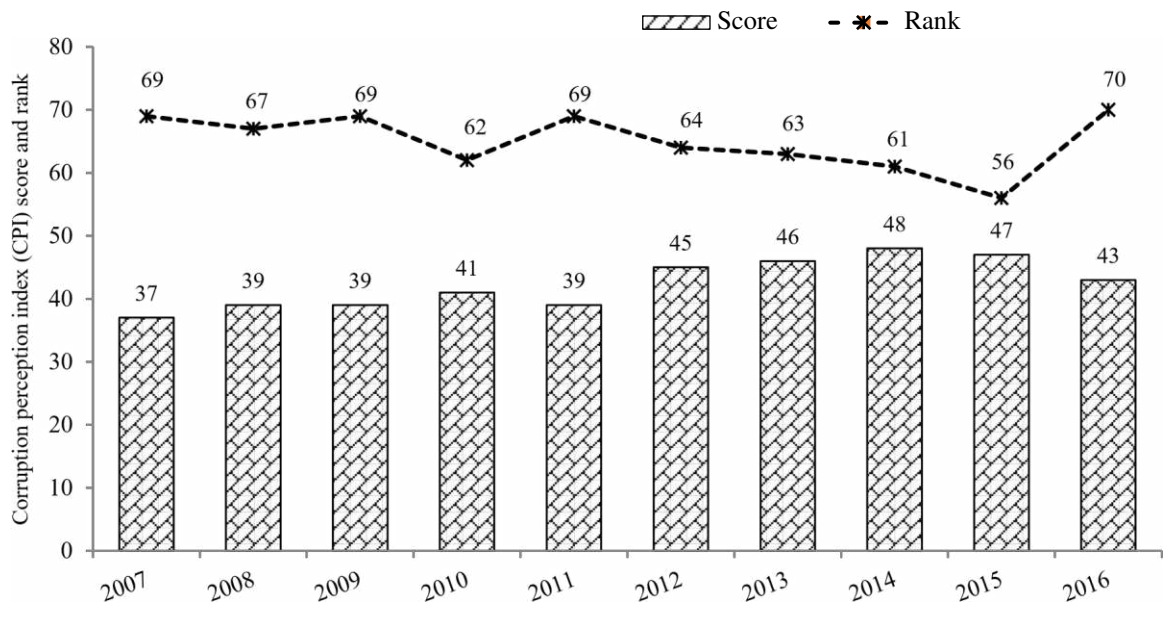
**Table 12** Barriers to reporting corruption practices

Barriers	Mean	Index	Rank	Standard deviation
Fear of dismissal (or other occupational penalty) imposed by your employer	4.42	0.88	1	0.70
The perception that the ‘whistle-blower’ is not well protected and may be exposed	4.38	0.88	2	0.60
No confidence in the national anti-corruption agencies and the judicial system	4.22	0.84	3	0.70
Loyalty to friends or organisation prevents individuals from reporting any illicit activity	4.16	0.83	4	0.75
A belief that it will be a waste of time as no serious action will be taken	4.03	0.81	5	0.90

Do not want to be seen as a “whistle blower” syndrome (stigma)	3.94	0.79	6	0.90
The fear of physical harm to one’s self and/or one’s family	3.81	0.76	7	0.95
Do not know the reporting procedures to be followed	3.75	0.75	8	0.90

---

Likert scale: 1 – 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree)



**Figure 1** Transparency International corruption scores and ranks for Ghana (2007–2016)

Figure Caption List

**Figure 1** Transparency International corruption scores and ranks for Ghana (2007–2016)

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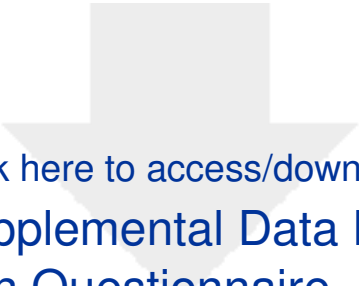
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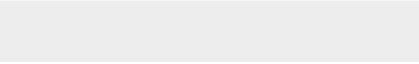
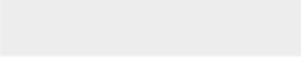
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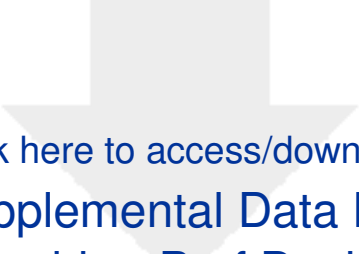




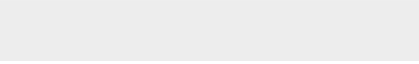

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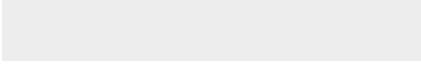



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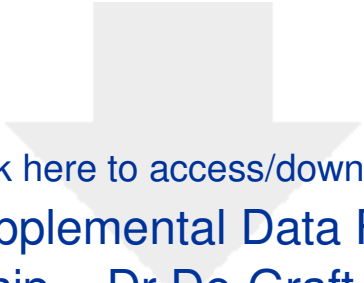
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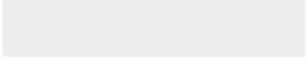
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Publication Title: Journal of Management in Engineering

Manuscript Title: Corrupt Practices in the Construction Industry: A Survey of Ghanaian Experience

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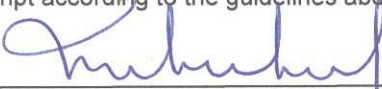
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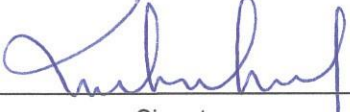
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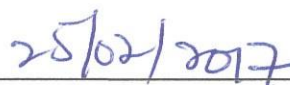
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The authors wish to thank the referees for their constructive comments and suggestions which aimed at improving the paper. Each individual comment has either been addressed or defended as appropriate (refer below) and a final file resubmitted for your consideration. Once again, thank you.

Reviewers' Comments	Authors' response
<b>All authors</b>	
<p>This manuscript was submitted as a Case Study. Does the reviewer think this is the appropriate article type? To see descriptions of the article types, <a href="download.aspx?scheme=7&amp;id=28">Click Here</a>.</p>	
<p>Reviewer #1: Yes. The author is using the correct article type.</p> <p>Reviewer #2: Yes. The author is using the correct article type.</p> <p>Reviewer #4: Yes. The author is using the correct article type.</p>	<p><a href="#">We thank the Reviewers for the agreement</a></p>
<p>Reviewer #3: No. The author should revise as a Technical Paper.</p>	<p><a href="#">We believe that it is appropriate to present this research as a Case Study given its specific focus on a developing country.</a></p>
<b>Reviewer #1</b>	
<p>This is a well written case study that addresses an important construction issue in developing countries.</p> <p>A copy of the questionnaire used for data collection needs to be added as an appendix to the paper to enhance reader understanding of the tabular data presented.</p>	<p><a href="#">The authors are delighted to read this comment - thank you.</a></p> <p><a href="#">As recommended, we have also made available a copy of the questionnaire to enhance readers' understanding of the tabular data.</a></p>
<b>Reviewer #3</b>	
<p>This is a fine written paper, following the classical IMRaD methodology. The abstract is well written and so is the inner text.</p>	<p><a href="#">We thank the Reviewer for the comment.</a></p>
<p>There are just couple of concerns before the paper could be recommending for final acceptance:</p>	<p><a href="#">We thank the Reviewer for the following comments.</a></p>

<p>1. it would be interesting to use Transparency International findings on Ghana (incl. the global rank) and include it in this research - when giving the intro, but also discussing the results.</p>	<p>We thank the reviewer for the comment. We have included Transparency International's corruption index scores and ranks on Ghana in the Introduction (Lines 63 – 69) and in presentation of results (Lines 225 – 225). Figure 1 is also included to show trends in the scores and ranks over the last 10 years (2007 to 2016)</p>
<p>2. the research community would benefit from attaching the sample of the survey to the appendix, so it could be used in and compared with the other developing countries.</p>	<p>We thank the reviewer for the comment. A copy of the Questionnaire is provided (uploaded).</p>
<p>3. the tables 4 and 6 could be omitted. The text is more than grateful...</p>	<p>Thank for the observation. Although the main text provides details of the results, inclusion of tables 4 and 6 provide further details. For example, Table 6 indicates associations between various forms of corruption and industry stakeholders. As the text highlights only corrupt acts associated with government officials, Table 6 further informs the reader of various malpractices in which other stakeholders are involved in.</p>
<p>4. the public procurement act is not put to referenced or is referred wrong.</p>	<p>The Public Procurement Act is referenced where it first appears (in Discussion section) (Lines 385 – 386).</p>
<p>5. the conclusions declared at Ln 425-428 are a bit bold, considering the citation from 1975 (!?)</p>	<p>We submitted that culture <b>may</b> explain the widespread corruption in Ghana's construction industry. The point about gift-giving and gift-taking in the Ghanaian culture still holds in today's cultural practices/traditions of the country. And therefore, our emphasis is on the abuse of these cultural practices in the business environment, which is supported by the World Bank Enterprise Surveys (2013):</p> <p><i>“... businesses in Ghana are expected to give gifts to government procurement officials ...Gifts are used as mechanism to improve the responsiveness of, and to enhance and maintain relationships, with government officials for present and future favourable contract opportunities” (see Lines 446 – 449).</i></p> <p>The above violates the traditional purpose of gift-giving and gift-taking in Ghana.</p> <p>Hence, the declaration is still valid within the Ghanaian context regarding corruption.</p>

<p>6. explain how to impose such anti-corruption measures (In 490-492). This is important for the readers</p>	<p>Thank you for the comment.</p> <p>Given the scope of this paper, and space limitation imposed by the Journal, implementation of the anti-corruption measures mentioned is recommended for further research. This aspect will appear in a subsequent publication as part of the research project being undertaken by the researchers.</p> <p>We submit that (Lines 528 – 531):</p> <p><i>“Successful implementation of anticorruption measures is beyond the scope of the research reported herein. Hence, given the widespread of corruption, further research is needed to explore ...”.</i></p>
<p>Just an advise... When using the Likert scale it's better if the even scale would have been used. Hence the respondents</p>	<p>We thank the reviewer for the advice, it is accepted.</p>
<p>would have been averted from using the neutral and middle value.</p>	
<p>Lastly, this paper is clearly written in a research fashion and should not be classified as case study.</p>	<p>We believe that it is appropriate to present this research as a Case Study given its specific focus on a developing country.</p>
<p><b>Reviewer #4</b></p>	
<p>This type of research is needed to make these practices and their extent of use known to the society. It also serves as an alert to locals and foreigners doing business in Ghana. The research can also inform actions that need to be taken to combat corruption.</p>	<p>We are grateful to the Reviewer for the comment – thank you.</p>
<p>The paper is very well organized and easy to read. The tables are necessary but Figure 1 could be removed, as it is not informative.</p>	<p>Thank you for the comment.</p> <p>Figure 1 is removed from the manuscript.</p>



<p>The methodology is explained but it is not clear how the main sections of the questionnaire were defined and/or how they directly relate to a review of the literature reviewed. It would be useful to know how the authors singled out specific questions and whether or not they were reviewed or pretested.</p> <p>The literature is well covered and integrated throughout the paper, and could be better used to explain the method as well.</p>	<p>Thank you for the comment and the authors are pleased to read that the literature is well covered.</p> <p>The key sections of the questionnaire were based on the literature and guided by the overall objectives of the research. The main aspects covered in the current paper are: prevalence and forms of corruption, parties involved in corruption, enablers or facilitators of corruption, and barriers to reporting corruption. Further, the questionnaire was reviewed and modified by the research team to ensure its suitability for the study Ghanaian environment, particularly the construction industry. Hence, the authors report that:</p> <p><i>Lines 219 – 220: The results are structured to iteratively report upon key sections of data collected from the questionnaires.</i></p> <p>The research methods are well explained, connecting to relevant literature. We describe our overall approach to the study, highlighting the identification and selection of experienced construction practitioners as survey respondents (<i>Lines 186 – 212</i>).</p>
<p>The results need to be evaluated to check their significance, from an Statistics standpoint. The tables present the frequency of responses and the analysis is shallow in terms of what could be done with this dataset. Which types of correlations can be verified in the dataset. Are there bias in the responses?</p> <p>Or certain participants tended to answer in one way or another. For instance, contractors pointing to problems with owners, and owners pointing to contractors. There seems to be a lot of blame assigned to public servants/officials, however, were they given a chance to fill this questionnaire? Is this a one-sided assessment of the situation? There needs to be some comment on that.</p>	<p>The authors thank the reviewer for the comment.</p> <p>This paper – which emanates from a larger-scope, ongoing corruption research – is exploratory, based on direct experiences of construction practitioners/professionals. This helps to build and inform the next stage of the research project. Also, advanced/sophisticated statistics are not employed in the analysis of data due in part to the small sample size (this limitation is acknowledged in the ‘Conclusions’ section). Despite their simplicity, the methods of analysis used</p>

	<p>are appropriate for a study of this genre, and have been used in previous studies (e.g., Tabish and Jha 2011; Bowen et al. 2007).</p> <p>We are of the view that the respondents were fair and drew on their lived experiences of corruption and professional knowledge; recall that the respondents were experienced construction professionals from private construction companies, public sector agencies/departments and professional consulting firms, and with affiliations to the construction industry professional bodies in the country (see Table 1: GhIS, GIA, and GhIE)). Hence, there was no one-sided assessment of corruption situation. Drawing on the professional knowledge and lived experiences of corruption of the professional respondents is a major strength of this paper. We have commented on this:</p> <p><i>Lines 193–195: In order to avoid bias in the survey responses, respondents were selected from private construction companies, professional consulting firms and public sector agencies/departments (refer to Table 1). This selection strategy was adopted ... and to guarantee credible and balanced feedback.</i></p>
<p>The discussion could be organized in subtopics to make the points clearer and more impactful and also make a more directly link to what is presented in the conclusions.</p>	<p>We thank the reviewer for the comment.</p> <p>We structured the paper as follows. The survey results are structured into four broad subheadings under ‘The Survey Results’, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevalence and forms of corruption</li> <li>• Participation in corruption</li> <li>• Facilitators of corruption</li> <li>• Control of corruption</li> </ul> <p>This structure helps to report upon key sections of data collected from the questionnaires (see <b>Lines 219 – 221</b>).</p> <p>Following the above, we provide a discussion that integrates ad reflects results of the four key subheadings.</p>

<p>The conclusions should reflect the results of the paper. How specific results should be addressed, instead of some blanket statements about the need for ethics reform or regulation. Address results separately, as well as address the results that point to the most frequent problems/barriers/facilitators.</p>	<p>We thank the review for the comment.</p> <p>We have revised/re-written the Conclusions section so that the results are reflected. Blanket statements are removed or revised. Further research is recommended to address relevant issues that are beyond the scope of this</p>
	<p>research, including development of anticorruption strategies and the role of cultural and traditional practices in facilitating corruption in public procurements (Lines 501–529; 534 – 538).</p>
<b>Editor’s comments</b>	
<p>Editor: First of all, I would like to thank you for considering Journal of Management in Engineering to publish your work. I have read the paper and the comments of the reviewers. The reviewers have recommended revise and resubmit the manuscript. Based on my own reading of the paper and the comments of review team and AE, I agree with the reviewers to invite you to revise your manuscript. During the revision process, I strongly recommend that you conduct a thorough literature review on the subject to discuss your work's importance/significance and clearly explain why your work is appropriate for the diverse readership of Journal of Management in Engineering.</p>	<p>We thank the Editor for the interest in our research.</p> <p>We have responded to the reviewers’ comments, and where necessary, further clarification is provided.</p> <p>In our concluding remarks, we state the study’s potential contribution to practice and transparency and accountability environment in public procurements, and the role of local cultural/traditional practices in the tackling corruption in the construction industry.</p>
<p>Please incorporate all reviewers' comments thoroughly and fully and submit a revised manuscript along with the detailed response to reviewers' comments for full re-review. Thanks for your interest in the Journal of Management in Engineering. We look forward to receiving the revised manuscript from you. The reviewer comments are listed below.</p>	<p>We have responded to the reviewers’ comments point-by-point as shown in this Response sheet.</p> <p>As requested by the reviewers, we have uploaded a sample of our questionnaire template under ‘Supplemental Data’ section: <i>Table S1 Sample Questionnaire Template is available online on the ASCE Library (asce.org).</i></p>
<b>Associate Editor’s comments</b>	
<p>Associate Editor: Thanks for your submission to JME. The paper was reviewed by three experts who acknowledged its value. However, the same reviewers also suggested various remarks to hone the quality of the paper. The authors should address these comments in their revision.</p>	<p>We thank the AE for the interest in this paper.</p> <p>Each individual comment is either addressed or defended as appropriate.</p>

## References

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African construction industry. *Construction Management and Economics*, 25(6), 631-648.



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