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A Framework for The Implementation of International

Construction Ethics Standards in Sub-Sahara Africa: The

Case of Ghana

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Abstract

Built environment professionals make decisions in their daily practice that affect various aspects of human lives. Their decisions are regulated by a professional code of ethics, which stipulates the rules that guide their practice. Irrespective of their common heritage as built environment professions, disciplines within the sector operate separate ethics guidelines, reflecting diverse priorities rather than a unified set of values. For professionals operating globally, varying ethical standards and practices across jurisdictions require adjusting to different ethical expectations, creating dilemmas where ethical boundaries are often unclear. To address these disparities, the International Ethics Standards Coalition (IESC) introduced the first draft of global ethical standards for the built environment sector in 2016, ratified and adopted in 2021.

Global standards aim to provide consistency across jurisdictions, ensuring practitioners worldwide follow identical ethical principles. Yet, the effectiveness of global standards in ensuring consistent ethical practice is contentious. This is because morality is often culture-specific; what is ethical in one culture might be unethical in another. Indeed, in professions like accountancy, the impact of global standards was influenced by the socio-cultural norms, values, and practices of the host country.

Focusing on Ghana, the literature is silent on how Ghanaian built environment professional bodies can integrate and apply global ethics standards in their unique setting. This study examines the impact of Ghana's socio-cultural context on applying universal ethics principles in its built environment sector and proposes a framework for adopting the IESC's global standards locally. A qualitative content analysis was used to compare selected Ghanaian codes with the IESC global standards, identifying areas of alignment and divergence. A grounded theory methodology guided 25 semi-structured interviews with Ghanaian professionals, providing the empirical basis for the framework.

The findings reveal a low level of awareness of the IESC ethics principles among Ghanaian built environment professionals. This thesis posits that a deontological ethical framework primarily offers the most effective philosophical paradigm for facilitating the integration of the IESC's global ethics principles into the Ghanaian built environment sector. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the necessity for flexibility and contextual adaptation. Not all ethical principles in international standards can be effectively implemented through a purely deontological approach. Some principles may require a more gradual and nuanced introduction, particularly in contexts where they are not readily accepted or embraced. Traditional socio-cultural practices exert a strong influence on corporate governance and combined with other systemic challenges, hinder the effective implementation of the IESC global ethics principles. However, targeted policies, as illustrated in the resultant framework could facilitate their successful implementation. This thesis contributes to knowledge by advancing the understanding of how the IESC's global ethics principles can be implemented in the Ghanaian context and offers policy recommendations for their successful application.

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to give all glory and honour to Jehovah God Almighty, the source of all wisdom and understanding, for His abundant Grace, divine guidance, and the gift of life.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Martha Mamphey, and our daughters, Nana-Yaa Mamphey and Averie Mamphey. Their love, patience, and sacrifices have been my sustenance, especially during the most challenging moments of this journey. You have been my constant source of inspiration and strength. I love you.

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List of Abbreviations

CPI   Corruption Perception Index

IESC   International Ethics Standards Coalition

IES   International Ethics Standards

GIA   Ghana Institute of Architects

GHIS   Ghana Institution of Surveyors

GHIE   Ghana Institution of Engineers

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background and Justification

Globally the built environment industry plays a significant role in shaping the quality of various aspects of human lives. This includes the provision of the buildings that humans occupy, the infrastructure that provides necessities such as water, electricity, and transportation systems, including roads and bridges, that enable people to move from one place to another. Regardless of whether one is directly involved in a project or simply an onlooker, professionals working in the built environment sector are responsible for making daily decisions that can have far-reaching consequences on all of our lives. The industry is also a significant contributor to global wealth creation. In Ghana, the context within which this study is undertaken, the construction industry significantly contributes to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with over 12.8 billion Ghanaian cedis (equivalent to roughly 2.1 billion U.S. dollars) being generated in 2020.
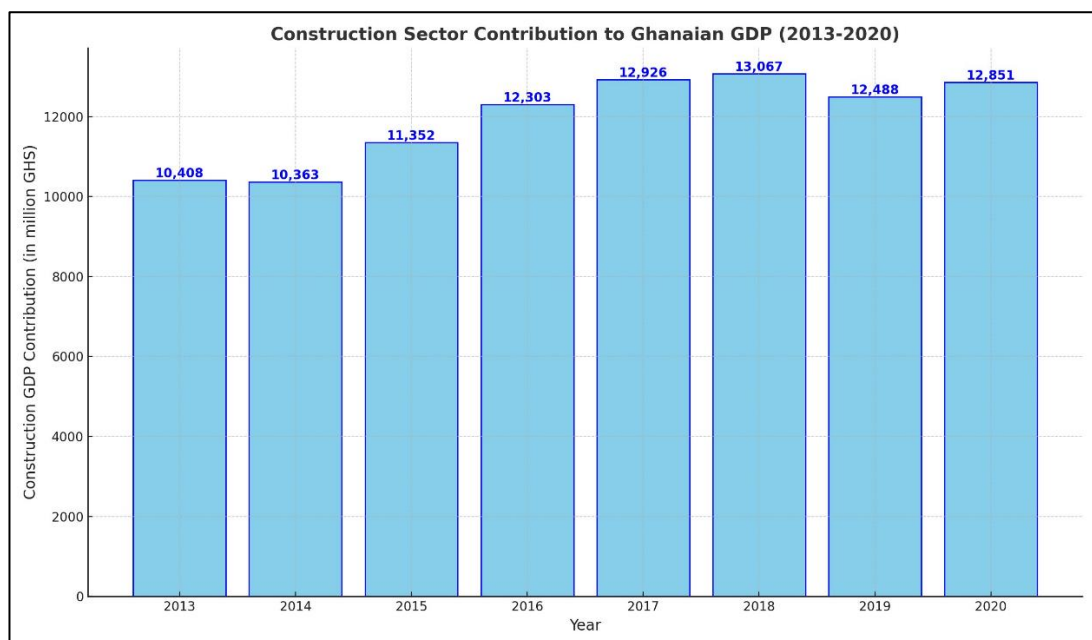
Figure 1. Contribution of Construction to GDP in Ghana. Source: Based on (Dokua Sasu, 2022)

As shown in figure 1 above, this was an increase from the previous year's figure of 12.48 billion GHS. The industry's peak value added was recorded in 2018 at 13.1 billion GHS.

Construction is considered one of the key industries in terms of its contribution to GDP in Ghana (Dokua Sasu, 2022). However, Ghana is not an exception. The sector contributes significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in many countries globally (Crosthwaite, 2000). Notwithstanding its significant contributions to global economies, including job provision, as well as the crucial role it plays in infrastructure development, the construction industry has been identified as one of the most unethical sectors globally (Owusu et al., 2019). Reports of unethical practices in the sector include bribery and corruption, discrimination, homophobia, health and safety breaches, modern day slavery, and a key contributor to global warming (Locatelli et al., 2017; Garner-Purkis, 2020; Porter, 2016; Dainty et al., 2020; Adinyira et al., 2018; Kuoribo et al., 2021; Ameyaw et al., 2017; UN Environment Programme, 2019; Chan and Owusu, 2017). The effects of poor and unethical practices in the sector often results in detrimental outcomes, such as environmental degradation (Ayarkwa et al., 2014; Asah-Kissiedu et al., 2021), and in some cases, loss of human lives through compromised safety standards and the use of substandard building materials (Boateng, 2020; Quaicoe, 2023). These malpractices not only erode public trust (Asamoah and Decardi-Nelson, 2014) but also hampers economic growth as well as the provision of developmental projects, such as hospitals, schools, roads, and public transportation systems, that benefit society at large (Dion, 2010; Osei–Owusu et al., 2014).

Considering the significant impact and influence of the sector on the socioeconomic welfare of humans, it is vital for those who work in the sector to establish trust in their professional expertise by demonstrating credibility and maintaining high ethical standards in their conduct. This is essential to ensuring that the interests of all stakeholders, including the public, are safeguarded and that the sector operates transparently and responsibly.

Professional bodies have a pivotal role to play in this regard. In the second edition of his collaboration for change report Morrell (2020) emphasised that professional bodies continue to perform a valuable role in regulating professionals within the built environment sector. One of the mediums by which they fulfil their regulatory function is through the enforcement of a set of rules designed to guide and regulate the activities of their members to ensure that they practice in an ethical way.

The word ethics is generally concerned with determining or distinguishing between right and wrong conduct or behaviours. Some definitions of ethics offered by scholars include *'the philosophy of human conduct with an emphasis on moral questions of right and wrong'* (Helgadóttir, 2008), *'the system of moral values by which the rights and wrongs of behaviour are judged* (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1991), and *'... the right rules that ought to govern human conduct ...'* (Petrick and Quinn, 1997) as cited in Helgadóttir (2008).

In a professional context, ethics refers to the expected standards of responsibility, competence, and commitment that a professional needs to uphold in order to provide high-quality services to the public (Watts et al., 2021). A professional code of ethics, containing rules, guidelines and principles often serves as the rulebook prescribing the expected standards of ethical behaviour. In addition to establishing the common set of rules or standards that define the ethical behaviour expected of professionals, the code also serves to govern and regulate the daily actions and behaviour of professionals (Higgs-Kleyn and Kapelianis, 1999).

This professional code of ethics is also sometimes referred to as a code of conduct, code of practice, or a code of professional behaviour (Fisher et al., 2001; Marnburg, 2000; Schwartz, 1998). In this study, the terms codes of ethics or codes of conduct are used interchangeably to refer to the same thing - a set of guidelines or standards that define the ethical behaviour expected of professionals within the built environment sector.

A well-crafted code of ethics is a crucial resource that can help with maintaining good ethical standards. For practitioners, it serves as a vital point of reference to guide their decision-making and to initiate discussions on ethics and compliance matters, it can empower them to speak up with confidence and make the right decisions when confronted with ethical difficulties, and function as a deterrent to steer individuals away from acting in an unethical way (Watts et al., 2021). The built environment sector includes a variety of professions, such as architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, project managers, health and safety experts etc. Despite sharing a common heritage as built environment professionals, each discipline within the sector operates under its own unique code of ethics. While there may be some similarities between the different codes, there are also significant differences. The proliferation of these codes worldwide has resulted in varying standards, creating a fragmented and, at times, inconsistent approach to applying and advancing ethics within the sector.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, multinational built environment organizations, and the professionals who work for them, often find themselves working in regions where the laws and cultural attitudes towards ethical conduct may differ from what they are used to. This lack of consistency in ethical practices creates a moral dilemma, making it difficult for professionals to reconcile the different approaches they encounter.

For example, in 2012 the CEO of SNC Lavalin, a Canadian engineering multinational, was compelled to resign due to ethical violations after authorising $56 million in payments that violated the company's ethical guidelines. These payments were offered as bribes to members of the former Gaddafi government in Libya and were connected to SNC-Lavalin's projects in the country (Tedesco, 2015). In February 2016, the UK-based multinational construction services provider, Sweett Group, was fined £2.25 million by the Serious Fraud Office due to corrupt payments made by the company to secure projects in

Dubai (Serious Fraud Office, 2014). In 2011, Mabey and Johnson, a British company specialising in bridge construction, became the first UK business convicted of bribery to secure contracts in Ghana and Jamaica. This scandal is also the first known case where the professionals involved have been sentenced to prison for engaging in unethical practices overseas (Sarpong et al., 2019).

To address these prevalent ethical discrepancies and harmonise ethical practice among built environment professional bodies worldwide, the International Ethics Standards Coalition (IESC) was established with the aim of developing a set of universally accepted ethical principles for the global profession. However, the feasibility and effectiveness of such global ethics standards in promoting uniform ethical practice across diverse jurisdictions must be critically evaluated.

For many years, Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) has reported contrasting ethical attitudes between countries in the Global North and Global South.

| CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2020 | CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2021 | CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2022 |
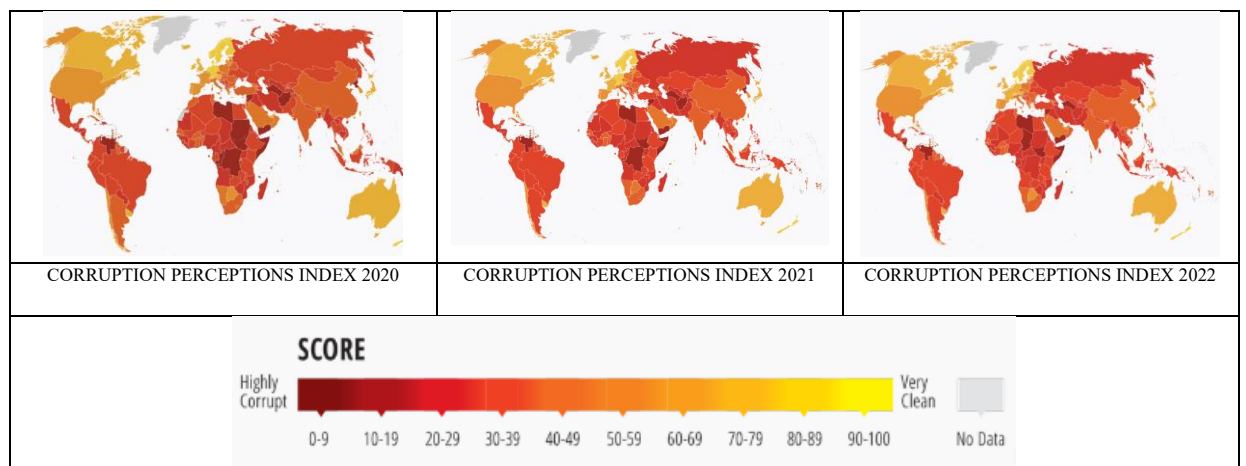
Figure 2. 2020, 2021 and 2022 CPI Results - Source: Transparency International

The index in figure 2 shows that the two regions are far apart in their demeanour towards things 'unethical'. Whereas western European societies receive the highest score and are generally less implicated in corruption, countries in the sub-Sahara African regions receive

the lowest score and are perceived to be significantly prone to corruption. Some argue that these discrepancies can be explained by the sociocultural differences that exist between the two regions (Jenkins, 2007; Blunt and Jones, 1997; Onwuachi, 1966). Whatever the underlying reasons may be, these differences cast doubt, and project a gloomy outlook, on the prospect of successfully implementing and enforcing a universally accepted ethical code across the two regions as promoted by the IESC. There is a pressing need for a comprehensive framework or roadmap that outlines the strategies for effectively integrating these global ethics standards across diverse settings. Additionally, such a framework must take into account the local variations in cultural norms, professional practices, and governance structures. In an attempt to provide a blueprint to guide the application of universal principles of ethics across different cultures and societies, Colero (2018) developed the framework below. This framework segregates ethics into three categories namely, interpersonal, professional, and global. The three categories are depicted as a continually burning flame to symbolise how they are interrelated and constantly influencing one another. Each category contains general guidelines meant to help people make ethical decisions.
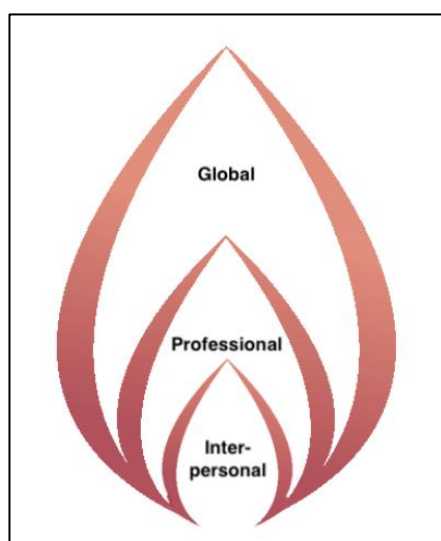
Figure 3. Framework for Universal Principles of Ethics. Source: (Colero, 2018)

In essence, each type of ethics affects an individual's ethical choices and behaviour in its own way, especially when ethical dilemmas arise. When there is a conflict between the categories on which ethical choice to make, the global ethics takes priority. For example, when a scientist working on a governmental project discovers that their government's plan for the project is to develop and use a biological weapon, they face an ethical dilemma between their professional duty as an employee to maintain confidentiality (professional), and their duties under 'Interpersonal Principles' and 'Global' duty to protect humanity. If there was an opportunity to inform United Nations observers, then one must aspire towards the higher ideal where their duty under the 'Global' as well as 'Interpersonal Principles' would likely justify divulging confidential information to save lives and protect the overall good of humanity. Colero (2018) introduced this framework as a potential solution to address the existing inconsistencies and disparities in how universal ethical standards are applied across different settings and cultures.

While this framework offers a useful theoretical guide for navigating conflicts that may arise between the different categories of ethical principles (interpersonal, professional, and global), in practice, it fails to address how to deal with the unique challenges arising from the specific contextual settings within a given jurisdiction. More importantly, it overlooks how deeply ingrained sociocultural norms can substantially influence individual ethical beliefs and decisions. The framework's default position of implementing the provisions of a global standard in conflict situations could prove problematic if the global ethical principles it advocates clash with local cultural values and norms.

As suggested by Cohen et al. (1992) in scenarios where local or societal ethics are at odds with global ethical principles, individuals are more likely to prioritise their immediate cultural norms over the universal ethics proposed by the framework. Indeed, past studies that investigated the application of global ethics standards in other professions have shown

that achieving consistency in the implementation and application of a global code of ethics can be constrained by the socio cultural and religious factors prevailing in the host country (Cohen et al., 1992; Alzahir and Kombo, 2014; Barrainkua and Espinosa-Pike, 2015; Espinosa-Pike and Barrainkua-Aroztegi, 2014). Despite the challenges, efforts by the IESC to standardise ethical practices appear necessary, as acknowledged in a study by Manu et al. (2015). In their study, they found that 95 percent of Ghanaian surveying practitioners agreed that achieving global consistency in ethical standards would have a positive impact on the sector. This finding not only corroborates the earlier-presented justification for the global standards but also signals support for the ongoing efforts by the IESC to harmonize professional ethics practices across different geographical contexts within the built environment sector.

1.2 Research Gap

The implementation of globalised ethical standards in the built environment sector enhances the likelihood of a more cohesive approach to ethical practice. However, this approach faces challenges due to variations in socio-cultural practices and norms across different societies. The ongoing debate between ethical relativism and absolutism highlights the conflicts that could arise, particularly in jurisdictions where these globalised ethical principles do not align with local values and norms. Past attempts to implement global standards in other professions have shown that certain local variables can hinder their successful implementation (Cohen et al., 1992; Alzahir and Kombo, 2014; Barrainkua and Espinosa-Pike, 2015; Espinosa-Pike and Barrainkua-Aroztegi, 2014). These previous scholarly efforts thus give rise to a research problem focused on determining how the IESC's global ethical standards can be successfully integrated and applied in Ghana's built environment sector. Within the Ghanaian built environment sector, there is an extensive range of studies and literature on ethics. For example, a study by Manu et al. (2015) focused on the extent to which the surveying profession stakeholders in Ghana can

influence improvement in unethical practices and to inquire how surveying practitioners in Ghana perceive the ongoing international efforts to produce an international ethics standard for the built environment sector. Ameyaw et al. (2017) set out to find the prevalence and forms of corruption within Ghana's construction sector, Asamoah and Decardi-Nelson (2014) uncovered that corrupt practices exist among public officials, contractors and construction professionals within the Ghanaian construction sector and Osei-Tutu et al. (2010) explored corrupt practices in the procurement of public infrastructural projects in Ghana. More recently, scholars such as Kuoribo et al. (2021) investigated the impact of ethical and unethical behaviours of professionals on construction project performance in Ghana, Agyekum et al. (2021) examined the prevalence of ethical misconduct within the tendering of construction projects in Ghana and Coffie et al. (2023) studied stakeholder perspectives on the most commonly observed unethical behaviours in Ghana's construction sector. While these studies contribute to knowledge and enrich the understanding of ethical issues in the Ghanaian built environment sector, a comprehensive review of the literature reveals a significant research gap. Specifically, there is a lack of studies that explores how global ethics standards can be successfully integrated into and applied in localised settings with a specific emphasis on the Ghanaian built environment sector. It is this gap in the literature that this study aims to fill. First, the study will investigate the factors that could impact the successful application of the IESC's global ethics principles within the Ghanaian built environment sector. Second, it would offer suggestions and recommendations on how to overcome any likely impediments. The recommendations would include suggestions on how the IESC's global standards can be integrated and applied in the Ghanaian built environment while respecting contextual sensitivities. The key research questions guiding this study are outlined below.

1.3 Research Questions

From the foregoing discussions, the following set of key research questions have been set:

RQ 1: How are the IESC's global ethical principles reflected in the local codes of ethics of built environment professional bodies in Ghana?

RQ 2: How do specific contextual factors in Ghana facilitate or impede the successful application of international ethics standards in the Ghanaian built environment sector?

RQ 3: Given the unique socio-cultural context in Ghana, can the IESC's global ethics principles be seamlessly adopted and successfully implemented in the Ghanaian built environment sector?

1.4 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to develop a framework designed to guide the integration and application of the IESC's global ethics principles in the Ghanaian built environment sector.

1.5 Research Objectives

To achieve the above aim, the objectives below are set, which will aid in collecting data to gradually produce a body of evidence that will inform the development of the framework and allow inferences to be drawn in relation to the overall aim.

RO 1: To explore the concept and philosophical underpinnings of ethics and ascertain how these apply or support the implementation of universal professional ethics standards in the built environment sector.

RO 2: To evaluate progress made by professional bodies in the Ghanaian built environment sector in aligning their local codes of ethics with the ethical standards outlined in the IESC global ethics principles.

RO 3: To discuss practices and other contextual factors in Ghana that will aid or hinder the successful integration and application of the IESC global ethics principles.

RO 4: To investigate drivers for change that may facilitate the successful application of the IESC's global ethics principles in the Ghanaian built environment sector.

RO 5: To develop a framework designed to guide the integration and application of the IESC's global ethics standards in the Ghanaian built environment sector.

RO 6: To evaluate the framework using selected built environment practitioners and stakeholders in Ghana.

1.6 Scope of Research

This research focuses on the implementation of the IESC's global ethical standards in the Ghanaian built environment sector. The study has a limited scope in the sense that it intends to explore issues pertinent to only a select set of professions within the sector. It is essential to acknowledge that other built environment professionals not covered in this study, such as project managers, health and safety experts, real estate professionals, and planners, may have unique factors, or nuances that this study will not address. A comprehensive evaluation of all these professions is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, this research will provide insights specifically from the perspective of only three professional groups within the Ghanaian built environment sector namely: architects, engineers, and quantity surveyors.

1.7 Research Design

This study is based on an interpretivist philosophical paradigm. This paradigm holds that reality is subjectively constructed and requires the researcher to interact as an "insider" with the object under investigation to uncover deeper meanings through dialogue and

interpretation (Creswell and Poth, 2013). In line with this approach, a qualitative research strategy was selected using semi-structured interviews to collect empirical data. The study of ethics is a complex phenomenon rooted in societal and individual perceptions; therefore, a quantitative approach would not have been the most appropriate to fully appreciate and understand such a highly contextualised topic.

A constructivist grounded theory methodology by Kathy Charmaz was adopted to support the development of a framework grounded in empirical data. This methodological approach is a modified version of the grounded theory originally founded in the 1960s by two sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is most suitable to use when a researcher wishes to produce or construct an explanatory theory for a substantive area of inquiry (Birks and Mills, 2015). The empirical data collected was analysed through coding, exploring, and the development of themes using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo (version 12). From the findings, a framework was developed to guide the implementation of global ethical principles within the Ghanaian built environment sector. Selected key stakeholders from the sector were subsequently used to evaluate the framework.

1.8 Proposed Contribution of Research

This research will offer evidence-based insights to guide current efforts to integrate global ethical standards into the code of ethics for Ghanaian built environment professionals, while also promoting adherence and compliance with these standards. The study's focus on a specific geographic region, Ghana, adds unique value. It will provide rich qualitative data to help understand how local factors peculiar to Ghana may promote or impede the adoption of IESC's global ethical standards. Additionally, institutions such as professional bodies in Ghana and the IESC will find the study helpful in formulating better approaches and strategies in relation to the promulgation of universal ethics standards. Furthermore, by

developing a framework that guides the implementation of universal ethical standards, this research will make a meaningful contribution to the existing body of knowledge on the application of universal ethics in the built environment sector.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organised across ten chapters as illustrated in figure 4 below. An overview of each chapter's content is also provided.
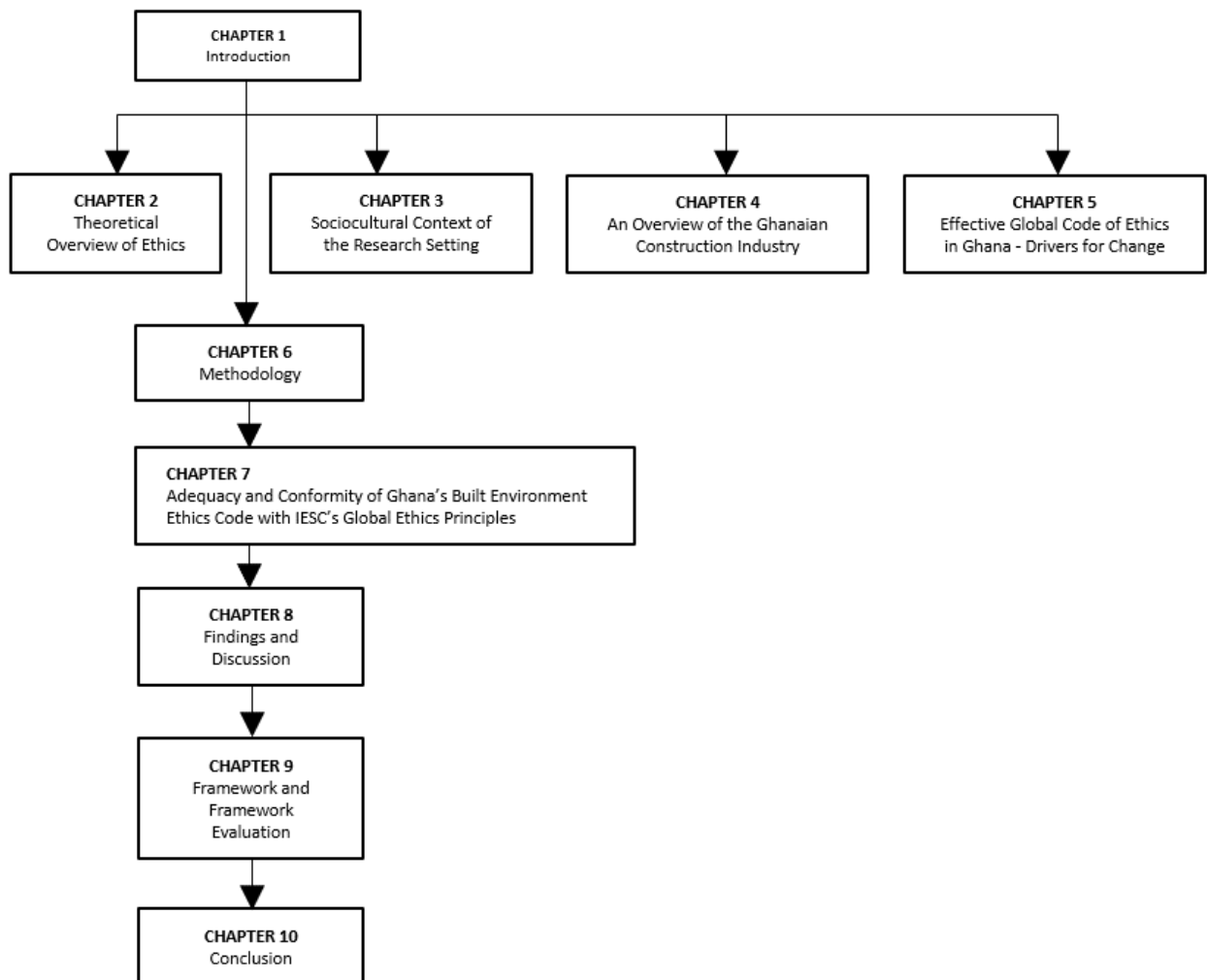
Figure 4. Structure of the Thesis. Source: (Authors Own)

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research

Chapter One comprises a background to the study, the research problem, the aim and objectives, the research questions, the scope, and proposed contribution of the study. Additionally, chapter one outlines the research design, and an outline of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Overview of Ethics

In this chapter, a foundational review of relevant theories is undertaken. The theories reviewed included utilitarianism, virtue ethics and deontology.

Chapter 3: Sociocultural Context of the Research Setting

Deliberations in this chapter revolves around the socio-cultural context of the research setting and how these contextual factors could hinder or facilitate the integration of the global ethics standards in Ghana's built environment sector.

Chapter 4: An Overview of the Ghanaian Construction Industry

Chapter Four provided a review of the key stakeholders in Ghana's built environment sector, an examination of the prevailing unethical practices in the sector, the causes and adverse effects of these practices.

Chapter 5: Effective Global Code of Ethics in Ghana - Potential Drivers for Change

Chapters Five examines the potential solutions that could be employed to facilitate the changes needed to successfully implement a universal code of ethics in Ghana's built environment sector.

Chapter 6: Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methodology used in the study, along with a justification for its selection. The strategies used to ensure ethical compliance requirements are also outlined.

Chapter 7: Adequacy and Conformity of Ghana's Built Environment Ethics Codes with
IESC's Global Ethics Principles

Chapter Seven present findings from a content analysis that compares the Ghanaian codes
with the ethical principles outlined in the IESC standards to determine their alignment or
non-alignment with the global ethics principles.

Chapter 8: Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the findings from the empirical data collected from the
semi-structured interviews. The chapter provides a deeper understanding by analysing the
relationships between the emergent findings and previous research work.

Chapter 9: Framework and Framework Evaluation

This chapter presents the framework developed from the findings of the research. It
includes an explanation of how the framework was developed and evaluated, and the
feedback received from the selected participants who evaluated the framework.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Chapter Ten presents the conclusion to the study. It provides a summary of the steps taken
to fulfil the research objectives, the study's contribution to knowledge and practice, its
limitations and identifies areas for further research.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the thesis by setting the background and outlining the research
problem. The aims, objectives and research questions are also identified. Finally, the
chapter provided an outline and organisational structure of the thesis and detailed the
contents of each of the ten chapters within the thesis. The next chapter presents the first
part of the literature review, which focuses on and presents an overview of the
philosophical and ideological underpinnings of ethical reasoning.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Overview of Ethics

2.1 Introduction

An attempt to integrate the IESC's global ethics principles into the ethical codes of professions in Ghana's built environment sector necessitates a thorough comprehension of the philosophical and ideological foundations of ethical reasoning. This understanding serves multiple vital purposes. First, it equips the researcher with a foundational grasp of the field and helps to understand the key concepts, principles, scope and intellectual underpinnings within which both the subject matter and discourse on ethics are situated. Secondly, it highlights the complexities inherent in ethical decision-making, offering insights valuable for multidimensional analyses. Such analyses may cover issues ranging from ethical relativism and objectivism to the subject of moral integrity, and whether its emphasis must be on duty, the greater good, or virtuous qualities. The primary objective of this chapter is to conduct an evaluation of the three major theories of ethics, namely, deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics. This evaluation will focus on scrutinising their origins, justifications, and criticisms. The insights gained will deepen appreciation and understanding of the intricate ethical considerations professionals face in a real-world context, thereby adding depth, rigour, and comprehensiveness to this study on ethics. As part of this discussion, the chapter will also provide an overview of the IESC's global ethical principles, explaining its history, purpose, composition, and potential implications for ethical practice in the global built environment sector.

2.2 The International Ethics Standards Coalition

The International Ethics Standards Coalition (IESC) was founded to establish and implement universal ethics principles for professionals in the property and built environment sectors (IESC, 2021a).

IESC coalition members comprise of over 120 global institutions across various geographical regions, as shown in Table 1. These include built environment professional organisations, NGOs, governmental, non-governmental, and academic institutions. The coalition arose from the recognition of a growing need for ethical standards that transcend national and professional boundaries (IESC, 2021b; IESC, 2021a).

Table 01: Geographic Distribution of IESC Member Organisations. Source: Adapted from (IESC, 2021b)

Geographical Location	Distribution of Members by Region
Australasia	23
Africa	14
Europe	50
North America	9
South America	7
Middle East	5
Institutions Spread Internationally	15
Total	123

Collectively the member organisations represent millions of professionals working across the various disciplines within the built environment sector, such as real estate, property management, architecture, and engineering.

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) spearheaded the initiative to establish global ethics standards for the built environment sector, aiming to create a universally applicable set of principles that enhance trust and integrity.

In December 2016, the IESC developed and published its first draft of global ethics principles for the built environment sector (Rashid, 2016; IESC, 2021c). The draft principles were finalised and eventually adopted as the new ethics standards for the global built environment sector in 2021 (IESC, 2021c).

The initial version of the global ethical principles was drafted by a standards-setting committee specifically set up for that purpose. This committee, composed of prominent built environment representatives from various regions worldwide including from Africa,

Asia, Europe, and North and South America. The committee reviewed the many existing ethical codes and identified common themes to enhance consistency and clarity across the sector. Building on their work, member organisations were tasked with the primary responsibility of integrating and implementing these global ethical standards into their local processes and codes of ethics. This ensures that the global principles are effectively applied and adhered to within diverse local contexts.

While the concept of an internationalised set of ethical standards is relatively new in the built environment sector, other professions such as accounting (IFAC, 2008), medicine (WMA, 2022) and Internal Auditors (Vanasco, 1994) have long established universal ethics standards. The concept of universal ethics is a subject of intense debate. Indeed, the question of whether ethics can be universal or not has been considered in numerous cultures and societies (International Theological Commission, 2009) with various esteemed thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Mencius, Kant and Darwin all contributing to the debate (Singer, 2011). On this issue, there are two main schools of thought. On one hand, there is the perspective that morality is subjective, and there is no absolute truth in matters that concerns human ethics. Those who belong to this school of thought argue that ethical beliefs are highly diverse and often deeply held, especially when intertwined with personal beliefs, local cultural or religious practices. Thus, there is no single objective way of discerning right from wrong as societal values and customs play a crucial role in defining ethical values (LaFollette, 1991; Rachels and Rachels, 2007). Proponents of ethical relativism argue that understanding different perspectives can promote tolerance and empathy towards diverse cultures and belief systems. Previous studies that examined the adoption and implementation of international ethical standards across other professions suggests that the effectiveness of such standards is often limited by the cultural and socioeconomic conditions specific to the country where they are being implemented (Alzahir and Kombo, 2014; Cohen et al., 1992). Consequently, proponents of the relativist

perspective argue that the establishment and application of a universally agreed-upon code of ethics would be impractical, given the constraints imposed by cultural relativism.

In contrast, some scholars have suggested that moral absolutism offers a more viable framework for determining moral standards across diverse cultures and socioeconomic settings (Kant, 2020). According to this school of thought, certain universal moral principles hold true across different cultures and personal belief systems. Advocates of ethical absolutism argue that these principles serve as a constant guide for behaviour and decision-making, irrespective of the specific cultural or socioeconomic context. Therefore, they believe that a universally agreed-upon ethical code is not only feasible but also essential for maintaining a consistent standard of ethical practice across diverse settings (Bok, 1995; Winkler, 2022; Acton, 1970; Helin and Sandström, 2008; Donaldson, 1996)

The ongoing debate between proponents of ethical relativism and absolutism persists because both camps raise compelling arguments and concerns. Indeed, each of these perspective presents viewpoints that contribute valuable insights into the complexities of ethical decision-making across diverse cultural and socioeconomic settings.

For example, although the ethical relativist perspective promotes cultural tolerance and acceptance, proponents have difficulty addressing behaviours or actions considered morally repugnant regardless of context, such as stealing, genocide or slavery. On the other hand, whilst ethical absolutism has the potential to provide a clear moral compass, it runs the risk of imposing a single set of values on a variety of cultures, which may be perceived as repressive, ethnocentric, or even imperialistic.

This discussion of the IESC's global ethics standards and their interplay with ethical relativism and absolutism sets the stage for a deeper inquiry into the major ethical theories that have long shaped philosophical thought on the subject. Understanding these theories is important because they provide the philosophical underpinnings that could either support

or challenge the viability and applicability of the global ethical principles proposed by the IESC for the built environment sector.

A thorough analysis of these theories will offer diverse perspectives on moral reasoning and decision-making, each presenting unique implications for the formulation and implementation of ethical standards in a global context. The discussion that follows will scrutinize the origins, justifications, and criticisms of each theory, beginning with an exploration of virtue ethics.

2.3 Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics is one of the three main traditional moral theories and approaches to normative ethics (Hursthouse and Pettigrove, 2022). Although it can be traced as far back as Mencius and Confucius, Plato and Aristotle are believed to be the main progenitors of virtue ethics (Hursthouse and Pettigrove, 2016; Sanford, 2015). These ancient Greek philosophers searched for the essential elements needed to live the 'good life' (the concept of eudaimonia). The approach they adopted examined the sort of character a person had rather than how that person acted. Thus, the best approach to ethical living they espoused was one that required individuals to cultivate good traits of character (virtues) such that one can become an embodiment of good virtues. According to Aristotle, virtuous character is manifested in habitual action (Ross and Brown, 2009). Therefore, the virtue of honesty is possessed by someone who is truthful across many situations over a lifetime because such a person is always honest as a matter of course. Through habitual use of this virtue, honesty becomes a part of that person's character and springs from their firm and unchangeable character of being truthful. Aristotle's character-based approach to ethics and morality advocates that virtue can be acquired and honed through practice (Ross and Brown, 2009; Sher, 2012). Continued practice of a virtue will result in a morally matured individual who is fully equipped to make the right choices when faced with ethical

challenges (Freeland, 1982). The actions of this morally matured and virtuous person are not informed by a desire to maximise utility or to simply carry out a duty or an obligation (Rachels and Rachels, 2012), but by an intuitive leaning towards virtuous behaviour. Therefore, the primary question to be asked when confronted with a moral dilemma is what sort of person should I be' not 'what is the right action or thing to do' (Shand, 2004). The central focus of this theory is on being rather than doing.

As well as possession of the virtues, Ross and Brown (2009) conceived that a virtuous person must also have practical wisdom, phronesis or in other words common-sense. Aristotle believed that practical wisdom is key because without it a virtuous person will be incapable of striking the right balance when applying the virtues. They may either not apply enough of a virtue or apply too much of it, both of which are extremes. One must find the right balance or the 'golden mean' of a virtue in its application. For instance, although courage is an Aristotelian virtue, applying too much of it could be foolhardy or cowardice on the other hand when too little is applied. In Aristotle's view, the master virtue of practical wisdom enables one to avoid the two extremes in the judicious application of all the other virtues (Ross and Brown, 2009).

There are a number of criticisms levelled against virtue ethics. Some of these have been somewhat countered by contemporary proponents of virtue ethics with partial responses, offers of clarifications and workaround fixes (Hursthouse and Pettigrove, 2016; Loewy, 1997; Swanton, 2001). A criticism which has not been easy to shake off is the question of relativism which is also connected with the charge that there is no agreement on a comprehensive list of the virtues. The lack of an agreed definitive list of the virtues is primarily because virtue ethics is plagued by a proliferation of different versions of the theory (Oakley, 1996; Sanford, 2015; Annas, 2017; Gardiner, 2003; Lovell et al., 2013). There is clearly no agreement among scholars as to what the virtues are, nor is there a

single agreed standard of measure on how the virtues should be derived. Given the lack of agreement there is amongst most western philosophers, notwithstanding their similar cultural identities, it is fair to assume that it would be a much greater challenge for the global community to agree on what constitutes the virtues or how they should be derived. This situation also brings into sharp focus the question of relativism. Indeed, some scholars have argued that Aristotelian virtue ethics is contextual and lacks the efficacy required for universal applicability (Van Staveren, 2007; Campbell, 2005). On the question of relativism, some virtue ethicists admit the charge (Hursthouse and Pettigrove, 2016). However, they deploy the 'tu quoque' or 'partners in crime' response which contends that relativism is a widespread problem which afflicts all the other ethical approaches and theories (Wachbroit, 1984; Solomon, 1988; Campbell, 2005). This is clearly a weak and lame response because it does not only shy away from addressing the problem, but also, it seems to negate a need to find a competent solution.

Virtue ethicists have failed to provide a suitable time frame of how long it takes to hone a virtue. The likelihood is that individual differences would mean people from diverse backgrounds would imbibe different virtues at a different pace, based on their familiarity with or prior exposure to those particular virtues. This scenario introduces what some critics have described as an objection to virtue ethics based on moral luck (Hursthouse and Pettigrove, 2016; Athanassoulis, nd). Thus, whereas some folks will be lucky to have received an upbringing that encourages all the right virtues needed to achieve the required moral maturity, others will not.

Van Oudenhoven et al. (2014) carried out a study to ascertain the extent to which virtues are universal or culturally specific. The study participants were selected from fourteen (14) nations which included the US, Mexico, Spain, Czech Republic, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Norway, Poland, France, Austria, Germany, Malaysia, India and Hong Kong.

The participants came from different religious and secular backgrounds and spoke eleven (11) different languages. Table 2 below shows the number of respondents per nation, their gender and religious backgrounds.

Table 2. Demographic of Survey Participants. Source: Based on (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2014)

	Nation	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Males	Percentage of Females	Mean Age	Percentage without Religion	Most Frequently Mentioned Religion
0	Malaysia	211	77.9	22.1	21.26	1.0	Muslim
1	Spain	202	52.5	47.5	26.77	40.4	Catholic
2	Czech Republic	231	48.1	51.9	20.42	87.8	Catholic
3	Netherlands	371	28.5	71.5	24.87	69.8	Protestant
4	United Kingdom	149	22.1	77.9	21.96	73.2	Protestant
5	Austria	276	30.9	69.1	25.05	24.6	Catholic
6	Germany	220	44.4	55.6	30.39	39.8	Protestant
7	Poland	163	20.9	79.1	24.59	33.1	Catholic
8	Hong Kong	101	54.5	45.5	20.58	80.2	Protestant
9	India	152	69.1	30.9	22.16	11.0	Hindu
10	United States	183	28.4	71.6	25.31	23.5	Protestant
11	Norway	187	18.7	81.3	23.65	64.1	Protestant
12	France	216	15.7	84.3	22.37	48.6	Catholic
13	Mexico	149	39.7	60.3	23.24	21.5	Catholic
14	Total	2809	37.9	62.1	23.62	41.5	Catholic

The study found strong evidence that nations with similar cultural identities subscribed to the same set of virtues. The study also found that irrespective of cultural and geographical divide, some virtues had strong appeal amongst all respondents. These included virtues such as honesty, respect, kindness, openness and tolerance. In a prior study, Peterson and Seligman (2004) sampled populations from China, South Asia (India particularly) and The West. Their study sought to find instances where similarities across these different cultures exceeded the variances. They found that although there are variances, six (6) core virtues, wisdom, courage, knowledge, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence were common across all the cultures. They dubbed these the 'high six'. The empirical findings from these two studies demonstrate that there is scope to achieve universal agreement on some virtues, and that present efforts to achieve symmetry in professional ethics will not be in vain. Indeed, scholars such as Nussbaum (2019), Grcic (2013) and Koehn (2013) have hinted that there is possibility of achieving universal agreement. For example, Nussbaum (2019) found that the virtues themselves are not relative to any particular culture, but it is how the virtues are perceived and interpreted that differ from one culture to another. While

there are some core values that are universally recognised there are certain ethical values that are influenced by culture and longstanding social norms. The difficulty in agreeing on a universal set of values also present a challenge in the application of a universal set of ethical standards. Therefore, any attempt to integrate a universal form of ethics must take note of these challenges as well as the varying pace at which different societies might imbibe certain virtues.

2.4 Utilitarianism

Jeremy Bentham a 19th century English philosopher and social reformer, developed the first coherent version of utilitarianism (Driver, 2014). Although Bentham is believed to have invented the term 'utilitarianism', most scholars (Driver, 2014; Kaneko, 2013; Scarre, 1996) believe that he took his inspiration and cue from Hume's advocacy of utility, and earlier claim that the only actions worthy of praise, are those that create 'happiness and welfare' for society. The key concept of utilitarianism is to improve society by creating an increased level of happiness with our actions. The theory argues that the best action is the one that maximizes utility or the overall good. Whether an action is right or wrong is determined by the outcome and consequences that stem from the action (Veenhoven, 2010; Peterson, 2003; Scarre, 1996). Fundamentally, utilitarians seek not only to increase pleasure and happiness but to also reduce pain and unhappiness (Ryder, 2009). In a built environment context, this could mean ethical practices and behaviours that result in the greatest good for the greatest number of stakeholders such as the environment, clients, fellow practitioners, the public etc.

Bentham acknowledged that human actions are solely governed by two sovereign masters, which are pain and pleasure (Bentham, 1996). According to Bentham, the deciding factor that determines the value of two actions when compared is the quantity of pleasure or pain each action produces (Mitchell, 1918). The better action is the one that produces the most

amount of pleasure for the greatest number of people, Bentham suggested no qualitative differences between pleasures, only quantitative ones. If Bentham's quantitative approach to evaluating pleasure and pain is to be taken seriously, the question that naturally arises would be, how can such key factors of the value of an action be quantified? Benthamite hedonism offers something of a solution in the form of the felicific calculus; a mathematical algorithm used in calculating the levels of pain and pleasure generated by an act (Bentham, 1996; Mitchell, 1918). The felicific calculus assigns a number in the form of a weighting to seven input variables. When computed, these weightings provide a numerical answer, a net sum of pleasure or pain generated by an action. The act generating a greater net sum of pleasure than pain is the right action deemed to follow the principles of utility (Gustafsson, 2018).

Not everyone agreed with Bentham's concept of utilitarianism. Like Bentham, John Stuart Mill was also an English philosopher and proponent of utilitarianism (Mill et al., 2003; Martin, 1997; Quincy, 1980). These classical utilitarians held conflicting views on two key concepts (Driver, 2014). They disagreed on how the 'value' of different pleasures should be appraised (Vergara, 2011), and also advocated different brands of utilitarianism. Mill supported rule utilitarianism while Bentham promoted act utilitarianism (Dimmock and Fisher, 2017). Mill challenged Bentham's approach for not distinguishing between 'higher' and 'lower' pleasures (Driver, 2014). He offered an alternative concept of hedonism. According to Mill, both quantitative and qualitative considerations must play a role in the evaluation of pleasures (Riley, 2003; Ryberg, 2002). He argued that there are higher pleasures and lower pleasures (Hauskeller, 2011). Higher pleasures required distinctive human capacities and some degree of cognitive ability to enjoy such as intellectual pursuits, religion, engaging in art and philosophy (Riley, 2003). Mill emphasised that higher pleasures deserved a greater weighting than lower pleasures. In contrast, he described lower pleasures as requiring mere sentience. Those pleasures that both humans

and animals can enjoy (Driver, 2014) such as basking in the sun, eating something tasty, enjoying a drink or having sex (Riley, 2003). Mill asserts that, given equal access to both higher and lower pleasures, most people will pick pleasures that appeal to their 'higher' faculties (Hauskeller, 2011). He acknowledges that while some others might choose lower pleasures over a higher pleasure, those that did so are almost certain to have an 'infirmity of character' (*ibid*). In his words, 'it is better to be a dissatisfied Socrates than to be a satisfied fool' (Driver, 2014). Thus, Mill shifted the emphasis from Bentham's quantity to his version, which also comprised qualitative intuitions (Driver, 2014).

2.4.1 Bentham's Act Utilitarianism

The second difference between Mill and Bentham is how they both apply the concept of utilitarianism. Bentham's act utilitarianist approach subscribes to a principle that focuses on the happiness produced by each separate act. Whatever the act that generates the greatest happiness is the act that should be followed (Singer, 1972). Under act utilitarianism, one is required to consider the likely consequences of their actions, and from that analysis, pick the action that will generate the most happiness for the greatest number of people in every defined situation (Eggleston and Miller, 2014). This approach calls for a separate process of moral reasoning and deliberation on every occasion an ethical dilemma arises (Singer, 1972). Therefore, at its core, act utilitarianism is substantially reliant on individual assessment and judgements; a repetitive process that has been described as painstakingly exhaustive (Hare et al., 1981). In real world professional practice, effective act utilitarianism relies on an assumption that different individuals will interpret and select the same useful action in a given scenario. Without such consistency, the theory will fail to achieve standardisation on a global scale. Achieving such symmetry in human action from individuals with different backgrounds and experiences is near impossible. This theory therefore presents a significant challenge to the concept of a universal codified set of ethics.

2.4.2 Mills' Rule Utilitarianism

In contrast to Bentham, Mill supported the 'rule' model of utilitarianism (Dimmock and Fisher, 2017). Rule utilitarians engage the principle of utility to establish the ideal moral rules that must apply in defined situations (Harsanyi, 1985). When confronted with ethical dilemmas, individuals are expected to refer to the moral rules that apply in their particular circumstances (*ibid*). The fundamental premise is that strict adherence to the agreed moral rules will produce the best consequences and ultimately result in the best outcome for all members of society. This way, the right action is the one that follows a rule that has demonstrated the maximisation of utility in other similar situations (Sobel, 1968).

Harsanyi (1977) suggested that the difficulties associated with act utilitarianism are rectifiable through the adoption and deployment of the rule utilitarianism version of hedonism, thus placing emphasis on the social utility of rules rather than the social utility of individual actions (Malone and Goodin, 1997). This approach to utilitarianism is largely supported by Professor Hare (Bailey, 1997), a prominent 20th-century English moral philosopher and ethicist. In his deliberations on the rule and act forms of utilitarianism, Hare et al. (1981) considered a two-level moral analysis. He suggested that people can be pigeon-holed into two kinds when it comes to moral deliberation (Nardin and Mapel, 1992).

The first kind is the 'archangel'. These are critical thinkers who make rational decisions using the act utilitarian principle. They have 'superhuman powers of thought, superhuman knowledge, and no human weaknesses'. The archangel does not suffer from partiality, either to self or to friends and family. Archangels do not need rules as they can rapidly evaluate a situation, scanning all its variables, including the consequences of alternative actions and arriving at the most useful decisions without partiality to self (Hare et al., 1981).

On the other hand, rule-utilitarians are likened to 'proles'. Proles are completely inept of safe and sound critical thinking. They have all the human weaknesses, including being partial and prejudiced (*ibid*). Hare et al. (1981) recognised that these are two extremes and humans fall somewhere between the two kinds. He concluded that humans are incapable of the archangel-type, higher level reasoning all the time and trying to do so would often result in the wrong decisions being made. Hare leaned more towards a system of ordered principles, tried and tested rules that humans can follow which over time, will be firmly imbued into one's character (Brittan, 1983; Bailey, 1997). Rule utilitarianism is not free of criticism. Smart (1956) berated the rule form of utilitarianism as being too rigid. His view was that, if rule utilitarians are consistent in their approach, they would be ethically bound to follow a set of rules even in circumstances where the option to maximise utility is in favour of breaking the rule (Dimmock and Fisher, 2017). He therefore objected to the rule utilitarianist approach brandishing it as superstitious rule worshipping (Smart, 1956). Notwithstanding their differences, both Mill and Bentham agreed on the fundamental principle of utility. That, ethically correct actions are those that yield the greatest net utility for the greatest number of people (Elfstrom, 2010; Ast, 2018; Harsanyi, 1977).

While the rule utilitarianism approach is logically consistent and harmonises well with the notion of instituting a codified set of ethical principles, it raises complex questions. One of these concerns who is appropriately qualified to establish what constitutes the 'right' ethical choices. The approach therefore reopens the discourse on ethical relativism by questioning the universality of ethical norms. How does one reconcile the notion of 'the greatest good for the greatest number' across different cultures or belief systems.

2.5 Deontology

The word deontology comes from the Greek word 'deon' which means duty or obligation (Lazier, 2010). Born in 1724 in Königsberg, Prussia which is now known as Kaliningrad,

part of Russia (Jackson, 2017), Immanuel Kant is credited with developing or formulating the philosophical framework of contemporary deontological ethics (Lazier, 2010). This perspective of ethics is rule-based and argues that some actions are right or wrong in themselves, no matter what results they bring, and it is one's duty to pursue the right actions (*ibid*). Deontology focuses on the 'rightfulness' or 'wrongfulness' of actions, rather than the outcomes those actions produce (Misselbrook, 2013). For instance, people have a duty to tell the truth because telling the truth is considered the right action. The duty to tell the truth is considered absolute regardless of the outcome because being honest would have been determined to be the right action. In deontological ethics therefore, the morality of an action is determined by whether it conforms to a set of rules and regulations rather than the consequences that emanates from an action.

In determining what actions are right or wrong, Kant believed that the right actions are only those that follow universal moral laws (Field, 1932). In other words, if an action cannot be universalized without contradiction, then it should be considered morally impermissible. Kant's Categorical Imperative is a cornerstone of deontological ethics (Kant, 2020). Although the Categorical Imperative has several formulations, these formulations do not project different principles but rather, they all offer multiple explanations that reinforces the application of the same fundamental ethical principle that the only actions that are moral are those that can be universally applied (Bowie, 2002).

Of the various formulations of the Categorical Imperative, the universalizability principle is perhaps considered as the most essential feature of Kantian ethics (Field, 1932). This principle posits that one should *'act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law'* (Kant, 2020). Therefore, one should only take those actions whereby if everyone were to act in the same way, that action would still be considered moral. For example, if one were to tell a lie with the intention of gaining

some advantage, the underlying principle or rule suggested could be that *'it is ok to lie if it benefits the person telling the lie.'* According to Kant's universalizability principle, before accepting lying as an action that is morally permissible, one should ask whether the underlying principle could be universally applied without contradiction. Therefore, if everyone were to adopt the act of telling lies to benefits themselves, lying would become commonplace and, as a result, societal trust, which is a fundamental element of social cohesion would be eroded. In such a world, the initial benefits that was gained from lying would disappear because people would become sceptical of all statements, rendering lying as an ineffective moral duty or rule.

A deontological approach to ethics is profoundly influential in shaping the conduct of practitioners in the built environment sector. Practitioners in fields such as architecture, engineering, and surveying are often bound by stringent rules and guidelines codified in their rules of ethics or rules of conduct. These rules are considered obligatory and echoes the deontological emphasis on duty over consequence. While the IESC's ethical principles and other similar ethical frameworks aim to instil a universal standard of professional conduct, the increasing interconnectedness of global professions raises complex questions about the very notion of universality in ethics. In a globalized world where ethical beliefs can vary widely between cultures, the idea that there exists a set of universal moral principles is contentious. Critics of deontology often point out its potential for cultural bias (Rozuel, 2013). They contend that the insistence on universal rules may not be readily applicable – see stamp collector example (Aragbonfoh Abumere et al., 2019) or even acceptable across diverse cultural landscapes (Rozuel, 2013). Thus, deontological theories may inadvertently privilege certain cultural norms or values while marginalizing others. In doing so, such theories risk imposing a particular ethical framework on communities for whom those rules might not only be irrelevant but potentially oppressive.

Other criticisms levelled against a deontological approach is its rigidity. Schapiro (2006) argues that deontological frameworks can be too rigid, leading to morally counterintuitive outcomes. For instance, a rule or a duty to tell the truth must be complied with irrespective of the consequences. However, strict adherence to such a duty may require one to tell the truth even when lying could save a life. Schapiro (2006) suggests that lying in this case would have been the morally right thing to do because it would save a life. This rigidity or the strict application of rules without considering context can result in a mechanical application of rules where the rules become more important than the moral reasons for having those rules.

Deontology offers a robust and well-structured ethical framework that emphasizes the intrinsic value of actions. This theory simplifies the decision-making process by providing clear, absolutist guidelines and rules, thus ensuring a consistent approach to ethical practice in real-world applications. However, the deontological approach is not without its criticisms. It faces challenges concerning ethical relativism, which questions the universal applicability of its principles across diverse cultures and contexts. Despite these criticisms, its focus on duty and obligation provides a valuable perspective that enriches ethical discussions, complementing other approaches like consequentialism and virtue ethics.

2.6 Chapter Summary

The analysis of these three theories offers valuable insights and enhances our understanding of ethics. While the discussion raises crucial questions about the feasibility of achieving universal ethical standards, there is also evidence that suggests that certain ethical values may indeed be universal, adding complexity to the tension between universal principles and ethical relativism. The evaluation in this chapter provides essential background knowledge and understanding of the key debates that govern ethical thought. The chapter also identified the key challenges that can be anticipated when considering

integrating a universal set of ethical principles, especially in new or diverse settings. These insights will enrich the discourse on ethics, adding depth and rigour and offer a multifaceted perspective to guide this study on global ethical standards in the built environment sector.

Chapter Three: Sociocultural Context of the Research Setting

3.1 Introduction

Socio cultural practices are described by Cialdini and Trost (1998) as the rules, expectations or standards of behaviour and thoughts based on the shared beliefs within a specific culture or social group. An individual's personal values and morality plays a key role in influencing what they perceive to be ethical or unethical behaviour (Finegan, 1994). There is a considerable body of literature which shows that an individual's moral disposition is specified in relation to culturally defined virtues, including other contextual factors such as religious, and established social norms and conceptions of normative behaviour (Bentahila et al., 2021; Jia and Krettenauer, 2017; Saucier, 2018) This means that our understanding of ethics, our judgment on moral issues, and as a result, our actions and inactions, are significantly influenced by a complex interplay of cultural virtues, religious teachings, and societal norms that we are exposed to in our surrounding environment. This deeply ingrained influence of socio-cultural context on our sense of right and wrong highlights the importance of considering these factors in research effort such as this that seeks to understand and implement ethics standards in a given context. The aim of this chapter is to provide a contextual understanding of Ghana as the setting of this study. This section will offer a brief country profile and discuss key practices within the Ghanaian context that could guide and impact the moral reasoning and behaviours of practitioners in the country's built environment sector. The insights gained from a study of Ghanaian norms, beliefs and practices will equip the researcher with the necessary understanding to accurately interpret their findings in the appropriate context.

3.2 A Brief Country Profile of Ghana

The West African nation of Ghana is situated along the Guinea Coast, between latitudes 4°

and 11.5° North (Embassy of Ghana, 2023). As shown in figure 5 below, it shares borders

with Burkina Faso to the north, Côte d'Ivoire to the west, Togo to the east, and the Gulf of

Guinea to the south. Covering an area of 238,537 square kilometres (92,100 square miles),

Ghana stretches approximately 672 kilometres from its southern coastline to its northern

boundary, and about 536 kilometres from east to west. It is roughly the same size as the

United Kingdom and nearly five times larger than Denmark (Kuada and Chachah, 1999).

Figure 5. Map of Ghana. Source: (Hermes Furian, 2014)

Ghana's population comprises five major tribal communities and several smaller ones. The

main tribal communities are the Akan, Ga-Adangbe, Ewe, Gonja, and Mole-Dagbani, each

containing various distinct ethnic groups. The Akan community represents around 44

percent of the population, followed by the Mole-Dagbani with 16 percent, Ewe with 13

percent, and Gonja with 4 percent (*ibid*). Despite their diversity, Ghana's ethnic groups

have generally coexisted peacefully, avoiding the conflicts and instability often seen in

other pluralistic societies. Inter-ethnic marriages are on the rise, and younger generations, particularly those in urban areas, have embraced the advantages of harmonious coexistence (*ibid*).

As a former British colony, Ghana gained independence on March 6, 1957, and became the first sub-Saharan African country to gain its independence from colonial rule. Although the country experienced several coup d'états, it has maintained relative peace and stability as a multi-party democracy since 1992. Today, Ghana is regarded as one of Africa's most established democracies (Kermeliotis, 2014), with power regularly transitioning between its two leading political parties.

3.3 Extended Family System

A person's identity is highly valued and protected in most European families. Their actions are assessed separately from their family members, meaning family connections tend to be much looser (Davis and Williamson, 2020). Individualistic societies, such as these, promote self-reliance and prioritize the needs of oneself and one's immediate family (Brewer and Venaik, 2011; Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2001). People in these societies focus on personal goals, which precede group objectives (Samovar et al., 1998).

In collectivist cultures, individuals prioritize the group's interests over their interests. Ghana is an example of such a culture, where family relationships are a fundamental aspect of the socio-cultural fabric (Kuada and Chachah, 1999; Oyserman et al., 2002). In a traditional Ghanaian family setup, the family imposes moral rules and responsibilities on its members, creating a strong sense of interdependence between them. The individual's actions and choices are heavily influenced and constrained by the expectations and obligations of the family. As cited in Dzramedo et al. (2018), Kurankye (2017) explained that Ghana's traditional extended family system played a significant role in shaping family members' values, morals, and beliefs, particularly regarding their upbringing and character

development. In a collectivist society, Bejanyan et al. (2015) suggested that children tend to exhibit greater respect for parental authority, likely due to the fact that all adults in such a society are responsible for the moral upbringing of children. This is reflected in the widely recognized African proverb, 'It takes a village to raise a child,' which emphasizes that child-rearing is not the sole responsibility of parents but a communal effort that involves the extended family.

Shared responsibilities are characteristic of the closeness of family relationships in the extended family system. Studies by several scholars have shown that these shared responsibilities can even extend to the adoption of the children of a deceased family member, treating them as one's own children (Lassiter, 2000; Malunga, 2006; Muekalia, 2004). UNICEF (2018) noted that this provides a safety net for children because the responsibility for children is viewed as a communal obligation rather than solely the responsibility of the birth parents. As a result, the individual's identity is closely tied to the family's. Ultimately, the family unit functions as a cohesive and interconnected whole. The authority distribution within the family is decided based on various factors such as age, financial contribution, genealogical position, and gender.

It is common practice within extended families to collectively contribute towards the education or training of family members, assuming that by doing so, the individual will eventually climb the social ladder, which will benefit the entire family. The beneficiary of these contributions is expected to return the gesture and help other family members climb the social ladder. In this way, these contributions are seen as investments that will yield dividends for the family in the future. In a study conducted by Caldwell (1965), University of Ghana students were surveyed to determine their extended family obligations upon completing their education. The students were asked about their education financing and whether they received financial support from their extended family. More than 20 percent

of the sample population reported receiving support from distant relatives such as uncles, and over half of those who received help believed that they had a moral obligation to repay the assistance by supporting their extended family beyond their immediate family.

Debrah (2002) argued that the community-oriented culture in Ghanaian society, where people assist their relatives and family members, and expect similar support in return, can have detrimental implications for corporate Ghana. He posited that this attitude of collectivism often leads to partiality, discrimination, favouritism and unethical practices which have negative implications for professional practice and organizations. Many people coerce their relatives in power to hire them or their offspring, irrespective of their qualifications or job availability. It is not unusual for individuals to constantly approach their family members in authoritative positions to request special treatment.

Whilst the preceding discussion is significant in providing insights into the traditional and historical practices and attitudes towards extended family obligations in Ghana, societal views on this issue are evolving. Indeed, more recent studies have found that the family structure in Ghana has experienced changes. Most Ghanaian families, especially those in the urban areas, are moving from their traditional extended arrangements to becoming more nuclear (Dzramedo et al., 2018; Kpoor, 2016; UNICEF, 2018).

A report commissioned by UNICEF to evaluate Ghana's child protection system found that nationally, the practice of extended family living arrangements was perceived to be collapsing and extended family households are now more common in rural areas than in urban areas (UNICEF, 2018). Dzramedo et al. (2018) also reported a similar finding that the traditional extended family in Ghana had undergone some transformation resulting in a shift towards a more modernized nuclear family system. Others, such as Kpoor (2016), have cautioned that this drift towards a more nuclearized family structure has negatively impacted family life by weakening the cohesion and support typically provided by the

extended family system. Indeed, UNICEF (2018) indicated that the practice of community influence over children is changing to a culture where children are no longer seen as belonging to communities but to nuclear families. Notwithstanding these changes, the literature suggests that the extended family has not been wholly relegated and still plays an influential social welfare role, especially during significant occasions like childbirth, marriage, and funeral rites (Dzramedo et al., 2018; Kpoor, 2016)

3.4 Generosity and Gift Giving

Like many other sub-Saharan African countries, gift-giving is an important cultural practice that is deeply ingrained in Ghanaian society (Kuada and Chachah, 1999). The practice serves as a means of conveying appreciation, respect, gratitude, strengthening social connections, and recognizing achievements and talents (Yeboah‑Assiamah et al., 2016). It is revered and considered a sacred act which bestows upon the giver a reputation for kindness. A person's failure to give gifts in certain cultural contexts may result in them being perceived as uncultured or unfamiliar with the customs of their culture (*ibid*). It is customary for one to present a gift when visiting the chief's palace. In this context, gifts are offered as a sign of goodwill, a symbol of respect, and tribute and serve to acknowledge their position and imply your deference to both the person and the office they hold (*ibid*). This practice finds support in the local Ghanaian proverb below, which means 'We do not go to the chief's palace empty-handed'.

Proverb: 'Yemfa nsa pan nko ahenfie'.

Similarly, giving gifts to elders or other respected community members is a way of acknowledging their social status and demonstrating respect. Gift-giving is also customary during significant traditional occasions, such as naming ceremonies, weddings, funerals, and other similar events. Declining a gift is a highly unfriendly gesture that may be

regarded as offensive or an insult (Acheampong, 2016). While the cultural tradition of gift-giving in Ghana is a cherished and generally acceptable norm, the interplay between this cultural norm and the professional context has become an issue. It has become commonplace occurrence within Ghanaian corporate settings whereby practitioners give and receive gifts from stakeholders with whom they have a professional relationship. Indeed, the practice has become so widespread across sub-Saharan Africa that multinational firms often find themselves engaged in it too (Adewale and Khalid, 2016).

Yeboah‑Assiamah et al. (2016) reported that gift-giving is now so entrenched in the psyche of public sector workers in Ghana that they consider their workplaces as 'their palaces,' and perceive it as inappropriate to seek services from them without offering gifts. Debrah (2002) described this phenomenon in less polite terms, referring to such requests from public officials as bribes. He noted that civil servants in Ghana frequently demand or expect bribes before fulfilling their duties, and failure to pay such bribes can lead to unnecessary delays in document processing and obtaining support for business operations.

Torfason et al. (2013) posited that this practice creates a problem in that the expectation of reciprocity that arises from gift-giving can undermine public officials' impartial decision-making processes, often leading to ethical dilemmas. Marcel Mauss offered a theory to explain how the process of gift giving functions in society. According to Mauss (2000), gifts are not simply objects exchanged between individuals, but rather they represent a complex set of social relationships and obligations. In his theory, gift-giving is a three-part process that involves giving, receiving, and reciprocating. The act of giving a gift creates a social bond between the giver and receiver, and the receiver is obligated to reciprocate in some way, creating a cycle of gift-giving and obligation (Mauss, 2000). In other words, Marcel Mauss' main argument was that gifts are never free.

Although gift-giving is deeply entrenched in Ghanaian culture as a means of fostering social connections, there are examples that demonstrates how gift-giving in professional settings can influence decision-making and lead to a conflict of interest. In 2016, investigative journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas uncovered the infamous judicial scandal in Ghana, exposing well-respected Ghanaian judges who received gifts in exchange for obstructing the course of justice (Adogla-Bessa, 2016). In response to this, Ghana's chief justice has been urging Ghanaians to abstain from presenting any form of gift to members of the judiciary, as this practice can compromise their ability to render impartial decisions in the course of their official duties (Ghanaweb, 2023).

When applied to the Ghanaian construction sector, Marcel Mauss' theory will suggest that contractors who offer gifts to practitioners in the built environment sector will expect reciprocal preferential treatment in future business transactions. This dynamic creates an uneven balance of power, as the contractor gains an advantage over competitors who do not offer gifts. Moreover, the acceptance of a gift by a professional will create a sense of obligation that may even lead to a practitioner making decisions even if it may not be the most appropriate course of action. This situation creates a conflict of interest that can undermine the integrity of professional relationships and lead to the manifestation of unethical conduct. The act of gift-giving in professional settings can create a dilemma as the expectation of reciprocity can blur the line between what is considered a gift or a bribe. This ambiguity can make it challenging for practitioners to distinguish when a gift is genuine and given without any expected return or when it is provided to influence improper conduct. Somiah (2006) suggested that one cannot overlook the role cultural customs and traditions play in perpetuating unethical practices. From his perspective, a culture that emphasizes gift-giving can lead to reduced awareness and sensitivity of bribery

among individuals. This has led some to suggest that the practice (gift giving) is an enabler of unethical practice (Adomako, 2005; Ali, 2017).

3.5 Respect for the Elderly

Like many other parts of Africa, respect for the elderly is considered a core value in Ghanaian society which is deeply rooted in the traditional beliefs and customs of Ghana (Debrah, 2002). A widely held belief exists that older individuals have demonstrated their resilience in the face of various life challenges and are fortunate to have reached old age. Their wealth of life experiences accords them a sense of power and admiration. Therefore, when it comes to interpersonal relationships, even a slight age difference can play a significant role, requiring younger individuals to display sincere reverence towards their elders. The degree of respect accorded to older individuals increases as the age gap widens and it is considered a grave transgression to show disrespect towards elderly individuals (Kuada and Chachah, 1999).

According to Michel et al. (2020) the elderly are revered and valued for their custodianship of traditional knowledge, wisdom, and societal values. They therefore hold a significant role in the community and are accorded the utmost respect." In Ghanaian society, respect for the elderly is demonstrated through a variety of means, one of the most prevalent of which is through the use of language. Ghanaian culture includes specific terms of address designated for expressing respect and veneration towards older members of the community. For instance, when addressing elderly men in the Ga community, the honorific title Nii is commonly used in the Ga language.

Contrary to Western societies where the state generally takes on the obligation of caring for the elderly, in Ghana this responsibility primarily rests with the younger generation. This caregiving responsibility is also viewed as a way of expressing respect for the elderly (Kuada and Chachah, 1999). Therefore, children take on the responsibility of caring for

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their elderly parents or grandparents when they become unable to care for themselves. This is seen as a way of showing gratitude and respect for the sacrifices that the elders made in raising and caring for their children (Nyarko, 2013), and is exemplified in the old Akan proverb that says *'Sɛ obi w'awowohwewomawo se fifiria, wonsowohwe no manese tutu'*, meaning, it is your responsibility to care for your parents through their old age because they cared for you during your childhood. While respect for the elderly is an important cultural value, as cited in Nyarko (2013), a study by Karlberg (2003) which centred on the perspectives of elderly individuals in small towns and villages in Ghana, identified a notable lack of respect in the care given to older individuals in these locations. Karlberg (2003) asserted that changes in attitudes towards the elderly are becoming increasingly evident even in rural areas. This is a departure from previous research by Apt (2000), which had identified that these changes were restricted to urban settings only. As Ghana becomes more urbanized and industrialized, younger generations may be less likely to adhere to traditional cultural values and practices. This could lead to a decline in respect for the elderly and a shift towards more individualistic and less community-oriented societies.

The cultural practice of revering older individuals in Ghana has significant implications for professionals in a workplace setting. This cultural predisposition presents challenges for younger individuals who are required to enforce disciplinary measures against older individuals who have violated workplace regulations (Debrah, 2002). To avoid being perceived as arrogant, Yeboah-Assiamah et al. (2016) posited that younger superiors tend to approach such encounters with tact when they are required to sanction an elderly person. The situation becomes even more complex when an elderly person who has violated rules expresses regret and asks for forgiveness. Debrah (2002) explained that Ghanaians have a culture of forgiveness, which has led to a tendency of Ghanaians to beg for forgiveness

after violating organizational rules. Since the cultural expectation is to offer forgiveness when someone expresses remorse, a younger superior who refuses to forgive an elderly person for ethical violations is likely to be seen as cruel and indifferent. According to Yeboah-Assiamah et al. (2016), the unfettered respect for the elderly sometimes nurtures paternalistic relationships in the workplace where some elders are referred to by titles such as 'chief,' 'uncle,' or 'auntie'. This makes it difficult to hold the elderly accountable for their actions and often creates a work environment where older individuals are sometimes allowed to engage in unacceptable behaviours that encourage corruption and indiscipline.

3.6 Social Control Systems in Traditional Ghanaian Societies

Traditional Ghanaian society employed social control mechanisms to curb deviant behaviours and other actions that did not conform to the expected social norms and values. A thorough examination of these mechanisms is important because it offers further socio-cultural insights into the Ghanaian context. The understanding gained could also be used to inform and inspire the formulation of innovative solutions, deeply rooted in tradition, to tackle contemporary ethical challenges. Without social control mechanisms, individuals in society may be free to act according to their desires and impulses without facing any consequences for their behaviour. This can lead to chaos, disorder, and harm to individuals or the community.

Citing Young 1942, Abotchie (1997) explained that one of the primary purposes of social control is to bring about conformity because, despite having internalised the norms of society, adults are sometimes driven towards nonconformity to fulfil their self-centred motives, which necessitates the use of sanctions to encourage conformity. Abotchie (1997) argued that the effectiveness of social control mechanisms depends on the collaborative application of all of its other elements, such as coercion and sanctions. He advocated for a

'carrot and stick' approach because, in his view, none of these parts in isolation can be solely relied upon to ensure effective social control.

Thus, a one-dimensional approach to social control, such as relying solely on coercion or punishment, is unlikely to be effective. Instead, a multifaceted and balanced approach that considers the complex interplay between the different components of social control, such as education, persuasion, and sanctioning, may be more effective in promoting conformity to a set of ethical values or principles. In addition to other informal social control mechanisms, traditional Ghanaian societies used religion and taboos to keep order in their societies. Before Christianity and Islam arrived in Africa, most Africans followed traditional African religions. Although their beliefs and practices varied across different ethnic groups, those who practised this religion shared a common theme centred around the belief in a supernatural being often considered distant and unreachable. As a result, lesser deities that were considered more accessible acted as intermediaries to communicate with the supreme god.

Religion is considered a crucial mechanism in maintaining law and order in traditional African societies through its use as an informal social control measure (Abotchie, 1997; Assimeng, 2006; Nukunya, 2003). Igbo and Ugwuoke (2013) observed that in Nigeria's Igbo society, the community's gods are summoned to seek out unknown offenders who violate religious norms and may be punished with dreadful diseases or mysterious deaths. The notion that supernatural beings possess the power to detect and reveal criminal behaviour is a deterrent to individuals straying from accepted societal norms and values, as they are afraid of being caught by these beings.

Taboos were employed as another means of enforcing social norms. According to Macaulay (2020), these taboos consist of guidelines that dictate what actions are acceptable and unacceptable, moral and immoral. These guidelines aimed to discourage

behaviours that could harm the community. Violating the code is considered immoral as it disrupts social harmony and order. According to Acheampong (2010), some taboos were implemented as guidelines to maintain and safeguard the environment. For instance, the communities along the coast of Ghana have a custom of not fishing on particular days, which is considered taboo. The sea is worshipped as a goddess (deity) by these tribes, and it is believed that refraining from fishing on those days enables the goddess to spend time with her offspring, mainly the fish. Disrupting the goddess and her offspring was strictly forbidden to avoid adverse consequences. From a scientific perspective, these fishing-free periods promoted fish reproduction and protected young fish from being caught. Despite the lack of scientific basis, Acheampong (2010) explained that the communities believed that those who violated the taboo and went fishing on these days drowned and never returned.

Other forms of informal social control measures employed within traditional African societies included proverbs (Bergsma, 1970), oath-taking or swearing (Ntiamoah and Ameyibor, 2023), charms (Handloff and Britain, 1982), trial by ordeal (Ntiamoah and Ameyibor, 2023) and songs (Darkwa, 1987). Ntiamoah and Ameyibor (2023) conducted a study to explore the role of shrines in maintaining social order in Ghana, specifically through the case study of the Ɖuveh Shrine in Peki, in the Volta Region of Ghana. Their study concluded that the traditional religious means of social control have proven effective in ensuring social order. They proposed that traditional authorities needed to be empowered to function side-by-side with the formal control systems in Ghana to maintain order in Ghanaian societies. Their finding aligns with that of Abotchie (1997), who asserted that the fear of the supernatural power of deities, coupled with the belief in their omnipresence and omniscience, has played a significant role in ensuring law and order in Ghanaian society. Other scholars have reached similar conclusions. Tweneboah (2021) carried out a study to

uncover the benefits of using traditional deities to resolve conflicts in Ghana. Investigating the concept of duabɔ (imprecation/ invoking a curse), he found that traditional methods of justice delivery are effective and can still be helpful in Ghana, but they needed to be modified to meet the needs of modern legal standards (Tweneboah, 2021; Tweneboah and Richards, 2023).

3.7 The Foundations of Ghanaian Morality

The moral framework of Ghanaian society is rooted in two main concepts: religion and communitarian or humanist principles. The communitarian perspective emphasizes values such as solidarity, cooperation, and social wellbeing, mandating a morality that underscores duty to others and the community (Abotchie, 1997; Gyekye, 2010). The individual, within this framework, has social and moral obligations towards their community members, reflecting the duty-oriented nature of Ghanaian morality aimed at preserving social harmony (Opoku, 1978). This belief among people that they need to care about their community and everyone living in it is a big part of what shapes their morals. On the other hand, religion, which includes Christianity, Islam, and African traditional faiths, plays a big part in how Ghanaians think about morality (Oduro Wiafe, 2010). The belief in divine retribution or reward based on one's adherence to the moral code shapes individual moral values (Oduro Wiafe, 2010; Opoku, 1978). Thus, people believe that if they follow the moral code, they'll be rewarded by God or the gods, and if they don't, they'll be punished (Oduro Wiafe, 2010; Opoku, 1978). It is important to acknowledge the existence of a conceptual tie between these two foundations. First, there are some scholars who argue that Ghanaian morality originates from religious roots (Busia, 1967; Danquah, 1944; Opoku, 1978; Sarpong, 1972), whilst others attribute it to humanistic principles (Gyekye, 2010; Mbiti, 1970; Nel, 2009; Wiredu, 2002). These dual concepts of religion

and communitarianism create a unique interplay that forms the conceptual foundations of how most Ghanaians think about right and wrong.

3.7.1 Religion

Some people believe that what is right or wrong does not vary from situation to situation and can be expressed in constant unchanging commandments that have been handed down from a divine source (God/Allah/ Ancestors/ Spirits /Deities). This proposition has deontological connotations and is in keeping with such an outlook to ethical reasoning (Alexander and Moore, 2020).

From a religious context, it is a concept that will require complete adherence to the prescriptions and commands enshrined in religious ideologies seen as providing the absolute framework that shapes and guides moral decisions and choices.

It is common knowledge that religion permeates all aspects of Ghanaian community life. Indeed, religion seems to be the axis around which most activities revolve. At an individual level, it can be argued that, when confronted with ethical dilemmas, rather than the law, a religiously driven morality provides the standards to which most Ghanaians will refer. Such is the extent to which religion penetrates the main fabric of Ghanaian society that some scholars have argued that Africans in general are notoriously (Mbiti, 1970), and incurably (Parrinder, 1969) religious. Therefore, moral concepts such as what is good or bad, or what is right or wrong are justified and determined largely by religious commands. This African disposition conforms with the divine command theory (DCT), an absolutist theory that defines good or bad actions based on answers found in the divine rule book (Bible or Qur'an). Thus, an action is right if it supports God's commands and vice versa (Murphy, 2019).

From a Christian religion point of view, the Holy Bible is quite clear on the moral and ethical expectations it places on the faithfuls. In the biblical book of Leviticus 19:11 (New King James Version), the Bible states that *'Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another'*. In Exodus 23:8 it says, *'And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous'.* Similarly, the Holy Qur'an (Al Islam Version) prescribes ethical behaviours such as, telling the truth and being sincere and honest (2:43; 33:36; 3:72; 4:172; 33:71), treating people fairly (60:9; 5:9; 4:136; 6:153; 11:186) and abhors giving bribes (2:189).

Unlike Christianity and Islam, African traditional religion does not have its theology and doctrines documented or written out in books. Rather, mandates for right or wrong are embedded in oral traditions, proverbs (see table 3), taboos, folk-stories such as Kweku ananse stories, symbols, rituals, songs, etc. (Mbiti, 1970; Olojede, 2015; Macaulay, 2020).

Table 3: Examples of Some Traditional Ghanaian Proverbs. Source:(Adinkra Symbols and, 2016)

Proverb (In Akan Twi)	English Translation	Principle/Value
Obanyansofoo yebu no be, yennka no asem	The wise is spoken to in proverbs, not in plain language.	There is no need to belabour a point for the wise to understand. A few words of counsel and advice should be fine. Similar to the English saying, "A word to the wise is enough."
Woforo dua pa a na yepia wo	It is when you climb a good tree that we push you.	Society can only support a good cause, not a bad one. Hence, if you want support, you should do good things with which all can publicly identify and support.
Hu m'ani so ma me nti na atwe mmienu nam	It is because of "blow the dust off my eyes" that two antelopes walk together.	It is good to do things in a group. This proverb encourages the idea of collaboration rather than competition. Creates a strong disincentive for independence and isolation.

Obi nnim obrempon ahyease	Nobody knows the beginning of a great man.	The beginnings of greatness are unpredictable. Hence, we should not despise small beginnings or condemn people when they are starting and seem to be struggling.
Animguase mfata Okanni ba	Disgrace does not befit the child of an Akan.	Honour is a very important virtue in Akan culture, and all must be done to preserve it. Anything that could bring animguase (shame, disgrace) rather than animuonyam (glory, honour) should be avoided like the plague.

In African tradition religion, God is worshipped through intermediaries. It is the widespread belief amongst many African people that God should not or cannot be approached directly. Therefore, all interaction and communication with God is via intermediaries such as priests, seers and oracles (Mbiti, 1970). Intermediaries give advice and act as a medium through whom directives, revelations and or prophecy is sought from the gods. Through these intermediaries, the will of God including commands about morality (right or wrong) is expressed to individuals and the community (Mbiti, 1970). Although not formally chronicled or recorded in writing, taboos served as a code of conduct providing a set of rules around acceptable behaviours and conduct. In essence, the conduct of the individual was requisitioned to have the well-being of the entire community at heart. A breach of the code (taboos) was regarded as a morally wrong act because it destroyed the social order and peace of that society (Macaulay, 2020). To avoid calamity befalling the community or an individual, they must ensure that they do not act or behave in a way contrary to the directives of the gods (Mbiti, 1970).

The ubiquitous subscription by many Ghanaians to the moral prescriptions governing behaviour that are espoused in their religious beliefs, is at sharp variance with the

widespread prevalence of corruption and unethical behaviour that continues to blight the country (Ghana Integrity, 2018; Gyesi, 2021; Ljubas, 2019). There appears to be a disconnect between the Bible verses that are memorised from childhood in Sunday school, the recitations of the Quranic madrassas (Islamic schools) and even the stark admonishments of the traditional religious custodians handed down by oral traditions vis a vis the decisions that individuals in Ghana seemingly tend to make when faced with an issue of moral dilemma or conflict.

In as much as the most quantum measure of religious efficacy is assumed to be the ethical values and behaviour dominantly expressed by individuals in society, the impact of religion on morality remains mostly unclear in Ghana and within the wider Sub-Saharan Africa region. This point is brought into sharp focus by the many high-profile cases of pastors, evangelists, imams and traditional priests who have been exposed for their immoral activities and unethical behaviour (Anokye, 2019; Ghanaweb, 2020; Ghanaweb, 2021; BBC News, 2020). That the perceived moral exemplars and epitomes of good ethical behaviour continue to display such nefarious proclivities is a stark paradox that remains unanswered.

3.7.2 Humanism

Gyekye (2010) questioned the claim that African morality is founded on or derived from religious principles and challenged the authenticity of the nature of the connection between religion and morality. Advocates of the humanist interpretation of Ghanaian morality totally debunk the rationale that religion plays any significant role in influencing Ghanaian ethical behaviour. In their article *'Foundations of morality in Ghana: an ethical inquiry'*, Dei and Osei-Bonsu (2015) asserted that the structure of morality in Ghanaian society rests upon the notion of onuado (brotherhood and sisterhood) which denotes the common good. They provided a vivid illustration of this *'the common good'* in their examination of the

Akan art symbol of the Siamese crocodile (see figure 6) which has two heads but a single (shared) stomach.
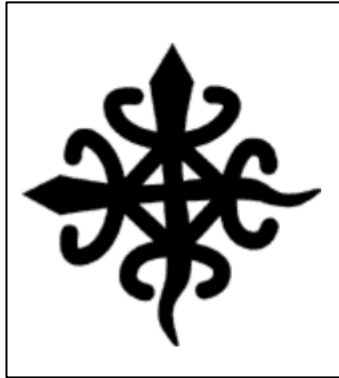
Figure 6. Siamese Crocodiles: Symbol of Unity. Source: (Adinkra.org, 2001)

The relevance of the above illustration to moral thought is the enforced compromise that the shared stomach requires for the greater good to triumph. Accentuating the point further, Gyekye (2010) claimed that, amongst the traditional sages (thinkers) of some Akan communities in Ghana, there is no specific stipulation from God (Onyame) that a particular action is good or evil. He argued that in the Akan moral system, the consequences for humankind and one's own society are the most pertinent drivers of good or moralistic behaviours. In contrast to the deontological leanings of the religious argument, the humanist logic subscribes to a utilitarian approach to morality. This is a form of consequentialism that determines right from wrong by focusing on outcomes (Driver, 2014).

Whilst Ghanaian ethics is by no means a strict reflection or a microcosm of sub-Saharan African ethics, conceptual and empirical evidence exists to suggest that the principles, values and beliefs demonstrated in Ghanaian ethics echoes (allowing for some variations and adjustments) within the landscape of other sub-Saharan African societies (Gyekye, 2010; Idang, 2015). Across other sub-Saharan African cultures, examples that support the humanist perspective include Little (1951) who reported that, among the Mende people of

Sierra Leone, *'Wrong behaviour is regarded as a breaking of some specific rule of conduct, not as the flouting of some divine or absolute law of the universe'*.

From Tanzania, Wilson (1960) explained that whilst the Nyakyusa people of southern Tanzania accepted the existence of religion, he propounded that the most accurate description of their social behaviour cannot be found in religious terms. In their observation of African morality in general, Wilson and Wilson (1971) remarked that *'the basis of morality was fulfilment of obligation to one's kinsmen and neighbours and living in amity with them'*. Thus, African moral considerations have their genesis in the most conducive arrangements suited to human welfare and interest and not in divine decrees.

Notwithstanding the above examples, it would be disingenuous to suggest the existence of a monolithic sub-Saharan African ethical demeanour. Among the 48 countries that make up the sub-Saharan African region, there are a myriad of subcultures (Darley and Blankson, 2008; Mufune, 2003; Wolf and Frese, 2018) with differing practices, customs, and ethical beliefs. Nevertheless, there are also underlying similarities that are shared by many sub-Saharan African societies which, when contrasted with other cultures, reveal a wide gap of difference. Thus, as a modal example, the arguments and references advanced from the Ghanaian viewpoint are still relevant and applicable to the wider sub-Saharan African region.

3.7.3 Ghanaian Society - A Transformed Ethical Landscape

In present day Ghana, globalization, science and technology, have led to the assimilation of western cultural practices. These changes are increasingly leading to the adoption of more nuclear family patterns and individualistic lifestyles, in preference to the indigenous communitarian traditional culture (Nukunya, 2003). George (2015) reported that, there is a notable attitudinal change whereby most Ghanaians have abandoned their own ethical and cultural ideals which they believe to be archaic, for western values perceived as superior to

their own. Thus, the influx of globalization and western culture has diluted and debased the indigenous Ghanaian socio-cultural configuration (Ukpabi, 1970; Wahab et al., 2012). Also accompanied by these changes is the advent of capitalism (Kayange, 2020) with its heavy emphasis on individualism that has further chipped away at the indigenous moral proclivities of kinship and onuado (brotherhood and sisterhood).

In seeking to understand the factors that continue to inform Ghanaian ethics and morality, it becomes clear that within Ghanaian society, there are two competing systems that affect ethical decision making. The indigenous socialist leaning Ghanaian system and a westernized rules-based framework with its harsher capitalist ideals. In its unadulterated and original form, traditional Ghanaian morality was assured through the two main facets of humanism and religion. Where necessary, the use of social control systems and mechanisms offered societal elders the tools they needed to enforce the rules and ensure compliance with societal values and norms.

With the advent of globalization and capitalism, indigenous Ghanaian moral foundations (humanistic and religious) have increasingly lost their absolute hegemony and influence on the ethical decision-making process. Ntibagirirwa (2001) echoes this point which she calls the big paradigm shift; from the value of being to the value of having in the African value system. Market-oriented values, previously alien to African societies, have emerged as a strong competitor and have become the dominant driver of social behaviour (Dzobo, 1992), challenging the status quo and presenting competition and unbridled individualism as a counter option to the indigenous Ghanaian communitarian framework. As evidenced in most western economies, the capitalist approach works best in a rules-based economy where strong institutions provide effective deterrence to unethical behaviour, support compliance, and enforce sanctions (Hooker, 2003).

In the current Ghanaian climate, the compulsion on individuals to continue to follow the African humanistic principle of being considerate towards the welfare of other members of society is gradually being eroded. Explaining this trend, Mazrui (1980) notes that, *'The pursuit of personal profit has escalated in African economic systems'*; and concludes that, *'With the heavy influence of Western capitalism, the African clearly is developing and appreciating the values of capitalism as well, such as class distinction based on the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', competitive spirit, private enterprise and profit motive'*

Accentuating the point further, Macaulay (2020) noted that, judged in the context of modern life and the modern worldview, some cherished Ghanaian taboos used to sustain communal life and to instil morality in indigenous Ghanaian societies are eroding fast because they are now evaluated as irrational, superstitious or retarding modern progress. On the flip side and also worth pointing out, is the observation that, adherence to Christian religious values and principles have lessened as the incentive for good moral behaviour (heaven) and the deterrent for poor ethical choices (hell) are seen as distant future concepts.

The fundamental changes resulting from the intersection of the indigenous values system with western capitalism, and the inability of Ghanaian society to assimilate these changes effectively into a new way of life has created the present socio economic and political dysfunction. Thus, a new landscape has emerged whereby regardless of which values system an individual ascribes to, in the absence of an effective and strong democratic institutional framework, as is the case in present-day Ghanaian socio-economic and political society, there is little or no accountability for unethical behaviour.

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the country Ghana, exploring some of the essential cultural practices, norms, and beliefs that have historically shaped the moral reasoning of Ghanaian society, and explained how these principles have changed over time. The insights gained offers an understanding of how such traditions might either hinder or facilitate the implementation of the IESC global ethics standards within the Ghanaian context. The discussions clearly demonstrates that the current scenario in Ghana, where a mixture of diverse value sets has resulted in a somewhat vague and ill-defined ethical reasoning and decision-making framework. Yet, it would be an oversimplification to suggest that the current confusion about ethical reasoning alone is the root cause of the widespread unethical behaviours reported in Ghana's built environment sector. It is likely that the reality is much more complex, involving an interplay of numerous factors. These findings set the stage for the next chapter, where a deeper examination will be undertaken to understand the types of unethical behaviours prevalent, identification of their root causes, and an evaluation of their impact on the sector and the broader Ghanaian economy.

Chapter Four: An Overview of the Ghanaian Construction Industry

4.1 Introduction

Several studies have highlighted widespread unethical practices in Ghana's built environment sector (Adinyira et al., 2018; Ameyaw et al., 2017). Ameyaw et al. (2017) found that the top five unethical practices observed were kickbacks, bribery, collusion and tender rigging, conflict of interest, and fraud. Others such as Asiedu and Alfen (2016), Manu et al. (2015), and Osei-Tutu et al. (2010) also included additional forms such as excessive gift giving, discrimination and nepotism, and political interference. There are various reasons that account for the high incidence of unethical practices reported. A comprehensive understanding of these causes will provide the contextual insights needed to develop effective, targeted solutions and interventions to promote ethical practice and combat unethical behaviour.

This chapter therefore commences with a detailed discussion identifying the key stakeholders in the sector whose conduct, behaviours, and practices can directly affect ethical practice in the Ghanaian built environment sector. The discussion provides a brief stakeholder profile, specifically emphasising their role and contribution to construction projects and how their actions or inactions might influence and promote or hinder ethical practices in the sector. The chapter also explores the main forms of unethical practices observed in the Ghanaian construction industry. The key aim is to provide an awareness of the specific ethical challenges faced by the sector in Ghana. The causes of unethical behaviour within the sector will also be examined, as understanding the foundational causes is important to help formulate targeted strategies and interventions to address these challenges. The chapter concludes with a look at the consequences of unethical practices for the sector and the Ghanaian economy.

4.2 Who is a Project Stakeholder?

A project stakeholder is any entity who can affect or be affected by a project (Chinyio et al., 2009; Karlsen, 2002; Vogwell, 2003). Within the construction industry there is an extensive list of project stakeholders which typically includes the owners and users of facilities, design consultants, funders, contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, media organisations, community representatives, neighbours, the general public, government establishments, visitors, customers, regional development agencies, the natural environment, pressure groups and civic institutions etc. (Chinyio et al., 2009). It is important to note that not all stakeholders have an equal ability or opportunity to influence a project. Factors such as power dynamics, resource constraints, and different degrees of influence among stakeholders can greatly affect their capacity to influence a project. This section examines the roles of four primary stakeholders: clients, design consultants, professional bodies, and contractors. These groups are generally recognized as key stakeholders in all construction projects, as identified in studies by Jin et al. (2017) and Osei-Asibey et al. (2021).

4.2.1 Clients

Widespread unethical practices on projects often result in clients paying more than is necessary. For example, corrupt practices such as fraudulent overbilling, using inferior materials, or cutting corners on safety standards could inflate costs beyond a project's budget, resulting in clients paying more without a corresponding increase in quality or value. Moreover, the use of substandard materials and practices could also compromise the quality of the project resulting in safety risks, frequent repairs, and a reduced lifespan.

As in several other countries, the Ghana Government is a key client in the procurement of infrastructure and construction related projects (Eyiah and Cook, 2003). In Ghana, most public sector projects are typically procured through two central governmental ministries,

namely The Ministry of Works and Housing (MOWH) and the Ministry of Roads and Transport (MRT) (Eyiah and Cook, 2003). A key mandate of the MOWH is maintaining and developing housing infrastructure across Ghana. On the other hand, the MRT is responsible for the development and maintenance of the road infrastructure in Ghana. Boadu (2022), pointed out that there are fourteen other governmental ministries which also administer and procure public construction projects in Ghana.

Several scholars including Lopes et al. (2017) and Cherian (2020) have identified a correlation between Government spend or investments in the sector and its impact on economic growth within a country. Indeed, this is one of the key reasons why governments sometimes increase their spending on infrastructure to stimulate the economy. The ability of the government to inject such huge sums into the sector means the Ghanaian government is one of the biggest clients of the sector in Ghana (Eyiah and Cook, 2003).

The Government's involvement in the sector however extends beyond that of a client. Several governmental ministries in Ghana, including the Ministry of Works and Housing (MOWH) and the Ministry of Roads and Transport (MRT), also play a regulatory role in the Ghanaian construction industry. In addition to being clients, these ministries implement government policies that directly influence various stakeholders in the industry. For example, the MOWH oversees the activities of all building contractors in Ghana. One of its responsibilities is to maintain a register of eligible contractors who can participate in bidding for public sector projects. Due to its multi-layered roles as a client and regulator, the government holds significant influence in the construction industry. Bosch and Philips (2003) emphasized that governments can utilize this leverage by taking a lead role in driving transformative change in the sector. This argument has also been made by Ofori (2015) and Ofori (1993), who called for public sector clients to utilize their influence to shape the practices employed within the construction industry.

In addition to public sector projects, another integral segment of construction project clientele in Ghana hails from the private sector. These private entities include companies embarking on construction projects, housing developers, individuals seeking to undertake the construction of dwelling homes for their families etc., all of whom contribute substantially to the total volume of construction projects within Ghana.

4.2.2 Contractors

As key stakeholders, contractors play a vital role as they are directly responsible for the actual execution and delivery of construction projects. Contractors in Ghana can be broadly categorised into two distinct segments: those who are part of large-scale, formalised contracting companies, and those who are independent contractors or small-scale operators, often handling relatively minor projects (Boadu et al., 2020). The formal sector consists of legally registered companies that carry out organised construction projects, using a workforce mix of skilled professionals and labourers. Such companies typically adhere to established rules and regulations, such as compliance with employment laws, tax obligations, and other related statutory requirements. Their operations are regulated and monitored (*ibid*).

On the other hand, the informal sector comprises actors primarily engaged in construction activities to generate employment and income to support their livelihood. Those in this sector are typically domestic contractors who operate on a smaller scale without any organised structure. Workforce relations where they exist, are predominantly casual rather than formal contracts with guaranteed rights. Boadu (2022) observed that the community of contracting firms in the construction industry of Ghana is primarily composed of several of these small contractors. Explaining why this is so, Ofori-Kuragu (2013) posited that the industry imposes minimal entry barriers, which has enabled individuals and businesses lacking the necessary resources, staff, or qualifications to establish themselves as

contractors and construction companies. Research by Ahmed et al. (2018) shows that the workforce within the informal construction sector is largely illiterate, displaying a lack of understanding of health and safety laws and thus do not adhere to safety measures and protocols on their construction sites. The Ghanaian government has little or no influence on the operations of those in the informal sector and receives little or no revenue through taxes from them (Boadu et al., 2020).

The influence of contractors as key stakeholders stems from their pivotal role in making crucial decisions related to procurement, employment, and overall project execution and delivery. Their decisions can have profound ethical implications. For instance, they could face pressure to engage in unethical behaviours such as bribing officials to secure projects, resorting to substandard materials and processes for cost reduction, bribing officials to expedite permit approvals, etc. Therefore, contractor behaviour and decisions can significantly influence the industry's ethical climate. By making ethically sound choices, they can create a culture that encourages good ethical conduct and provides robust mechanisms for detecting, reporting, and punishing unethical behaviours.

4.2.3 Practitioners or Project Consultants

Within the construction industry of Ghana, professionals such as Architects, Civil Engineers, Mechanical and Electrical Engineers, and Quantity Surveyors offer their services and expertise as project consultants (Osei, 2013). These consultants operate under the regulatory guidance of their respective professional bodies, including the Ghana Institution of Architects (GIA), the Ghana Institution of Surveyors (GHIS), and the Ghana Institution of Engineers (GHIE).

The range of services rendered by project consultants includes developing project drawings, managing project execution by supervising contractors' progress, enforcing quality checks to meet specified standards, and endorsing contractors' monthly payment

requests. As part of the project delivery team, project consultants operate in partnership with contractors, to ensure the successful completion and delivery of projects. The primary role of consultants is to maintain critical oversight responsibilities as stewards of the client's interests. Their influence on the successful delivery of construction projects is substantial. It can include a broad spectrum of ethical considerations, such as ensuring that only good quality works are signed off, verifying the legitimacy of payment applications made by the contractor, exposing unethical conduct, and ensuring adherence to health and safety standards and regulatory requirements. Despite their pivotal roles as the ears and eyes of the client, project consultants may sometimes be prone to unethical conduct. This could take the form of accepting bribes (Serious Fraud Office, 2014), which might compromise the quality of their approved work or lead to a disregard for their responsibility to uphold safety standards. In more severe instances, it could even involve aiding and abetting fraudulent activities (Tedesco, 2015). Their broad role and significant influence on project outcomes underscore the necessity of upholding rigorous ethical standards within the consultant community. Research on unethical practices within the Ghanaian construction industry has identified two primary stages where consultants can potentially be entangled in corrupt and unethical practices. The first stage is during tendering and bid evaluation, where contractors may bribe consultants for insider information to secure contracts. The second stage arises during contract implementation and administration, with consultants potentially accepting kickbacks to approve substandard work or inflated payments for contractors. (Ameyaw et al., 2017; Osei-Tutu et al., 2010). Given the integral role project consultants play throughout the construction process, from inception to completion, they are an indispensable component of any project. They, therefore, form a critical stakeholder group in the Ghanaian construction sector, underscoring the necessity for ethical vigilance and professionalism in their conduct.

4.2.4 Professional Bodies

The primary function of Professional Bodies within the Ghanaian construction industry is to regulate the activities of their members, including practitioners such as Architects, Engineers, Quantity Surveyors, Project Managers etc. Professional bodies also undertake a policing role whereby they monitor and take enforcement action where necessary to ensure their members comply with ethical guidelines and other relevant statutes, regulations and codes. Regardless of the sector, all professional bodies in Ghana are registered and regulated by the Professional Bodies Registration Decree, 1973 (NRCD 143). This decree is an Act of parliament which dictates the requirements and guidelines set by the government of Ghana for establishing and regulating professional bodies in the country. Professional bodies are backed by this legislation to register and issue licenses to qualified persons to practice. In addition to this primary legislation, within the Ghanaian construction sector, some professions such as Engineers and Architects, also have Registration Councils, such as the Architects Registration Council (ARC) and the Engineering Council (EC), which are set up by separate legislation purposely to regulate the architectural and engineering professions.

Table 4. Professional Bodies Backed by Registration Councils. Source: (Authors Own)

Professional Body	Registration Council
Ghana Institute of Architects (GIA)	Architects Registration Council (ARC)
Ghana Institution of Engineers (GHIE)	Engineering Council (EC)
Ghana Institution of Surveyors (GHIS)	N/A

In addition to their duty to maintain a register of all professionals operating in Ghana, these Councils are mandated to regulate the practice of the specific profession for which it was set up by ensuring high-quality professional standards in education, practice and ethical conduct. Professional Bodies such as the Ghana Institute of Architects (GIA), Ghana Institution of Engineers (GHIE) and the Ghana Institution of Surveyors (GHIS) derive their primary mandate and authority from legislation such as the Professional Bodies Registration Decree, 1973 (NRCD 143) and Registration Councils where applicable.

In the Ghanaian construction sector, professional bodies play a pivotal role as key stakeholders. They aim to establish and enforce professional standards and ethics to improve integrity and public trust. They provide training to encourage professional development, administer certification processes to ensure practitioner competence and influence industry-related discourse through their advocacy efforts.

4.3 Forms of Unethical Behaviours in the Ghanaian Built Environment Sector

4.3.1 Bribery

Muravska et al. (2014) described bribery as *'the offering, promising, giving, accepting or soliciting of an advantage as an inducement for an action which is illegal or a breach of trust'*. In their handbook on bribery, which was written for Transparency International, they gave several examples of the different forms in which bribes can exist. These included grease or facilitation payments, excessive hospitality offered in breach of company policy, bribery in the form of gift-giving, in-kind benefits as bribes: such as you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours, bribes disguised as charitable donations and bribes disguised as political donations (Muravska et al., 2014). They pointed out that not all bribes are paid directly and are in cash. They provided examples of how bribes can be paid, such as through agents, intermediaries, and introducers. Additionally, some bribes are disguised through the

manipulation of invoices or product prices, while others are given in exchange for favours by offering jobs or employment opportunities to officials' relatives or associates (*ibid*).

UNODC (2022) explained the initiation process of bribery, identifying two primary methods. The first method involves a direct or indirect solicitation, where the intended bribe recipient requests illegal payment to carry out some act that is often unethical or to speed an existing duty that falls within their scope of responsibility, in order to give undue advantage to the bribe giver. The second method is where a gift is given by the bribe-payer to an official as a sign of appreciation. In presenting the gift, the bribe payer imposes an implicit burden on the receiver to return the favour by granting him undue advantages in future transactions creating a cycle where gifts are continuously exchanged for favours. Mauss (2000) assessed this phenomenon of reciprocal exchanges and concluded that gifts are in fact never free.

Citing Noonan (1984), Owusu et al. (2020) pointed out that bribery was the first case of corruption ever documented. In support Chan and Owusu (2017) stated that it is the most historically acknowledged form of corruption. Lengwiler and Wolfstetter (2006) reported that the amount of money involved in bribes during public sector procurement globally is believed to be around $200 billion per year. Mawenya (2008) suggested the figure could be higher estimating it to be around $390-400 billion per year. In Sub-Saharan Africa specifically, Mawenya (2008) indicated that corrupt practices such as bribery lead to a 20-30 percent increase in the cost of procuring public sector projects. Osei-Tutu et al. (2010) reported that the private sector is not exempt from these practices as private business owners often pay bribes to influence decisions made by public officials.

In a study which sought to uncover the forms and frequency of corrupt practices within the Ghana construction sector, Ameyaw et al. (2017) found that, along with other forms of unethical behaviour, bribery was predominantly observed during the bid evaluation and

tendering stages of construction projects. Contributing to this, Osei-Tutu et al. (2010) observed that there is a high likelihood of bribery at this stage of a project because officials in charge of the project often break procurement rules to give an unfair advantage to their preferred bidders in exchange for bribes. Damoah et al. (2018) also identified bribery and corruption as one of the most prevalent forms of unethical behaviour in the Ghanaian construction sector.

According to Wells (2013), some construction professionals in Ghana are willing to offer between 10 and 20 per cent in bribes to get onto tender lists and win contracts and did not consider these practices as improper or unethical. Indeed these findings are not surprising and are rather consistent with and augment a study by Osei-Tutu et al. (2010) which found that there is an unacceptably high level of tolerance for bribery and corruption in Ghanaian society.

4.3.2 Tender Rigging

Collier (2001) explained that one of the main factors influencing the selection of a construction bid is the client's desire to minimize costs, which often leads to a preference for the lowest bid in a competitive bidding process. Collusive tendering, also known as tender rigging, is a practice in which a group of contractors bidding for a project illegally join forces to manipulate the outcome of the selection process to decide who should win the contract and at what price (Wells, 2013). This unethical tactic involves two or more competitors agreeing not to genuinely compete against each other for tenders, ultimately enabling one of the members of the group to secure the tender (*ibid*). Wells (2013) gave some examples of how collusive tendering can occur including in scenarios where a single contractor submits multiple bids using different identities. It is likely that the reason behind this is to guarantee that a favoured contractor wins the bid while fulfilling the legal prerequisites of the bidding process, which typically necessitates the submission of at least

three separate bids. Studies have shown that bid rigging is a prevalent practice in the construction sector in various countries including developed economies such as the United States (Bajari, 2001; Chotibhongs and Arditi, 2012), and the Netherlands (Dorée, 2004). A survey by the CIOB in the United Kingdom revealed that about sixty percent of respondents perceived collusion between bidders to be only moderately or not at all corrupt (Wells, 2013). In Ghana a survey of practitioners in the construction industry by Ameyaw et al. (2017) found that bid rigging was the most common unethical practice amongst main contractors and the second most common unethical practice amongst sub-contractors. The widespread incidence of bid rigging in Ghana underscores a pressing need for comprehensive solutions that can tackle the fundamental causes of this problem within the Ghanaian context.

4.3.3 Conflict of Interest

Field and Lo (2009) defined conflict of interest as a situation where there is a potential for a professional's decision-making or conduct related to a primary interest to be unreasonably affected by a secondary interest. In practice this means that a professional, driven by their peripheral interests, could potentially engage in conduct or render decisions that are disadvantageous to the entity that they are principally accountable to. The purpose of conflict of interest policies is to ensure that persons in positions of responsibility prioritize primary over secondary interests when making decisions (*ibid*). Secondary interests refer to advantages that accrue to the decision maker directly or indirectly from decisions or actions taken in their professional capacity. According to Wiersma et al. (2018), these advantages need not necessarily be financial, but are relevant as long as they bring some benefit to the professional concerned. Within the Ghanaian construction sector, various scholars have found conflict of interest to be one of the main forms of unethical practices observed within the sector (Ameyaw et al., 2017; Asiedu and Alfen, 2016; Osei-

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Tutu et al., 2010). Studies including by Osei-Tutu et al. (2014) found that at the tender, contract execution, and final accounting and auditing stages, the public procurement process is most prone to incidents of conflict of interest. Given its complexity, it is usually difficult to identify and avoid all forms of conflict of interest (Boyce and Davids, 2009). Nonetheless, it is essential that appropriate steps are taken to manage it. Indeed, in some cases, this may require a recusal from certain decisions or recourse to objective judgement from a third party to ensure that decisions are made impartially. As noted by OECD (2003), recognizing and openly addressing conflicts of interest are crucial first steps towards demonstrating commitment to accountability, transparency and ethical conduct.

4.3.4 Political Interference

Several studies have found that political interference constitute one of the greatest facilitators of unethical activities in the Ghanaian construction sector (Agyekum et al., 2021; Asante et al., 2018; Kuoribo et al., 2021; Manu et al., 2015). Ameyaw et al. (2017) found that, compared with other built environment sector stakeholder groups, corruption was excessively high among political office holders and the contractors with whom they have connections. The study also identified some of the various ways in which political interference manifests in the construction sector. These include approving and awarding contracts for political gain, procuring bribes from contractors and suppliers in exchange for contracts and giving unfair advantage to preferred bidders by disclosing confidential information often for financial gain. Other instances identified are the awarding of contracts to close associates or family members in disregard of conflict of interest policies and rejecting qualified contractors or suppliers for political reasons (Ameyaw et al., 2017; Whitfield, 2018). Ameyaw et al. (2017) also identified sole sourcing as another avenue through which politicians pervert the bidding process. Under the Ghanaian Public Procurement Act, sole sourcing is allowed under certain specific circumstances where only

one supplier is contracted in a non-competitive process to provide goods or services for the state (Osei-Tutu et al., 2010). Sole sourcing can be employed where there is an emergency such as a disease outbreak; where only one supplier is considered capable of meeting the standards required or where there are national security concerns (*ibid*). According to Ameyaw et al. (2017) and Rockson (2017), politicians often exploit this system by resorting to it without ample reason, merely for the purpose of facilitating unethical practices such as overpricing and awarding construction contracts to cronies and associates.

4.3.5 Discrimination and Nepotism

According to Amnesty International (2023), discrimination occurs when an individual is unable to enjoy the same rights as others because of unfair differences in rules or how they are treated usually because of their race, ethnicity, nationality, class, caste, religion, belief, sex, gender, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, age, health or other status. In contrast, nepotism is deemed to have occurred where someone in an official position exploits their position to extend favours or unfairly give a job to their family (Nadler and Schulman, 2015) or friends (Transparency International, 2023b), even though they are unqualified for it.

These practices are unethical and were also identified in the Ghanaian construction sector by a number of scholars including Ameyaw et al. (2017), Manu et al. (2015), Kuoribo et al. (2021), Amoah and Steyn (2022) and Adinyira et al. (2018). For example, Amoah and Steyn (2022) and Osei-Tutu et al. (2014) discovered that nepotism and discrimination were especially noticeable during the procurement and tendering phases of construction projects. They found that some bidders received projects based on their connections as friends or family members of those in charge, rather than on merit. An investigation by a media organisation, The Fourth Estate revealed that the Chief Executive Officer of the Public

Procurement Authority contrived to award construction contracts to companies owned by himself and his brother in law, which they would then sell on to other contractors (Adogla-Bessa, 2022). The recruitment process for jobs is another avenue through which nepotism is often demonstrated. According to UNODC (2022), it is a widespread practice in Ghana for certain job applicants or candidates to receive preferential treatment based on their personal, familial, or social connections, rather than their qualifications, skills and experience. In an attempt to understand the influence of nepotism on the recruitment of job applicants in the banking sector of Ghana, Nyukorong (2014) conducted a qualitative study that involved over a hundred in-depth interviews. Among the interviewees were 50 current employees of banks in Ghana. The findings of the study revealed that 80 percent of the interviewed bank employees obtained their employment through personal connections, such as family or friends, which confirms the prevalence of the 'whom you know' factor in securing a position in the Ghanaian banking industry. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime conducted a study in an effort to gauge the public's perception on the extent to which public officials influence the recruitment of their friends or relatives into public sector roles in Ghana. Findings from the study shows that 89.3 percent of the study population believed that public officials in Ghana frequently influence the hiring process to place their friends or relatives into public sector roles in Ghana (UNODC, 2022). Despite the common perception that the public sector job market in Ghana is nepotistic, the study also revealed that 70.4 percent of the study population did not approve of public officials getting jobs based on nepotism (UNODC, 2022). These examples point to the prevalence of discrimination and nepotism in both the private and public sectors in Ghana.

An examination of the professional codes of conduct for the built environment sector in Ghana reveals that there are no provisions on discrimination or any attempt to protect the interest of marginalised groups through the codes. This could be attributed to a general

hesitancy in Ghanaian society to address these issues and a reflection of the socially conservative views widely held in Ghana and the wider African continent. A study of local news stories in Ghana reveals that sexual minorities, for example, are routinely discriminated against (Boateng, 2022), while the parliament of Ghana is considering a bill to outlaw LGBTQ+ activities and/or advocacy (Princewill, 2023). Failure to address these and other forms of discrimination will mean that the ethical environment in Ghana's construction sector will continue to fall short of internationally accepted standards.

4.4 Causes of Unethical Behaviours in the Ghanaian Built Environment Sector

4.4.1 Greed

Greed is explained as the selfish and excessive desire for more of something (such as money, wealth, food) beyond what is necessary (Seuntjens et al., 2015). Balot (2001) offered a slightly different definition characterising greed as an extreme and immoral form of self-interest at the expense of others. These definitions suggest that individuals who exhibit greedy behaviour tend to prioritize their own needs and interests above the interests of others and may engage in actions that harm others in order to satisfy their own desires. Whether it is the aspects of selfishness, or its propensity to drive an excessive pursuit of personal needs at the cost of others, it is clear that greed is a detrimental attribute that can bring harm to any society in which it is prevalent. Amoah and Steyn (2022) conducted a study with the aim of identifying the key challenges faced by construction professionals as they strive to adhere to their professional code of ethics. Using a quantitative approach, they collected empirical data from 56 construction professionals in South Africa which showed that the primary obstacle hindering their compliance with their code of conduct is personal greed (see table 5 below).

Table 5. Respondents' Views on Barriers to Ethical Compliance. Source: Based on (Amoah and Steyn, 2022)
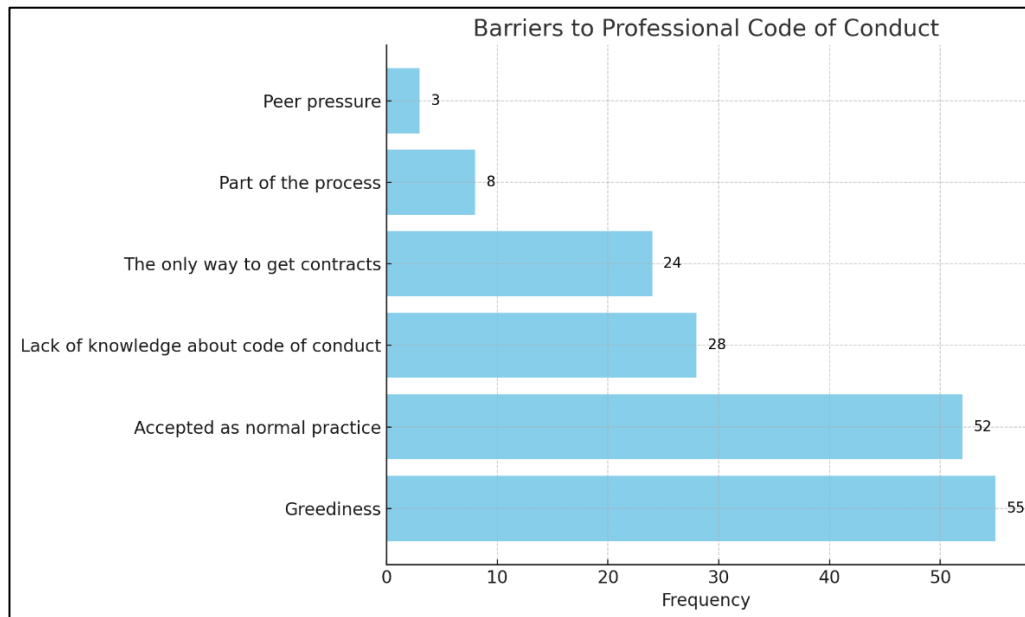
Similar findings were identified in Nigeria by Bimbola et al. (2020) who discovered that excessive love of money (greed) was one of the top three factors contributing to unethical conduct by Quantity Surveyors in the Nigerian construction industry. In Maylasia, Yap et al. (2022) came to the same conclusion in relation to their construction industry. An insatiable desire for personal gain in the form of greed appears to be a prevalent underlying cause of unethical behaviour which transcends geographical boundaries. Hence, it is unsurprising that Osei‑Tutu et al. (2010) identified greed as a major factor underlying

corrupt and unethical practices in the public procurement of infrastructure projects in Ghana. Findings from the above studies align with the view of Nordin et al. (2013) who suggested that construction professionals engage in unethical practices due to their own personal interest, and that of Adnan et al. (2012) and Osei–Owusu et al. (2014) who identified individual greediness as the cause of unethical practices such as overinflated construction costs, substandard work and as the reason why some practitioners engage in unethical practices.

4.4.2 Poor Remuneration

There is a noticeable gap in scholarly work investigating whether the issue of low wages or inadequate remuneration for professionals in the Ghanaian built environment sector contributes to the rise in unethical practices observed in the sector. Yirenkyi-Fianko and Chileshe (2012) conducted a study that aimed to identify the determinants of job satisfaction for white collar construction professionals in Ghana. The study participants included quantity surveyors, engineers, architects, project managers and other construction professionals. Although financial reward is typically one of the key benefits derived from employment, it was surprising to find that wages, salaries, or financial rewards did not appear as crucial factors in either boosting or diminishing the job satisfaction among the research participants. This notwithstanding, the general consensus in wider studies on the subject suggests a substantial correlation between inadequate compensation and the prevalence of unethical behaviour. A study by Osei–Owusu et al. (2014) identified low salaries of civil servants as one of the causes of corruption and unethical conduct. Renowned economist Vito Tanzi identified the significant role inadequate wages play in promoting unethical practices. His research showed that when professionals, regardless of their field of expertise, are not adequately compensated for their work, the temptation to engage in unethical activities, such as bribery or fraud, increases (Tanzi, 1998).

Although Ghana holds the status of a Lower-Middle Income Economy (Moss and Majerowicz, 2012), a recent study conducted to analyse and compare the country's minimum wage and the International Poverty Line (IPL) over the past decade (2012 to 2022) reveals a concerning discrepancy. As illustrated in figure 7 below, the income level for Ghanaian workers earning a minimum wage lag behind the International Poverty Line (Ayamga, 2022). This is an indication of a high working poverty rate where most employed persons belong to poor households.
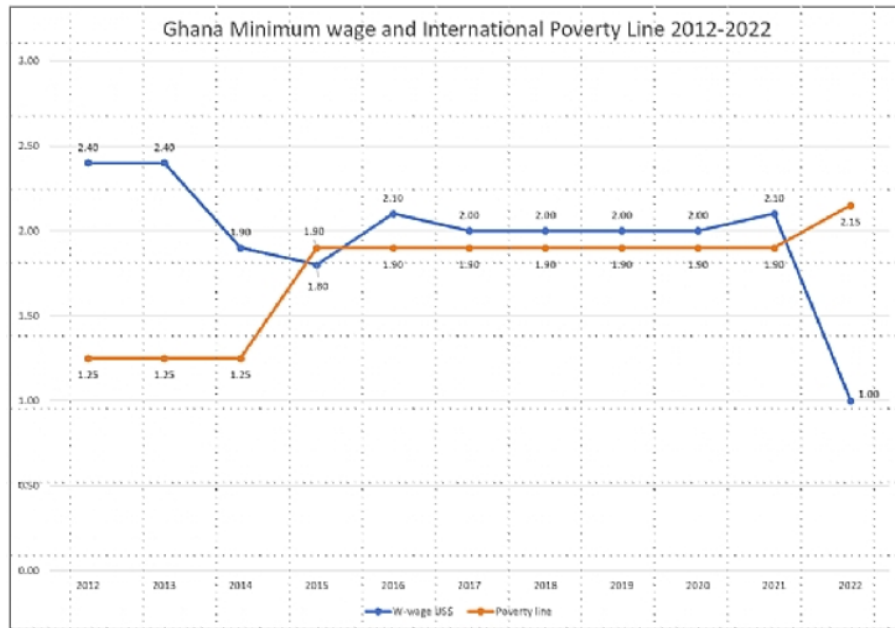
Figure 7. Comparison of Minimum Wage in Ghana and IPL. Source:(Ayamga, 2022)

In low wage economies where the wages of employees does not cover their living expenses, workers seek to supplement their wages through the procurement of gifts or bribes (Gyimah-Boadi, 2002). Research by Van Rijckeghem and Weder (2001) shows that some corrupt and unethical practices can be reduced through renumeration by ensuring that workers receive a fair financial reward for the work they do. According to Debrah (2002), inadequate remuneration often results in a lack of commitment on the part of employees towards their employer, leading them to engage in other income generation activities during work hours and treating their primary job merely as a part-time obligation. The low pay scales prevalent in Ghanaian organisations (Ayamga, 2022; Dadzie, 2015) compel workers to seek additional employment opportunities to meet their basic needs and maintain their standard of living. Some scholars have opined that poor wages for civil servants in Ghana is particularly problematic and poses a substantial challenge because they often hold positions with critical decision-making powers, which makes them vulnerable to behaving unethically as a means of supplementing their incomes (Gordon, 2017; Somiah, 2006). This phenomenon has been described by Osei-Tutu et al. (2010) as

"power without pay," a situation where workers hold positions of power without adequate compensation, leading them to seek additional income through other means.

Using cross sectional data, Van Rijckeghem and Weder (2001) were able to identify a significant relationship between wage level and the incidence of corruption. Their data shows that wage levels would have to increase significantly in order to reduce unethical behaviour to the barest minimum. While the literature suggest that higher wages could decrease the incidence of corrupt acts, as they increase the opportunity cost of losing one's job, research by Tanzi (1998) also shows that higher wages do not eliminate greed, as some officials may now demand higher bribes. So, in effect, despite a reduction in the occurrence of corrupt acts, there may not be a guaranteed reduction in the total amount of corruption-related payments.

4.4.3 Accepted as Normal Practice

Ethical fading is explained as where consideration of the ethical implications of an action is absent from the ethical decision making process. Tenbrunsel and Messick (2004) described it as *'the process by which the moral colours of an ethical decision fade into bleached hues that are void of moral implications'.* According to Ethics & Compliance Initiative (2015), there are three broad moral disengagement mechanisms involved in ethical fading. The first is cognitive restructuring where professionals focus on their overarching objectives and achieving their goals and thus overlooking the ethical consequences of their actions. The second is obscuring of the individual's moral agency which involves minimizing employees' sense of responsibility for their actions. This thrives in a culture where professionals or individuals are led to believe that they are only following orders and that their actions are vital for their organisation's success. The third mechanism is minimizing the perception of harm to others which seeks to downplay the perception of harm inflicted on others from one's actions. Typically, this arises from a

culture in which there is a belief that the benefits that are accrued from one's actions outweigh any potential harm they may cause. Recent studies have highlighted elements of ethical fading within the construction industry. For example a study by Amoah and Steyn (2022) identified that construction professionals and organizations frequently discount ethical considerations in their quest to win new projects. This attitude exemplifies the first phase of ethical fading which is cognitive restructuring.

Laryea (2010) and Owusu et al. (2019) found that unethical practices have become widespread and an acceptable norm in the Ghanaian and South African construction sectors. Amoah and Steyn (2022) posited that the prevalence of unethical practices in the sector is so extensive that a substantial proportion of actors within the sector are implicated and engaged in it. This creates a snowball effect and encourages others to engage in such practices to remain competitive (Amoah and Steyn, 2022; Eddleston et al., 2020). Thus, engaging in such practices becomes crucial for survival, the second mechanism of ethical fading.

The third mechanism of ethical fading is where one seeks to downplay the harmful effects of their engagement in unethical practice. In this phase professionals attempt to present unethical activities as a victimless pursuit that does not cause harm to anyone else. This is a view that is also held by some built environment professionals who rationalise that their participation in unethical practices is a harmless endeavour (Amoah and Steyn, 2022).

The effect of ethical fading on a society is that it erodes moral values and denigrates ethical reasoning, resulting in an environment where members of a society become numbed and desensitized to unethical behaviour and are less likely to prioritize ethical considerations in their decision-making. Eddleston et al. (2020) argued that this will lead to even more unethical practices and create an environment where such practices are normalized and perceived as accepted.

4.4.4 Lack of Transparency

Transparency is increasingly recognized as a crucial tool for combating unethical practices. According to Wiehen (2001), transparency entails making institutions, processes, and decisions accessible to all relevant stakeholders including the public, enabling them to monitor, review, and influence where necessary. Several studies have shown that promoting a culture of transparency makes it possible to hold decision makers accountable and reduces unethical practices (Cordis and Warren, 2014; van der Berg, 2017).

According to Masoud (2022), a lack of transparency is one of the most common factors in procurement related conflict of interest in particular. Indeed, other studies have shown that a lack of transparency, particularly in areas such as procurement, tendering and contract awards, is a key enabler of unethical practices in Ghanaian construction projects (Ameyaw et al., 2017; Laryea, 2010; Osei-Tutu et al., 2010). Research to assess barriers that hamper the growth of small and medium scale construction enterprises (SMSCE) in the Ghanaian construction sector identified a lack of transparency to be one of the key factors (Ametepey et al., 2022).

According to Tanzi (1998), where rules governing public transactions are shrouded in secrecy, inaccessible to the public, unclear or changed without adequate publicity, it can be difficult for the public to understand the steps leading to particular decisions or to establish whether corruption has occurred. Scholars such as van der Berg (2017) have admitted that transparency alone cannot guarantee the reduction of corruption and unethical practices, however they strongly argued that transparency is key because it plays a fundamental role, and fosters an environment where information is openly accessible, and decision-making processes are clear. In his view, this approach would enable officials to be held accountable for their actions which will in turn decrease the likelihood and opportunities for corrupt practices to thrive. According to van der Berg (2017), an effective and comprehensive

strategy aimed at tackling corruption and unethical practices must fundamentally integrate transparency as its central element. Cordis and Warren (2014) discovered that having robust transparency laws significantly increased the likelihood of detecting, prosecuting, and convicting corrupt officials.

Given that it is the lack of transparency that enable officials to engage in unethical practices away from the scrutiny of the public and oversight institutions, promoting a culture of openness and transparency would be a significant factor in reducing corruption in the Ghanaian construction sector. Thus, any efforts to improve the ethical practices in the sector must be anchored to the promotion of openness and transparency.

4.4.5 Poor Enforcement of Rules and Regulations

In any professional organisation or society, the ability to enforce rules, regulations and policies and to apply commensurate sanctions to erring individuals and entities is vital in ensuring compliance with established norms. To achieve compliance an effective enforcement and sanctions regime must satisfy a number of conditions. It should be able to deter would be offenders from engaging in unlawful or non-compliant activities. The consequences of wrongdoing imposed by the sanctions regime should be designed to discourage violations of the rules and regulations. It also signals to other individuals and organisations what is considered as acceptable within that jurisdiction and conduct which will attract sanctions, thereby encouraging compliance and adherence to the rules and regulations.

An enforcement and sanctions regime should also help hold individuals and organizations to account by applying appropriate punishment for non-compliance. The regime should also foster a return to compliant behaviour. This may include compelling the offender to participate in training programmes, introduce new operational guidelines or undertake

other corrective actions to address the underlying issues that led to the non-compliant behaviour.

In many developing countries, including Ghana, there is a persistent issue with the weak and inefficient enforcement of sanctions (Quaicoe, 2023). According to Boadu et al. (2021), this problem can be traced back to various factors, such as the interference of influential individuals or politicians, insufficient instances of sanctions and prosecution, unethical behaviour by those responsible for imposing penalties, among other contributing factors. The challenge of poor enforcement of rules and regulations in Ghana spans across multiple industries and aspects of daily life and reflects a broader systemic issue in Ghanaian society. In the transportation sector, Okyere et al. (2021) carried out a study to understand the hurdles to the enforcement of mandatory seat belt laws in Ghana. The study revealed that enforcement of these laws was impeded due to interference from various influential figures, such as politicians, traditional leaders, and other prominent societal members, often resulting in the release of offenders upon their intervention and hindering state agencies from performing their mandated duties. In the environmental and sanitation sector, Mensah et al. (2022) also found that a mild sanctions regime was one of the key reasons for the poor enforcement of environmental and sanitation laws in Ghana.

In contrast, the literature suggests that where the employing organisation is an international body such as the world bank, stricter standards of enforcement are applied, and sanctions are meted out without leniency or consideration for extenuating factors as often happens with local employers. For example, in 2013, the World bank group sanctioned zoom lion a Ghanaian owned waste management company for paying bribes to facilitate the execution of a contract and processing of invoices whilst engaged in a project in Liberia funded by the bank. The company was banned from engaging in any World Bank funded projects for a period of two years and was also required to demonstrate that it would fully comply with

the World Bank standards of integrity in its future activities (The World Bank, 2013). This is markedly different from how the case was treated by the Ghanaian authorities, where despite adverse findings made against the company by state investigative bodies no punitive action was taken against the company (Ayamdoo Salifu, 2022). Further contrast can be drawn between the inaction of the Ghanaian government and the standards applied by governments such as the United States (Earle and Cava, 2018) and the United Kingdom (Sarpong et al., 2019; Serious Fraud Office, 2014) where companies found guilty of unethical practices abroad become subject to punishment by the home government.

Refocusing on the construction sector, a study by Boadu et al. (2021) identified the lack of sufficient examples of sanctions meted out as one of the top three factors that hinders the effective enforcement of health and safety regulations in the Ghanaian construction sector. Thus, in the absence of significant cases or examples where individuals have faced penalties, stakeholders develop a perception of the enforcement system being weak or ineffective. The effect of this is that confidence and trust in the regulatory system is undermined and may even decrease the likelihood of people reporting violations.

Ofori-Kuragu et al. (2016) found that professional bodies in the Ghanaian construction sector such as the Ghana Institution of Surveyors (GHIS), Ghana Institute of Architects (GIA) and the Ghana Institution of Engineers (GHIE), are weak in enforcing their own professional code of ethics partly because membership of these bodies are optional for practitioners and due to the lack of a legal mandate. The effect of this is that sanctions from the professional body have only minor consequences for offenders as they do not need to be members of their professional bodies to be able to practice in the country.

The work of Cotton et al. (2005) focused on exploring issues around the implementation of labour standards in the construction sector of low income countries including Ghana. They found that despite countries such as Ghana, India and Zambia ratifying international

standards, they were not always adequately enforced. This finding implies that the success of international standards such as the IESC principles must go beyond mere adoption but must take account of and address relevant local factors that could impede the effective implementation of these standards.

4.4.6 The Role of Traditional Ghanaian Norms

The pervasive inadequacy of rule and regulation enforcement in Ghana point to deeper underlying causes that may be deeply rooted in specific cultural and social practices inherent to Ghanaian society. Indeed, some social customs and practices in Ghana, which may be harmless or even positive in some Ghanaian context, might be incompatible with the strict enforcement of some global rules within a code of ethics.

For example, the customary practice of gift-giving, a gesture often associated with goodwill and respect, can be manipulated to facilitate bribery within the industry. The line between gift-giving and bribery can be blurred when the intention behind the gift changes from a simple gesture of goodwill to an attempt to influence decision-making (Ahamad Kuris et al., 2023). For instance, an individual offering a gift to a practitioner with the expectation of receiving favourable treatment in return, such as being awarded a contract or having certain unfavourable procedures or regulations overlooked. While the act of giving the gift might appear similar on the surface to any other act of gift-giving, the underlying intention creates a scenario where the gift becomes a bribe. The challenge here lies in distinguishing between genuine acts of gift-giving and those intended to unduly influence decision-making processes, as they can appear similar in form, but differ significantly in intent and impact.

Similarly, the high regard for elders, an integral aspect of Ghanaian culture, can become a hurdle when trying to discipline older practitioners or professionals who violate ethical codes. It is a well-documented observation that revering the elderly is an integral and

almost sacrosanct practice in many African cultures, including Ghana (Debrah, 2002; Kuada and Chachah, 1999). Arising from the belief that elders are custodians of wisdom and possess valuable life experience (Michel et al., 2020), this cultural norm could potentially hinder the necessary disciplinary actions being taken against older professionals, even when they are clearly in breach of rules.

Another cultural factor influencing rule enforcement is the widespread tendency among Ghanaians to beg or plead for forgiveness when they breach rules and regulations. This often involves respected elders and authority figures whose intervention is sought to intercede on behalf of the alleged culprit. Simultaneously, such esteemed individuals within Ghanaian society may feel a sense of obligation to provide their insights and guidance in disagreements and conflict resolution, driven by what they see as their inherent responsibility to do so. The traditional African conflict resolution mechanism focusses on empathy, forgiveness and the preservation of communal ties and relationships based on the belief in a shared destiny (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2012). Rather than meting out punishment, these conflict resolution mechanism places emphasis on the establishment of the truth behind the conflict and the reconciliation of the parties with a view to restoring social harmony (Chereji and Wratto, 2013). The likelihood is that the modern-day practice of interceding in enforcement action is likely an expression of these cultural values. In many situations, this plea for leniency can make it challenging to apply the full extent of the penalties outlined in the code of ethics. Enforcement becomes mired in emotional appeals, potentially undermining the effectiveness of penalties intended to deter unethical behaviour.

Understanding these complex cultural and societal factors and their potential impact is essential for developing effective strategies for enforcing rules and regulations. It would allow for a more nuanced approach that considers these underlying influences and how

they may impact the effectiveness of the enforcement mechanisms. This way, the approach to enforcement can be adjusted and crafted to be more sensitive and to work within cultural norms in achieving the desired outcome rather than against them.

4.4.7 Weak Institutions

It is widely documented that strong institutions offer numerous benefits, such as the effective implementation and enforcement of regulations, ensuring transparency and accountability in decision-making (Alhassan and Kilishi, 2019; Aron, 2000; Kumssa and Mbeche, 2004; Parks et al., 2018) and promoting a conducive environment for businesses to flourish by reducing transaction costs (Hobbs, 2018; Hobbs, 1997; Hobbs, 2007). One of the possible explanations for the pervasive occurrence of unethical practices is weak institutions, where such institutions charged with ensuring good governance and compliance with the rule of law are failing in their duty to do so. Some scholars contend that corruption is widespread in developing nations due to weak institutions and ineffective monitoring mechanisms (Lengwiler and Wolfstetter, 2006; Osei-Tutu et al., 2010).

Dr Gary Becker, a well-renowned, Nobel prize-winning behavioural economist, suggested that a critical determinant influencing an individual's decision to participate in unethical behaviour is the perceived probability of getting caught, the severity of the consequences if caught, and whether the benefits of committing the act outweigh the advantages of pursuing an alternative, lawful activity (Becker, 1968). This implies that, in settings where institutions have poor monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, the prevalence of unethical conduct and corruption would be significantly high.

In Ghana, two of the key institutions responsible for providing the oversight necessary to ensure ethical practice and good governance within the construction sector are professional bodies and legislative backed professional councils such as the architects registration council and the engineering council. A fundamental role professional bodies is their

commitment to maintain and promote the usefulness of their professions to serve the public interest (Hughes and Hughes, 2013). They achieve this using a number of tools including a professional code of ethics, the purpose of which is to provide a decision-making framework to help practitioners recognize and analyse ethical dilemmas, weigh options, and make responsible choices (Lemen, 2022). The mere existence of these ethical codes is unlikely to influence behaviour, as it is the implementation and enforcement of these codes that are essential in preventing unethical practice and behaviour. Unfortunately, it is in this crucial aspect of monitoring and enforcement that most professional bodies in the Ghanaian built environment sector have been notably identified as being deficient and ineffective, often failing to uphold and impose the standards they espouse. The failure to robustly monitor and enforce their codes of ethics has given rise to the perception that professional bodies within the Ghanaian construction industry are weak, resulting in a situation where unethical behaviour is prevalent throughout the sector. (Akosa et al., 2020; Ofori-Kuragu et al., 2016). Indeed, Callistus and Clinton (2016) also found that weak institutional capacity is the single most critical challenge facing the Ghanaian construction industry.

Ofori-Kuragu et al. (2016) argued that a contributing factor to the perceived weakness of professional bodies in Ghana may be the non-compulsory nature of their memberships. They contend that since joining these organizations is not a mandatory requirement for professionals, their influence over their members remains limited. This lack of authority impedes their ability to enforce strict guidelines and adherence to their code of ethics. Several others (Alhassan and Kilishi, 2019; Aron, 2000; Birdsall, 2007; Kumssa and Mbeche, 2004) who have also explored the underlying causes of weak institutions in Africa, have highlighted factors such as the lack of a robust civil society, political meddling, mismanagement, and pervasive corruption. Addressing these factors would be

crucial for strengthening institutions to ensure their effectiveness and overall ability to better serve the needs of the construction sector in Ghana.

4.5 Effects of Unethical Behaviours in the Ghanaian Built Environment Sector

Documented effects of unethical practices in the Ghanaian construction industry includes poor execution of construction projects, delays, cost overruns, compromised safety, loss of life, reduction in the durability of works completed, collapse of buildings; deterioration of the environment etc. (Ameyaw et al., 2017; Laryea, 2010; Osei-Tutu et al., 2010; Osei-Tutu et al., 2014; Osei‑Tutu et al., 2010).

Somachandra and Sylva (2018) reported that the industry consumed large amounts of resources and energy with over 50 percent of raw materials obtained from nature being utilised within the sector. Notwithstanding this and the sizable harmful impact towards the environment, in Ghana (Ametepey and Ansah, 2014) and in other parts of the world (Jain et al., 2016) stakeholders continue to show disregard for sustainable building practices (Somachandra and Sylva, 2018). Wu (2008) argued that compared to other regions, developing countries such as Ghana, are the biggest culprits of wasting resources in construction processes, leading to a much lower level of efficiency in resource utilization.

The effects of unethical practices in the construction sector are broadly similar across other jurisdictions. Studies by Inuwa et al. (2015) found the most extreme effects of unethical practices on construction projects in Nigeria are frequent maintenance work, delays and cost overruns. These findings are similar to those found by Kenny (2010) who reported that in India, unethical practices contributed to slightly over 50 percent of road projects being delayed and exceeding their original budgets by over 25 percent. Explaining the relationship between bribe payments and the escalation of costs associated with road rehabilitation projects, Kenny (2010) reported that countries where bribe payments for

government contracts is less than 2 percent of the contract value had an average cost of $30 per square meter for road rehabilitation projects, while countries with bribe payments above 2 percent had an average cost of $46 per square meter for a similar project.

In addition to the cost overruns, other unethical practices such as the use of substandard materials, shoddy workmanship, violation of building codes often result in compromised quality and safety standards and increases the risk of structural failures, building collapses and the loss of human life (Boateng, 2020; Quaicoe, 2023). For example, in 2012, a shopping mall in Accra Ghana collapsed leading to the deaths of nine people and several others injured (Kpodo, 2012) . A year later a three-storey building in Ghana's second largest city also collapsed which again resulted in the loss of three lives (Ghanaweb, 2013). Both of these incidents were attributed to unethical practices specifically, the failure to adhere to building guidelines and regulations.

It is well documented that unethical practices in the built environment sector have far-reaching and significant effects the impact of which goes beyond the immediate stakeholders and is felt by the wider society and on the environment as well. Scholars including Dion (2010) argue that since government investment in infrastructure is a significant driver of economic growth, mismanagement and corruption in the construction process can undermine socioeconomic development by reducing amount of funding available for new national infrastructure development. In Ghana Asamoah and Decardi-Nelson (2014) examined the development and enforcement of ethics to promote trust and confidence in the construction sector. They concluded that corruption in the sector reduces investment in and access to public services such as education, healthcare and good roads. These findings resonate with those presented by Osei–Owusu et al. (2014) who argued that unethical procurement practices in the public sector leads to increased financial strain on public funds, cause delays in project completion, and deprive nations of superior services

by deterring ethically responsible firms from participating in public sector bids. In effect corruption in the construction sector has direct implications for the quality of life and wellbeing of all citizens. For Ghana to derive the full benefits of the sector and the investment into it, it would be necessary to address and improve ethical conduct amongst professionals in the sector. The next segment now examines some of the ways in which this can be achieved.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a review of the key stakeholders in Ghana's construction sector, which includes clients, professional practitioners, contractors, and professional bodies. The discussion on these stakeholders included an explanation of their roles, and how their conduct, behaviours, and practices can influence ethical practice in the Ghanaian built environment sector. The chapter further examined the prevailing unethical practices in the construction sector in Ghana. These included malpractices such as bribery, tender rigging, conflict of interest, political interference etc. The root causes of these unethical practices were also explored where systemic issues such as greed, lack of enforcement, weak institutions and other cultural factors are highlighted. Finally, the chapter underscored the adverse impacts of these practices on both the construction sector and the broader Ghanaian economy. For the construction sector, these practices have resulted in compromised quality and safety, inflated project costs, and a reputation deficit. On a macro level, these unethical practices are undermining socioeconomic development, exacerbating environmental degradation, and reduces the availability of funding for public services which ultimately impacts the quality of life and wellbeing of all citizens. The next chapter will delve into the methodology for this study.

Chapter Five: Research Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This aim of this chapter is to identify and discuss the methodology adopted for this research. In this chapter the overall research strategy and approach employed to address the objectives of the study will be explained. The initial sections of the chapter will deliberate on the philosophical approach of the study, with a focus on the researcher's position on ontology, epistemology, axiology as well as the researcher's position on research reasoning. In addition to providing justification for the selected grounded theory methodology and methods, reasons will also be provided for why other potential methodologies were invalidated. Ethical considerations will be discussed followed by a chapter summary.

5.2 Research Philosophy

All research must be based on some underlying philosophical assumptions. According to Knight and Turnbull (2008), a researcher would struggle to provide a robust defence of their contribution to knowledge if they do not clearly identify their ontological and epistemological stance. Their argument is widely accepted by other scholars (Moon and Blackman, 2017; Saunders and Thornhill, 2019), who contend that the ontological and epistemological positions of a researcher influences not only the outcome of a study but also frames the way in which research is designed, conducted, and interpreted. In other words, a researcher's philosophical assumptions have practical implications for designing and conducting the study (Saunders et al., 2011). This study considers three main philosophical concerns. These are, the researcher's persuasions on the nature and existence of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what is known (epistemology) and the role the researcher's own values play in terms of influencing the design and conduct of the research (axiology).

5.2.1 Ontology

According to Saunders and Thornhill (2019), ontology refers to the philosophical assumptions one makes about the nature of reality. Thus, what constitutes reality and how does reality exist? Levers (2013) and Bryman (2012) adds that there are two divergent perspectives on ontology. The first is objectivism and the second subjectivism. The objectivist or realist viewpoint is that there is only one single reality. That reality sits outside the influence of humans and is independent of the perceptions of the human mind irrespective of whether it is comprehendible or has been directly experienced by human actors (Levers, 2013). In contrast, subjectivism or the relativist position is one that leads to the conclusion that there is no absolutism in reality. This viewpoint suggests that multiple realities exist, each shaped by some form of context such as the experiences and relative perceptions of humans (Ponterotto, 2005).

This study is informed by a relativist ontological position because a key aspiration of the study is to gather and understand the views and opinions of Ghanaian built environment sector professionals. Consequently, assuming an objectivist or realist ontological position for this research would not align with the multi-faceted and subjective viewpoints and opinions that would be solicited and expressed by the participants of this study. The concept of ethics in itself is a phenomenon that heavily draws on a person's individual values. A study by Odediran et al. (2013) emphasised that the first and most important factor that influences one's attitude towards compliance with ethical practices is the individual factor. They argued that such factors include variables that an individual assumes as a result of their development and socialization with the world around them. In their view, it is an embodiment of one's life experiences and circumstances of birth that an individual brings to the ethical decision-making process.

5.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology examines the questions of 'what constitutes acceptable knowledge' and 'how we know what we know' (Knight and Turnbull, 2008) especially in terms of the relationship between the researcher and the researched. The two main epistemological viewpoints in research are positivism and interpretivism (Ponterotto, 2005). The term positivism is often used to describe the belief that the world is capable of objective interpretation (Aliyu et al., 2014). Positivism is rooted in the principles of dualism and objectivism (Ponterotto, 2005). Positivists explain that the researcher and the research participant and topic are independent of one another (dualism). It is their assessment that a researcher can operate by detaching their own views from the research to achieve objectivity and to arrive at universal truths not influenced by the researcher. In such instances, the researcher is considered an 'outsider' (Creswell and Poth, 2013).

Positivism is contrasted with interpretivism. Those who hold an interpretivist view explain that the world is capable of multiple interpretations and that reality is socially constructed (Ponterotto, 2005). Interpretivists seek to unearth the meanings and rationale that sit behind and explain human activity and behaviour. From a researcher's perspective, an interpretivist approach to a study will require the researcher to become an 'insider' (Creswell and Poth, 2013), such that one might gain deeper insights, through an active interactive dialogue with research participants in their natural settings. Thus, the more the researcher engages with research participants in their natural settings, the more they get to 'know what they know' about what is being researched.

This study is based on the interpretivist epistemological position, which stipulates that the researcher needs to be in close proximity to the research population in order to investigate the nuanced complexities of ethics and the ways in which it manifests amongst built environment professionals in Ghana. This interpretivist epistemological perspective is

consistent with the subjective ontology of different realities that has already been established.

5.2.3 Axiology

According to Ponterotto (2005), the axiological position relates to the effect of the researcher's own values on the study. Positivists maintain that researchers must take an objective position and remain emotionally detached from the research. Thus, one's values, feelings and expectations will have no bearing or effect on the study (Ponterotto, 2005). On the other hand, interpretivists contend that a researcher's values and lived experiences cannot be disconnected from the research process. Having already adopted an interpretivist epistemological position for this study, one finds that it logically dictates an axiological position where the researcher's values and views may influence interpretations of multiple realities. Ponterotto (2005) argued that it is inconceivable to expunge the effects of a researcher's value biases in an interdependent researcher-participant interaction. In an interpretivist research such as this, it is therefore proper that a researcher duly acknowledges the bias effect of their own belief systems and values on the study (Malterud, 2001; Creswell and Poth, 2013; Ponterotto, 2005). Indeed, several experts have argued that complete objectivity is not possible in social research (Bryman, 2012; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). However, confirmability which involves demonstrating trust worthiness (Korstjens and Moser, 2018) by taking steps such as carrying out member checking (Birt et al., 2016) must be undertaken. In addition, a researcher may decide to include a reflexivity statement, as suggested by Finlay (1998), to explain their pre-study beliefs. These suggestions have been implemented in this study to both demonstrate that the researcher has acted in good faith.

5.3 Research Reasoning

Research reasoning is the process of drawing conclusions, making predictions, or constructing explanations based on existing knowledge. According to Kovács and Spens (2005), there are three main types of research reasoning namely inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning and abductive reasoning.

5.3.1 Inductive Reasoning

This is the interpretivist/relativist approach. Inductive thinking, also known as 'bottom-up' thinking, it is a logical process in which multiple premises, all believed to be true, are combined to reach a specific conclusion (Sauce and Matzel, 2017). When a researcher employs an inductive logic or approach, they begin by collecting data relevant to their area of study. The collected data is examined to identify patterns in an effort to develop a theory or to explain the emerging patterns. Thus, when researchers employ an inductive methodology, they begin with a set of observations and then transition from these specific experiences to a more general set of hypotheses regarding these experiences (Creswell, 2017).
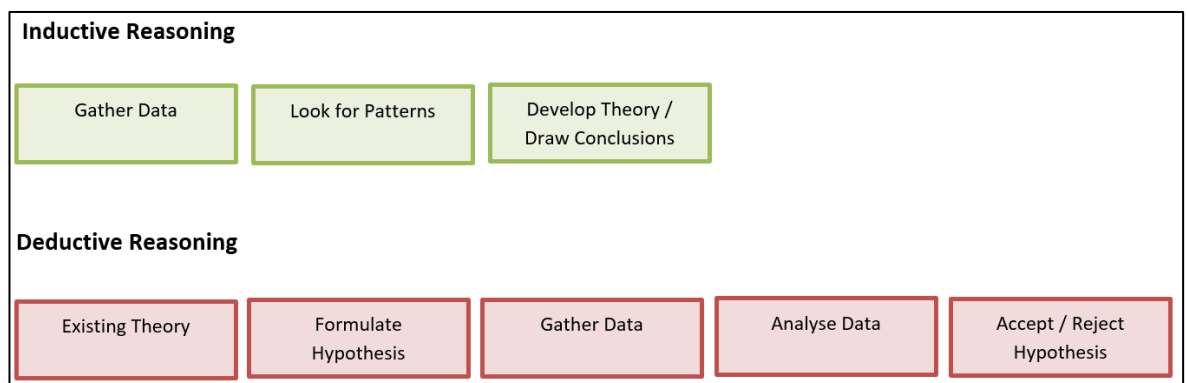
Figure 8. Inductive vs Deductive Reasoning. Source: Adapted from (Bhandari, 2022)

5.3.2 Deductive Reasoning

A deductive approach involves generating a specific hypothesis about a phenomenon, testing the hypothesis through the collection of observations or the undertaking of

experiments and generating data to support or refute the hypothesis. A rigorous regime for testing and validating the findings is what is considered important (Williamson et al., 2002). Some of the criticisms levelled against the deductive approach of reasoning is that this positivist approach ignores the subjective dimension of human action and assumes that only 'scientific' methods yield theories.

5.2.3 Abductive Reasoning

Abduction is a non-monotonic form of reasoning. It is considered non-monotonic in the sense that abductive reasoning does not strictly reflect the tenets of a specific premise as in the case of an inductive or deduct approach. Rather, abductive reasoning follows a pragmatist perspective (Mitchell, 2018). When following an abductive approach, a researcher seeks to select the most plausible grounds to explain an observation or a phenomenon, based on what they know (Brena, 1998). An abductive approach may employ both numerical and cognitive reasoning such as interpretation and contextual understanding to reach a conclusion. Thus, unlike inductive reasoning which begins with observations and merely proceeds to the most likely generalized conclusion, or deductive reasoning which starts with a hypothesis which is tested to reach a specific guaranteed conclusion, abductive reasoning refrains from embracing either deductive or inductive methods. Instead, it focuses on determining the most likeliest possible explanation or theory to a phenomenon (Mukumbang et al., 2021).

5.3.4 Justification for Selecting an Inductive Approach

Explaining the research logic applied by a researcher is important because the adopted reasoning plays an important role in explaining how a study has been conducted. A researcher's position on logic is determined by whether the study aims to test theory (deductive) or to develop a theory (inductive). This study employed the use of an inductive approach because it enables the study to achieve one of its primary goals, which is to

follow an exploratory research design to explain the underlying structure of experiences or processes of ethics as observed in Ghana's built environment sector. It must be noted that the selected inductive approach also aligns with the researcher's philosophical positions already discussed above. The next section will now explain the strategies of inquiry adopted which also includes the methods adopted for this study.

5.4 Research Methodology

There are two main methodologies or strategies of inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) that determine the specific procedures adopted for undertaking research (Creswell and Poth, 2013). These are quantitative and qualitative research strategies (Ponterotto, 2005).

5.4.1 Quantitative Research

At its most fundamental level, quantitative data is measurable information. It is data that can be tallied and assigned a numerical value (Sheard, 2018). Quantitative data makes it easier to identify trends and patterns in collected data to comprehend their significance. The primary disadvantage of quantitative data is that it does not provide context or explanations for responses received (McLeod, 2019b). A great deal of nuance and significance is therefore lost when presenting human experience statistically. In quantitative research, researchers often test or confirm a theory rather than seek to develop new ones (Creswell, 2017).

5.4.2 Qualitative Research

Conversely, qualitative research is exploratory and often employed when a researcher wants to dive more deeply into an issue and to examine the intricacies of the issue such as the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. Thus, qualitative approaches are used to address questions about experience and perspectives, typically from the research participant's viewpoint (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Qualitative research techniques include focus group discussions, interviews, observations etc. The five main forms of qualitative

research methodologies are narrative, phenomenology, case study, grounded theory and ethnography (Creswell and Poth, 2013).

These two strategies of inquiry are ingrained in the objective (quantitative) and subjective (qualitative) ontologies as well as in positivist (quantitative) and interpretivist (qualitative) epistemologies. In addition to the above strategies of inquiry, Creswell and Poth (2013) also discusses mixed-method strategies which adopts a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches within a study.

5.4.3 Justification for Selecting a Qualitative Research Approach

This study adopts a qualitative research approach because the study intends to investigate the views and perceptions of built environment professionals in Ghana about ethics. According to Ponterotto (2005), ultimately, the research design selected should naturally flow on from the researcher's perspective and standpoint on ontology, epistemology and axiology. Indeed, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argued that where a qualitative design is selected, the researcher is often restricted to an interpretivist or constructivist paradigm. This is because both paradigms seek to deeply understand issues rather than predict outcomes, as in the positivist paradigm. To thoroughly deconstruct and understand the nuances and subtleties that inform the ethical attitudes of participants, a deeper interaction between the researcher and the research population is required. This level of interaction is something a quantitative method, such as a survey questionnaire, cannot provide. A qualitative approach therefore became necessary. It allows for a rich description of the social processes and meanings influencing the ethical practices of Ghanaian construction professionals. Additionally, this approach sheds light on how decision-making interacts with the demands imposed by their professional code of conduct.

5.5 Qualitative Research Approaches

There are five main types of qualitative research approaches. The subsequent paragraphs cover the broad landscape to provide a general overview and understanding of the five available qualitative research methodologies. Justification is provided, along with an explanation as to why the adopted qualitative research approach, namely grounded theory, is the most suitable for the conduct of this research.

5.5.1 Narrative Research

Narrative research is centred on documenting the life experiences of an individual. This is similar to biographical or autobiographical studies of individuals (Creswell et al., 2007). According to Andrews et al. (2008), although most narrative studies rely heavily on interviews as their primary data collection tool, narrative research data can be collected in a variety of formats, including autobiographical writing, documents such as class plans and bulletins, journals, field notes, interview transcripts, observations, stories, letters, photographs, metaphors, and personal philosophies. Typically, this type of research focusses on a single individual or two or three individuals whose life story corresponds to the question under investigation (Creswell and Poth, 2013). The personal stories of a research participant which is known as field texts (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), provides the research raw data. In addition, the researcher also collects information regarding the cultural and geographical context of the narrative stories. The stories are analysed and retold in a narrative chronology using an appropriate framework (Creswell et al., 2007).

While narrative research is useful for exploring the subjective life stories and experiences of individuals, it is not the most appropriate method for this study, which requires a multi-level analysis encompassing both individual and institutional perspectives. Consequently, a narrative research approach was ruled out due to the reasons mentioned above.

5.5.2 Phenomenological Research

Unlike narrative research which focuses on exploring and interpreting the stories that individuals narrate about their lives, phenomenology is dedicated to understanding how individuals experience a phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019). This approach seeks to describe the commonalities shared among all participants experiencing a particular phenomenon (Creswell and Poth, 2013). For instance, when death occurs, everyone experiences grief. Thus, phenomenology's fundamental purpose is to reduce individual experiences of the phenomenon to the core elements that are shared across all these experiences (Creswell and Poth, 2013). In other words, phenomenology seeks to identify the common elements or core principles that define an experience, irrespective of the individual variations that might exist. The two primary approaches to phenomenology are considered to be descriptive and interpretive (Sloan and Bowe, 2013). Edmund Husserl founded descriptive phenomenology, while Martin Heidegger developed interpretive phenomenology (Connelly, 2010). In the descriptive approach, the researcher attempts to capture the authentic perspective of the individual who has lived a certain experience. This approach requires the author to ensure that their own presuppositions, assumptions and experiences have no effect on the process, a concept known as bracketing (Tufford and Newman, 2010). However, when employing the interpretive method, in which meaning is derived from the experience, the interpretive function falls to the author, and they will not be able to divorce their own ideas and biases from the process.

In the early stages of this study, a phenomenological approach was initially considered for its suitability in exploring the lived experiences and perceptions of participants, especially concerning a specific phenomenon like ethics within the Ghanaian built environment sector. However, a phenomenological approach was later deemed less appropriate compared to grounded theory, which emerged as a more fitting methodology for this

research. For instance, unlike phenomenology, grounded theory is deliberately designed to avoid undertaking a comprehensive literature review at the initial stages of research. This approach enhances the empirical foundation of its conclusions by allowing theories and understanding to develop organically from the data collected. Furthermore, one of the central tenets of grounded theory is its commitment to generating theory directly from empirical data. This approach is particularly beneficial for this study, which has an objective to develop a framework deeply rooted in and validated by the observed reality of the research context. Grounded theory's focus on data-driven theory generation ensures that the conclusions are not only empirically substantiated but also closely linked to the specifics of the context under study. For these methodological differences, the phenomenological approach was ultimately deemed unsuitable for this research.

5.5.3 Ethnographic Research

The goal of an ethnographic study is to identify patterns of common values, behaviour, or beliefs within a cultural group (Creswell, 2017). An ethnographic study is usually the method of choice where the goal of the study is to understand a culture, and to present, or explain, its spoken and unspoken nature to people who are not part of the culture (Grossoehme, 2014). It involves extended direct observation of the group under study through participant observation in their natural settings with little or no intrusion. This allows the researcher to be fully immersed in the day-to-day lives of research participants in an effort to understand their experiences, perspectives and everyday practices. Ethnography uses different research techniques, which may include observations, taking field notes, informal conversations, interviews, document analysis, surveys, filming and photography (Reeves et al., 2013).

One of the primary advantages of ethnography as a research approach is its ability to provide a more in-depth understanding of participants' experiences compared to

quantitative methods or qualitative approaches that rely solely on interviews. This depth comes from observing what people do, rather than just what they say. However, ethnographic work typically involves negotiating permissions, and gaining access for observational research which can be time consuming and challenging. Although ethnography has evolved over time to enable its application in organisational settings (Jayathilaka, 2020), it does not focus as intensively on generating empirically grounded constructs as grounded theory does. Therefore, an ethnographic approach was discounted for the reasons outlined above.

5.5.4 Case Study Research

Case study research allows for an in-depth and intensive study of a single case or a small number of cases, within their natural settings or context (McLeod, 2019a). Data for case study research are typically collected from a range of sources by employing a variety of techniques such as observations, interviews, document analysis etc. According to Proverbs and Gameson (2008), data collected from different sources must be woven together to form a unified, logical and coherent narrative. Yin (2014) and Stake (1995) both explained that the key reason for a selecting a case study research approach is to arrive at a coherent narrative or description of a study object in its real-life context. In contrast to this study's key objective of generating an empirically modelled framework, the primary focus of a case study research often remains on the particularities of the case, aiming to provide an outcome that offers a rich, contextualized, in-depth understanding of the specific case. A case study methodology was therefore deemed not the best fit to achieve one of this study's most important objectives.

5.5.5 Grounded Theory Research

The goal of a grounded theory study is to go beyond description or narration and come up with or find a theory for a process or action (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). An essential criterion is that theory creation is not processed from an existing theory but rather developed or 'based' on the data or evidence collected from research participants (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Therefore, as a qualitative research methodology, grounded theory can be explained to be an approach whereby the researcher develops an explanation (a theory) of a phenomenon based on the views and perspectives of study participants.

Grounded theory methodology was originally founded in the 1960s by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. This was in response to the intense positivism approach that had become prominent in social research, as noted by Suddaby (2006). The discovery of grounded theory by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss was seen as a big step forward at a time when researchers were sceptical of qualitative methods. With Strauss's background in social science and Glaser's background in quantitative research, the pair came up with a method for conducting qualitative research (Holton, 2009). Glaser and Strauss went their separate ways after an academic disagreement about how the data are analysed (Polit and Beck, 2012) and the role of the researcher during data analysis (Walker and Myrick, 2006). Their differences led to two versions of grounded theory namely Glaserian and Straussian grounded theory (van Niekerk and Roode, 2009). Further development by second generation grounded theorists led to a constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2006), which recognises the role of the researcher and their active influence on the research process.

Since its inception in 1967, there have been three main and distinct iterations of grounded theory developed. These are the Glaserian grounded theory, also known as the 'classical grounded theory,' the Straussian grounded theory, also known as the 'interpretive grounded

theory,' and the Constructivist grounded theory, which was developed by Charmaz in the year 2000 (Thornberg, 2012). As a result of these iterations, it is absolutely vital for researchers to be cognizant of and have a comprehensive awareness of the many approaches to grounded theory and to be able to defend the approach that they intend to use in their work (Heath and Cowley, 2004). Having an awareness of the various approaches also ensures that the methodology that is eventually selected is appropriate for the research goals, the researcher's intent and position, and that the theory that is developed as a result is useful (Singh and Estefan, 2018).

5.5.5.1 Glaserian Grounded Theory (Classical)

The classical approach to grounded theory research, as initially proposed by Glaser and Straus, emphasised the direct production of codes and categories from the data. Therefore, when this approach is employed, the codes and categories are not determined prior to data analysis but rather, typically labelled based on terms extracted from the data (Kendall, 1999). The classic version of grounded theory relies on an objectivist approach (Ong, 2012; Oliver, 2012) where it seeks to arrive at a theory that can be applied to explain an objective reality (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

The premise of classical grounded theory is that reality and the procedures employed to construct it are independent of the observer (Singh and Estefan, 2018). Rather than being defined by the researcher or his analysis, Glaser explained that the grounded theory researcher is a neutral inquirer and observer (objectivist) who only recognizes patterns in data (distant observer) and 'discovers' the theory that describes the 'reality' existing in the field (Singh and Estefan, 2018; Charmaz, 1990). Thus, researchers are deemed to be passive (Charmaz, 2014b) and neutral observers (Oliver, 2012). According to Heath (2006), the classical approach to grounded theory stringently excludes review of any literature ahead of the collection of data, as this might have a distorting impact on analysis.

In addition, Glaser notes that since discovery and emergence are central to the grounded theory process, the researcher may not be able to determine which literature is relevant to the research at the early stages (Heath, 2006).

5.5.5.2 Straussian Grounded Theory

A key difference between the Glasserian and Straussian approach is that, the Straussian method prescribes a rigid coding structure for the purposes of analysing the collected data (Kenny and Fourie, 2015). Strauss and Corbin argue that their relatively rigid structure, which entails a four-step coding process, allows for a more enhanced and effective approach to the methodology. In particular, this approach, they say, is useful for less experienced researchers, who will be guided by its laid down, step by step procedures.

Figure 9. The Coding Procedure of Straussian Grounded Theory. Adapted from (Rahimi-Feyzabad et al., 2021)

Another difference between the two approaches is that Straus and Corbin recommend a review of relevant literature prior to the collection of data. A researcher adopting this approach is able to apply the understanding and insights gained from the review of existing literature to interrogate the data. Their approach is based on the belief that simultaneous appraisal of the literature helps reveal the gaps in the literature, inspires further inquiry, provides supplementary validation and allows some insight into existing theories and philosophical frameworks (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). However, Strauss and Corbin caution against undertaking a full and comprehensive literature review prior to the collection of data, as this could constrain the researcher and prevent the organic discovery of new themes arising from the data.

The differing approach to the use of literature is also based on a varying attitude to the role of the researcher. The Straussian approach rejects the notion that the researcher can be truly detached from his research, arguing that the researcher invariably exerts some influence on his work (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). While insisting that the researcher must remain objective in his analysis and interpretation of the findings from the data, this approach permits the researcher to undertake some review of existing literature on the subject, generating some preconceptions on the topic which would inform the nature and direction of the study, including queries that arise out of the literature review. This approach, however, is distinct from the constructivist approach, where the researcher is seen as a co-constructor of knowledge aiming to bring meaning to the study (Charmaz, 2014a).

5.5.5.3 Constructivist Grounded Theory

The constructivist approach is the most recent of the grounded theory iterations. It was first mooted by Kathy Charmaz, a student of Straus and Glaser (Kenny and Fourie, 2015). This approach recognises and welcomes an active role for the researcher, whose perspectives are considered to be relevant to the study and whose decisions affect the process and resultant theory from the study (Charmaz, 2014a). Constructivists see the researcher and the participants as partners who co-construct meaning. This is achieved through deep and recurrent interactions. The aim of the researcher is to uncover hidden meanings that arise from the professional, the socio-cultural and historical contexts of both the researcher and the participant. Charmaz (2014a) argues that a study must consider the contexts within which it is conducted. This thinking is based on a subjectivist or relativist ontological paradigm. According to this paradigm, multiple realities exist. Each reality is shaped by the particular context in which it is perceived, and also by the experiences of the observer and/or participants (Henwood and Pidgeon, 2003). Charmaz's approach is therefore a firm rejection of the Glaserian objectivist standpoint which insists on a single, absolute reality

independent of the researcher's perspective or interference. Additionally, constructivists do not adhere to the idea of a single inflexible structure for coding data as suggested by Straussian approach. Rather, Charmaz recommends a flexible, three-step approach involving, open coding, focussed coding and the construction of a theory (Kenny and Fourie, 2015).
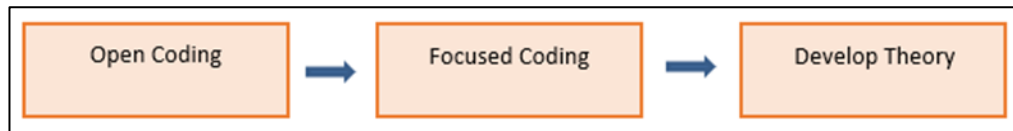
Figure 10.The Coding Procedure of Constructivist Grounded Theory. Adapted from (Kenny and Fourie, 2015)

In contrast with the Glaserian method, the constructivist position on the use of existing literature is that some familiarity with it prior to data collection and analysis is necessary (preliminary literature review), while deferring total immersion into the literature (full literature review) until after data has been collected and analysed (Giles et al., 2013; Charmaz, 2014a). Charmaz argues that doing so positions the researcher in the continuing academic dialogue on a subject, enhances one's credibility and authority and supports their rationale for undertaking the study (Charmaz, 2006). While conceding that the grounded theory approach requires researchers to dispense with preconceptions, Charmaz dismisses the idea that a researcher can completely ignore their past experiences and perspectives pertaining to the subject under study. Instead, she advocates that researchers should account for these experiences and perspectives through reflexivity, rather than simply attempting to ignore them (Giles et al., 2013).

5.6 Justification for the Selected Approach

According to Crooks (2001) and Birks and Mills (2015), grounded theory offers the most suitable research approach where a study attempts to tackle the nature of social relationships and groups in cases where the contextual factors that affect lives of

individuals have not been previously well explored. While existing research on ethics is well-documented, the researcher found no comprehensive study that adequately explains how global ethical principles for professionals in the built environment sector can be successfully integrated and implemented in the Ghanaian context. A grounded theory approach therefore seemed to be the most appropriate and logical choice in this study. Although other qualitative approaches such as narrative, phenomenological, ethnography and case study research could have been potentially useful in the exploration and unearthing of participants' experiences, perspectives and everyday practices, these other approaches tend to focus on application of existing theories rather than the construction of a new empirically grounded output.

Within the grounded theory approach itself, the researcher had the option to choose between the forms championed by Glaser and Strauss, Strauss and Corbin or the Charmaz approach. While all three methods require that the study be grounded in data, there are significant procedural and philosophical distinctions that a researcher must evaluate in deciding which is most suitable for their study. Section 5.7 below explains why the constructivist grounded theory approach was deemed to be best suited for this study.

5.7 Justification for Selecting a Constructivist Grounded Theory Approach

5.7.1 The Nature of Reality

The constructivist grounded theory championed by Charmaz recognises that people perceive their unique constructs as reality, which reflect their understanding of their own experiences and the variety of contexts in which they occur (Charmaz, 1990). This unequivocal acknowledgement of multiple, valid realities inherent in the constructivist approach makes it exceptionally suitable for a study that tackles the question of global ethics. Given the diverse viewpoints and the contested nature of the subject of morality and ethics (Bentahila et al., 2021) and the ongoing debates over the universal applicability of

ethical standards (LaFollette, 1991; Parboteeah and Cullen, 2018), it becomes not just beneficial but almost imperative for any scholarly work in this domain to adopt a methodology that is designed to accommodate a range of perspectives. For the reasons explained above and the researcher's commitment to a philosophical position that views reality as subjective, alternative strands of the grounded theory methodology were deemed unsuitable. Their lack of alignment with the researcher's philosophical underpinnings led to their exclusion. Consequently, the constructivist grounded theory approach, as advocated by Kathy Charmaz, was selected for its better fit with the research objectives and the researcher's epistemological position.

5.7.2 The Role of the Researcher

Whereas Glaser insisted on the preservation of an objective reality where the detached researcher merely observes and analyses data (Singh and Estefan, 2018), Strauss in his later work with Corbin, would come to accept that the researcher exerts some influence on his work (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). However, Straus and Corbin are careful to note that the researcher must remain impartial in relation to the participants and the subject of the study itself. In sharp contrast, the constructivist approach embraces an active role for the researcher and places the experiences, history and perspectives of both the researcher and the participant as well as their individual perspectives at the centre of the quest for knowledge (Burns et al., 2022).

When using the constructivist method, the researcher goes beyond the face value of the participant's responses to seek the underlying meaning that is rooted in the context of the experiences and perspectives of the participant and the researcher (Burns et al., 2022). In this approach, the data is not separated from the source and the researcher's appreciation of the participant's values and beliefs yields an unspoken meaning that enriches the data (Burns et al., 2022). The constructivist method of grounded theory thus enables the

researcher to co-construct the emergent themes with the participant, who is not merely a subject of the study but a partner in the search for meaning (Charmaz, 2014a). This researcher concurs with the constructivists' standpoint that context cannot be divorced from data. Fully acknowledging the subjective perspectives of participants as well as the researcher serves to enrich the study. Specifically, this research, which explores the subjective topic of global ethical standards in the context of the Ghanaian construction sector, stands to gain from an approach that accommodates the researcher's professional background as a quantity surveyor, as well as their historical and cultural connections to the Ghanaian context.

5.7.3 Flexible Approach to the Research Process

Another rationale for adopting the constructivist grounded theory approach is its flexible approach to data coding and use of concurrent data generation and data analysis (Groen et al., 2017). Charmaz (2006) argues that employing constructivist grounded theory enables the researcher to study new, or dynamic phenomena that appear during the research which, in turn, can help shape the focus and direction of the study. This way, researchers are able to follow the data where it leads them and adapt the direction of inquiry to reflect new information and themes. Although the Glaserian and Straussian approaches are similarly data-driven, constructivist grounded theory is less constrained by elements such as its coding framework or the emphasis on 'discovering' reality (Glaser, 1978; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

5.8 The Literature Debate

The use of literature in grounded theory is perhaps one of the most controversial aspects of this research method. Glaser and Strauss' original version of grounded theory advocated against the review of relevant literature ahead of the collection and analysis of data. In their view, exposure to extant literature had the potential to influence the direction of the study

and constrain the researcher from recognizing trends that contradict the preconceptions founded in existing literature (McGhee et al., 2007). Thus, when literature review is conducted early in a study, it can have a detrimental effect on the originality of the research and hinder the development of a theory grounded in data. However, Glaser and Strauss did not call for a complete rejection of literature review. Their argument was that literature review was best conducted after empirical data had been collected and analysed. In effect, classic grounded theory challenges the timing and not the necessity of literature review (Dunne, 2011).

Strauss and Corbin's approach to grounded theory, on the other hand, accepts that being conversant with existing knowledge on a subject can have helpful ramifications for the study. They argue that some understanding of the subject, based on the review of existing literature, promotes theoretical sensitivity (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), a concept that reflects a researchers' familiarity with the topic under study (Mills et al., 2006). Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that gaining familiarity with the literature before data collection helps the researcher to contextualise and justify the study. It also makes the researcher more aware of unhelpful preconceptions instead of desensitising them to these preconceptions (Maijala et al., 2003). Additionally, an early review of literature fosters clarity in thinking about concepts and potential theory development (Henwood and Pidgeon, 2006).

On the subject of literature review, Charmaz (2014a) sides with Glaser and proposes that a comprehensive review of literature is deferred until after data has been collected and analysed. She takes the classical view that undertaking a full literature review prior to fieldwork contaminates the researcher with preconceptions that can interfere with the emergence of empirical themes from the data (Charmaz, 1990). Notwithstanding Charmaz's belief that grounded theorists should strive to reduce prior assumptions

regarding a study, she acknowledges that each person carries a past into the present and will bear the burden of preconceptions as they undertake their research. Charmaz also acknowledged that institutional demands may usually require that a researcher delves into the literature at the outset of a study (Charmaz, 2014a).

Later, together with Antony Bryant, she would argue that researchers must not simply ignore their pre-existing ideas but must studiously account for them and the influence they might exert on the study (reflexivity). Existing literature, they suggest, must be used to 'to provide a beginning framework to the study and [gain] a level of understanding to provide an orientation to the research' (Giles et al., 2013). Citing Lempert (2007), they recommended a preliminary literature review to acquaint the researcher with existing evidence and to situate his work in the current theoretical debate. Indeed, several other grounded theory scholars now recognize that a lack of familiarity with relevant literature is unlikely and untenable (Clarke, 2005; Dunne, 2011; Goldkuhl and Cronholm, 2010; Henwood and Pidgeon, 2003; Lempert, 2007; Thornberg, 2012; Tummers and Karsten, 2012; Walls et al., 2010) and a limited and purposive preliminary review can be useful because it helps the researcher to acquire and develop their theoretical sensitivity. Researchers, however, must ensure that familiarity with prior literature does not direct the focus of the research.

This researcher is broadly in agreement with the constructivist approach to the use of extant literature in a study. As argued by Charmaz in Giles et al. (2013), acquaintance with existing literature is necessary to provide context whilst situating the study in the ongoing theoretical debate. It must also be noted that this researcher's professional background and cultural association with the Ghanaian context means that it was never possible to approach the study in a tabula rasa state of mind. Rather, the approach of theoretical agnosticism, as recommended by Henwood and Pidgeon (2003) and Thornberg (2012) is

adopted. Theoretical agnosticism requires the researcher to adopt a position of scepticism, treating all theories and concepts as provisional, disputable and modifiable. According to Dunne (2011), this does not mean that the researcher must ignore the existence of these theories. Rather, one must avoid the possibility of imposing prior frameworks on one's own work or examining empirical data via a particular theoretical lens. According to Thornberg (2012), a researcher adopting the grounded theory approach must critically examine all underlying presuppositions with which they come to the study and remain sceptical of all existing knowledge on the subject. Theoretical agnosticism is thus an effective approach for this study. As a quantity surveyor, the researcher has first-hand experience working within the built environment industry and has been exposed to discussions around professional ethics and other matters of ethical relevance to the sector. In addition, the initial research proposal included a literature review to justify the study, provide context, and identify its focus. These elements are in keeping with the constructivist position, which does not reject pre-existing knowledge or extant theories. Instead, the understanding gained helps sensitise the researcher and contextualise the study.

Mindful of this, the initial review of literature was welcomed for the contextual understanding it provided. However, this information was carefully regarded as provisional ideas that did not have a direct bearing on the study, in accordance with the guidance from (Henwood and Pidgeon, 2003). This approach ensured that the eventual framework was not shaped by empirical data obtained through interviews directed by preconceptions from existing knowledge. Instead, it was grounded in empirical data that naturally emerged from the interviews. The extensive review of the literature was undertaken after all the data had been analysed. The literature review served to contextualize the findings and to assess how they aligned with, or diverged from, existing knowledge.

5.9 Data Collection

5.9.1 Primary Data

The methods for collecting data for a grounded theory methodology are the same as those used by other qualitative approaches (observations, focus groups, interviews, etc) (Charmaz, 2014a). Interviews served as the primary tool for collecting data because they enable a detailed examination during the exploration of a particular topic or experience. For example, interviews offered the researcher an opportunity to request more details, restate points to check for accuracy and probe a participant about something they might have said about their feeling or actions (Charmaz, 2006).

There are three main types of interviews which are structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). A structured interview utilises a tightly designed schedule of questions which allows a researcher to ask each participant exactly the same questions in the same way. Structured interview questions are usually phrased such that each question offers the respondent a limited number of pre-coded responses to choose from (Fox, 2006).

A semi-structured interview is conducted in the form of a conversation between the researcher and the participant. The conversation is guided by a set of flexible, predefined open-ended questions or prompts. Semi-structured interviews also give the researcher the opportunity to seek additional clarity through the use of follow-up questions, probes, and comments (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019). Using semi structured interviews, a researcher is able to dive deeply into issues exploring a participant's inner thoughts and feelings which could sometimes cover very personal or perhaps even sensitive issues (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019).

The unstructured interview approach is the last of the three interview types. An unstructured interview is the most flexible type of them all because they have very little

structure if any at all (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). This form of interview is characterised as one in which neither the question categories nor the answer categories are predetermined Minichiello et al. (1990). Consequently, the data generated from each unstructured interview may have distinctively different structure and patterns. Generally, questions asked during an unstructured interview are formulated in response to the interviewees' narration on the subject matter (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009).

In keeping with the constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014a), this study used an in-depth, semi-structured interview approach to collect qualitative data. Indeed, Charmaz argued that in-depth / intensive interviewing fits grounded theory methods particularly well because it takes an open ended yet directed approach to obtaining research data (Charmaz, 2014a).

Using in-depth interviews, I was able to undertake a deep discussion with participants, probing and exploring their views on ethics and ethical practices within the Ghanaian construction sector. Initial interview questions were designed to encourage the participants to open up about the topic. These were very broad questions which asked about what the participants knew about the use of code of conduct or ethics within their own profession. A total of 25 participants were interviewed. Out of this number, 8 participants were architects, 10 were quantity surveyors and 7 were engineers. NVivo™ (version 9) was used to manage the substantial volume of data collected and to facilitate the process of analysing and coding the collected data. A sample of some of the questions asked during the semi structured interviews can be found in Appendix D.

5.9.2 Secondary Data and Analysis

To fulfil the requirements of objective 2, which sought to assess progress made by professional bodies in Ghana in aligning their codes of ethics with the IESC's ethical

principles, this study also adopted a content analysis approach, collecting and analysing secondary data in the form of codes of ethics from the following bodies.

- International Ethics Standards Coalition

- Ghana Institute of Architects

- Ghana Institution of Surveyors

- Ghana Institution of Engineers

A content analysis approach for Objective 2 was deemed appropriate due to the availability of necessary evidence in the form of ethical codes within pre-existing documents. Therefore, content analysis facilitated a structured and in-depth examination, objectively assessing their alignment with the IESC's ethical standards.

As a research technique, content analysis is used to understand and interpret the meaning of recorded data. It involves breaking down the data into smaller, meaningful parts and then organising these parts within a framework. This framework can then be used to describe or explain a particular phenomenon (Kleinheksel et al., 2020). According to Wilson (2016), there are two distinct approaches to undertaking content analysis namely conceptual analysis and relational analysis.

Conceptual Content Analysis focuses on identifying specific words, themes, or concepts within a text. The primary aim is to quantify the presence of these elements, often through counting the frequency of specific words or phrases. Conceptual Content Analysis can be described as aligning more closely with objectivist or positivist approaches to research (Wilson, 2016; Busch, 2005).

Relational Content Analysis, on the other hand, is more interpretive and seeks to understand the relationships between different concepts, themes, or ideas within the data. Instead of merely identifying and counting words or themes, relational analysis aims to

understand the underlying patterns, and often employs a more qualitative approach, looking at how different concepts are connected etc (Wilson, 2016; Busch, 2005).

The three codes of ethics that were analysed were directly obtained from the professional bodies themselves or from their websites. The following steps were undertaken to ascertain whether the themes, principles, and ethical standards outlined in the IESC code were reflected in the codes of conduct of Ghanaian professional bodies.

1. Construction of a coding frame/ thematic category using the 12 ethical principles found in the IESC standards. This formed the basis for analysing the rules and provisions found in the selected Ghanaian codes of ethics.

2. Line by line coding of the Ghanaian professional codes using the above coding frame to identify similarities and differences between the Ghanaian codes and the ethical principle from the IESC.

3. Where similarities were identified, further analysis was undertaken to assess the context in which the occurrences of words, phrases, and sentences were recorded, to ensure the intent aligned with the intent as found in the IESC principles.

4. The frequency of citation was also analysed to examine the emphasis placed on these ethical principles in the Ghanaian codes.

5.10 Essential Grounded Theory Characteristics and Methods

The sections that now follow (5.10.1 to 5.10.8) provide a general overview of the key steps that were followed within a constructivist grounded theory approach and demonstrate how these features of the grounded theory methodology have been utilised in this study.

5.10.1 Theoretical sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity refers to the level of insight and understanding that a researcher has about a subject before commencing a study (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), a researcher's theoretical sensitivity enables the researcher to

identify underlying themes in the data and extract subtle cues that might otherwise be overlooked. The researcher's awareness of or insight into current knowledge on the subject of their research helps to focus the research and provide context to it (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; McCann and Clark, 2003). A researcher can gain theoretical sensitivity in a number of ways. The researcher's knowledge of the research area through personal or professional experiences can be a source of theoretical sensitivity (Walls et al., 2010). The researcher may also choose to conduct a limited literature review to acquaint himself with the prevailing knowledge as well as the basic concepts around the study area (McCann and Clark, 2003; Glaser, 1978). However, researchers must be careful not to be swayed by the discoveries in their literature review, instead remaining critical and sceptical of all concepts and theories until they have been validated by the empirical data collected (Henwood and Pidgeon, 2003).

In this study, the researcher drew on his existing experience and knowledge of the sector, as well as his historical and cultural ties to the Ghanaian environment, as a source of theoretical sensitivity. Further insights and awareness were also derived from conducting a preliminary literature review and through discussions with the researcher's supervisors.

5.10.2 Research Population and the Sampling Process

A research population is defined as an entire group of people with common characteristics or a group of people that meet a designed set of criteria from whom a researcher wants information (Sekaran, 2003; Polit and Hungler, 1992). This study sought the views and opinions of built environment sector professionals in Ghana who were considered key participants or respondents of the study. A purposive sampling approach was adopted to identify suitable participants with the requisite knowledge necessary to contribute to the study. Purposive sampling is the intentional selection of participants based on their ability to explain a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon (Robinson, 2014). When using a

grounded theory research approach, an initial selection of research participants can be undertaken using purposive sampling, followed by theoretical sampling to select only those participants who can best contribute to the evolving theory or phenomenon (Moser and Korstjens, 2018).

Ligita et al. (2020) explained that as data collected from the initial participants are analysed, questions arise and potential gaps in the data and/or the evolving theory are identified. Theoretical sampling can assist with filling in these gaps and expanding on the developing concepts (Charmaz, 2014a), by directing the researcher on what data to collect in order to acquire further information (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This process guides the researcher with not only 'who to talk to' but also 'where to go' and 'what to ask', to help address and fill in the gaps in knowledge. For the initial interviews, using purposive sampling, the researcher selected leaders from the three professional bodies in Ghana (GHIE, GIA and GHIS). The findings that emerged from the analysis of these interviews led to further interviews with the grassroot members of each of these professional bodies. These then led to additional interviews which were conducted with some of the members of the registration councils. Professionals from these specific disciplines were selected because they are recognised as key stakeholders who play a central role in all construction projects in Ghana (Osei-Asibey et al., 2021).

The following inclusion criteria were applied for all study participants.

- All participants were required to be Ghanaian nationals.

- All participants were required to be geographically based in and practice in Ghana.

- All participants were required to be registered members (chartered built environment professionals) with their respective professional body.

- All participants needed a minimum of five years' post-chartership experience in the Ghanaian built environment sector to qualify. This requirement aligns with the

memorandum of understanding between GHIS and RICS, which stipulates a five-year practice period for direct entry into RICS. The five-year criterion was therefore considered sufficient for gaining valuable experience and understanding, essential for deriving useful and insightful contributions from participants.

In qualitative research, determining how big a population sample should be is a topic of debate and uncertainty (Vasileiou et al., 2018). There have been many suggestions for what is thought to be a good sample size for grounded theory studies. However, it has been argued that none of these suggestions appear to be empirical, instead, they tend to be guidelines that different theorists recommend (Mason, 2010). Bryman (2012) suggested that researchers who use grounded theory cannot anticipate what kind of sample size they will need to achieve theoretical saturation. Thus, rather than being guided by a strict and rigid sample size, Charmaz (2014a) argued that gathering of data should stop at the point at which saturation is achieved. There is some contention among scholars about when saturation can be determined to have been reached. This is further discussed below in Section 5.10.7 on theoretical saturation.

5.10.3 Iterative Process

The iterative and non-linear nature of grounded theory is a key feature that distinguishes it from other research methodologies. Grounded theory is non-linear in the sense that the researcher does not delay the process of data analyses until after all data for the study is collected (Chun Tie et al., 2019). The iterative nature of this methodology requires that a researcher initially collects some data using a purposive sampling approach (Birks and Mills, 2015). The collected data is immediately analysed, to provide the researcher with the initial categories of analysis and directions for the next data collection stage in terms of what additional data is needed and where and from whom it should be collected (Idrees et al., 2011). Thus, from the analysis of the initial data collected, the researcher modifies the

research emphasis and recruiting approach to account for the emerging themes. The cycle of simultaneous data collection and analysis also allows the researcher to compare incidents and events from the data and, consequently, revise interview questions, add new questions or discard other questions (Idrees et al., 2011). The researcher continues with this cyclical process until saturation is reached. As explained by Strauss and Corbin, it is this continuous interplay between analysis and data collection that leads to the generation of a theory that is grounded in the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). In line with this approach the researcher conducted the analysis of data collected after each round of interviews, which enabled him to revise the focus of the study, the questions asked and interview participants for the subsequent stages of data collection.

5.10.4 Constant Comparison Method

The continuing process of comparing and cross-comparison of incidents, codes and categories is part of the iterative process of concurrently collecting and analysing empirical data. This process is known as constant comparative analysis, and it is repeated until a theory is fully developed. Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Charmaz (2014a) all agree that constant comparison is an integral part of the grounded theory approach. Thus, all grounded theory approaches employ a constant comparative method where the researcher is constantly comparing data obtained from participants with ideas about the forming theory. According to Charmaz (2014a), researchers should compare statements and incidents from the same interview as well as statements and incidents from multiple interviews. She also suggests the comparison of interviews done at different times and observations from different places and times during the analysis of the data. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that making comparisons helps the researcher in guarding against bias because the researcher continually challenges their understanding of the data with the data to confirm or debunk their perception of the emerging themes.

5.10.5 Coding

In qualitative research generally, coding is the medium through which empirical data is organised and labelled to identify different themes and the relationships that exist between the data (Walker and Myrick, 2006). Charmaz describes coding as the pivotal link between the collection of empirical data and the development of an emergent theory to explain the data (Charmaz, 2014a). The constructivist approach to coding is a three-step approach which involves starting with line by line or open coding, followed by focussed coding and then the development of a theory (Kenny and Fourie, 2015). According to Charmaz (2014a), line by line coding is particularly beneficial because it prevents the imposition of an existing theory or preconceptions onto collected data, rather allowing themes to develop directly from the data. The constructivist approach is for the researcher to use open coding to allow for the possibility of all theoretical directions that can be discerned from the data (Charmaz, 2014a). Following the process of open coding, the researcher uses focused coding to identify and highlight the most relevant codes, which are then raised to provisional conceptual categories.

Following on from each round of data collection, familiarisation with the data was conducted through a thorough review of all the transcripts. NVivo™ (version 9) was then used for the line by line or open coding of the interview transcripts. During this process, the researcher gave short labels to the excerpts in the transcripts. After open coding of all the transcripts, the researcher entered a period of focused coding which involved comparing the open codes or labels from the different transcripts which revealed similarities among some of the codes. Through this procedure, the researcher was able to group the similar codes together under a broader label which is called a focused code. Once the process of focused coding was completed, conceptual categories were developed for the different groups of codes as demonstrated in the table below.

Table 6. Example of How the Interview Transcripts were Coded and Analysed. Source: (Authors Own)

Reference	Interview Data Excerpt	Open Coding	Focused Coding	Categories
Transcript 1	Here, even before a contractor gets a project in the public sector, he must pay something not less than 25% of the contract sum. So, he hasn't received any money from the government yet, but he must pay something before he will be awarded a contract.	Mandatory payment, 25% of Contract Sum	Bribery	Prevailing Challenges
Transcript 2	So, when you start your project, you can pay in the form of a kickback so that nobody checks your work whether you are using the right material or not. It's a kickback.	Monetary kickback in exchange for zero oversight	Bribery	Prevailing Challenges

5.10.6 Memo-ing

Memo writing supports the development of conceptual categories in a grounded theory research. Memos can be just a sentence, paragraph or even a few pages (Glaser, 1978). Critically, they enable the researcher to capture their thoughts and ideas and to think about the data and emerging themes in a self-reflective manner. The primary objective of writing memos is to facilitate the development of categories and theories. Memos act first and foremost as a tangible guide for the researcher as his thoughts evolve on the subject and do not need to conform to more formal structures of written communication. However, the researcher may choose to develop the ideas in them and incorporate them into his research (Charmaz, 1996). In this study, the researcher used a number of mediums to record and

develop ideas, thoughts and questions that came to mind during the study. Some of these included notepads, email messages to self and the dedicated memos functionality in NVivo™ (version 9). Figure 11 below shows an example of how written memos were used to contribute to the development of the researcher's ideas and understanding in this study.
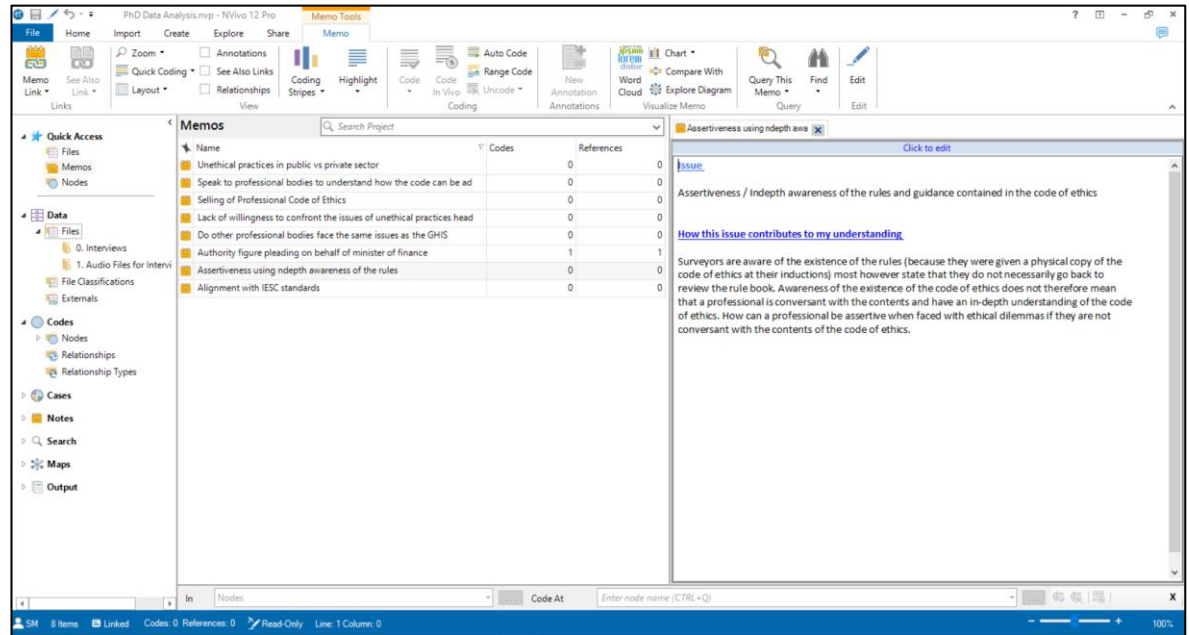
Figure 11. Memo-ing using NVivo™ (version 9). Source: (Authors Own)

5.10.7 Theoretical Saturation

According to Francis et al. (2010), theoretical saturation is that stage during data collection when the researcher discovers that additional data no longer brings new insights or helps develop aspects of a conceptual category. Charmaz (2014a) argued that theoretical saturation in grounded theory encompasses more than merely reaching a point where no new ideas can be generated, nor does it mean repeatedly seeing the same events or hearing the same stories. O'Reilly and Parker (2013) explained that saturation is reached at the point where the researcher is able to fully account for all categories as well as explain the variabilities between them, test and validate the relationships between them and thus a theory can emerge.

There is widespread disagreement on how saturation can be determined and what sample size is required to achieve it in a given study. In Baker and Edwards (2012), Adler and Adler recommended interviewing 30 participants as this number is large enough and does not require the researcher to endure the burden of endless data collection. In contrast to this position, Ragin, also in the same report, argues that 50 is the ideal number for a doctoral thesis. In another study, Guest et al. (2006) determined that 12 participants were required to reach theoretical saturation.

An analysis of 660 PhD studies by Mason (2010), revealed that an average number of 12 participants was cited as the stage at which saturation was reached. Given that this covered a range of sample sizes from 1 to 95, the headline figure masks the fact that saturation is in fact reached at widely different stages in the studies analysed. While some scholars link theoretical saturation to sample size, the literature shows that it is impossible for researchers applying grounded theory to estimate specific sample sizes they would require to achieve saturation. This is echoed by Bryman (2012) who argues that in a grounded theory study, the researcher cannot anticipate, at the outset of the study, how many interviewees would be needed to reach saturation.

Glaser agrees with Bryman (2012). Glaser's view of saturation is more nuanced, in that he focuses on categories. In his opinion, a researcher must collect enough data to ensure that each category has been sufficiently saturated. This means reaching a point where no new theoretical insights can be gleaned from the collection of additional data. It also means that no new properties of the categories can be revealed by more data. Ultimately, Glaser believes that collecting enough data to reach this point will result in conceptual density where the development of a theory can be rendered as being complete. This, he argues, is a more logical consideration than a focus on predetermined sample sizes (Glaser, 1992; Glaser, 1998; Glaser, 2001).

In this study, the point of data saturation was reached based on a set of specific indicators. These included a diminishing rate of new themes that emerged during the coding process, a noticeable lack of variation in participant responses, and the realisation that additional data no longer contributed to altering the overall findings of the study. Importantly, the decision to conclude data collection was not influenced by a predetermined sample size. Instead, it was the ongoing analysis and empirical evidence that guided the judgment that the study had reached the point of saturation.

5.10.8 Substantive Theory

In the end, all grounded theory approaches seek to provide an empirically generated output to explain the phenomenon under study (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992). The literature however shows that not all researchers employing the grounded theory approach end up with an eventual theory (Templeman et al., 2015; Plakas et al., 2009; Mossin and Landmark, 2011). According to Charmaz, this is because the concept of grounded theory is often improperly applied by some researchers to justify their inductive approach rather than generate a theory. She goes further to argue that grounded theory has come to represent a general method of analysis as its features are now found and applied in other forms of qualitative research approaches (Charmaz, 2015). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), in sociology, a theory must help predict and explain behaviour, as well as being applicable in practical situations. Charmaz contradicts this characterisation of a theory and focusses instead on understanding rather than explanation. This approach is in keeping with her constructivist perspective which emphasises multiple and layered realities (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz recommends that researchers must seek to pursue an understanding of a phenomena rather than taking an approach that seeks to verify or validate. This study adopted an inductive, or 'bottom-up,' approach to develop a framework that is grounded in empirical data. This framework consequently provides a

roadmap for integrating global ethical standards into the existing codes of ethics within the sector the built environment sector in Ghana.

5.11 Credibility in Qualitative Research

According to Morse et al. (2002), without rigour, research is worthless, it loses its utility and becomes fictional. There is however disagreement on what the criteria for deciding the credibility of qualitative research should be (Cutcliffe and McKenna, 2002). The main driver of the disagreement is whether qualitative research methods should be evaluated using the same standards as those applied in quantitative methods (Mays and Pope, 2000). Notwithstanding the debate on the criteria to apply, it must be noted that several qualitative researchers such as (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Seale, 1999) all advocate that, given that the nature of knowledge (epistemology) in each paradigm is different, there is need for a paradigm-specific criteria for determining rigour. Thus, unlike quantitative researchers, who employ statistical methods to establish the validity and reliability of their research findings, the concepts of reliability and validity in qualitative studies are measured differently. Qualitative researchers incorporate methodological strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of their findings (Noble and Smith, 2015; Russell and Gregory, 2003). Charmaz believes that it is important to recognise that qualitative research is different from quantitative research and must be therefore *'assessed from an internal logic of its own method, not by inappropriate application of external criteria founded in other methods'* (Charmaz, 1990). This requires a researcher to apply new methods of evaluation for qualitative research that reflects its interpretivist approach (Seale, 1999). Seale (1999) goes further to say that qualitative researchers should focus on credibility instead of seeking to measure truth. This view is echoed by Guba and Lincoln (1994) who advises that qualitative researchers should place greater emphasis on the trustworthiness of their work.

Scholars such as Patton (1999), Guba and Lincoln (2001) and Elliott et al. (1999) have provided some frameworks that qualitative researchers can adopt to assess the credibility of their studies. Some of these techniques are respondent validation, negative case analysis and multiple researcher analysis. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), respondent validation, or member checking is the most critical of the various techniques that are used to evaluate the credibility of a qualitative study. This is the process by which a researcher seeks to confirm the study's findings by allowing participants to scrutinise and confirm the accuracy of the collected data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Morse et al., 2002).

Charmaz argues that respondent validation or member checking involves more than just validating the interview transcripts with the respondent. Rather she recommends that researchers integrate this approach into the entire process of the study. Typically, this would require a researcher to present emerging categories and themes to participants as this would enable them to adapt and refine them together (Charmaz, 1990). This way, the eventual theory or framework is co-created by the researcher and the research participants.

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, member checking was used as the primary method for assessing the credibility of the findings. This entailed providing all interviewees with copies of their interview transcripts for review. The main aim for doing this was to minimize any potential researcher bias that may have been introduced during the transcription stages and to verify that the meanings derived from the collected data were accurately represented as understood by the respondents. A sample of an email sent to one of the participants, with personal details redacted for confidentiality, is presented in the thesis as Appendix E. In addition to validating the interview transcripts with participants, the conceptual framework developed from empirical data was circulated among selected representatives from the three professional bodies for evaluation. This process is explained in greater detail in Chapter Nine. To further demonstrate the integrity and self-awareness of

the researcher throughout the study, a reflexivity statement has been included to explain the researcher's beliefs and assumptions prior to the study's commencement, as suggested by Finlay (1998). This statement can be found in section 10.8 of this thesis.

5.12 Research Process

The diagram below presents a schematic representation of the research process that will be followed in the conduct of this study. It shows how the various stages of the research links to and supports the achievement of the objectives identified for the study.
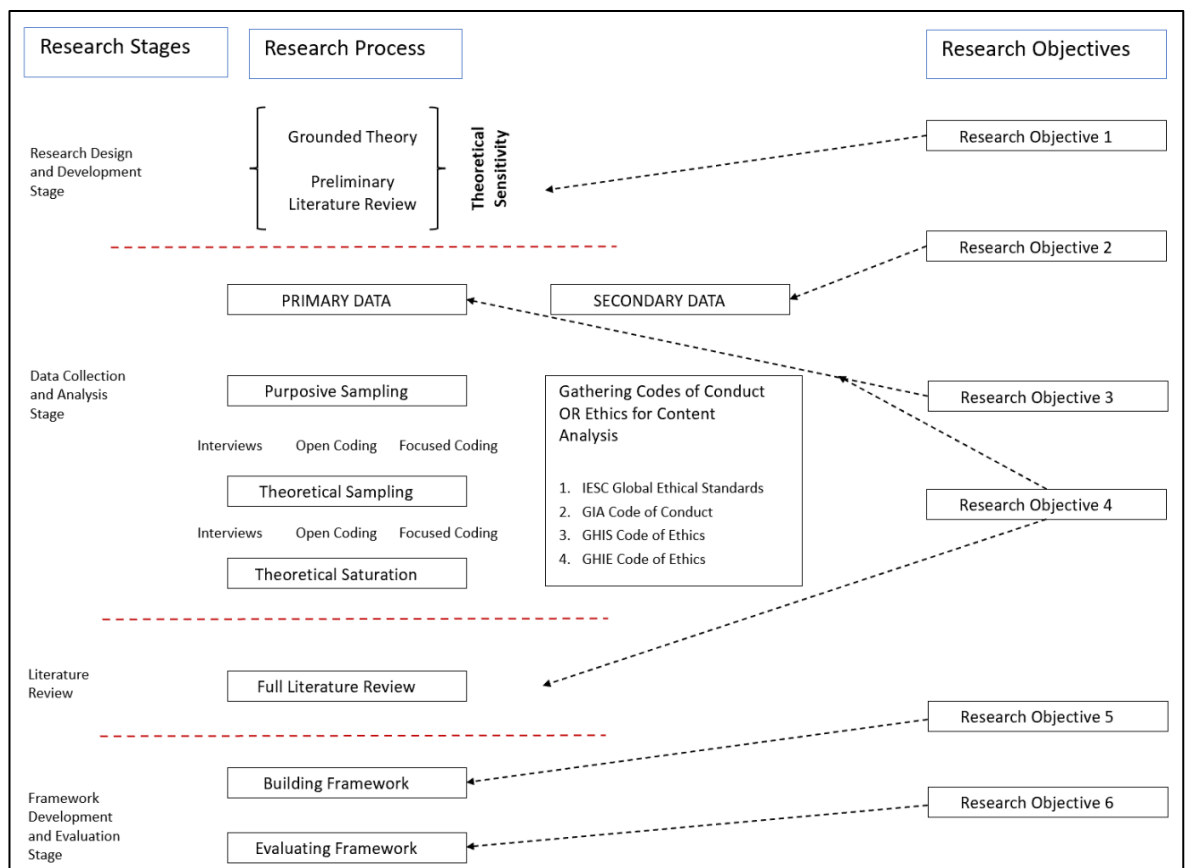
Figure 12. The Overall Research Process. Source: (Authors Own)

5.13 Ethical Considerations

All research must consider the potential ethical implications of the study and steps must be taken to ensure that harm does not come to participants, whether inadvert or not. According to Runeson and Höst (2009), ethical considerations include informed consent,

review board approval, confidentiality, handling of sensitive results and data, inducements and feedback. To ensure that proper ethical practices in research were followed, this study adhered to the ethics procedures, guidelines and conduct in relation to confidentially, anonymity, and integrity as stipulated by the doctoral school at Nottingham Trent University. At the very onset, the researcher prepared a data management plan. This document outlined how the researcher intended to manage the research data both during and after completion of the research project. Within the plan, the researcher addressed matters such as the types of data to be collected, how the data will be documented, stored, shared and preserved.

Prior to the collection of primary data, the researcher sought and received ethical approval from the Schools of Art and Design, Arts and Humanities and Architecture, Design and the Built Environment Research Ethics Committee (AADH REC). In line with the University guidelines on research ethics, the aims and objectives of the study including what was expected of research participants was communicated to all participants in advance via a Participant Information Sheet (see template attached as Appendix B). Involvement of all research participants was voluntary, and this was formalised through the signing of a consent form before each interview commenced (see template attached as Appendix C). To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, false names (pseudonyms) were used throughout, which reduced the chances of participants being identified. Respondents were informed of the measures taken to ensure their confidentiality and anonymity.

Physical storage of documents such as hardcopy documentation (including interview transcripts and handwritten field notes) were housed in secure, lockable filing cabinets to which only the researcher had access. Vital digital information about the research (such as interview recordings and transcripts) were uploaded to NTU DataStore for storage. As

stated in the data management plan, all raw data containing identifiable information would be destroyed immediately at the end of the research.

5.14 Chapter Summary

The underlying research philosophy and methods for this study have been discussed in this chapter. The chapter started with a discussion that reviewed the epistemological, ontological and axiological positions adopted. The research reasoning stance employed and justification for it was also analysed. Given the nature of the study, a qualitative approach to research was selected. This was followed by an appraisal of the relative merits of the various qualitative research approaches resulting in the conclusion that a constructivist grounded theory would best fit the study. In accordance with a grounded theory approach, this chapter examined the researcher's use of theoretical sampling, theoretical saturation, theoretical sensitivity, constant comparative analysis, coding processes and me-moing. The chapter also presented a detailed visual illustration of the research process which included the various stages such as the research design and development phase, data collection and analysis phase as well as the theory or framework development and evaluation phase.

The chapter also explored the approach to data collection, emphasizing the use of semi-structured interviews (primary) and documentary content analysis (secondary). Further, it discusses the efforts made to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and points out the steps taken to address any ethical concerns. The aim of Chapter Six is to evaluate the suitability and adequacy of the existing Ghanaian codes of ethics in addressing the unethical practices identified in Chapter Four. Chapter Six will also examine how well the Ghanaian codes align with the IESC global ethics principles. It will offer valuable insights into the discrepancies and gaps between the local codes and the IESC global ethical principles, shedding light on areas that might need improvement for greater alignment.

Chapter Six: Adequacy and Conformity of Ghana's Built Environment Ethics Codes with IESC's Global Ethics Principles

6.1 Introduction

Building on from the discussion in Chapter Four, which offered an overview of the unethical practices common in Ghana's built environment sector, this chapter examines the existing codes of conduct that regulate practitioners in their daily operations. The chapter seeks to achieve two key objectives. The first is to determine if the codes of conduct employed by professional bodies in Ghana's built environment sector are suitable for their intended purpose. This will involve evaluating the suitability of the code in terms of its design and scope. More specifically, the codes will be examined to see if they include rules and guidelines that address each of the unethical practices identified as prevalent in Ghana, and how well they strike a balance between regulatory, aspirational, and educational elements of code design. The second objective is to examine whether the existing local codes of conduct for professional bodies in Ghana's built environment industry align with and reflect the broad principles within the universal ethics standards for the sector. A comparative analysis will be undertaken to evaluate the existing Ghanaian codes of ethics against the IESC global ethics principles to determine the degree of alignment or misalignment between the two. Serving as a beacon for ethical conduct within the global built environment sector, the IESC ethics principles provide a valuable benchmark against which to measure local practices. This exercise will provide a clear understanding of the magnitude of work and effort needed to integrate and operationalize the IESC standards within the framework of the Ghanaian codes of ethics.

6.2 Code Design

6.2.1 Aspirational Codes

Frankel (1989) outlined three main types of professional codes of ethics. The first type is an aspirational code, the second is a regulatory code, and the third is an educational code. Each type of code has its specific purpose and unique characteristics. While Frankel (1989) described aspirational codes as codes that lay out the ideal standards professionals should aim for, Al-Aidaros et al. (2015) and Allen (2010) further expanded this understanding by introducing the term 'conceptual framework method' to describe the underlying principle that underpins such codes. They agreed with Frankel (1989) that codes built in this way sets the overarching ethical principles with an expectation that practitioners will align their actions and behaviours to conform with those core principles. Thus, for example, rather than detailing the specific do's and don'ts in relation to the conduct of a tendering process, this approach to code building would establish the key principles of avoiding conflicts of interest and maintaining integrity. Typically, aspirational codes will not provide detailed and explicit rules regarding the tendering process. However, the principles of avoiding conflicts of interest and maintaining integrity sets the broad guidelines for ethical and professional conduct which, if followed, can help practitioners avoid unethical tendering practices. Therefore, these codes guide rather than direct moral behaviour. According to Frankel (1989), aspirational codes do not provide mandates or explicit rules dictating how professionals must behave to align with the core principles, instead, they are written with the belief that people naturally want to behave ethically and therefore aim to create a supportive environment where individuals can act freely in an ethical manner. In this sense, these codes align well with the philosophical theory of virtue ethics which emphasizes the development and cultivation of personal virtues and moral character as the basis for ethical

behaviour, rather than mandating adherence to a strict set of rules (Freeland, 1982; Rachels and Rachels, 2012).

6.2.2 Regulatory Codes

On the other hand, a regulatory code serves as a rule book, providing specific guidelines that detail the dos and don'ts for handling various situations. It can be argued that regulatory codes follow a deontological ethical model, in that they necessitate practitioners to strictly adhere to stipulated rules which is one of the defining attributes of Immanuel Kant's ethical philosophy (Sandberg, 2013). Unlike aspirational codes, this type of code does not allow practitioners to interpret and apply overarching principles in their own way, these codes leave little room for discretion, requiring adherence to the prescribed guidelines to ensure consistent ethical conduct (Lawton, 2004). Al-Aidaros et al. (2015) and Allen (2010) characterised this method as the rules-based approach to code building. Thus, for example, rather than providing a set of high-level principles to guide the actions of practitioners when tendering, regulatory codes will specify the exact rules that must be strictly observed (see Clauses 4.12 and 6.02 below).

- 4.12 Not have any self-interest financially or otherwise in the tenders of a contractor on competitive work for which they are employed as an Engineer unless with the written consent of their client or employer (Ghana Institution of Engineers, 2012).

- 6.02 A registered architect must not permit the insertion of any clause in tenders, bills of quantities or other contract documents which provides for payment to be made in his/her consideration unless with the full knowledge and approval of the employer (Ghana Institute of Architects, 2016).

According to Maxwell (2017), codes in this category typically include specific clauses stating that members may be subject to disciplinary action if the ethical standards established in the code of ethics are violated. Banks (2003) and UNESCO (2006) also add that regulatory codes often include a list of prescribed sanctions for violations of the provisions in the code. This approach presents several benefits. For example, it provides clarity and transparency where members of the professional body know exactly what the potential consequences are if they fail to observe the rules. Secondly, it serves as a deterrent because practitioners are most likely to think twice when reminded of the potential sanctions they may face for engaging in conduct that breaches the rules. A clearly outlined disciplinary procedure also assures fairness and consistency in how misconduct complaints will be handled.

6.2.3 Educational Codes

An educational code design does not only stipulate the rules but also provides comprehensive explanations and examples to educate. An educational code aims to deepen understanding by explaining what each rule means and how it applies to real-life ethical dilemmas in professional practice (Frankel, 1989). Thus, the focus of this type of code is not just on presenting the rules, but also on teaching and demonstrating how these rules can help navigate tricky ethical situations in the professional world. The RICS rules of conduct (see figure. 13 below) provides an example of such a code. Whereas this code of conduct has 5 main rules, under each rule, the RICS provides a long list of examples that provides practitioners with an in-depth understanding of how these rules apply to everyday professional situations.

Figure 13. Rule 4 of the RICS Rules of Conduct. Source: Based on (RICS, 2021)

This additional context explains the practical meaning behind each rule and gives practitioners valuable insight into how they can navigate complex ethical dilemmas in line with these guidelines.

6.2.4 Determining the Appropriate Code Building Design to Adopt

Lawton (2004), emphasised a need for careful consideration when deciding on the type of code-building approach to adopt. Factors such as the specific context within which the code will operate must be taken into account (Lawton, 2004). Bowman (2000) expressed a similar view arguing that poorly designed codes are most likely to fail and be ineffective. Lawton (2004) believes that an exclusive reliance on aspirational codes in a society with widespread unethical practices would be ill-advised. Rather, in such a society, a rules-based approach that offers practitioners clear, predetermined, and unambiguous rules to guide their behaviour would be most appropriate. Notwithstanding this view, Lawton (2004) also acknowledged that relying solely on a rules-based approach can be limiting, as it may not cover all possible ethical scenarios that a professional might face and might also encourage practitioners to rely too heavily on the rules and not exercise their ethical judgment. Bowman (2000) also recognised this as a drawback of regulatory codes. He

argued that to promote a culture of personal responsibility and excellence, codes of ethics must demand more than just compliance. They must also allow practitioners to exercise their judgment and accept responsibility for their decisions which, in his view, is the real work of ethics. To address this shortcoming of the regulatory code design, Lawton (2004) suggested taking a balanced approach in societies where unethical practices are widespread. He proposed the use of a regulatory code that integrates aspects of aspirational code-building principles. In his view, such a balance would encourage a culture of ethical decision-making rather than simply mandating practitioners to follow the rules.

Despite these theoretical distinctions between the codes, both Frankel (1989) and UNESCO (2006) indicated that these distinctions are not as clear-cut in practice. They acknowledged that some regulatory codes may contain aspects that are aspirational, whereas some aspirational codes could also include rules that require mandatory adherence. They advocated for a code that combines elements of regulatory, aspirational, and educational types. Frankel (1989) argued that the decision on which type of code is appropriate depends on a blend of pragmatic and normative considerations. Pragmatic considerations such as taking into account the practical needs of the profession and its current ethical climate. For instance, in professions where unethical behaviour is rampant, a regulatory code with mandatory compliance may be more suitable. It would seem therefore that perhaps the most ideal type of code is one that blends elements of all three types, by providing clear robust rules (regulatory), inspiring high ethical standards (aspirational), and educating professionals about ethics (educational).

6.2.5 Understanding the Design Techniques Used in the Ghanaian Codes of Ethics

An assessment of the code of ethics belonging to the Ghanaian professional bodies (Architects, Surveyors and Engineers) reveals a substantial emphasis on a regulatory code design that sets out clear prescriptions on what professionals can and cannot do. With the

exception of the code of ethics for the Surveyors (GHIS), the remaining two codes for the Architects (GIA) and the Engineers (GHIE) also incorporated some aspirational code design principles that outline ethical ideals that professionals should strive towards.

For example, section 4.01 of the code of ethics for the GIA prohibits conduct that it refers to as supplanting. It states that *'a registered architect must not attempt to supplant another architect, nor must he/she compete with another architect by means of a reduction of fees or by other inducements'* (Ghana Institute of Architects, 2016). The use of 'must' imposes a non-negotiable imperative on practitioners to refrain from this conduct. However, clause 6.03 states that *'It is desirable that in a case where a registered architect takes out the quantities for his/her buildings, he/she should be paid directly by the employer and not through the contractor except with the prior consent of the employer'* (Ghana Institute of Architects, 2016). The use of the term 'desirable' highlights the aspirational nature of this guideline which suggests a preference, rather than imposition of a strict rule or regulation.

The code of ethics for the GHIE takes a similar approach. In clause 4.1, it prohibits engineers from undertaking work for which they are not qualified which is presented as follows *'Not to undertake responsible engineering work for which they are not competent and qualified'* (Ghana Institution of Engineers, 2012). This code sets a precise and unequivocal directive that does not allow for subjective interpretation of the expected conduct. Had it been framed as an aspirational code, this guideline would have encouraged professionals to strive for the ideal of professional competence in everything that they do. In contrast, clause 2.1 of the GHIE code states that Members shall: *'Be committed to developing and improving their knowledge, skills, and competence on a continuing basis'* (Ghana Institution of Engineers, 2012). This clause is more indicative of an aspirational code because it promotes the ideal of lifelong learning and professional development and encourages members to always strive to improve their knowledge and skills rather than

imposing a strict rule or mandating a specific amount of continuous professional development that must be completed.

In contrast to the previous two codes, the code of ethics for GHIS does not include any elements of an aspirational design. An examination of the code shows that it applies a regulatory approach with an extensive emphasis on the word 'must' to underscore the non-negotiable and mandatory nature of the stated rules or guidelines. The absence of aspirational elements in the GHIS code suggests that the GHIS, as a professional body, prioritizes establishing clear standards and discourages ambiguous guidelines that might not provide explicit direction to its members.

In a setting like the Ghanaian built environment sector, where widespread unethical practices are reportedly common (Adinyira et al., 2018; Ameyaw et al., 2017; Chan and Owusu, 2017; Kuoribo et al., 2021), it is understandable why some might be quick to suggest a regulatory code as the solution, given its emphasis on strict adherence to rules. Indeed as asserted by Lawton (2004) and Bowman (2000), the clear and structured approach inherent in a regulatory code design is best suited for promoting strict ethical compliance in settings marked by widespread unethical conduct. However, the use of some aspects of the educational code design can also prove beneficial in educating practitioners on how the rules will apply to their professional practice. There is consensus on the value of incorporating some aspirational design elements into a code (Bowman, 2000; Lawton, 2004). However, an overreliance on an aspirational code design is discouraged because it would lead to ambiguities that could be easily exploited by bad actors looking to escape the consequences of their unethical actions and those who wish to assist them to evade punishment.

6.3 Scope

Scope as used in this section, refers to the degree to which the existing codes of ethics for the following Ghanaian built environment professional bodies (GHIS, GHIE, and GIA) address and provide practitioners with guidelines on how to navigate the most common forms of unethical practices identified in the Ghanaian built environment sector. As well as deliberations on whether the rules in the Ghanaian codes address the specified unethical practices, an evaluation of how robust (regulatory/aspirational/educational approach) the rules or guidelines are will also be undertaken. The table below presents a list of some of the most common forms of unethical practices observed in the Ghanaian built environment sector.

Table 7. A Comparison of How the Ghanaian Codes of Ethics Address These Unethical Practices. Source: (Authors Own)

	Bribery	Tender Rigging	Conflict of Interest	Political Interference
Code of Ethics for GHIS (Surveyors)	◯	◯	✓	◯
Code of Ethics for GHIE (Engineers)	◯	✓	✓	◯
Code of Ethics for GIA (Architects)	◯	✓	✓	✗

Key

✓	Identified in the code with clear, robust, and explicit directives.
◯	General / indirect guidance. Explicit directives for addressing the unethical conduct not provided.
✗	No provisions or directives provided for addressing the unethical conduct.

6.3.1 Bribery

In their handbook for Transparency International, Muravska et al. (2014) defined bribery as the act of offering, promising, giving, accepting, or soliciting any form of advantage to induce an illegal action or a breach of trust. They explained that not all bribes involve

direct cash payments and that bribes can take multiple forms such as grease or facilitation payments, excessive hospitality, bribery in the form of gifts, 'quid pro quo' or 'something for something' arrangements, and bribes disguised as charitable or political donations. According to Muravska et al. (2014), some bribes can be transacted through agents, intermediaries, or introducers, or disguised through the alteration of invoices or product prices, while others might involve giving jobs or employment opportunities to relatives or associates of officials. While giving or receiving gifts in Ghana is a cultural norm, it is also widely acknowledged that this indigenous custom is often used as a veneer to facilitate the payment of bribes, which has led to the practice being labelled as an enabler of unethical practice (Adomako, 2005; Ali, 2017; Somiah, 2006). Ameyaw et al. (2017), Osei-Tutu et al. (2010) and Wells (2013) observed that bribery was predominantly observed during the bid evaluation and tendering stages of construction projects. Wells (2013) suggested that some construction professionals in Ghana paid between 10 and 20 per cent in bribes to get onto tender lists and win contracts and did not consider these practices as improper or unethical.

6.3.1.1 Ghana Institution of Surveyors

Section 9 of the code of ethics for the GHIS relates to the financial interest of surveyors in the projects they work on. The provision in this section promotes transparency and forbids undisclosed financial interests. It stipulates that professionals should not have hidden financial stakes in any project they are working on. If there is any financial incentive or agreement beyond the standard professional fees, these must be expressly agreed upon in writing. The provisions in section 15 allows professionals to reward someone or offer a gift for client introductions, but they must be open about it and ensure no undue influence is used. Section 23 prevents professionals from accepting personal trade discounts from work-related suppliers as these discounts should benefit the client instead.

6.3.1.2 Ghana Institution of Engineers

Similar to the code for the GHIS, several of the rules and provisions in the GHIE code

relate to practices that may potentially increase one's vulnerability to bribery. For example,

sections 4.14, 4.15, and 4.11 forbid professionals from making payments on behalf of

clients or employers, placing orders for themselves, or accepting commissions or

allowances from contractors or other parties connected with their work, unless explicitly

approved in writing. This prevents situations where bribes could be given or received

under the guise of such transactions. Sections 4.4, 4.9, 4.10, 4.12, and 4.13 require

professionals to disclose any personal or financial interests they have that could influence

their decisions. This includes receiving compensation from more than one interested party

for the same service, receiving royalties or commissions for patented items used in their

work, having a financial interest in contractors' tenders, and any other competing business

interests. Unlike the provisions in section 15 of the GHIS code which allows professionals

to offer a gift or reward for client introductions as long as there is transparency and no

undue influence is used, in section 2.6 of the GHIE code, it is expressly forbidden for

professionals to pay or present gifts to someone in exchange for the person introducing

clients to them. This is clearly a superior provision that takes a zero-tolerance approach and

leaves little room for interpretation and potential misuse.

6.3.1.3 Ghana Institute of Architects

Elements of the GIA code that appear to address issues related to bribery included

provisions in section 1.02 which insists that a registered architect should only be paid

through their professional fees or a salary from their employer. This avoids any potential

hidden financial gains from other parties, which could be seen as a form of bribery. Section

2.04 provides a regulation to prevent conflicts of interest that could potentially lead to

situations where bribery may occur. By requiring mutual agreement and direct payment of

fees, it ensures transparency and prevents the architect from being unduly influenced by third parties. Section 4.01 prohibits architects from supplanting others by reducing fees or offering other inducements, actions that could be considered a form of commercial bribery. Section 5.0 prevents an architect from using their official position to grant approvals while also working privately on the same projects, as this could lead to accusations of bribery or abuse of power. Sections 6.02 and 6.03 ensure that payments related to contracts and services are made with the full knowledge and approval of the employer. This transparency helps to avoid situations where an architect might receive illicit payments or bribes.

6.3.1.4 Summary

The use of the word 'bribe' or 'bribery' was not found in any of the codes. While not explicitly targeting bribery, all three codes contribute to its prevention by mandating and promoting transparent financial dealings.

In contrast to section 2.6 of the GHIE code, which expressly forbids professionals from offering gifts in exchange for client introductions, clause 15 of the GHIS code permits professionals to offer rewards or gifts for client introductions as long as transparency is maintained, and undue influence is not used. This clause in the GHIS code points to a potential weak spot in its efforts to mitigate bribery, specifically within the area of client introductions. The literature shows that the line between a gift and a bribe disguised as a gift can be blurry. Therefore, this provision in the GHIS code leaves room for a certain level of subjective interpretation that might create a loophole for unethical practices.

The use of indirect clauses that promote transparency and ethical financial conduct, as found in the codes, contributes to the prevention of bribery. However, they may not convey the full gravity of the issue to all professionals. In the Ghanaian built environment sector, where bribes are often masqueraded as gifts, a more assertive response is needed in the form of explicit, rather than implicit, guidelines. Explicit prohibitions are clear, direct and

leave less room for misinterpretation or exploitation. Therefore, a categorical directive against bribery or gifts disguised as bribes would unambiguously communicate to professionals that such practices constitute unacceptable behaviour.

6.3.2 Tender Rigging

Collusive tendering, also known as tender rigging, occurs when a group of contractors illegally conspire to manipulate the selection process in order to decide who wins the contract and at what price (Wells, 2013). Wells (2013) offered another example of this practice where a contractor submits multiple bids under different identities. Typically, this is done to satisfy the legal requirements of the bidding process, such as requiring a minimum of three bids, while ensuring that a preferred supplier is awarded the contract. Evidence of tender rigging in the Ghanaian construction sector was identified by Ameyaw et al. (2017). They conducted a study to investigate the occurrence and forms of corrupt practices within the Ghanaian construction industry. They found that tender rigging ranked as the most common form of unethical conduct among main contractors, and it was the second most common malpractice among subcontractors in the Ghanaian construction sector (Ameyaw et al., 2017).

6.3.2.1 Ghana Institution of Surveyors

Clause 17.6 of the GHIS code discourages actions that could harm a professional's reputation or practice and creates a deterrent against unethical or illegal activities by mandating their reporting to the Governing Council. It encourages members to hold each other accountable and to report any unethical practices they become aware of, indirectly deterring unethical tendering practices.

6.3.2.2 Ghana Institution of Engineers

The ethical rules 4.11 and 4.12 in the GHIE code are specifically designed to discourage unethical tendering practices. Rule 4.11 prohibits practitioners from accepting (either

indirectly or directly) any allowances from contractors dealing with their client or employer in connection with work for which they are responsible. This clause is key because it could help avert manipulation of tender outcomes. Rule 4.12 restricts practitioners from having a personal interest in contractor tenders, deterring favouritism for personal gains. Unlike the provisions in the GHIS code, the rules as stated in the GHIE code are explicit in naming the specific unethical practice it is seeking to avert which in this case is poor tendering practices.

6.3.2.3 Ghana Institute of Architects

In the GIA code, the ethical rule 6.02 essentially aims to prohibit practitioners from inserting any clause in tenders, bills of quantities, or other contract documents that enables payments to be made to them, unless their employer fully knows about and approves it. If a practitioner is receiving payment from a contract, there may be a temptation to favour that contract over others in the tendering process, which is a form of unethical tendering practice. This is therefore important because it can prevent conflict of interest that may lead to unethical tendering practices.

6.3.2.4 Summary

The GHIS code, particularly clause 17.6, uses a broader approach. It discourages any actions that might damage a professional's reputation or practice and requires members to report any unethical or illegal activities to the Governing Council. Although this clause indirectly deters unethical tendering practices, its broad nature might not be sufficiently explicit to address tender malpractices directly. It relies heavily on the members' discretion and their willingness to hold each other accountable. The robustness of the provisions could be improved by providing more specific guidelines on what constitutes unethical tendering practices and how to avoid or report them. On the other hand, the GHIE and GIA codes adopt a more explicit and targeted approach which directly address unethical

tendering practices. These rules are more robust, leave little room for ambiguity or interpretation, thus enhancing the effectiveness of their enforcement.

6.3.3 Conflict of Interest

As defined by Field and Lo (2009), the concept of conflict of interest occurs when a professional's decisions tied to their primary duty is inappropriately influenced or swayed by a secondary interest. In such circumstances, a professional might be motivated by their secondary interests, to make decisions or behave in ways that could harm the organization to which they owe their primary commitment. Notably, evidence of conflicts of interest have been identified in the Ghanaian construction sector, as highlighted by Osei-Tutu et al. (2014). They found that in Ghana, issues relating to conflict of interest were most apparent during specific stages of the construction process such as tendering, contract execution, and final accounting and auditing stage (Osei-Tutu et al., 2014). This underscores the need for stringent rules, guidance and enforcement measures to manage and mitigate these conflicts effectively.

6.3.3.1 Ghana Institution of Surveyors

The code of ethics by the GHIS currently contains several provisions that pertains to conflict of interest in clauses 8.1 through to 8.6. Specifically, clauses 8.1.2, 8.2, and 8.3 requires practitioners to fully disclose any personal or financial interest they or their associates might have where such interests present a conflict. In addition, Clause 8.6 addresses conflict of interest within firms or companies. These provisions mandate full transparency and proper management of any potential conflicts of interest.

6.3.3.2 Ghana Institution of Engineers

Similarly, the GHIE code emphasises the principle of conflict of interest in several areas. Clause 4.4 mandates that practitioners must disclose to their client any personal or financial interest they might have in any equipment or apparatus before undertaking a task

where they might have to make decisions regarding these interests. Clause 4.9 forbids practitioners from receiving compensation from more than one party for the same service without the consent of all interested parties. The provisions of Clause 4.11 bars practitioners from accepting commissions or allowances directly or indirectly from contractors or other parties dealing with their client or employer in connection with work for which they are responsible. Clause 4.12 restricts practitioners from having personal or financial stakes in competitive tenders they are responsible for, without the written approval from their client or employer. Under clause 4.13, practitioners are required to notify their client or employer of any potential competing interest that might impact their client or employer's business. Collectively, these provisions in the GHIE code emphasizes transparency, integrity, and the prevention of conflicts of interest amongst practitioners.

6.3.3.3 Ghana Institute of Architects

Conflict of interest provisions were also found in the code for the GIA. Clause 5.0 states that a registered architect who holds a full-time salaried position with a government or statutory body and has the power to grant or influence any form of statutory approvals, should refrain from engaging in private work, even if their employer allows it, unless they can ensure that there will be no perception of misconduct or abuse of power. This provision is designed to prevent conflicts of interest where an architect could potentially misuse their official position for personal gain. Other conflict of interest provisions in the GIA code were found in clauses 1.02, 2.04, 6.02 and 6.03. In 1.02 Architects should only receive professional fees or salary as remuneration, preventing them from seeking additional financial incentives related to their work. This rule prevents potential conflicts of interest where the architect might be influenced by other financial incentives. 2.04 states that a registered architect should not act for a third party to whom his/her client owe a contractual duty. This clause is designed to prevent conflicts of loyalty. 6.02 prohibits

architects from inserting any clause in tenders, bills of quantities, or other contract documents that allow payments to be made to them. This provision prevents potential conflicts of interest that might arise from undisclosed financial benefits. 6.03 recommends that in cases where an architect takes out quantities for his/her buildings, he/she should be paid directly by the employer and not through the contractor unless the employer gives prior consent. This rule reduces the risk of potential conflicts of interest where the architect could be unduly influenced by the contractor.

6.3.3.4 Summary

Each of the three professional bodies has various measures to address conflict of interest in their respective codes of ethics. However, the extent of their emphasis and the specificity of the guidelines provided vary. The GHIS code contains multiple provisions to ensure practitioners disclose personal or financial interests that could create a conflict. The GHIE code addresses various circumstances, including discouraging practitioners from having undisclosed financial interests, accepting unapproved allowances, or having stakes in tenders they manage. Lastly, the GIA code prevents government-employed architects from exploiting their positions for personal gain. It includes additional clauses that inhibit architects from accepting undisclosed financial benefits or acting against a client's interests.

6.3.4 Political Interference

Political interference has been identified as a significant driver of unethical practices in the Ghanaian construction sector (Agyekum et al., 2021; Asante et al., 2018; Kuoribo et al., 2021; Manu et al., 2015). A study by Ameyaw et al. (2017) provided several examples of how political interference facilitates unethical practices. These included circumstances where politicians place undue pressure on practitioners to approve and award contracts for political gain, reject qualified contractors or suppliers for political reasons and award

contracts to close associates or family members, disregarding conflict of interest policies. Other examples include politicians procuring bribes from contractors and suppliers in exchange for contracts and giving unfair advantage to preferred bidders by disclosing confidential information, often for financial returns.

Although politicians often initiate this form of unethical practice, practitioners in charge of directly administering the construction processes and procedures frequently find themselves under pressure to manipulate the rules, processes, and procedures to accommodate these political interests. It is therefore essential that the code of ethics for practitioners clearly stipulate that participation in such unethical practices, even if instigated by politicians, makes them complicit in these practices. This would serve as a deterrent and foster a more ethical environment within the industry.

6.3.4.1 Ghana Institution of Surveyors

A review of the code of ethics for the GHIS found that the code does not include specific provisions or guidelines on how practitioners can avoid unethical conduct related to political interference. Instead, clauses 21.5.2 and 21.6 outlines how practitioners could engage with local and central government entities or other public institutions to obtain professional work. There is a requirement for practitioners to submit their names and particulars through the Institution rather than reaching out directly to governmental departments or politicians. By standardizing the protocols for engaging with government bodies and other public institutions, the professional body is perhaps seeking to protect and shield practitioners from potentially compromising interactions with public servants and political figures, which could lead to future instances of unethical conduct.

6.3.4.2 Ghana Institution of Engineers

On the part of the GHIE, provisions in clauses 4.2 and 4.11 can indirectly relate to the requirement for practitioners to resist unethical political influences. Although they do not

explicitly mention political influence, Rule 4.2 requires practitioners to act as faithful

agents and trustees in professional matters for their clients. This means that practitioners

must prioritize the interests of their clients or employer in their professional conduct. Rule

4.11 prohibits practitioners from accepting commissions or allowances directly or

indirectly from all parties dealing with their client or employer. This rule is clearly

designed to prevent conflict of interest. It can be considered a breach if practitioners allow

themselves to be politically influenced in a way that compromises their duties under these

rules. Therefore, while these rules do not explicitly reference unethical political influence,

they set guidelines for ethical and professional conduct which, if followed, can help

practitioners resist potential political pressures to act unethically.

6.3.4.3 Ghana Institute of Architects

The code of ethics for the GIA does not include any provisions that mandate practitioners

to resist political pressures that may cause them to behave in an unethical manner. While

the GIA Code may not directly address the issue of political interference, several of its

principles, including those that apply to a conflict of interest, can be applied to such a

situation. If political interference and pressures are causing an architect to act in a way that

conflicts with these broad principles, it could be considered a breach of the code. However,

without an explicit rule, interpreting and enforcing these principles in specific situations is

a matter for the professional body.

6.3.4.4 Summary

The above review of the code of ethics for all three professional bodies reveals an absence

of detailed and specific clauses aimed at addressing unethical conduct associated with

political interference. While none of the institutions explicitly discusses political

interference in their codes of ethics, they each promote practices and principles that, when

adhered to, could help their members resist such influences. Nonetheless, the lack of clear,

direct regulations leaves room for uncertainty and subjective interpretation, and it may be beneficial for the professional bodies to consider developing and incorporating more explicit rules addressing political interference into their ethical guidelines.

6.4 Comparing the Ghanaian Codes with the IESC Global Ethics Principles

The preceding analyses explored and offered insights into the design and scope of the Ghanaian codes of ethics. This included examining how the language used in building the code can impact its effectiveness in promoting ethical behaviour and facilitate enforcement. Attention was also paid to scope, specifically focusing on how thoroughly the Ghanaian codes cover and address the most common forms of unethical practices identified within the Ghanaian built environment sector. In order to situate these findings within a broader context, it becomes necessary to compare the Ghanaian codes with the global ethics principles propagated by the International Ethics Standards Coalition (IESC). These global standards are the first of its kind for the built environment sector and are supported by built environment professional bodies all over the world (IESC, 2021b). The primary aim of the IESC is to establish a unified ethical framework for professionals across the global built environment sector. In doing so, these standards ensure that the ethical principles guiding practitioners remain consistent and comparable, irrespective of geographical location (IESC, 2021a).

A comparison of the Ghanaian codes with these standards will provide an understanding of how the existing Ghanaian codes sit within the new global ethical framework. It will help identify areas where the local standards converge with or diverge from these globally accepted standards of ethics and indicate how much effort and work would be needed to adopt and implement the global standards in Ghana. Before embarking on a comparison between the Ghanaian codes and the IESC standards, this section will first evaluate the code building approach adopted by the IESC in the design of its standards. Understanding

the philosophy underlying the design of the IESC standards is important because the insights gained will enable a meaningful comparison with the Ghanaian codes.

6.4.1 The IESC Standards

There are a total of twelve guiding principles within the IESC's global ethical standards. Collectively these principles form the universally accepted ethical framework which professional bodies in the built environment sector must incorporate into their code of ethics. All twelve principles are presented in figure 14 below.

The Twelve IESC Global Ethical Standards

Accountability:
Practitioners shall take full responsibility for the services they provide; shall maintain knowledge of current professional technologies, models and data relevant to their practice; shall recognise and respect client, third party and stakeholder rights and interests; and shall give due attention to social and environmental considerations throughout.

Confidentiality:
Practitioners shall not disclose any confidential or proprietary information without prior permission, unless such disclosure is required by applicable laws or regulations.

Conflict of Interest:
Practitioners shall make any and all appropriate disclosures in a timely manner before and during the performance of a service. If, after disclosure, a conflict cannot be removed or mitigated, the practitioner shall withdraw from the matter unless the parties affected mutually agree that the practitioner should

Diversity:
Practitioners shall promote an environment that is inclusive and open to enable people of varied abilities and identities to enter and thrive in their workplaces and respective professions.

Financial Responsibility:
Practitioners shall be truthful, transparent and trustworthy in all their financial dealings.

Integrity:
Practitioners shall act with honesty, propriety and fairness. They shall base their professional advice on relevant, reliable and supportable evidence.

Lawfulness:
Practitioners shall observe the legal requirements applicable to their discipline for the jurisdictions in which they practise and any extra-territorial or international laws relevant to an assignment.

Reflection:
Practitioners shall regularly reflect on the standards and best practice for their discipline and shall take steps to ensure that their practice is consistent with evolving ethical principles and professional standards.

Respect:
Practitioners shall treat others with consideration; shall avoid diminishing any person's capacity for freedom, privacy and independence; and shall recognize the importance of both engaging with others without discrimination or prejudice and sustaining their wellbeing and personal safety.

Standard of Service:
Practitioners shall provide services for which they are competent and qualified; shall ensure that any employees or associates assisting in the provision of services have the necessary competence to do so; and shall encourage employees and associates to maintain and advance their professional skills through continuing professional development and other resources.

Transparency:
Practitioners shall be open and accessible; shall provide relevant documentary or other material including terms of engagement in plain and intelligible language; and shall present the results of data and analysis clearly and without improper manipulation.

Trust:
Practitioners shall uphold their responsibility to promote the reputation of their profession and shall recognise that their practice and conduct bears upon the maintenance of public trust and confidence in the IESC professional organisations and the professions they represent.

Figure 14. The 12 Ethical Principles in the IESC Global Standards. Source: Based on (IESC, 2021c)

For each principle in figure 14 above, table 8 below provides an assessment on whether it leans more towards an educational, aspirational, or regulatory code approach. The analysis helps to identify the guiding philosophy of each principle. This in turn determines the minimum standard or benchmark that the code of ethics for other professional bodies should strive to attain.

Table 8. Categorising the Design Approach of the IESC Standards. Source: (Authors Own)

Accountability	Aspirational	This principle leans towards an aspirational code design. While it sets some specific expectations (such as maintaining knowledge of current professional technologies and respecting client rights), it also encourages the broad ideal of practitioners taking responsibility for their services and giving due attention to social and environmental considerations. Thus, it presents a holistic approach to ethical practice rather than giving specific non-negotiable rules.
Confidentiality	Regulatory	This principle follows a regulatory code design as it sets a clear and specific rule that practitioners must adhere to.
Conflict of Interest	Regulatory	This principle has the characteristic of a regulatory code design. It outlines specific procedures that practitioners should follow regarding disclosures and conflict of interest, and it also gives explicit directions on what actions should be taken if a conflict cannot be resolved or mitigated.
Diversity	Aspirational	This principle encourages practitioners to foster an inclusive and open environment that allows people of different abilities and identities to flourish in their

		workplaces and professions. The principle outlines broad ideals and does not provide a specific rule or regulation that must be complied with.
Financial Responsibility	Regulatory	This principle categorically states that practitioners must be truthful, transparent, and trustworthy in all their financial transactions. The direct and clear nature of this directive leaves no room for interpretation.
Integrity	Regulatory & Aspirational	This principle presents high-level values like honesty, propriety, and fairness. These are presented as ideals that practitioners must strive for and are not presented as explicit rules. However, the instruction for practitioners to base their professional advice on relevant, reliable, and supportable evidence is prescriptive and can be categorized as regulatory.
Lawfulness	Regulatory	This principle exemplifies a regulatory code design. It sets out a specific rule for practitioners to adhere to the legal requirements of their discipline in the jurisdictions where they practice, as well as any relevant international laws. It is a prescribed conduct, something they 'must' or 'shall' do, indicating a hard and fast rule rather than a professional ideal or aspiration.
Reflection	Aspirational	This principle encourages practitioners to regularly reflect on the standards and best practices of their discipline, and to make sure their practice is consistent with evolving ethical principles and

		professional standards. This is more about striving for an ideal, continuous learning and adaptability.
Respect	Regulatory	This principle specifies clear rules and behaviours that practitioners must adhere to in their professional interactions. The rules are well defined and clear. 1. To treat others with consideration, 2. To avoid infringing on the freedoms, privacy and independence of others, 3. To engage with others without discrimination or prejudice.
Standard of Service	Regulatory	This principle aligns more with a regulatory code. It sets explicit rules and standards for practitioners, such as providing only services they are competent and qualified for, ensuring their employees have necessary competencies, and encouraging continuous professional development.
Transparency	Regulatory	The principle provides explicit directives such as practitioners providing relevant documents or materials in clear, intelligible language, and presenting data and analysis results honestly without manipulation. These are all specific behaviours that are expected, demonstrating characteristics of a regulatory code.
Trust	Aspirational	This principle specifies some clear expectations for practitioners (like upholding the reputation of their profession and recognizing the impact of their conduct), however, it primarily focuses on broad ideals and values such as trust, public confidence, and the reputation of the profession. These are open-ended and somewhat subjective, making them more difficult to enforce in a rigid or punitive manner.

		This principle aligns more closely with the characteristics of an aspirational code.

Whilst some of the principles in table 8 above set clear expectations for practice and behaviour (indicative of a regulatory approach), their overarching design often leans towards maintaining a broader perspective. This dichotomy shows the strategic balance the IESC has adopted in designing standards that aim to set certain non-negotiable boundaries of professional conduct while avoiding an excessively prescriptive approach. It is quite clear that the IESC's intention here is to design the standards to provide clear ethical guidance, yet flexible to be interpreted and applied in different jurisdictions. Thus, the IESC principles can be thought of as a hybrid ethical standard that blends elements of both regulatory and aspirational models. The standards have the rigidity of regulatory codes but also embrace the flexibility of aspirational code design to allow for adaptability in the different jurisdictions in which they are to operate. As echoed in the work of Vanasco (1994), attempting to achieve a balance between specificity and flexibility in a universal code of ethics can be a difficult line to tread. Vanasco (1994) found that a global code of ethics can only prove effective when it is sufficiently broad to command the buy-in from all the jurisdictions within which it would be applied. Yet, he also cautions that pursuing such wide-reaching inclusivity could result in an ethical code that is too broad to be useful in practice (Vanasco, 1994).

6.4.2 Ghanaian Codes vs The IESC Standards

Table 9 below presents a side by side comparison, showing the intersections and gaps between the Ghanaian codes of ethics and the IESC global ethical standards. In the table, a tick mark indicates that the particular ethical principle, as defined within the IESC standards, has been found within the corresponding Ghanaian code of ethics. Where an ethical principle is associated with multiple ticks, this is an indication of the frequency of

the principle's repetition within the specific Ghanaian code of ethics. On the contrary, a

cross symbol implies that the particular IESC ethical principle does not find its place

within the corresponding Ghanaian code of ethics. In this context, the cross denotes the

absence of the IESC principle in the corresponding Ghanaian code of ethics.

Table 9. Side by Side Comparison of the IESC standards and the Ghanaian Codes. Source: (Authors Own)

IESC Global Standards	Surveyors (2007) (Freq. of Citations)	Engineers (2012) (Freq. of Citations)	Architects (2016) (Freq. of Citations)
Accountability	✓	✓	✗
Confidentiality	✓ ✓	✓	✗
Conflict of Interest	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Diversity	✗	✗	✗
Financial Responsibility	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓
Integrity	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓
Lawfulness	✗	✓ ✓	✗
Reflection	✗	✗	✗
Respect	✓	✓	✗
Standard of Service	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✗
Transparency	✓ ✓	✗	✗
Trust	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✗

Key

✓	Ethical principle cited in the profession's code of ethics. Multiple ticks indicate a higher frequency of citation.
✗	Ethical principle was not cited in the profession's code of ethics.

6.4.3 Areas of Similarity

The information presented in table 9 above shows a considerable overlap between the

ethical codes of Ghana's built environment bodies and the IESC standards. This overlap

can be seen in three key areas namely conflict of interest, financial responsibility, and

integrity. In these areas the ethical codes of the three professional bodies in Ghana seem aligned with and mirror the scope of the IESC standards.

6.4.3.1 Conflict of Interest

On the principle of conflict of interest, the IESC mandates practitioners to promptly disclose all relevant conflicts and to withdraw from a project where such conflict cannot be mitigated, unless all parties involved mutually agree that the practitioner can continue. On the part of the GHIS, the requirement of this principle is fulfilled in clauses 8.1 through to 8.6. Indeed, the GHIS code includes several provisions addressing conflict of interest. Compared to the IESC principle, their code seems to go further. It places the onus on the practitioner to stop acting immediately once a conflict of interest is identified, even before informing the client. The IESC provision on the other hand requires disclosure and provides an opportunity to remove or mitigate the conflict before withdrawing. The GHIS code also includes an extra layer of protection for the client. It requires that the client seeks independent professional advice before the practitioner can continue to act for them, thus, ensuring that the client makes an informed decision with external guidance. The GHIE code places a similar emphasis on conflict of interest which it addresses in several clauses including in clauses 4.4, 4.9, 4.11, 4.12, 4.13. Akin to the others, clause 4.13, obligates practitioners to inform their client about any situations that could potentially lead to a conflict of interest. Conflict of interest provisions were also found in the code for the GIA. These provisions were found in clauses 1.02, 2.04, 5.0, 6.02 and 6.03. In 2.04 Architects are compelled not to act for a third party to whom their client also owes a contractual duty. This clause is designed to avoid any situation where a practitioner might be drawn into serving the interests of another party to whom their client is contractually bound.

6.4.3.2 Financial Responsibility

Another area where the Ghanaian codes align with the IESC standards is regarding

financial responsibility. This principle, as outlined in the IESC standards, mandates

practitioners to uphold truthfulness and trustworthiness in all their financial transactions.

While the Ghanaian codes do not explicitly state that practitioners must be truthful,

transparent and trustworthy in all their financial dealings, the same principles are implied

in their guidelines. For example, in clause 4.9, the GHIE code prohibits practitioners from

accepting compensation from more than one party for the same work unless all parties

consent. This suggests a commitment to transparency. Also, the obligation to promptly

disclose any potential financial or competitive interests in clause 4.13 highlights both

truthfulness and transparency. The GHIE code defines further parameters of ethical

behaviour in financial dealings in clauses 4.14 and 4.15. These clauses prohibit

practitioners from acting as the medium of payment on behalf of clients or employers

(4.14) and placing orders on their own behalf (4.15), both situations that could create

potential abuse or misuse of funds. Similar to the GHIE, the GHIS addresses the

observance of financial responsibility in its code. Clause 9.1 states that other than receiving

their agreed professional fees, a surveyor should not take any financial interest in a project

they are working on, nor should they accept any project terms or conditions that could be

interpreted as them having a financial interest. By not accepting terms that could hide a

financial interest, a practitioner is ensuring that their dealings are transparent, also being

truthful about their professional role and not misrepresenting their interests. Practitioners

who observe these guidelines will be able to build trust with their clients who can be

confident that their work is not being influenced by the practitioner's undisclosed financial

interests. Other provisions on financial responsibility can be found in clauses 9.1.2, 9.2,

15.1, 15.1.1, 15.1.2, 23.1 and 23.2. The IESC's guideline for practitioners to be 'truthful,

transparent and trustworthy in all their financial dealings' broadly encompasses the GIA's

more specific rule (1.02) that an architect should be remunerated 'solely by his/her professional fees payable by his/her client or by salary payable by his/her employer' (1.02) and 'barred from any other source of remuneration' in connection with their work. The GIA code explicitly states that any clauses in tenders, bills of quantities, or other contract documents that provide for payment to the architect must have the 'full knowledge and approval of the employer' (6.02). Similarly, an architect taking out quantities for buildings should be paid directly by the employer and not the contractor, unless there is prior consent (6.03). These standards align with the IESC principle of transparency in financial dealings.

6.4.3.3 Integrity

The integrity clause in the IESC standards enjoins practitioners to act with honesty, propriety and fairness. It is expected that the professional guidance given by practitioners will be founded on relevant, reliable and supportable evidence. This is another principle in the IESC standards that is similar to some of the standards in the Ghanaian codes. Starting with the GIA, the IESC's call for practitioners to act with propriety or in a dignified way, corresponds to the rule in the GIA's clause 4.01. This clause admonishes against any attempt by a practitioner to supplant another architect or compete with them through fee reduction or other inducements, which could be classed as improper behaviour. The requirement for practitioners to act fairly, is echoed in the GIA standards (6.01) that registered architects must act impartially in disputes between a building owner and a contractor, interpreting the conditions of the contract with 'entire fairness'. Further, GIA clause 4.02 places a specific professional responsibility on a registered architect to ensure that, before taking over a project from another architect, there are no unresolved obligations between the client and the previous architect. This is a demonstration of fairness and propriety. The IESC requirement for honesty under its principle of integrity is reflected in GHIS clauses such as 17.1 (publicity must be accurate and not misleading),

17.3 (only express opinions based on adequate knowledge and honest conviction), and 17.5 (refrain from public opinion on surveying subjects unless well-informed). Propriety requirements are detailed in GHIS clauses 17.8 (not reviewing or taking over the work of another member without consent or formal notification) and 17.9 (not knowingly competing on the basis of professional charges). The requirement for practitioners to act with fairness as stated within the IESC integrity principle is also specified in the GHIS code which calls on practitioners to discharge their duties 'with fairness and impartiality to all'.

Honesty requirements under the principle of integrity in the IESC standards are highlighted in clause 3.4 of the GHIE code which states that professionals should express their opinions only when they are founded on honest conviction. In the GHIE code, the idea of propriety is reflected in the call for members to avoid associations with any enterprise of questionable character (1.2 preamble). This is an instruction for members to adhere to proper and ethical behaviour. The GHIE standards stress fairness in contracts between clients or employers and contractors (clause 4.3), and in general professional conduct (1.2 preamble). Similarly, GHIE clause 3.4 requires members to express opinions based on adequate knowledge which is agreement with the IESC requirement for practitioners to base their professional advice on relevant, reliable and supportable evidence.

6.4.4 Areas of Dissimilarity

While the above three ethical principles contain strong similarities in their intent and context between the IESC and the Ghanaian codes, an analysis of some of the other rules and guidelines shows that even in instances where the guidelines appear similar, some contextual misalignment can sometimes be discerned. For example, on the principle of respect, both the IESC and the Ghanaian professional bodies advocate for mutual respect, treating others with dignity, and consideration towards others. The IESC further broadens

the scope of this principle by explicitly addressing discrimination and prejudice. In contrast, none of the Ghanaian codes mention or address these two concepts in any way, leaving a noticeable gap in their scope. Several other ethical principles within the IESC standards including accountability, confidentiality, lawfulness, standard of service, transparency, trust and respect could only be found in one or sometimes two of the Ghanaian codes but not all three (see table 9). This points to a notable lack of consistency even in the ethical guidelines governing professionals in Ghana's built environment sector. Indeed, this observation is not entirely unexpected and aligns with the research conducted by Langlois and Shlegemilch (1990), who noted substantial variation in ethical approaches even among people with similar socio-cultural backgrounds. The noted inconsistency across the Ghanaian codes highlights one of the key reasons why the IESC global standards were established in the first place, to instil a level of uniformity in ethical practices within the built environment sector. Of the three Ghanaian codes examined, the GIA's code was found to have the least alignment with the ethical principles contained in the IESC standards. The only areas of agreement between the GIA code and the IESC standards were identified in the principles relating to conflict of interest, financial responsibility, and integrity. In addition to the above differences highlighted by the fragmented and sporadic representation of the IESC principles across the three Ghanaian codes of ethics, the IESC principles of reflection and diversity were not found in any of the three Ghanaian codes.

6.4.4.1 Reflection

As well as the separate requirement for practitioners to undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to enhance their professional skills, the IESC standards introduce an additional concept of reflection. This element encourages practitioners to reflect on their work to ensure that it is consistent with the ever-changing landscape of ethical principles

and professional standards. Although it could be argued that the Ghanaian codes indirectly include this concept of staying current with evolving standards through the stipulated requirement for CPD, it is worth noting that the IESC principles do not merely advocate for the completion of CPD. They underscore the necessity of reflection, placing a stronger emphasis on the need to reflect on one's work to ensure its consistency with the evolving nature of ethical principles. This concept is not explicitly addressed in the Ghanaian codes. Thus, while the Ghanaian codes seem to focus more on the acquisition of knowledge (such as learning new things through CPD), the IESC principles value both learning (CPD) and the application of this learning via reflective practice (Reflection), making this a key point of divergence between the two.

6.4.4.2 Diversity

The absence of diversity from all three Ghanaian codes of ethics could be potentially linked to the cultural context within Ghana, which is reflective of the broader trend across the African continent. Despite Africa being home to the most diverse populations with over 1000 distinct ethnic groups (Awedoba, 2005), the research focus on diversity and inclusion management on the continent remains quite limited (Appiah and Adeyeye, 2021).

Ghana is a diverse society, with over 90 ethnic groups who belong to various religions, and multiple cultural backgrounds (Asante and Gyimah-Boadi, 2004). This notwithstanding, the understanding and appreciation of diversity and inclusion management within the Ghanaian corporate sector remain relatively low (Appiah and Adeyeye, 2021). The broad similarities shared amongst the various ethnic groups in the country often overshadow the underlying differences, making discrimination less apparent. Ghanaian society has not confronted issues of discrimination and marginalization as extensively as it should have. This is true of several forms of discrimination including that against sexual minorities (Akinwotu, 2021), gender-based discrimination (Akotia and Anum, 2015), and prejudice

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against people living with disabilities (Ocran, 2019). The lack of public discourse and robust debate on these issues could be an explanation of why all three professional bodies have not incorporated these aspects into their codes of conduct. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that discrimination exists in Ghana, and the built environment sector will not be immune from its effects. The Ghanaian codes will not fully resonate with the spirit and ethos of the IESC principles if they do not include stipulations addressing diversity.

6.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the different forms of code design, namely regulatory, aspirational, and educational. It was argued that an effective code of ethics should ideally incorporate elements from all three designs instead of exclusively focusing on one. Notwithstanding the benefits that can be derived from adopting a mixed approach, in the Ghanaian built environment sector where poor ethical practices are widespread, a code of ethics that is predominantly regulatory may be beneficial for targeting and curtailing specific unethical behaviours and conduct. The chapter then assessed the extent to which the current codes of ethics for Ghanaian built environment professional bodies address unethical practises observed in the sector. The results were mixed; while some unethical practises were comprehensively addressed in the codes, others received partial attention or were overlooked entirely. In the final part of this chapter, a comparative analysis is conducted to highlight the similarities and differences between the Ghanaian codes and the universal ethical principles put forth by the International Ethics Standards Coalition (IESC). This analysis shows that although some elements of the IESC standards are already present in the Ghanaian codes, there are prominent differences in context and focus. Notably, two IESC principles, diversity and reflection, were entirely absent from the Ghanaian codes. The next chapter presents a discussion of the study's findings from the primary data collected.

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Knight, A. and Manu, E. (2023). Similarities, Intent, and Emphasis: Alignment of

International Ethics Principles with Built Environment Professional Standards in Ghana.

Ed(s) *37th Annual ARCOM Conference*. Leeds, 4-6 September.

Chapter Seven: Findings and Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings from the interviews. The discussion in this chapter explains the meaning of the findings, their relationship with the existing body of knowledge, and their implications. In total, the study involved 25 participants, all of whom were chartered members of their respective professional bodies. The participants comprised 7 Engineers, 10 Quantity Surveyors, and 8 Architects. All the participants interviewed were Ghanaian nationals who had lived in Ghana for most of their life and had received either full or partial professional training in the country. The professionals, all holding a minimum of a university first degree, had extensive experience working in the Ghanaian built environment sector. A minimum of five years' experience was set as a prerequisite for participation in the study. The list of participants and their corresponding pseudonyms or codes are presented in table 10 below.

Table 10. Demographics of Research Participants. Source: (Authors Own)

Discipline	Participant	In leadership position?	Gender	Years of experience
Engineers	P1 - LP	Yes	Male	15+
	P2 - LP	Yes	Male	15+
	P3	No	Male	10-15
	P4	No	Female	10-15
	P5	No	Male	10-15
	P6	No	Female	10-15
	P7	No	Male	10-15
Surveyors	P8 - LP	Yes	Male	15+
	P9 - LP	Yes	Male	15+
	P10	No	Male	10-15
	P11	No	Male	10-15
	P12	No	Female	10-15
	P13	No	Male	5-10
	P14	No	Female	10-15
	P15	No	Male	15+
	P16	No	Male	15+
	P17	No	Female	15+
Architects	P18 - LP	Yes	Male	10-15
	P19	No	Male	10-15

P20	No	Male	10-15
P21	No	Male	10-15
P22	No	Male	10-15
P23	No	Male	15+
P24	No	Male	10-15
P25	Yes	Female	10-15

Section 7.2 below focuses on the findings and discussion relating to the alignment of the

Ghanaian codes with the ethical principles outlined in the IESC global standards. Section

7.3 examines local practices and contextual influences, and how they might impact the

application of the IESC global ethics standards in Ghana. Finally, Section 7.4 discusses the

key drivers for change needed to successfully integrate and enforce the IESC ethical

principles in Ghana's built environment sector. The chapter concludes with a summary of

the key findings and themes from the interviews, including their implications for the study.

7.2 Alignment

Following the ratification and adoption of the IESC standards in 2021, built environment

sector professional bodies were expected to align their local codes of ethics with the ethical

principles outlined in the IESC global standards. The rationale behind the drive to align

these ethical standards is to have a uniform set of ethical rules governing built environment

professionals worldwide. A key objective of this study was to investigate whether

professional bodies in Ghana's built environment sector have aligned or made any efforts

to align their codes of ethics with the global principles in the IESC standards. This section

(7.2) outlines and discusses the findings from that enquiry. It focuses on the key themes

identified from the data analysis, such as participants' responses regarding their awareness

of the IESC standards (awareness), the extent to which the professional bodies have

integrated the IESC ethical principles into their local codes (alignment), and respondents'

perspectives on the possible approaches to alignment, such as whether they would

advocate for a complete and strict alignment or a modified or partial integration of the IESC principles deemed appropriate for the Ghanaian context (adaptation).

7.2.1 Lack of Awareness or Alignment of the IESC Standards

Respondents were asked whether they are aware of the IESC standards and any efforts to align their local professional code of ethics with the ethical principles outlined in the global standards. This question aimed to establish the level of awareness amongst the members and leaders of the Ghanaian professional bodies.
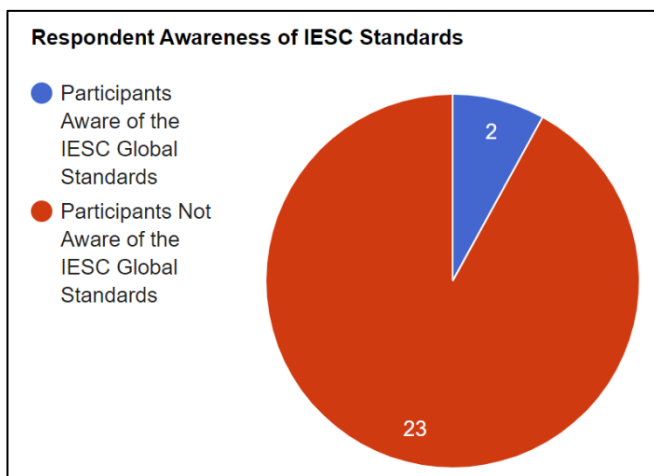
Figure 15. No. of Respondents Aware of the IESC Standards. Source: (Authors Own)

Out of the 25 respondents who were interviewed, the study discovered that 23 participants had no awareness of the global standards. Only participants P8 - LP and P9 – LP (categorised as leaders within the surveying professional body) demonstrated an awareness of the global standards, including their origins. However, they were not fully abreast with recent developments regarding the ratification and adoption of the standards. The following is an excerpt from the interaction between the researcher and participant P8 - LP who is one of the leaders of the surveying professional body.

Researcher: Have you heard of the global ethics standards by the IESC?

P8 - LP: Yes, I know about the International Ethics Standards Coalition very well. Their initial working document was an RICS document and that is where the starting point is. I really see it as an RICS policy. I have had a lot of discussion with them on the standards so yes, I am very aware of the standards.

Researcher: Has your professional body amended their code of ethics to align with the ratified IESC principles?

P8 - LP: GHIS is a member of the coalition. However, we haven't reflected the global standards in our own code yet because the standards have not yet been adopted by all the key stakeholders. I am sure that we will amend our standards immediately the global standards are adopted.

Researcher: I am sure that the standards have been adopted. This happened in 2021 and the RICS and other UK professional bodies have updated their codes.

P8 - LP: Oh, then I must have missed that one. So, are you suggesting that the final report has been published and the standards adopted? I will make my own queries and will have to check that one out again. (Researcher opens the IESC website to show participant proof on the IESC website that the standards have been adopted and published). Oh, I see. Then I am certainly late. I will check and investigate this further.

The results of the study indicate a general lack of awareness of the global ethics standards across all three professions. However, a significant difference was observed in the level of awareness among the leaders of the three professional disciplines. For example, despite the knowledge gap identified among some leaders of the surveying profession regarding recent developments in ratifying and adopting IESC standards, their awareness of the standards

exceeded that of the engineering and architecture professions. The leaders from the engineering and architecture professions exhibited a complete lack of awareness of the global standards, including their purpose and objectives. Given the significant low level of awareness amongst respondents and especially the leaders of the professional bodies, it was unsurprising to find that none of the professional bodies in the Ghanaian built environment sector had made any efforts to incorporate the standards into their local codes of ethics. As evidenced in the interaction above with participant P8 - LP, some leaders attributed the lack of alignment to their being unaware that the IESC standards had progressed to being ratified and adopted. Others, such as the leaders of the architecture and engineering professions, stated that they were not aware of the existence of the standards because they had not been approached or invited by the IESC to be members of the coalition. These findings indicate that professional bodies in Ghana do not regard the incorporation of IESC standards with the same sense of urgency as their international counterparts. Supporting evidence for this perspective can be subtly discerned in a comment from participant P8-LP, who viewed the push to implement global ethical standards largely as an RICS policy initiative.

Evidence from the literature review shows that all the existing codes of ethics for the Ghanaian professional bodies pre-dates the adoption of the IESC standards. For example, whilst the IESC standards were adopted in 2021, the most recent versions of the GHIS, GHIE and the GIA professional codes of ethics are 2007, 2012, and 2016 respectively. Further evidence of a lack of alignment is also discernible from a comparative analysis of the IESC standards and the Ghanaian codes of ethics which revealed differences between the standards. For example, the IESC standards of diversity and reflection does not appear in all three codes of ethics for the Ghanaian professional bodies. Several others such as transparency and trust appear sporadically sometimes in one or two but not in all the three

Ghanaian professional codes of ethics examined. Despite the apparent lack of deliberate efforts to align the codes, the comparative analysis did reveal some existing similarities between the IESC standards and the Ghanaian codes. For example, they both require practitioners to avoid conflict of interest, practice with Integrity and demonstrate financial responsibility. These commonalities exist most likely because, in all countries and jurisdictions, professional bodies exist to pursue broadly similar objectives. Consequently, one would naturally expect some convergence in the rules and regulations irrespective of geographical location. From a deontological standpoint, the observed commonalities between the Ghanaian codes of ethics and the IESC ethical principles could be attributed to the claim of universality of certain moral imperatives or duties that are deemed fundamental across different cultural and professional contexts (Johnson, 2022). In some other cases where there appeared to be some similarities, a closer assessment of the relevant clauses shows a variation in the scope and intent of those provisions. On respect for example, both the IESC and the Ghanaian professional codes require practitioners to show consideration for others. However, while the IESC standards specifically include discrimination and prejudice under its provisions, the Ghanaian codes of ethics do not explicitly address these issues.

The findings reveal two key challenges to the effective implementation of global ethics standards in Ghana's built environment sector. First, the lack of awareness about the global ethics principles among respondents indicates a significant knowledge gap that must be filled. Left unaddressed, this gap could lead to an inconsistent or inadequate application of the global principles in the local context, undermining efforts to instil a culture of ethical compliance that aligns with the IESC global standards. Second, the delay in the alignment of the local codes of ethics with the global principles signals an institutional lag. This lack

of alignment suggests that the existing regulatory and oversight mechanisms neither encourage nor enforce adherence to the IESC global ethical standards.

To successfully implement the global ethics principles, it is imperative for Ghanaian professional bodies to initiate a comprehensive educational and awareness-raising programme. Such a programme must aim to disseminate knowledge about the global standards, as well as the rationale and objectives they are intended to fulfil. Furthermore, the misalignment between the local and global codes of ethics must be rectified. Ghanaian professional bodies should revise and update their existing codes to align more closely with the IESC global ethics principles. The revisions must include the necessary modifications to make the local codes consistent with the intent and scope of the IESC global standards. Collectively, these findings imply that there is a substantial amount of work to be done at both the grassroots and at an institutional level to achieve successful implementation of the global ethics principles in Ghana's built environment sector.

7.2.2 Need for Adaptation

Findings from the interviews indicate that professionals within the Ghanaian built environment sector are receptive to the idea of integrating the IESC ethics principles into their own local codes of ethics. However, despite expressing a readiness and willingness to adopt the standards, most respondents objected to the idea of wholly adopting the standards in their current form without making some modifications to them. Respondents expressed a firm viewpoint regarding the need for regional variations in the implementation of the standards, citing cultural disparities as a contributing factor, they remained adamant that the standards will fail if they are ultimately not aligned with Ghanaian cultural and social practices. The view among respondents was that *'what may be workable for somebody in a particular region may not necessarily work for another person'* – P17.

For example, while respondents were generally welcoming of the principle of diversity, there was a strong hesitation to name specific groups or classes that would be protected under diversity clauses. Rather, they insisted that the profession was already open and inclusive and did not prevent any groups of people from joining or progressing. For them, diversity does not present a pressing problem that would require any detailed specific protocols to address. Other respondents suggested modifying how any resultant standards would be implemented and applied in the local context. Explaining this point, participant P8 – LP used respect for the elderly as an example. In his view, respect for the elderly is a major Ghanaian cultural value. Hence, when dealing with an elderly person who has violated the code of ethics, there is a certain manner to approach the problem so as not to disrespect the elderly individual while attempting to address the transgression committed by the elderly individual.

Whether it was adjusting how the standards are applied or modifying the actual principles, there was a consensus that adopting the standards in full without any changes would be the wrong approach. Participants advocated for the Ghanaian professional bodies to undertake an evaluation of the standards and to determine which ones and how the ones selected will be implemented before incorporating the standards into their local codes of ethics.

These findings are hardly surprising. The call for the global principles to be amended to suit the local context is one that aligns with the views promoted by advocates of ethical relativism who maintain that morality is not a universal constant. They contend that ethical norms and moral principles can vary between different cultures and societies (LaFollette, 1991; Rachels and Rachels, 2012). Previous attempts to apply global ethics principles have been attended by demands for adaptation to suit varying cultural, legal and socio-economic situations. Cohen et al. (1992), found that despite pressure from the International Accounting standards committee for member bodies to adopt a uniformed set of reporting

standards, varying socio cultural and legal conditions prevented the full realisation of this ambition. According to Gray (1988) distinct national cultures can be said to be responsible for the notable differences in financial reporting patterns. Studies by other scholars such as Espinosa-Pike and Barrainkua-Aroztegi (2014) and Vanasco (1994) have underscored the influence of cultural and societal factors, such as religion and diverse ethical perspectives, on the acceptance and application of international ethical codes emphasizing the complexity of creating and implementing universally accepted ethical standards. Indeed even between the relatively similar cultural environments that exists in western Europe and the United States of America, differences in approach have been discerned (Langlois and Schlegelmilch, 1990). Therefore, the study's findings are consistent with existing literature that addresses the ethical relativism concerns that frequently arise during the application of a globalised set of ethics or professional practices.

There is strong desire for adaptation of the IESC standards before application in the Ghanaian built environment sector. Respondents asserted that the successful implementation of the IESC standards in Ghana must necessarily entail these adaptations to reflect Ghanaian cultural values. The reluctance to fully implement the global standards as they currently exist was evident in various areas, with diversity being a key concern, and an area where respondents were most insistent on the need for adaptation prior to implementation of the standards in Ghana. On the universal ethical principle of diversity, the IESC standards states the following.

'Practitioners shall promote an environment that is inclusive and open to enable people of varied abilities and identities to enter and thrive in their workplaces and respective professions' (IESC, 2021a).

The references to ability and identity can be interpreted to mean that professional bodies must make every effort to welcome and include people who may be living with disability

or belong to racial ethnic, gender or sexual minority groups. In the United Kingdom where most professional bodies have already implemented the IESC standards, this IESC provision has been fully and explicitly reflected in their updated code of ethics. For example, the relevant diversity clause in the RICS code (2022) is as follows.

'Members and firms treat everyone fairly and do not discriminate against anyone on any improper grounds, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation' (RICS, 2021).

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) code (2021) on the same principle states that

Members shall not discriminate unlawfully on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, nationality (RIBA, 2021).

The provisions in both the RICS and RIBA codes are unambiguous and unequivocal, demonstrating a clear commitment to the IESC principle of diversity in both letter and spirit. By explicitly naming the protected classes within their respective codes, the RICS and RIBA are extending targeted protection to these groups within their respective professions.

Responses from interviewees however indicates that there is a hesitation within the Ghanaian built environment sector to adopt a similar approach to that of the RICS and RIBA. While respondents insisted that the sector is open to all and allows for free practice, they saw no necessity in explicitly naming and offering special protections to specific social classes. This hesitation must be viewed and understood within the context of Ghanaian cultural and social unease in addressing matters of discrimination against

marginalised and minoritized groups such as women (Dowuona-Hammond et al., 2020), people living with disabilities (Ocran, 2019) and more specifically the LGBTQ community (Nuer, 2022).

These findings highlight the complex challenges associated with implementing global standards within diverse cultural contexts. In a socially conservative society like Ghana, where LGBTQ+ concerns are often met with unease or outright rejection, the reluctance to explicitly name these protected classes under diversity clauses suggests that certain deep-rooted sociocultural perspectives in Ghana might clash with the explicitly inclusive guidelines advanced by the IESC ethics principles. Therefore, these findings raise questions about how principles such as the diversity clause within the IESC standards can be adapted to respect local norms while pushing for broader social change. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing an effective and culturally sensitive framework for introducing and implementing the global standards in Ghana.

7.3 Practices and Contextual Influences

Countries vary significantly in their economic, political, and social landscapes. One of the primary objectives of this study was to examine the impact of Ghanaian contextual factors, including established local customs, traditions, and laws, on ethical practice in Ghana. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges presented by these factors is vital because it provides an indication of the scope and magnitude of work that may be required to successfully implement the IESC standards in Ghana. This section presents the views and comments collected from respondents on this issue.

7.3.1 Interference with Enforcement and Sanctioning Processes

A common view amongst interviewees was that the interconnected social and religious ties in Ghanaian society compromise the enforcement of sanctions by professional bodies in cases of ethical violations by professionals. Respondent P11 explained that the strong sense

of community in Ghanaian society obligates individuals to look out for and support one another when they face adverse circumstances.

> *"The family-oriented culture that we have means we tend not to leave family members or friends in times of adversity. You do not sit by idly for the name of your loved ones to go bad in the public eye".* – P11

Another respondent echoed the above sentiment noting that these customs have been part of Ghanaian society for a long time and are even reflected in some Ghanaian proverbs, such as the one below.

> *'Nea ɔpɛ adeɛ akɔ kotoko no, yɛnndi no aborɔ'.* Loosely translates to mean *'we do not sabotage the efforts of anyone with good intentions'* – P8 - LP

While the proverb promotes a culture of support and solidarity, it also introduces a paradox. The implication that this proverb could serve as a basis for weakening the enforcement of sanctions against unethical behaviour suggests a form of uncritical loyalty rooted in social affiliation rather than merit. Moreover, the concept of 'good intentions' becomes increasingly problematic due to its openness to multiple interpretations shaped by societal and cultural definitions of 'goodness'. Consequently, if actions considered unethical can be somehow justified in a particular context as 'good intentions', this conflicts with the principles in the global ethics standards that call for punitive measures against such actions. This dilemma resonates with ongoing debates in virtue ethics, particularly the unresolved issue of ethical relativism, which is connected with the charge that there is no agreement on a comprehensive list of the virtues.

The findings show that it is common practice for individuals facing sanctions to seek intervention from others in positions of authority, such as politicians, chiefs, community elders, and religious leaders, who advocate for leniency on their behalf. Most respondents

agreed that such figures held in high esteem in Ghanaian society could leverage their positions to interfere in disciplinary procedures. According to one respondent, the influence wielded by such figures is so significant that it often becomes difficult for people to resist their overtures for fear of being targeted. The study found that politicians also often compromise or pervert sanctioning processes. Several respondents highlighted the prevalence of this phenomenon which they felt perpetuates unethical conduct, especially in the public sector. Interviewee P14 provided one of the various viewpoints offered on this matter. He observed that in Ghana's public and private sectors, people in authority frequently intervene in disciplinary processes. While he was sure that this phenomenon was not unique to Ghana, he emphasized that such practices were widespread in Ghana and occurred much more brazenly, allowing those with such connections to disregard rules, regulations and laid down procedures frequently. This practice, he said, '.... *runs deep in our culture.*' – P14

Adding to the discussion, participant P4 presented an alternative perspective, he explained that when professionals commit infractions, rather than accepting the sanctions that goes along with it, there is a culture or tendency to beg for forgiveness. In his view, the widespread practice of interfering with due process has contributed to an environment in which the natural disposition or tendency of professionals who have committed infractions is a reluctance or hesitancy to accept punishment. He added that, although he had travelled to many countries, Ghana is one of the few countries where he has observed that such a practice happens. In his view, it is also one of the reasons why it is almost impossible for professional bodies to effectively curtail unethical practices and actions that violate their code of ethics. He remarked that

> *'... in the other countries that I have visited, I find that people simply accept the consequences of their actions when they break the law. But here in Ghana, the first thing you hear is - I beg' – P8 – LP*

Some respondents also pointed to some hesitation in the application of sanctions due to existing social connections and ties between those enforcing the rules and those in alleged breach of the rules. For example, P1 – LP, who is a leader at one of the professional bodies, observed that

> *'Some of these guys who fall or get into these breaches are our people and friends and I think that naturally we don't have the heart to even sanction them if they did something wrong.' – P1 – LP*

P1 – LP linked the lack of firmness in the application or the enforcement of sanctions to the deep cultural settings, which favours an approach where people are given an opportunity to reform, especially if they are first-time offenders.

P11 described how the cumulative impact of a permissive environment that allows external interference with due process has resulted in some practitioners exploiting cultural practices to avoid punishment when they violate the rules.

Findings from the empirical data above shows that the enforcement of ethical rules is compromised by a communitarian approach that is inherent in Ghanaian traditional societies. Historically, Ghana's indigenous socialist system valued kinship, brotherhood and sisterhood (onuado). The traditional Ghanaian system of jurisprudence was designed to rehabilitate the offender and to appease the victim. In this system, considerable value is placed on the process where the victim is given an opportunity to express their grievance whilst the offender is expected to show regret for their actions. This is in consonance with the African system of humanity, brotherhood and communitarianism (Gyekye, 2010). On

the other hand, the literature suggests that modern economic systems are best suited to

environments where rules are strictly applied and strong institutions deter unethical

behaviour, support compliance, and robustly enforce sanctions (Hooker, 2003).

In the Ghanaian built environment sector as well as the wider Ghanaian society, chiefs,

elders, pastors and other figures of authority continue to exert influence over disciplinary

processes in the spirit of the Ghanaian tradition system of jurisprudence. This can even

take the form of public appeal for leniency or pardon for individuals found to have

engaged in unethical practices. In August 2022 for example, The Ahanta Traditional

Council (ATC) comprised of chiefs from the area publicly intervened in the case where a

high-profile indigene of the community had been indicted for evading taxes (Adams,

2022). Similarly, in February 2012, chiefs from the Volta Region made a public appeal to

the president of Ghana to pardon a businessman from the region who had been arrested on

charges of conspiracy to commit crime, defrauding by false pretence and corrupting public

officials (Akuaku, 2012). In another example, a religious leader pleaded for clemency on

behalf of judges who were filmed by an investigative journalist negotiating and receiving

bribes to free suspected criminals who were to appear before them (Ghanaweb, 2015). It

must be pointed out that these interventions by community leaders and figures of authority

do not fully represent the complexity inherent in Ghanaian traditional jurisprudence. Citing

Young 1942, Abotchie (1997) claimed that the main forms of social control measures such

as taboos, swearing of oaths, fear of the wrath of the gods and curses were primarily aimed

at bringing about conformity in social behaviour and restraining individuals from engaging

in unethical and impermissible conduct. Therefore, while the traditional system indeed

focused on rehabilitation and communitarian values, it also incorporated mechanisms for

social control and penalties that were part of a balanced system of checks and balances.

Given that these traditional forms of social control are not practised in modern professional

settings, the selective application of only the lenient aspects of traditional jurisprudence, such as interference in disciplinary processes by figures of authority, merely achieves absolution for errant individuals without incorporating the critical elements that could motivate future compliance. Consequently, when authority figures, respected for their role in traditional jurisprudence, intervene in modern disciplinary processes, their primary role shifts to shielding wrongdoers, granting them undue advantages and immunity. Such actions are not in harmony with the modern economic systems within which Ghana's built environment sector is meant to operate, and they present a risk of weakening the effectiveness of systems designed to enforce ethical norms and ensure compliance.

7.3.2 Respect for the Elderly

Respect for the elderly is an essential part of Ghanaian culture that extends into the professional setting. This cultural practice can sometimes create challenges when it comes to sanctioning and enforcement and holding elderly practitioners accountable for their actions. For example, where an elderly practitioner commits an ethical breach of the code and is being disciplined by a younger supervisor, the disciplinary process may be hindered by a need to avoid 'disrespecting' or 'ridiculing' the elder. This practice can make it difficult for younger supervisors to effectively sanction the elderly when they violate the code of ethics. As a result, some younger supervisors may hesitate to enforce disciplinary action against the elderly, as it may be viewed as disrespectful or against societal norms. Respondent P22 provided an example where an elderly architect who was accused of endorsing projects from draughtsmen in contravention of the regulation of the professional body avoided punishment because the leaders of the professional body, who were his juniors were unsure of how to deal with the situation due to his age and seniority in the profession.

These findings align with the literature about the deference that is given to older people in social and professional environments in Ghana (Debrah, 2002; Yeboah‑Assiamah et al., 2016). It is a practice that makes it difficult for especially younger colleagues to point out wrongdoing when it is committed by an older person. Ghanaian culture places great value on age and the associated wisdom that it is believed to come with (van der Geest, 2007; Alber et al., 2008). A key component of this cultural norm is the role of the elderly in imparting wisdom, life lessons, and societal experiences to the younger generation. Under this socio-cultural paradigm, it is generally considered unlikely for a younger individual to possess a greater depth of knowledge or wisdom than an elder. This perception stems from the belief that extended life equates to accumulated wisdom, with the elderly seen as living repositories of knowledge and experience. Thus, by the sheer virtue of having lived longer, the elderly are presumed to have accrued greater knowledge and accordingly deserve respect. Young people who do not observe this norm are thought to be disrespectful and arrogant and can themselves become the target of criticism and contempt. Even though there is some evidence of a weakening in the respect accorded elders in the Ghanaian society (Apt, 2000; Karlberg, 2003), it remains a long-standing tradition that cannot be easily changed.

The traditional paradigm of older employees supervising younger employees, as observed historically (Linton, 1936), is undergoing rapid transformation (Cappelli and Novelli, 2013), including in societies such as Ghana. A study by Chiang and Birtch (2007) indicated that several organisations are moving away from promotion systems that prioritise seniority, adopting instead merit-based models that encourage driven younger employees to compete with and potentially surpass their older peers in the organisational hierarchy.

In Ghanaian society, this emergent trend presents a significant cultural challenge and is of particular significance because, in Ghana, the principle of showing deference and respect to elders extends into professional environments (Debrah, 2002; Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2016). This implies that a younger employee could be placed in the awkward position of having to enforce disciplinary actions against an older colleague. While respect for elders is an admirable aspect of Ghanaian culture, its extension into the professional context could serve as a shield that impedes the consistent application of rules. To successfully implement a global ethical standard within the Ghanaian context, professional bodies must navigate the tension between age-based respect and impartial enforcement of ethical norms, ensuring that all practitioners are held accountable.

7.3.3 Preference for Private Resolution of Infractions

Evidence from the data shows that Ghanaian professional bodies have a preference for resolving infractions privately and discreetly. Participants stated that it is common practice in Ghana for the initial stages of dealing with infractions to be handled privately and sensitively. There was broad agreement amongst participants that this preference is rooted in Ghanaian cultural norms, traditions, and values that places more emphasis on the importance of preserving one's reputation and avoiding public ridicule, embarrassment, or shame. Some participants explained that the Ghanaian way of resolving issues and problems is often through informal channels such as mediation and negotiation. In describing how such an arrangement might work, P24 elucidated that this may typically involve seeking the assistance of a trusted and respected third party, such as a community leader or religious figure to facilitate a resolution acceptable to all parties involved. According to P5, this practice is even more pronounced in Ghana's rural areas where the traditional governance and justice systems are still prevalent.

P19 added that where these informal approaches prove unsuccessful, the issues or the problems can be brought to a formal process, such as a disciplinary hearing. However, even in these cases, there may still be a preference for keeping the matter private and limiting public disclosure. P12 expressed her disapproval of taking this approach to dealing with infractions. In her opinion, this approach often leads to a lack of accountability and transparency in addressing infractions. She maintained that using this approach would result in difficulty in providing a clear and consistent standard to apply, and there may be bias in favour of certain parties.

Several participants expressed the view that a constant stream of allegations or reports about unethical behaviour amongst professional body members will be damaging and potentially lead to an erosion of public trust and confidence in the professional body. Participants explained that it was better to deal with member infractions in private. They argued that airing violations publicly would reflect badly on the institution's image. Moreover, they believed that such bad publicity would make it difficult for the institution to command respect and for its members to attract and retain new clientele. A leader of one of the professional bodies explained it in this way.

> *'If we always put these issues about ethical breaches and the punishments out there in the public, then we are effectively disgracing the institution. As far as the public is concerned, all members of that profession are corrupt. They will not see the reformative or deterrence side of things.'*

It was also observed that the private handling of ethical violations by members was primarily motivated by concerns for the career prospects of the offender. Almost all the interviewees expressed the view that, regardless of the seriousness of the breach or infraction, penalties should not be so severe as to cause irreparable damage to the professional's career.

When comparing the punishments meted out to the severity of the misconduct committed, a clear imbalance in the weight assigned to each was evident. This prevailing sentiment of excessive caution regarding a member's career prospects emerged from several interviews, including the one with P4, as illustrated in the excerpt below.

> *'Regardless of the issue and the need to sanction, it is also important to recognise that this is someone's profession and if some of these things are not handled sensitively, you might end up killing a career that somebody has worked many years for'. – P4*

Another participant also held the view that the sanctions process should consider not only the career prospects of the practitioner in question but also the welfare of family members who might depend on the income that may be potentially forfeited due to publicised disciplinary proceedings.

Another issue of concern amongst participants pertained to the possibility that an excessively forceful implementation of sanctions may reduce the pool of qualified professionals available to the sector. To illustrate this, P20 explained that there are approximately 1000 chartered architects in Ghana. In his view, a sanctions regime prioritizing the frequent revocation of licenses would further diminish this figure. Participants believed that there is a need to maintain a balance between the application of sanctions and the need to minimise adverse consequences for practitioners and the profession.

Interviewees also believed that sometimes individuals involved in unethical conduct may not have acted independently. Therefore, it would be unjust for only one individual to be held solely responsible for the transgressions that may have been committed in collaboration with other unidentified professionals. By handling such matters through

private resolution, the potential for one person's career to be ruined as a consequence of the actions of others is avoided.

Findings from the study show a general hesitancy within Ghanaian society to be associated with championing or implementing disciplinary measures against colleagues. This reluctance is attributed to a likelihood of being perceived as acting against the interests of the other individual. The phenomenon is also seemed to be influenced by a self-preservative inclination that rests on the belief that exhibiting benevolence towards others during their difficulties could incentivise reciprocal treatment when faced with similar challenges.

An opposing view shared by a minority of participants was that conducting disciplinary proceedings in private eliminates transparency from the process and renders it impossible to objectively evaluate the sanctioning process, whether it was equitable or commensurate with the infraction committed. To these respondents, a more transparent process would improve the image of the professional body and signal to the public that professional bodies are serious about tackling unethical practices and act as a deterrent to other members.

Those respondents who held this view felt that, in addition to undermining the deterrence function of the sanctioning process, the lack of transparency creates an environment of mistrust and contributes to a perception that enforcement of the rules may not be equitable and erode confidence in the system. Expressing his frustration about the situation P22 stated that

> *There is a cloud of secrecy surrounding this whole thing. You never know whether sanctions have been applied or not and there is nowhere to go and find out. – P22*

Respondents who shared the above views called for mechanisms such as an open and effective process of public reporting of infractions and an independent oversight of the enforcement and sanctioning process.

These findings are consistent with existing literature, which indicates that conflict resolution in traditional Ghanaian society typically begins with a private and informal approach. As illustrated in figure 16, the initial stage in conflict resolution among the Akan's of Ghana occurs at the household level. The figure outlines the various stages through which a conflict progresses, ultimately reaching the paramount chief only if previous attempts at private resolution away from the broader community have been unsuccessful.
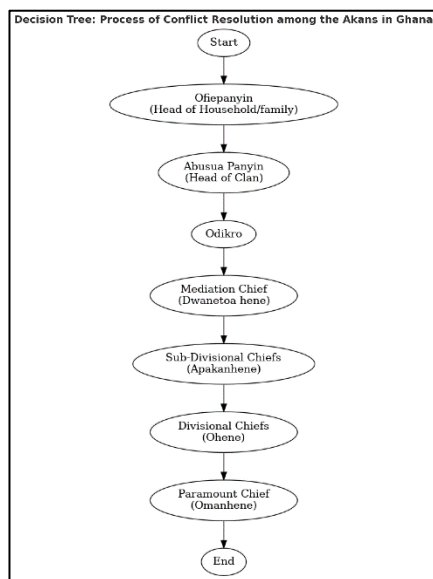
Figure 16. The Akan Traditional Conflict Resolution Process. Source: Based on (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2012)

As figure 16 above shows, the traditional approach has historically been used to mediate disputes among individuals, families, or communities (Kariuki, 2015). Therefore, applying this approach to a professional setting seems misguided, particularly because the professional environment often prioritises established ethical guidelines, compliance with regulatory standards, and institutional reputation over communal relationships and

interpersonal harmony. In the former, the approach rightly commences at the family level, emphasizing private and informal resolutions and centres on mediation and finding common ground between opposing parties (Kariuki, 2015). On the contrary, in the latter, the focus shifts to investigation, enforcement, and possible sanctions.

A more suitable example within traditional jurisprudence, which moves away from the family dispute model, would involve a case where an individual or a community member has committed an offense or breached community guidelines. A closer examination of traditional Ghanaian jurisprudence in contexts similar to individual misconduct or alleged wrongdoing reveals that these traditional methods do not necessarily advocate for a private or discreet approach to justice. Rather, it reveals that traditional judicial processes were conducted in the chief's palaces, where hearings and subsequent punishments were administered in a public manner. Kuusaana et al. (2013) provided a detailed step by step explanation of how chiefs in the Asante and Wa regions of Ghana adjudicated such cases. They described a transparent procedure similar to a formal courtroom setting. The process took place openly usually within the confines of the chief's palace, with no attempts to conceal the proceedings, maintaining the essence of transparency throughout. From their perspective, it was evident that the traditional dispute resolution mechanism was designed to foster a fair and transparent process, aimed at building public confidence in the system (Kuusaana et al., 2013).

It is also essential to highlight the significant differences between traditional Ghanaian practices and the realities of the modern era. Numerous scholars, including (Nukunya, 2003; George, 2015; Ukpabi, 1970; Wahab et al., 2012), assert that both modern African and Ghanaian societies have undergone considerable cultural transformations due to factors such as globalisation, technological advancements, and incorporation of Western ideals. Once characterised by dominant communitarian values, the literature shows that

contemporary Ghanaian society is increasingly shifting towards nuclear family structures and individualistic ideologies (Kayange, 2020). These changes in Ghanaian society raise critical questions about the relevance of traditional Ghanaian approaches in contemporary professional settings dominated by capitalist principles.

Other respondents argued that withholding information about ethical violations was necessary to preserve the professional image and reputation of the professional body. However, this argument appears counterintuitive. A more logical stance would be that a lack of transparency could, in fact, tarnish the public's perception of the professional body. Therefore, the public is more likely to hold professional bodies in higher esteem if they enforce their ethical standards, transparently discipline erring members, and publicise the penalties imposed on those found guilty. Indeed, the view that the non-disclosure of ethical violations serves to preserve a professional body's professional image and reputation diverges from the practices of other professional bodies in Ghana. For example, the Ghana Medical and Dental Council routinely discloses its disciplinary actions against members openly, including citing the names of penalised members and the reasons for their expulsion (Ghanaweb, 2022; Wiafe, 2021). Similarly, professional bodies in other jurisdictions who uphold the value of openness concerning these matters have stated their reasons, indicating that transparency enhances public trust and bolsters confidence in the integrity of their profession (Solicitors Regulation Authority, 2019).

Another reason respondents offered to justify the use of private resolution procedures was the belief that public hearings and punishments could irreparably harm the careers and future opportunities of the offending practitioners. This view overlooks the severe consequences of ethical violations, which have, in some instances, led to the loss of life (Quaicoe, 2023). It also disregards the need to set a precedent through visible consequences to deter future transgressions. On the other hand, it's worth noting that

disciplinary measures can include rehabilitation procedures, offering a path back for offenders. Therefore, except for the most serious breaches, such measures do not necessarily have to be career-ending.

The empirical data shows that the current disciplinary practices and procedures within professional bodies operating in the Ghanaian built environment sector are characterised by a noticeable lack of transparency. The veiled nature of the existing procedures obscures and impedes a comprehensive understanding of how Ghanaian professional bodies deal with professional misconduct. The literature shows that the existing practices have contributed to the continued incidence of unethical practices in the sector (Akosa et al., 2020; Callistus and Clinton, 2016; Ofori-Kuragu et al., 2016; Ameyaw et al., 2017; Laryea, 2010) as it fosters an environment in which impunity thrives and where there is no fear of consequences. The lack of transparency in the existing enforcement processes would have significant implications for efforts to improve ethical conduct in the sector and means that transparency must be a key anchor in any reforms, such as introducing and implementing global ethical standards in the sector.

7.3.4 The Practice of Gift Giving

Participants unanimously stated that the practice of gift-giving is a deeply embedded Ghanaian norm that is generally regarded as a positive and acceptable social custom. Some participants explained that gifts are given for several reasons. Elaborating further on this, P16 explained that gift-giving is a common practice among friends and family members in Ghana and can be offered as a token of appreciation, a demonstration of respect, or as a way of expressing affection or gratitude. According to P16, the act of giving gifts plays a critical role in building and fortifying social relationships within the Ghanaian community.

He also indicated that the practice is not merely confined to informal settings but also permeates professional settings.

> *As a people we are brought up to show appreciation. So, for instance when you are going to see a chief, even though that person hasn't done anything for you, you send a drink as a token of your respect. So, in the same context when you are approaching maybe the head of an institution our culture requires that you bring a gift as a mark of respect – P16*

Indeed, some respondents observed that gift-giving had become such an indispensable facet of Ghanaian business practice that foreigners, such as the Chinese, who do business in the country also engage in it. Respondents struggled to give clear and consistent answers when asked how they would distinguish between a gift and a bribe. The answers they gave ranged from using one's gut feeling to trying to second guess or read the minds of people offering them a gift. While respondents acknowledged the cultural importance of gift-giving in Ghana, they agreed that the practice can often blur the lines between genuine generosity and attempts to exert influence. The exchange below demonstrates the existing ambiguity that complicates the distinction between bribery and gift-giving.

> **Researcher:** *How do practitioners navigate this very tricky issue of gift giving.*

> **Participant P9 - LP:** *Its very simple indeed. You take the gift, but you should not be influenced by it.*

> **Researcher:** *How can you take the gift and not be influenced by it. I don't quite understand. That would be very difficult right?*

> *Participant P9 - LP: No. It is actually very easy to navigate. You have to make sure your professional practice is brought to bear on your decisions. Pretend as if the gift was never even given.*

> *Researcher: How about if you know that this gift is being given to influence you.*

> *Participant P9 - LP: If that is their reason, do not accept the gift.*

> *Researcher: And if you do not know that and accept the gift then what happens.*

> *Participant P9 - LP: (he laughs) Well then that is too bad for you. You would have accepted a bribe which is a crime (laughing)*

A few interviewees gave examples of their own experiences where they had accepted seemingly harmless gifts, only to discover later that the gift giver intended to sway a decision or gain an unfair advantage over others. Some respondents said their organisations had established gift-giving policies, while others were unsure whether such policies existed. Even where policies had been put in place, some respondents expressed scepticism about their effectiveness, suggesting that they were not being strictly followed. For example, P17 reported that although her organization had a gift-giving policy she had doubts about whether it was being adhered to in practice.

> *'we have a gifts policy where instead of giving any one individual money as a gift, clients would have to make out a cheque to the directorate which would then be distributed to all the staff who performed the service. This was to shield individuals from direct influence. However, I heard several stories of colleagues receiving cash and not reporting it'.*

Most participants shared that while giving and receiving gifts is not an unethical cultural practice in Ghana, there is a growing awareness that within the professional context, an effective gift-giving policy is crucial to ensure that the practice does not promote unethical behaviour. These findings align with existing literature. Kuada and Chachah (1999) assert that gift-giving has deep roots in Ghanaian culture and tradition. This cultural norm is further supported by the local Ghanaian proverb 'Yemfa nsa pan nko ahenfie,' which states that one should not go to the chief's palace empty-handed. According to various scholars, gift-giving in Ghanaian culture serves multiple purposes: it establishes goodwill, builds rapport between individuals and groups, and functions both as a mark of respect and as a gesture of appreciation, particularly in contexts such as being granted an audience by a chief (Kuada and Chachah, 1999; Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2016). In consonance with the findings from the empirical data, Yeboah-Assiamah et al. (2016) also observed that this cultural practice has now been superimposed onto the Ghanaian professional setting. Such is the extent of this incorporation that officials and persons in positions of authority now expect members of the public who require services from their departments to present them with gifts, similar to the expectations when visiting a chief's palace. For example, some civil servants are known to deliberately frustrate and delay routine administrative tasks if their expectations and demand for these gifts are not met (*ibid*). According to UNODC (2022), in 2021, a total of roughly 5 billion Ghanaian cedis (just over £69,500,000) was paid as bribes by Ghanaians to public officials to facilitate routine services. Typically, these sums would have been given as bribes disguised as gifts (UNODC, 2022).

Although it is less common in most Western societies (Li, 2020), in many other cultures, gift-giving is a widely practiced and cherished tradition. The practice is not unique to the Ghanaian culture or professional environment. Gift giving is also known to exist in other African countries (Adewale and Khalid, 2016; Harms, 2000), and in other parts of the

world such as in China where it is commonly referred to as *guanxi* (Ledeneva, 2008), *blat* in Russia (Ledeneva, 2008), *wasta* in most Arab nations (Transparency International, 2019), and *jeopdae* in South Korea (Carpenter and Moon, 2021).

If the widespread practice of gift-giving in the Ghanaian built environment sector is permitted to persist in its current form, it would serve as a conduit for unethical practices and pose a significant obstacle to one of the key agendas of the IESC, which is to level ethical practice within the global profession. Solutions adopted in other jurisdictions such as in the UK includes the provision of clear rules surrounding the giving and receiving of gifts. As embodied in their codes of conduct, the RICS for example expects its members (practitioners) and firms not to allow themselves to be improperly influenced by others through the use of gifts, payments or any other form of hospitality (RICS, 2021). Firms and organisations observe this rule typically by implementing a gift giving policy that provides their practitioners with clear guidelines on what to do when they are given gifts. Guidelines will usually be included in a gift giving policy which includes a number of provisions and directives such as:

1. What can or cannot be received as a gift

2. The acceptable value of gifts (typically specified to be nominal and in non-cash form)

3. From whom gifts can be received or to whom they can be given

4. A stipulation that the gift must be of a 'one-off' or irregular nature

5. Record keeping or documentation process associated with giving or receiving gifts

Wilkinson (2018) noted that a key feature of appropriate gift-giving is that all gifts should be given openly and transparently. Therefore, the approach outlined above significantly alleviates the challenges commonly associated with distinguishing between a bribe and a genuine gift. The lack of clear, transparent procedures, coupled with a weak sanctions and

enforcement framework in the Ghanaian built environment sector, have contributed to the current ambiguity surrounding the practice of gift-giving in the built environment sector in Ghana. To address this, the sector must formulate and implement a comprehensive gift-giving policy that provides unequivocal and transparent guidelines on both receiving and giving gifts. Enhancing transparency in this manner will reduce the challenges often linked to the presentation of bribes disguised as gifts and mitigate the risk of allegations of unethical conduct.

7.3.5 Political interference

Findings from the study link various ethical and procedural violations to the influence exerted by political actors. P13 explained that tendering for public projects is often characterised by unethical practices directly at the behest of politicians. These practices range from interfering with the tendering process to favour allies or cronies, weakening the enforcement of quality standards, hiring practitioners not in good standing with their professional bodies, and ignoring technical advice that requires compliance with ethical procedures.

Focusing on their tendency to interfere with the tendering and procurement processes on public sector projects, respondents stated that typically, this takes the form of politicians instructing or coercing technical operatives to ignore laid down procedures for the benefit of particular firms or individuals. P5 contrasts this approach with the procedures observed on international projects where there is strict compliance with all established tendering procedures to ensure value for money and the allocation of projects solely based on merit. In the local context however, politicians push for expediting procurement and tendering processes without any justification, merely for handing an advantage to their allies or cronies.

"We often work in an environment where there are always pressures from politicians wanting something to be procured so quickly or a project to be given to a contractor so quickly that there is actually no time sit down and evaluate or do diligence as we should". – P11

Efforts by the professional bodies to punish errant members are compromised by politicians who ignore the sanctions handed down by these bodies and employ or contract with members who are no longer in good standing. Most respondents indicated that this blatant disregard for the sanction's regime weakened their effectiveness and the overall ability of the professional body to promote ethical behaviour. Citing an example of this P9 – LP expressed that

'Getting sanctioned by your professional body does not mean you cannot practice in Ghana. Those with political connections can even manoeuvre and get juicy jobs which should have gone to a professional in good standing. I am even sometimes envious of the projects that these people who have been expelled can get.' – P9 - LP

Political interference also manifests in the subversion of the supervisory function of technical officials. Respondents explained that politicians could overrule efforts by technical officials to enforce quality standards on projects being delivered by their contractor friends and cronies. Often this emboldens contractors who feel able to rebuff directives from technical operatives to comply with contractual procedures such as payment processes, quality and time requirements. P3 explained that the entire construction process is embroiled in political manoeuvring. He stated that some contractors draw so much power from their political connections that technical operatives and civil servants responsible for overseeing their work are apprehensive of doing so for fear of

losing their positions or being otherwise victimised. Another respondent gave an example of his friend who had missed out on promotions because he tried to ensure the strict implementation of an architectural design by a politically connected contractor.

Other participants also reported that leaders who are political appointees tend to ignore guidance when it comes to making ethical choices, insisting that as political leaders, they bear ultimate responsibility and therefore have the final say. Respondents said that this discourages efforts to improve ethical behaviour and creates a sense of despair, given the conviction among practitioners that advice, no matter how well intended, will be routinely ignored while unethical practices persist.

The study found that the procurement process of public sector projects has become so politicised and perverted that it has undermined the credibility and transparency of the public sector procurement process. Consequently, some professionals who uphold ethical practices hesitate to take up jobs or be involved with contracts on government-funded projects. Indeed, P7 framed it as a moral choice in a system in which adherence to the professional code of ethics is often incompatible with professional advancement. He explained that there is a sense of disillusionment among professionals, highlighting a challenging reality for those professionals who continue to prioritise ethical conduct in their work.

The above findings are consistent with findings from the literature. Indeed, several studies have identified that political interference is one of the greatest facilitators of unethical practices within the Ghanaian construction sector (Agyekum et al., 2021; Asante et al., 2018; Kuoribo et al., 2021; Manu et al., 2015). A study by Osei–Owusu et al. (2014) reported that, a significant portion of Ghanaian politicians believe they have the prerogative to interfere in procurement processes, a practice that frequently results in poor

and illogical procurement decisions. Evidence from the data shows that politicians often collude with practitioners to engage in unethical practices or override them when practitioners resist, and the politicians remain intent on doing something unethical. Although professional bodies can influence practitioners to some extent, they hold no sway over politicians who are, in the end, answerable to their voters. These findings have profound implications for the drive to improve the ethical environment in the Ghanaian built environment sector. The power imbalance between practitioners and politician's means those practitioners who work with politicians will always come under pressure to engage in unethical practices themselves or be forced turn a blind eye to practices that are unethical. These findings raise questions about the feasibility of an effective industry wide implementation of the global ethical guidelines in the Ghanaian built environment. One implication of these findings is that, even where professionals strive to adhere to these global standards, external pressure from powerful political entities might hamper their efforts. Such external pressures from political entities not only challenge adherence to the global ethics standards but also create an environment ripe for what is known as ethical fading. The concept of ethical fading can be observed through its three fundamental manifestations.

According to Ethics & Compliance Initiative (2015), the first sign of ethical fading is cognitive restructuring. This occurs where individuals ignore or downplay the ethical dimensions of a decision they are making. As a result, ethical considerations become secondary or are entirely excluded from the decision-making process. Relating this back to the findings from the data, this is comparable to the behaviour observed in certain politicians and practitioners who prioritise their unethical agendas over complying with established procedures and ethical standards.

The second sign of ethical fading occurs when individuals downplay their own moral responsibility to intervene in unethical situations. This phenomenon is supported by evidence from the primary data collected. Some respondents portrayed themselves as merely following orders from political superiors, thereby abdicating personal responsibility for any unethical conduct. For these practitioners, turning a blind eye seemed to be the only viable option. They indicated that any attempt to intervene or counter the unethical practices often resulted in negative repercussions, such as being passed over for promotions or experiencing other forms of professional retaliation.

The third sign of ethical fading occurs when individuals downplay the potential harm their unethical actions might have on others, believing that the benefits of their unethical actions outweigh any potential harm. While the empirical data collected does not capture this third form of ethical fading or offer any evidence of practitioners or politicians embracing this form of thinking, it is worth noting that existing literature fundamentally challenges the validity of such a mindset. Indeed, several studies have shown a direct correlation between unethical practices in the Ghanaian built environment sector and severe consequences, such as building collapses resulting in loss of life (Kpodo, 2012). Such malpractices also strain a nation's financial resources (Kenny, 2010), which impacts the broader population by reducing funding allocated for other important national infrastructure projects pivotal to economic growth (Dion, 2010).

The empirical data also shows that some politicians display a blatant disregard for the ethics regime of the Ghanaian professional bodies. According to some respondents, when faced with practitioners who refuse to participate in unethical practices, politicians bypass them to engage the services of other practitioners amenable to their requests. Respondents stated that such practitioners, often not affiliated with the professional bodies or having lost

their good standing, seem free and willing to practice to their own ethical standards without any apparent concern or fear of repercussions.

> *'Getting sanctioned by your professional body does not mean you cannot practice in Ghana. Those with political connections can even manoeuvre and get juicy jobs which should have gone to a professional in good standing. I am even sometimes envious of the projects that these people who have been expelled can get.' – P9 - LP*

The current situation highlights a critical gap in the regulation of ethical practices within the Ghanaian built environment sector. Ofori-Kuragu et al. (2016) identified the voluntary nature of professional body memberships, such as that of the GHIS, as a significant contributor to unethical conduct in the sector. He suggested that this has created a pool of practitioners who evade accountability and engage in unscrupulous practices. While professional bodies lack regulatory authority over politicians, they are not without options to address this issue of unethical influences from political figures. Politicians are heavily dependent on practitioners for project implementation. Therefore, efforts to address this issue should aim to curtail the availability of practitioners who are not members of professional bodies, that politicians could otherwise enlist for unethical activities. The existing predicament arises only because some politicians and practitioners are exploiting vulnerabilities and loopholes in the current ethical oversight framework. Closing these gaps is an essential remedy to deter and curtail the adverse impact of political interferences leading to unethical practices in the Ghanaian built environment sector.

7.3.6 A Fragmented and Duplicated Oversight Regime

All participants agreed that one of the main impediments to upholding ethical practice in the built environment sector is the inability of professional bodies to implement a robust framework for monitoring, enforcing and sanctioning members who breach ethical codes. Explaining the current landscape of governance structure within the built environment sector in Ghana, P2 - LP said that each of the professions has a body that professionals are encouraged to join. He likened these bodies to clubs that have rules, choose their own leaders and are self-funded. The government has no role in or control over how they are run.

Apart from these bodies, some professions have registration councils that are set up by legislation, funded and controlled by the government and mandated to regulate the activities of all professionals regardless of whether they are a member of a professional body or not. P2 - LP pointed out that only registration councils possessed the requisite power and authority to effectively address instances of unethical behaviour by firms and practitioners. This is because the registration councils are established under specific Acts of Parliament by the government, which grants them the requisite authority to regulate practitioners. This includes the power to remove individuals from the professional register when necessary. The registration councils therefore maintain their own register of practitioners, and revocation of a practitioner's registration with the council will result in an inability of the practitioner to practice in Ghana.

Professional bodies, on the other hand, have limited influence. While they too have the ability to revoke a practitioner's membership on their register, this measure alone is of little consequence, as membership of a professional body is not a requirement to practice in Ghana. This finding shows that built environment professional bodies in Ghana are

weakened as they appear to have limited power to influence and drive any meaningful change in ethical practice amongst their members. This weakened position is further reflected in their inability to create the necessary monitoring and enforcement environment for effective ethical practice.

Despite the registration councils' legal mandate and authority to regulate professional practice, which includes ensuring effective oversight and promoting proper and ethical conduct, most respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the council's effectiveness. Respondents strongly felt that the registration councils are failing in their duty to establish a robust framework for monitoring, enforcing, and sanctioning ethical violations. The current arrangement has created an ineffective two-tiered regulatory system which has contributed to a growing culture of impunity and lack of accountability, where certain members engage in unethical practices without repercussions. Notwithstanding the concerns expressed by some respondents about the registration councils, it is clear that these councils are a vital and indispensable component of the existing framework for regulating practitioners and their professional conduct. While architects and engineers have professional registration councils in place, respondents from the surveying profession expressed disillusionment and frustration, citing the government's reluctance to establish a surveying registration council as a major obstacle in promoting ethical practice among its members. Several surveying respondents noted that having a registration council mandated by law to regulate their profession would significantly enhance efforts to promote ethical practice.

These findings broadly align with existing literature, indicating that professional bodies in Ghana's built environment sector are weak and seemingly incapable of establishing the necessary monitoring and enforcement environment for effective ethical practice. However, this issue of weak institutional oversight is not unique to the built environment

sector, it is a widespread issue affecting multiple sectors in Ghana (Draman, 2020; Serrano and Díez, 2022). The literature identifies several factors contributing to this perceived weakness, with the first relating to the non-compulsory nature of professional membership in certain fields such as surveying (Donkor-Hyiaman, 2014; Ofori-Kuragu et al., 2016). Additionally, Ofori-Kuragu et al. (2016) highlight the concern of duplicate oversight mechanisms. Indeed, numerous studies (Ahadzie, 2009; Donkor-Hyiaman, 2014; Ofori, 2012; Ofori-Kuragu et al., 2016) have identified that a lack of coordination among the various agencies has led to an incoherent approach to addressing key sector issues, including unethical professional conduct. Whilst some efforts towards progress have been made with the formation of the Ghana Chamber of Construction Industry (GCCI) in 2018 (Owusu-Manu, 2020), the goal of centralising governance and regulation (Bomanso Issah, 2021; Donkor-Hyiaman, 2014) remains elusive, partly due to resistance from those favouring the status quo (Bomanso Issah, 2021).

An examination of unethical behaviours in the Ghanaian built environment sector reveals a vicious cycle that involves political interference and institutional weaknesses. On the one hand, weak institutions, characterised by inadequate monitoring, poor enforcement mechanisms, and fragmented responsibilities, become susceptible to political manipulation and interference. On the other hand, widespread political interference undermines the ability of institutions to operate effectively, thereby reinforcing their inherent weaknesses and creating a self-perpetuating loop. Disrupting this cycle is crucial for enhancing ethical practices in the sector. The absence of a centralised agency to guide change and addressing industry-wide issues has also hindered effective regulation. These findings show that introducing the IESC's global ethics standards in Ghana would face significant obstacles if the existing enforcement infrastructure remained inadequate. Streamlining the existing regulatory framework could help to provide the strategic direction and oversight needed,

and ultimately contribute to a more robust and well-regulated built environment sector in Ghana.

7.3.7 Attitude Disparities Between Local and International Projects

Despite the uncovering of widespread instances of unethical practices in Ghana, the findings from the interviews also indicate that the majority of Ghanaian practitioners were careful not to engage in unethical practices when commissioned to work on international projects such as those sponsored by renowned organisations like the World Bank, UN, IMF etc. This change in approach when working on such projects seems to stem from two main reasons. First, there is a shared awareness among practitioners that these international projects operate strict prohibition against unethical conduct and practices. Secondly, these projects employ highly effective monitoring mechanisms and processes, coupled with the genuine threat of serious consequences for any breaches of ethical standards. Although not all the interviewees had experience working on such projects, they were all fully aware of the notorious reputation of a zero-tolerance policy regarding unethical practices mandated by internationally funded projects. Some with experience working on these projects also attested to a strict framework of compliance monitoring processes and procedures to ensure stringent adherence to ethical practice guidelines.

This is in clear contrast to the sanctioning and enforcement protocols on local projects. P21 observed that there appears to be a need for more oversight on local projects. He asserted that ethical violations, wherever they occur, often go undetected, raising questions about the feasibility of enforcing and sanctioning breaches if they are not detected in the first instance. In his view, the current system is afflicted with a myriad of problems, with no one actively monitoring and enforcing sanctions where necessary.

The findings above support evidence from previous studies which identified that a mild sanctions regime in Ghana was a key contributory factor to the prevalence of unethical practices in Ghana (Ayamdoo Salifu, 2022). However, where the employing organisation is an international body, monitoring, enforcement and sanctions are applied without leniency which serves as a deterrent and drives ethical conduct (The World Bank, 2013).

These findings expose clear inconsistencies in the ethical behaviour of Ghanaian practitioners when contrasting their work on local and international projects. This discrepancy challenges the prevailing notion that certain sociocultural norms, such as gift-giving, exploited to perpetuate unethical practices, are an intrinsic part of the Ghanaian culture that is inseparable from the professional context. The results clearly demonstrate that the argument for accommodating certain contextual practices in the application of global standards is not universally true. These insights therefore lend support to the proponents of moral objectivism and the deontological perspective on ethics, affirming that certain ethical principles, such as the categorical imperative, may indeed hold true regardless of cultural considerations. There is a need to look beyond ethical relativism as an explanation for the widespread unethical practices observed in the Ghanaian built environment sector. If ethical relativism doesn't fully explain these practices, then other theories must be explored. Two such compelling theories are 'convenient relativism,' as proposed by Parboteeah and Cullen (2017), and 'cognitive dissonance,' which was first introduced by Leon Festinger in 1957 (Bruner et al., 1957).

According to Parboteeah and Cullen (2017), when ethical relativism is taken to the extreme, it can lead to a situation known as convenient relativism. In this context, various unethical behaviours and practices are justified under the guise of ethical relativism. This theory suggests that those who insist on modifications to global standards before their implementation are likely driven more by convenience than by cultural considerations. As

shown by the empirical data collected, although some Ghanaian practitioners insist on making allowances for socio-cultural norms in their local practice, when working on international projects with stricter monitoring mechanisms and consequences for ethical breaches, practitioners from the same context are suddenly able to adhere to higher ethical guidelines and regulations. Convenient relativism, therefore, helps to understand how the theory of cultural relativism could be manipulated for self-serving purposes.

Cognitive dissonance is another theory that offers some explanation to the observed differences in ethical practices and behaviour. First introduced by Leon Festinger in 1957 (Festinger, 1962; Bruner et al., 1957), this theory is based on the idea that people naturally strive for inner harmony. Where they encounter conflicts or inconsistencies, individuals are driven to change their thoughts or actions to reduce or eliminate those discrepancies within themselves (Cooper, 2007). According to Harmon-Jones and Mills (2019), the higher the intensity or the degree of internal conflict, the stronger the impulse or urgency for the person to alleviate such tension. For example, an individual who holds honesty as a core value but tells a lie will find that this behaviour (telling a lie) clashes with their deeply held belief (honesty), creating an unsettling feeling known as cognitive dissonance. To alleviate this discomfort and reach a state of inner calm, the individual might attempt to resolve the conflict in various ways. According to Tueanrat and Alamanos (2023), this could include:

1. Modifying their behaviour by confessing their dishonesty.
2. Diminishing the perceived seriousness of the discrepancy, such as dismissing the lie as trivial.
3. Reshaping their belief system, such as deciding that certain lies may be acceptable under specific circumstances.

Cognitive dissonance sheds light on the contrasting ethical behaviours observed among Ghanaian practitioners working on local and international projects. For instance,

practitioners may feel compelled to follow the rules when working on projects sponsored by international organizations that enforce strict ethical practices. This pressure to align with expected ethical behaviours may arise from the general ethical culture and the stringent monitoring and enforcement processes on such projects. To achieve a state of consonance or harmony, practitioners align their practices with the prevailing ethical principles on such projects. Conversely, on local projects, practitioners may encounter practices that perpetuate unethical behaviour, such as gift-giving, political interference, respect for elders etc. To resolve the discomfort or dissonance they may experience working in that environment, they might adjust their practices, convincing themselves that such unethical actions are acceptable. In doing so, they justify their contrasting behaviours and conduct on local and international projects. This theory provides a valuable lens to understand the observed discrepancies in ethical behaviour amongst built environment practitioners in Ghana. It explains the seemingly inconsistent behaviour and can guide interventions to promote consistent ethical standards regardless of the project context.

While it may appear at first glance that the increased appetite of Ghanaian practitioners to engage in unethical practices is fuelled by local cultural norms, this understanding is misleading. In a true traditional sense, Ghanaian sociocultural norms emphasise harmony, community spirit, mutual care, respect for the elderly, and the formation of a cohesive society (Dei and Osei-Bonsu, 2015; Nyarko, 2013; Kuada and Chachah, 1999; Michel et al., 2020; Acheampong, 2016). Some professionals misuse these values, exploiting cultural norms to justify unethical behaviour. However, this does not inherently tarnish or brand the culture as unethical. Nor does it suggest that suppressing these values would lead to a more transparent ethical environment within the Ghanaian built environment sector. The evidence shows that strengthening institutions and empowering them to establish and enforce clear ethical guidelines and professional norms will help curb these unethical

practices. Thus, by implementing robust monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, these institutions can ensure that professional ethics are properly interpreted and applied, thereby finding a balance between respecting local norms and upholding professional integrity.

7.3.8 Ethical Challenges in Public Sector Projects

Findings from the empirical data reveal significant differences in the ethical conduct exhibited by practitioners in the public sector and those in the private sector. The marked difference in ethical conduct appears to stem from a widespread belief that government-owned assets are communal property. This belief leads to the perception that misusing such assets is not a serious ethical concern, as no single individual can claim exclusive ownership of something that is considered to belong to the entire community. In Ghana, the traditional concept of public service is often referred to as *"aban adwuma,"* an Akan term that denotes government work or public sector enterprise. Consequently, individuals tend not to be invested in the success or failure of *"aban adwuma."* Instead, they perceive it as distinct from private enterprises owned by individuals who can question unethical behaviour, demand total accountability and higher productivity and efficiencies. According to respondents, the private sector has significantly higher levels of supervision and monitoring, with little tolerance for subpar performance. It was the view of interviewees that private sector employers typically take a zero-tolerance approach to unethical practices. Indeed, some respondents gave examples of where private sector employers have terminated the employment of practitioners for engaging in unethical activities. According to one interviewee, private sector employers tend to take unethical practices more seriously because these businesses are owned by individuals who are invested in their success and reputation. They understand that any adverse publicity resulting from unethical behaviour could harm their ability to secure new client commissions. As such, private sector employers are more likely to prioritize ethical conduct and take swift action when breaches

occur. In cases of suspicion of illegality, private sector employers may also pursue prosecution. On the other hand, the findings revealed that in the public sector, disciplinary action against practitioners who engage in unethical practices or unacceptable conduct usually involves transferring them to another department or position without necessarily addressing the underlying behaviour. Interview findings show a consensus among respondents that public sector workers inadequately paid. Consequently, interviewees expressed that some practitioners in the public sector feel justified in engaging in unethical behaviour to compensate for their low salaries. Indeed, some respondents went as far as to suggest that the employer acknowledges the issue of poor wages. This may also be a reason why the employer is not taking a more assertive approach towards enforcement action.

The findings show that practitioners in the public sector of Ghana display a higher tendency for unethical conduct compared to their counterparts in the private sector. These results align with prior studies (UNODC, 2022), which emphasized the prevalence of a deeply ingrained culture of corruption in Ghana's public sector institutions. This observation is further supported by Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which similarly ranked Ghana unfavourably based on the perceived levels of corruption within Ghanaian public sector institutions.
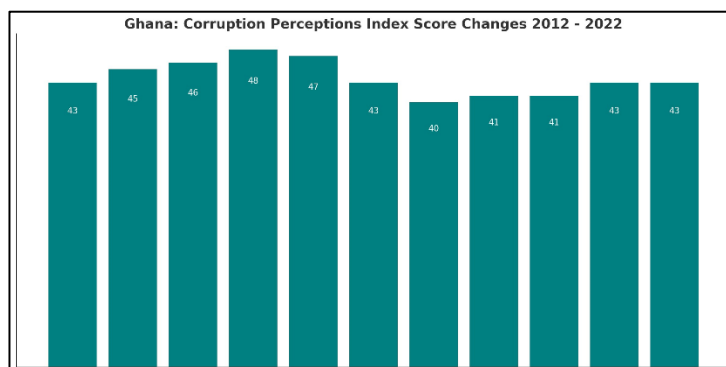

Figure 17. Corruption Perceptions Index - Ghana. Source: Based on (Transparency International, 2023a)

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As illustrated in figure 17, Ghana's CPI score is 43 out of 100, a measure developed by Transparency International to evaluate the extent of corruption within public sector institutions. In this scoring system, a score of 100 indicates a high degree of corruption, while a score of 0 represents a country with minimal public sector corruption. When placed in a global context, Ghana ranks 72nd out of 180 countries in terms of corruption and unethical practices in the public sector. Figure 17 shows a rise in public sector corruption from 2017 to 2020. Following this surge, the level of corruption appears to have plateaued, as Ghana's corruption ranking remained relatively unchanged between 2020 and 2022. The stagnation in Ghana's corruption ranking between 2020 and 2022 suggests two potential scenarios. One possibility is that not enough actions are being taken to mitigate corruption in the public sector, or it could also imply that measures being implemented to combat corruption have been unsuccessful and have failed to shift perceptions regarding the prevalence of corruption within the country's public sector (Transparency International, 2023a).

While the above data and global indices highlight a concerning state of corruption in Ghana's public sector, findings from the primary data collected present a contrasting picture for the private sector within the Ghanaian built environment sector. According to respondents, this lower rate of corruption can be attributed to enhanced ethical oversight, heightened accountability measures, and a zero-tolerance stance toward unethical conduct commonly adopted by practitioners in the private sector.

These findings serve as further evidence that some Ghanaian practitioners exercise ethical conduct selectively, adhering to high ethical standards in certain contexts while condoning and engaging in unethical conduct when situational factors allow. This empirical finding strengthens and extends the argument articulated in Section 4.4.5, Chapter 4. Specifically, it suggests that the widespread unethical practices in the Ghanaian built environment sector

can be attributed more to weak institutional frameworks and a lackadaisical attitude toward enforcement rather than to any inherent proclivity among Ghanaian practitioners for unethical behaviour due to Ghanaian sociocultural norms and practices. As these findings demonstrate, evidence from the private sector suggests that reducing corruption and unethical practices in Ghana's built environment sector is possible. However, to achieve this, strict rule enforcement must be in place, along with a credible threat of sanctions.

The findings also provided valuable insights into why unethical behaviour appears more prevalent in the public sector compared to the private sector, with poor wages cited as a significant factor. According to respondents, it is these low wages in the public sector that compel workers to engage in unethical activities like bribery and corruption. However, the notion that simply increasing wages will mitigate unethical conduct is flawed for several reasons. First, evidence on the efficacy of wage increases in reducing corruption is inconclusive (An and Kweon, 2017; Chêne, 2009; Lindner, 2013). Second, the literature shows that while there is some reduction in perceived corruption with wage increases, the effect is rather modest and insufficient to justify wage increases as a standalone solution for reducing corruption. For example, research shows that a one-unit increase in public sector wages results in a 0.26-unit decrease in perceived corruption levels. This suggests that while higher wages may contribute to reducing corruption, the effect is not large enough to rely solely on this approach (An and Kweon, 2017). According to An and Kweon (2017), to bring corruption in less affluent nations down to the same levels as those in wealthier nations, government wages would have to increase approximately sevenfold, an impractical and costly remedy. Indeed a study by Foltz and Opoku-Agyemang (2015) indicated that doubling police salaries in Ghana failed to lessen petty bribery and corruption and may have even exacerbated it.

Contrary to the common belief that public sector workers in Ghana earn less than their private sector counterparts, a study by Younger and Osei-Assibey (2017) found that they generally earn higher wages than those with similar skillset in the private sector. Their research estimates that aligning public-sector pay with private sector rates could cut the government's wage bill by 20 to 37 percent. However, they also observed that high-wage public sector workers, although no longer significantly earning less than those in the private sector, still fall short of their counterparts in the private sector.

Another key factor cited as contributing to the ethical disparities between the public and private sector is a pervasive sentiment that accountability and personal responsibility are lacking in *'aban adwuma'* or the Ghanaian public sector. These findings show that built environment practitioners in the public sector face a unique set of ethical challenges compared to their private-sector counterparts. Given that the public sector is a significant client within Ghana's built environment sector (Osei–Owusu et al., 2014; Eyiah and Cook, 2003), addressing these ethical challenges is crucial for improving overall ethical compliance. Failure to confront these issues will pose significant obstacles to the successful adoption and implementation of global ethical standards within Ghana's built environment sector. To overcome these challenges, professional bodies must develop and implement a range of strategies tailored specifically in response to the unique issues faced by public sector practitioners.

7.3.9 Unethical Procurement and Tendering Practices

The vast majority of participants in this study stated that they had witnessed or experienced unethical conduct during project procurement and tendering processes, particularly in the public sector. Unfair tender processes were a common issue reported. Some respondents expressed frustration at wasting time bidding on projects they had no realistic chance of winning. They believed that the bidding process is always rigged and conducted as a mere

formality to create an illusion of fairness, with the successful bidders having been predetermined. To illustrate, P10 mentioned a recent news story where a contractor was allegedly asked to submit three different bids for the same contract to comply with the requirements of the public procurement act while ensuring that the contract would be awarded to him alone. All respondents shared a common sentiment that projects were often awarded to individuals who belong to the same political party as the governing party or well-connected individuals with political friends who could influence the tendering process in their favour. Findings from the study shows that a widespread culture exists where the allocation of contracts is often conditional upon the contract recipient offering financial incentives to the awarding party. One respondent explained that, in the local Akan dialect, this is referred to as *'di bi ma me nso ma midi bi'*, which loosely translates to 'mean squander and give me the opportunity to also squander or loot yours and give me the opportunity to also loot mine'.

Interviewees explained that the financial incentive would typically take the form of a kickback or bribery where officials of a tender board receive an upfront payment, a percentage of the contract sum, in exchange for rigging the bidding process in favour of the beneficiary. Those who decline to provide a kickback or insist on doing the right thing are often side-lined, and contracts are given to others willing to participate in these unethical practices. Multiple respondents shared the view that practitioners are often compelled to engage in unethical behaviour because insisting on adherence to the rules will result in the project being given to someone else. If one persists in demanding adherence to the rules, they will not be able to survive in the system because there is always someone willing to fulfil the expectations of those awarding the project and take the job. Voicing his displeasure with the way things are, P10 stated that

Practitioners who insist on ethical practice risk losing lucrative commissions. This system is something else. When such offers come along, if you don't take it, you may go hungry in this country. You can stick by your very strong moral ethics and place a lot of value on your integrity. Just know that others will be queuing up to take all those jobs you are refusing. They will just give the project to a different consultant. – P10

In his view, P13 opined that politicians are primarily responsible for creating the problems being experienced. He noted that although there are established rules and procedures to follow, these rules are often side-lined and disregarded at the behest of politicians. He explained that as a practitioner in the public sector, he had observed situations where politicians generate unnecessary pressure in the system by demanding that a project is procured or awarded so quickly, leaving no time to comply with the laid down processes and observance of due process.

These findings are unsurprising and are consistent with the works of several others (Ameyaw et al., 2017; Laryea, 2010; Osei-Tutu et al., 2010; Osei-Tutu et al., 2010), who identified that the Ghanaian built environment sector is fraught with unethical procurement-related practices such as collusive tendering, cover pricing, bid cutting, inflated tender prices, rates overpricing, tender-based kickbacks, and bribes for projects etc.

Studies by Masoud (2022) and others (Mazibuko and Fourie, 2017; Kaspar and Puddephatt, 2012; Essilfie-Baiden, 2020; Ebekozien, 2019) identified a lack of transparency as one of the key contributing factors to procurement-related unethical practices. These studies found that when procurement processes lack transparency, it creates an environment ripe for corruption, favouritism, and various other forms of malpractice and unethical conduct (*ibid*). They also found that a lack of transparency also

inhibits accountability by making it harder to identify and punish those who act unethically. Thus, it creates an environment where bad actors and others involved in the process can exploit this lack of clarity for personal or political gain.

Bauhr et al. (2010), conducted a study to understand how increased transparency could influence good governance through societal accountability. In countries with high levels of corruption and unethical practices, such as Ghana, they found that increasing transparency to expose unethical acts and corruption had an initial effect of stirring public discontent. However, this unrest is temporary and can act as a catalyst which often leads to taking measures to introduce accountable and ethical governance.
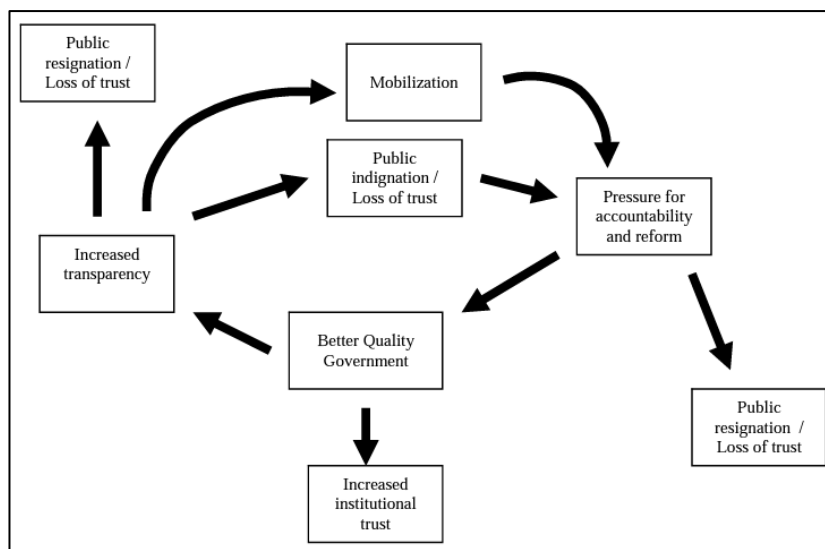

Figure 18. Theorized Positive Effects of Transparency on Good Government. Source:(Bauhr et al., 2010)

Lending credence to the findings by Bauhr et al. (2010), several case studies in Ghana have shown that the public outrage following the exposure of corrupt activities by influential figures led to those individuals facing accountability measures, including prison time. Some notable cases include individuals such as Kwame Peprah (Ghanaweb, 2003), Daniel Abodakpi (Ghanaweb, 2007), Baffoe-Bonnie (Agbobli, 2020) and Abuga Pele (Hawkson, 2018). This evidence amplifies the importance of transparency as a vital instrument for advancing ethical governance and responsible conduct.

For professional bodies, these findings imply that, whilst they may not have any direct jurisdiction over politicians, they can nonetheless exercise meaningful influence by ensuring that their own enforcement and sanctioning process work. By implementing stringent regulatory frameworks and bolstering transparency measures such as effective whistleblowing processes, they can maintain rigorous oversight over their members. More importantly, these processes can also be crucial in unveiling unethical practices across the sector, including exposing politicians who frequently misuse their positions to engage in unethical procurement practices.

7.4 Implementing Global Ethical Standards in Ghana: Creating an Environment for Change

This section of the study presents the proposed changes that respondents indicated would be necessary for successfully implementing a globalised set of ethical standards in the Ghanaian built environment sector. The two key solutions recommended by respondents included a suggestion to increase education and awareness among all stakeholders, and a suggestion to improve the monitoring of unethical behaviour, provide a more robust enforcement environment and to institute a stricter sanctioning regime. These policy recommendations are examined in greater detail below.

7.4.1 Education and Awareness

Education and a need to raise awareness of the IESC standards was one of the policy prescriptions proposed by respondents to address the challenges faced. A common view expressed by members of all three professional bodies was the need for continuing education about unethical practices and increased awareness about the existence of the professional code of ethical conduct. Some members stated that they received a copy of their code of ethics during their induction ceremony and were informed about their duty to comply with it. However, many members indicated that they had not reviewed the

brochure's contents since the ceremony. Despite the professional bodies organising regular continuing professional development (CPD) sessions on ethics, it was apparent that very few members availed themselves of these sessions, particularly since they were optional.

Respondents emphasized the importance of practitioners being knowledgeable about the rules and using them to be assertive. According to respondent P9 - LP, being assertive means declining inducements and justifying one's position using the rules outlined in their professional code of ethics. Instead of merely declining and appearing uncooperative, practitioners should clearly explain that they cannot do certain things because it violates their ethical code.

Additionally, participants in the study stressed the need for a widespread campaign of education and awareness among the members before incorporating the global code of ethics into the local codes of ethical conduct. In their view, compliance would be enhanced by a campaign of education that would acquaint them with their responsibilities under the new regime and provide a better understanding of how any changes would affect their daily practices. This would ultimately make it easier to enforce the new standards since practitioners would be fully aware of its implications and be encouraged to embrace the vision and purpose behind the IESC standards.

The findings revealed that both members and some leaders of the professional bodies were unaware of the IESC standards, or the ethical guidelines contained within their local code of ethics. Hence, the suggestion for extensive educational and awareness campaigns to inform practitioners of their ethical obligations appears sensible. In a communitarian society like Ghana, practitioner awareness of their code of ethics is especially important because aligning refusal to engage in unethical practices with the demands of one's professional code of ethics can serve as a safeguard for the practitioner. However, the current voluntary approach to ethics training would be insufficient to bring about the

increased level of education and awareness that is required. Indeed, the study showed that many practitioners do not regularly attend the ethics training sessions that are currently offered by the professional bodies. While the literature affirms that ethics training can be a vital tool for fostering, reinforcing, and modifying ethical behaviour (Watts, 2020), its effectiveness is contingent upon active participation by practitioners. A more effective approach may involve making ethics training compulsory as a prerequisite for renewing professional memberships. This would not only compel participation but also link the training to the career continuity of practitioners, thereby elevating its importance and potentially improving engagement levels.

Making this change could have some far-reaching effects. Firstly, practitioners would have a vested interest in completing the training, as failure to comply would jeopardize their professional membership. Moreover, tying ethics training to membership renewal would eliminate the excuse of ignorance concerning ethical guidelines. Finally, this initiative would allow professional bodies to regularly update and refine their ethics training modules based on evolving industry trends and challenges, ensuring the curriculum remains useful and current.

7.4.2 Enforcement Monitoring and Sanctioning Mechanisms

Of all the challenges identified in the findings, the issues of enforcement, monitoring and sanctioning were identified by all respondents as the most significant challenge faced by Ghanaian institutions within the built environment sector. Respondents believed that a poor and weak enforcement, monitoring and sanctioning regime is responsible for the widespread practices of unethical behaviour in the sector. Interviewees suggested that addressing these challenges could significantly improve compliance with the local code of ethics and the IESC standards when implemented in Ghana.

To address these problems, respondents felt that the institutions should have a better way of monitoring and identifying unethical conduct. A whistleblower policy was proposed as a way for practitioners, contractors, clients, and other stakeholders to report unethical behaviour. Respondents believed this could foster transparency and accountability within the sector. In a society that values a sense of community, there can be significant personal consequences for reporting someone's unethical behaviour to the authorities. Whistleblowers could be targeted unfairly for speaking out. As such, respondents emphasized that any whistleblowing policy must guarantee absolute anonymity, considering the social and cultural implications that could arise from such actions. Emphasizing this point, P21 stated that

'people will only report bad practices if they have confidence that 1. the process is completely anonymous and 2. that their concerns will be properly looked into. Without these conditions being met, my brother you will be wasting your time'

Respondents suggested implementing a more robust sanctions system to address ethical misconduct. Some respondents said the current system where sanctions are applied privately does not deter wrongdoing. Instead, they proposed that the disciplinary process and the sanctions applied must all be made transparent. Other interviewees stated that private resolution of the disciplinary processes has resulted in a situation where it is not always clear if sanctions have been meted out. Those who held this view also suggested that the current system allows leaders to extend preferential treatment to those close to them or in positions of influence. Respondents called for an open and transparent sanctioning process to help deter future violations and encourage compliance with the rules and regulations. Practitioners are more likely to respect and follow the rules if they believe the sanctioning process is effective, transparent, and fair. Some interviewees suggested that such a process can only be achieved if a new system is implemented. They stated that the

system must provide clear and timely information about the reasons for the sanctions, the evidence or findings that support the sanctioning decision, the criteria used to determine the severity of the sanctions, and the procedures for appealing or challenging the sanctions.

The findings show that respondents perceived the current sanctions to be too lenient and not tough enough to deter unethical conduct. They believed this could be addressed by introducing a new regime of stricter and harsher sanctions. In their view, these penalties should be severe enough to act as a deterrent and to send a message that unethical behaviour will not be tolerated. Most respondents were also unaware of which sanctions are attached to which breaches of the code of ethics. They called for a clearer system that detailed the specific sanctions attached to the various forms of unethical breaches.

Another aspect of the sanctioning process where respondents wanted to see changes made was the composition of the panels overseeing disciplining and sanctioning processes. Some respondents proposed that this oversight function be handed to a new and independent body to oversee the sanctioning process without interference from the professional bodies themselves. This proposal was however disparaged by other respondents who believed that the absence of members of the professional body from such a panel would limit their insight into the issues and compromise the quality of their decisions. To address this perceived deficiency, other interviewees proposed a system where disciplinary matters from one built environment professional body were handled by a panel from a different professional body also within the built environment sector. This suggestion was also discredited by other interviewees, who believed that this proposal did not go far enough because professionals from the different disciplines work together on projects and have built a level of familiarity that could still compromise the effectiveness of such a system. A third proposition put forward was to bring in an annual audit process to review the discipline processes within the period and to establish whether they had been conducted

according to the rules, were robust enough and had followed through on the application of sanctions. These differing opinions shows that there is no clear consensus on a single solution even amongst the members of the Ghanaian professional bodies. It may be necessary to consider multiple solutions or a combination of approaches to effectively address the challenges faced.

These findings align with the literature indicating that poor monitoring and enforcement are key contributors to unethical practices in the Ghanaian built environment sector (Boadu et al., 2021; Quaicoe, 2023). Ineffective oversight mechanisms and a lax regulatory environment foster a culture where unethical behaviour is neither reported nor punished. This absence of accountability perpetuates unethical practices, a scenario currently evident in the Ghanaian built environment sector.

Although several studies have identified whistleblowing as one of the most effective ways of turning the situation around (Welch and Stubben, 2020; Berry, 2004), others, such as Puni et al. (2016), argue that whistleblowing is ineffective if those being relied on to blow the whistle fear that their reporting of unethical practices will result in reprisals against them. This shows that if whistleblowing is to be employed as one of the solutions in the Ghanaian built environment sector, robust safeguards and anonymity measures must be implemented to protect whistleblowers from any form of retaliation. It is worth noting that within the Ghanaian context, the Whistleblowers Act 2006 (Act 720) provides legislative protection that empowers people to expose corruption and wrongdoing in public and private sector institutions without worrying about reprisals (Parliament of Ghana, 2006). Therefore, professional bodies can also benefit from and have the backing of the law to establish their internal reporting mechanisms that align with these legal provisions.

Other measures suggested by respondents to tighten the enforcement and sanctioning regime included introducing a transparent system of stricter and more severe sanctions and

revising the composition of the disciplinary panels responsible for investigating unethical conduct and meting out sanctions. These recommendations align with the suggestions found in the literature that advocate bolstering the enforcement and sanctions capabilities of professional bodies. For example, Becker (1968) argued that stiffer penalties would convey a strong message of zero tolerance and serve as a deterrent against unethical conduct. Similarly, Kahan and Posner (1999) suggested that publicly identifying and shaming practitioners found guilty of ethical breaches can effectively deter future misconduct. According to Olken (2007), routine monitoring and auditing could help in the early identification of violations, whilst Boadu et al. (2021) suggested that the lack of sufficient examples of sanctions meted out is one of the top three factors that hinder the effective enforcement of health and safety regulations in the Ghanaian construction sector.

Some respondents suggested modifying the composition of the disciplinary panels within the Ghanaian built environment professional bodies. Specifically, they proposed including independent panel members from other disciplines, a practice that aligns with existing precedents in other jurisdictions. In the UK for example, the Regulatory Tribunal of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) operates independently of the professional body itself. The panel comprises approximately 12 independent members who are highly experienced and leading professionals from diverse disciplines, such as the legal profession, accounting, law enforcement, health, academia etc (RICS, 2023). Additionally, the panel includes about eight seasoned RICS members who also sit as members of the panel. Collectively, these professionals adjudicate regulatory matters, including disciplinary cases against RICS members and firms. To guarantee fairness and independence, the Regulatory Tribunal is operated at an arm's length from the rest of RICS operations (RICS, 2023).

Given the widespread nature of unethical practices in the Ghanaian built environment sector, merely adopting the IESC ethical standards without first addressing existing challenges would be counterproductive. Indeed, such an approach would reduce the integration of the IESC principles to a mere academic exercise that is ineffective in yielding any tangible outcomes in the face of prevailing unethical practices. To avoid this, implementing measures to strengthen enforcement and sanctioning are critical.

These findings suggest that there is no single, straightforward solution to addressing the ethical complexities identified in the Ghanaian built environment sector. What is required is a multi-faceted approach that combines various measures that collectively enhance both enforcement and sanctions and raise the stakes for non-compliance. Such an approach would be instrumental for successfully implementing the IESC global ethics standards and rebuilding trust and integrity within the Ghanaian built environment sector.

7.5 Chapter Summary

These findings indicate that the professional bodies in Ghana's built environment sector have not yet integrated the IESC ethical principles into their existing codes of ethics. This lack of integration is mainly due to a lack of awareness that the IESC standards even exist. In cases where awareness is not the issue, it appears that leaders of the professional bodies are not up to date with the ongoing development and ratification of the global standards, likely because they do not see the incorporation of these universal ethics principles as a pressing matter. Respondents identified several Ghanaian norms and practices that could impact the effective implementation of these global standards. However, rather than labelling these local customs as intrinsically unethical, it is evident that some professionals exploit them to justify their own unethical conduct. There is a systemic failure to effectively enforce the existing rules, making the introduction of the global ethics principles under the current conditions a futile exercise. No single remedy exists for these

challenges. Rather, a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy is needed to improve ethical practices and restore trust and integrity in the sector.

The subsequent Chapter Eight will explore the potential drivers for change that will enable the effective implementation of the IESC Global Code of Ethics within the Ghanaian context. This chapter will propose invaluable policy prescriptions, pragmatic solutions, and strategies for introducing these global ethics principles. Furthermore, it will emphasise strengthening the monitoring, enforcement, and sanctioning responsibilities of professional bodies to ensure stringent compliance with the codes.

Chapter Eight: Effective Global Code of Ethics in Ghana - Potential Drivers for Change

8.1 Introduction

In pursuit of a primary aim of this study, which is to develop a framework guiding the implementation of universal ethics standards within the Ghanaian built environment sector, two major challenges emerge. The first challenge manifests where specific values promoted within the global standards materially conflicts with Ghanaian local values, customs, and norms. Such a clash can render the application of these standards impractical or entirely ineffective, often facing considerable resistance. Secondly, ensuring the successful implementation of the standards is largely dependent on the presence of a rigorous governance framework within the Ghanaian built environment sector, one which stringently enforces the code and administers deterrent sanctions for non-adherence.

A comparative analysis of the existing Ghanaian code of ethics and the IESC standards revealed some alignment between the existing Ghanaian codes and some of the principles within the IESC's ethical standards. Out of the twelve universal ethics principles outlined in the IESC standards, three (conflict of interest, financial responsibility and integrity) were adequately addressed in all the Ghanaian codes of ethics examined. However, other principles, such as accountability, confidentiality, lawfulness, standard of service, transparency, trust, and respect, were only partially represented. These principles were present in one, or sometimes two, but not all of the three Ghanaian codes of ethics examined. Whilst this partial representation highlights a significant lack of uniformity in the ethical guidelines governing professionals within Ghana's built environment sector, the presence of these principles in the Ghanaian context demonstrates their compatibility with

Ghana's sociocultural beliefs. Thus, it suggests that it should be feasible to integrate these principles into the remaining Ghanaian codes of ethics where they are absent.

Although these findings suggest that many of the IESC principles could be seamlessly integrated into the Ghanaian codes of ethics, it would be naive to not anticipate some challenges. The analysis also indicated that potential discrepancies might emerge due to contextual variations, even in instances where the global principles and the Ghanaian codes appeared similar. For example, both the IESC and Ghanaian professional bodies promoted the principle of respect, which included mutual respect, treating others with dignity, and showing consideration. The IESC expanded on this principle by specifically addressing discrimination and prejudice. However, these two concepts were completely absent from all the Ghanaian codes, leaving a significant gap in their scope. Furthermore, two principles from the IESC standards (reflection and diversity) were not addressed in any of the Ghanaian codes of ethics examined. Incorporating these missing principles, particularly the principle of diversity, may encounter resistance. Much like many other African nations, Ghanaian society appears to have substantial resistance against embracing aspects of diversity, such as LGBTQ+ identities, as part of their accepted social norms (Boateng, 2022; Princewill, 2023). Therefore, a principle endorsing diversity in its entirety could face opposition within the Ghanaian socio-cultural context.

The literature also shows that there are broader systemic issues of poor and effective enforcement of rules and regulations within Ghanaian society as a whole (Boadu et al., 2021; Ofori-Kuragu et al., 2016). In addition to this, the Ghanaian built environment sector has a fragmented governance framework that is often ineffective and incoherent (Osei, 2013; Fugar et al., 2013; Tandoh, 2021). This chapter focuses on identifying pragmatic strategies and solutions to tackle the widespread unethical practices in the sector. It also addresses potential barriers and challenges that may hinder the effective implementation of

the IESC's global ethical standards within the Ghanaian built environment sector. The solutions proposed do not operate in isolation. Instead, they serve as interconnected components, with each bolstering and complementing the others. Together, they provide a comprehensive approach to applying and enforcing ethical standards that can drive a shift to the desired ethical practice and conduct within the sector.

8.2 Centralising Regulatory Practices

Within the Ghanaian built environment sector, the architecture and engineering professions are regulated by both professional bodies and registration councils. The Ghana Institute of Architects and the Ghana Institute of Engineers are the professional bodies, while the Architects Registration Council and the Engineering Council are their corresponding registration councils. For the architecture profession specifically, a unique situation arises where architects in Ghana must navigate two separate codes of ethics. These codes, one issued by the Ghana Institute of Architects and the other by the Architects Registration Council, present a situation where an additional burden is placed on architects, who must navigate the demands of two separate ethical frameworks.

In contrast to registration councils, which have been established by law to regulate all individuals practicing within a particular profession, professional bodies do not have such extensive powers. They only exert influence over those practitioners who choose to affiliate with them. A consequence of this governance structure is that a practitioner debarred by their professional body only loses their professional affiliation with that body. Such a sanction does not prohibit the practitioner from continuing their professional practice in Ghana. However, being debarred by a registration council will result in the revocation of the practitioner's licence to practice, which is a significantly sterner and more deterrent measure. Despite this, there is inconsistency in the presence of registration councils across the professions. For example, the quantity surveying profession,

represented by the Ghana Institution of Surveyors (professional body), currently lacks a registration council endowed with the authority to enforce sanctions or to bar unethical practitioners from the sector (Ghana News Agency, 2010). This is despite the profession's repeated appeals to the government for the establishment of such a council (Ghana News Agency, 2010; Tandoh, 2021; Ankiilu, 2021; Andoh, 2022). Consequently, the regulatory landscape across the sector is not uniform, leading to disparities in the enforcement of ethical practices and sanctions.

Ofori-Kuragu et al. (2016) argued that the existing arrangement has led to professional bodies being perceived as weak because they lack the requisite authority and influence over practitioners. This perceived weakness could result in an inability for professional bodies to strictly enforce adherence to their code of ethics. Boadu et al. (2020) stated that the absence of a centralized regulatory body with oversight hampers the effective enforcement of other standards such as health and safety within the sector. Citing successful models of such centralised bodies in the construction industries of Hong Kong, Malaysia, and South Africa, their study proposed the creation of a single, statutory regulatory body in Ghana. They argued that such a body, backed by legislative power through an Act of Parliament and appropriately resourced, should possess a clear mandate to oversee and regulate the activities of Ghana's construction industry. Echoing similar sentiments, multiple studies (Fugar et al., 2013; Osei, 2013; Ofori, 2012; Ofori, 2000; Ahadzie, 2009; Ofori-Kuragu et al., 2016; Ofori-Kuragu et al., 2014) have also called for the establishment of a central regulatory agency to provide oversight and ensure consistency in the application and enforcement of ethical standards across all built environment sector professions within the country. Figure 19 below offers a visual illustration of a potential structure for a centralised regulatory agency in Ghana. Working alongside the professional bodies in the Ghanaian built environment sector, such an agency

could help streamline governance of the sector including implementation of the IESC global ethics standards in Ghana. For this to work, it would be imperative that the composition of this agency accurately reflects the broad spectrum of professionals within Ghana's built environment sector. The composition of this agency should include representatives from all the existing regulatory councils, as well as those from other professional disciplines who currently do not operate under the governance of a regulatory council. To incorporate an added layer of objectivity and a broader range of perspectives, the inclusion of professionals external to the built environment sector could be considered. This would also safeguard against potential biases or complicity. Drawing from areas such as legal, financial, and academic backgrounds would bring a wealth of expertise and ensure that the agency operates from a broader regulatory and ethical perspective. Such a diverse representation will fortify the regulatory process, making it more comprehensive, well-informed, and attuned to both the nuances and broader challenges of the sector.
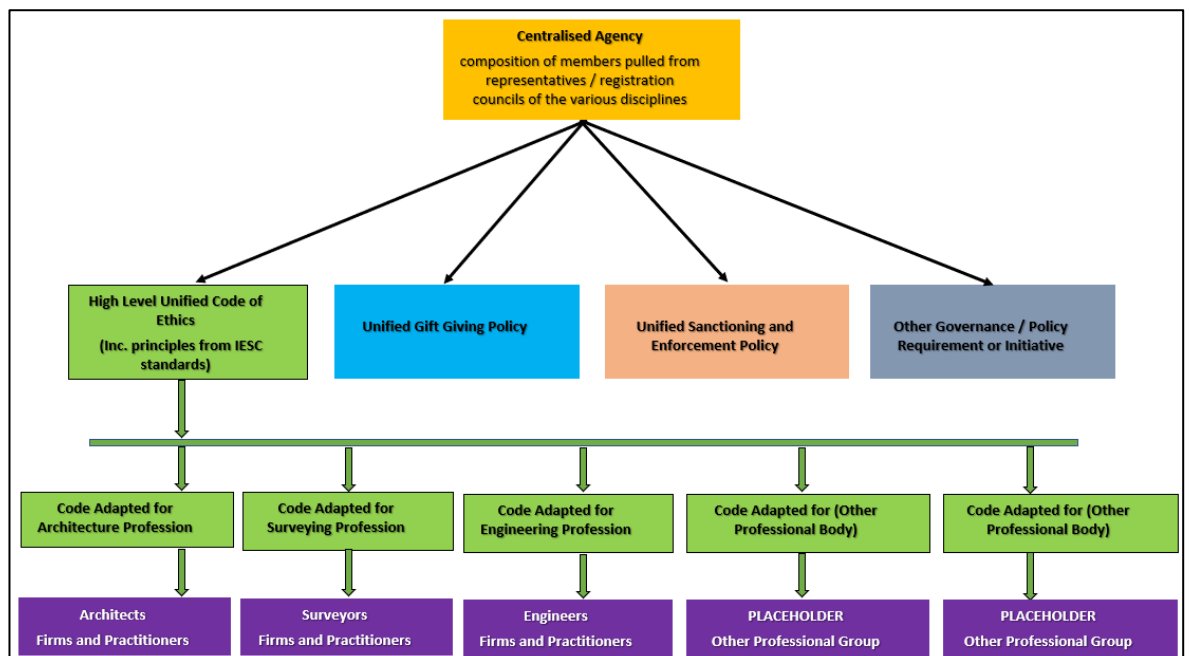

Figure 19. Proposed Unified Code of Ethics (inc. IESC principles) Enforced from the Centre. Source: (Authors Own)

As well as addressing the current fragmented governance framework, an additional benefit from establishing a centralised agency would be its capacity to drive uniformity and promote consistency across various policy areas such as code of ethics, gift giving, sanctions and enforcement etc. Figure 19 above positions the centralised agency at the heart of the proposed governance structure. With authority derived from its legal mandate, the agency can harmonize and oversee the efforts of the individual professional bodies, ensuring that the IESC global ethics standards are consistently and effectively applied across all professions within the sector.

8.3 Strategic Code Design

In crafting a code of ethics, it is crucial to consider the unique ethical environment within which the code will function. In the Ghanaian built environment sector where unethical practices are rampant, the design of a code of ethics should incorporate more rules that align with a regulatory code design. This would provide a definitive framework for guiding ethical behaviours. There is a need to adopt a hierarchical approach where greater emphasis is placed on providing explicit rules, guidelines, and stipulations aimed at curtailing widespread unethical practices and conduct.
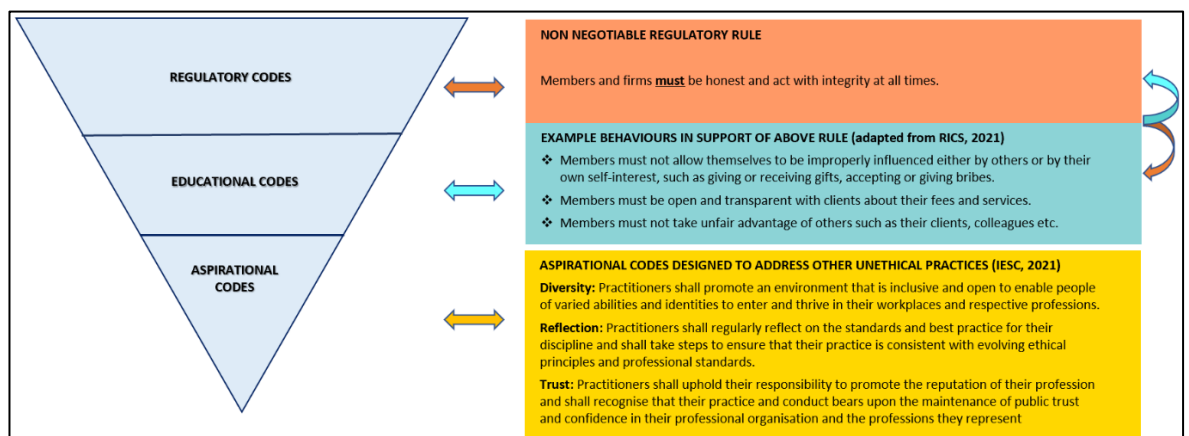

Figure 20. Proposed Code Design in Jurisdictions with Widespread Unethical Practices. Source: (Authors Own)

Regulatory elements are instrumental in these situations, as they stipulate clear-cut guidelines that leave no room for misinterpretation or subjective understanding, thereby eliminating any chance for practitioners to plead ignorance about expected behaviours. The educational elements of code configuration in the inverted pyramid (see figure 20) play a secondary role and are specifically designed to work in support of the regulatory elements, offering deeper explanations behind the rules, practical examples on behaviour, and context for interpretation of the rules.

Ranking third in the hierarchy of the inverted pyramid are the aspirational elements. Aspirational codes are typically non-prescriptive, meaning they focus on encouraging rather than mandating and do not have the same enforcement mechanisms as regulatory codes. These should be deployed to address other less prevalent, but equally significant unethical practices and encourage Ghanaian professionals to strive towards ethical excellence beyond just compliance. Aspirational codes could be especially useful for addressing principles in a global code of ethics likely to meet resistance in a particular context. Existing evidence suggests that achieving universal acceptance for all ethical principles in a global ethics framework is unlikely across all jurisdictions. This assertion lends credence to the position held by ethical relativists, who argue that ethical norms are often culturally contingent. Moreover, even if agreement can be reached on the ethical principles in a code, as is the case for the IESC standards, as explained by some virtue ethicists, different virtues would be imbibed or adopted at a different pace by different peoples based on their levels of familiarity with or prior exposure to particular virtues. This differential rate of adoption introduces what some critics of virtue ethics have often cited as an objection to virtue ethics based on moral luck (Hursthouse and Pettigrove, 2016; Athanassoulis, nd). Thus, whereas some people, professionals and stakeholders will readily attain the desired moral maturity quickly, others will not. Aspirational codes could offer a

flexible and nuanced way to tackle these challenges. For example, in the Ghanaian context, where the subject of LGBTQ+ identities is such a highly contentious topic, the use of non-mandatory aspirational codes could be employed to stimulate discussion, foster gradual changes in attitudes, and provide ethical guidance in settings that have initial cultural or societal resistance to certain global norms.

8.4 Adopting a Stringent and Effective Sanctioning Regime

The literature shows that there is a persistent problem of weak and inefficient enforcement of sanctions in Ghana. Boadu et al. (2021) and Okyere et al. (2021) identified a number of reasons for this. They explained that the problem can be traced back to factors, such as the interference of influential individuals or politicians with sanctioning and enforcement processes, insufficient examples of sanctions and prosecution, unethical behaviour by those responsible for imposing penalties etc. According to Boadu et al. (2021), the lack of sufficient examples of sanctions meted out is one of the top three factors that hinders the effective enforcement of health and safety regulations in the Ghanaian construction sector. Others (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2012; Chereji and Wratto, 2013) have pointed to other underlying factors such as deeply rooted sociocultural practices including unfettered respect for elders (often results in a hesitancy to punish elderly persons who breach the rules), the widespread tendency among Ghanaians to beg or plead for forgiveness when they breach rules and regulations (often results in the avoidance of punishment or the application of less severe punishment). This relaxed approach to enforcement undermines the deterrent function of the sanctioning system and inadvertently promotes unethical behaviour. Despite the prevailing lenient approach towards enforcement and sanctions, there are also several examples within the Ghanaian context where stringent sanctioning and enforcement measures have been enacted in response to unethical conduct (Ghanaweb,

2003; Ghanaweb, 2007). These instances provide encouragement that efforts to find viable solutions to the problems can be realized.
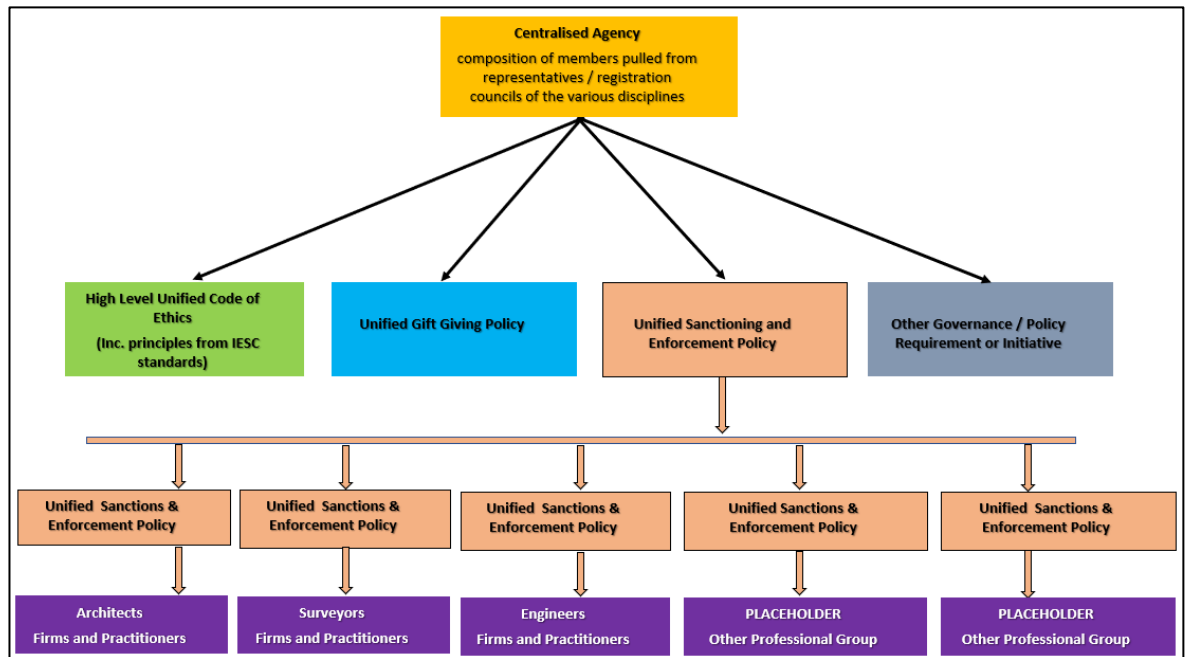

Figure 21. Proposed Unified Sanctioning and Enforcement Policy Regulated from the Centre. Source: (Authors Own)

In the quest to find a solution to the laxity in sanctioning and enforcement, figure 21 illustrates a proposal to introduce a unified sanctioning and enforcement process. Under this proposed system, the centralised agency (Section 8.2) would provide overall oversight for the enforcement of rules and where appropriate, the sanctioning of built environment sector practitioners or firms. Crucially, this agency would possess and reserve the authority, backed by legislation, to impose punitive actions on professionals (firms or practitioners) who violate their respective codes emanating from the unified codes of ethics (see figure 21). Under the proposed regime, the centralised agency would hold exclusive sanctioning authority. This addresses a major flaw in the current system, where sanctions from professional bodies often lack deterrence due to their absence of legal jurisdiction to strike off practitioners where warranted.

Further, the introduction of a stringent and uniform sanctioning and enforcement framework can be supplemented with several other measures. For example, harsher penalties would send a clear message of zero tolerance and offer more of a deterrence for unethical behaviour and conduct (Becker, 1968). Routine monitoring and auditing could help in the early identification of violations and ensure ongoing adherence to stipulated rules and regulations (Olken, 2007). Another controversial but effective policy prescription could be the naming and shaming of practitioners who have been found guilty of breaching the ethical standards of their professions (Kahan and Posner, 1999). Incorporating these additional measures into a unified sanctioning and enforcement framework would strengthen the enforcement process and instil a culture of ethical compliance and accountability across the Ghanaian built environment sector.

8.5 Gift Giving Policies

In Ghanaian society, gift-giving is a deeply ingrained cultural norm that serves as a mark of respect, friendship, and goodwill (Kuada and Chachah, 1999). However, the literature shows that this cultural practice is often abused in the professional context, leading to instances of bribes being disguised as gifts (Debrah, 2002). A potential solution for addressing this unethical practice is by introducing a clear policy on gift-giving. This would establish guidelines and promote transparency about the nature and value of gifts that professionals can accept without crossing into bribery. Given the widespread reports of gift-giving and bribery in the Ghanaian built environment sector, allowing individual firms and professionals to craft their own gift-giving policies could lead to inconsistencies in the application of the policy.

To mitigate the risk of inconsistent application, adopting a unified gift-giving policy across all the built environment disciplines would be prudent. This approach offers several advantages. Firstly, it facilitates sector familiarity with the policy as all professionals

regardless of discipline would be operating to the same guidelines. Secondly, a standardised approach highlights a collective commitment to addressing this issue. Unlike a code of ethics, which may require tailoring to cater to the unique characteristics of each discipline, a gift-giving policy does not have such requirements. Its strength is derived from its universal application, establishing a consistent practice across all practitioners within the Ghanaian built environment sector. Finally, a unified gift-giving policy, governed by the proposed centralised agency, would benefit from enhanced deterrence given the agency's capacity to revoke the licenses of practitioners who violate the policy.
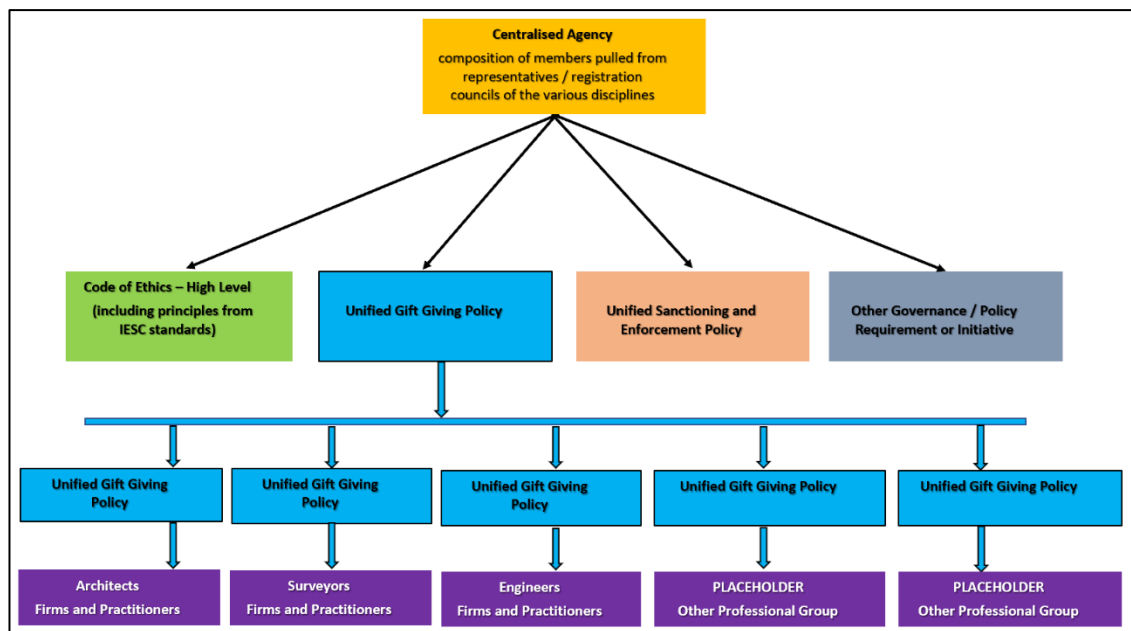

Figure 22. Proposed Unified Gift Giving Policy Regulated from the Centre. Source: (Authors Own)

To increase the prospects for successful implementation, the policy must reflect an appreciation and understanding of the sociocultural dynamics in Ghana. Guidelines must specify what constitutes an acceptable gift, monetary limits, and occasions when gift-giving is appropriate. For example, in Ghanaian culture, there are specific occasions where gift-giving is customary. These occasions must be highlighted in the policy. Clear guidance must be provided for a transparent procedure for disclosing all gifts received, regardless of their value. Additionally, the policy should establish a monetary threshold for acceptable

gifts that is sufficiently low to prevent potential misuse. Where gifts exceed this limit, the policy should be clear that it must be refused. To increase awareness and ensure ongoing adherence, regular training sessions as part of professional CPD should be considered in emphasizing the importance of the policy and to reinforce the reasons behind its establishment in the professional environment.

8.6 Anonymous Reporting Systems

The literature shows that poor monitoring and enforcement is one of the key causes of unethical practices within the Ghanaian built environment sector (Boadu et al., 2021; Quaicoe, 2023). A vital component of any strategy formulated to address unethical practices in the Ghanaian built environment sector must thus include effective compliance monitoring to ensure that wrongdoing can be swiftly detected and addressed. One way of achieving this is through the use of whistleblowing policies. Kaptein (2022) defined whistleblowing as the process where an individual reports observed misconduct to an authority capable of addressing the issues, such as penalising the alleged perpetrators and taking measures to prevent the recurrence of such misconduct.

Several studies have identified whistleblowing as one of the most effective ways of detecting unethical behaviour (Welch and Stubben, 2020; Berry, 2004). Yet still, some studies also show that the fear of reprisals is often a reason why some people do not whistleblow (Puni et al., 2016). According to Organisation de coopération et de développement (2016), maintaining confidentiality is the first element of an effective whistleblower protection system, as when this fails, reprisals may ensue. Thus, ensuring that the information provided by a whistleblower remains confidential, along with one's identity, is essential in encouraging the disclosure of wrongdoing. Within the Ghanaian context, the Whistleblowers Act 2006 (Act 720) provides legislative protection that empowers people to expose corruption and wrongdoing in public and private sector

institutions without worrying about reprisals (Parliament of Ghana, 2006). The Act explicitly states that a whistleblower should not face any form of retaliation or adverse treatment from their employer, colleagues, or any other persons because a disclosure has been made. However, the evidence indicates that in Ghana, concerns over reprisals, stigmatisation and negative perception associated with whistleblowing are prevalent and may act as significant deterrents for individuals considering coming forward (Puni et al., 2016). Domfeh and Bawole (2011) argued that passing an Act and mere legal safeguards are not enough to shield whistleblowers from threats or retaliation. In their view, people will only be driven to report misdeeds when they have complete faith in the robustness of protection systems and are confident that their identity will remain completely undisclosed. Their finding correlates with that of Apaza and Chang (2011), who investigated and sought to understand the key elements needed for an effective whistleblowing policy. They concluded that one of the essential components of effective whistleblowing is proper legal protection for those who whistleblow. Research by Zhang et al. (2013) investigating the effectiveness of external versus internal whistleblowing channels also determined that an external whistleblowing 'hotline' was preferable and more likely to prompt individuals to report observed wrongdoing.

In recognition of the risks and potential backlash whistleblowers face when their identities are disclosed, this study strongly recommends the implementation of an anonymous whistleblowing policy to minimize the risk of revealing a whistleblower's identity. To further augment the credibility of the policy, it is recommended that the administration of this system be outsourced to an external provider, separate from the professional bodies. Such an approach will instil greater confidence in the system and should help create an environment where concerns about misconduct can be voiced freely. These steps will represent a leap towards instilling a culture of transparency, accountability, and unwavering

commitment to ethical practice. The channels for reporting unethical practices could be a dedicated hotline or an encrypted online portal. Extensive promotion of the anonymous whistleblowing policy will ensure that a broad audience is aware of the channels available to report misconduct. This awareness alone can deter potential wrongdoers, as they understand that there is a higher chance of their actions being reported. Promoting the policy beyond the confines of the Ghanaian built environment sector will also signal to all stakeholders, including members of the public, that the sector is serious and committed to ethical practices and has mechanisms in place to detect and address wrongdoings. Thus, the visibility of the policy not only encourages reporting unethical behaviours but also fosters a more ethically vigilant and transparent professional environment.

8.7 Strong Effective Institutions

Most institutions in Africa are weak and ineffective due to poor enforcement of the rule of law, corruption, mismanagement, absence of a strong civil society and political interference (Kumssa and Mbeche, 2004; Aron, 2000; Alhassan and Kilishi, 2019; Birdsall, 2007; Parks et al., 2018). Specifically, within the Ghanaian construction industry, Bondinuba (2012) and others such as Callistus and Clinton (2016) have identified weak institutional capacity as one of the sector's most critical challenges. Ofori-Kuragu et al. (2016) and Adjei et al. (2015) suggested that weak institutions, including professional bodies in the Ghanaian construction sector, often struggle to enforce their own prescribed rules and regulations.

According to North (1990), strong and efficient institutions set the 'rules of the game', including codes of conduct that offer clarity in shaping, regulating processes, and ensuring orderly economic transactions. Echoing similar sentiments, both Brousseau and Glachant (2008) and Dreyhaupt (2006) also highlighted the significance of well-structured and effective institutions. Scott (1987) observed that effective institutions provide rewards

through increased legitimacy, resources and survival capabilities to individuals and organisations who conform to the rules and institutional forces imposed on them. This means that an institution's ability to wield an agenda-setting influence on its members is partly determined by its ability to provide direct tangible benefits to its membership. For Ghana, this will require professional bodies to introduce initiatives that will enhance the value of their membership. Such initiatives can include networking opportunities, advocating for member interests, offering continuous professional development opportunities, sharing best practices, and granting access to databases and resources beneficial to its members in their professional roles. Professional bodies should also promote and emphasise the value of membership as a competence indicator with reputational and financial advantages. Engaging in policy dialogues and leveraging their expertise to shape policy formulation can further enhance their credibility in the sector. Through these efforts, professional bodies can elevate their influence, positioning them to drive meaningful reforms, including effectively implementing the IESC's global ethics standards in Ghana.

8.8 Ongoing Professional Ethics Training

Ethics training is an essential tool that can be used to cultivate, reinforce and change unethical behaviour and conduct (Watts, 2020). Ongoing training would offer an opportunity to remind Ghanaian professionals of their ethical obligations, and at the same time, equip them with the knowledge they need to make informed ethical decisions.

Instead of relying on a generic ethics curriculum, the training program should be tailored to address the most pressing and widespread ethical problems facing the Ghanaian built environment sector. Tailoring training to address specific ethical challenges within the Ghanaian built environment sector will enhance its relevance and effectiveness. Professionals are more likely to engage with material directly applicable to their daily

challenges because they can understand and identify with the issues. The training programme could be delivered in a flexible mode, either online or in-person, to suit the diverse needs of professionals. To ensure that the training is not optional, completion of the training should be made a prerequisite for the renewal of a practitioner's professional membership, thus making it integral to the professional's career continuity.

Ongoing mandatory training will also offer an opportunity to initiate dialogue with professionals on IESC ethical principles that are likely to meet resistance in Ghana. This can potentially help dismantle barriers and gradually shift attitudes towards these principles. As professionals regularly engage with ethical principles through training, they are likely to develop heightened awareness and increased mindfulness of their actions and decisions, which will improve their adherence to their code of ethics.

8.9 Rewards and Incentivisation Schemes

According to Scott et al. (2017), rewards and incentive schemes are grounded in the psychological premise that behaviours receiving positive reinforcement are more likely to be repeated. They argue that although both reinforcement and punishment can effectively modify behaviour independently or together, positive reinforcement tends to produce results more efficiently and effectively than punishment alone. Indeed, the Institute of Business Ethics noted that some organisations are no longer solely relying on punitive measures to deter unethical behaviour but are also developing positive incentives such as rewards and recognition to encourage adherence to high ethical standards (Institute of Business Ethics, 2023).

In collaboration with the other stakeholders within the sector, Ghanaian professional bodies could utilise rewards and incentivisation schemes to reinforce good ethical practices amongst sector professionals. Professional bodies can play a significant role in implementing and managing these schemes or events. They could establish a transparent

system for identifying and rewarding ethical practices. This could be in the form of an annual 'Ethics Award' recognising and rewarding practitioners and firms who demonstrate exceptional ethical conduct and practice. Incentives for such schemes could range from financial rewards, like bonuses or grants, to non-monetary incentives, such as public recognition, advanced training opportunities, or career advancement. Professional bodies could introduce an 'Ethics Certification' for firms and consultancies recognising businesses with strong ethical track records and robust compliance systems. Such certification could enhance the reputation of the firms that receive them, providing them with a competitive edge while incentivising other firms to follow suit.

Moxey (2016) recommends that the criteria for rewards or incentivisation schemes should be clearly outlined through ethical targets, underscoring the specific values and actions being encouraged. This alignment is important because it signifies an institution's commitment to those stated values and principles and communicates its expectations and core values to its practitioners. Introducing a rewards and incentivisation scheme also presents a promising antidote that could counter the widespread unethical practices observed in the Ghanaian built environment sector. As well as the other strategies, over time, a reward scheme could contribute to a shift in the culture and attitudes of the sector towards embracing ethical practices and conduct.

8.10 Improved Accessibility to Code of Ethics

Attempts made as part of this study to acquire the codes of conduct for the Ghanaian professional bodies revealed some significant hurdles and disparities in accessibility among the different professional bodies. While some bodies had their codes readily available online, others required multiple communications and formal requests. Improving the accessibility of the code of ethics in the Ghanaian built environment sector is an essential first step towards enhancing ethical conduct. An easily accessible code becomes a

handy tool that provides practitioners with immediate guidance instead of relying on memory or personal judgment. Easy access to a code will ensure that professionals can swiftly consult it to direct their actions in ethical decision-making. With consistent exposure to a readily accessible code, its principles become deeply ingrained. This means that over time, the values and standards emphasized in the code naturally become second nature to practitioners, helping to improve their understanding and application of the code in their everyday practice.

Figure 23. Advertised Price of the Code of Ethics Belonging to the GHIS and GHIE. Source: (Authors Own)

Except for the Ghana Institute of Architects, whose code of ethics is freely available online (Ghana Institute of Architects, 2016), the code for the Ghana Institution of Engineers and the Ghana Institution of Surveyors was difficult to obtain. It necessitated several enquiries and, in the end, the purchase of a physical copy. Figure 23 above shows that the code for the Ghana Institution of Surveyors can be purchased for 50 GHS, which equates to £4 or $5. The code for the Ghana Institution of Engineers was on sale for 25 GHS, which equates

to £1.75 or $2.23. Such barriers to access are a significant impediment to promoting ethical conduct and practices in the sector. The accessibility of ethical codes empowers clients and other stakeholders, including the public, to hold practitioners accountable as they become familiar with the code of ethics and the standards they should quite rightly expect from professionals. Easy accessibility of the code is, thus, an essential bedrock for an ethically conscious and responsible professional environment. To ensure the broadest reach, Ghanaian professional bodies must consider making their codes of ethics more accessible. Online platforms are effective tools for this purpose. For example, hosting the code of ethics on the professional body's website, making it downloadable and searchable, would vastly improve accessibility.

8.11 Chapter Summary

Integration of the IESC's global ethics principles is essential for the Ghanaian built environment sector to achieve parity in ethical standards with practitioners worldwide. However, its mere introduction in the Ghanaian sector may not bring about the desired shift in ethical practices. The literature suggests that some underlying structural reforms would be essential to successfully integrate and apply the IESC principles within the Ghanaian context. Within this chapter, several proposals have been suggested on how some of these changes can be achieved. Drawing on a range of interventions, the solutions include the establishment of a centralised regulatory agency and the introduction of new policies and procedures to govern gift-giving and whistleblowing protocols. Another key recommendation is to reconfigure the Ghanaian code of ethics to be more robust and effective in providing unambiguous guidance. The importance of strong institutions equipped with rigorous monitoring and enforcement mechanisms was also underscored among other proposed solutions. The next chapter will present and discuss a framework

designed to address the identified challenges and offer a pathway through which Ghana's

built environment sector can effectively implement universal ethical standards.

Chapter Nine: Framework Development and Evaluation

9.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on developing a conceptual framework to fulfil the fifth objective of this study. The chapter starts with a brief overview, outlining the need and justification for the framework, and then explains its design and development. Subsequently, the chapter discusses the framework evaluation process, which incorporates perspectives from selected participants involved in evaluating the framework.

9.2 The Need for the Framework

The need for this framework arises due to a notable gap in the current literature, which offers limited insights on how global ethics standards can be effectively integrated into and applied in localised settings. With a specific emphasis on the built environment sector in Ghana, this framework serves two primary purposes. Firstly, it proposes targeted solutions to address the prevalent unethical practices in the Ghanaian built environment sector. Secondly, the framework provides a pathway for Ghanaian professional bodies in the built environment sector to implement global ethics standards, balancing the achievement of consistency with international norms while respecting contextual sensitivity.

9.3 Guide to Framework Design and Development

The framework has been primarily developed using empirical data from this study. However, the initial plan of using only empirical data to develop the framework was not fully realised. For example, whilst component A of the framework, which identifies the existing ethical challenges in the Ghanaian built environment sector, is purely derived from empirical data, the same cannot be said for component B, which focuses on practical and effective solutions for addressing the identified challenges. The views and perceptions of participants did not provide comprehensive solutions to address all the challenges

identified as prevalent within the Ghanaian built environment sector. Consequently, adopting a pragmatic approach, such as integrating insights from scholarly literature, became necessary to fill gaps that the empirical data alone could not cover.

The specific aspects of Component B derived entirely from scholarly literature included suggestions such as the use of naming and shaming as well as a gift-giving policy, the introduction of incentivisation schemes, the introduction of a centralised regulatory agency and the development of institutional capacity-building measures. Other suggestions in Component B, such as the use of whistleblowing policies (See section 7.4.2, Chapter 7), application of robust sanctioning end enforcement mechanisms (See section 7.4.2, Chapter 7), improving code accessibility (See section 7.4.1, Chapter 7) and suggestions to implement educational initiatives (See section 7.4.1, Chapter 7) were all directly derived from empirical findings. Finally, while the underlying principles of regulatory, educational, and aspirational elements of code design are based on existing scholarly inputs, the concept of a strategic code design, as presented in the thesis, is one that the researcher has innovatively developed from these foundational ideas, tailoring it specifically to work as an effective solution for the Ghanaian built environment sector. Together, the contributions from these separate sources played a crucial role in shaping the framework's approach to tackling the unethical practices identified in the Ghanaian built environment sector while also providing a pathway for Ghanaian professional bodies to implement global ethics standards effectively.

As presented in figure 24 below, the proposed framework comprises three main components: Component A, Component B, and Component C. Each component serves a distinct yet interconnected function.

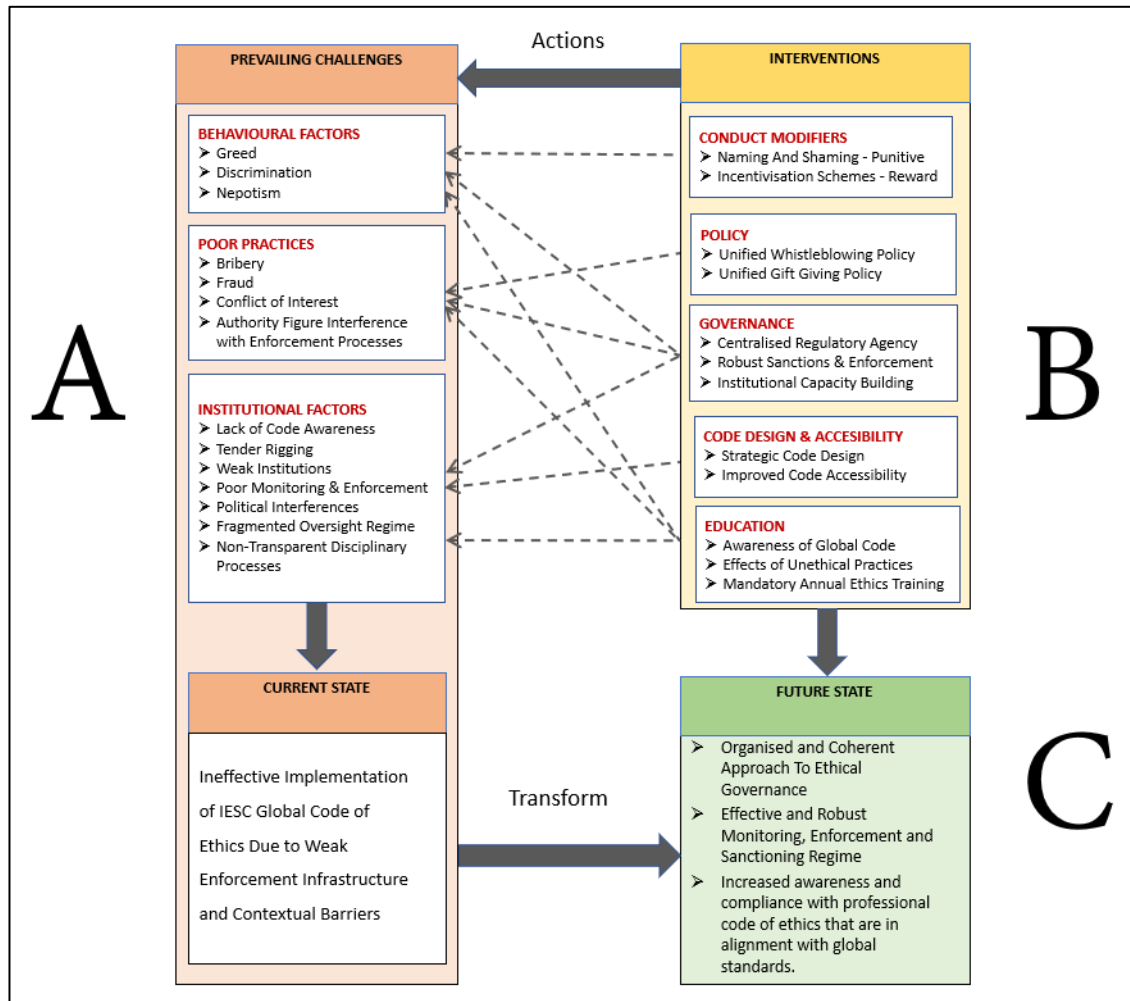*Figure 24. Framework for the Implementation of the IESC Global Ethics Standards in Ghana's Built Environment Sector.*

Source: (Authors Own)

Component A in figure 24 presents a comprehensive overview of existing ethical issues within the Ghanaian built environment sector as identified from the empirical data. This provides a baseline understanding of the current ethical concerns and challenges.
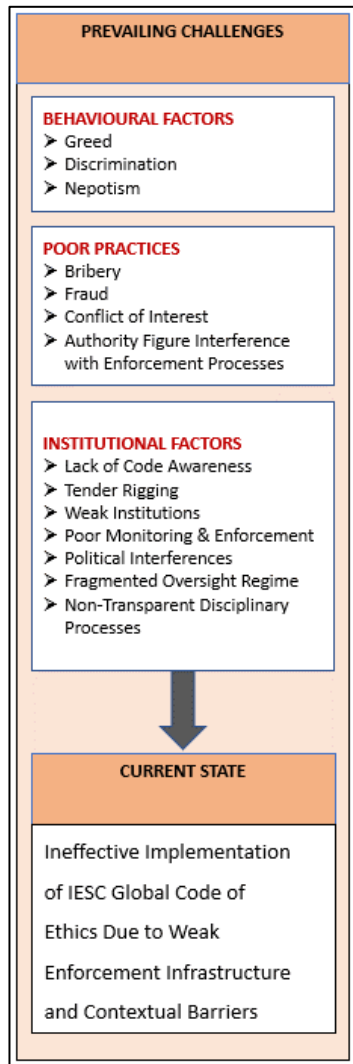
Figure 25. Framework Component A. Source: (Authors Own)

Findings from the study revealed that the Ghanaian built environment sector is beset with widespread unethical practices. These practices have been grouped into three main segments: behavioural factors, poor practices, and institutional factors. In the framework, behavioural factors are those tendencies that influence a practitioner's actions or decisions. These factors often serve as the underlying motivators for actions and decisions that breach ethical guidelines. Greed and nepotism were identified in the data as behavioural factors often manifested by built environment practitioners in Ghana. According to study participants, practices such as bribery and fraud are motivated by greed often because some practitioners prioritise personal gain and enrichment over ethical obligations.

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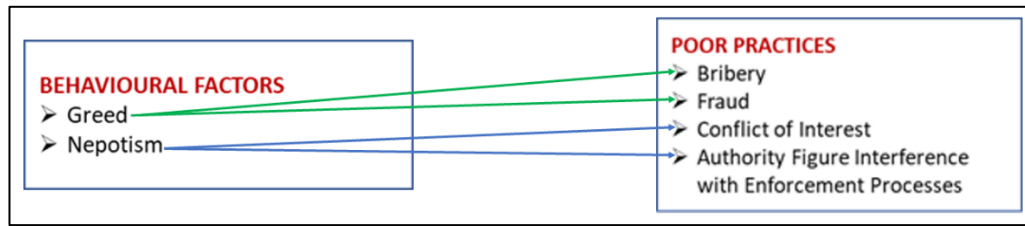
Figure 26. Identifying Links Between Behavioural Factors and Poor Practices. Source: (Authors Own)

Nepotism presents yet another ethical challenge. It involves showing favouritism to relatives in business dealings or employment to the detriment of meritocracy and fairness. As shown in figure 26 above, nepotism often facilitates the poor practices of conflict of interest and authority figure interference with enforcement processes. In addition, component A in the framework shows that certain institutional factors are also significant contributors to the widespread occurrence of unethical practices in the sector. Specifically, the absence of strong institutions with an effective, coherent approach to ethical governance has led to a systemic degradation of ethical behaviours and practices within the built environment sector.

Component B outlines a range of solutions designed to address the issues identified in Component A. The proposed solutions span a variety of approaches, including behavioural incentives, policy recommendations, initiatives to bolster the existing governance infrastructure, educational programs, and a strategic code design approach for integrating the IESC global ethics principles.
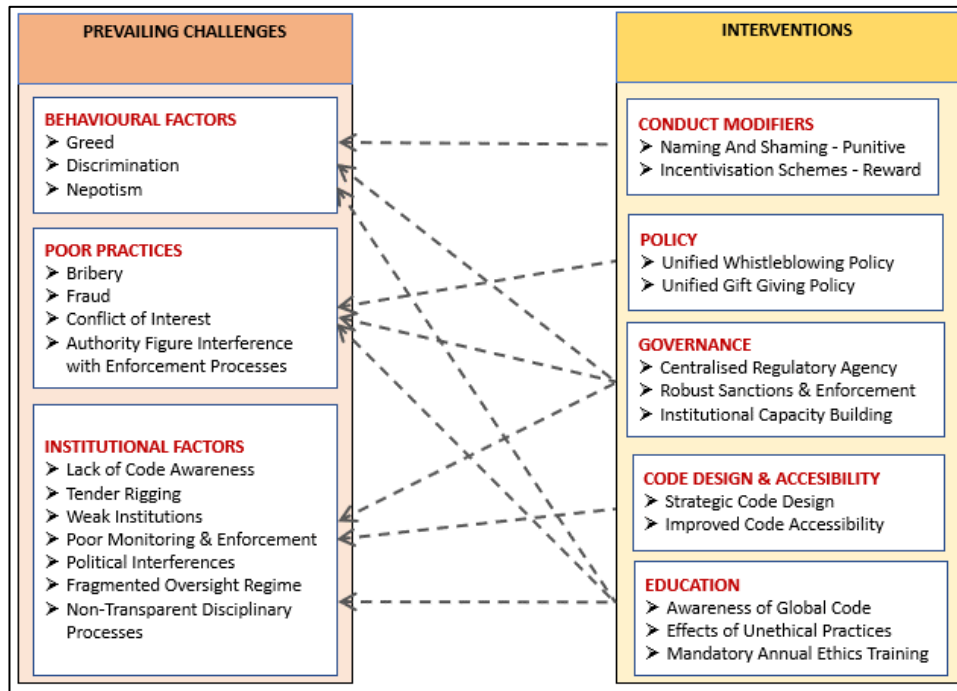
Figure 27. Framework Component B - Interventions. Source: (Authors Own)

To address behavioural factors such as greed and nepotism, the framework presents a range of interventions for Ghanaian professional bodies to consider. These include publishing disciplinary and regulatory decisions to 'name and shame' practitioners violating ethical guidelines and a proposal to recognise and reward practitioners exhibiting exemplary ethical behaviour. Additionally, educational programmes are recommended to reemphasise the potential consequences of unethical conduct. For more severe breaches such as bribery and fraudulent behaviour due to greed, the framework advocates applying robust sanctions and enforcement measures to ensure that extreme ethical violations are duly penalised to deter others. As suggested in the framework, other unethical practices such as bribery, fraud, conflict of interest, and authority figure interference with enforcement processes can be addressed using a range of interventions, including policy, governance and educational initiatives. Measures proposed to address the identified institutional factors have been categorised under governance, code design and accessibility, and educational initiatives. These strategies should be seen as a combined set of approaches intended to work together

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as a comprehensive, multi-dimensional plan to effectively confront the ethical challenges in the Ghanaian built environment sector. The recommendations prescribed in component B have been organised into eleven practical interventions, as summarised in table 11.

Component C envisions the future state of the ethical landscape, illustrating how it could improve to facilitate specific goals, such as increased compliance with the IESC's global ethics principles.

Figure 28. Framework Component C. Source: (Authors Own)

9.4 Recommendations Based on Component B

This section provides practical recommendations for stakeholders in Ghana's built environment sector to improve ethical practices and governance. The recommendations in table 11 are derived from the framework developed through this research, combining insights from empirical data and literature findings. Each recommendation is part of an integrated strategy designed to mitigate existing issues and pave the way for the successful implementation of IESC Global Ethics Standards.

Table 11. Recommendations for improving the ethical landscape of the Ghanaian Built Environment Sector. Source: (Authors Own)

Ref	Interventions
1.	Develop a comprehensive educational campaign to increase awareness of professional Codes of Ethics among members.
2.	Designate ethics training as a mandatory annual prerequisite for renewing professional membership.
3.	Publicise and divulge names and the sanctions issued to members who have violated the Codes of Ethics.
4.	Disseminate Codes of Ethics by making it freely available as a downloadable online document.
5.	Review all existing sanctions to assess their effectiveness as a deterrent against ethical violations.
6.	Introduce incentivisation schemes to reward ethical practice.
7.	Introduce a cross-disciplinary policy on whistleblowing, including the introduction of anonymous reporting channels.
8.	Introduce a cross-disciplinary policy on gift giving.
9.	Integrate the IESC ethics principles into the local codes using strategic code design principles. See Fig. 29 below.
10.	Embark on institutional capacity-building initiatives. See Appendix G.
11.	Replace existing separate Registration Councils with a Centralised Regulatory Council or Agency with responsibility for all built environment sector professional bodies and professionals. See Fig. 30 below.

Intervention 9 in table 11 recommends incorporating the IESC's ethical standards by employing a strategic code design approach. This approach is illustrated in figure 29 below. Section 8.3 in Chapter 8 of this thesis further explains the application and relevance of this approach in the Ghanaian built environment sector.
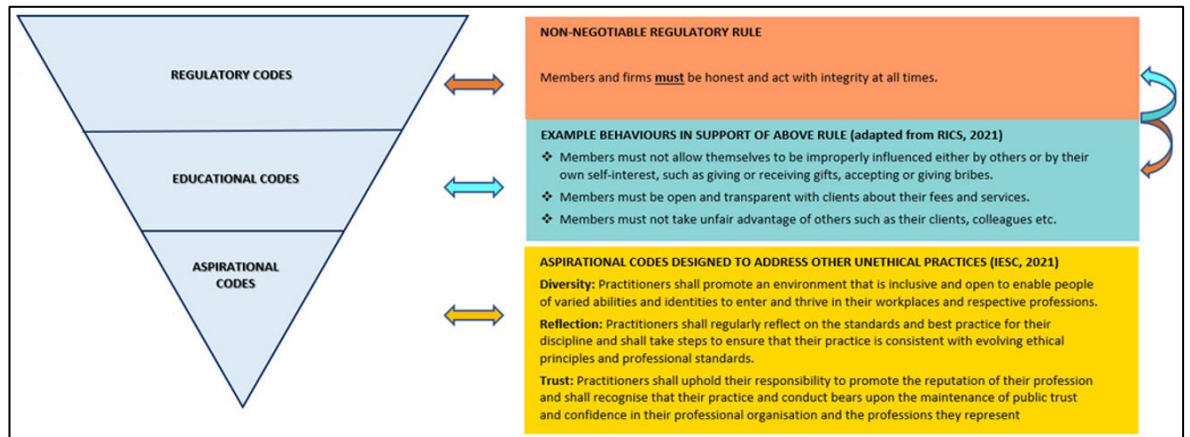
Figure 29. Strategic Code Design. Source: (Authors Own)

Intervention 10 in table 11 suggests that Ghanaian professional bodies should embark on institutional capacity-building initiatives. A range of practical measures on how this can be achieved can be found in the Framework Evaluation Report, which is attached to this thesis as Appendix G.

Intervention 11 as outlined in table 11 above, proposes replacing the separate Registration Councils with a Centralised Regulatory Council or Agency. This new entity would assume responsibility for all professional bodies and disciplines within the Ghanaian built environment sector. The proposed structure of this centralised approach is illustrated in figure 30. Refer to Section 8.2 in Chapter 8 of this thesis for a detailed explanation of the implications and benefits of this recommendation.
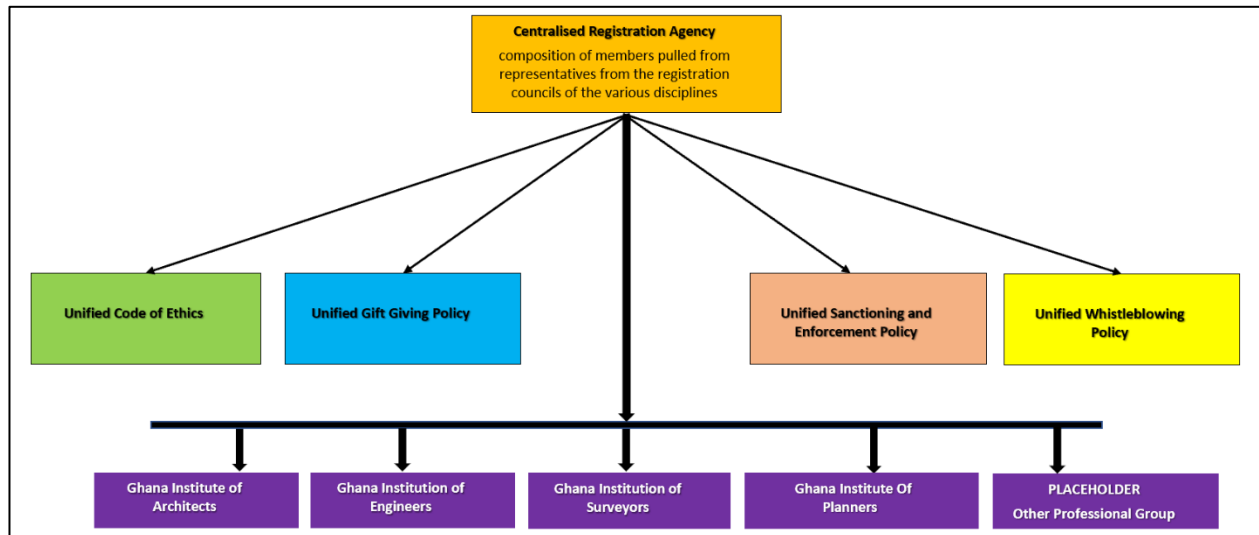
Figure 30. Proposed Centralised Regulatory Council. Source: (Authors Own)

9.5 Framework Evaluation

The proposed framework, including the recommendations outlined in table 11, was compiled into an evaluation report. This report was shared with a selected group of key stakeholders in Ghana's built environment sector for their review and feedback as a part of the framework evaluation process.

9.6 Rationale for Framework Evaluation

Evaluation of the framework was undertaken to achieve the following objectives.

1. To assess the relevance and usefulness of the framework as a tool for guiding the implementation of interventions aimed at resolving the ethical challenges in the Ghanaian built environment sector.

2. To confirm from the perspectives of the selected participants whether the unethical practices and behaviours identified as constituting the prevailing trends in the Ghanaian built environment sector adequately capture the ethical challenges currently faced by the Ghanaian built environment sector.

3. To assess from the perspectives of the selected participants whether the solutions proposed in the framework are feasible and practically implementable in the Ghanaian built environment sector.

4. To solicit feedback from the selected participants on potential enhancements that could be made to improve the framework's usefulness as a tool in addressing ethical issues within the Ghanaian built environment sector.

9.7 Selection of Framework Evaluation Participants

Participants selected for the evaluation comprised a representative from the three professional bodies integral to the study - the Ghana Institution of Engineers, the Ghana Institute of Architects, and the Ghana Institution of Surveyors. Additionally, input was collected from a chartered built environment professional to gauge their perceptions of the practical applicability of the proposed framework from the standpoint of a lay member within the sector.

To enhance the robustness of the research findings and the framework's integrity, particular care was taken to include participants in the framework evaluation who had not been involved in the original data collection. This extra step was taken to ensure a more balanced and unbiased assessment of the framework. Table 12 offers further details on the backgrounds of the participants enlisted for the evaluation. The code used to identify participants involved in the original study is designated as SP, meaning study participant, while the code for those who were not part of the initial data collection is marked as NSP, meaning non-study participant.

Table 12. Background of Participants Used for Evaluation of the Framework. Source: (Authors Own)

Participant Code	Organisation	Years of Experience
NSP 1	Ghana Institute of Architects	5+ Years
NSP 2	Chartered Practitioner	10+ Years
SP 3	Ghana Institution of Engineers	10+ Years
SP 4	Ghana Institution of Surveyors	10+ Years

Key

NSP   Non-Study Participant

SP   Study Participant

9.8 Evaluation Process

The evaluation process was conducted through semi-structured interviews, a method chosen due to the qualitative nature of this study. Employing a quantitative approach, such as a questionnaire, was considered incompatible with the study's objectives. This is because such an approach would not facilitate the in-depth understanding required to capture the complexity of the issues under investigation. Microsoft Teams was selected as a suitable, cost-effective, and convenient platform for the interviews. During the interviews, in addition to posing direct questions to the participant being interviewed, responses collected from other evaluators were also shared. This approach was used to gather views on the shared answers, which helped to understand the areas of agreement or disagreement amongst the participants and their collective perspectives on the subject matter. The four key questions below were used to guide the discussion and to evaluate the framework.

1. How relevant and / or useful do you find a framework such as this that captures the unethical practices in the sector and proposes solutions that address these unethical challenges in the Ghanaian built environment sector?

2. Do you agree with the research findings that the below practices and behaviours constitute the key unethical behaviours in the Ghanaian built environment sector?

3. How feasible do you think the solutions proposed in the framework are? Specifically, do you believe the solutions are practically implementable and will they adequately address the current ethical challenges?

4. What improvements, if any, do you think could be made to enhance the framework's effectiveness and usefulness?

To give participants sufficient time to reflect on their responses, a briefing document (Framework Evaluation Report) explaining the framework and the interview questions to be asked was shared with participants two weeks before their scheduled interview dates. A copy of the Framework Evaluation Report is included in this thesis as Appendix G.

9.9 Discussion of the Evaluation Findings

The opinions and contributions provided by the four selected participants during the evaluation phase are examined here under the following key headings: the relevance and utility of the framework, its adequacy and comprehensiveness, the practicability of its recommendations, and suggestions for enhancing the framework.

9.9.1 Relevance and Usefulness of the Framework

All the respondents concurred that the framework is relevant and can be multifaceted in its usefulness. Respondents NSP1, SP3 and SP4 agreed that the methodology proposed in the framework for the implementation of IESC ethical principles offers a viable pathway for Ghanaian professional bodies to implement all the ethical principles in a way that acknowledges and respects local norms, ensuring that the implementation does not come across as an imposition of Western societal norms. Respondent SP3 suggested that the unethical practices identified in the framework could serve as a basis for designing ethics-focused training programs, workshops, and seminars. Respondent NSP1 also emphasised

the framework's role as a valuable guide for professional bodies in developing or refining

their regulations and standards. She however underscored the need for a framework such as

this to be constantly evolving to mirror the ever-changing sector. These positive comments

clearly show the framework's potential influence in shaping policy and industry practices,

highlighting its capacity to contribute meaningfully to the Ghanaian built environment

sector.

9.9.2 Adequacy and Completeness of the Framework

All four participants agreed that the proposed framework effectively captures the most

unethical practices prevalent in the current environment. However, they also provided

additional input, recommending specific elements to be incorporated into the framework.

Participant NSP2 suggested the inclusion of poor wages as one of the key causes of

unethical practices within the Ghanaian built environment sector. She explained that poor

pay is a major driving factor of unethical conduct, as financial constraints often compel

practitioners to engage in corrupt practices, especially where their wages are incapable of

catering to all their basic and essential needs. The issue of poor wages, identified in the

literature review (see Section 4.4.2, Chapter 4) and empirical data (see Section 7.3.8,

Chapter 7), was deliberately excluded from the framework. This decision was influenced

by findings from Tanzi (1998), which indicate that higher wages do not necessarily

eliminate greed. According to this research, even with increased salaries, some officials

might demand higher bribes. Therefore, while higher wages might reduce the frequency of

corrupt acts, they do not assure a corresponding decrease in the total amount of corruption-

related payments. This suggests that simply increasing wages may not be an effective

solution to combat unethical practices in the sector. Except for participant SP4, who

disputed that poor remuneration is not a justifiable reason for engaging in unethical

practices, all the other participants maintained that poor remuneration is a significant contributing factor and must be included in the framework.

Participant SP4 expressed a strong view that cronyism and efforts to address cronyism must also be included in the framework. In his view, cronyism, distinct from the already covered nepotism, is also an endemic issue in the Ghanaian built environment sector. SP4 recounted his personal experience of observing several instances of favouritism where contracts have been extended to less qualified or undeserving individuals just because they are the friends and acquaintances of the awarding party. SP4 strongly suggested including cronyism in the framework to ensure that it is representative of the varied forms of unethical practices prevalent in the sector.

Participants NSP1, SP3 and SP4 raised concerns regarding the lack of strategies in the framework to address the significant issue of undue political influence in the sector. These participants emphasised that political influence drives unethical practices, with political figures frequently bypassing established rules and protocols. They suggested incorporating measures to provide targeted guidelines to address the challenges faced by practitioners who are often placed in an impossible position by their political masters to engage in unethical acts or face professional repercussions.

9.9.3 Feasibility of the Recommendations

All participants expressed great enthusiasm about the framework and its proposed interventions. However, they also expressed scepticism about the feasibility of the proposal to centralise the registration councils. Participants SP3, SP4 and NSP2 specifically highlighted the extensive challenges that has been encountered in establishing professional registration councils in Ghana. They noted the lengthy process faced by the engineering profession who spent several years lobbying to secure governmental consent to establish their registration council. Additionally, they pointed to the ongoing struggles within the

surveying profession, which has been futilely trying for well over 15 years to establish their own registration council. According to practitioners, any proposals to extensively reorganise the existing structures would be ill-advised due to the difficulty in obtaining governmental support to establish registration councils in the first place. In their view, while centralisation of the registration councils might sound appealing theoretically, its practical implementation would face significant challenges.

9.9.4 Feedback for Improvement

Most participants suggested that the framework's proposed intervention on centralisation of the registration council be amended to take the form of a more feasible alternative where the existing registration councils collaborate while maintaining their individual structures. Their suggested approach calls for unity in action without necessarily requiring structural amalgamation. The participants suggested that the different councils can leverage their joint legislative power to streamline the sector in areas such as sharing fundamental rules for ethics, promoting a common approach to whistleblowing or reporting wrongdoing, and adopting a unified framework for sanctioning and enforcement. In their view, this approach is one that is achievable, easily implemented and will also help create a stronger ethical culture across the disciplines in the sector.

9.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explained the process involved in developing the conceptual framework for this study. The chapter presented specific recommendations from the framework, illustrating how professional bodies and other stakeholders can improve ethical standards and strengthen regulatory compliance. Findings from the framework evaluation process, conducted with participants purposefully selected for their expertise and knowledge on the issues, were also presented and discussed. The next chapter will provide a conclusion to this research.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study. First, a summary of how each of the study's six research objectives has been met is provided. This is followed by a section clarifying how the research questions have been addressed. A summary of the key findings is then presented. The chapter proceeds to discuss the study's contributions to both theoretical and practical knowledge and acknowledges its limitations. Finally, potential directions for future research are discussed, and the chapter concludes with the researcher's reflexivity statement.

10.2 Research Objectives

To achieve the overall research aim, this study set out to fulfil six objectives. Table 13 provides a summary showing how each of these objectives was achieved and indicates where the relevant information can be found in the thesis.

Table 13. Achievement of Research Objectives. Source: (Authors Own)

Research Aim	Objectives		Where
The aim of this study is to develop a framework designed to guide the integration and application of the IESC's global ethics principles in the Ghanaian built environment sector.	1	To explore the concept and philosophical underpinnings of ethics and ascertain how these apply or support the implementation of universal professional ethics standards in the built environment sector.	Refer to Chapter Two
	2	To evaluate progress made by professional bodies in the Ghanaian built environment sector in aligning their local codes of ethics with the ethical standards outlined in the IESC global ethics principles.	Refer to Chapter Six

	Objectives		Where
	Objectives		**Where**
	3	To discuss practices and other contextual factors in Ghana that will aid or hinder the successful integration and application of the IESC global ethics principles.	Refer to Chapters Three, Four and Seven
	4	To investigate drivers for change that may facilitate the successful application of the IESC's global ethics principles in the Ghanaian built environment sector.	Refer to Chapters Seven and Eight
	5	To develop a framework designed to guide the integration and application of the IESC's global ethics standards in the Ghanaian built environment sector.	Refer to Chapter Nine
	6	To evaluate the framework using selected built environment practitioners and stakeholders in Ghana.	Refer to Chapter Nine

<u>Objective 1</u>

To fulfil this objective, Chapter Two of the thesis reviewed the three major ethical theories: deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics. The review examined the distinct principles, tenets, and implications of these theories. It assessed their relevance with respect to whether and how these theories may have informed the task of establishing a universal ethical standard within the built environment sector.

<u>Objective 2</u>

To fulfil objective two, a qualitative content analysis was undertaken, which compared the content of the code of ethics for built environment professional bodies in Ghana to that

emanating from the IESC. Using a deductive approach, the researcher constructed a thematic coding frame with the 12 categories from the IESC ethics principles. A line-by-line coding of the Ghanaian ethics standards allowed the content of the Ghanaian codes to be categorised into the constructed coding frame. This enabled easy identification of where there are similarities and differences between the Ghanaian codes and the IESC standards. The analysis began with the exploration of similarities and differences. Where similarities were identified, further analysis was undertaken to ensure that the intent and emphasis aligned with that found in the IESC standards. The frequency of occurrences of the IESC's ethical principles in the Ghanaian codes was also tabulated to provide a quantitative dimension to the analysis.

<u>Objective 3</u>

The third objective of the research was to identify and discuss practices and other contextual factors in Ghana that will aid or hinder the successful implementation of the IESC ethical principles. To achieve this objective, a grounded theory approach was employed for data collection. This ensured that the data were deeply rooted in the experiences and perceptions of professionals in the built environment sector.

<u>Objective 4</u>

The fourth objective of this study was to investigate drivers for change that would facilitate the adoption of the IESC's global ethics principles in the Ghanaian built environment sector. To achieve this, a blend of interviewee recommendations and literature-derived insights was developed into targeted interventions. These interventions are tailored to overcome prevailing challenges and facilitate the effective adoption and implementation of the global ethical principles in the Ghanaian built environment context.

<u>Objective 5</u>

The fifth objective of this research was to develop a framework for integrating, monitoring and applying universal ethics standards in the Ghanaian built environment sector. The development of the framework was primarily informed by findings from the data collected and involved synthesizing insights regarding the prevailing contextual challenges and the formulation of specific interventions designed to address these identified challenges.

<u>Objective 6</u>

The sixth objective of this study was to evaluate the proposed framework using selected participants from Ghana's built environment sector. This evaluation was conducted using semi-structured interviews with four specifically targeted participants. Two of the participants were involved in the original grounded theory study, and two were not. Three participants were senior representatives from the professional bodies representing architects, engineers, and surveyors. These representatives are also significantly involved in the shaping of the code of ethics for their respective organisations. The fourth participant is a chartered professional whose views were sought to provide a balance of perspectives from both the leadership of professional bodies and that of a lay member. Efforts to recruit participants from the registration councils and governmental agencies proved unsuccessful. Findings from the framework evaluation are presented in Chapter Nine.

10.3 Summary of Key Findings

- There is a significant lack of awareness of the IESC standards in the Ghanaian built environment sector. Professional bodies in the sector have made no efforts to integrate the IESC ethical principles into their code of ethics. Despite this, there are some similarities in ethics principles between the existing Ghanaian standards and the IESC global ethics principles. This similarity is particularly noticeable in three key areas: conflict of interest, financial responsibility, and integrity. However, other ethical principles within the IESC standards, such as accountability, confidentiality, lawfulness, standard of service, transparency, trust, and respect, were inconsistently reflected in the Ghanaian codes. They were present in one or sometimes two, but not all three of the examined codes. This inconsistency in the Ghanaian codes underscores the necessity for the IESC global standards, which were established to promote uniformity in ethical practices within the built environment sector.

- Notwithstanding the existing similarities between the Ghanaian and IESC standards, there were notable differences. These differences were observed both in the contextual alignment and focus of certain ethical principles and in the complete absence of some principles from the Ghanaian standards. While both standards endorse the principle of respect, emphasizing mutual respect and dignity, the IESC uniquely extends this principle to explicitly address issues of discrimination and prejudice, elements not covered in the Ghanaian codes. This difference highlights a clear divergence in the scope of the codes. In addition, the IESC standards go beyond CPD by introducing reflective practice, urging practitioners to reassess their practice in relation to evolving ethics continually. In contrast, while focusing on CPD, the Ghanaian codes lack guidance on reflective practice and adaptation to changing ethics. This gap is further evident in the principle of diversity, which is

entirely overlooked in the Ghanaian codes. Thus, the absence of focus on diversity and reflective practice significantly differentiates the Ghanaian codes from the IESC principles, highlighting a key area of disparity.

- An observed reluctance was noted among Ghanaian professional bodies to incorporate clauses related to diversity, particularly those that offer explicit protection for professionals identifying as members of the LGBTQ+ community. This observation underscores the tension between the ethical principles advocated by the IESC globally and the prevailing socio-cultural norms in Ghana, thereby indicating the influence of ethical relativism within the Ghanaian built environment sector.

- Ghana's prevailing national culture and socio-cultural norms significantly influence its corporate governance practices. Deeply ingrained cultural traditions, such as gift-giving, profound respect for the elderly, and a collectivist mindset derived from the extended family system, intertwine with various systemic challenges. These factors hinder the effective implementation of the IESC's global ethics standards in Ghana. For example, the cultural emphasis on respecting elders tends to discourage younger professionals from challenging unethical behaviours by their older colleagues. Similarly, while promoting unity, the collectivist mindset can lead to conflicts of interest, especially when familial ties intersect with professional responsibilities. These issues are further exacerbated by systemic challenges such as a lack of transparency, weak institutional structures, and poor sanctioning and enforcement mechanisms, making integrating and applying ethical guidelines in the Ghanaian built environment sector challenging.

- Notwithstanding the challenges mentioned above, the findings also show that successfully implementing the IESC ethical standards in the Ghanaian built

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environment sector is achievable. However, this will necessitate introducing a range of measures. Starting with expanding access to their code of ethics, professional bodies must consider hosting their codes on their websites, making them downloadable and searchable to significantly improve accessibility. Policies tailored for whistleblowing and gift-giving must be introduced to enhance transparency and reinforce accountability. Creating a more effective deterrent environment is crucial. This can be achieved by introducing tougher sanctions and establishing a more transparent, robust monitoring, sanctioning, and enforcement regime. A strategic code design can be utilised to integrate all the IESC ethics principles fully into the Ghanaian code of ethics in a globally informed and locally sensitive way. Other essential measures include introducing mandatory professional ethics training and institutional capacity-building initiatives to strengthen existing institutions. Furthermore, adopting a cross-discipline and coordinated approach to ethical practices and incentivising good ethical behaviour through recognition and rewards are vital to fostering a culture of integrity and ethical compliance in the sector.

10.4 Research Questions

This study set out to answer the following research questions:

> RQ 1: How are the IESC's global ethical principles reflected in the local codes of ethics of built environment professional bodies in Ghana?

> RQ 2: How do specific contextual factors in Ghana facilitate or impede the successful application of international ethics standards in the Ghanaian built environment sector?

> RQ 3: Given the unique socio-cultural context in Ghana, can the IESC's global ethics principles be seamlessly adopted and successfully implemented in the Ghanaian built environment sector?

With respect to the first research question, findings from the study show that the Ghanaian professional bodies have made no efforts in trying to integrate the global standards into their local professional code of ethics. From the interviews, two key points became clear. First, there is a significant lack of awareness among professionals regarding the global standards. Second, even those professionals who are aware of the standards are not fully up to date with recent developments concerning the ratification and adoption of these standards. Notwithstanding that no concerted efforts had been made to integrate the IESC ethics principles into the Ghanaian codes of ethics, a comparison of the Ghanaian codes and the IESC ethics principles show that there are some similarities between the two standards. However, prominent differences were also found in context and focus of some of the ethical principles. In addition, two IESC ethical principles on diversity and reflection, were entirely absent from the Ghanaian codes.

The second research question sought to identify the specific contextual factors in Ghana that will either aid or hinder the successful application of international ethics standards in

the Ghanaian built environment sector. Findings from the interviews identified that several Ghanaian socio-cultural values and practices, once considered virtuous, are being misused in ways that could hinder the successful integration and application of the IESC's ethical principles in the Ghanaian built environment sector. For example, practices like gift-giving, originally a token of goodwill and respect, have been exploited in modern contexts to facilitate bribery. Similarly, the cultural emphasis on respecting elders could obstruct the necessary disciplinary actions against senior professionals who breach ethical standards. In addition, traditional conflict resolution methods, which focused on communal harmony and pursued virtues such as empathy, forgiveness, and preserving communal bonds, now soften the strict enforcement of modern sanctions intended to deter unethical behaviour. This misuse of traditional practices also occurs within a built environment sector that is beset by other challenges, including weak institutional frameworks, poor enforcement of rules, political interference, inadequate remuneration, lack of transparency, and general greed. Collectively, these factors form a complex set of barriers that could significantly hinder the successful implementation of the IESC's global ethics principles in the Ghanaian built environment sector.

Research question three sought to investigate whether the IESC's global ethical principles can be seamlessly adopted and successfully implemented in the Ghanaian built environment sector, given the country's unique socio-cultural context. The findings suggest that contextual factors will present some difficulties. Notwithstanding this, the findings also offer some cautious optimism, suggesting that seamless application of the IESC ethics principles could be possible. For instance, the study revealed that Ghanaian built environment professionals demonstrate a strong adherence to ethical conduct when working on internationally funded projects, such as those sponsored by organisations like the World Bank, UN, and IMF. This change in ethical conduct is largely attributed to the

stringent prohibitions against unethical conduct enforced by these international bodies, backed by rigorous monitoring mechanisms and significant consequences for breaches. The empirical evidence therefore suggests that, with effective strategies developed and enforced, there is potential for the sector to integrate and apply the IESC's global ethical principles effectively.

10.5 Research Contributions

This research offers several original contributions not offered in previous studies. These are organised into two categories: knowledge contributions and practical contributions.

10.5.1 Theoretical and Knowledge Contributions

- Findings from the study indicate that ***the most effective approach for directing moral actions, crucial for the successful application of global ethics principles in the Ghanaian built environment sector, aligns closely with a deontological perspective in moral philosophy***.

  The recommendations for a hierarchical code design, which emphasizes regulatory elements over educational or aspirational ones, underscore a rules-based approach that leaves little room for subjective interpretation. This ensures that ethical behaviour is guided by objective standards rather than by consequentialist evaluations (utilitarianism) or individual moral development (virtue ethics). This approach mitigates the ambiguity and ethical variability that can arise from relying on personal virtues or the utilitarian calculus of outcomes, which may be influenced unduly by individual, local, or cultural norms and practices.

  Notwithstanding the study's pronounced deontological stance, the findings also acknowledge the reality of ethical relativism, recognizing that not all ethical norms can be readily accepted and practiced. In the Ghanaian context, this issue is addressed by

proposing aspirational codes to facilitate the gradual acceptance of diversity clauses which promotes tolerance for professionals from all backgrounds.

There is a need for a pragmatic approach, which clearly acknowledges the importance of adapting to the unique challenges presented by diverse sociocultural contexts found in different regions, thereby respecting local customs and values while still promoting a broader ethical vision.

- The existing literature lacks a study that has undertaken a ***comparative analysis of the IESC's global ethical principles with the code of ethics for professional bodies in the Ghanaian built environment sector*** (see Section 6.4, Chapter 6). This research addresses this gap in the literature. This study carried out a comprehensive evaluation of the existing Ghanaian codes of ethics against the IESC global ethics principles to determine the degree of alignment or misalignment between the two. The exercise provided a clearer understanding of the magnitude of work and effort that was needed to integrate the global ethics principles in the IESC standards into the framework of the Ghanaian codes of ethics examined. The study revealed the similarities and differences between the two sets of standards. There are many topical areas where the professional codes of ethics of the Ghana built environment bodies broadly reflect the principles in the IESC standards. Indeed, on principles such as conflict of interest, financial responsibility and integrity, all three Ghanaian codes seem to largely follow the IESC standards in their scope. However, even where the rules seem similar, some contextual misalignment can sometimes be discerned. For example, on the subject of respect, both the IESC and the Ghanaian professional bodies demand consideration for others. However, the IESC standards go further to include discrimination and prejudice in its scope of expectations. The Ghanaian codes on the other hand are silent and do not address these two concepts in any way. Other ethical principles within the IESC standards such as rules relating to accountability, confidentiality, lawfulness, respect,

standard of service, transparency and trust appear in at least one of the Ghanaian codes of ethics, but not present in all three of the Ghanaian codes examined. This points to a lack of uniformity in the ethical codes of ethics guiding built environment professionals within the Ghanaian context. Two of the IESC's guiding principles were missing from all three Ghanaian codes. These are related to the principles of diversity and reflection. Out of all three codes, that of the GIA in particular was identified as having the least alignment with the IESC standards. The GIA code only aligned with the IESC standards in the areas of conflict of interest, financial responsibility and integrity.

- While there are numerous studies on ethics within the Ghanaian built environment sector, a comprehensive review of existing literature reveals a conspicuous absence of research ***specifically exploring the integration and application of global built environment ethics standards in localised settings*** (see Section 1.2, Chapter 1). This study provides empirical evidence to plug this gap in the literature. Specifically, the study explains how Ghanaian professional bodies can adopt strategic design principles to integrate the IESC ethics principles into the Ghanaian code of ethics in a way that is both globally informed and locally sensitive. Further, it provides a prescription of various interventions to address identified barriers to facilitate the integration of the IESC ethical principles. While focused on Ghana, the study contributes to the broader global discourse on integrating ethical standards in the built environment sector. Its methodology and findings can inform similar efforts in other contexts, particularly in regions with comparable socio-cultural dynamics. In this sense, the study makes a contribution that advances the theoretical discourse on the application of global ethical principles in localised settings.

10.5.2 Practical Contributions

- This study introduces the concept of a ***strategic code design***, (section 8.3, Chapter 8) which is a hierarchical approach to developing a code of ethics. This concept offers Ghanaian professional bodies with a flexible pathway to implementing the IESC's global ethical principles in a manner that is both globally informed and locally sensitive. The concept of the 'strategic code design' also offers insights that have the potential to aid ethical governance beyond the immediate context of Ghana, such as in other Sub-Saharan African countries that may be grappling with similar ethical questions.

- Beyond identifying challenges, this study proposes ***eleven customised and tangible interventions*** (section 9.4, Chapter 9) to address the specific contextual challenges in the Ghanaian built environment sector to enable the implementation of the IESC's global ethics principles. One of the strengths of this research is its use of a grounded theory approach for data collection and analysis. By adopting this approach, the interventions are not solely informed by existing literature but also reflect a detailed understanding of the unique socio-cultural and other contextual challenges in the Ghanaian built environment sector. Co-developed with the study's participants, these interventions are not merely a one-size-fits-all theoretical construct. Instead, they provide practical and context-sensitive solutions intended for ready deployment by professional bodies and other relevant stakeholders in the Ghanaian built environment sector.

- This research culminated in the ***development of a framework*** designed to integrate and apply the IESC's global built environment standards in the Ghanaian sector. This framework is a notable practical contribution that offers policymakers a thorough insight into the ethical landscape of the Ghanaian built environment sector. As

highlighted by the framework evaluators in Chapter 9, the usefulness of the framework itself lies in its adaptability and relevance to local contexts. It can be a foundational guide for crafting new policies, updating current ones, and devising educational and training programs for sector professionals.

10.6 Limitations of the Study

- It is imperative to acknowledge the limitations inherent to this research. One significant limitation is the absence of perspectives from relevant governmental agencies. Specifically, input from the Ministry of Works and Housing, the department mainly responsible for overseeing and regulating the Ghanaian built environment sector, could have provided invaluable insights to enrich the study. The absence of this perspective limits the research in the sense that the implementation of some of the proposed changes arising from this study would likely necessitate governmental backing and endorsement. Moreover, although the built environment sector in Ghana comprises several disciplines, the scope of this research is limited to three specific professions: quantity surveyors, engineers, and architects. Therefore, the findings and conclusions may not fully represent the diverse range of perspectives and experiences within the broader built environment sector in Ghana.

- As is common in qualitative research, this study was not designed with the intention of making broad, generalisable claims about the Ghanaian built environment sector as a whole (Polit and Beck, 2010; Forrest-Lawrence, 2019; Payne and Williams, 2005). Instead, the focus was on gaining a deep, contextual understanding and exploration of the study objectives. Indeed, the sample size and demographic composition of the study prevent the possibility of such statistical generalisation. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as being representative solely of the views and experiences of the

specific subset of professionals in the built environment sector in Ghana that were engaged in this study.

10.7 Recommendations for Future Research

- To address the limitations pertaining to the study's population and demographics, future studies could extend the study to incorporate the views and perceptions of the remaining professionals within the Ghanaian built environment sector, including professionals such as project managers, planners and health and safety professionals. The views of other key stakeholders, such as representatives from the registration councils and governmental agencies, must also be represented. Expanding the scope to include these stakeholders would enhance the comprehensiveness and applicability of the study's findings and contribute to a more holistic understanding of ethical practices within the Ghanaian built environment sector.

- An evaluation of the framework revealed additional opportunities for its further refinement. For instance, participants suggested expanding the list of factors contributing to unethical practices to include elements such as poor pay and cronyism. Additionally, they recommended incorporating strategies within the framework to specifically address undue political influence in the sector. Future research should seek to integrate these additional variables to ensure the framework's completeness. In addition to refining the framework, it is equally important for subsequent studies to endeavour to generalise the study's findings. This can be accomplished by rigorously testing the framework's usefulness, adequacy, and feasibility across a larger and more demographically diverse and representative sample within the Ghanaian built environment sector. Adopting a quantitative approach, perhaps through the use of survey questionnaires, would serve dual purposes: it would validate the refined

framework and also facilitate methodological triangulation. This, in turn, would augment the robustness and generalisability of the study's findings.

10.8 Reflexivity Statement

A researcher's prior experiences inevitably shape the issues they decide to investigate, the perspective they adopt for a study, the methodologies they deem suitable, and the ultimate interpretations and conclusions derived from the study (Malterud, 2001). In this section, I reflect on my role as the researcher and examine how my pre-existing beliefs, both personal and professional, could have guided and shaped the direction and methodology of my research.

I started this research journey already well-acquainted with the prevailing stereotypes concerning unethical behaviour in both the construction industry and the broader built environment sector. My past professional roles in the UK's construction sector offered me first-hand encounters with questions of ethics and the unethical behaviours and conduct that sometimes occur. I remember the countless heated monthly conversations with contractor quantity surveyors about inflated interim payment applications, which were recurring events for me, discussions that I found more stressful than enjoyable.

Before this study, my ethical convictions were not only influenced by my experiences from my professional life but also deeply rooted in the values instilled in me during my upbringing and childhood. I had come to hold a firm conviction that ethical lapses in the construction industry were not merely symptomatic of systemic failures and issues with processes and procedures but were often rooted in individual moral failures and shortcomings. I first engaged with the topic of ethics during my dissertation, which was part of my master's degree qualification. After completing my master's degree, the topic of ethics and ethical conduct in the built environment sector frequently became the basis for conversations with several of my peers. Indeed, it was during one of such conversations

with a former lecturer of mine that I came to learn about the IESC's initiatives to advance international ethical standards in the built environment sector. As a native of Ghana, deeply familiar with the socio-cultural nuances and customs of the country, my immediate thought was about the challenges of implementing these standards in diverse regions, especially in Ghana. My Ghanaian heritage and professional experience in the UK's construction industry meant that my role as the researcher extended beyond that of a mere external observer. I adopted an insider perspective, engaging participants as co-creators of knowledge and understanding rather than as mere subjects of study. I also carried preconceptions about the potential factors contributing to unethical practices in the Ghanaian built environment sector. For instance, I was inclined to believe that cultural factors could serve as convenient excuses for unethical behaviour in this sector. To ensure the maintenance of objectivity and research rigour, I leveraged the co-creative nature of my research methodology to test and challenge these preconceptions throughout the study. Further strategies employed to ensure objectivity included member checking (Birt et al., 2016) and the evaluation of the framework by research participants.

The journey of conducting this research has been profoundly enlightening for me. It has offered me a broader understanding of ethical practices within the Ghanaian built environment sector. Additionally, it has provided me with deeper self-awareness and an opportunity to examine and reassess my own preconceptions and biases critically. In conclusion, I hope that this reflection has served as a thorough demonstration of how my unique background, ingrained personal values, and wealth of prior experiences have meaningfully influenced the research process and its outcomes.

10.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the steps taken to fulfil the study's objectives. An overview of the key research findings was presented, and the theoretical and practical contributions to the existing body of knowledge identified. Limitations of the research were also acknowledged, setting the stage for potential directions of future research. Overall, this study has provided empirical support for how the IESC global ethics principles can be effectively adapted and applied within the distinct context of Ghana's built environment sector.

Word Count

Excluding 17,632 words of ancillary text which covers aspects such as the front cover, contents page, list of tables, list of figures, appendices, references etc, the total word count for this PhD thesis (Chapter One through to Chapter Ten) is 75,609.

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