FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY MINNA

THE NIGERIAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY: THE AILING ELEPHANT - A MENU OF CURE

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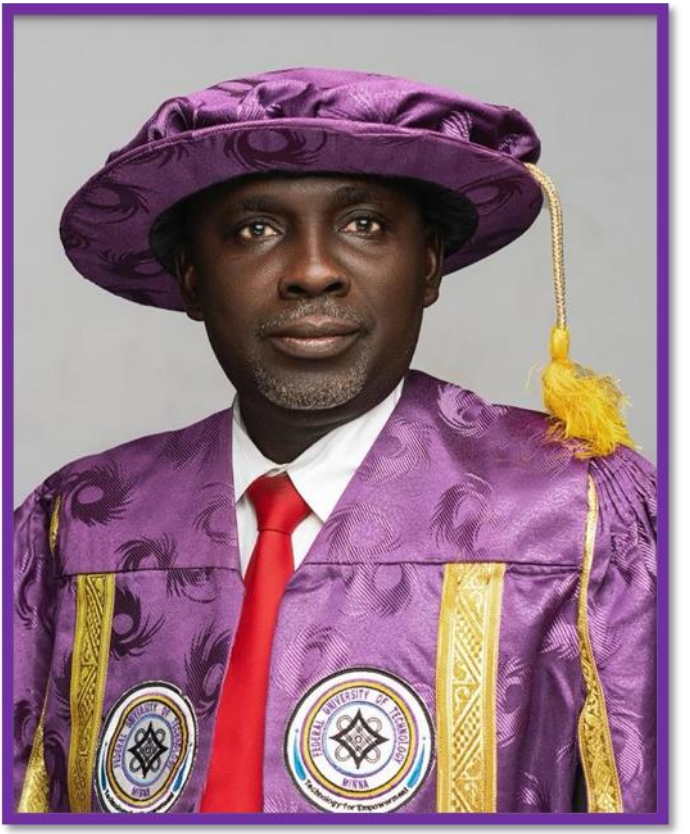

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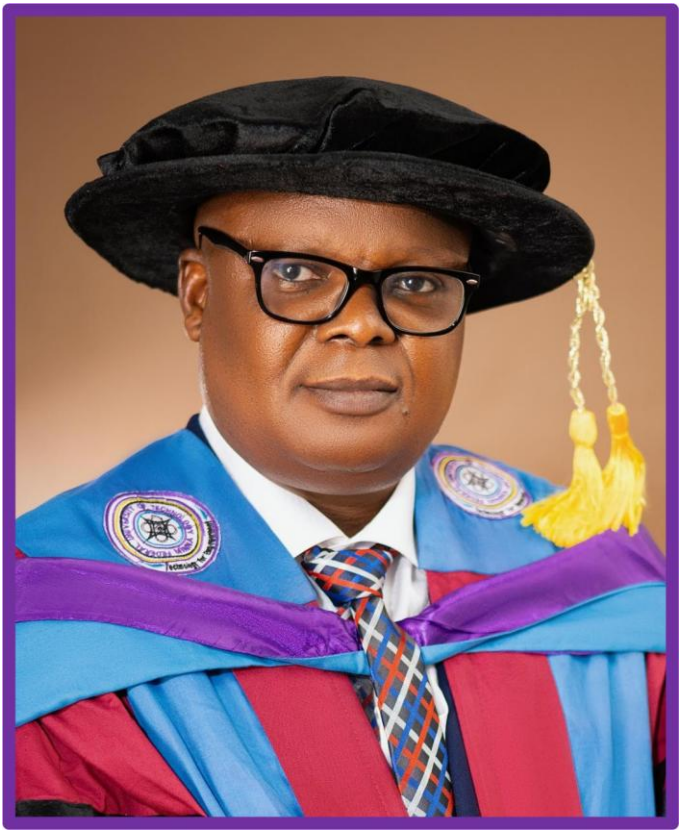

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Introduction

The Vice Chancellor, Principal Officers of the University, Eminent Members of Senate, Deans of Schools, Directors of Units and Centres, Head of Departments, Distinguished Academics and Administrative Staff, Great Comrades ASUU, Great students of FUT Minna, Esteemed Professional colleagues, Honoured guests, friends, and family, Gentlemen of the Press, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen. I stand before you today with immense appreciation and a strong feeling of responsibility to present my inaugural lecture. This event is not just a commemoration of scholarly success, but a moment for introspection, an opportunity to evaluate the journey, the challenges, the insights, and the persistent aspirations that characterise a life devoted to scholarship, education, and service in the built environment.

The title of today's presentation, *'The Nigerian Construction Industry: The Ailing Elephant*,' is more than just an intellectual metaphor for me. It is a clear and unpleasant recollection from my childhood. I did not simply read about this 'elephant'; I grew up in its shadow. I travelled across the dusty, scarred ground that was supposed to be a road. I watched the very best teachers walk away, not because of the children, but because the path to our school was a witness to neglect that lasted through the 1980s and 1990s.

My first encounter with 'abandoned projects' was not in a textbook; it was the skeletal remains of concrete and rusting steel that littered our landscape, memorials not to a lack of funding, but to a profound lack of priority and an epidemic of institutional failure. I have experienced the distinct, gut-wrenching frustration of witnessing hope fade. I have seen towns, including my own, promised schools, hospitals, and highways, only to be met with a terrible exchange: a functional need for a decaying signboard and the faded echo of a political slogan. And I have personally experienced the human cost. I watched the brightness in brilliant young professionals' dimming eyes after their first site task, their idealism crushed by the weight of the system.

These endless worries, this proximity to unmet promises, convinced me that the solution lied in the absolute truth of physics and mathematics. I believed I could calculate my way out of the dysfunction. But fate had a different plan. It shifted my focus to Quantity Surveying. That turnaround was the first crucial point on a journey that began in 1993, with an admission letter to the Polytechnic Ibadan, and which has led me to this stage today.

So, my perspective is not entirely academic. It is the conviction of a young lad from a dusty community combined with the knowledge of a professional. It is a lived experience with an industry that has the capacity for greatness

but repeatedly, regrettably, underperforms. The *'menu of cure'* we are discussing today is, for me, a very personal prescription for a patient I have known my entire life.

I therefore invite you to this lecture with profound honour and keen insight. The title for this lecture, rich in imagery and serious in its implications, encapsulates the contradiction of an industry that is both crucial and fragile, needed for national progress yet hindered by systemic inefficiencies, inadequate governance, and operational stagnation. Similar to the elephant, the Nigerian construction sector is substantial, influential, and integral to our socio-economic framework. However, unlike the elephant, it falters, its actions bogged down by corruption, inefficiency, antiquated procedures, and regulatory dysfunction.

The construction industry is acknowledged as a fundamental pillar of national progress, a vital catalyst for infrastructure development, job creation, and economic transformation. Construction worldwide transcends mere edifices; it encompasses the development of nations. This sector in Nigeria should act as a spur for industrialisation, urbanisation, and modernisation, supplying the necessary infrastructure for transportation, housing, education, healthcare, and energy. The sector's contribution to the nominal GDP was 3.07% in Q1 2025, as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2025) and is among the major employers in the nation.

In addition to its direct economic worth, the construction sector serves as a catalyst for fostering growth in manufacturing, real estate, logistics, and tourism. It is essential for sustained development throughout our varied regions. Nevertheless, despite its pivotal significance, the Nigerian construction sector faces substantial challenges: cost and time overruns, project abandonment, inferior quality, inadequate safety records, a deficiency of competent labour, and erratic policy enforcement.

Like the ill elephant, the symptoms are apparent and troubling: deteriorating structures, unfinished highways, unsuccessful housing initiatives, and the escalating distrust among the government, contractors, and the people. This lecture is not a dirge. It is not a dirge for funerals. This is a call to action. It is a prescription, a systematic, evidence-based, and contextually pertinent regimen for an industry that must recover from its decline.

Utilising over ten years of empirical study, practical experience, and collaboration with professionals, I will propose a series of reform proposals designed to rejuvenate the industry. These encompass pragmatic solutions in procurement reform, ethical governance, capacity enhancement, technological innovation, environmentally friendly construction

methodologies, and performance-oriented project execution. The lecture references global best practices and indigenous scholarly contributions, notably from esteemed researchers across the globe who have developed models for supply chain integration, strategic project management, and institutional accountability in Nigeria.

This lecture aims to advance the national conversation from mere rhetoric to thorough diagnosis, contemplative meditation, and imperative transformation. It compels policymakers, scholars, industry executives, and regulators to reevaluate the structural underpinnings of the Nigerian construction sector and to reconstruct them on the principles of integrity, efficiency, innovation, and inclusive growth.

Esteemed guests, it is time to cease lamenting the ailing elephant and commence its treatment. Upon identifying the diseases, we must also possess the fortitude and expertise to implement the remedy. The Nigerian construction industry can rejuvenate, transform from an inefficient behemoth into a responsive, resilient, and vigorous sector that matches with the ambitions of a modern, affluent Nigeria.

Let's begin.

1.1 **Explanation of the Metaphor: Why the Construction Industry is referred to as an "Ailing Elephant"**

The metaphor "ailing elephant" well depicts the Nigerian construction industry, highlighting its substantial importance and its crippling difficulties. Similar to an elephant, immense, formidable, and integral to its ecosystem, the construction industry serves as a fundamental pillar of Nigeria's economic advancement. It substantially adds to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and offers employment possibilities across diverse skill levels (Oladirin, Ogunsemi and Aje, 2012). Similarly, an ailing elephant becomes lethargic and inefficient despite its magnitude, the Nigerian construction sector, although vital, is progressively burdened by systemic issues that impede its efficacy. Consequently, designating it as a "ailing elephant" emphasises the contradiction of a significant and essential sector hindered by internal dysfunctions, and accentuates the pressing necessity for comprehensive reforms to rejuvenate its productivity, competitiveness, and developmental significance (Oyewobi *et al*., 2011; Oyewobi *et al*., 2014).

A primary issue plaguing the sector is its persistent underachievement in project execution. Notwithstanding substantial investments from both public and private sectors, construction projects in Nigeria are often plagued by delays, budget overruns, and substandard outcome. Calderon, Cantu and

Chuhan-Pole (2019) indicated that the industry consistently fails to provide infrastructure promptly and within budgetary constraints. This inefficiency symbolises a burdensome entity whose magnitude obscures profound dysfunctions. Oyewobi *et al*. (2011a) identified primary factors contributing to subpar performance, such as inadequate planning, insufficient technical skills, and lack of stakeholder participation. The difficulties are exacerbated by pervasive corruption, inadequate institutional capability, and inefficient project management frameworks, which persistently undermine confidence in the business (Oyewobi *et al*., 2011b; Adindu *et al*., 2020).

Furthermore, the metaphor of "ailing" effectively illustrates the industry's failure to provide the nation's infrastructure requirements amid swift urbanisation and population expansion. Nigeria's population, surpassing 200 million, exerts significant strain on its urban infrastructure, needing the prompt development of roads, housing, water systems, energy facilities, and public services (Obianyo *et al*., 2021). The construction sector has failed to meet the increasing demand due to disjointed coordination among regulatory agencies, antiquated procurement methods, and a pervasive deficiency in innovation and sustainability initiatives (Oyewobi and Jimoh, 2022). Oyewobi, Mohammed and Jimoh (2017) contended that without the adoption of proactive strategies, such as the incorporation of green building techniques, procurement transparency, and the professionalisation of project management, the sector will persist in its structural weakness and inability to drive national growth.

The "ailing elephant" metaphor serves not only as a description but also as a diagnostic and prescriptive tool. It indicates that although the industry possesses significant latent potential, it necessitates thorough, systemic, and ongoing reforms to restore its vigour. Mitigating these difficulties necessitates the reform of public procurement procedures, the augmentation of regulatory monitoring, the investment in human capital development, and the promotion of ethical behaviours throughout the industry. Oyewobi *et al*. (2011b) constantly asserted that, in the absence of such reforms, the Nigerian construction industry will persist in struggling under its considerable yet fragile burden.

2. Historical Context of the Nigerian Construction Industry

2.1 Pre-independence era

The Nigerian construction industry traces its origins to the colonial period when the British colonial government played a pivotal role in shaping the country's infrastructure landscape. During this time, construction activities

were largely driven by the colonial administration's interest in facilitating resource extraction, trade, and governance. Consequently, the focus was on constructing infrastructure that would serve colonial interests rather than the broader needs of the indigenous population.

2.1.1 Early stages of the Nigerian construction industry

The foundational stages of Nigeria's construction industry were profoundly shaped by British colonial imperatives, establishing patterns that continue to influence contemporary infrastructure development. Significant construction initiatives concentrated on developing fundamental infrastructure including roads, railways, ports, and governmental edifices, each contributing to the overarching economic and political objectives of the colonial administration (Obinna, 2025; Falola and Heaton, 2008). These developments were driven not by indigenous requirements but by the logistics of resource extraction, particularly for commodities such as palm oil, cocoa, rubber, and tin, establishing a foundation for export-driven economic endeavours that closely aligned with colonial resource exploitation and territorial consolidation objectives.

The railway network represented one of the most significant colonial investments, serving as a crucial link between resource-abundant hinterlands and coastal export centres. The inaugural major railway line connecting Lagos to Ibadan was completed in 1901 and subsequently extended to reach Kano by 1912, facilitating not only goods transportation but also enabling colonial administration, troop deployment, and regional supremacy (Obiakor and Agajelu, 2016; Oni and Okanlawon, 2011). These railway routes were intentionally designed to prioritize economic exploitation over equitable national development, frequently circumventing indigenous communities and economic hubs unless they directly facilitated export requirements, thereby perpetuating regional inequalities that persist today. Similarly, road networks and port infrastructure enhancement focused on strengthening colonial trade routes, with significant thoroughfares like the Lagos-Ilorin-Kaduna corridor developed to facilitate overland product transit to port towns such as Lagos, Calabar, and Port Harcourt, constructed with little regard for local development or mobility needs (Onokala, 2015; Udoh, 2024).

2.1.2 Impact of the British colonial government on infrastructure development

The colonial legacy created serious institutional and structural impacts that extended far beyond infrastructure development. Public and administrative buildings, particularly in Lagos as the colonial capital, were constructed in European neoclassical styles using imported materials and foreign architectural expertise, symbolizing colonial authority and maintaining ideological dominance (Fagbenle, 1982; Umo, 2016). The restricted advancement of indigenous technical abilities proved particularly detrimental, as the British colonial administration predominantly relied on European engineers and imported labour for specialized construction roles, confining indigenous Nigerians to menial positions with limited technical training opportunities (Obiakor and Agajelu, 2016). This neglect resulted in a significant skills deficit that continues affecting the Nigerian construction workforce, rendering the sector dependent on foreign consultants and expatriates (Oyewobi *et al*., 2012; 2016a). The colonial development paradigm was fundamentally extractive rather than inclusive, thereby creating infrastructure systems that, while providing basic foundations, were profoundly inequitable and favoured export logistics over fair development or indigenous requirements. Contemporary analysis reveals that this colonial heritage has enduring institutional and spatial effects, continuing to shape modern infrastructural planning, procurement methodologies, and regional disparities (Adama, 2018), while fostering systematic vulnerabilities through excessive dependence on imported construction supplies, design standards, and technical proficiency that persist in limiting local contractor capabilities for autonomous complex infrastructure project execution.

2.2 post-independence challenges

2.2.1 Growth trajectory after Nigeria independence in 1960

Consequent upon Nigeria's independence in 1960, the nation encountered both prospects and obstacles within its construction sector. The immediate post-independence period signified the commencement of Nigeria's endeavours to modernise its infrastructure in accordance with its new political position. In the initial two decades following independence, the Nigerian government, acknowledging the significance of substantial infrastructure for economic advancement, emphasized extensive public works initiatives.

The 1960s and 1970s were crucial for the Nigerian construction sector, as the government launched numerous infrastructural development initiatives, encompassing the construction of roads, bridges, airports, and public edifices. This era also saw the emergence of significant public sector projects, bolstered by both domestic and multinational enterprises. Notable initiatives encompassed the development of the Lagos International Airport and the enhancement of Nigeria's transportation infrastructure (Onokala and Olajide, 2020).

Nonetheless, these undertakings were frequently obstructed by financial constraints, inefficiencies, and sporadic political involvement. The Nigerian construction industry experienced growth during this period, primarily propelled by government-led programmes, with limited participation from the private sector. Abubakar *et al*. (2018) indicated that throughout this period, the Nigerian government was the predominant employer in the construction sector, with numerous projects being state-funded. The federal administration concentrated on extensive infrastructural initiatives to promote national growth thereby facilitating industrialisation and urbanisation. This period also saw various state governments initiating local infrastructural projects, hence enhancing the expansion of the construction industry (Okoye *et al*., 2018).

2.3 The post-colonial era: Socio-political instability, economic challenges, and their impact on the construction sector

The post-colonial era, notably the years succeeding the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), signified a period of significant socio-political instability that had extensive repercussions for the nation, especially its construction sector. The civil war not only ravaged essential infrastructure but also precipitated a notable decrease in both domestic and international investments. Moreover, the nation encountered many economic obstacles that impeded the development and efficacy of the construction industry (Oyewobi *et al*., 2011a).

The era's socio-political instability evidenced by military coups, civil unrests, and volatile governments, led to erratic and inadequately executed construction policies. Babalola *et al*. (2024) asserted that the construction sector in the 1970s and 1980s was significantly affected by inconsistent government policies. The inconsistency resulted in delays in project implementation, leading to the abandonment or abrupt cessation of numerous infrastructure projects due to political transitions or changing budgetary priorities.

Furthermore, Nigeria's post-independence economy encountered significant challenges, including elevated inflation, increasing unemployment, and excessive dependency on oil earnings. As oil prices varied and the economy grew more reliant on petroleum exports, diversification in industrial sectors such as construction declined (Olatunji, 2010). The construction sector's reliance on governmental financing rendered it especially susceptible to fluctuations in oil revenue. During the early 1980s oil price collapse, Nigeria's fiscal ability to sustain infrastructure projects was significantly impaired, resulting in project suspensions and cancellations (Danjuma, 2025). A significant consequence of this economic volatility was the restricted access to financing for construction projects. The domestic banking system was insufficient for long-term infrastructure finance, and foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Nigerian construction industry declined as investors grew apprehensive about the unstable macroeconomic climate (Babatunde *et al*., 2018; World Bank, 2019).

Furthermore, the lack of a comprehensive regulatory framework and uniform construction techniques throughout this period resulted in extensive inefficiencies. Inferior construction quality, inadequate project management, and recurrent budget overruns became prevalent (Chete *et al*., 2014). Projects, even upon completion, frequently suffered from degraded quality and long-term sustainability due to insufficient planning, resource deficiencies, and inadequate institutional control.

The 1980s and 1990s were marked by economic stagnation and increasing external debt, compelling the government to reduce infrastructure spending to meet escalating debt obligations (Adebayo, 2015). Consequently, numerous building projects remained abandoned or unfinished, and the industry had ongoing structural issues, including a deficiency of experienced labour, antiquated construction methods, and insufficient innovation in project delivery (Oyewobi *et al*., 2016).

Notwithstanding these challenges, the 1990s had a modest resurgence, especially with the implementation of economic liberalisation policies and reforms by the military-led transitional administrations. The early 2000s witnessed heightened involvement of the private sector, particularly in urban housing and small to medium-scale infrastructure initiatives (Ezeokoli, Ugochukwu and Okolie 2016). Nonetheless, persistent challenges such as inadequate finance mechanisms, insufficient project oversight, and ineffective regulation continued to obstruct sustainable development within the sector.

The post-independence era in Nigeria offered both opportunities and challenges for the building sector. The Nigerian government's initial endeavours to develop national infrastructure were significantly hindered by political instability, economic mismanagement, and the absence of a defined policy. The persistent issues were exacerbated by the dependence on public sector funding and constrained institutional capacity, that have resulted in lasting impacts. Numerous issues initially recognised in the post-civil war era persisted in the Nigerian construction industry, necessitating thorough and systematic adjustments.

2.4 Modern-Day Landscape

The Nigerian construction industry has undergone significant transformations from the 1980s to the present. This period saw the industry grapple with several economic, political, and social challenges while simultaneously evolving in response to Nigeria’s expanding population, urbanization, and infrastructure needs. The historical context of Nigeria's construction industry reflects the broader economic trajectory of the nation, characterized by oil booms, structural adjustments, political instability, and increasing private sector involvement.

2.4.1 Examination of the construction sector’s growth from the 1980s to the present

The 1980s were a crucial period for the Nigerian building sector, primarily influenced by volatile oil prices. The Nigerian economy, reliant on oil earnings, underwent substantial fluctuations that profoundly impacted the construction sector. An economic crisis arose in the mid-1980s due to a significant drop in world oil prices. The economic decline prompted the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) during General Ibrahim Babangida's regime. The SAP implemented austerity measures, naira devaluation, trade liberalisation, and a substantial decrease in governmental expenditure on infrastructure projects (Ani, Ojiya and Abdulwahab, 2019; Olowu, 1991). Consequently, government-sponsored construction projects experienced a significant downturn. This decline generated new chances for private sector participation, as the government progressively reduced its direct investment in infrastructure.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, the construction industry began to exhibit indicators of recovery, particularly after the shift to democratic rule in 1999. Despite the persistence of structural difficulties including insufficient infrastructure and feeble regulatory institutions, the reinstatement of civilian

governance fostered a more stable policy climate that promoted investment. The surge in urbanisation, population expansion, and an increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) contributed to a moderate construction boom, especially in the residential and commercial real estate subsectors (World Bank, 2009; Oyebola and Adebayo, 2011). The federal government continued to play a pivotal role in significant infrastructure development, including road and bridge construction projects; nevertheless, this era also witnessed the rise of public-private partnerships (PPPs) as an increasingly prevalent method for delivering capital-intensive infrastructure (Ezeokoli *et al.,* 2016).

Since the 2000s, the Nigerian construction sector has undergone continuous and varied growth, propelled by economic reforms, population increase, and urban migration. With Nigeria's population exceeding 200 million (United Nations, 2019), the need for housing, transportation, electricity, and public utilities intensified. The International Trade Administration (2020) indicated that Nigeria's construction market had an expected value of $10.8 billion in 2020, demonstrating consistent development in both private and public sector investments. This era also saw the execution of extensive infrastructure initiatives, including road and highway expansions, urban mass housing projects, and energy-related facilities, in accordance with the government's overarching development agenda and economic diversification strategies (Oyewobi et al., 2016; National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

3. Key Subsectors within Construction and Their Evolution

The Nigerian construction industry can be broadly categorized into three key subsectors: residential, commercial, and infrastructure. These subsectors have evolved in response to the socio-economic challenges and demands of the population.

3.1 Residential construction

The residential construction sector in Nigeria has undergone significant transformation since the 1980s. Following the economic downturns of that decade—exacerbated by political instability—the demand for affordable housing in major urban centres, particularly Lagos and Abuja, grew rapidly (Ajayi and Oyewobi, 2019). In response, the Nigerian government introduced various housing initiatives, most notably the National Housing Policy of 1991, which sought to enhance access to affordable housing for Nigerians (Ishiyaku, 2016; Ogu and Ogbuozobe, 2001). However, despite these interventions, the housing deficit has continued to widen. A substantial

portion of Nigeria's urban population still resides in informal settlements lacking basic infrastructure and legal tenure (World Bank, 2015).

In recent years, there has been a notable shift in the residential construction landscape, marked by the proliferation of high-rise buildings, luxury apartments, and gated communities. This trend is largely driven by the emergence of a growing middle class and the interest of foreign investors seeking to capitalize on Nigeria's expanding real estate market. As a result, there is an increasing concentration of upscale residential developments in the country's major cities, often catering for high-income earners and expatriates (Fayomi, 2016).

3.2 Commercial construction

The commercial construction sector in Nigeria has also experienced substantial growth. During the 1980s and 1990s, commercial construction was largely limited to office buildings and retail spaces in cities like Lagos and Abuja. However, the expansion of the financial sector, the emergence of retail chains, and the entry of international brands into the Nigerian market in the 2000s significantly increased the demand for modern commercial office spaces and shopping malls. By the 2010s, cities such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt witnessed a boom in commercial real estate development, including the construction of upscale shopping malls like The Palms Mall in Lagos and Jabi Lake Mall in Abuja (Oni, 2018). This growth in the commercial sector reflects the expansion of Nigeria's economy and the increasing interest of global brands seeking to establish a presence in the country's rapidly growing consumer market.

3.3 Infrastructure

Infrastructure construction in Nigeria has remained a critical area of focus, particularly from the 1980s to the present. However, the pace of infrastructure development has consistently lagged behind the demands of the country's growing population and evolving economic needs. Despite various initiatives in the 1990s aimed at improving transportation and utilities infrastructure, Nigeria continues to experience significant deficits in these areas. Persistent challenges include poorly maintained road networks, inadequate electricity supply, and unreliable water distribution systems (Foster and Pushak, 2011).

In recent years, however, there has been a renewed emphasis on enhancing infrastructure through a combination of increased government investment and greater private sector participation. Large-scale projects—such as the

expansion of major airports, the reconstruction of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, and the development of a national railway network—have gained considerable momentum since the early 2000s (Oni and Okanlawon, 2011). Notably, the rise of private-sector-led infrastructure initiatives, particularly in the power and transport sectors, has played a crucial role in addressing some of Nigeria's long-standing infrastructure challenges.

4. The Rise of the Private Sector's Role in Driving Growth

Since the 1980s, the role of the private sector in the Nigerian construction industry has grown significantly. In the early years following independence, the industry was largely dominated by state-run entities, as government-led projects were central to national development. However, economic constraints, coupled with corruption and inefficiencies in government-managed projects, prompted a shift in the 1980s, leading to increased private sector participation.

The liberalization of the Nigerian economy in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s facilitated the emergence of indigenous construction firms that began to capture a significant share of the local market but limited in scope in terms of the value of the projects (Jimoh and Johnson, 2006). By the 2000s, Nigeria had developed a growing number of homegrown construction companies that not only undertook residential and commercial developments but also executed large-scale infrastructure projects. Firms such as Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, Cappa and D'Alberto, and Dantata and Sawoe became major players in both public and private sector construction, successfully completing key infrastructure works (Babatunde *et al*., 2018; Boge, 2024).

Private sector investment also introduced innovative financing models in the construction industry, including joint ventures, public-private partnerships (PPPs), and foreign direct investment (FDI). Through PPP arrangements, the government was able to share financial and operational risks with private firms, particularly in the development of toll roads, airports, and railways. Additionally, the growth of real estate investment trusts (REITs) and private equity investments in the real estate sector has provided new sources of capital, facilitating the development of large-scale commercial and residential projects (Dabara, 2022).

The increasing involvement of foreign construction firms and international investors has also been instrumental in the expansion of the Nigerian construction industry. Multinational companies such as China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC), often in partnership with

Nigerian firms, have been central to numerous infrastructure projects, especially in the transportation sector (World Bank, 2015). These collaborations have contributed to the transfer of technology, innovation, and technical expertise, helping to bridge critical capacity gaps within the local construction industry.

5. Diagnosis of the Ailments

5.1 Fragmentation of stakeholders and adversarial contracts

The Nigerian construction industry suffers from significant stakeholder fragmentation and antagonistic contractual relationships that jeopardize efficiency and sustainability. The traditional Design-Bid-Build procurement paradigm creates separation between design and construction phases, impeding knowledge integration and producing plans that frequently fail to align with site realities. This results in costly variants, accountability gaps, and time overruns (Nawi *et al*., 2014; Oyewobi *et al*., 2011a). Stakeholder relationships remain uneven, with unitary ties among professionals while coercive interactions dominate contractor engagements, reflecting fundamental goal misalignment where clients focus on cost reduction, consultants emphasize design integrity, and contractors prioritize revenue. This creates disjointed project teams with poor communication and low trust, identified by Olanrewaju *et al*. (2025) as critical drivers of disputes and delays, ultimately degrading productivity and increasing overall project costs.

5.2 Poor project management in the Nigerian construction industry

Inadequate project management represents a major challenge resulting in cost overruns, delays, and unfinished infrastructure throughout the Nigerian construction sector. The inefficiencies stem primarily from insufficient planning, impractical budgeting, and suboptimal execution tactics that poorly coordinate design, budgeting, scheduling, procurement, and quality control activities. Adebayo and Oyewobi (2020) observed that numerous projects experience financial difficulties from imprecise cost predictions, while inadequate scheduling procedures ignore realistic delay assessments from weather, supply chain disruptions, or regulatory obstacles. Notable examples include the Lagos-Ibadan Motorway development, originally scheduled for 2014 completion but remaining unfinished as of 2024 due to unexpected cost increases and bureaucratic inefficiency (Al-Mhdawi *et al*., 2025), and the

National Stadium in Abuja, which remains underutilized due to incomplete facilities and inadequate long-term planning (Olaniyi, 2017). The deficiency of skilled labour exacerbates these managerial shortcomings, with excessive dependence on inexperienced workers resulting in substandard craftsmanship and frequent rework.

5.3 Corruption and lack of accountability

Pervasive corruption and inadequate accountability substantially undermine the Nigerian construction sector's efficiency, project implementation, and overall progress. The industry faces widespread corruption including bribery, embezzlement, and political interference that compromises effectiveness, leading to frequent delays, increased costs, and subpar project outcomes. Oyewobi *et al*. (2011a) and Williams-Elegbe (2018) observed that public funds are frequently misappropriated through inflated contract costs, kickbacks, and unlawful transactions, creating inefficiency cycles where project budgets exceed limits without adequate quality or completion. Procurement processes are often compromised with contracts awarded based on political affiliations rather than technical expertise, as noted by Ahmed (2024). Political interference intensifies inefficiencies as politicians allocate contracts based on loyalty rather than technical abilities, while bribery emerges as normative behaviour in procurement processes. This systemic corruption, reflected in Nigeria's low ranking on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (2021), severely compromises industry development and undermines both domestic and international investor confidence.

5.4 Infrastructural deficiencies

Infrastructural inadequacies present significant obstacles to the Nigerian construction sector, impacting nearly every stage of project implementation through insufficient transportation networks, unreliable energy supply, and inefficient supply chain systems. The inadequate and declining road infrastructure, particularly in rural areas where raw materials are procured, substantially elevates transportation costs and causes schedule interruptions, with contractors encountering delays and operational inefficiencies that result in budget overruns (World Bank, 2021; Okafor *et al*., 2022). Nigeria's persistent energy supply unreliability, characterized by ongoing power outages and insufficient grid infrastructure, forces construction companies to depend significantly on costly diesel-powered generators, substantially elevating operational expenses and inducing intermittent job interruptions

(World Bank, 2020; International Energy Agency, 2021). Inefficient supply chain processes cause construction delays through poor logistics coordination, inadequate transport systems, and bureaucratic delays, with materials often arriving late, damaged, or in insufficient quantities. The aggregate impact creates a high-risk environment that diminishes productivity, profitability, and investment attractiveness in the construction industry.

5.5 Weak regulatory enforcement and legal issues

The regulatory and legislative structures governing Nigerian construction are beset by significant difficulties including inadequate rules, ineffective enforcement methods, and absence of cohesive policies for safety, standards, and environmental sustainability. Although Nigeria possesses legal structures designed to regulate the sector, implementation remains predominantly ineffectual due to insufficient monitoring mechanisms and corruption among regulatory agencies. The National Building Code has proven largely ineffective due to inconsistent enforcement, with regulatory bodies lacking capability or political resolve to enforce compliance, resulting in proliferation of inferior construction methods (Ajao and Ogunsemi, 2017). Safety regulations are frequently inadequate, resulting in numerous fatalities and injuries among workers, while the absence of cohesive environmental policies causes construction projects to fail sustainability standards. The disparity between regulatory structure and practical execution creates a construction sector functioning predominantly beyond legal confines, with numerous projects circumventing regulatory obligations entirely. This regulatory deficiency is evident in the concerning frequency of building collapses, many preventable through proper enforcement of building rules and safety standards.

5.6 Funding and financial constraints

The Nigerian construction sector encounters substantial financial obstacles with capital limitations being a principal impediment to expansion and advancement. Access to sufficient and affordable credit remains challenging, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises facing rigorous lending criteria, substantial collateral requirements, and short-term loan offerings that are unsuitable for long-term construction project timelines. The World Bank (2020) reported that Nigeria's credit-to-GDP ratio is among the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa and is attributed to inadequate domestic savings and commercial banks' hesitance to extend credit to high-risk construction

sectors. Increase in interest rates intensify financing challenges, with the Central Bank of Nigeria raising the Monetary Policy Rate to 13% in 2022 thereby exacerbating financial strain on construction firms and resulting in high project costs and delays. The volatile economic conditions shaped by global oil price variations, foreign exchange instability, and internal political uncertainty substantially impact long-term investments. This creates a detrimental feedback loop that constrains foreign direct investment attraction, as the volatile macroeconomic landscape renders Nigeria less appealing for construction-related investments (Babatunde *et al*., 2018), ultimately limiting the industry's capacity to generate employment and stimulate economic growth.

6. The Menu of Cure: Research-Backed Remedies

6.1 Embrace collaborative delivery models

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

A central pillar of my scholarly journey has been procurement reform and the strengthening of Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Nigeria's construction and infrastructure sector. My research and that of the doctoral scholars I have supervised has consistently addressed one critical question: why do our projects fail, and how can procurement systems be redesigned to ensure success?

One important contribution is the development of an e-procurement implementation model for public construction projects in Abuja (Abdullahi, 2023). This study confronted the inefficiencies, opacity, and delays associated with traditional procurement processes. By proposing a structured digital framework adapted to Nigeria's institutional context, the research demonstrated how transparency, accountability, audit integrity, and value for money can be significantly enhanced. In an environment weakened by discretionary practices and documentation gaps, digitalisation emerges not simply as innovation, but as a governance imperative.

Extending this reform agenda to PPPs, Gognaje (2024) investigated factors influencing private investment in Nigeria's PPP market using empirical data from six infrastructure projects in Northern Nigeria and applying Failure Mode and Effects Analysis. The study identified three dominant critical failure factors: public sector corruption, lack of competition and transparency in procurement, and political interference during implementation. Conversely, six critical success factors were established, including functional financial markets, favourable investment climate, appropriate risk allocation, competitive procurement processes, realistic

cost–benefit assessment, and stakeholder trust. These findings provide practical guidance for reducing PPP failure risks and strengthening investor confidence.

Complementing this, Ogunlolu (2025) developed a Multi-Criteria Decision Model (MCDM) to improve the selection of private partners in Nigeria's PPP framework. Her findings revealed that financial capacity, technical expertise, and managerial competence are the most influential selection criteria. Importantly, the study showed that traditional selection approaches possess very low predictive power, underscoring the need for structured, data-driven evaluation systems. The validated model enhances transparency, reduces subjectivity, and aligns private partner selection with regulatory and developmental objectives.

Beyond PPP reform, our earlier studies identified enabling conditions for effective PPP implementation in health, education, and housing (Oyewobi *et al*., 2012), while subsequent research emphasised transparent bidding, equitable risk allocation, and stakeholder trust as implementation strategies (Gognaje *et al*., 2023). Our work on sustainable procurement further revealed barriers such as weak regulatory enforcement, limited government commitment, and economic instability, leading to recommendations for stronger legislation and capacity building (Oyewobi & Jimoh, 2022).

Collectively, these contributions converge on a central thesis: procurement systems are not mere administrative routines; they are institutional determinants of infrastructure success or failure. Whether through digital procurement reform, structured PPP investment frameworks, objective partner selection models, collaborative delivery approaches, or sustainable procurement policies, the message remains consistent systemic reform is non-negotiable.

If the Nigerian construction industry is indeed an ailing elephant, then procurement reform and PPP optimisation form essential components of its treatment. Through research, mentorship, and policy engagement, we continue to advance evidence-based solutions aimed at restoring efficiency, credibility, and long-term sustainability to Nigeria's construction and infrastructure sector.

6.2 Strategic performance frameworks for the Nigerian construction industry

To remedy the ongoing underperformance and structural inefficiencies in the Nigerian construction sector, the implementation of strategic performance frameworks is essential. Our research suggested integrated performance model, which amalgamates the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) with the Business

Excellence Model (BEM), provided a thorough and flexible framework for construction companies (Oyewobi *et al*., 2015a). This model allows organisations to assess performance across various dimensions—financial outcomes, innovation, customer satisfaction, internal processes, learning, and organisational growth rather than solely concentrating on profitability, as traditional financial metrics do. This comprehensive approach is especially crucial in Nigeria, where non-financial elements such as ineffective leadership, fragile institutional frameworks, and insufficient knowledge management have been recognised as significant barriers to success (Oyewobi, 2014; Oyewobi *et al*., 2016).

Oyewobi (2014) asserted that enhancing performance in the construction sector cannot be achieved solely through increased capital investment or budgetary constraints. Companies must synchronise strategic objectives with operational actions, foster a culture of continuous improvement, and implement proactive risk management. The amalgamation of BSC and BEM enables organisations to conduct periodic "organisational health assessments," thereby facilitating the identification of operational impediments, monitoring advancements in quality and innovation, and ensuring the fulfilment of customer and stakeholder expectations. According to Oyewobi *et al*. (2015a), the absence of effective performance monitoring systems frequently results in a reactive management culture, wherein problems are resolved only post substantial harm. The proposed model addressed this by promoting early identification and rectification of inefficiencies, which is crucial for organisational resilience and long-term sustainability.

The Business Excellence Model component enhances leadership efficacy, strategic coherence, and stakeholder-centric practices, which are often deficient in Nigerian construction companies (Oyewobi *et al.,* 2015a). The integrated approach as shown in Figure 1, in conjunction with the Balanced Scorecard's focus on converting vision into quantifiable actions, facilitates a feedback loop for ongoing learning and adaptation. By monitoring innovation metrics and enhancing internal processes, organisations can adapt swiftly to external pressures like regulatory changes or client demands, essential capabilities in the unstable Nigerian construction sector (Oyewobi *et al*., 2011b; 2020).

This integrated approach addresses the industry's financial health as well as its structural, operational, and strategic wellbeing. It serves as both a preventive and remedial instrument, assisting companies in circumventing the profound issues that have rendered the industry a proverbial “ailing

elephant." According to the study conducted by Oyewobi *et al*. (2015a), in the absence of strategic frameworks, Nigerian construction businesses will persist in facing fragmented performance management and will forfeit prospects for sustained growth and excellence.

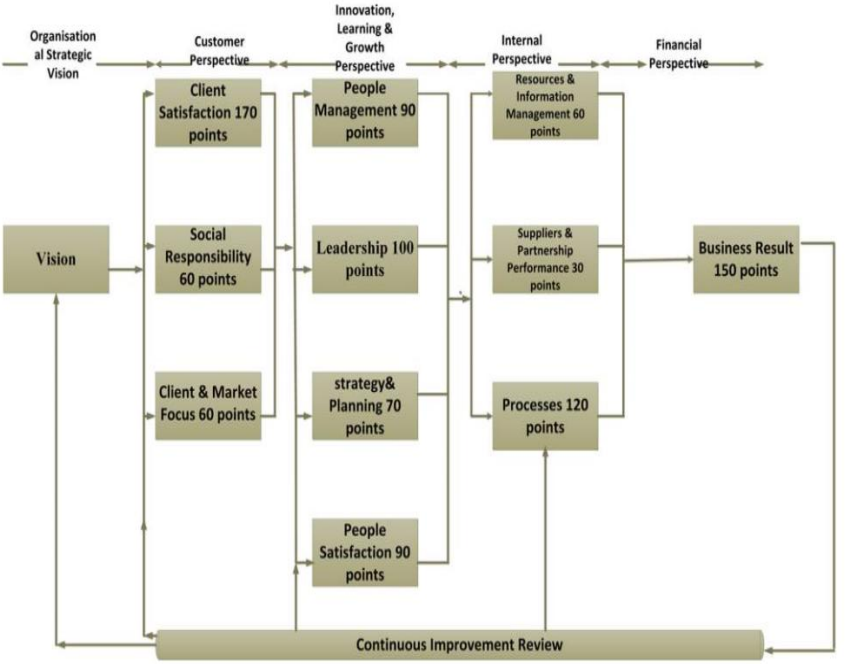

Figure 1: Proposed integrated construction excellence model (Oyewobi *et al*., 2015a)

6.3 Competitive strategies for sustainability in the Nigerian construction industry

In the current turbulent and competitive construction landscape, using strategic project delivery methods is essential for attaining sustainability and long-term competitiveness. Our empirical research on South African construction enterprises demonstrated that the use of cost leadership and differentiation strategies markedly improves both financial and non-financial performance metrics. These techniques enhance profitability while fostering client satisfaction, market repute, and innovative capacity. Conversely, numerous Nigerian construction companies persist in employing

opportunistic bidding strategies, concentrating exclusively on immediate profits rather than long-term strategic development.

Oyewobi *et al*. (2016) underscored the necessity of connecting corporate strategies with evolving market demands, highlighting that numerous Nigerian enterprises lack a cohesive competitive strategy, hence jeopardising their survival in a liberalised and progressively globalised construction industry. The inclination to engage in price competition by underbidding frequently leads to suboptimal project results, as companies find it challenging to uphold quality and adhere to schedules when functioning on narrow profit margins. This strategy compromises financial performance and undermines client trust and long-term sustainability (Oyewobi *et al*., 2013).

To realign the Nigerian construction sector for sustainable growth, companies must shift from transactional methodologies to more strategic, client-centric, and innovation-oriented frameworks. Oyewobi *et al*. (2016) contended that differentiation, via innovation, quality improvement, and service specialization, can markedly augment business competitiveness. Implementing contemporary construction technology, sustainable building practices, and design-build delivery method can operate as strategic differentiators that address changing market and environmental requirements. Moreover, cost leadership strategies, focused on operational efficiency, supply chain optimisation, and lean construction methodologies, enable enterprises to sustain competitiveness while providing value.

In order to improve performance, Oyewobi, Windapo, and James (2015b) examined how major South African construction companies apply Porter's general competitive strategies: focus, differentiation, and cost leadership. The study emphasised strategic behaviours like on-time delivery, quality service, innovation, and low-cost operations as crucial for attaining competitive advantage and sustainable performance. It found that differentiation and cost leadership are significantly linked to financial performance, while focus strategy has no discernible impact.

Incorporating strategic management principles, such as those suggested by Porter (1985), into the Nigerian construction sector is crucial. Oyewobi *et al*. (2015b) discovered that construction companies that strategically integrate cost efficiency with value creation are more likely to attain sustained performance and endure external shocks, such as economic recessions and regulatory changes. Furthermore, the implementation of strategic planning and risk management frameworks bolsters organisations' resilience and agility in a volatile commercial landscape.

Consequently, the longevity of Nigerian construction enterprises is predominantly contingent upon their capacity to transit from opportunism to the adoption of formalised competitive strategies. This includes differentiation through innovation and quality, as well as cost leadership through efficiency and process improvement. Oyewobi *et al*. (2013, 2015b, 2016) asserted that integrating strategic thinking into construction management techniques is essential for competitiveness and is imperative for survival and growth in the contemporary construction sector.

6.4 Risk and Safety Management in the Nigerian Construction Industry

Risk and safety management is a critical yet often underemphasised component of construction project delivery in Nigeria. Drawing from our work on Inherently Safer Design (ISD) (Windapo, Oyewobi and Zwane, 2014), we emphasized the importance of embedding safety considerations from the earliest stages of the project lifecycle. ISD promotes the proactive elimination or minimization of hazards at the source rather than relying solely on administrative controls or protective equipment. When implemented effectively, ISD principles can lead to significant reductions in construction-related accidents, improved quality outcomes, and overall project efficiency.

Jimoh *et al.* (2016) asserted that the Nigerian construction industry remains one of the most hazardous sectors, characterized by a high incidence of workplace accidents and unsafe site practices. These safety challenges are often linked to poor risk assessment procedures, low compliance with health and safety regulations, and a reactive approach to hazard management. The authors argued that many contractors prioritize cost and speed over safety, resulting in long-term financial losses, legal liabilities, and compromised project quality. Integrating ISD into project planning and design can therefore offer dual benefits: reducing life-threatening risks and enhancing operational efficiency. However, despite these benefits, Windapo *et al*., (2014) study, despite being conducted in South Africa, found that stakeholders' knowledge of Inherently Safer Design (ISD) in Project Life Cycle Management (PLCM) was inconsistent and limited. A substantial knowledge gap in ISD-based risk management in the utility industry is highlighted by the results in Tables 1 and 2, which revealed a frequent misapplication of principles across phases, with specific deficiencies in applying moderation during execution and simplicity in finalisation.

Table 1: Level of awareness of the process of Risk Management strategies used within the Project Life Cycle Management (PLCM)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Variance	Kurtosis	Skewness	FI
Inherent (safety "built in", not "added on")	1.71	0.80	0.64	-1.20	0.57	0.58
Active (Control, Prevent, or mitigate the consequences of incidents)	1.85	0.86	0.74	-1.59	0.30	0.62
Passive (Minimise hazard using process or equipment design features)	1.75	0.82	0.67	-1.33	0.50	0.59
Procedural (Safety standards, rules or procedures)	2.10	0.87	0.75	-1.65	-0.20	0.70

Source: Windapo, Oyewobi & Ziningi (2014)

Table 2: Level of awareness of the ISD principles used during PLCM phases

	Concept Phase	Definition Phase	Execution Phase	Finalisation Phase	Throughout PLCM
Minimise (intensify: Major changes, e.g. material, process)	43 (53.09%)	15 (18.52%)	12 (14.82%)	2 (2.47%)	9 (11.11%)
Substitute (Reduce inventory or hazardous substances with less hazardous ones)	23 (28.40%)	31 (38.27%)	17 (20.99%)	2 (2.47%)	8 (9.87%)
Moderate (attenuate: detail changes, operating parameters, passive Safety design)	26 (32.10%)	28 (34.56%)	17 (20.99%)	3 (3.70%)	7 (8.64%)
Simplify (Add-on-Safety: Better design, passive controls rather than active)	22 (27.16%)	27 (33.33%)	14 (17.28%)	9 (11.11%)	9 (11.11%)

Source: Windapo, Oyewobi & Ziningi (2014)

According to research evidence (Oyewobi, Ibrahim, and Ganiyu, 2012; Jimoh *et al*., 2016), risk management in Nigeria's construction sector is fragmented, with safety considerations rarely integrated throughout the project lifecycle. These researchers proposed a systematic and integrated strategy that is consistent with global best practices, combining design, construction processes, material selection, and operational safety into a cohesive framework. Within this paradigm, Inherently Safer Design (ISD) emerges as a safety and cost-saving method, reducing the need for costly retrofits, downtime, or post-construction alterations caused by safety violations (Windapo *et al*., 2014).

Beyond the obvious safety benefits, early adoption of ISD improves quality assurance by incorporating durability, sustainability, and environmental compatibility into design decisions. This is consistent with the calls made by Oyewobi *et al*. (2017) and Jimoh *et al*. (2020) for a stronger commitment to sustainable construction practices, such as green building principles and efficient resource management measures that reduce toxic material exposure while also strengthening structural integrity.

Extending the subject further, our most recent research (Adamu *et al*., 2024) proposed artificial intelligence as an innovative tool for safety compliance in Nigeria's construction sector. Moving beyond traditional manual and reactive methods, the study shows how artificial intelligence (AI) offers real-time danger detection, predictive insights, and proactive actions that significantly reduce accident rates and increase worker safety. By placing AI in the Nigerian environment, the study adds context-specific insights from a developing economy to worldwide construction safety research. More importantly, it gives governments, regulators, and industry leaders strong reasons to invest in AI-enabled safety technology and expedite the digital transition in practice.

Together, these study strands demonstrated that incorporating ISD concepts across the project lifecycle, from feasibility and design to construction and operation, provides a strategic approach to decrease risks, increase safety, reduce costs, and improve overall project quality. However, Oyewobi *et al*. (2011) and Adamu *et al*. (2024)

cautioned that achieving these results involve more than technical innovation; it necessitates a cultural shift towards safety consciousness, better policy enforcement, and long-term capacity building across all stakeholder groups.

6.5 Ethics and Governance Reforms

The Nigerian construction sector faces critical challenges requiring stringent ethical standards and governance reforms, as extensively documented by Oyewobi *et al*. (2011a; 2011c). Political interference in project allocation and implementation has severely compromised infrastructure quality, with corruption facilitating unethical practices including inflated contracts and project abandonment. Oyewobi *et al*. (2011a) identified political influence as a key driver of these issues. The solution lies in strengthening regulatory agencies like COREN and NIQS, implementing ethics training, establishing whistle blower protection systems, and ensuring transparency in procurement processes. Oyewobi *et al*. (2017; 2022) emphasized that ethical breaches represent systemic deficiencies requiring coordinated institutional and legislative reforms rather than mere individual failings.

6.6 Digital Transformation and Innovation

Digital transformation represents a strategic imperative for enhancing transparency and efficiency in Nigerian construction. Our research, Oyewobi *et al*. (2025) and Okanlawon *et al*. (2023) highlighted the technology's potential to reduce inefficiencies and address corruption. Building Information Modelling (BIM) offers collaborative platforms for design and lifecycle management, though Oyewobi *et al*. (2025) noted slow adoption due to limited awareness and cultural resistance. E-Procurement systems can enhance transparency and accountability, as argued by Oyewobi and Jimoh (2022). Advanced technologies including blockchain, artificial intelligence, and digital twins show promise for revolutionizing construction practices. Research by Okanlawon, Oyewobi and Jimoh (2023) and related studies demonstrated blockchain's role in supply chain transparency, while

work by Adamu *et al*. (2024) and Ibrahim *et al*. (2024) explored AI and digital twin applications respectively.

6.7 Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer

A significant barrier to Nigerian construction advancement is the mismatch between academic training and industry demands, particularly in project management, digital technologies, and professional ethics. Oyewobi *et al.* (2012) emphasized that graduates lack essential technical competencies and soft skills required for effective construction performance. Curriculum reform is urgently needed to integrate practical knowledge and modern technological tools, as argued by Oyewobi *et al*. (2020). Stronger academia-industry partnerships through collaborative research and structured internships are vital, according to Oyewobi *et al*. (2016). Research by Ganiyu *et al*. (2021) and Ola-awo *et al.* (2021) explored organizational behaviour and stakeholder management, while studies by Bamgbade *et al.* (2020) and Oyewobi *et al*. (2019; 2022) examined diversity management and work-life balance impacts on organizational performance and professional retention.

6.8 Increasing Investment and Financial Access

The Nigerian construction industry, termed the "ailing elephant," requires enhanced investment and sustainable financing access to address its capital-intensive nature. Oyewobi *et al*. (2014) identified inadequate funding as a major cause of project delays and abandonment, particularly in public infrastructure. Financial reforms including single-digit interest rates, tax incentives, and reduced bureaucratic obstacles are essential for investor confidence. Oyewobi *et al*. (2016) argued that viable projects may fail without proper financial policies and institutional support. Public-Private Partnerships represent a crucial strategy, though Oyewobi *et al*. (2012) noted that their effectiveness is hindered by inconsistent policies and corruption. Cost-effective financing mechanisms for smaller contractors and indigenous enterprises, including risk-sharing frameworks and construction-oriented microfinance, are vital for comprehensive sector development and sustainability.

7. Personal Reflection: From Classroom to Construction Sites

My personal journey from academic excitement to field reality revealed the stark disconnect between theoretical knowledge and construction practice in Nigeria. Early career experiences on government infrastructure projects exposed systemic breakdowns including absent designs, delayed materials, and technically incompetent contractors being retained due to political patronage. This disillusionment, transformed into my having strong conviction especially upon the realisation that the problems did not stem from lack of knowledge but from persistent neglect of established principles. The experience highlighted systematic and cultural failures rooted in skewed incentives, ethical compromises, and governance breakdowns. This pivotal moment shaped my research focus in seeking viable, context-sensitive solutions that combine policy reforms, ethical leadership, institutional accountability, and professional empowerment to address the industry's fundamental challenges.

8. Conclusion: Reawakening the Elephant

Mr Vice Chancelor, Distinguished guests, colleagues, and students, this lecture is not a requiem for a dying elephant, it is a call to action. The Nigerian construction industry, frequently characterised as a faltering giant, should not continue to be bogged down by inefficiency, corruption, and stagnation. The elephant can recover, but only if we, as stakeholders, prioritise reform over rhetoric, ethics over expediency, and strategy over mere survival.

As a scholar, I present evidence: the data, the patterns, and the models that illustrated not only the issues but also the locations and methods for interventions. As a professional, I provide insight: the lessons derived from the field, the lived experiences underlying the data, and the practical encounters that contest our beliefs. As a Nigerian, I embody optimism: a conviction that with integrity, bravery, and collaborative determination, this industry can be restored and revitalised.

Let us commence by candidly recognising and recognising the profound structural deficiencies that persistently afflict the sector. This encompasses prevalent problems such as continual rework resulting from inadequate planning and execution, unethical conduct including bribery and favouritism, and insufficient workforce development that renders our construction sites under-resourced and inefficient (Oyewobi *et al*., 2011a and c; Aiyetan, 2013). In the absence of this candid assessment, our solutions will perpetually fall short.

Subsequently, we must prescribe judiciously by not simply replicating foreign models, but customising reforms that are contextually appropriate, regionally pertinent, and scalable. This includes the adoption of innovative technologies like Building Information Modelling (BIM), enhancement of project management systems, enforcement of ethical standards, and establishment of robust regulatory frameworks (Oyewobi *et al*., 2020). Leadership in the industry must transit from patronage to performance, and from theoretical conformity to practical accountability.

Ultimately, we must proceed with immediacy and valour. We cannot permit any postponement. The repercussions of inaction extend beyond financial implications; they encompass human, social, and generational dimensions. Each structural failure, every forsaken project, and every misappropriated resource signifies not merely an infrastructural breakdown, but also a breach of confidence in our institutions and professions. We must reconstruct not only infrastructure but also trust in the ability of the Nigerian construction industry to provide secure, sustainable, and inclusive growth.

In conclusion, although the Nigerian construction industry has significant obstacles, it possesses substantial potential for growth and reform. By attacking systemic inefficiencies head-on, whether they be in the form of rework, unethical behaviour, bad leadership, or regulatory failure, and by embracing a vision driven by innovation, responsibility, and partnership, we may begin the process of healing this ailing elephant.

Let us not only converse about change, let us embody the change. It is time to propose a set of remedies that will not only revive but also

rejuvenate the construction industry thereby allowing it to reclaim its essential role as a pillar of Nigeria's economic advancement and national pride. This will truly renew our hope!

9. Recommendations for Shaping the Future of the Nigerian Construction Industry

Reviving the Nigerian construction industry requires coordinated work on several fronts. Reforms initiated by the government should focus on modernising regulations, enhancing local capacity, encouraging private investment, and incorporating sustainable practices. Learning from international models and harmonising development policies will be essential for converting the sector into a vibrant and globally competitive growth powerhouse. The subsequent recommendations are designed to encapsulate the essential policy transformations required to revitalise the Nigerian construction sector. These ideas correspond with effective global practices as well as underscore a unified and comprehensive development strategy:

9. 1. Changes in Policy Established by the Nigerian Government

a) Enhance Regulatory and Institutional Frameworks: Nigeria must revise and strictly implement building codes, professional standards, and procurement rules. This entails the digitisation of approval and compliance processes to mitigate corruption and delays, as well as ensure that all construction-related authorities operate cooperatively under a singular regulatory authority.

b) Promotion of Local Content and Capacity Development: The government ought to implement policies that require increased local involvement in construction projects, encompassing both labour and materials. Investment in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is essential for bridging the skills gap and diminishing reliance on foreign expertise.

c) Reliable Funding Mechanisms and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Implement consistent budgetary allocations and promote infrastructure bonds to finance long-term projects.

Promote PPP frameworks featuring clear risk-sharing agreements to entice reputable investors.

d) Embrace Digital Transformation and Innovation.: Implement Building Information Modelling (BIM), e-procurement, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in public projects to enhance precision, transparency, and lifecycle cost control. The government can mandate the adoption of these instruments in all public construction contracts.

9. 2. Illustrations of Effective Foreign Policies

a) Singapore – Construction Industry Transformation Map (CITM): Singapore's implementation of the Construction Industry Transformation Map (CITM) encompasses integrated digital delivery, prefabrication technology, and skills improvement initiatives. A similarly structured transformation strategy in Nigeria can enhance process efficiency and promote innovative thinking.

b) Malaysia/South Africa – Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB): Malaysia and South Africa established the CIDB to oversee, educate, and standardise the construction sector. Nigeria may replicate this by creating a central institution with genuine ability to implement reforms, organise training, and oversee quality and compliance.

c) Rwanda: E-government and ease of doing business: Rwanda drastically decreased the time and expense associated with construction permits through streamlined permitting processes. Nigeria needs to implement e-governance to optimise planning approvals, land access, and environmental assessments.

9. 3. The Significance of an Integrated Approach

Nigeria must implement a cohesive and multisectoral policy framework to effectively revitalise the construction industry, coordinate initiatives in urban development, housing, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability.

a) Urban Development: Formulate cohesive city master plans that synchronise transportation, land utilisation, and service infrastructure. Enhancing urban planning institutions and regional development organisations will facilitate the management of urban sprawl and foster inclusive growth.
b) Housing: Establish cohesive national housing policies featuring explicit objectives, land access frameworks, and improvements in housing financing. Public housing efforts must integrate affordability, quality benchmarks, and public-private partnerships.
c) Infrastructure: Synchronise infrastructure development strategies with national economic objectives, ensuring they are supported by robust cost-benefit evaluations and sustainability standards.
d) Environmental Sustainability: Integrate environmental impact studies, climate resilience strategies, and green construction standards into all public projects. Encourage energy-efficient and low-carbon building methodologies.

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Professor Luqman Oyekunle Oyewobi: A Biography

Professor Luqman Oyekunle Oyewobi was born on December 1, 1974, into the family of Mr Hassan Taiwo Oyekola Oyewobi and Mrs Esther Adenihun Oniosun, in Okaka Town, Itesiwaju Local Government Area of Oyo State. He began his early education at Baptist Primary School, Okaka, before transferring to Nawar-ud-Deen Primary School, Okaka, in September 1979. His journey to secondary education was threatened by financial constraints, as his family could not initially afford the admission form. However, with the timely intervention of his grandmother, Mrs Deborah Siye Ejide-Erin Oyewobi, he was able to continue his education. In 1985, he enrolled at Okaka Community Grammar School (OCGS), where he graduated in 1991 as the overall best student and as a member of the pioneer set under the 6-3-3-4 education policy in the old Oyo State. The path through secondary school was far from smooth. At one-point, financial hardship forced him to drop out and work briefly as a bus conductor. Support from his grandmother and his grandfather, Mr Johnson Ojedokun (a younger brother to Pa Oyewobi), enabled him to complete his studies, although he never received a report card throughout his time in secondary school due to the late payment of his school fees. He also had a brief spell at Ansar-ud-Deen High School, Okeho.

In 1992, Luqman gained admission into St. Andrew's College of Education (SACOED), Oyo, where he excelled as the best student in Mathematics and Integrated Science option. The following year, he left for The Polytechnic, Ibadan (Saki Campus), where he earned a National Diploma in Quantity Surveying, graduating as the overall best student. He later proceeded to the main campus of The Polytechnic, Ibadan, where he completed his Higher National Diploma in 1997/98. His academic brilliance culminated at the Federal University of Technology, Minna (FUTMINNA), where he graduated top of his class with a First-Class degree in Quantity Surveying, the first ever in the Department.

Upon completing his National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) at the Abia State Ministry of Works and Transport, which he commenced in 1999, he began his professional career as a Technical Officer (Quantity Surveyor) with the Oyo State Local Government Service Commission and was posted to Ogbomoso North Local Government, Kinnira, Ogbomoso. He

served there between 2000 and 2007. In February 2007, following his record-breaking achievement as FUTMINNA's first First-Class graduate in Quantity Surveying, he was employed as Assistant Lecturer in the University. He went on to obtain a Master of Technology (MTech) degree in Quantity Surveying from the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA), and later earned his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Construction Economics and Management from the University of Cape Town, South Africa.

Professor Oyewobi rose steadily through the academic ranks and, in 2023, was promoted to Professor of Quantity Surveying (Construction Economics and Management). His research expertise lies in construction economics, strategic management in construction, and quantity surveying. He has authored over 150 scholarly publications in reputable journals and conference proceedings, served as a reviewer for both national and international journals, and has been actively involved in consultancy services within and outside Nigeria.
His outstanding contributions have earned him numerous awards and recognitions, including: The West Africa Built Environment Research (WABER) Award for Outstanding Contribution to Research in Quantity Surveying in West Africa in 2019 (10th Anniversary Conference, Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences). The University of Cape Town International Student Scholarship Award. Multiple Best Paper Awards at international conferences.

Beyond academics, Professor Oyewobi has contributed significantly to institutional and professional service. At FUTMINNA, he has served as Students' Adviser across different levels, Postgraduate Coordinator, and Sub-Dean of the School of Environmental Technology (SET). At the university level, he was a member of the Conditions and Scheme of Service Review Committee. Within the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), he has served as Welfare Officer, Vice-Chairperson, and is currently the Chairperson of the ASUU FUTMINNA Branch.

He is a proud professional member of the Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS) and a Chartered Quantity Surveyor registered with the Quantity Surveyors Registration Board of Nigeria (QSRBN). He has also contributed to NIQS through committee works, including the Syllabus Review Committee, Education Committee, Library Committee, TPC assessor and Logbook Assessment Committee among others.

Professor Oyewobi is deeply committed to mentoring, having supervised numerous undergraduate and postgraduate students, many of whom have gone on to make significant contributions in academia and industry. His teaching philosophy emphasizes innovation, real-world case studies, and equipping students with practical insights to thrive in the construction sector. He is happily married to Mrs Hauwa Lami Idrees, and their union is blessed with two beautiful daughters, Zainab Motunrayo and Summaiyah Oyeladun Oyewobi.

Today, Professor Luqman Oyekunle Oyewobi stands as a distinguished academic, researcher, mentor, and leader. His resilience through early struggles, dedication to excellence, and unwavering passion for advancing knowledge in construction economics and management continue to inspire colleagues, students, and professionals across Nigeria and beyond.

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