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HEALTH AND SAFETY STATUS OF CONSTRUCTION SITE WORKERS: A STUDY OF SUBCONTRACTORS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA.

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The construction industry (in its narrow definition) is the largest industrial employer in the world,with 111 million employees worldwide. Of these, 74% are in the low-income countries. Since low-income countries produce only 23% of the global construction output, it is clear that the "employment intensity" of construction activities is much higher in low-income countries than in the high-income ones (CIB & UNEP-IETC, 2002). Several authors in constuction globally have reported that upto 90% of the the actual work on site is being carried out by subcontractors. Bamisile (2004) also found that, only few construction companies in Nigeria (less than 20%) can employ and keep in their employment the minimum number of the basic tradesmen required in the industry,

The construction industry is no stranger to the woes of a casual labour market; especially in developing countries were most subcontractors are from the informal sector .Workers move from employer to employer at a rapid pace and in and out of the construction industry as work is completed here but available there. This transient nature of the construction labour market leads to a pool of workers that is not well versed in safety and health issues as they exist in construction. Studies have shown that, the construction industry generally have very bad safety records and the high accident rate and other construction site health hazards are ascribed to lack of formal training and subcontracting to the unregulated informal sector.

Large gaps exist between and within countries with regard to the health status of workers and their exposure to occupational risks. Still only a small minority of the global workforce has access to occupational health services (*WHA*, 2007). English (2002) described the extensive subcontracting in Africa as temporary and characterized by insecure employment and also poor working conditions, the conditions supposed here are that informal workers are mostly self-employed and have little, if any protection from regulations. There have been relatively few systematic studies of the health of construction workers, but the main hazards are known. Some of the main health hazards on site include accidents (falls from height, motor vehicle crashes, electrocution, machines, and being struck by falling objects) dusts, toxic substances, radiation, vibration, noise, changes in atmospheric temperature and pressure, and inadequate welfare and hygiene.

These hazards and risks are known, but the discontentment is that they are very difficult to control in a constantly changing work environment. The paper discussed the health and safety status of subcontractors in the Nigerian building industry. The study reviewed related literature and opinion survey was carried out with the aid of closed ended structured questionnaires measured on a likert scale. Subcontractors in the building

industry were the main respondents in the study. Descriptive analysis was the statistical analysis (frequencies) was used to analyse the generated data. Inadequate provision for attendance and safety were found to have high impact on the project success in addition to the high frequent occurrences of such problems. In relation to these findings, the following are the recommendations made: employing discussing safety at coordination meetings and pre-job conferences, monitoring project safety performance, project management should insist on compliance with the safety regulations, if possible employ a project safety manager.

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