

UNETHICAL CONDUCT AMONG PROFESSIONALS IN
THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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DEDICATION

Thanks a million to:

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LOVE YA!!

ABSTRAK

Pembinaan merupakan antara sektor yang mencabar dan kompleks. Kemampuan untuk mengawal dan berkomunikasi dengan pelbagai peringkat, proses dan parti untuk mencapai objektif projek bukanlah satu kerja yang mudah dan semua beban dan tanggungjawab ini digalas oleh professional. Selain itu, professional juga berhadapan dengan krisis dan dilema sebagai seorang professional beretika. Kajian ini memfokuskan kepada tiga kumpulan professional iaitu jurutera, arkitek dan jurukur bahan. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti elemen-elemen tidak beretika, ciri-ciri serta tanggungjawab yang perlu ada pada seorang professional selain mengenalpasti kaedah atau cara yang terbaik untuk mengatasi masalah etika ini. 100 set borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada professional di sekitar negeri Johor dan Selangor. Daripada hasil kajian ini, didapati perilaku politik dan sosial merupakan elemen tidak beretika yang paling kerap berlaku di kalangan professional. Terdapat enam ciri-ciri penting yang telah dikenalpasti. Antaranya, integriti, kebolehpercayaan, bertanggungjawab, berdisiplin, kemahiran berkomunikasi dan beberapa sifat individu yang tertentu. Dari segi tanggungjawab pula, melindungi kepentingan klien, setia serta tidak terlibat dengan konflik dan professional sebagai penasihat kepada klien mendapat persetujuan yang tinggi daripada professional sebagai antara tanggungjawab yang perlu bagi seorang professional. Melalui kajian ini juga, didapati bahawa kod etika yang baik iaitu apabila professional percaya bahawa ia dibangunkan untuk membantu professional dan dijadikan sebagai petunjuk selain mengukuhkan lagi nilai syarikat merupakan kaedah yang terbaik dalam menyelesaikan masalah etika di kalangan professional. Selain itu, hasil kajian ini boleh dijadikan sebagai rujukan dalam usaha untuk mengurangkan masalah etika di kalangan professional di Malaysia.

ABSTRACT

Construction industry is a very challenging and complex sector. The ability to control and communicate with various stages, process and parties to meet the project objectives are not an easy job and these responsibilities are on the professionals shoulders. Besides that, the professionals are also facing their own crisis and dilemma as an ethical professional. This study is focusing on three group of professionals; engineers, architects and quantity surveyors. The objectives of this study are: to identify the elements of unethical conducts; the characteristics and responsibilities needed to avoid unethical conducts; and also trying to identify ways to reduce these problems. 100 sets of questionnaire surveys were distributed to the professionals in Johor and Selangor. From this study, the political and social behavior elements is identified as the most common element of unethical conducts with 90% agreement by the professionals. A total of six characteristics that are listed as important to the professionals which include integrity; accountability; trust; being responsible; self-discipline; communications skills and certain personality traits. For the responsibilities needed, including: to protect the interests and welfare of the client; to be loyal and not to engage in conflicts; and the professional as advisor to a client were the highest agreement between the professionals. A successful code of ethics is when the professionals perceive that it was created to guide the behavior of the professionals besides reinforce a company's shared value. The professionals agreed that this method is the best solution to the ethic's problems. The finding of the study can also be used by the industry to increase the level of ethics among the professional in Malaysia.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Professionals such as engineers, architects, and surveyors play a very important role in the construction industry. The absence of ethical behaviors will invites more problems in the future. The risk of exploitation, being cheated and hostility will always haunted the clients. Perceptions that professionals are always can be trusted, loyal, and responsible were no longer true if the ethical issues were not solved quickly. In this study, the unethical conducts among the professionals will be discussed in details together with the appropriate solutions. A percentage analysis will be used to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire surveys. Besides that, this study also has suggested some recommendations that may be useful to the industry.

1.2 General Background

In recent years there has been increased interest in the ethical values, beliefs and behavior of persons in the business world. Public abhorrence of questionable behavior of politicians, the savings and loan scandal and insider trading violations are just a few examples of many problems in professional life. Ferrell and Fraedrick (1991) have concluded that “*Professional ethics is one of the most important concerns in today’s world.*”

A few professional organizations have tried to comprehend the ethical values, beliefs and behavior of their constituents. Several studies and research concerning about the ethics has been conducted. Vittrell (1990) has studied the frequency of ethical behavior for management information specialists and Martin and Peterson (1991) have examined the ethical issues of insider trading.

Fimbel and Burstein (1990) have investigated the ethical values of technology professionals and Thornburg (1991) made use of a survey concerning the ethical beliefs and practices of human resources professionals.

On a preliminary basis, these studies indicate the various ethical issues and uncertainties which are problematic for members of the various professions. Most professionals are ethical segregationists that tend to segregate their ethical values into one type of behavior for business and another type of behavior away from business (Fraedrich, John P, 1988).

1.3 Problem Statement

We live in a cynical age. A major cause for such cynicism is the apparent absence of ethical behavior on the part of professionals with whom we deal. Most of us feel we can no longer trust others especially professionals, which they will exploit or cheat us that they may injure us physically out of anger, hostility, or fear that they will not be available when we need help, and so on.

Lying behind it, however, has to be a commitment to a set of ethical values that form the basis for those criticisms. We do feel that professionals should be trustworthy and supportive, they should deal fairly with us, and they should not hurt us.

Have professionals become less honest, less trustworthy, and more materialistic than their predecessors? This is both an empirical and a theoretical question. Our norms of behavior are not only a set of ideals we have, but also the lenses through which we look at and evaluate actual behavior. To what extent should either the actual or the ideal character of professionals be different today than in the simpler world of the nineteenth century?

Excuses may point to a problem; too great a dissonance between actual behavior and our expectations. In much ethical discussion, the assumption is that such dissonance should be eliminated or minimized by changing behavior.

1.4 Aim and Objective

The aim of the study is to have a clear overview about the unethical conducts among the professionals that involved in the construction industry in Johor and Selangor.

To achieve the above aim, the following objectives have been identified for this study:

- i. To identify the element of unethical conduct among the professional;
- ii. To identify the characteristics and responsibilities that the professionals should play to avoid unethical conducts; and
- iii. To identify ways of reducing unethical conduct among the professional.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study focused on three groups of professionals that are directly involved in a construction industry only. These professionals are engineers, architects and quantity surveyors. The study was conducted in Johor and Selangor area only.

1.6 Importance of the Study

Nowadays, the construction projects are become more complex and difficult. Not only problem occurs due to the increasingly uncertainties in technologies, budget, and development process, the involvement of several professionals bodies in a project can invites more problems. Professional such as engineer and architect always face with crisis and dilemma in the profession. The important of this study is to identify the unethical conduct by the professional in Malaysia besides to identify ways to reducing it.

It was envisaged that the study will be beneficial to all relevant parties that involved in the construction industry ranging from those involved in academic research, student, practitioners of construction industry and the professional's bodies as well. From the study, the element of the unethical conducts among the professional are determine together with the solution to the problem that can be used by each parties in the industry to make sure that the professional ethics are been implemented and practiced. By doing this, the image, reputation and integrity of the professionals will be increase and professional are continued to be respected by the publics.

1.7 Research Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study collection involves literature review and questionnaire survey. The appropriate choice of methodology largely depends on the objectives to be achieved. The analysis for the questionnaire survey, the data was analyzed using the percentage analysis. After that, the analysis will be deliberately discussed and appropriate recommendation will be given.

1.7.1 Flow Chart of Research Methodology

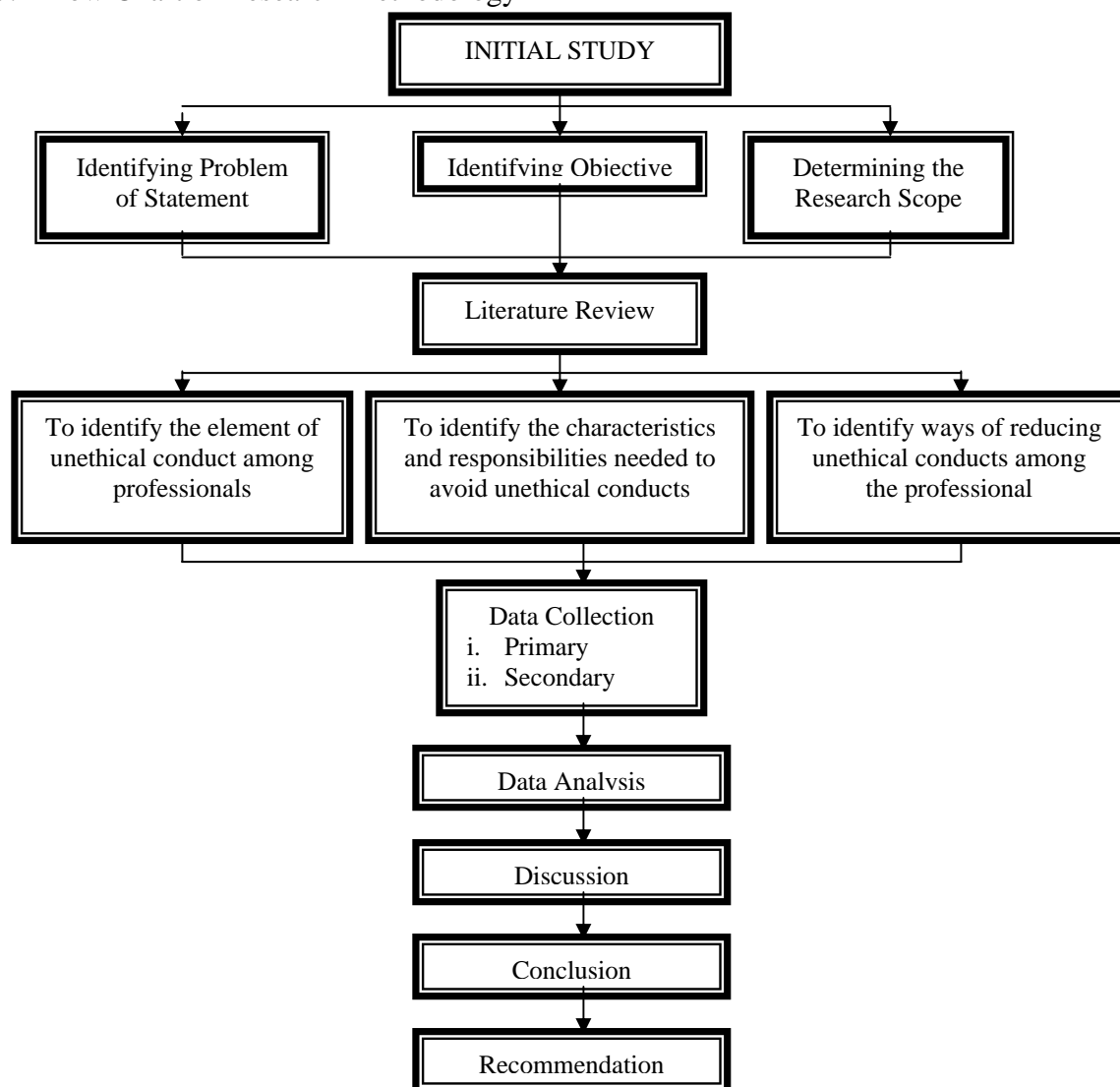


Figure 1. 1: Research Methodology Flow Chart

1.8 Summary of Chapters

This report is divided into six (6) chapters.

Chapter I describes the overall intention of the study. It also explains the objectives, the scope and limitation and the brief methodology adopted for the study.

Chapter II is a literature review that is gathered from the reading material such as books, journals and magazine. This chapter has been divided into four main topic that are related to the study. Those topics are about the professionals, ethics, unethical professionals and resolution of the ethical conflict.

Chapter III describes in detail the methodology used for this study to achieve the objectives. This includes methodology for the data collection and data analysis.

Chapter IV analyzed the data using the percentage analysis for the questionnaire survey. Each part of the questionnaire was analyzed in details and the bar chart diagrams are used to visualize the results.

Chapter V discussed in details the data analyzed in the previous chapter. The discussion is concerning about the agreement and disagreement of each statement by the professionals and the effects to them and to the industry as well.

Chapter VI concludes the overall study on the subject and evaluate whether the objectives of the study are met. Recommendations for further studies are also suggested.