



APPRAISAL OF HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES IN REAL ESTATE OFFICE WORKSPACES IN NIGERIA

John Olayemi Afolayan^{1*} and Ayobami Felicia Ibrahim²

¹Department of Estate Management, Faculty of Environmental Studies,
Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria.

²Department of Estate Management and Valuation, Faculty of Environmental Studies,
Osun State Polytechnic, Iree, Osun State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding Author's Email: jo.afolayan@acu.edu.ng

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ABSTRACT: *Nigeria's burgeoning real estate sector fuels economic growth via job creation, urban growth, wealth maximisation and sustainable development. The prospects and continuous increase in demand for real estate services is driving more people into the real estate profession. This underscores the critical need for the implementation of robust health and safety practices within offices where these services are carried out. In this study, the health and safety practices in real estate offices in Nigeria were assessed, focusing on the emphasis placed on safety and the availability of essential provisions. Employing a descriptive survey design, data from 302 valid responses across registered Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms were analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed a general awareness of health and safety importance, but implementation varied significantly. While emergency routes, comfort, and restrooms received priority, staff counselling, insurance, and food amenities were largely neglected. The study advocates for proactive health and safety measures, stronger regulatory enforcement, and capacity building to foster healthier and more productive work environments. Enhancing health and safety in real estate offices is vital for employee well-being, organizational efficiency, and the long-term sustainability of the real estate sector.*

KEYWORDS: Real Estate Practice, Office Workspace, Estate Surveying and Valuation Forms, Health and Safety.



INTRODUCTION

The real estate sector is pivotal in Nigeria's economic development, contributing significantly to employment, urban growth, wealth maximisation and sustainable development. With the rapid growth and urbanization in Nigeria, the demand for real estate services continues to rise, hence corresponding to an increase in the number of real estate practitioners. However, this growth comes with its challenges, particularly concerning health and safety practices within real estate firms. According to Lindhout and Reniers (2021), a contemporary organization should be morally and legally obligated to safeguard workers from job hazards. Health and safety in the workspace have become a critical area of concern, especially in the real estate sector where you do not necessarily need a large and luxurious office space to commence practicing real estate services. Health and safety practices within the real estate office workspaces have not received the same level of attention as it has in some fields and professions like the construction industry, manufacturing and engineering industry, medical space, etc. Hence, there is a growing concern about the well-being of employees in the real estate offices, where the risks of accidents and health-related issues should not be overlooked due to safety measures put in place by the real estate practitioners.

The nature of real estate practice in Nigeria involves a lot of physical presence in attending to clients' needs, which centers around activities like property valuation, facility and property management, estate brokerage, office administration, etc. The significance of occupational health and safety has gained more attention in recent years, particularly in office settings (Zanko & Dawson, 2012). There are tendencies to overlook these aspects. The oversight tends to affect the overall well-being of the stakeholders in the office workspace and the condition of the office itself, leading to various health-related issues and even in some cases, numerous injuries, property damage, and staff passing out at work (Asumeng, Asamani, Afful & Agyemang, 2015).

Nigeria's workplace health and safety regulatory framework is primarily outlined in The Nigerian Labour Act was enacted in 1971, serving as the primary legislation for employment relationships. Additional safeguards for the safety and well-being of employees are provided by occupational health and safety laws, such as the Factories Act of 2004 and the Employee Compensation Act of 2010. In 2006, a National Policy on Occupational Safety and Health Policy was formulated in Nigeria. These regulations mandate that employers should ensure safe working conditions and protect employees from hazards. According to Akinwale and Olusanya (2015), despite these regulations, compliance remains inconsistent across various sectors, and real estate is no exception. A significant challenge is the inadequate awareness about some of the required standards and a low level of enforcement regarding health and safety standards, which hampers effective implementation in office settings. Hence, many real estate firms lack comprehensive health and safety protocols tailored to the unique challenges of their office workspaces. This neglect not only compromises the health of employees but also affects the overall efficiency and morale within the organization (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015; Warrick, 2017).

However, there are situations of compelled health and safety practices. According to Syamila and Nurika (2021), workplaces made a number of efforts to ensure the health and safety of their employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. These efforts included personal protection gear, a safe working distance of approximately two meters, workplace sterilization, engineering, redesigning work stations, developing technological devices, administrative



control with work shifts, adjusting workloads, and various training programs, including psychological support for employees. Hou, Remøy, Jylhä, and Putte (2021) stated that the majority of planned and executed office workplace changes during the COVID-19 pandemic were connected to administrative oversight and personal protection as a mechanism for risk control. Organizations responded at a strategic level by redesigning their office workspaces, reorienting corporate real estate techniques on portfolio transformation, and implementing agile portfolio strategies. However, adequate health and safety practices should not be conditional.

According to Chang (2024), health issues stemming from poor office environments not only endanger employee well-being but also reduce overall productivity and job satisfaction. The repercussions can include increased absenteeism from work, higher healthcare costs, and diminished employee engagement, all of which can significantly hinder a firm's performance and reputation in a competitive market. Furthermore, inadequate health and safety measures in office spaces can undermine efforts to promote occupational health standards, and this will increase a culture that devalues workers' holistic safety and wellbeing (Moradi & Yazdi, 2025). Therefore, it is essential to explore the current health and safety practices among real estate offices in Nigeria to identify deficiencies and propose actionable improvements.

This study investigated the health and safety practices in real estate offices in Nigeria, focusing on the level of importance attached to health and safety measures and the extent of provision for such health and safety measures. This research provides insight into the current state of health and safety in real estate office workspaces and offers recommendations to improve safety standards, ultimately fostering a healthier work environment for employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Globally, workplace health and safety regulations vary significantly, influenced by local legislation, cultural norms, and economic factors. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) highlighted the importance of creating healthy office environments to prevent occupational health issues. It stated that ergonomic interventions, such as adjustable workstations and proper seating arrangements, are essential for minimizing physical strain and promoting employee comfort. According to López-Fernández and Pasamar (2019), these regulations mandate employers to provide safe working conditions and actively manage health risks. However, challenges might be faced in enforcement and compliance due to limited resources and awareness of health and safety standards (Emma-Ochu, Okolie & Ohaedeghasi, 2021).

Ravenswood and Douglas (2018) identified five principal health and safety issues: musculoskeletal disorders, environmental exposure, emotional stress and fatigue, unsafe client residences and neighborhoods, and workplace violence. The study indicated that the best way to reduce these hazards is to adopt a comprehensive approach to health and safety culture. This is to include working conditions, the availability of cleaning supplies and protective equipment, training on workplace violence, training on safe use and disposal of sharp objects, the availability of peer support and counselling, and involvement in risk evaluation and location-specific training.



Pratiwi, Dwicahyo and Haqi (2022) examined occupational health and safety regulations for office buildings. The study underlined the need for having first aid kits, fire fighting equipment, emergency evacuation routes, safety notices, and emergency stairs. Also, employee health examinations, lactation rooms, and health promotion materials should be a part of occupational health facilities. In an office setting, restrooms and hand-washing stations should be provided as office ergonomics facilities. Worthy of note is the study of Candido, Marzban, Haddad, Mackey and Loder (2020) that affirmed that offices that used active design concepts performed better than others in terms of reported productivity, health, workability, cooperation, and pleasure with the workspace.

The psychological and social well-being of open-plan office workers was investigated by Ramantswana, Mmamabolo, and Appel-Meulenbroek (2024). The research revealed that open-plan offices can improve communication, teamwork, accessibility, and inclusivity, but they can also hurt how employees feel about their social and mental well-being. In particular, open-plan designs are thought to increase stress, reduce productivity, shorten attention spans, and endanger privacy. According to Hassanain, Almhbash, Zami, Ibrahim, and Alshibani (2024), the most important design factors for productively sustainable workplaces are adequate ventilation and lighting, occupational health, security, and safety, ergonomically oriented technology infrastructure, both official and unofficial meeting spaces, efficient utilization of space, and ergonomic workstations.

According to Naji, Isha, Alazzani, Saleem, and Alzoraiki (2022), safety communication techniques improve working conditions and have a positive effect on employees' attitudes and behaviors regarding safety, which lowers the number of workplace accidents. According to the study, companies with a strong safety culture typically have happier workers and fewer accidents. In real estate offices, where teamwork and communication are vital, fostering a culture that prioritizes health and safety can significantly impact employees' attitudes toward compliance with safety protocols. Furthermore, a positive safety culture encourages employees to report hazards and participate in safety training programs, contributing to a safer workplace.

According to Juhari, Arifin, Aiyub, and Ismail (2024), ongoing training is essential for improving staff members' comprehension of safety and health laws and best practices. In the context of real estate offices, tailored training programs can address specific risks associated with office environments, such as ergonomic assessments, stress management, and emergency preparedness. Ensuring that employees are well-informed about safety protocols is essential for cultivating a proactive approach to workplace safety.

A total of seven important metrics of workplace wellness were identified by Korhan (2019) in his study on indoor environment and health. These include mental, social, emotional, and environmental well-being, as well as physical comfort, physical fitness, and physical sustenance. Interior spatial planning and design features, behavioral change promotion, and accessible physical activity places should all be incorporated into the physical fitness program. The physical comfort should include ergonomic furniture, thermal comfort, olfactory comfort, visual comfort, and auditory comfort. The provision of nutritious food amenities and the promotion of health-conscious eating patterns and behaviors should be part of the physical nourishment. Types of settings, acoustic privacy, and flexibility and fluidity in the main workspace are all important for cognitive well-being. A component of social well-being should be social connectedness. Workspace personalization and control, biophilic designs, and art elements for enjoyment should all be incorporated into the emotional well-being. Cleanliness,



maintenance, chemical management, indoor air quality, and drinking water quality should all be aspects of environmental well-being.

Lari (2024) investigated how workplace safety and health procedures affected worker productivity. The study found a significant change in employee attitudes of occupational health and safety as well as a direct correlation between increased productivity and better workplace health and safety practices. Its procedures are essential for both increased worker productivity and a safe workplace. In order to guarantee safety and boost production, the report advised companies to give strong health and safety procedures top priority. Strict compliance to government regulations regarding workplace health and safety is also necessary.

Animashaun and Odeku (2014) examined accident and safety hazards at the workplace. According to the study, Nigeria's physical workplace is not very valuable due to the country's high unemployment rate, high regard for life, pervasive corruption, and the ruling class's and labor aristocrats' contempt for the suffering of the workforce, which resulted in very lax, antiquated, and inadequate health and safety laws and regulations. This is made worse by poor planning regulations and the small amount of money awarded for breaking even the most lenient legislation. The report underlined that in order to eliminate the risks, the law must be strengthened.

METHODOLOGY

The research design applied in this study is survey research as a form of descriptive study, encompassing cross-sectional survey research. The target population for this study is the Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms in Nigeria, with a sampling frame of 1,250 (NIESV Directory, 2024). As a result of the large sampling frame, Krejcie and Morgan Table (1970) was used to obtain a reduced but adequate sample size. The adjacent column in the table shows the recommended sample size (S) for the population size (1,250), typically at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error is 291. The convenient sampling technique was adopted and opened to all Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms, and as many responses as possible were received till a minimum sample size was obtained. Hence, we had a total of 296 respondents for this study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire.

The research data was analyzed using Descriptive statistics in the form of frequency distribution and weighted mean score. Frequency distribution is the number of occurrences in which each variable in a distribution occurs or repeats itself. The number of responders who fit into the investigation's class was determined using this method. Frequency distribution is the initial stage of statistical data analysis and is a common method of organizing and summarizing data (Okoko, 2000). Frequency distribution was used to analyze the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the extent of provision for health and safety measures in Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms. The Weighted Mean Score was used for ranking and determining the order of importance consideration given to health and safety measures by Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms. The Weighted Mean on a 4-point scale, with 4, 3, 2 and 1 denoting Strong Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree respectively, was computed using this method.

$$\text{Weighted Mean} = \frac{4n_4 + 3n_3 + 2n_2 + 1n_1}{n_4 + n_3 + n_2 + n_1} \dots\dots\dots \text{Equation (i)}$$



RESULTS/FINDINGS

Table 1: Demographic Information of Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms

		Frequency	Percentage
Professional Cadre	Associate below 10 years	148	50.00%
	Associate above 10 years	89	30.07%
	Fellow	59	19.93%
	Total	296	100%
Firm Establishment	1–5 years ago	59	19.93%
	6–10 years ago	89	30.07%
	11–15 years ago	74	25.00%
	16–20 years ago	45	15.20%
	20+ years ago	29	9.80%
	Total	296	100%
Staff Strength	1–5 staff members	100	33.78%
	6–10 staff members	83	28.04%
	11–15 staff members	60	20.27%
	16–20 staff members	30	10.14%
	20+ staff members	23	7.77%
	Total	296	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2024*

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms based on a field survey of the 296 respondents. The professional cadre distribution reveals that half (50.00%) of the professionals are Associates with less than 10 years of experience, followed by 30.07% who are Associates with over 10 years, and 19.93% who are Fellows of the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers in Nigeria. This reflects that the profession has a growing pool of emerging talent.

Regarding firm establishment, most firms (30.07%) in the study have been in operation for 6–10 years, while 25.00% have existed for 11–15 years, 15.20% have been in operation for 16–20 years, and only 9.80% have operated for over 20 years. This indicates a dynamic and expanding industry with respondents having years of professional practice that can be trusted. In terms of staff strength, a majority of firms (33.78%) have between 1–5 employees, and 28.04% have 6–10 employees, suggesting that most firms are small- to medium-sized enterprises. This reveals the real estate sector to be a fragmented industry with many players, leading to intense competition.

**Table 2: Level of Importance Consideration Given to Health and Safety Measures**

Health and Safety Measures	VI	I	SI	NI	WMS	SD	Rank
Emergency escape route	270	26	0	0	3.91	0.31	1 st
Visual comfort	262	34	0	0	3.89	0.32	2 nd
Thermal comfort	264	32	0	0	3.89	0.31	3 rd
Provision of restroom	256	40	0	0	3.87	0.34	4 th
Auditory comfort	200	96	0	0	3.68	0.47	5 th
Provision of fire extinguishers and hydrant	198	98	0	0	3.67	0.47	6 th
Provision of sanitary and cleaning materials	187	109	0	0	3.63	0.48	7 th
Provision of first aid kits	164	116	13	3	3.49	0.59	8 th
Olfactory comfort	172	93	31	0	3.48	0.65	9 th
Proper office layout and seating arrangement	177	86	25	8	3.46	0.71	10 th
Encouragement of health-conscious eating/lifestyle	132	164	0	0	3.45	0.50	11 th
Provision of safety and directional signs	163	101	32	0	3.44	0.66	12 th
Provision of drinking water	143	134	19	0	3.42	0.61	13 th
Provision of personal protective gears	156	111	29	0	3.39	0.66	14 th
Provision of health checks for workforce	135	120	41	0	3.32	0.69	15 th
Training on the use of safety tools	104	179	13	0	3.31	0.54	16 th
Work leave period	92	140	62	2	3.09	0.73	17 th
Provision of peer support and counselling	44	65	154	33	2.41	0.87	18 th
Provision of food amenities	37	92	89	78	2.30	0.96	19 th
Provision of insurance cover	22	114	137	23	2.46	0.76	20 th
Provision of biophilic designs	23	47	77	149	1.81	0.93	21 st
Provision of relaxation/informal meeting room	24	32	75	165	1.71	0.90	22 nd

Source: Field Survey, 2024

VI = Very Important; I = Important; SI= Slightly Important; NI = Not Important

Table 2 reveals a clear hierarchy in the perceived importance of health and safety measures among firms. Very Important (WMS 3.25–4.00) is strongly attributed to fundamental safety aspects such as emergency escape routes, thermal comfort, visual comfort, provision of restrooms, auditory comfort, sanitary and cleaning materials, fire safety provisions, and safety/directional signs. These measures demonstrate a strong consensus among most real estate firms regarding their critical role in ensuring a safe and healthy work environment. Measures falling into the Important category (WMS 2.50–3.24) include training on safety tool usage and work leave periods, indicating a general recognition of their value, though perhaps with more variability in prioritization compared to the "Very Important" group.

The categories of Slightly Important (WMS 1.75–2.49) and Not Important (WMS 1.00–1.74) encompass measures like insurance cover, peer support/counselling, food amenities, biophilic designs, and relaxation rooms. These lower scores, often coupled, reveal a less consistent understanding and prioritization of these aspects as core health and safety responsibilities within real estate firms. This indicates a potential divergence in views on the scope of workplace health and safety, with some firms viewing them as secondary benefits rather than essential components of a safe and healthy work environment.

**Table 3: Provision for Health and Safety Measures in Estate Firms**

Health and Safety Measures	Yes	No	Total	Level of Provision
Emergency escape route	124 (41.89%)	172 (58.11%)	296 (100%)	Limited Provision
Visual comfort	295 (99.66%)	1 (0.34%)	296 (100%)	Widely Provided
Thermal comfort	260 (87.84%)	36 (12.16%)	296 (100%)	Widely Provided
Provision of restroom	264 (89.19%)	32 (10.81%)	296 (100%)	Widely Provided
Auditory comfort	293 (98.99%)	3 (1.01%)	296 (100%)	Widely Provided
Provision of fire extinguishers and hydrant	247 (83.45%)	49 (16.55%)	296 (100%)	Widely Provided
Provision of sanitary and cleaning materials	265 (89.53%)	31 (10.47%)	296 (100%)	Widely Provided
Provision of first aid kits	101 (34.12%)	195 (65.88%)	296 (100%)	Limited Provision
Olfactory comfort	294 (99.32%)	2 (0.68%)	302 (100%)	Widely Provided
Proper office layout and seating arrangement	271 (91.55%)	25 (8.45%)	302 (100%)	Widely Provided
Encouragement of health-conscious eating/lifestyle	155 (52.36%)	141 (53.04%)	302 (100%)	Moderately Provided
Provision of safety and directional signs	139 (46.96%)	157 (54.0%)	302 (100%)	Limited Provision
Provision of drinking water	263 (88.85%)	33 (11.15%)	302 (100%)	Widely Provided
Provision of personal protective gears	98 (33.11%)	198 (66.89%)	302 (100%)	Limited Provision
Provision of health checks for workforce	61 (20.61%)	235 (79.39%)	302 (100%)	Very Limited Provision
Training on the use of safety tools	87 (29.39%)	209 (70.61%)	302 (100%)	Limited Provision
Work leave period	195 (65.88%)	101 (34.12%)	302 (100%)	Moderately Provided
Provision of peer support and counselling	43 (14.53%)	253 (85.47%)	302 (100%)	Very Limited Provision
Provision of food amenities	38 (12.84%)	258 (87.16%)	302 (100%)	Very Limited Provision
Provision of insurance cover	23 (7.77%)	273 (92.23%)	302 (100%)	Very Limited Provision
Provision of biophilic designs	45 (15.20%)	251 (84.80%)	302 (100%)	Very Limited Provision
Provision of relaxation/informal meeting room	267 (90.20%)	29 (9.80%)	302 (100%)	Widely Provided

Source: Field Survey, 2024



According to Table 3, Widely Provided (Yes > 75%) measures like visual comfort, thermal comfort, provision of restrooms, auditory comfort, sanitary and cleaning materials, fire safety, proper office layout, olfactory comfort, and relaxation/informal meeting rooms are implemented by a large majority of the surveyed firms, indicating a strong focus on these fundamental aspects of workplace health and safety and well-being. Secondly, Moderately Provided (Yes = 50–75%) measures like encouragement of health-conscious eating/lifestyle and work leave periods are provided by a significant portion of firms, suggesting a moderate level of attention to these areas related to employee health and work-life balance.

However, Limited Provision (Yes = 25–49%) measures like emergency escape routes, provision of first aid kits, safety and directional signs, provision of personal protective gears, and training on the use of safety tools are provided by less than half of the firms. This suggests potential gaps in ensuring preparedness for emergencies, basic medical assistance, clear safety guidance, and the safe use of equipment. Finally, Very Limited Provision (Yes < 25%) measures, such as provision of health checks for the workforce, peer support and counselling, food amenities, insurance cover, and biophilic designs, have the lowest provision rates. This indicates that these aspects, while potentially contributing to employee well-being and long-term health, are not widely implemented by the surveyed firms.

DISCUSSION

This analysis provided two perspectives on health and safety measures within the estate surveying firms, examining both the level of importance they are accorded and the extent to which they are provided. The Weighted Mean Score (WMS) analysis revealed a clear prioritization of fundamental safety and comfort aspects, with measures like emergency escape routes, thermal comfort, visual comfort, and basic amenities consistently rated as highly important. This underscores a general awareness and value placed on these core elements for ensuring a safe and functional work environment.

However, when comparing these importance ratings with the level of provision (based on "Yes/No" responses), some interesting discrepancies emerged. While measures deemed highly important, such as visual comfort, thermal comfort, restrooms, auditory comfort, sanitary provisions, and fire safety, generally show high rates of provision, others like emergency escape routes, first aid kits, and safety signage, despite being considered important, exhibit lower levels of implementation. Furthermore, measures related to employees' well-being beyond basic safety and comfort, such as health checks, peer support, food amenities, and insurance coverage, tend to be viewed as less important and are also provided at significantly lower rates. This suggests a gap between the recognized importance of certain safety fundamentals and their actual implementation, alongside a less widespread adoption of more holistic well-being initiatives among estate firms. Understanding these disparities can inform targeted efforts to improve workplace health and safety practices.

The discussion highlights the importance of prioritizing health and safety practices in real estate offices. Implementing robust health and safety policies can lead to a more productive workforce and enhance overall employee satisfaction. The role of management in fostering a culture of safety is crucial, as is the need for regular training and awareness programs.



CONCLUSION

The study revealed a dual reality in the health and safety practices among real estate firms in Nigeria. Safety and workplace comfort measures are largely recognized as important. However, notable gaps exist between perception and implementation. These disparities highlight the need for a more integrated and proactive approach to workplace health and safety, one that not only addresses physical safety requirements but also prioritizes employee well-being. While there is commendable recognition of the importance of fundamental measures, such as thermal and visual comfort, restrooms, and fire safety, the discrepancies between perceived importance and actual implementation, particularly regarding emergency escape routes, first aid kits, and safety signage, call for urgent attention. These elements are critical in mitigating workplace risks and should be uniformly provided across all offices.

It is recommended that real estate firms adopt a more balanced and comprehensive approach to workplace health and safety. Also, Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms are encouraged to expand their definition of workplace health and safety to include supportive measures, which can significantly contribute to employee morale and long-term productivity. Hence, estate firms should play an active role in promoting a safety-first culture through consistent investment in safety infrastructure, periodic health and safety audits, and comprehensive training programs, by aligning the importance attributed to safety measures with their actual provision and by integrating broader well-being initiatives, to foster safer, healthier, and more efficient work environments. Ultimately, improving health and safety measures will not only protect employees but also enhance operational efficiency and organizational reputation within the real estate sector.

IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The study calls for estate surveying firms to reassess their current health and safety practices. Although basic safety elements are generally recognized and provided, critical emergency preparedness measures and employee well-being initiatives remain inadequately addressed. Firms are encouraged to also integrate broader wellness programs such as routine health screenings, insurance coverage, and mental health support. This will not only enhance the physical and psychological safety of employees but also improve operational efficiency and stakeholder trust in the long term.

Furthermore, this study is an exploration into the disconnect between perceived importance and actual implementation of health and safety measures in estate surveying firms. Future research can build on this by investigating the underlying factors responsible for these disparities, such as organizational culture, resource constraints, regulatory enforcement, awareness levels among management, etc. Also, longitudinal studies could assess how health and safety practices evolve and what impact such changes have on employee well-being, productivity, and retention in the real estate sector.



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