

Possible Reasons For Loss In Interest Of Nigerian Youth For Construction Craft Vocations And Remedy. A Case Study Of South-East Nigeria

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Abstract

The striking scarcity in the labour force due to the diminishing interest of the youth in construction craft vocation in recent times is a major concern to the labor supply chain in the construction industry. Thus, this study sought to identify the possible reasons for the diminishing interest using South-East Nigeria as a case study. The study was pursued using the survey research method, where a total of 300 well-structured questionnaires were distributed to building professionals and teaching staff of technical /vocational schools in the area, with 210 returned giving a percentage response of 70.0%. Data collected were analyzed using SPSS version 20.0 and results were presented using Bar Charts, Pie Charts, Tables, means, percentages, and Relative Important Index (RII). The study revealed among others, that the major reason youths are not showing interest in acquiring construction skills is; 'the get rich quick' orientation amongst youths which drives the choice of their career path, followed by 'poor pay'. Other reasons such as lack of encouragement by the government, lack of guidance and counseling in skill acquisition, and hazardous nature of construction site works also play a discouraging role in that regard. The study, however, recommends: reorientation of the youths on the need for acquisition of construction crafts skills, discourage the 'get rich quick mentality ravaging the youth; Improved wages for construction craftsmen and artisans to commensurate the efforts in doing the work; and encouraging dignity in labour.

Keywords: *Youths interest, Construction crafts skills, South-East, Nigeria.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a developing country with a growing population and commensurate housing needs requires the services of a skilled workforce on construction sites and a productive, competent, and flexible workforce to further its economic growth. The age-old method of locally organized apprenticeship schemes is becoming obsolete (Awe *et al.*, 2009). The aged and retiring site operatives are not wishing that their children take to their trades; rather, their goals are for their children and wards to become architects, engineers, doctors, and accountants (Dennis, 2004; Ireland, 2007). Gone were the days when skills were passed from father to son. Now young people seem to eschew the high-end construction trades in exchange for the lure of promising positions in technology or other emerging fields, leaving a shortage of skilled workmen in the construction industry. The cream of the nation's youth no

longer shows interest in skill acquisition; a case which is not the same with a developed country like the UK where the Chartered Institute of Building [CIOB] (2008) reports that the demand from young people for apprenticeship is outstripping the number of training places available in the industry. In Nigeria, however, many who would have been trained to acquire necessary skills take to petty or even serious crime (Awe *et al.*, 2009). Emphasis on skill acquisition in technical colleges and vocational training centers has become secondary, due to poor funding and a misplaced emphasis and misdirected focus.

In the study area, the problem of skill training is characterised by a lack of efficient and effective vocational and technical training centers, the declining number of new entrants into skilled trades, poor funding, and misdirected focus. Some of the trained craftsmen who should be engaged on construction sites have taken to other supposed financially lucrative businesses such as 'okada' commercial motorcycle transportation leaving a shortage of construction craftsmen in the area. This study, therefore, aims to identify major reasons (s) youths in the study area (South-East, Nigeria) are not showing interest towards construction crafts vocation and recommend measures to attract these young, potential craft skills to the industry.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview of the Construction industry

The construction industry contributes significantly in terms of employment generation in both developed and developing economies as it provides an entry point into the labour market for the least educated and other disadvantaged sections of the society (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2001). The industry is, however, characterised by several challenges and difficulties which most often portrays it in a bad light.

The poor image of the construction industry is generally thought to stem from the nature of its work, which is often described as 'dirty, difficult and dangerous (ILO, 2001; Kashiwagi and Massner, 2002). A report by Garrity, (1999) reveals that most young people see construction work as dirty and uninteresting, done in harsh weather by not very intelligent people. A report by Garrity, (1999) reveals that most young people see construction work as dirty and uninteresting, done in harsh weather by not very intelligent people. A survey of high school students in the United States, for example, shows that, out of 250 career options, the choice of construction came 247th as an attractive career option (Kashiwagi and Massner, 2002). Bokinni (2005) observed that, for many people, the construction industry is seen as the employment of 'the last resort', entered into when an alternative is unavailable or just to continue a family tradition.

According to ILO (2001), one of the many reasons construction work is so poorly regarded by many people has to do with the terms on which labour is recruited in the industry. Many people view the terms of employment of workers in the construction industry to be poor. In Nigeria for example, as in many other developing countries, the informal approach to construction practices is prevalent. Construction workers are mostly employed temporarily through informal contracts. According to Gunderson (2001), employment insecurity in the construction industry is four times higher than in the manufacturing industry. The prevalence of flexible forms of employment practices such as subcontracting, outsourcing, and self-employment has contributed to the insecure nature of employment in the industry. The level of skill in the construction industry has thus fallen significantly as a result of these developments. The image of the industry has also suffered from these developments, not least

in the eyes of its potential workforce. In most of the world today, work in construction is not regarded as “decent work” (Gunderson, 2001).

Another reason construction work is poorly regarded has to do with the poor health and safety records of the industry (ILO, 2001). Adenuga *et al.* (2007), observed that the construction industry is a very hazardous industry to work in. Each year, a lot of skilled and unskilled workers lose their lives and many more are maimed and injured on construction sites. The ILO (2001) has also disclosed that workers in the construction industry are most often exposed to dangerous and unsafe working conditions, such as falling from ladders and scaffoldings, injuring selves lifting heavy equipment, breathing toxic fumes, and cutting themselves using sharp tools, etc. Due to the high safety and health risk associated with construction, work in the construction industry is not highly regarded and most people work in the industry out of necessity rather than choice. The ILO (2001) reported that almost universally, construction workers wish for better things for their children. Conditions, as characterized by poor and dirty working environments, are other contributory factors to the unattractiveness of construction work. In a study on the causes of turnover of labour in the Nigerian construction industry, George (cited in Abdullahi, Anum, Adole, and Williams, 2015) observed that most construction sites are characterised by the unhygienic and unsafe environment which serves to discourage potential workers as most people would prefer to work in relatively healthier conditions.

2.2 Reasons for declining youths interest in Construction crafts

Low wages have been identified as a major reason the construction industry is having problems attracting and retaining skilled workers (Alao, 2008, Kashiwagi and Massner 2002; Mackenzie, *et al.* 2000). Ubenyi (1999) observed that there is a high rate of labour instability and employee turnover in the construction industry in Nigeria due to poor wages. Alao (2008) asserts that low wages have hindered many, especially the youth from venturing into careers in the construction industry in Nigeria because they see nothing good in jobs “that earn but them peanuts”. George (in Abdullahi *et al.*, 2015) also reported that at least 40% of workers in the Nigerian construction industry leave their respective firms because of the poor wage structure. He revealed that most workers complain that their efforts are grossly exploited by low wages. This has done a lot of harm to the morale of construction workers, making those present leave and discouraging others from joining the industry. Bilau, Ajagbe, Kigbu, and Sholanke (2015) identified the following reasons youth do not show interest in construction crafts:

a. Poor Remuneration of Skilled Craftsmen:

This is a major reason the construction industry is having problems attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. In Nigeria, there is no regulation guiding minimum wage for construction workers. Fagbenle (2004) put forward that different wages are paid to craftsmen across the country. This issue prompts construction workers to pursue other careers or migrate to where they will be better remunerated.

b. Lack of Motivation of Skilled Craftsmen:

Motivation is the art of inspiring someone to work (Solomon *et al.*, 2012). Unfortunately, the majority of construction firms in Nigeria do not motivate their skilled workforce for improved productivity. Since lack of motivation has always resulted in high staff turnover in the industry. Fagbenle (2004) submits that motivation of skilled workforce can be achieved in many ways, but whatever method is adopted, it must be realized that economic rewards must

be among the chief consideration. It is therefore necessary that a sound wage policy is laid down with a well-structured incentive and bonus plan. Ugheru (2006) finds that other considerations to aid motivation include: financial incentives, promotion, job security, welfare package, and participation in decision making and among others.

c. Lack of Organization Training and Retraining of Skilled Craftsmen:

Training for capacity building is central to sustaining economic growth and development because human capital is the greatest asset of any organization (Long *et al.*, 2012a: Long *et al.*, 2012b). Surprisingly, most construction firms in Nigeria are very narrow, because they seem to focus on the financial gains forgetting the people that make the job and money. Dantong (2007) posits that these are among the multiple problems of craftsmen training as most construction firms in Nigeria hardly discuss how to improve the workforce but on how the workforce will improve them. Onuka *et al.* (2012) portend that the absence of craftsmen training and retraining programme in an organization often manifests tripartite problems of incompetence, inefficiencies, and ineffectiveness.

Awe (2012) outlined the following reasons Nigerians youth are not showing interest in acquiring construction vocations :

- a. Hazardous nature of construction site works
- b. Poor rate of pay for site workers
- c. Lack of recognition for artisans
- d. Lack of respect/dignity for artisans
- e. Government do not encourage skills acquisition
- f. No clear-cut career path for craftsmen
- g. The youth lack adequate guidance and counseling to take to skills acquisition
- h. Lack of adequate forum for mobilising youth for skills acquisition
- i. Construction site work is viewed by the youth as too difficult a task
- j. Construction site work is viewed by the youth as too degrading
- k. The youth generation is lazy and hence unwilling to acquire skills
- l. Too much emphasis on general/secular education
- m. It is too expensive to receive vocational training
- n. The get rich quick orientation in the nation
- o. Lack of adequate provision for protection and safety of site workers
- p. Lack of encouragement or incentive from political leaders
- q. Absence of health and safety

Offei-Nyako, Osei-Tutu, Fugar, and Adinyira (2014), also identify the following factors:

1. Irregular and Low Remuneration
2. Low Motivation
3. Varying Working Conditions
4. Technological Advancement

3. METHODOLOGY

The study is carried out in Southeast Nigeria, using a survey method. The Survey method entails the use of the questionnaire administered to the respondents (drawn from Enugu, Imo, and Anambra state comprising of construction professionals and the staff in the Technical college in these states) to establish their opinion on the factors responsible for the lack of youths' interest toward construction crafts vocation.

3.1 Method of Data Collection

The primary data for this survey was collected using a structured questionnaire, while secondary data was obtained from books, journals, magazines, conference/seminar papers will be utilized. The questionnaires were used for data collection and were administered to various professionals involved in building projects comprising Architect, Builders, Structural Engineers, and Quantity Surveyors, and vocational/technical education teachers in the study area

3.2 Population and Sample of the Study

The population for the study is building professionals such as Architects, Builders, Quantity Surveyors, Civil/Structural Engineers, and technical/vocational education teachers in the study area. This category of respondents was selected because by their training and work experiences, they can provide information from the structured questionnaires that guarantee a reasonable level of validity to achieve the aim of this research work.

Similarly, the population of the staff and professionals are 366 and 548 respectively (Totaling 914). Taro Yamane sample size method is employed to determine the appropriate sample size for the study. Taro's formula is represented as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

When n = sample size

N = population

e² = Margin of error (assumed 5%)

1 = unity or constant

Therefore,

$$n = 914 / (1 + 914(0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 914/3.285$$

$$n = 278$$

3.3 Questionnaire administration

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to selected respondents. The respondents covered were technical/vocational teachers of different technical schools in the southeast comprising Government technical colleges, GTC located in three South-east States (Enugu, Imo, and the Anambra States). Also, professionals involved in building projects formed the targeted respondents of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were delivered and retrieved by hand. A total of 250 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to respondents in the target population whereas 50 others by staff representatives in the technical school, 210 were returned and found appropriate for the analysis.

3.4 Method of Analysis and Data Presentation

In the analysis of data, both descriptive and referential data analyses were adopted. Bar Charts, Pie Charts, Tables, means, and percentages were used to express the statistical results. Charts like bar and Pie charts were also be used to present the results. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze the data using descriptive statistics.

Relative Importance Index (RII) was also used in the study to assess the results, using the formula:

$$RII = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^5 W_i X_i}{5 \sum X_i}$$

Where

W_i = the weighting given to each variable by the respondents, ranging from 1- 5

X_i = the percentage of respondents scoring

i = the order number of respondents

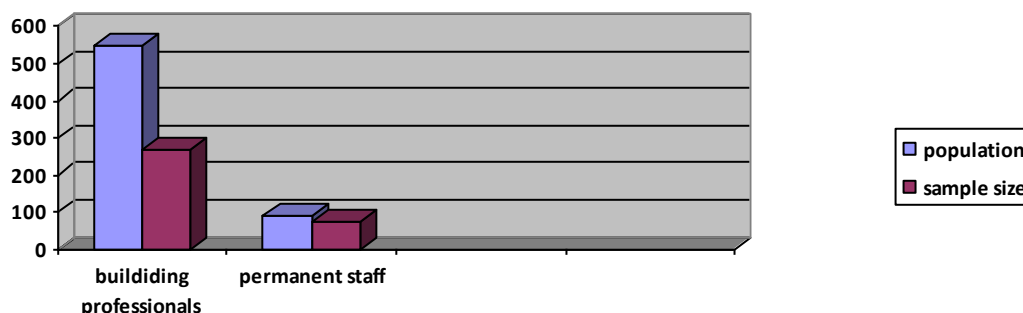


Figure. 1. Distribution of population and sample size of respondents.

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey (2020)

4. DATA PRESENTATION

A total of two hundred and fifty questionnaires were administered to various respondents within the study area. The percentages of responses are presented in Table 1. From the Table, it can be gathered that 210 were returned, correctly filled giving a percentage response of 84%.

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution of the Respondents

Number of Questionnaires	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not returned	90	30.0
Returned	210	70.0
Total	300	100.0

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, (2020)

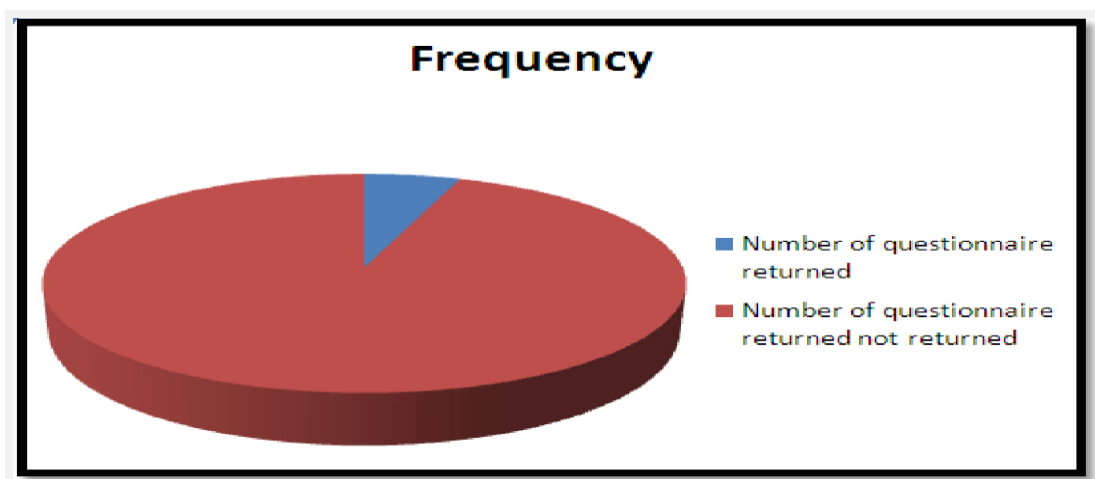


Figure 2: Pie Chart Showing Distribution of Questionnaire
Source: Researcher’s Field Survey 2020

Table 2. Respondents’ opinions on the possible reasons youths are not showing interest in acquiring construction skills

S/N	Possible Reasons the youths are not showing interest in acquiring construction skills	Frequency					ΣF	Mean	RII (%)	Rank
		5	4	3	2	1				
1	Hazardous nature of construction site works	88	76	8	27	11	210	3.97	79.33	4th
2	Poor pay rate for site workers	98	81	6	22	3	210	4.19	83.71	1st
3	Government does not encourage skills acquisition.	109	63	11	17	10	210	4.16	83.24	2nd
4	No clear-cut career path for craftsmen	74	68	26	30	12	210	3.77	75.43	6th
5	The youth lack adequate guidance and counseling to take to skills acquisition	69	79	9	16	7	210	4.04	80.78	3rd
6	Construction site work is viewed by the youth as too degrading	45	65	30	61	9	210	3.36	67.24	8th
7	Too much emphasis on general/secular education	59	76	22	47	7	210	3.63	72.61	7th
8	The get rich quick orientation in the nation	78	74	14	39	5	210	3.86	77.24	5th

Note SA - Strongly Agreed (5), A-Agreed (4), UD- Undecisive (3), D-Disagreed (2), and SD-Strongly Disagreed (1).

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey 2020

The descriptive result in Table 2 shows that the major reason youths in the study area are not showing interest in acquiring building crafts skills is; Poor pay rate for site workers which ranked first (mean = 4.19>3.00, RII = 83.71%), followed by the government not encouraging skills acquisition (mean = 4.16, RII = 83.24%), the youth lack adequate guidance and counseling in skills acquisition (mean = 4.04, RII = 80.78%), hazardous nature of

construction site works (mean = 3.97, RII = 79.33%), and the get rich quick orientation amongst youths (mean = 3.86, RII = 77.24%). The least in their consideration is Construction site work is viewed by the youth as too degrading (3.36, RII=67.24%).

However, re-shaking these identified reasons on inferential analysis basket, using the principal component method of extraction, it can be inferred that the key reason youths are not showing interest in acquiring construction skills in the area is the get rich quick orientation in the nation. As shown in the principal component analysis (PCA) result, the get-rich-quick orientation amongst youth explained about 88.5% of the total variations in the identified reasons with an eigenvalue of 7.078 and a component loading of 99.6% [see **Appendix A**].

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concludes that the major reason youths are not showing interest in acquiring construction skills is 'the get rich quick' orientation amongst youths in the area which drives the choice of their career path, followed by 'poor pay rate'. Other reasons such as lack of encouragement by the government, lack of guidance and counseling in skill acquisition, and hazardous nature of construction site works also play a discouraging role in this regard.

The study however recommends:

- Reorientation of the youths on the need for acquisition of construction skills, discourage the 'get rich quick mentality ravaging the youths and encouraging dignity in labour.
- Improve wages for construction skilled labours (craftsmen and artisans) to commensurate the efforts in doing the work.
- Awareness campaign needs to be created jointly by the government at all levels and teachers in technical colleges including Professional Builders in the industry. This is to sensitize the general public, especially parents of secondary school students on the need to enroll their ward in technical schools to learn construction crafts like carpentry, masonry, brick/block laying, tiling, etc., and obtain relevant certificates in this regard.
- The government and construction industries should make the wages of skilled operatives attractive to attract the younger generation to the industry, and motivate them to take up skills crafts as a vocation to replace the retiring aged ones.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

FACTOR

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/VARIABLES R1 R2 R3 R4 R5 R6 R7 R8
/MISSING LISTWISE
/ANALYSIS R1 R2 R3 R4 R5 R6 R7 R8
/PRINT INITIAL CORRELATION SIG KMO EXTRACTION
/PLOT EIGEN
/CRITERIA MINEIGEN(1) ITERATE(25)
/EXTRACTION PC
/ROTATION NOROTATE
/METHOD=CORRELATION.
    
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Factor Analysis

		Notes
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Comments		
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Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	MISSING=EXCLUDE: User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	LISTWISE: Statistics are based on cases with no missing values for any variable used.
Syntax		FACTOR /VARIABLES R1 R2 R3 R4 R5 R6 R7 R8 /MISSING LISTWISE /ANALYSIS R1 R2 R3 R4 R5 R6 R7 R8 /PRINT INITIAL CORRELATION SIG KMO EXTRACTION /PLOT EIGEN /CRITERIA MINEIGEN(1) ITERATE(25) /EXTRACTION PC /ROTATION NOROTATE /METHOD=CORRELATION.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:04.70
	Elapsed Time	00:00:01.77
	Maximum Memory Required	9264 (9.047K) bytes

Correlation Matrix^a

		R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8
Correlation	R1	1.000							
	R2	.998	1.000						
	R3	.956	.965	1.000					
	R4	.977	.986	.935	1.000				
	R5	.971	.970	.884	.968	1.000			
	R6	.597	.587	.408	.652	.615	1.000		
	R7	.870	.864	.718	.899	.892	.904	1.000	
	R8	.974	.972	.896	.976	.949	.758	.950	1.000

a. This matrix is not positive definite.

Communalities

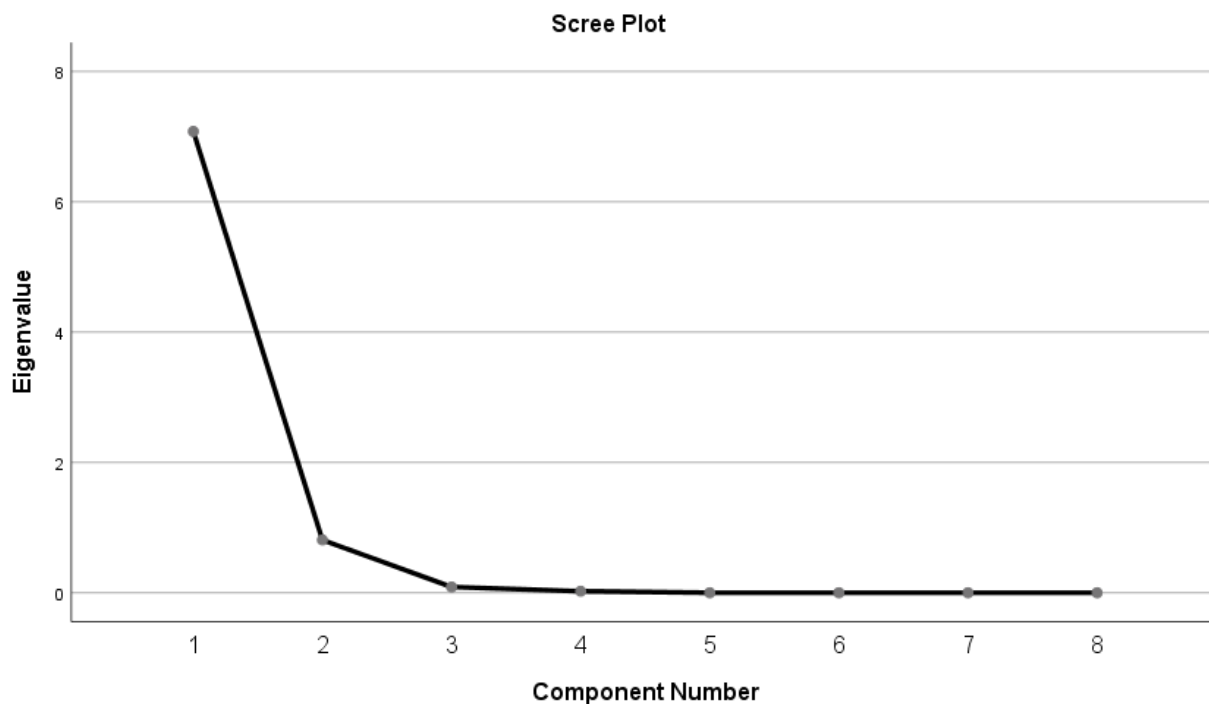
	Initial	Extraction
Hazardous nature of construction site works	1.000	.968
Poor rate of pay for site workers	1.000	.967
Government does not encourage skills acquisition.	1.000	.829
No clear-cut career path for craftsmen	1.000	.977
The youth lack adequate guidance and counseling to take to skills acquisition	1.000	.942
Construction site work is viewed by the youth as too degrading	1.000	.520
Too much emphasis on general/secular education	1.000	.883
The get rich quick orientation in the nation	1.000	.993

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.078	88.481	88.481	7.078	88.481	88.481
2	.809	10.119	98.600			
3	.089	1.113	99.713			
4	.023	.287	100.000			
5	8.829E-17	1.104E-15	100.000			
6	-8.788E-18	-1.099E-16	100.000			
7	-1.716E-16	-2.144E-15	100.000			
8	-5.046E-16	-6.307E-15	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.



Component Matrix^a

	Component 1
Hazardous nature of construction site works	.984
Poor rate of pay for site workers	.984
Government does not encourage skills acquisition.	.910
No clear-cut career path for craftsmen	.988
The youth lack adequate guidance and counseling to take to skills acquisition	.970
Construction site work is viewed by the youth as too degrading	.721
Too much emphasis on general/secular education	.940
The get rich quick orientation in the nation	.996

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.