Design for safety in construction in Nigeria: a qualitative inquiry of the critical opportunities

Nnedinma Umeokafor, Chioma Okoro , Ikechukwu Diugwu , Tariq Umar
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Abstract

Purpose
The purpose of this paper is to investigate the critical opportunities for design for safety (DFS), the potential statutory (and non-statutory) health and safety (H&S) responsibilities of designers including DFS and its workability in developing countries.

Design/methodology/approach
Interviews were conducted among 28 multi-designers including Architects, Civil Engineers and Builders and the data was analysed thematically.

Findings
The study revealed that the likelihood of designers, clients, etc. inclining to change because of the infancy stage of H&S in developing countries, making it “fallow” for H&S was a barrier. The opportunities for DFS include the willingness of designers to develop DFS skills and knowledge, which results in a welcoming attitude towards DFS. Further, the success recorded by professional bodies on other regulatory matters and designers' greater inclination to comply with DFS when professional bodies are involved in the regulatory process of DFS remain key opportunities for DFS.

Practical implications
For statutory-backed DFS to achieve the objective at the optimum level, the role of professional bodies in the regulatory and sensitisation processes, geographic differences in DFS legislation enforcement, nuanced and strategic design and enforcement of any legislation that will support DFS should be taken into consideration.

Social implications
A grassroots collaborative approach to developing and implementing DFS in the country and the exploitation of the zeal of designers to have DFS-related knowledge, is recommended.

Originality/value
To the knowledge of the authors, this is the first study that examines the opportunities for DFS in developing countries when it is (or not) supported by statute and the need to advance the understanding of DFS in developing countries through qualitative enquiry.

Keywords: Architects, Civil engineers, Safety in design, Design risk management, Safe design, Prevention through design