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Research Article

FACTORS INFLUENCING CLIENTS' CHOICE OF REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS IN PROPERTY TRANSACTIONS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The increasing complexities of property transactions in Nigeria, coupled with the prevalence of informal agents, have raised concerns about service quality, professional ethics, and the protection of clients' interests. This research investigates the factors influencing clients' choice of real estate professionals in property transactions within the Ibadan metropolis, with particular attention to the comparative roles of Estate Surveyors and Valuers, and unregistered property agents. The study adopts a survey research design and utilizes structured questionnaires administered to a purposive sample of property buyers, sellers, and tenants (276 respondents) across selected locations in Ibadan metropolis. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings shows that professionalism, trustworthiness, and formal registration with relevant regulatory body are primary determinants of clients' choices, while affordability, proximity, and marketing strategies also significantly influence decisions. Many clients expressed limited awareness of the legal implications of engaging unregistered agents, highlighting a need for stronger public sensitization.

This research concludes that the promotion of ethical standards, stricter regulatory enforcement, and increased public education on the roles of registered Estate Surveyors and Valuers are essential in improving transparency, service quality, and clients' satisfaction in the Nigerian real estate sector. The study recommended estate surveyors and valuers should engage public enlightenment on the need to engage them on the professional services they render so that the

government and NGOs can support too. The stakeholders, professional bodies and practitioners should bridge the gap between formal and informal service provisions in the property market.

Keywords: Estate Surveyors and Valuers, property agent, clients choice, property transactions, Ibadan Metropolis

Introduction

Behavioral decision of an individual stems out of individual differences, perspectives, ideas, opinions and views. In making an informed decision, an individual could have weighted the benefit as well as its associated cost, this is not limited to buying a product or goods but also crucial in property transaction. The complexity of property transactions requires the expertise of professionals to ensure efficiency, legality, and transparency (Adebanjo, 2013). Transactions involving land and property are multifaceted, often involving legal, financial, and technical considerations that need to be properly managed to avoid disputes and inefficiencies (Oertel, 2020). Inadequate knowledge of real estate law, improper documentation, and unregulated market practices can lead to significant losses for clients, including fraud, overvaluation, and legal challenges (Gambo & Ashen, 2012). This makes the role of professionals in real estate transactions even more important, as they provide guidance and ensure that all processes are carried out in line with statutory requirements and market standards (Omotosho, 2012).

In Nigeria, Estate Surveyors and Valuers, alongside unregistered property agents, play pivotal roles in facilitating property transactions. Estate Surveyors and Valuers (ESVs) are formally trained professionals licensed by the regulatory body of the Estate Surveying and Valuation Registration Board (ESVARBON). These qualifications equip ESVs to handle a range of services, including property valuation, real estate consultancy, management, and market analysis. The regulatory oversight provided by professional bodies ensures that estate surveyors operate within the ethical and professional guidelines, offering clients a high level of accountability and competence (Wong, 2020). Estate surveyors also engage in land administration, property investment analysis, and dispute resolution, functions that are critical for maintaining the stability of the property market (Memunat, 2025).

In contrast, unregistered property agents typically operate without formal qualifications or regulatory oversight, focusing more on facilitating the buying, selling, and leasing of properties (Gambo, & Ashen, 2012). While unregistered property agents often offer services that are perceived as more accessible and cost-effective, their lack of professional training can lead to inefficiencies, inaccuracies, and legal complications (Agboola, Jasper and Zakari, 2021). Unregistered property agents generally act as intermediaries, connecting buyers and sellers, but they may not have the necessary expertise to handle complex issues such as property valuation, zoning regulations, or title verification (Sanni, 2025). As the real estate market grows more competitive, unqualified agents may engage in practices that could lead to long-term negative consequences for the market, such as speculative pricing, poor record-keeping, and failure to comply with legal standards (Ogundeji, 2024).

In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in client choice, with many prospective tenants or buyers gravitating toward unregistered property agents, largely driven by cost and accessibility factors (Agboola, et al, 2021). In a rapidly urbanizing country like Nigeria, where housing demand is on the rise, the informal nature of unregistered property agents allows them to operate more flexibly, often catering to the immediate needs of clients who may not fully understand the intricacies of real estate transactions (Opoko et al, 2020). Clients often perceive unregistered property agents as more flexible and affordable, despite the potential risks of engaging unregulated professionals (Alani, 2023). This shift is particularly evident in urban centers like Ibadan, where high demand for residential and commercial properties drives people to seek quick and affordable solutions (Lawal, 2024). However, it was observed in Ibadan that there seems to be a growing trust gap and easy accessibility between clients and unregistered property agents, which affects the transaction flow of Estate surveyors and valuers who are professionals in the real estate sector. It was also observed that many clients are unaware of the distinction between Estate surveyors and unregistered property agents, often believing that anyone can practice real estate without consequence and achieve successful transactions. With this limited knowledge, they tend to approach property agents rather than estate surveyors and valuers. This observation motivated this study to explore the factors influencing clients' choice of real estate professionals in property transactions.

This study seeks to understand the factors driving client choice of real estate professionals in Ibadan and to explore how estate surveyors and valuers can adapt to meet changing market demands. Identifying these factors is crucial for maintaining the relevance of professional estate surveyors and ensuring that clients receive the high-quality, legally compliant services needed. The changing dynamics in client choice necessitate that estate surveyors reassess their service delivery models, potentially embracing new technologies, marketing strategies, and more flexible payment structures to compete effectively with informal agents (Onwuanyi, 2024). By understanding client motivations such as cost sensitivity, convenience, and trust in informal networks, the study aims to provide insights into how estate surveyors can position themselves more effectively to regain market share and enhance their professional visibility (Ola 2020). In cities like Ibadan, where urbanization is driving up property values, the consequences of engaging unqualified agents are particularly severe, as real estate transactions are becoming increasingly complex (Olukolajo, et al., 2015).

Ultimately, this research seeks to provide an understanding of the challenges facing estate surveyors in Ibadan and offer strategies for restoring their professional dominance in Nigeria's real estate industry. This study aims to investigate the factors influencing clients' preferences between unregistered property agents and estate surveyors in property transactions in Ibadan metropolis, with a view to providing information to the estate surveyors for better service delivery.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several authors had examined clients' choice of real estate professional from different perspectives including the factors that influences decision of their respective choices. In the Nigerian property market, client preferences often shape the choice of service providers, whether estate surveyors or unregistered property agents. According to Akpan, Ebam and Effiong (2023), clients are more likely to trust estate surveyors due to the formal processes and regulations that govern their practice. Estate surveyors are seen as more credible, as they follow standard procedures for property valuation, documentation and negotiations. This trust is further enhanced by their professional affiliations, which offer clients recourse in cases of disputes or misconduct. Clients' trust in real estate professionals in closely tied to NIESV and its regulatory arm, ESVARBON, set and enforce professional standards rooted in the Estate Surveyors and Valuers (Registration) Act of 1975 (Cap E13 LFN 2004). These institutions mandate licensing, ethics and continuous education, creating a basis for clients to prefer registered practitioners for transaction security and accountability. In Ibadan, such institutional trust factors likely guide clients towards estate surveyors especially when risks like fraud or legal disputes loom by signaling professionalism and recourse in formal transactions. On the other hand, property agents must often rely on personal relationships to build trust. Abiodun (2017) found that in Ibadan, clients who have long-standing relationships with property agents are more likely to engage their services, even when estate surveyors are available. The study concluded that trust in property agents is often based on word-of-mouth recommendations, which can compensate for the lack of formal regulation in the industry.

Umeh and Abugu (2018) explored the impact of regulatory bodies, such as the Estate Surveyors and Valuers Registration Board of Nigeria (ESVARBON), in regulating estate surveyors and ensuring adherence to professional standards. Their findings indicate that clients in regions where regulatory oversight is stricter tend to prefer estate surveyors because of the legal accountability and assurance that their transactions will comply with real estate laws. In contrast, property agents, who are often unregulated, may offer quicker and less expensive services but at the cost of potential legal issues. The absence of regulatory oversight for property agents can lead to a higher incidence of fraud and unethical behavior, which influences risk-averse clients to opt for estate surveyors.

Ajibola et al. (2013) observed that clients with limited financial resources are more likely to engage property agents because their fees are typically lower than those of estate surveyors. Property agents often operate outside formal structures, allowing them to reduce overhead costs and pass on the savings to clients. However, the study also found that while property agents might offer more affordable services, clients often face hidden costs later, such as legal disputes, inaccurate property valuations, and lack of proper documentation. In contrast, estate surveyors, while more expensive, provide comprehensive services that minimize future legal and financial risks. However, Iroham *et. al.,* (2020) noted that clients are willing to pay higher fees to estate surveyors if they believe the services offered provide better value in terms of legal protection, documentation and the overall quality of the transaction process. According to Cordier, Marin and Cader (2017), clients benefit from this specialized knowledge, which estate surveyors are able to provide due to their training and access to industry databases. As a result, clients who prioritize accuracy in property valuations and legal compliance are more likely to opt for estate surveyors. In contrast, property agents, who often rely on personal networks and local market knowledge, may provide inconsistent or incomplete information. While property agents can be effective in small-scale transactions or for clients seeking fast and flexible services, they often lack the depth of market data necessary for larger or more complex deals. A study by Fakolujo and Adeniyi (2018) found that clients choosing property agents were more likely to encounter issues related to incorrect property valuations, incomplete documentation, and lack of due diligence, which could lead to financial losses or legal disputes.

Adeyemo and Johnson (2021) highlighted that estate surveyors are more likely to adopt technology-driven solutions such as online property listings, virtual tours, automated valuation models (AVMs), and digital contracts. These technologies enhance transparency and provide clients with easy access to accurate information, making estate surveyors more attractive to clients who value efficiency and data-driven decision-making. In contrast, property agents, particularly in more informal markets, tend to be slower in adopting technological innovations. This slower adoption can limit their ability to reach tech-savvy clients who prefer digital platforms for convenience and speed. However, property agents with strong digital presence, particularly in urban centers, are increasingly competing with estate surveyors by offering online property services, though often without the same level of professional rigor. The role of digitalization thus creates both opportunities and challenges for both types of intermediaries in attracting and retaining clients. These differences in professional requirements significantly influence client preferences. Clients who prioritize compliance with legal standards, thorough documentation, and long-term security often opt for estate surveyors. Meanwhile, clients focused on convenience and cost-effectiveness may choose property Agents, even though this may come with certain risks (Agboola, 2020). Affordability is a major consideration for many clients, especially those engaging in low-value property transactions. Property agents typically charge lower fees than estate surveyors, making them more attractive to clients with budget constraints (Ajibola *et al*., 2013). However, clients who prioritize long-term value over upfront savings may choose estate surveyors, who provide more comprehensive services, including legal guidance and accurate property valuations, which can prevent costly mistakes later. Oladokun and Ojo (2011) identified factors responsible for the proliferation of non-professionals in property management in Nigeria, noting that high income from property was a major impetus for the incursion of other professionals into property management practice. This highlights the importance of clients carefully considering the potential hidden costs and risks associated with engaging unregistered agents, despite the apparent immediate cost savings. As a result, transaction cost theory helps explain why some clients opt for property agents, despite the absence of formal regulation, while others prefer estate surveyors for legal safeguards (Agboola, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

The population for this research comprises property buyers, sellers, landlords, and tenants in Ibadan metropolis who have previously engaged the services of real estate professionals, including both Estate Surveyors and Valuers as well as unregistered property agent in Ibadan metropolis. The metropolis include Ibadan North, Ibadan North-West, Ibadan North-East, Ibadan South-West and Ibadan South-East local government areas. The respondents consist of clients, specifically tenant, landlords, property buyers and sellers who are actively engaged in the property market within these selected areas. The study used multi-stage sampling, which includes stratified sampling and systematic sampling techniques. Ibadan metropolis was first stratified according to its five local government areas (LGAs). Two (2) urbanized localities were randomly selected from each LGA, giving a total of ten (10) localities. The study focused on urbanized localities because such areas typically have a higher concentration of real estate activities, greater diversity of property transactions and a larger population of potential respondents with relevant experience. Four out of the five LGAs was surveyed. At the second stage, within each selected locality, households were systematically sampled. A starting point was randomly selected, and then every 10th household was chosen to participate in the study. Within each selected household, purposive sampling was applied to identify respondents who met the inclusion criteria. Eligible respondents were residents aged 20 years and above who had participated in a property transaction (Such as purchase, sale, rent, management or valuation). This approach ensured that the sample was spatially representative of Ibadan Metropolis while focusing specifically on individuals with relevant property transaction experience. In total, 300 respondents were surveyed, with an average of 38 respondents per selected locality.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by LGA and Localities in the Study Area

LGA	Localities	Number of respondents
Ibadan North LGA	Bodija	38
	Mokola	37
Ibadan North-west LGA	Dugbe	38
	Eleyele	35
Ibadan North-east LGA	Iwo road	38
	Bashorun	38
Ibadan South-west LGA	Ring road	30
	Challenge	22
Total		276

The data for this study was collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consist of closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions is designed to capture quantitative data on factors such as accessibility, cost of services, professionalism, regulatory oversight, and client satisfaction. The questionnaire was designed in a simple, clear language to avoid any ambiguity, ensuring that all respondents, regardless of their educational background, could understand and complete it. The primary instrument used was a structured questionnaire, carefully designed to capture relevant data on the factors influencing clients' choice of real estate professionals in property transactions within the Ibadan metropolis. Primary data collected through questionnaires is a widely adopted approach in real estate research due to its efficiency in capturing client perceptions (Creswell, 2018). The questionnaire comprised of closed-ended questions, structured into sections that covered respondents' demographic information and their experiences, perceptions and preferences in engaging estate surveyors & valuers and unregistered property agents. Questionnaires were administered directly (face-to-face) in prominent areas of the Ibadan metropolis with high real estate activity, such as Bodija, Akobo etc. This method allowed for clarifications where necessary and encouraged higher participation. Additionally, to reach a wider audience and accommodate respondents who preferred remote participation, an electronic version of the questionnaire was distributed. The data collected through the administered questionnaires were systematically organized, coded and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical method. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean scores, standard deviation, weighted mean and the Relative Importance Index (RII) and Inferential statistics such as factor analysis was used.

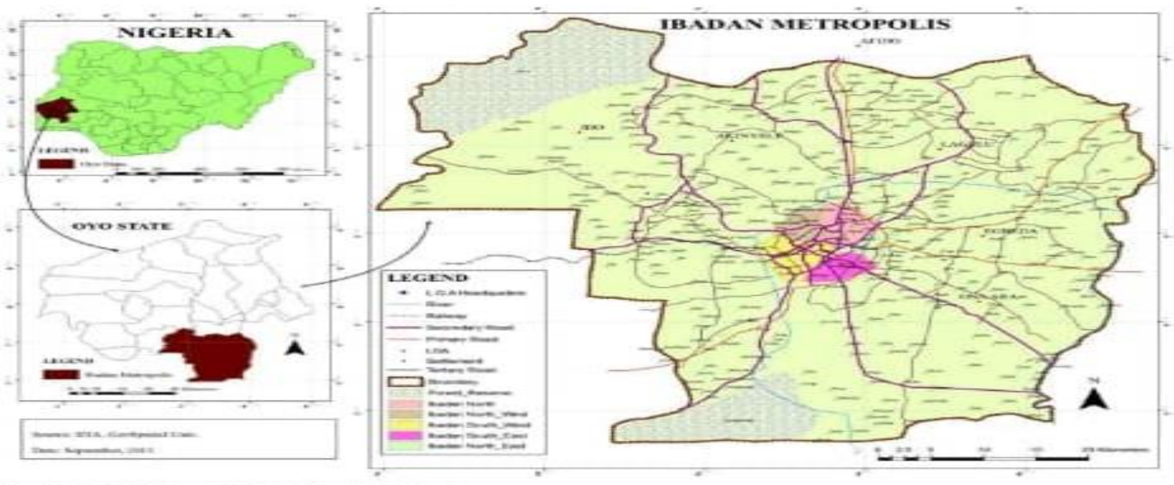

Figure 1 – Ibadan City Region in the Context of Oyo State and Nigeria
Source: International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Geospatial Unit (2013)

Figure 1: Map showing Ibadan metropolis

Discussion of findings

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the data collected through the structured questionnaire administered to respondents. The results are systematically organized in line with the research objective. The analysis includes descriptive statistics to examine demographic profiles, client preferences, and perceptions. It also features weighted mean, Relative Important Index (RII) and Factor analysis to test the influence of various factors on clients' choices of real estate professionals. All interpretations are discussed with academic depth to ensure alignment with scholarly expectations and research standards. A total of 300 structured questionnaires were distributed to respondents across various strategic locations within Ibadan metropolis. Out of the 300 questionnaires administered, 276 were duly completed and useful, yielding a response rate of 92%. This high return rate is indicative of the effectiveness of the data collection process and the relevance of the research topic to the respondents. It also enhances the credibility of the data and ensures that the sample is adequate for robust statistical analysis.

The demographic data provides insight into the background of respondents and helps contextualize their opinions and decisions in property transactions. Understanding demographic traits is crucial, as they often influence real estate preferences, service expectations, and professional perceptions.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender and Age

	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	160	58
	Female	116	42
Age	20-29 years	96	34.8
	30-39 years	66	23.9
	40-49 years	42	15.2
	50-59 years	49	17.8
	60 years and above	23	8.3

Source: Field Survey 2025

The analysis in the table above shows that 58.0% of the respondents are male, while 42% of the respondents are female. This indicates that males are more actively involved in property transactions and more accessible for real estate-related surveys within Ibadan metropolis. The relatively high male participation may reflect the gender dynamics often observed in real estate decisions, where men traditionally more engaged in property acquisition and investment activities. However, the considerably high female representation also demonstrates that women are increasingly participating in property markets, underscoring the growing inclusiveness and diversity within the real estate sector in Ibadan. The analysis in the above table also reveals that respondents between 20-29 years made up the highest proportion of 34.8%. Those aged 30-39years represent 23.9% of the respondents, and 50-59 years are 17.8%. Respondents aged 40-49 years comprised 42 (15.2%), while those aged 60 and above are 8.3% of the respondents). The concentration of respondents in 20-39 age bracket suggests that the real estate market in the study area is attracting younger individuals who may be exploring property either for personal use or Investment purposes. The 30-39 age group indicates growing interest among individuals likely to be more financially stable and actively seeking to build wealth through property ownership. Respondents aged 40-59 shows that older adults also remain engaged in the property sector, possibly due to accumulated wealth or as a means of securing long-term investments. The age group 60 and above reflects lower levels of participation, which may be due to a shift in priorities or reduced financial activity in property dealings at that age. It shows that while younger individuals are taking strong interest in real estate activities, Insights from older age brackets contribute experience and depth to the study.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Marital and client status

	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Marital Status	Single	108	39.10%
	Married	139	50.40%
	Divorced	11	4.00%
	Widow/widower	18	6.50%
Client Status	Tenant	161	58.30%
	Landlord	77	27.90%
	Property Investors	28	13.80%

Source: Field Survey 2025

The analysis in the above table shows that 50.4% of the respondents were married, 108 (39.1%) were single, 11 (4.0%) were divorced and 18 (6.5%) were widowed/widowers. The dominance of married individuals suggests that real estate transactions may be highly influenced by starting a family, stability and the need for long-term accommodation or investment. This supports the idea that married individuals are more likely to pursue homeownership or rental decisions for family needs. On the other hand, the strong representation of single respondents indicates that many individuals are independently making real estate decisions, driven by career growth, investment potential or personal preference. Including divorced and widowed individuals also reflects the influence of life transitions on housing and property decisions, which adds socio-cultural richness to the dataset. In terms of client status, according to the analysis of the table above, the largest proportion were tenants (161 respondents, 58.3%), then the landlords (77 respondents, 27.9%) and property investors (38 respondents, 13.8%). This indicates that tenants remain the most active client group in Ibadan's real estate market, likely due to the high urban rental demand. Their frequent interaction with both registered and unregistered agents gives them firsthand experience in evaluating professional conduct. Landlords provide insight into the supply side of property markets and are critical to understanding how service providers are selected for property management, leasing or sale. The presence of property investors, although the smallest group is also critical. They typically seek efficiency, professional credibility and market knowledge, which can influence their preference for certified real estate professionals.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation, Education qualification and Income level

	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Occupation	Student	48	17.40%
	Civil Servant	55	19.90%
	Private Sector Worker	52	18.80%
	Self-employed/ Business owner	85	30.80%
	Professional	33	12%
	Others	3	1.10%
Educational Qualification	SSCE	38	13.80%
	ND/NCE	55	19.90%
	HND	63	22.80%
	Postgraduate	120	43.50%
Income Level	Below #100,000	70	25.40%
	#100,001 - #200,000	60	21.70%
	#200,001 - #300,000	57	20.70%
	#300,000 and above	89	32.30%

Source: Field Survey 2025

The occupational breakdown shows that self-employed/ business owners were the largest group representing 30.8 % of the respondents, civil servants 19.9%, Private sector workers 18.8%, students 17.4%, Professionals 12% of the respondents and others 1.1% of the respondents. The dominance of the self-employed category suggests that entrepreneurial individuals are highly active in the real estate sector, likely due to their flexibility in decision-making and investment orientation. Civil servants and private sector workers also form a large part of the market, often participate in rental markets and offer perspectives on short-term engagement with real estate professionals. The professional class (engineers, lawyers, doctors etc.) brings a unique angle, often preferring formal engagement with registered estate surveyors. This occupational spread confirms that property transactions in Ibadan cut across various income groups and employment sectors.

The educational qualification of respondents indicates that 120 (43.5%) of the respondents holds postgraduate degrees, 63 (22.8%) had HND, 55 (19.9%) held ND/NCE, and 38 (13.8%) had SSCE as their highest qualification. This trend shows that a significant portion of the respondents were highly educated. Such individuals are likely to be more informed about real estate regulations, professional ethics, and the potential risks of engaging unregistered agents. The predominance of postgraduate respondents suggests a growing population of informed clients who may demand accountability and transparency in property transactions. Even among respondents with lower educational attainment, there is an indication of interest and involvement in property matters, reflecting the universal relevance of housing. The varied educational background adds richness to the data and validates the findings across multiple literacy levels.

Terms of income monthly as shown in the analysis of the table above, 89 respondents (32.2%) earned ₦300,000 and above, 70 (25.4%) earned below ₦100,000, 60 (21.7%) earned ₦100,001–₦200,000, and 57 (20.7%) earned ₦200,001–₦300,000**.** This income distribution shows that the study covered a wide economic spectrum, from low to high-income earners. Those earning higher incomes are more likely to engage the services of estate surveyors and valuers, driven by professionalism, efficiency, and long-term value. In contrast, lower-income earners may prioritize cost and accessibility, which could lead them to opt for unregistered property agents.

This finding highlights the importance of pricing and perceived value in clients' choice of professionals and suggests that estate surveyors may need to adjust their service strategies to appeal to all income categories. The presence of a sizeable middle-income group also presents opportunities for client education and service diversification.

Table 5: Respondent's Awareness of Property Transactions and Experience with Real Estate Professionals

	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Who handled the Property Transaction	Estate Surveyor and Valuer	115	41.70%
	Unregistered property agent	154	55.80%
	Others	7	2.50%
Connection	Referral	134	48.60%
	Social media	40	14.50%
	Walk-in	102	37%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the table above, the analysis shows that a majority of the respondents (55.8%) indicated that their property transactions were handled by unregistered property agents, with a total frequency of 154 respondents. This is followed by 41.7% (115 respondent) who reported that Estate Surveyors and valuers were responsible for handling their transactions. Only a small fraction 2.5% (7 respondents), indicated that others were involved. This shows that despite the professional and legal recognition of estate surveyors and valuers, unregistered property agents are still the dominant players in property transactions among the respondents. This may be due to factors such as accessibility, affordability or informal referral networks. According to table 5 above, Referral is the most common means by which respondents get connected to the property agent, with 48.6% (134 respondents). This is followed by walk-ins 37.0% (102 respondents, while social media was the least cited means of connection, with 14.5% (40 respondents). This implies that personal networks and informal referrals play a significant role in how individuals connect with real estate professionals. The relatively low percentage of social media use suggests that digital platforms are yet to become a dominant channel for initial engagement in property transactions in the study area.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Choice of Real Estate Professionals

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
Reason for choice	Affordability	52	18.80%	2.982	1.36836
	Trust	56	20.30%		
	Recommendation	61	22.10%		
	Accessibility	59	21.40%		
	Professionalism	48	17.40%		
	Others	0	0%		
Level of Satisfaction	Very Satisfied	71	25.70%	2.286	1.04514
	Satisfied	99	35.90%		
	Neutral	69	25.00%		
	Dissatisfied	39	10.90%		
	Very Dissatisfied	7	2.50%		
Next choice	Estate Surveyor and Valuer	155	56.20%	1.714	0.8705
	Unregistered Property Agent				
	Not Sure	45	16.30%		
		76	27.50%		
Better service quality	Estate Surveyors and Valuers	174	63%	1.62	0.85929
	Unregistered Property Agents				
	No Difference	33	12%		
		69	27.50%		
Is there difference	Yes	194	70.30%	1.5	0.81128
	No	26	9.40%		
	Not Sure	56	25%		
Any Issues	Yes	117	42.40%	1.576	0.49507
	No	159	57.60%		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The analysis in the table 6 above shows that the most common reason for choosing a property agent is Recommendation (Referral) which represent 22.1% of the respondents, followed closely by accessibility which represent 21.4% (59 respondents) and Trust which represents 20.3% (56 respondents). Affordability is 18.8% (52 respondents), while Professionalism 17.4% (48 respondents). The mean score of 2.9829 and a standard deviation of 1.36836 suggest that the responses are fairly spread across the different reasons, with recommendation and accessibility being slightly more prominent. The variability also implies that no single reason overwhelmingly dominates clients' choices, indicating a multifactorial decision process. Regarding satisfaction with the property agent chose, 35.9 % (99 respondents) reported being satisfied, while 25.7% (71 respondents) were very satisfied. A quarter of respondents (25%) remained neutral, and 13.4% (combining dissatisfied and very dissatisfied) expressed discontent. The mean score of 2.2862 reflects a moderately positive satisfaction level, skewing slightly above neutral. The standard deviation of 1.04514 indicates moderate variation in satisfaction levels, suggesting that while many were pleased, a notable number remained undecided or unsatisfied. As shown is the table above, when asked who they would prefer to use in future transactions, a majority 56.2% (155 respondents) indicated ESVs, while 16.3% (45 respondents) chose unregistered property agents, and 27.5% (76 respondents) were not sure. The mean score of 1.7138 and standard deviation of 0.87050 indicate that most respondents leaned toward choosing registered professionals in future transactions, although a notable number remain undecided. In terms of better service quality, 63% (174 respondents) believed that ESVs offer better services, compared to 12% (33 respondents) who preferred unregistered property agents. 27.5% (69 respondents) saw no difference between the two. With a mean of 1.6196 and a standard deviation of 0.85929, the responses suggest a strong preference for estate surveyors and valuers, with relatively low variation, meaning a majority agree on who provides superior service. This corroborated with the study carried out by Iroham, I (2020) and Cardier *et al*., (2017). A significant majority, 70.3% (194 respondents), acknowledged a difference between ESVs and unregistered property agents, while 9.4% (26 respondents) said there is no difference, and 25% (56 respondents) were not sure. The mean score of 1.5000 indicates a strong leaning toward recognizing a distinction, while the standard deviation of 0.81113 confirms a moderate consistency in that opinion across respondents. When asked if they had ever encountered issues with their chosen property agent, 42.4% (117 respondents) said yes, while 57.6% (159 respondents) said no. The mean score of 1.5761 and standard deviation of 0.49507 show that most respondents did not experience issues, but a significant proportion (nearly half) did, highlighting the need for better regulation and accountability in property transactions.

The analysis shows that while unregistered agents are currently popular (as earlier revealed in 4.3 above), clients demonstrate a clear preference for ESVs in terms of trust, professionalism, and future choice. Satisfaction levels are generally positive, though some clients have faced issues, reinforcing the need for professional guidance in real estate transactions.

Requirements for Real Estate Professionals

The Relative Importance Index (RII) was used to determine the importance respondents attach to various professional requirements expected of real estate practitioners. The RII values range from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating higher importance. Using a 5-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements related to requirement for real estate professionals. The analysis revealed the following ranking of requirements, arranged in descending order of importance.

Table 7: Respondents' views on Requirements for Unregistered Property Agents and ESVs

Requirements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Weighted Mean	RII	Rank
Real estate professionals should be duly registered and licensed with relevant regulatory bodies.	168	82	14	10	2	4.46	0.89	1st
Transparency and full disclosure are essential in property transactions.	137	116	16	6	1	4.38	0.88	2nd
Real estate professionals should provide advisory and consultancy services beyond buying and selling.	135	109	21	9	1	4.32	0.87	3rd
Formal contracts and written agreements should be used in all property transactions	136	100	26	14	0	4.29	0.86	5th
Ethical practices and client	117	121	33	3	2	4.26	0.85	6th

interest protection are essential in professional conduct.								
Clients should be regularly updated during the transaction process	144	86	36	10	0	4.32	0.86	4th
Online verification of registration status builds client trust.	114	66	83	13	0	4.02	0.8	9th
Certifications and affiliations influence client confidence in professionals	106	112	40	15	3	4.09	0.82	8th
Clear explanation of legal and technical matters enhances service quality.	117	109	36	7	7	4.16	0.83	7th

Source: Field Survey, 2025

SA= Strongly Agree (5), A = Agree (4), N = Neutral (3), D = Disagree (2), SD = Strongly Disagree (1)

From the table above, the highest-ranked requirement is that real estate professionals should be duly registered and licensed with relevant regulatory bodies (RII = 0.8928), indicating a strong demand for professionalism and regulatory compliance in the real estate sector. This is closely followed by transparency and full disclosure in property transactions (RII = 0.8768), and the need for professionals to offer advisory and consultancy services beyond basic transactions (RII = 0.8676). Requirements such as client updates during transactions, use of formal contracts, and ethical conduct were also rated highly, reflecting clients' desire for clarity, accountability, and integrity in service delivery. Meanwhile, although still important, online verification, certifications/affiliations, and clear explanation of legal/technical matters received relatively lower RII scores, suggesting they are seen as supporting factors rather than core expectations. Overall, the analysis reveals that registration, transparency, professionalism, and client-centered practices are the most critical qualities clients expect from real estate professionals.

Factors Influencing Choice of Real Estate Professionals

This section examines the factors that influence clients' decisions when choosing between estate surveyors and valuers and unregistered property agents. The weighted mean and Relative Important Index (RII) were used to determine the relative importance of each factor. Higher mean values indicate stronger influence on clients' choices. Below is the ranking of the factors based on their weighted mean scores and RII.

Table 8: Distribution of Respondents' Perceived Factors influencing choice of Real Estate Professionals.

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	RII	Weighted Mean	Rank
I chose my real estate professional based on their professional license	108	78	45	35	10	0.77	3.865	9th
I preferred someone with more affordable charges	83	116	43	28	6	0.78	3.876	8th
Proximity and accessibility influenced my decision	105	110	42	18	1	0.82	4.086	2nd
I trusted the person more because of referrals	77	117	53	25	4	0.77	3.862	10th
I believe unregistered agents are more flexible in negotiations	52	107	60	37	20	0.7	3.485	14th
Estate surveyors have more technical knowledge	105	124	30	13	4	0.83	4.134	1st
I think both unregistered property agents and estate surveyors offer the same services	32	58	58	90	38	0.57	2.84	15th
I chose my real estate professional because they have strong	75	121	46	29	5	0.77	3.84	11th

reputation and credibility.								
The location and accessibility to the real estate property agent influenced my decision.	67	133	48	23	5	0.77	3.847	12th
I considered the professional's service charges to be affordable and fair.	72	122	62	17	3	0.78	3.88	7th
I believed the professional had superior technical knowledge and understanding issues related to property transaction.	87	111	47	26	5	0.78	3.902	6th
I valued the professional's ability to negotiate flexibility on my behalf.	87	107	53	29	0	0.78	3.913	4th
Previous positive experiences with the professional influenced my choice	80	123	43	27	3	0.78	3.905	5th
The marketing and online presence of the professional attracted me to their services.	65	113	51	42	5	0.74	3.692	13th
Clients use unregistered property agents due to lack of awareness about registered professionals	100	105	33	30	8	0.79	3.938	3rd

Source: Field Survey, 2025

SA= Strongly Agree (5), A = Agree (4), N = Neutral (3), D = Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1)

The analysis in the table above reveals that the most influential factor in clients' choice of real estate professionals is the perception that estate surveyors have more technical knowledge (weighted mean = 4.1341). This suggests that clients value the depth of expertise and professionalism associated with registered estate practitioners. The second most influential factor is proximity and accessibility (4.0870), indicating that ease of reaching the professional plays a key role in decision-making. Another major factor is the lack of awareness about registered professionals, which ranks third (3.9384), highlighting the need for better public sensitization on the role of licensed estate surveyors and valuers. Other important factors include the professional's flexibility in negotiation, past positive experiences, and the belief in their superior technical knowledge, all of which scored above 3.9. This reflects a balance between clients' need for professional expertise and personal satisfaction. Meanwhile, factors such as online presence and marketing ranked lower (3.6920), while the idea that both registered and unregistered professionals offer the same services was rated the least influential (2.8406), suggesting that most respondents recognize a distinction between the two.

Table 9: Distribution of Respondents' Perceived Factors influencing choice of Real Estate Professionals using Factor Analysis

Factors	Initial	Extraction	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Professional license status influences the choice of real estate professionals	0.302	0.353	0.62				
Affordable service charges are a key selection factor	0.275	0.476	0.567	-0.332			-0.449
Proximity and accessibility affect professional selection	0.34	0.604	0.542			0.517	

Referrals increase trust in real estate professionals	0.215	0.217	0.533				
Unregistered agents are seen as more flexible in negotiations	0.162	0.298	0.532				
Estate surveyors are viewed as more technically knowledgeable	0.289	0.39	0.523				
Both unregistered agents and estate surveyors are perceived to offer similar services	0.134	0.224	0.503				
Strong reputation and credibility influence client choice	0.316	0.674	0.462	-0.311			
Location and accessibility of professionals affect decision-making	0.297	0.573	0.423				
Fair pricing of services impacts professional selection	0.261	0.282	0.346				

Technical understanding of property transactions influences choice.	0.295	0.42					
Negotiation flexibility is valued in professional selection	0.356	0.495		0.577			
Previous positive experiences shape future choices	0.289	0.319	0.473	0.54			
Online presence and marketing attract clients	0.176	0.229			0.464		
Use of unregistered agents is linked to low awareness of registered professionals	0.122	0.165			0.385		

Source: Field Study, 2025

The analysis in the table above shows that fifteen variables relating to clients’ choice of real estate professionals were analyzed using factor analysis. Based on the extraction and rotated component matrix, four major factors were identified based on the pattern of high loadings on each component. These were interpreted and categorized as Economic Factors, Social and Relationship Factors, Awareness and Informational Factors, and Technical and Professional Factors.

Factor 1 – Economic Factors

This factor accounts for clients' sensitivity to cost and convenience. It includes high loadings from variables such as professional license status, affordable service charges, proximity and accessibility, perceived flexibility of unregistered property agents, perceived similarity of services between unregistered property agents and estate surveyors & valuers, location/accessibility of the professional, and fairness of service charges. This suggests that many clients are primarily influenced by how affordable and accessible a real estate professional is, regardless of formal registration or credentials. This is corroborated by Ajibola et. al. (2013) and Agboola (2020).

Factor 2 – Social and Relationship Factors

This component reflects the role of interpersonal trust and previous experiences. It includes variables such as referrals, reputation and credibility, previous positive experience, and negotiation flexibility. The presence of these items under one factor implies that clients value social validation and trust, often choosing professionals them or their network have dealt with in the past. This factor reflects the importance of interpersonal trust, negotiation ability and established relationships. This is corroborated by Abiodun (2017)

Factor 3 – Awareness and Marketing Factors

This factor comprises items related to clients' access to information and the visibility of the professional. It includes online presence and marketing and use of unregistered property agents due to lack of awareness. This reveals that in some cases, clients make choices not based on professional standards, but on how visible or well-advertised the professional is, or due to limited awareness of estate surveyors. This is in corroboration with Adeyemo and Jonson (2021)

Factor 4 – Technical and Professional Factors

This factor represents the importance of formal qualifications and technical competence in the client's decision. Items that loaded significantly here include possession of a professional license and technical knowledge of estate surveyors. This implies that although not the most dominant, professional competence and licensing still influence the choices of some informed clients, this is in consonance with the study of Umeh and Abugu (2018).

Factor 5 – Inverse Cost Sensitivity

The only key loading in this factor is affordable service charges (-0.449). This factor represents a segment of clients who place little emphasis on affordability when selecting a real estate professional, suggesting that price is not their primary concern.

From the factor analysis, it is evident that economic considerations have the strongest influence on clients' choice of real estate professionals, followed by social relationships and trust, level of awareness or marketing exposure, and finally, technical competence and professional qualification. This interpretation provides insight into why many clients may prefer unregistered property agents over estate surveyors, especially in informal markets where cost and accessibility take precedence over professional standards.

Conclusion

This study examined the factors influencing clients' choice of real estate professionals in property transactions in Ibadan, with a special focus on comparing the roles and perceptions of registered estate surveyors and valuers with those of unregistered property agents. Through the analysis of relevant variables such as trust, affordability, accessibility, referral influence, professional qualifications, service quality, technical knowledge, and legal registration status, the research provided meaningful insight into the behavioral patterns of clients when choosing between formal and informal service providers in real estate.

The findings revealed that clients are more likely to choose real estate professionals who are trustworthy, affordable, easily accessible, and familiar to them through referrals. It became evident that while registered estate surveyors and valuers are recognized for their superior technical knowledge, professional conduct, and legal credibility, a significant number of clients still opt for unregistered agents, primarily due to lower service costs, flexible processes, and the belief that they understand the local market better. This situation suggests that although professional registration and technical expertise are valued, many clients still make decisions based on convenience, personal relationships, and financial considerations.

Furthermore, the results indicate that there is still a low level of public awareness regarding the importance of engaging certified professionals for property transactions. Many clients remain unaware of the potential risks of working with unregistered agents, including fraudulent practices, lack of legal protection, and poor service quality. The implication is that estate surveyors and their professional bodies must proactively address the visibility and public perception challenges currently facing the profession. In conclusion, clients' choices are influenced by a combination of economic, social, and perceptual factors. The professional status of an estate practitioner is important, but not always the determining factor. To ensure the proper functioning of the real estate market, protect clients' interests, and uphold ethical standards, there is a pressing need to bridge the gap between formal professionalism and client expectations. This can be achieved through enhanced public education, improved marketing strategies, community engagement, and stricter enforcement of regulations governing real estate practice in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In light of the findings from this study, recommendations are proposed to improve client trust and increase the patronage of registered real estate professionals over unregistered agents. The study recommends that estate surveyors and valuers should embark on public awareness, blend professionalism with flexibility, adopt modern marketing techniques that would improve visibility to the citizens and increase accessibility of estate surveyors and valuers.

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