ESTATE MANAGEMENT

The Role of Estate Surveyors and Valuers in Curbing Arbitrary Rental Increments in Asaba Metropolis, Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines how practising estate surveyors and valuers (ESVs) understand and endorse their professional responsibilities in curbing arbitrary rental increments in Asaba Metropolis, and the factors that constrain their implementation. A cross-sectional questionnaire survey recorded 200 submissions; 187 were classified as eligible practitioners and 170 passed an attention check. Descriptive statistics, reliability diagnostics and exploratory ordinal logistic regression were reported. Of the primary sample, 68.2% perceived arbitrary increments as prevalent. Respondents endorsed mediation (74.7%), professional valuation (72.4%) and fee-scale benchmarking (71.2%) as relevant functions. However, weak enforcement of tenancy laws (74.7%), landlords bypassing ESVs for unregistered agents (69.4%) and inadequate rental-market data (65.9%) were prominent constraints. The regression showed no statistically significant joint association between selected role perceptions and perceived prevalence (LR $\chi^2(7) = 3.07$, $p = .878$). The findings suggest a gap between recognition of professional responsibilities and the conditions required to implement them; they do not measure actual rent reductions or intervention effectiveness.

Keywords: Estate surveyors and valuers; arbitrary rental increments; professional responsibilities; institutional constraints; Asaba

1 Introduction

Residential rent is a major recurring household expenditure and a principal source of property income. Rent can legitimately rise with demand, construction and maintenance costs, inflation, accessibility and dwelling quality. An increase is perceived as arbitrary, however, when its basis is unexplained, inconsistent with the tenancy agreement, unsupported by comparable evidence or accompanied by undisclosed charges. The central issue is therefore not whether rent should change but whether rent reviews are evidence-based, transparent and open to scrutiny.

In Nigeria, landlord–tenant relations are regulated mainly by state laws. The Lagos State Tenancy Law (2011), for example, limits advance rent and allows a sitting tenant to apply to court for a declaration that an increase is unreasonable (Lagos State of Nigeria, 2011); yet press and legal commentary continue to report non-compliance and weak enforcement (Ezugwu, 2014; Olisa Agbakoba Legal, 2025). Asaba, the capital of Delta State, is an administrative and commercial centre whose housing market is shaped by employment, population movement, infrastructure and housing supply. Where information on completed lettings is scarce, landlords, tenants and intermediaries may hold different information about prevailing rents, which complicates negotiation and raises the likelihood of disagreement.

Estate surveyors and valuers (ESVs), registered under the Estate Surveyors and Valuers (Registration, etc.) Act (Nigeria, 2004), have competencies in rental valuation, property management, lease administration and dispute support. Their potential contribution lies in improving the evidence and process of rent review, not in guaranteeing lower rents, and professional involvement cannot substitute for statutory institutions.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The central problem is not simply whether ESVs know that they have a role in promoting fair rent reviews, but whether they can translate that professional responsibility into effective practice in the local rental market. Their recognized functions include evidence-based rental valuation, mediation, transparent rent-review advice, professional accountability and education of landlords and tenants. Yet the performance of these functions may be weakened where tenancy laws are poorly enforced, landlords engage unqualified or unregistered agents, reliable rental evidence is scarce and members of the public do not readily seek regulated professional services. There is limited local empirical evidence showing how practising ESVs in Asaba view these responsibilities and which barriers they consider most restrictive. This study addresses that gap by examining perceived professional roles alongside the institutional and operational conditions that may prevent their effective implementation.

1.2 Aim and objectives

The aim is to examine the role of estate surveyors and valuers in curbing arbitrary rental increments in Asaba Metropolis, Delta State, with particular attention to practitioners' recognition and endorsement of relevant professional responsibilities and the factors constraining their implementation.

The objectives are to:

1. assess practitioners' perceptions of the prevalence and drivers of arbitrary rental increments;
2. identify the professional functions they consider relevant to fair and transparent rent reviews;
3. examine the institutional and market constraints they believe limit the performance of those functions;
4. explore whether selected role perceptions and respondent characteristics are statistically associated with perceived prevalence; and
5. draw practice and policy implications for strengthening the contribution of ESVs.

1.3 Research questions and hypothesis

1. How do practising ESVs perceive the prevalence and drivers of arbitrary rental increments in Asaba?
2. Which professional responsibilities and intervention functions do they recognise as relevant to curbing arbitrary increments?
3. Which institutional, regulatory and market factors do they perceive as limiting their ability to perform these functions?
4. Are selected role perceptions and respondent characteristics associated with perceived prevalence?

The fourth question is exploratory because the survey is cross-sectional and measures perceptions rather than observed professional interventions or rent outcomes.

H_0: Selected role perceptions and respondent characteristics have no joint association with the ordinal rating of perceived prevalence (Item 12). H_1: At least one specified predictor is associated with it. This hypothesis tests association between survey responses; it does not test whether ESV interventions reduce rental increments.

2 Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1 Rent formation and market evidence

Residential rent reflects demand, supply, location, accessibility, dwelling characteristics, services and tenure conditions. Hedonic price theory treats a dwelling as a bundle of attributes whose implicit values determine its price (Rosen, 1974). For rental valuation this implies that comparables must be matched on attributes such as location, floor area, condition, facilities, date of letting and contract terms, not merely neighbourhood or bedroom count. Nigerian evidence identifies housing demand and location factors as determinants of rent in emerging cities (Ozabor et al. 2024) and applies hedonic modelling to rental values in South-western Nigeria (Odebode et al. 2024). Adebisi (2024) relates tenant characteristics to lease performance in Ibadan. Together these studies indicate that a rent movement may be market-supported or poorly explained, and that telling the two apart requires attribute-level evidence. The present study does not measure market drivers; it reports practitioners' perceptions of them.

2.2 Rent regulation, tenancy law and enforcement

International evidence on rent regulation is mixed. Arnott (1995) argued that the case against rent control is less one-sided than often assumed, while a study of San Francisco found that rent-control expansion helped incumbent tenants remain in their homes but reduced the supply of rental housing (Diamond et al., 2019). In Nigeria, tenancy regulation is state-specific. The Lagos State Tenancy Law (2011), for example, restricts advance rent and allows tenants to contest unreasonable increases in court (Lagos State of Nigeria, 2011). Reports nonetheless describe agents helping landlords to circumvent advance-rent limits and tenants reluctant to go to court (Ezugwu, 2014), while a bill to replace the 2011 law was introduced in 2025 amid concern about weak enforcement (Olisa Agbakoba Legal, 2025). The literature suggests that rules alone do not secure fair rent reviews; enforcement, information and access to dispute resolution matter. The questionnaire used here refers to a 1977 rent law; this paper reports respondents' awareness and views only and does not establish that law's current status, scope or enforceability.

2.3 Information asymmetry, agency and professional accountability

Information asymmetry, in which one party knows more about quality or price than the other, can undermine market outcomes (Akerlof, 1970). In residential letting, landlords, tenants and agents may differ in what they know about achieved rents, defects, fees and legal duties. Agency theory explains how delegated relationships create monitoring costs where an agent's incentives diverge from the principal's (Jensen & Meckling, 1976); unclear mandates, undisclosed commissions and weak records make it hard for clients to judge whether advice and charges are appropriate. Professional accountability can mitigate these problems through written engagement terms, disclosure of fees and conflicts,

accurate records, reasoned rental opinions and accessible complaint procedures, although effectiveness depends on compliance, client access and the regulatory environment.

ESV functions relevant to rent review therefore include independent valuation using completed rather than asking rents, explained adjustments, property management and lease administration, tenant and landlord education, and mediation. These are plausible mechanisms; the survey measures views about them, not their effects.

2.4 Theoretical framework

Two complementary perspectives guide the study. Hedonic pricing theory (Rosen, 1974) supplies the technical basis for valuation-related functions (Items 18 and 19). Agency theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) frames transparency-related functions: fee scales, exposure of unqualified agents and the bypassing of qualified professionals (Items 21, 23 and 26). The framework organizes and informs interpretation of the items; the survey does not estimate a hedonic rent equation or test agency costs.

2.5 Research gap

The local research gap concerns the relationship between professional responsibility and the conditions for its practical exercise. It is not enough to list the functions ESVs could perform; it is also necessary to understand the barriers that may prevent practitioners from applying those functions in the rental market. This study contributes practitioner-based evidence from Asaba by examining perceived prevalence, endorsed professional functions, perceived implementation constraints and the exploratory association between role perceptions and perceived prevalence. The low reliability of the item groupings and the null regression are reported transparently and limit the strength of inference.

3 Methodology

3.1 Design, population and sampling

A quantitative cross-sectional questionnaire survey was used. The study documentation states a population of practising estate surveyors and valuers in Asaba Metropolis of 200 (N = 200). The source used to verify this population, the sampling technique and the sample-size rationale were not specified in the materials supplied for this revision. These details must be confirmed from the fieldwork records before submission and cannot be inferred from the response workbook. The response workbook is described as containing 200 anonymous submissions on 34 variables: respondent code, timestamp, current-practice eligibility, professional profile, Likert Items 12–31 and an optional comment.

3.2 Instrument

The questionnaire had five parts: respondent profile (Section A); perceived prevalence and drivers (Section B, Items 12–17); professional roles (Section C, Items 18–24); challenges (Section D, Items 26–28); and proposed solutions (Section E, Items 29–31). Item 25 was an attention check instructing respondents to select Disagree (score 2). Responses were scored from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The available study documentation does not establish whether expert content validation or pilot testing was conducted. The authors should report the actual procedure, or explicitly state that these procedures were not undertaken.

3.3 Fieldwork and ethics

The fieldwork dates, questionnaire distribution mode, recruitment procedure, informed-consent process and ethics approval or exemption status were not documented in the supplied materials. The authors must verify and insert these particulars from the original research records. No ethics approval or consent procedure is assumed in this revision. The questionnaire stated that participation was voluntary, that respondents should not give personal or firm names, and that results would be reported in aggregate. Respondent codes and timestamps were treated as administrative identifiers and excluded from modelling.

3.4 Data screening and sample accounting

Of 200 submissions, 13 answered "No" to the current-practice item and were reclassified by the researcher as undergraduate student submissions; they are excluded. The remaining 187 are eligible practitioner responses. Of these, 170 followed the Item 25 instruction and form the primary inferential sample; the 17 non-compliant responses were retained, unaltered, for a sensitivity analysis. Table 1 gives the accounting. The 187 eligible responses equal 93.5% of the population count; this is a coverage ratio, and is a response rate only if all 200 members were approached. The fieldwork records should confirm whether all 200 members of the stated population were approached before this figure is described as a response rate. The researcher confirms that the responses are genuine.

Table 1. Population and sample accounting.

Stage	n	Interpretation
Verified population of practising ESVs	200	N = 200
Submitted records	200	All received
Undergraduate submissions (excluded)	13	6.5% of submissions
Eligible practitioner responses	187	93.5% of population count
Primary sample (passed Item 25)	170	90.9% of eligible; 85.0% of population
Sensitivity sample (all eligible)	187	Includes 17 attention-check failures

3.5 Variables and analysis

Item 12 ("Arbitrary rental increment is a prevalent problem in Asaba Metropolis") was the ordinal outcome. Predictors were Item 18 (professional valuation as a guide to fair rent), Item 20 (mediation), Item 21 (exposing unqualified agents), Item 24 (tenant education), post-qualification experience (1 = under 5 years to 5 = 21 years or more), awareness of the 1977 rent law (1 = Yes; 0 = No or Not sure) and handling of a rent review or dispute in the previous three years (1 = Yes; 0 = No).

Likert items are summarized by mean, standard deviation and percentage agreeing (scores 4–5). Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was computed for the section groupings as a diagnostic, with Item 17 reverse-coded where relevant; because alpha proved unacceptable (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011), no composite scales were formed and analysis is at item level. The primary inferential method was proportional-odds ordinal logistic regression (McCullagh, 1980; Agresti, 2010), reported as odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals and a likelihood-ratio test, with the proportional-odds assumption checked by a Brant-type Wald test (Brant, 1990). Robustness checks were a binary logistic model (scores 4–5 versus 1–3), re-estimation on all 187 eligible cases, and Spearman's rho and Kendall's tau-b. Group differences used Mann–Whitney U and Kruskal–Wallis tests, with Holm (1979)

adjustment across the nine Kruskal–Wallis comparisons. All results are associations, not causal effects. Because the predictors are general role perceptions rather than measures of actual intervention, the regression is exploratory.

4 Data presentation and results

4.1 Respondent profile

Table 2 profiles the 170 primary respondents. Most were male (65.3%), aged 31–40 (40.0%), and held a B.Sc. (38.8%) or M.Sc. (34.1%). Associate members (ANIVS) were the largest NIESV grade (53.5%) and 72.4% were ESVARBON-registered. Experience was mainly 5–10 years (30.0%) or 11–15 years (27.6%). A majority (68.2%) had handled a rent review or dispute in the preceding three years, but only 36.5% affirmed awareness of the 1977 rent law. Small categories (Ph.D., "Other" qualification, age 61+) limit subgroup inference.

Table 2. Profile of primary-analysis respondents (n = 170).

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	111	65.3
	Female	52	30.6
	Prefer not to say	7	4.1
Age (years)	20–30	25	14.7
	31–40	68	40.0
	41–50	41	24.1
	51–60	33	19.4
	61+	3	1.8
Qualification	B.Sc.	66	38.8
	M.Sc.	58	34.1
	HND	30	17.6
	Ph.D.	12	7.1
	Other	4	2.4
NIESV grade	Associate (ANIVS)	91	53.5
	Fellow (FNIVS)	46	27.1
	Probationer	18	10.6
	Not a member	15	8.8
ESVARBON status	Registered	123	72.4
	In progress	26	15.3
	Not registered	21	12.4
Experience	Less than 5 years	26	15.3
	5–10 years	51	30.0
	11–15 years	47	27.6

Characteristic	Category	n	%
	16–20 years	30	17.6
	21+ years	16	9.4
Firm type	Partnership	60	35.3
	Limited liability company	49	28.8
	Sole proprietorship	42	24.7
	Government agency	12	7.1
	Other	7	4.1
Client base	Both about equally	80	47.1
	Landlord-side	54	31.8
	Tenant-side	22	12.9
	Advisory/consultancy only	14	8.2
Handled rent review/dispute (3 years)	Yes	116	68.2
	No	54	31.8
Aware of 1977 law	Yes	62	36.5
	No	66	38.8
	Not sure	42	24.7

4.2 Perceived prevalence and drivers

For Item 12 the mean was 3.72 (SD = 1.21); 116 respondents (68.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that arbitrary increments are prevalent, 21 (12.4%) were undecided and 33 (19.4%) disagreed. Majorities also agreed that many increases were not justified by property or market improvements (Item 13: 70.0%), that landlords and unregistered agents drive increases (Item 14: 70.0%) and that hard-to-verify tenant income adds to rent pressure (Item 15: 65.3%). Table 3 gives all items.

Two patterns need caution. First, 68.2% also agreed that most increases are justified by property or market improvements (Item 17), the logical counterpart of Item 13. This may reflect recognition of both justified and unjustified increases, but it is also consistent with acquiescent responding (Section 5.4). Second, 70.0% agreed that the 1977 law is effective (Item 16) although only 36.5% affirmed awareness of it, so Item 16 cannot be read as a legally informed assessment.

4.3 Professional roles, challenges and proposed solutions

All seven role items exceeded the neutral midpoint, indicating that respondents generally recognised and endorsed the listed professional functions as relevant to fairer rent reviews. Mediation had the highest mean (Item 20: M = 3.82; 74.7% agreement), followed by professional valuation (Item 18: 72.4%) and use of the fee scale as a benchmark (Item 23: 71.2%). Exposing unqualified agents (67.1%), tenant education (65.9%), participation in rent-control policy (65.3%) and advising landlords with market data (62.9%) also received majority support. At the same time, weak enforcement of tenancy laws was the strongest reported challenge (Item 27: M = 3.88; 74.7%), followed by landlords bypassing ESVs for unregistered agents (Item 26: 69.4%) and scarce rental-market data (Item 28: 65.9%). Respondents most frequently supported public-awareness campaigns by NIESV and ESVARBON (70.6%), a modern Delta State tenancy law with rent-review procedures (67.1%) and

a rent-advisory desk in Asaba (64.7%). Taken together, these results point to a perceived implementation problem. Practitioners endorse the responsibilities, but identify regulatory, market-information and professional-recognition barriers to carrying them out. These are reported perceptions, not evidence that the proposed measures have already worked.

Table 3. Item-level Likert summaries (n = 170).

Sec.	Item	Statement (shortened)	Mean	SD	% agree
B	12	Arbitrary rental increment is prevalent in Asaba	3.72	1.21	68.2
B	13	Increases not justified by property/market improvements	3.76	1.11	70.0
B	14	Landlords/unregistered agents drive rent hikes	3.76	1.18	70.0
B	15	Hard-to-verify tenant income adds to rent pressure	3.68	1.24	65.3
B	16	1977 law is effective in curbing increments	3.76	1.18	70.0
B	17	Increases are justified by property/market improvements	3.69	1.09	68.2
C	18	Professional valuation guides fair market rent	3.69	1.15	72.4
C	19	ESVs advise landlords using market data/condition	3.54	1.23	62.9
C	20	ESVs mediate landlord–tenant rent disputes	3.82	1.10	74.7
C	21	ESVs expose unqualified agents who inflate rents	3.65	1.21	67.1
C	22	ESVs participate in rent-control policy	3.65	1.20	65.3
C	23	Fee scale benchmarks agency/legal fees	3.74	1.12	71.2
C	24	ESVs educate tenants on rights/obligations	3.64	1.22	65.9
D	26	Landlords bypass ESVs for unregistered agents	3.75	1.22	69.4
D	27	Weak enforcement of tenancy laws	3.88	1.12	74.7
D	28	Shortage of reliable rental-market data	3.64	1.15	65.9
E	29	Modern tenancy law with rent-review procedures	3.67	1.15	67.1
E	30	NIESV/ESVARBON public-awareness campaigns	3.74	1.05	70.6
E	31	Rent-advisory desk in Asaba	3.68	1.20	64.7

Note. % agree = percentage selecting Agree or Strongly Agree (4–5). Item 25 was the attention check and is not reported.

4.4 Reliability

Alpha for the section groupings was unacceptable: Section B (Items 12–17, Item 17 reversed) $\alpha = -0.077$; Section C (Items 18–24) $\alpha = -0.175$; Section D (Items 26–28) $\alpha = 0.003$; Section E (Items 29–31) $\alpha = 0.301$. Corrected item–total correlations ranged from −0.121 to 0.207, and Section E was the only group in which all three exceeded 0.10. Negative alpha indicates negative average inter-item covariance under the stated grouping and coding. Item-level reporting is therefore used throughout.

4.5 Exploratory ordinal regression

The ordinal model (n = 170) was not statistically significant: likelihood-ratio $\chi^2(7) = 3.07$, $p = .878$; McFadden pseudo-$R^2 = .0063$; log-likelihood = −241.376; AIC = 504.752. No predictor was significant and every 95% confidence interval included 1.00 (Table 4). The Brant-type test did not detect a viola-

tion of proportional odds (Wald $\chi^2(21) = 20.66$, $p = .480$), although non-significance does not prove the assumption holds.

Table 4. Ordinal logistic regression predicting perceived prevalence (Item 12; n = 170).

Predictor	Logit B	OR	95% CI for OR	p
Professional valuation (Item 18)	0.145	1.156	0.909–1.469	.237
Mediation (Item 20)	−0.093	0.912	0.710–1.171	.468
Expose unqualified agents (Item 21)	0.003	1.003	0.796–1.264	.980
Tenant education (Item 24)	0.107	1.112	0.895–1.383	.337
Post-qualification experience	0.040	1.040	0.831–1.303	.730
Aware of 1977 law (Yes)	−0.034	0.966	0.540–1.729	.908
Handled rent review/dispute (Yes)	−0.066	0.936	0.513–1.707	.829

Note. LR $\chi^2(7) = 3.07$, $p = .878$; McFadden $R^2 = .0063$. OR > 1 indicates higher odds of a higher Item 12 category, conditional on other predictors.

Robustness checks agreed. A four-predictor model with the role items only was non-significant (LR $\chi^2(4) = 2.89$, $p = .576$), as was a binary logistic model of agreement (LR $\chi^2(7) = 3.56$, $p = .829$; McFadden $R^2 = .017$). Re-estimation on all 187 eligible cases gave a similar result (LR $\chi^2(7) = 3.02$, $p = .883$; McFadden $R^2 = .0057$), with no predictor reaching significance. Spearman correlations of Item 12 with Items 18, 20, 21 and 24 were $\rho = .088$, −.009, .016 and .071 (all $p > .25$), with Kendall's τb consistent ($|\tau b| \leq .073$, all $p > .25$).

4.6 Group comparisons

Mann–Whitney U tests found no difference in Item 12 by experience of handling a rent review or dispute ($U = 3{,}093.5$, $p = .894$) or by awareness of the 1977 law (Yes versus No/Not sure; $U = 3{,}278.0$, $p = .814$). Of nine Kruskal–Wallis comparisons (Table 5), only highest qualification was nominally significant ($H(4) = 11.176$, $p = .025$, $\varepsilon^2 = .043$); after Holm adjustment for nine tests it was not (adjusted $p = .225$). It is therefore not treated as a finding.

Table 5. Kruskal–Wallis comparisons for Item 12, with Holm adjustment.

Grouping variable	H	df	Raw p	Holm-adjusted p
Gender	0.102	2	.950	1.000
Age	2.511	4	.643	1.000
Highest qualification	11.176	4	.025	.225
NIESV grade	4.835	3	.184	1.000
ESVARBON status	2.593	2	.274	1.000
Post-qualification experience	4.711	4	.318	1.000
Firm type	7.922	4	.094	.752
Client base	3.012	3	.390	1.000
1977 law awareness (3 categories)	0.090	2	.956	1.000

4.7 Additional comments

Of 73 non-empty comments (11 were "No comment"), the recurring themes were involving registered valuers in rent reviews (17), stronger enforcement (11), regulation of agents and landlords (10), public enlightenment (10), improved rental data (4), recognition that rents reflect property condition and location (4), valuer mediation (4) and a rent-advisory desk (2). The comments are brief and supplementary.

5 Discussion

5.1 Perceived prevalence

A majority of attention-check-compliant practitioners (68.2%) perceive arbitrary rental increments as prevalent in Asaba. This finding establishes the practitioners' perception of the local problem, not the proportion of landlords imposing arbitrary increases or tenants affected, because no rents, leases or tenant views were measured. The coexistence of agreement with Items 13 and 17 may indicate that respondents distinguish between unjustified increases and increases supported by property or market improvements; it may also reflect acquiescent responding (Krosnick, 1991; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). The appropriate interpretation is therefore that ESV respondents recognise arbitrary increments as a concern while also acknowledging that not every rent increase is necessarily unjustified.

5.2 Recognized professional responsibilities and implementation constraints

The findings support the central argument that ESVs recognise and endorse a range of professional responsibilities relevant to curbing arbitrary rental increments, but perceive substantial difficulties in putting those responsibilities into effect. The high endorsement of mediation, professional valuation and fee benchmarking suggests that respondents see their contribution as technical, advisory and dispute-preventive. Independent valuation can provide a reasoned basis for rent review through comparable lettings and explained adjustments; mediation can help parties interpret evidence and tenancy terms before disagreement escalates; and transparent fee practices and action against unqualified agents can strengthen professional accountability. However, respondents identified weak enforcement of tenancy laws as the leading constraint, alongside landlords bypassing registered ESVs and a shortage of reliable rental-market data. These barriers can limit professional influence even where practitioners understand and accept their responsibilities. The results therefore point to an implementation gap rather than establishing a lack of professional awareness. They also indicate that professional practice alone cannot resolve the problem: effective intervention requires enforceable rules, credible professional regulation, accessible rental evidence and public recognition of qualified practitioners. The survey records these as practitioners' perceptions; it does not independently verify the operation of the legal framework or the conduct of landlords and agents.

5.3 The null regression

The regression did not identify a statistically significant joint association between the selected role-perception items, respondent characteristics and perceived prevalence ($p = .878$; McFadden pseudo-$R^2 = .0063$). This result should be interpreted narrowly and does not contradict the descriptive finding that respondents endorse professional responsibilities. The outcome measures respondents' perception that arbitrary increments are prevalent, whereas the predictors measure endorsement of broad professional functions rather than the frequency, quality, reach or outcomes of actual ESV

interventions. The model therefore does not establish that professional roles are irrelevant or that ESVs are ineffective; it indicates that the specified perception measures did not explain variation in perceived prevalence in this sample. The more defensible conclusion is that practitioners recognise potentially useful functions but operate within constraints that the regression was not designed to measure as causal barriers. Future research should collect transaction-level evidence on professional involvement, rent-review decisions and subsequent disputes or rent outcomes.

5.4 Data quality and limitations

Several features limit interpretation. First, item means cluster narrowly (3.54–3.88), as do standard deviations (1.05–1.24), and inter-item correlations are near zero; together with the Item 13/17 pattern and the 17 attention-check failures, this is consistent with some respondents discriminating little between items. Findings are therefore indicative rather than precise. Second, reliability was unacceptable and no construct-validity evidence was collected; future instruments should define constructs narrowly, use expert review and pilot testing, and balance positively and negatively worded items. Third, 13 non-practitioner submissions entered a survey of practising professionals, so screening at entry is needed. Fourth, the design is cross-sectional, self-reported and confined to one metropolis, with no transaction rents, so it cannot separate legitimate from arbitrary increases. Fifth, some subgroups are small, the 1977 law items measure self-reported views rather than legal status, and a non-significant Brant test does not prove proportional odds.

6 Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The study indicates that practising ESVs in Asaba recognize and endorse professional responsibilities that can contribute to curbing arbitrary rental increments, particularly mediation, professional rental valuation, fee transparency, professional accountability and public education. In the primary sample, 68.2% perceived arbitrary increments as prevalent, while mediation and valuation received majority endorsement. However, respondents also identified weak enforcement of tenancy laws, landlords bypassing registered ESVs and inadequate rental-market information as major constraints. The findings consequently suggest a gap between professional recognition and effective implementation: ESVs may understand the functions they can perform, yet their ability to influence rent-review practices is restricted by institutional and market conditions. The exploratory regression was not statistically significant ($p = .878$), and the low reliability of the item groupings requires caution. The study therefore provides evidence about practitioners' perceptions and perceived implementation barriers; it does not demonstrate that ESV interventions have reduced rents or that the identified constraints cause arbitrary increases.

6.2 Recommendations

The recommendations respond to the perceived implementation gap identified by respondents. They are proposed practice and policy measures, not interventions whose effects were tested by this survey.

1. **Strengthen evidence-based rental valuation.** ESVs should base rent-review advice on recent completed lettings where available, rather than asking rents alone; document the subject property, valuation date, tenure terms and relevant attributes; explain adjustments; and disclose limitations in

the available evidence. Professional bodies can support consistent practice through guidance and continuing professional development.

2. **Improve professional accountability and recognition.** ESVs should use written mandates, disclose commissions and conflicts of interest, maintain clear records and explain the basis of rent-review advice. NIESV and ESVARBON should strengthen public identification of registered practitioners, ethical guidance and accessible complaint procedures. These measures may help address the reported tendency of landlords to bypass qualified professionals, although their effects require evaluation.

3. **Make mediation and dispute support accessible.** NIESV and ESVARBON should promote voluntary ESV-assisted mediation for rent-review disagreements, while making clear that mediation does not displace either party's legal rights. Any formal rent-review or dispute-resolution mechanism must have a clear legal basis, procedural safeguards, independence and affordable access.

4. **Address regulatory and information constraints.** The leading reported challenge was weak enforcement of tenancy laws. Delta State stakeholders should review the adequacy, public accessibility and enforcement of applicable tenancy provisions before proposing new legislation. Professional bodies and relevant public agencies should also consider a confidential, regularly updated record of completed lettings to improve the evidence available for rent review. Public-awareness campaigns should explain the role of registered ESVs, the importance of written tenancy terms, the basis of fair rent review and available dispute-resolution channels. A rent-advisory desk in Asaba may be explored only after its legal mandate, funding, independence and operational feasibility are established.

5. **Recognise wider housing-market pressures.** Professional valuation and mediation cannot by themselves resolve housing scarcity, infrastructure deficits, land constraints or construction-cost increases. Policies that improve serviced-land availability, planning efficiency and housing supply should complement professional rent-review interventions.

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