

DO ACCOUNTING FIRMS ACTUALLY OBSERVE PROFESSIONAL COURTESY AS THEY PROVIDE AUDIT AND OTHER SERVICES IN NIGERIA?

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Abstract

The objective of the study is to determine whether accounting firms actually do observe professional courtesy as they provide audit and other services in Nigeria. To achieve this objective, the study examined four accountancy firms in Kano state, Nigeria. The study employs survey research design and primary sources of data were used in carrying out the research. The data were obtained through face-to-face interviews with staff of each of the selected accountancy firms. The analytical technique employed in the study is thematic technique. The study reveals that accountancy firms actually do observe professional courtesy as they provide audit and other services in Nigeria in the conduct of professional engagements. It also found that for auditors to observe professional courtesy there is need for auditors to adhere to the professional ethical behaviour as set in the professional code of conduct of the professional body to which they belong. The study recommends that accountancy firms should observe professional courtesies before accepting an engagement to ensure a smooth transition for a client's succession from an existing auditor to a new auditor and also in the best interest of the accountancy profession. This helps to protect the successor auditor from engaging clients that might be involved in improprieties which are against the legal provisions of his profession.

Keywords: *Accountancy firms, professional courtesy, audit service, professional engagements.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Establishing a strong reputation and minimizing risks is a critical step in an auditing firm which will enable it in obtaining clients that are dependable, financially secure and present a low risk for fraud. The most successful audit acceptance procedures will help reduce legal and financial risks. Before accepting clients for an engagement, the triangular relationship exists in the course for switching from one audit firm to another by a client (Dandago, 2019). Hence, this is where professional courtesy comes into place. Overall what can we say professional courtesy is actually referring to? Imbued in all professions, ethics is a fundamental component. Professional courtesy is not only ethical but also generally refers to a philosophy of particular professional behaviour or etiquette which is extended between members of the same profession. However, the philosophy does not necessarily involve the same courtesy across all professions nor is professional courtesy a mandated privilege, but it is freely given at the discretion of the party extending the courtesy (McVay, 2012).

Moreover, in accounting, professional courtesy or professional etiquette or professional clearance as some will call it can be seen as the due regard accounting firms give to each other in the transition from one accounting firm to another by a client. This due regard between predecessor and successor auditors is observed through an ethical letter. It is simply a letter written by an auditor who has just been engaged or about to be engaged by a new client which is sent to the client's previous auditor to essentially let them know that the client is moving to a new auditor, and to request necessary information to make this transition as smooth as possible hence seamless (Anthony, 2017)

According to IFAC's Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants, 'Before accepting a new client relationship, a professional accountant in public practice shall determine whether acceptance would create any threats to compliance with the fundamental principles. Potential threats to integrity or professional behaviour may be created from, for example, questionable issues associated with the client (its owners, management or activities)' (ACCA, 2013). Therefore, when approached to take on a new client, the firm should investigate the potential client, its owners and business activities in order to evaluate whether there are any questions over the integrity of the potential client which create unacceptable risk. A way of doing this is by issuing the professional courtesy letter to the predecessor auditor in order to determine the reason why you should not go ahead with the engagement. This gives a certain protection to the successor auditor. IFAC's Code makes it clear that acceptance decisions are not to be treated as a one-off matter. The Code states that: 'It is recommended that a professional accountant in public practice periodically reviews acceptance decisions for recurring client engagements.' Changes in the circumstances of either the client, or the audit firm may mean that an engagement ceases to be ethically or professionally acceptable or creates a heightened level of risk exposure. Therefore, client continuance assessments are important and should be fully documented (ACCA, 2013)

However, the nature of services been performed by accountancy firms are not only restricted to audit services. Accountancy firms do not only perform audit services but also observe other related services to their client's satisfaction which include; consultancy, advisory, business valuation depending on the acceptance of engagements between the client and the accountancy firm. These services performed by accountancy firms have to follow the fundamental code of ethics in the professional code of conduct. There are few empirical evidences on determining whether accountancy firms actually exercise professional courtesy in carrying out audit and other services. Therefore, dearth of knowledge in this regard has prompted for the need to research on the observance and practice of professional courtesy by accounting firms in Nigeria. The main objective of the study is to determine whether accountancy firms actually do observe professional courtesy in providing audit and other services in Nigeria.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual review

Ethics is a fundamental component of every accountant's life. IFAC's Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants published by the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants (IESBA) referred to as the code is a guide for members. Professional bodies expect their members to comply with codes of conduct relating to independence, integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care as well as confidentiality and technical standards thereby taking disciplinary action as appropriate for non-

compliance. Such action might lead to a fine, suspension, reprimand or exclusion from membership. Therefore, in performing audit and other services by accountancy firms each and every accountancy firm as well as a member should abide by the code of conduct. Accountancy firms and members of professional bodies make conservative judgments when they act in line with ethical standards (John-Akamealu & Iyidiobi, 2017).

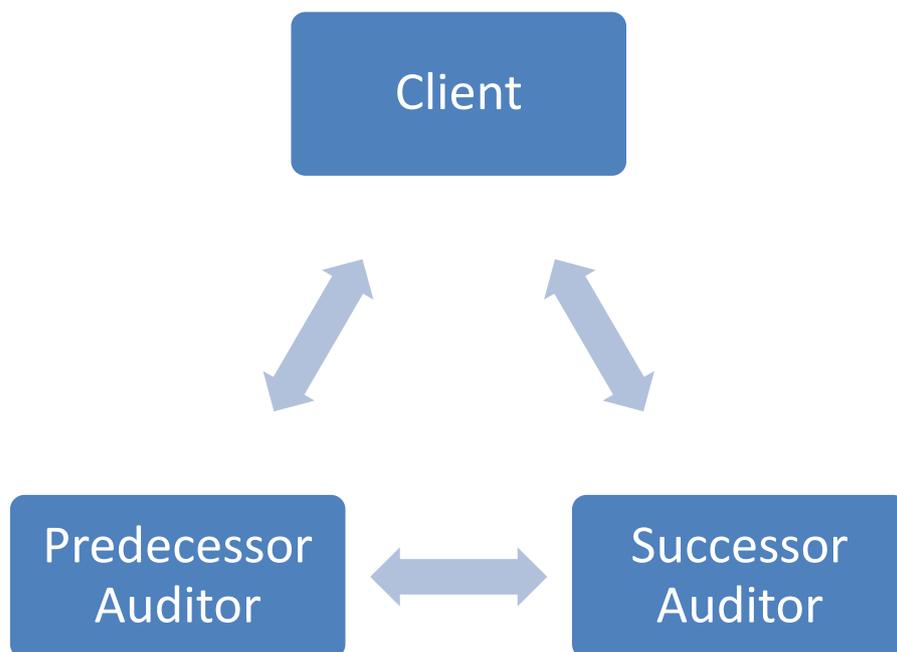
In determining the acceptance of an engagement, the predecessor-successor auditor communications are a vital key to deciding if a firm should accept a new client. This communication will determine whether the client and successor auditor will enter into an agreement or not. The successor auditor must initiate the communication with the predecessor. The completion of this exchange of information depends on the response of the predecessor auditor. Before the acceptance of a client, it is very necessary for a firm to communicate with any predecessor auditor (both to comply with generally accepted auditing standards and as a professional courtesy to the predecessor auditor) and to perform a pre-acceptance evaluation of the client (Craig, 1992). Hence, information gathering and information evaluation is very necessary. Assuming independence and requisite technical abilities are the pre-acceptance evaluation of a prospective audit engagement, if problems will be encountered as regards to this then the firm should decline acceptance (Craig, 1992). The professional courtesy or clearance ethical letter's main purpose is to enable the prospective auditor ensure that there has been no action by the client which would, on ethical grounds, precludes him from accepting the appointment and that, after considering all the facts, the client is someone for whom he would wish to act.

SAS 84 made the following definitions as regards predecessor and successor auditors:

Predecessor Auditor: This is an auditor who (a) has reported on the most recent audited financial statements or was engaged to perform but did not complete an audit of any subsequent financial statements and (b) has resigned, declined to stand for reappointment or been notified that his or her services have been or may be terminated. Under this definition a current or an existing auditor can be considered a predecessor auditor if he or she has been informed by the client that services may be terminated.

Successor Auditor: A successor auditor is an auditor who is considering accepting an engagement to audit financial statements but has not communicated with the predecessor as required and an auditor who has accepted such an engagement. An auditor becomes the successor auditor after the prospective client extends an offer to perform the engagement; at this point the successor auditor can communicate with the predecessor.

ICAEW Code of Ethics suggests that in changing professional conducts an accountant who is asked to take on a client who has previously been serviced by another accountant, shall determine whether there are any reasons, professional or otherwise, for not accepting the engagement. Such reasons would include circumstances that create threats to compliance with the fundamental principles that cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level by the application of safeguards (ICAEW, 2019). Hence, the issue of professional courtesy arises in this situation which leads to the triangular relationship between the successor auditor, the client and the predecessor auditor.



The Triangular Relationship between the 3 Parties (Source: Adopted from Dandago, 2019)

Communications Before Successor Auditor Accepts Engagement

The Auditing Standards Board has issued a Statement on Auditing Standards Number 84 in October of 1997. SAS No. 84 replaced the SAS No. 7. SAS No. 84 defines the required communications between the predecessor and successor auditor before accepting an audit engagement which contains sample client consent and an acknowledgement letter and a successor auditor acknowledgement letter. SAS 84 (AU 315) sets out the guide for the successful transition from an existing auditor to a new auditor by a client. This is necessary to protect the firm from potential future liabilities based on their client's activities. SAS No. 84 made several modifications or improvements to SAS No. 7 which include; communications prior to engaging with the client, the professional courtesy correspondence letters for the predecessor-successor with examples, and outlines actions that the successor should follow. The following are client engagement procedures as set out in Section 13 of ACCA 2013 rulebook:

Client Engagement Procedures

1. The successor auditor should request permission from the prospective client to make an inquiry of the predecessor auditor prior to final acceptance of the engagement. Except as permitted by the Rules of the Code of Professional Conduct, an auditor is precluded from disclosing confidential information obtained in the course of an engagement unless the client specifically consents.
2. If permission is refused you decline the appointment whereas if permission is granted, the successor auditor should write a professional courtesy letter on reasons why they shouldn't accept the audit engagement as well as making specific and reasonable inquiries on matters such as:
 - Information that might bear on the integrity of management.
 - Disagreements with management as to accounting principles, auditing procedures, or other similarly significant matters.

- Communications to audit committees or others with equivalent authority and responsibility regarding fraud, illegal acts by clients, and internal control related matters.
 - The predecessor-auditor's understanding as to the reasons for the change of auditors. An auditor should not accept an engagement before evaluating the responses to the above.
3. If permission is withheld, the existing auditor should inform the prospective auditor, who should decline the appointment whereas a predecessor should respond fully to the successor's inquiries upon receiving client's permission to discuss client's affairs with the predecessor auditor. However, if a client asks for proposals from several auditors, the predecessor is not expected to respond to inquiries until one auditor conditionally accepts the engagement subject to required communications.
 4. Communication received from predecessor auditor (can be verbal or written). Such communication must be treated in the strictest confidence, whether or not the appointment is accepted.
 5. The successor auditor should respond and disclose all relevant matters and as well confirm that there is no professional reason why the appointment cannot be accepted. The existing auditor is required to give specific reasons to the new auditor as to why the appointment should be declined.
 6. However, a predecessor who limits his or her response should let the successor auditor know this is the case. Litigation, disciplinary proceedings or other such unusual circumstances may result in a limited response. If the successor receives a limited response, he or she should consider its implications and decide whether to accept the engagement or not.

Another item that the successor auditor should request is access to the predecessor auditor's working papers. "SAS no. 84 includes a list of the working papers guide such as planning, internal control, audit results and other matters of continuing accounting and auditing significance". These working papers provide a good insight into the client and gives exposure to the predecessor and client's working arrangements. However, the extent, if any, to which the predecessor auditor permits access to the working papers is a matter of judgment (Gibson & Mcheachern, 1998) In practice, access to working papers maybe denied for several reasons, such as litigation involving the engagement, an incomplete engagement or unpaid audit fees. The predecessor is merely exercising his right of lien by limiting or denying the successor access to the working papers.

In addition to the provision of accountancy or valuation services, the Code recognises that there may be a threat to objectivity and independence where the auditor provides additional, non-audit services to the client (ICAN, 2019). Such non-audit services might include: accounting services and services in connection with preparing the financial statements, taxation work, outsourcing of internal audit services, I.T work and consultancy assignments. However, sending of an ethical letter regarding other services is at the discretion of the new accountant, although the Institute considers this to be best practice.

Empirical review

William and Mark (1996) investigated 400 CPAs which were randomly chosen from American Institute of CPAs members who answered to auditing as their specialty. They were mailed questionnaire and only 151 replied indicating about 38% response rate. The survey been carried out included questions about the extent, timing and form of communication between predecessor and successor auditors as well as the successor's use of the predecessor auditor's working papers. Findings revealed that only 23% respondents

communicated with the predecessor auditor at the time stipulated by SAS 7. This shows lesser observance of professional courtesy.

John-Akamealu and Iyidiobi (2017) investigated the relationship between professional ethics on audit assurance engagements. Research questions and hypotheses were formulated in line with the objectives of the study which are: to determine whether ethical issues in auditor affect the quality assurance of audit; to ascertain the extent, professional ethics affect auditing standards and to evaluate if the amount of audit fee paid by client influence the auditor's professional ethics. Survey research design was adopted and data were obtained from questionnaires and analysed with five-point Likert's scale and hypotheses formulated were tested using t-test statistical tool with the aid of SPSS statistical package version 20.0. The study revealed that the professional ethics significantly affect the quality assurance of audit hence, Professional ethics is essential in quality assurance in audit as it enhances independence of auditor and as well professional ethics has a significant effect on quality of standards in auditing.

In assessing the level of compliance with codes of professional ethics by members of the Institute, Isa (2013) employed the use of a sample of 25 auditors and one hundred and fifty (150) investors were randomly studied in Kano. A three-point rating scale questionnaire was administered on these respondents to generate data and examine the level of compliance to the codes of professional ethics by practicing auditors in Kano state of Nigeria. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and the null hypothesis was tested using the Chi-square test. The result showed that the auditors practicing in Kano significantly comply with the codes of professional ethics in the conduct of their professional engagements as prescribed by the Institute. To the best of the researcher's ability and knowledge, there have been limited researches in the subject regarding professional courtesy. Most of researches in this subject were discussions made on media platforms or frequently asked questions in accounting professional forums of foreign countries. However, in Nigeria, this issue has not been thoroughly examined, that is, there are limited studies and this is a gap that motivates this study.

Theoretical Review

The study identifies two theories in relation to the research which are explained as follows: Signalling theory is fundamentally concerned with reducing information asymmetry between two parties (Spence, 2002 in Connelly et. al, 2011). In order to underpin the research, the signalling theory can be used which is a theory based on describing behaviour when two parties (individuals or organizations) have access to different information. Typically, one party, the sender, must choose whether and how to communicate (or signal) that information, and the other party, the receiver, must choose how to interpret the signal. Accordingly, signaling theory holds a prominent position in a variety of management literatures, including strategic management, entrepreneurship, and human resource management. While the use of signaling theory has gained momentum in recent years, its central tenets have become blurred as it has been applied to organizational concerns (Connelly et. al, 2011). Information asymmetry is important when one party is not fully aware of the characteristics of another party and as well, information asymmetry is also important when one party is concerned about another party's behaviour or behavioural intentions (Elitzur & Gavius, 2003 in Connelly et. al, 2011). This is displayed in the triangular relationship between a prospective client,

predecessor auditor and successor auditor which shows the need for the flow of information from client, predecessor and successor auditor.

Stakeholder theory is a view of capitalism that stresses the interconnected relationships between a business and its customers, suppliers, employees, investors, communities and others who have a stake in the organization. The theory argues that a firm should create value for all stakeholders, not just shareholders and the company has a binding fiduciary duty to put their needs first, to increase value for them (Freeman, 1984). In this sense, the auditor not only serves the duty of carrying out audit and other services to a particular firm but also helps the firm in ensuring it represents the entire public i.e the stakeholders through carrying out his professional services in a timely and correct manner in line with the professional code of conduct. He protects the stakeholders as well as his profession by ensuring that a client or company presents its affairs according to standards set and the financial affairs are free from any material misstatements and also represent what they purport to represent.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research based on survey research design. The study used primary sources of data collection in which data was obtained through personal interview. In order to obtain the sample size, the study uses judgmental sampling technique which is based on researcher's focusing on a population that have same characteristics of interest to the researcher thus the accountancy firms can provide the necessary information the researcher needs. The sample size involves four accountancy firms including Ahmed Tijjani & Co., Ahmad Zakari & Co., Aminu Ibrahim & Co. and Julius AtheKaime & Co. out of the several accountancy firms in Kano state. The study used the sampled accountancy firms due to ease and accessibility of data. The research uses thematic data analysis to analyse the data which is an appropriate data analysis method due to the nature of the data which was obtained through interview.

4.0 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Response to interview questions by accountancy firms suggests the following results and discussions:

1. How long has your firm been in operation? In stating the duration of operation of accountancy firms, most respondents stated that the accountancy firms have been operating for over and above 20 years. This in the researcher's opinion is quite a long time for issues to be quite clarified and familiarity with the auditing and financial services. It shows the experience of accountancy firms in their line of work i.e the period of time they have been providing audit and other services. So, it is likely that whatever their experience the more they can explain their findings decisively.

2. Does your firm observe professional courtesy as you provide audit and other services?

All firms answered yes to the question though one of the firms said they didn't have to observe professional courtesy for other services e.g consultancy. They just go ahead and provide separate engagement services to the client since it's not part of the main audit work they didn't need to extend any clearance letter. Furthermore, one of the firms explained that professional courtesy can be observed depending on size of the client giving an example of Kano as a domain where there are several small-scale businesses. They are of the view that most of the clients are small in size and nature of the audit engagement determines whether to send a professional letter or not. They went ahead to explain that professional courtesy cannot be observed

in a situation whereby the client is new which signifies no need of seeking professional colleague's opinion before going ahead with the audit engagement.

3. In these enlightened times, how do you send professional courtesy enquiries (e-mail or by letter)? Is it a must to send the ethical letter by post or there are other means?

Verification on the means of communication used in observing professional courtesy between the predecessor auditor and successor auditor yield results on post letters by all accountancy firms been interviewed. Though, some firms claimed to send professional enquiries by both mails and post letters and others see it as enlightened times to further clarify with a phone call reasons why they shouldn't go ahead with the audit engagement and also reasons why the predecessor auditor declined or resigned depending on circumstances. They further stated that most frequently, there are likely situations where one may not be able to get response by mails because getting response could be a difficult situation especially with firms that are not I.T compliant. Moreover, others prefer to see a hard copy of the letter with enough details to back the reasons up.

4. As the successor auditor do you seek the prospective client's permission to communicate with the existing auditor before you do so?

The accountancy firms made it clear that there was no need of seeking permission as it is part of the job process which will enable them to perform their job better so they didn't have to do so. Some firms attest to the fact that not frequently do they do so, while others are of the view that you can't just go ahead without the client's permission and most at times the client would have to connect you to the predecessor auditor as he's your channel to the predecessor auditor so they have to seek permission. This however is consistent with Auditing Standards 315.

5. Have you or how frequently have you ever found yourself in a situation whereby the client declines permission to communicate with the existing auditor?

In response to the above, out rightly respondents said they haven't encountered this before. They further elaborated the issue on the fact that from there on there's a likely chance of declining the audit engagement. A client declining permission sends a negative concern or a red alert and as well can serve as an indicator which signifies that the client might be hiding something from the new accountancy firm which can also set grounds for the accountancy firm not to accept the audit engagement. In the words of the interviewee, it raises the question 'WHY? What particular reason could the client have for declining the communication process? When this happens, there is a likely chance of not accepting the audit engagement.' However, the best practice according to SAS 84 is to decline the engagement.

6. As the successor auditor would you consider declining the engagement unless you are certain there is a good reason for this?

All accountancy firm respondents' attest to out rightly decline performing the audit engagement. In their opinion, professional courtesy or enquiry is there to protect the successor auditor and 'if the client is hiding some things from you there's a call for concern, your business and reputation as well as the professional body you're representing is at stake', stated a firm. Caution has to be taken and as well fundamental principles of integrity, confidentiality, objectivity, behaviour and competence have to be protected. This is

as well in line with the provisions of SAS 84 which states that ‘If the prospective client prohibits the predecessor from responding to the successor, the successor should ask the prospective client why and then should consider the implications of that refusal in deciding whether to accept the engagement.’

7. What should be the decision of successor auditor where there is delay in response from the predecessor auditor?

There have been different responses to this particular question ‘you try other means of communication and if they still persist, you go ahead with the audit’, replied one respondent. ‘You send another letter and if there is still no response you go ahead and accept the engagement’, said another. While another said to send at least three (3) reminders before deciding to go ahead with the audit engagement as far as the client’s reason is valid enough. Another stated that ‘these are enlightened times they would decide to make a phone call to the predecessor auditor if there’s still no response they will accept the audit engagement. Moreover, most of the firms are of the view that most at times there are no response for about 60% auditors do not really send professional courtesy letters and clients dismiss them from service. Clients do change auditors and the auditors do not observe professional courtesy with due regards to them while about 40% do observe professional courtesy.

8. As a predecessor auditor how would you tackle a situation whereby you have outstanding professional fees not paid and you have received a professional courtesy letter requesting information. Would you respond to this while the work done remains unpaid?

As regards to this scenario, according to two of the accountancy firms, this seemed to be the reason why the client is changing auditors and they would like to inform the successor auditor about the state at hand if that’s the actual reason he’s not offering his services anymore, the successor auditor is left to decide whether he would carry on or not. In another view of one of the accountancy firms, clients are valuable assets and there is competition amongst accountancy firms since they are all engaged in provision of services. He states that according to professional ethics, you can’t stop an auditor from performing audit engagements based on unpaid professional fees therefore it is at the discretion of the successor auditor to accept or not. The last respondent is of the opinion that there shouldn’t be any need for disclosing about unpaid fees. It should be settled between them and the client so they didn’t need to do so.

9. How do you obtain information about any possible threats to compliance or in the case where the predecessor auditor declines to observe professional courtesy?

Accountancy firms seemed to have witnessed cases regarding ways to obtain information about any threats to compliance if predecessor auditor refuses to observe professional courtesy such as; information withheld by other accountancy firms. According to an interviewee, they are deemed to still go ahead with the engagement since the client must have his documentation of financials therefore reviews of the client’s years closing balances will be carried out or taking alternative procedures like checking supporting documents for fixed assets registers. If after reviews and checks and there aren’t any proof of existence of financials a qualified opinion is given. According to the auditor the opening balances of the previous year and preliminary accounts ledgers and journals will be sufficient to perform audit work as they can only be responsible for the year they performed audit work. According to others, the issue of professional dilemma comes into place and the best decision here is to decline the job. However, getting the necessary and reliable

information is the client's job in other respondent's view, therefore as far as the client is not able to provide the information that the successor auditor will work with, they don't stand a chance of accepting the job nor offering their audit engagement services. In line with the provisions of SAS 84 'It is, however, customary and beneficial for the successor to review them. This review can affect the nature, timing and extent of the successor's procedures. a successor who does not review the prior-year working papers must use his or her judgment to determine whether sufficient audit evidence was obtained in analysing the impact of the opening balances and consistency of accounting principles for the current years engagement.'

10. Is there any legal provision or sanction for observing or not observing professional courtesy?

Existence of legal provisions or sanctions for observing or not observing professional courtesy came as the concluding enquiry. Some accountancy firms view professional courtesy as a general etiquette and also part of the ICAN professional code of conduct which is ethical in nature and as well others are not aware of it as a legal provision but rather as a due etiquette extended to professional colleagues. Others linked Auditor's liability to it CAMA and for it having any sanction that has not come to their attention before. While others linked to suspension, seizure of certificate and there's need to observe professional courtesy. Moreover the researcher found that there's no legal provision that mandates observing professional courtesy, and as stated by McVay (2012) but it is freely exercised at the discretion of the party extending the courtesy.

11. What are the benefits of observing professional courtesy?

In order to shed more light about professional courtesy, the interviewees were asked to give an overall view and benefits of observing professional courtesy. In which several benefits were stated by the accountancy firms as follows;

- Observing professional courtesy serves as a guide in carrying out professional duties.
- It prevents you from the risk of putting yourself in an ethical dilemma.
- Non observance of professional courtesy can lead to a likelihood of putting yourself in danger (auditor's liability) e.g. saves your reputation.
- It helps you to avoid professional conflicts.
- It prevents you from engaging in services that may end up been unpaid or having outstanding fees.
- Switches of auditor based on technical skills and having the required technical know-how or competence e.g. I.T it prepares you on the requirements of engagement from a client.
- It protects your professional behaviour e.g. especially performing audit services to clients that would want to engage in irregularities such as money laundering or tax evasion, preparation of two accounts (separate for FIRS and Bank)

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the limitations faced by the survey, such as limited number of accountancy firms been interviewed and time constraint faced in carrying out the research, it is concluded that accountancy firms do observe professional courtesy in providing audit and other services. This is in consistent with the work of Isa (2013) that accountancy firms in Kano do exercise their professional ethical behaviour in their audit dealings. They have high regard for their professional integrity and work in line with their professional code of conduct.

However, the experiences of interviewed accountancy firms who expressed discontent towards delay or non-response of professional courtesy letters by most predecessor audit firms indicates that the triangular relationship for observing professional courtesy is broken. And of course, an unreasonable refusal by the prospective client to authorize the predecessor to respond to the successor's inquiries ordinarily would cause the successor to decline acceptance of the engagement. A major objective of many pre-acceptance procedures is to minimize the likelihood of association with a client whose management or principals lack integrity (Craig, 1992). Usually the simplest and most effective way an accountancy firm can protect its professional reputation and its practice is to avoid questionable client associations in the first place.

Accountancy firms who do provide the information requested for a smooth client handover should be applauded. It is recommended that accountancy firms should endeavour to observe professional courtesy before accepting an engagement from a client and as well, accountants in public practice should consider their fellow colleagues with due regard by responding and also extend a simple professional courtesy to newly engaged auditors thereby providing them with the information requested in the ethical letter with reason in a complete and timely manner. This serves to protect the reputation of professional accountants, the firm and also in the best interest of the accountancy profession.

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