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Citation: Agyefi-Mensah, S., Yankah, J. E., Afriyie, N., Oppon, J. A. 2026. Artisans' Job Pricing Strategies: An Exploratory Study of Construction Artisans in Cape Coast, Ghana. *Construction Economics and Building*, 26:3/4, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.5130/m1ck7978>

ISSN 2204-9029 | Published by UTS ePRESS | <https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/AJCEB>

ARTICLES (PEER REVIEWED)

Artisans' Job Pricing Strategies: An Exploratory Study of Construction Artisans in Cape Coast, Ghana

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5130/m1ck7978>

Article History: Received 25/01/2025; Revised 31/03/2026; Accepted 02/04/2026;
Published 28/09/2026

Abstract

Unlike the systematic and standardized approach to job pricing in formal employment, individual, self-employed artisans in informal job settings generally set and/or negotiate their wages using different strategies considering several factors. This study uses the factors that artisans consider as proxies to explore the job pricing decisions and strategies of construction artisans in Cape Coast in the Central Region of Ghana. The artisans were building craftsmen and master craftsmen – masons, carpenters, steel benders, plumbers, and painters – who signed up for a model continuing professional development (CPD) training programme under the Ghana Skills Development Fund project. A qualitative phenomenological approach to inquiry using open-ended written interview responses was used for this study. Data were analysed using constant comparative analysis, consistent with Glaser and Strauss' inductive thematic method. This study found that artisans' job pricing decisions and strategies are influenced by a variety of objective job-related and market-driven factors and subjective discretionary considerations. Using these factors as proxies, artisans adopt cost-based, competition-based, and customer-based pricing. A notable addition is "contingency-based pricing", an approach that is influenced by discretionary considerations, the bulk of which are living wage-related. This study supposes that in view of the inconsistent and unpredictable nature of artisanal job offerings, artisans adopt this strategy to establish relationships that assure future jobs. Consistent with classical labour market theory and insights from behavioural economists,

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTEREST The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. **FUNDING** The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

this study shows that informal workers' job pricing decisions and strategies are nuanced and complex, influenced by a multiplicity of objective factors and subjective considerations.

Keywords

Construction Artisans; Compensation; Job Pricing; Pricing Strategies; Informal Sector

Introduction

In formal employment, both private and public, the determination of employee wages – job pricing – is an intricate task of human resource experts and compensation professionals ([Panwar & Agnihotri, 2022](#); [Hukkeri et al., 2023](#)). Job pricing focuses on establishing the right compensation or salary for a specific job within an organisation ([Ismail et al., 2022](#)). It involves analysing various factors, both internal and external, to set competitive and fair pay that matches a job's responsibilities, requirements and market value ([Thoti, 2022](#)). The approaches to job pricing include job evaluation (which traditionally focuses on factors internal to the job), market pricing (which is externally driven) or a combination of the two ([Armstrong & Brown, 2017](#)). In job evaluation, the value of a job is determined based on what is described as compensable factors to ascertain the worth of individual jobs and the compensation to be paid to employees who hold those jobs ([Berrocal et al., 2018](#); [El-Farr, 2023](#)). Following some rating scheme, such as Hay's point-factor method, jobs are profiled and categorised to determine internal relativities and grades ([El-Hajji, 2015](#)). Subsequently, the market is "scanned" to provide guidance on "going rates" (market prices) and pay ranges ([Armstrong & Brown, 2017](#)). In market pricing, job prices are set by the interplay of the forces of demand and supply in the same way as prices of goods and services are determined in the marketplace ([Sugiarto et al., 2019](#)). Some have described the latter as "extreme market pricing" ([Weinberger, 2007](#)), where market pricing alone is used to set pay levels, without any attempt to assess internal relativities through a formal job evaluation system. In either case, the goal is to ensure that employees are paid fairly for the work they do relative to those in the wider labour market.

Unlike the structured, systematic, and deterministic approach to job pricing in formal employment, wage dynamics in the informal sector are fuzzy and can vary based on several factors, with some informal jobs offering premiums while others incur penalties ([Nordman et al., 2016](#)). For example, unlike formal organisations where employers determine wages and salaries, enforceable by law, in informal job settings, individual self-employed artisans generally set and/or negotiate their wage – daily or on a contract basis ([Wilson, 2022](#)) – a practice that is typical of the Ghanaian construction industry ([Ofori-Kuragu, 2020](#)). [Chhetri and Basnyat \(2023\)](#) attributed this flexibility in wage setting in the informal sector to the nature of employment relationships, which are usually not regulated by formal labour legislation or covered by social protection. [Wilson \(2022\)](#) noted that, across the globe, there are no laws specifically pertaining to how artisans are compensated. For the same job within the same location, therefore, one artisan may charge more than another as a function of different considerations and pricing strategies. It is worth noting, however, that while the flexibility to negotiate may encourage customised pricing based on exigencies (contingencies) of local information, and ostensibly lead to better wage ([David et al., 2017](#); [Chen et al., 2022](#)), it can be opportunistic and often leads to situations where prices can potentially be increased above the objectively determined "par" rate ([Liang et al., 2021](#)). In such cases, mark-up can become significantly higher, influenced by various considerations, including relationships and the willingness and ability of clients to pay ([Shah & Yang, 2022](#)).

Nevertheless, [Carr et al. \(2024\)](#) observed that "...markets regularly fail to deliver equitable outcomes" and that "the over-emphasis on compensable factors, implicates job evaluation in continuing inequities in wage as it relies on what the market is paying to set wages for any given job" (p. 8). Carr et al. argued that the focus on compensable factors typical of job evaluation in formal employment, while necessary, does

not sufficiently represent the diversity, complexity and range of factors that influence job pricing decisions. At the level of individual self-employed artisans, this raises research interest because of not only the weak regulatory oversight and flexibility in job pricing but also, as a result, the many latent and unexplored discretionary and contingency-based factors that may influence artisans' job pricing decisions. [Indounas and Avlonitis \(2009\)](#), in a study of pricing objectives and their antecedents in the services sector, argued for a contingency-based approach to pricing decisions in view of so-called "certain organisational and environmental concerns" (p. 370).

Even though different studies exist that provide insights into approaches, strategies, and methods, including the range of factors that influence job pricing decisions in a formal employment context ([Graham et al., 2007](#); [Armstrong & Brown, 2017](#)), in informal artisanal work settings, particularly among construction artisans, this remains largely unexplored. It is unknown what these factors are and how they influence artisans' job pricing decisions/strategies. Exploring, identifying, and structuring these factors contribute to wider research and deepen knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of wage and job pricing in the informal sector ([Amusan et al., 2021](#); [Ismail et al., 2022](#)). This can inform policy decisions in terms of a regulatory framework towards fair wages for fair work for the sustainable livelihood of artisans.

Against the foregoing background, this study seeks to (i) identify the factors that artisans consider in job pricing, (ii) relate the factors that artisans consider to those in compensation management in formal employment (to understand the dynamics of their pricing decisions) and, using these as antecedents, (iii) establish the strategies that artisans adopt in job pricing. This study provides insights into the factors critical to individual artisanal job pricing decisions, as distinguished from those in firm-level formal employment compensation management. This knowledge and understanding can inform business decisions of clients when negotiating prices with artisans. For research, this study can provide insight into the dynamics of pricing decisions of self-employed individual artisans and how this differs from those in a formal employment context.

Literature review

JOB PRICING METHODS AND STRATEGIES

Job pricing is a formal process of setting or determining the pay of workers in an organisation ([Ismail et al., 2022](#)). It considers the nature of the job (job description), ability to pay, market conditions, competitor actions, trade margins and input costs, and it analyses the data to determine the optimum pay values or wages that should be paid for a particular job role ([Aulia et al., 2021](#); [Ismail et al., 2022](#)). Pricing strategies, by contrast, describe the explicit steps or procedures by which firms arrive at pricing decisions – to charge for a product or service ([Thrane et al., 2019](#)). They affect firms' revenue and profit margins, customer demand and sales volume, market share and competitiveness, brand image and perceived value, customer satisfaction and retention, and overall business growth and sustainability ([Yatna & Yulianah, 2024](#)). Understanding pricing strategies is, therefore, important to set prices to maximise profit, respond to market changes and competition, position products and services in the market, create price differentiation and segmentation, develop effective pricing tactics, and help analyse and adjust pricing decisions ([Jawabreh et al., 2023](#)).

Several pricing strategies and methods exist. Broadly, however, these may be put into three categories, namely, cost-based pricing, competition-based pricing, and customer- or demand-based pricing ([Gangwar & Rao, 2020](#); [Neubert, 2022](#)). Specific methods in *cost-based pricing* include cost-plus method, where a profit margin is added on the service's average cost ([Van Den Berg et al., 2022](#)); target return pricing, where price is determined at the point that yields the firm's target rate of return on investment ([Sari & Hikmah, 2022](#)); and break-even analysis, where price is determined at the point where total revenue is equal to total costs ([Cortés, 2023](#)). Other cost-based pricing methods include contribution analysis, where only direct costs of

a service are considered ([Freitas et al., 2022](#)), and marginal pricing, where the price is set below total and variable costs so as to cover only marginal costs ([Araujo, 2019](#)). The *competition-based methods* involve pricing like competitors or pricing according to average prices ([Kuchkanov, 2024](#)), pricing above competitors ([Vlašić et al., 2019](#); [Indounas, 2020](#)), pricing below competitors ([Gerpott & Berends, 2022](#)), and pricing according to the dominant price in the market ([Singh & Janor, 2013](#); [Farm, 2016](#)). *Customer-based pricing* methods include perceived-value pricing, where price is based on the customer's perception of value ([Aripin et al., 2024](#)); value pricing, where a fairly low price is set for a high-quality service ([Boucher, 2023](#)); and pricing according to customers' needs, where price is set to satisfy customers' needs ([Shah et al., 2022](#)).

ARTISANS' JOB PRICING DYNAMICS

Artisans are craft persons who render skilled service in return for a fee ([Begmatov & Vokhidova, 2021](#)). This fee, referred to as pay or wage, is compensation of a stated sum paid to the artisan as a reward in exchange for their working skills and experience; it is the price of labour – service labour ([Lutsenko, 2022](#)). As compensation, this fee is crucial because artisans generally suffer low and insufficient wage/remuneration due to inconsistent and unpredictable job offerings ([Offei-Nyako et al., 2014](#); [Amusan et al., 2021](#); [Goetz, 2022](#); [Wilson, 2014](#)). Like many wage earners, it represents, among other things, a means to a sustainable livelihood: a means to afford a decent standard of living and improved quality of life ([Frey, 2017](#); [Yao et al., 2017](#); [Andersen & Hernani-Limarino, 2019](#)), consistent with the wider ambitions of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as good health and wellbeing, quality education, and decent work. As a form of compensation, it is also a measure of (social) justice ([Bhattacharyya, 2014](#)).

In the context of service systems, artisanal work qualifies as routine service work, where value (or compensation) solely depends on whether the work is completed or not ([Salvador, 2023](#)). However, because services by nature depend on who provides them, and when and where they are provided ([Ćorić, 2021](#)), in some routine service work, a service provider may have the discretion to vary the service time and the corresponding value ([David et al., 2017](#); [Zhang et al., 2017](#)). Unlike standardised products, attributes such as variability and inseparability allow service providers to customise service for better service delivery with corresponding higher compensation ([Park et al., 2022](#)). In such a situation, one of two alternative pricing strategies becomes available: service providers either can fix the price for the service offered in advance (posted-price strategy) or can negotiate the price with every potential customer (bargaining strategy) ([Phillips et al., 2015](#); [Chen et al., 2022](#)). In the bargaining strategy, prices are customised for individual clients based on local information and various idiosyncratic factors ([Phillips et al., 2015](#)). Customised pricing offers the opportunity and flexibility to price jobs in ways that contribute to different objectives, including sustainable livelihood, considering different factors. At the same time, the unpredictability of job offerings weakens artisans' bargaining power. Given the importance of wages to artisans' livelihood, and the nexus between wages/compensation and employee performance, exploring and understanding artisans' job pricing dynamics are crucial not only for construction industry productivity and profitability but also for national economies at large.

JOB EVALUATION FACTORS IN JOB PRICING

Job evaluation, the traditional method of job pricing in formal organisations, seeks to compare jobs based on specific considerations to create a pay structure that is fair, equitable, and consistent for everyone ([Berrocal et al., 2018](#); [El-Farr, 2023](#)). The most common method of job evaluation – the point-factor method – assigns points to selected factors, described as “compensable factors” ([El-Farr, 2023](#)). These factors include skill level (know-how), effort, responsibility, and working conditions ([Kutlu et al., 2013](#)), with each of these having specific sub-factors. The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the International Labour Organization identify four generic factors to consider when deciding on fair pay, namely, skill

(qualifications), effort, responsibility, and working conditions ([US EEOC, 1997](#); [ILO, 2008](#)), with each of those factors composed of several sub-factors. The skill sub-factors include education and job knowledge, experience and training, and initiative and ingenuity. Effort consists of physical, mental and emotional demand, while responsibility encompasses equipment or tool, material or product, and the safety of others. The sub-factors for job conditions consist of working conditions and unavoidable hazards. It is noteworthy that the scarcity of specific skills, qualifications, and experience, as well as job function, conditions, and responsibility in terms of complexity and impact on business performance, often commands and drives up compensation.

MARKET-DRIVEN FACTORS IN JOB PRICING

Market-driven factors in job pricing refer to the influence of market forces in determining compensation rate for various jobs ([Lavetti, 2023](#)). These factors include supply and demand, industry standards, location, market rates, economic conditions, competition, and government regulations ([Armstrong & Taylor, 2020](#)). The balance between the number of qualified job seekers and the available number of job offers affects salary levels, while salary ranges are often benchmarked against industry standards ([Choi & Kim, 2020](#)). In addition to going market rates, geographic location significantly impacts salaries due to variations in cost of living, taxes, and local market conditions ([Harvey, 2020](#)). Economic conditions in terms of general economic growth, inflation, and labour market conditions also influence compensation levels, while firms consider what competitors are paying to attract and retain new employees ([Choi & Kim, 2020](#)). Furthermore, government legislation relating to fair wages and salary standards can impact salary structures and hence compensation for jobs ([Lavetti, 2023](#)). In concert, these factors interact dynamically to influence job pricing and shape the compensation landscape.

DISCRETIONARY CONSIDERATIONS IN JOB PRICING

Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary defines “discretionary” as “unrestricted except by judgement”. The term discretionary pricing, therefore, generally refers to pricing in which a seller’s judgement plays a significant role in setting the final price. It is pricing in which components of the price are influenced by factor/considerations other than purely market-determined factors ([Olotewo, 2015](#); [Liang et al., 2021](#)). For many wage earners, a primary incentive for work is that of securing a living wage ([Anker & Anker, 2017](#); [Frey, 2017](#); [Carr et al., 2024](#)). In contrast to minimum wage, which is typically for subsistence, living wage provides remuneration sufficient to afford a decent standard of living for the worker and their family ([Andersen et al., 2019](#)) to enable meaningful participation in society beyond subsistence ([Yao et al., 2017](#)). The elements of living wage reinforce this view, which include necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter, and also the ability for individuals to participate in society and afford a minimum satisfactory standard of living, namely, education, healthcare and childcare, transportation, utilities, and other essential needs including provision for unexpected events ([Andersen et al., 2019](#); [Inchiet al., 2020](#)). Rather than its simple monetary effect in better meeting employees’ living costs, [Yao et al. \(2017\)](#) observed that a living wage can also improve wellbeing through subjective perceptions of valued freedoms pertaining to job satisfaction, equity, and security.

In addition to the extrinsic monetary reward of a living wage, there are intrinsic components of compensation, which reflect workers’ mental satisfaction with their job accomplishment ([Bhattacharyya, 2014](#)). Research has suggested that many people strongly value and prioritise meaningful work ([Gallup, 2019](#)). For example, [Hu and Hirsh \(2017a\)](#) found that people express willingness to accept lower salaries for highly meaningful work. This is because meaningful work is found to contribute to job satisfaction and career commitment while lowering the risk of burnout and depression ([Hu & Hirsh, 2017b](#)). Furthermore, [Munro and O’Kane \(2022\)](#) underscored the role of non-pecuniary benefits for self-employed artisan

businesses, such as autonomy, creativity, authenticity, and liberation. They argued that the “amazing feeling” ([Chapin, 2012](#), p. 46) of self-employment and the “creative, do-it-yourself life” ([Whitney, 2013](#), p. 112) must be their own reward when the financial benefits for self-employed artisans are not assured. It reflects the meaningfulness of work, an observation consistent with literature ([Munro & O’Kane, 2022](#)). Thus, the degree of meaning that artisans derive from their job, while latent, could influence their job pricing.

The review presents job pricing as an intricate, multi-variable task that involves the evaluation of a mix of objective factors – internal and external to a job – as well as subjective, discretionary considerations that result from the perceived and idiosyncratic judgement of service providers. Unlike in regulated, firm-level employment where job pricing is standardised, contractual in its arrangements, and motivated by profit maximisation, in the informal sector of individual self-employed artisans, job pricing is shaped by weak regulatory oversight and the absence of formal wage-setting mechanisms. This situation results in negotiation-driven outcomes and can lead to significant price dispersion and potential equity concerns, where rates depend on bargaining power, relationships, and project-specific conditions rather than standardised benchmarks ([Krynska & Kopycinska, 2015](#); [Myers, 2022](#)). Pricing is flexible and customised, often influenced by personal relationships and the quest for a living wage for a sustainable livelihood. While artisans may not be privy to the complex set of objective price and cost variables examined in job pricing in formal employment, it is undeniable that they consider an array of factors when setting/negotiating their wage. Understanding these factors and how they influence artisans’ job pricing strategies and decisions are critical to managing wages in the informal artisanal economy.

Research methods

RESEARCH DESIGN

The paper uses an exploratory-descriptive design based on a phenomenological approach to inquiry. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that attempts to understand participants’ perspectives and views of social realities ([Leedy & Ormrod, 2015](#)). By looking at multiple perspectives on the same situation, the researcher can make some generalisations of what something is like from an insider’s perspective ([Leedy & Ormrod, 2015](#)). This study sought to explore, from their own perspective, the factors that construction artisans consider when negotiating or fixing their wage or service charge, leaning on the theory of negotiated wages ([Bhattacharyya, 2014](#)). The theory conceptualises pay as the negotiated outcome of either collective unionised bargaining or individual bargaining. This study leans on individual bargaining by artisans to provide insight into the job pricing strategies adopted. As an exploratory research design, this study adopts an open-minded investigation of a phenomenon in a specific context, intended to lead to “thick, rich qualitative descriptions” ([Foster, 2024](#), p. 14). Such research can provide proof of concept and existence proofs for a feasibility study, raise pertinent questions for discussion and generate hypotheses and theories to be tested ([Yarkoni, 2022](#)).

DATA COLLECTION

Phenomenological researchers depend almost exclusively on interviews with a small, carefully selected sample of participants ([Leedy & Ormrod, 2015](#)). Unstructured qualitative written interview (open-ended written responses) was used for data collection. This involved participants writing down (but in no order) the factors they consider when negotiating their wage or fixing their service charge. This was clarified as “what goes into their charge for a given job” where this became necessary. In a phenomenological study, a typical sample size is between 5 and 25 individuals ([Leedy & Ormrod, 2015](#)). The study sample (interviewees) consisted of 26 masons, 18 carpenters, 14 painters, 10 tilers, 10 plumbers, and 8 steel benders, giving a total of 86 out of the 117 artisans (craftsmen and master craftsmen) who responded to a radio advertisement

and had signed up for a skill upgrading programme under the Ghana Skills Development Fund project in the Central Region of Ghana. This gave a response rate of 73.5%. The sampling technique was therefore purposive and convenience. Even though respondents were all artisans, it was considered useful to elicit the views of artisans in each trade to obtain a cross-section of perspectives on the phenomenon.

ANALYSIS

The data were analysed using constant comparative analysis (CCA) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As a technique, CCA was deemed appropriate for this study because the researchers were interested in utilising the entire data collected through interviews to identify underlying themes revealed by the data. This is a principle of CCA (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). The steps involved in CCA are consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of inductive thematic analysis (Table 1). In turn, according to trade responses, the researchers first read through the entire raw interview several times to familiarise themselves with the data, after which they coded them. After all the data had been coded, the codes were grouped by similarity to search for emerging themes. According to Foster (2024), the results of an exploratory study may be coded and organised to generate descriptive themes. Each grouping was thus identified and labelled with a theme and discussed. By inductive reasoning, the factors identified (that is, the antecedent job pricing factors) were used as proxy measures of artisans' job pricing strategies.

Table 1. Phases of data thematic analysis (based on Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phases of thematic analysis	Steps
Familiarisation with the data	Transcripts were read multiple times for familiarity
Coding	Codes that captured categories were written on transcripts
Search for themes	Codes were combined and grouped together, identifying potential themes
Reviewing themes	Themes were reviewed and developed, with relevant text applied to each theme
Defining and naming themes	Themes (and subthemes) were named and identified
Writing up	Themes were analysed and discussed, with supporting literature

Results

Tables 2 and 3 show the profile of the artisans by the highest level of education and years of experience. In terms of the level of education, Table 1 shows that nearly one-half of all participants have secondary education, with about one-third having basic education. Artisans' work experience ranged from a minimum of 2 (required for enrolling in the programme) to 15 years and above (Table 2).

The results of this study are summarized and presented using tables (Table 3 and 4) following Moro et al. (2024). Table 4 shows the responses and the themes that emerged from the grouping of similar responses. These are numbered serially from 1 to 30, referred to in parentheses and bolded in the presentation and discussion. In Table 5, the emerging themes are further regrouped based on the broad set of factors considered in job pricing observed in the literature – namely, job evaluation factors, market-driven factors, and discretionary factors. Then, using the observed themes as antecedent factors, conclusions were drawn regarding the job pricing strategy (see Table 5).

Table 2. Profile of respondents by trade and the level of education.

Trade	Highest educational qualification			Total
	Basic (primary, JHS/JSS/MSLC)	Post-basic (Sec./Tech., NVTI)	Post-secondary (HND, degree)	
Carpenter	10	7	1	18
Mason	12	12	2	26
Painter	1	13	0	14
Plumber	4	6	0	10
Steel bender	5	3	0	8
Tiler	4	6	0	10
Total	36	47	3	86

Notes: JHS, junior high school; JSS, junior secondary school; MSLC, middle school leaving certificate; NVTI, National Vocational Training Institute; and HND, higher national diploma.

Table 3. Artisans' years of experience.

Type of trade	Years of experience				Total
	2–5	6–10	11–15	Above 15	
Carpenter	7	5	2	4	18
Mason	12	11	2	1	26
Painter	7	6	0	1	14
Plumber	3	5	0	2	10
Steel bender	1	3	2	2	8
Tiler	1	3	2	4	10
Total	31	33	8	14	86

JOB EVALUATION FACTORS

Job evaluation has traditionally focused on the content and requirements for a job in terms of what is referred to as compensable factors. These include the skill (or qualification), effort, and the level of responsibility required for a job, as well as the job conditions, with defined sub-factors. In relation to skill, while no reference is made to education and job knowledge, in [Table 4](#), artisans indicated that they consider their experience (and training) when setting job price. This includes “experience” [response 27] reflected in the response “I consider my experience”, a consideration that is inextricably bound with “quality of output” [response 23]. In addition, participants responded that they consider the nature or kind of work, with emphasis on the “level of difficulty” [response 3]. This is taken to signal the level of ingenuity required for the job. For example, in the case of steel benders, this is expressed in the response “the type of rod I am going to work with”. Apart from being a measure of ingenuity considered a skill in job evaluation, the

level of difficulty can be said to indicate physical effort, expressed in responses such as “hardness of the work” or “the hard of the work”. In terms of effort, artisans also consider the “duration of work” [response 7] expressed in ways such as “I consider the days it will take to complete the work”, “no. of days I will spend on the work”, “working hours”, “the days we will use to finish the job” and “the time I will spend”. Effort may also be mental, and in this regard, artisans consider the “mental effort” [response 25] required in preparing estimates for the work in a response such as “days that will be used for the calculation of the building”. Responsibility in job evaluation is defined by sub-factors, namely, equipment/tools, material/product, and safety of others. In line with this, this study shows that artisans consider allowance for their tools [response 5], the nature and cost of materials to be used [response 9], and the “number of assistants/labourers/workmen involved in the work” [response 8]. In terms of job conditions, artisans consider the “location of the job” [response 12] and personal protective equipment with respect to working conditions, and the “level of risk” [response 6] in relation to unavoidable risk. This is expressed variously as “I consider my health and safety” and “risk-taking”; “If it is a building, I consider the height of the building”; “If travelling, I consider risk-taking”; “risk allowance”; “the risk involved”; and “risk that is involved in the particular job”.

MARKET-DRIVEN FACTORS

Market pricing focuses on pricing that is based typically on external market-driven considerations such as market conditions, competitor actions, trade margins, and input costs ([Sammut-Bonnici & Channon, 2015](#)). From this point of view, this study shows that artisans consider the “availability of other artisans” [response 21], “prevailing market prices” [response 28], and “taxes” [response 19].

Table 4. Factors influencing artisans’ job pricing.

S/No.	Grouping of participants’ responses	Emerging theme (factors)	Percentage
1.	“I consider the transportation to work”, “transportation fee”, “transport”, “T&T” “transportation either by car or walking”, “lorry fare”, “transportation of my workers”, and “the distance”.	Transportation (T&T)	52.3
2.	“I consider feeding”, “chop money”, “feeding fee”, “feeding”, and “food and water”	Feeding	30.2
3.	“Hardness of the work”, “kind of work”, “nature of the work”, “the hard of the work”, “the nature of the work”, and “the type of rod I am going to work with”	Nature of work/level of difficulty	27.9
4.	“The SSNIT”, “SSNIT” and “insurance”	Insurance	17.4
5.	“Tools” and “tools allowance”	Tools (allowance)	14.0
6.	“Risk allowance”, “I consider my health and safety”, “risk-taking”, “if it is a building, I consider the height of the building”, “If traveling, I consider risk-taking”, “risk allowance”, “the risk involved”, “risk that is involved in the particular job”, “sick allowance”, and “sick fee”	Level of risk	14.0

Table 4. continued

S/No.	Grouping of participants' responses	Emerging theme (factors)	Percentage
7.	"I consider the days it will take to complete the work", "no. of days I will spend on the work", "working hours", "the days we will use to finish the job", and "the time I will spend"	Duration	12.8
8.	"My labourers", "number of boys I am going with", and "labourers"	Assistants/ workmen/ labourers	12.8
9.	"Sometimes movement of materials", "total amount of material cost", and "materials used for the work"	Nature and cost of materials	9.3
10.	"House rent", "light bills", "school fees", "hospital bills", "medication", "light bill", "house-keeping money", and "medical bills"	Bills (other domestics expense)	8.1
11.	"My accommodation", "hotel bills", and "accommodation"	Accommodation (out-station)	7.0
12.	"Where the work is" and "area where I am going to work"	Location of job	7.0
13.	"I consider as family/family member" and "I consider personal relationship with the client"	Relationship with client	5.8
14.	"I consider the passion I have for the job"	Passion for the job	4.7
15.	"I consider my credit transfer", "credit" and "credit for call"	Communication allowance	4.7
16.	"I consider they don't have money", "I consider if they have money", "due to customer service" and "due to my hospitality"	Empathy (artisans' feeling and expression of kindness towards clients)	4.7
17.	"I consider if they have money"	Ability to pay/ willingness to pay	4.7
18.	"PPEs"	Personal protective equipment	3.5
19.	"Tax I paid" and "duties and taxes that I pay"	Taxes	3.5
20.	"I consider having more trade" and "I consider another job"	Possibility of next job	3.5

Table 4. continued

S/No.	Grouping of participants' responses	Emerging theme (factors)	Percentage
21	"I consider available artisans"	Availability of other artisans (competition)	2.3
22	"Sometimes the weather"	Weather	2.3
23	"I consider the quality of my work" and "customer specifications"	Quality of output	2.3
24	"Savings"	Savings	2.3
25	"Days that will be used for the calculation of the building"	Mental effort for the preparation of estimate	2.3
26	"Express" and "I consider if person will beg me to come down"	Urgency required	2.1
27	"My experience" and "I consider my experience"	Experience	2.1
28	"Market prices" and "I just charge what others are charging"	Prevailing market prices/ rates	2.1

DISCRETIONARY FACTORS

Apart from job evaluation and market-driven factors, this study ([Table 4](#)) shows that artisans consider a range of other factors that are mostly discretionary, namely, living wage-related factors, personal considerations and contingency-based factors. Consistent with [Anker and Anker \(2017\)](#), the living wage considerations include necessities such as food, housing, healthcare and childcare (e.g. school fees); essential needs such as transportation and communication; and provision for unforeseen events such as sickness, savings and insurance. Other considerations such as "passion for the job" [14] and "relationship with client" [13] are deemed to be personal factors. This study interprets "passion for the job" [14] as artisans' love for their work, influenced, in part, by its meaningfulness. A sense of meaningfulness is found to affect compensation demands, consistent with literature ([Munro & O'Kane, 2022](#)). In addition to passion for the work, on a personal level, artisans also consider what is described as "relationship with clients" [13]. Respondents indicated, for example, "I consider as family/family member" and "I consider personal relationship with the client". Consideration of relationships with clients could lead to discounts and influence the possibility for future job offerings. It becomes clearer when tied with considerations such as "possibility of next job" [20]. Artisans indicate, for example, that "I consider having more trade" and "I consider another job". Apart from the potential of securing another job in the future, as a strategy, relationship marketing increases customer loyalty and retention and makes price changes (increases) smoother ([Albérico & Casaca, 2023](#)). To the same extent, artisans consider the willingness and/or ability of clients to pay [17] evident in responses such as "I consider whether they have money". Other contingency factors include the "urgency required" [26] and weather conditions [22].

[Table 5](#) shows the summary and structures of the factors that influence artisans' job pricing decisions when viewed in light of the broad factors (and sub-factors) considered in formal firm-level job pricing –

internal job evaluation factors and external market-driven factors. To these are added discretionary considerations – living wage-related, personal and contingency-based.

Discussion

ANTECEDENT FACTORS INFLUENCING ARTISANS' JOB PRICING DECISIONS

Set against job evaluation factors in compensation management in formal employment, this study shows that artisans consider their skill (qualification), effort, responsibility, and the job conditions. These considerations are consistent with many of those factors considered in the point-factor system of Hay's model used to evaluate jobs for internal pay settings ([Armstrong & Taylor, 2023](#)). Hay's model, which is anchored on three universal factors, evaluates "know-how" (skill and technical knowledge), problem-solving (effort, both mental and physical), and accountability (responsibility) as bases for compensation or job pricing ([El-Hajji, 2015](#)). In relation to skill (qualifications), while there is no specific reference to education and job knowledge, there is mention of experience [27] and quality of output [23]. In compensation management literature, quality of output provides a measure of employee performance, while experience counts as a key factor for seniority and job experience in job evaluation ([Bhattacharyya 2014](#)). Artisans also consider the effort they expend physically, measured by the job's level of difficulty [3], and mentally in terms of, for example, how long it will take to prepare an estimate for the work [25]. Regarding job conditions, artisans consider the level of risk borne [6], the location of the job [12], and tools and equipment for the job [5], and thus how these are compensated for by means of some allowance. Lastly, artisans consider the level of responsibility associated with the job defined by the nature and cost of materials used [9] and the safety of others involved (assistants/labourers) [8].

Apart from job evaluation factors, this study shows that artisans also demonstrate knowledge of market-related factors such as the availability of other artisans [21], prevailing market rates [28] and taxes [19]. As considerations, the availability of other artisans and prevailing market rates ("I charge as others charge") recognise the interplay of labour forces – demand and supply – which determine wage levels ([McConnell et al., 2021](#)).

Added to job evaluation and market-related factors are a multiplicity of other factors that can best be described as discretionary, the bulk of which relate to living wage for sustainable livelihood, including food and other domestic expenses, transportation and savings, and insurances against unforeseen events. Beyond these, there are yet other factors that result from the exigencies of the work, ranging from urgency of the job, client's willingness and/or ability to pay, to weather conditions. These are contingency-based factors. Urgent projects, for example, often command higher prices ([De Lima Teodoro Da Penha & Caten, 2023](#)), while clients willing and able to pay a premium for faster completion benefit from price discrimination. In formal contracts, contractors adjust rates based on project timelines and client priorities ([Finnie, 2021](#)). Based on ethnographic, experimental, and survey data from handicraft artisans in India, [Ranganathan \(2018\)](#) found that the monetary value that artisans put on their work – price – depends on their audience. This study noted that with a discerning audience – that is, an audience knowledgeable about and appreciative of their work – artisans underemphasise financial gains. Transactions with a non-discerning audience, however, result in a focus on monetary rewards, implicating subjective personal judgement in artisans' job pricing decisions. In the present study, artisans consider the relationships [13] they have with clients in job pricing.

ARTISANS' JOB PRICING STRATEGIES/METHODS

Using the factors that artisans consider as antecedents, this study shows that artisans adopt a complex mix of job pricing strategies. These include cost-based pricing, competition-based pricing, customer-based pricing and what could be described as *contingency-based pricing*. Under cost-based pricing, contribution

Table 5. Summary of antecedent factors for artisans' job pricing strategies.

Formal firm-level employment		Informal self-employed artisanal jobs	
Factor	Sub-factor	Antecedent factors (observed themes)	Pricing strategy
A. Job evaluation factors (<i>job content, responsibilities, and requirements</i>)			
Skill (qualification)	Education and job knowledge	-	
	Experience and training	- Experience (27) - Quality of output (23)	Customer-based pricing Customer-based pricing
	Ingenuity	- Level of difficulty (3)	Contingency-based
	Initiative	-	
Effort	Physical	- Level of difficulty (3) - Duration of work (7)	Contingency-based pricing Cost-based pricing
	Mental	- Preparation of estimates (25)	Cost-based pricing
	Emotional demand	-	-
Responsibility	Material/product	- Nature and cost of material (9)	Cost-based pricing
	Safety of others	- Assistants/labourers/workmen (8)	Cost-based pricing
Job conditions	Working conditions	- Location of job (12) - Personal protective equipment (18)	Cost-based pricing
	Equipment/tools	- Tools allowance (5)	Cost-based pricing
	Unavoidable hazards	- Level of risk (6)	Contingency-based pricing
B. Market-driven factors			
Market conditions	Competition	- Availability of other artisans (supply) (21)	Competition-based pricing
	Going rates (market price)	- Prevailing market prices (28)	Competition-based pricing
	Taxes	- Taxes (19)	Cost-based pricing

Table 5. continued

Formal firm-level employment		Informal self-employed artisanal jobs	
Factor	Sub-factor	Antecedent factors (observed themes)	Pricing strategy
C. Discretionary factors			
Living wage considerations	Necessities	- Food/feeding (2) - Other domestic expenses (10)	Cost-based pricing
	Other essential needs	- Transportation (1) - Communication (15)	Cost-based pricing
	Unforeseen events	- Savings (24) - Insurance (4)	Contingency-based pricing Cost-based pricing
Personal considerations		- Passion for the job (14)	Contingency-based pricing
		- Relationship with client (13)	Contingency-based pricing
		- Empathy (16)	Contingency-based pricing
Contingency/practical considerations		- Weather (22)	Contingency-based pricing
		- Possibility of next job (20)	Contingency-based pricing
		- Ability to pay (17)	Contingency-based pricing
		- Urgency required (26)	Contingency-based pricing
		- Out-of-station (accommodation) (11)	Contingency-based pricing

analysis constitutes the main method that artisans adopt. In contribution analysis, artisans consider the extent to which various costs (direct and indirect) affect their service delivery. These encompass direct costs of materials used for the job, feeding, and transportation, including overhead costs relating to tools and equipment, out-of-station accommodation, and inconvenience allowance.

Apart from the costs, artisans also consider the perceived value of their work, such as the quality of output, as a basis for pricing. This is customer-based pricing. Perceived value is a subjective evaluation made by individuals regarding the benefits they receive from a product or service compared to the costs they have to pay to obtain it ([Aripin et al., 2024](#)). By perceived value-based pricing, therefore, service providers set/negotiate their price according to the consumers' perceived or estimated value of a product or service, suggested to be a potential negotiation tool in pricing discussions ([Shafrin et al., 2023](#)). In an artisanal

context, it may be influenced by the perceived value of artisans' expertise, craftsmanship and/or reputation. Highly skilled artisans undertaking complex or risk-prone tasks can command premium rates, as clients associate their work with superior quality, reliability, and reduced project uncertainty, and this also reflects the intangible "aura" of artisanal competence ([Krynska & Kopycinska, 2015](#); [Kissi et al., 2016](#)).

Generally, price gives an indication of quality. To many consumers or clients, therefore, the higher the price, the better the quality ([Salvador et al., 2007](#)). Customers may also be willing to pay a premium for customized services because customization enables service providers to better address their specific needs and preferences ([Tomczyk et al., 2022](#)). In view of this, service providers may charge higher prices for more customised services. Responses such as "I consider the quality of my work" and "customer specifications" suggest that artisans are aware of and, therefore, leverage clients' perceived value of their work and competence in pricing their services. In addition to cost-based and customer-based pricing methods, there are also elements of competition-based pricing evident in the responses "I charge as others charge".

Taken together, the observed factors indicate that artisans are aware of and, therefore, set/negotiate their service charges (job price) from some informed position, albeit tacitly, and yet consistent with economic theory. In explaining how labour services are exchanged for wages in a free market, labour market theory views labour as economic agents who make rational decisions and choices to maximise their personal gains (utility) considering both pecuniary and non-pecuniary factors ([Ehrenberg et al., 2025](#)). In this way, individual artisans, such as firms, behave purposefully by weighing the costs and benefits of their actions based on available information.

This notwithstanding, behavioural economists argue that individuals do not always make perfectly rational decisions due to factors including limited information and emotional attachments ([Heukelom, 2014](#)). This is evidenced by factors such as passion for the job [14], relationship with client [13], empathy [16], and even the possibility of a next job [20]. In this way, artisans may not typically price their jobs as income maximisers, being constrained by personal and contingency-based factors spanning reciprocity, empathy, and weak bargaining power ([Skitmore & Smyth, 2007](#)). This study thus suggests that there is no one factor or single combination of mechanisms that determine artisans' job pricing but a multiplicity of nuanced considerations – both objective and discretionary.

Conclusion and recommendations

Artisans' job pricing is a complex yet underexplored phenomenon. Unlike the structured, standardised, and deterministic approaches to pricing in formal employment, artisans' pricing practices are flexible, negotiated, and context-specific, making them inherently nuanced and unpredictable. This situation results largely from its weak regulation and flexibility that allow prices to be negotiated and customised. Using the varied set of factors that artisans consider as proxies (antecedents), this study explored the job pricing strategies of individual self-employed artisans in the building construction industry in Cape Coast, Ghana. This study found that artisans' job pricing decisions are influenced by a variety of objective job evaluation and market-driven factors as well as subjective discretionary considerations. As a function of the different considerations, as in formal employment, artisans adopt cost-based pricing typically based on contribution analysis, competition-based pricing, and customer-based pricing. A notable addition to these traditional strategies is what could be described as "contingency-based pricing", an approach that is influenced by discretionary considerations – both personal and practical – the bulk of which are living wage-related. In view of the inconsistent and unpredictable nature of artisanal job offerings, the paper supposes that, theoretically, artisans adopt "contingency-based pricing" as a strategy to secure and/or establish relationships to retain customers for future jobs. The dominance of living wage-related factors in contingency-based pricing suggests that, at a more fundamental level, for many artisans, job pricing constitutes a means to sustainable livelihood, an observation that highlights the social concerns implicit to job pricing in the

informal sector beyond economic factors. Through the lenses of classical labour market economic theory and behavioural economics, this study posits that artisans' job pricing decision-making is not purely economic, as characteristic of rational agents seeking to maximise their gain. It is also situational and heavily influenced by personal factors, social norms, and many other exigencies. This makes artisans' job pricing a multidimensional construct shaped by demand and supply, negotiation processes, and value attribution. Cognisant of this, artisans adopt job pricing strategies that overall inure to their benefit in the short- or long-run.

Implications and future research

The implication of this study is that informal artisanal job pricing in construction is highly nuanced, influenced by a complex set of economic and social factors. Beyond objective job evaluation and market-related factors, there are subjective, discretionary considerations that influence pricing decisions and strategies. Future research using quantitative approaches can help better understand the significance of these factors across trades, for example. As in job evaluation, such studies can focus on the significance of the observed factors to artisans' job pricing decisions, with the goal of reducing these to principal components and sub-principal factors. By isolating and establishing the principal (significant) factors, different predictive models can be built to better understand and explain the dynamics of job pricing in the informal sector. Furthermore, using representative samples of the different trades, further research can reveal variations in pricing strategies and antecedent factors among different artisanal trades. Further analysis of the living wage-related factors, in particular, can help understand their relationship with sustainable livelihood. The extent to which socio-cultural factors may be significant in moderating artisans' job pricing decisions could also be examined. Similarly, wider cross-cultural and regional studies can help uncover the nature and scope of these factors in different contexts and their influence on artisans' job pricing decisions.

Acknowledgements

This work is the result of funding provided by the Ghana Skills Development Fund project as part of the Ghana Jobs and Skills Project with grant number GSDF/C1/00158/W3.

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