Influence of the Landlords–Tenants Relationship on Compliance with Commercial Property Lease Arrangement in Abuja, Nigeria

Adedamola Fisayo Audu [a*], Olusola Kehinde Olaniyi [a] and Cecilia Omolola Afolabi [a]

[a] Department of Estate Management, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State, Nigeria.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Main Purpose: This study focused on investigating the influence of landlord-tenant relationships on commercial property lease compliance in Abuja, Nigeria. The study was borne from the various impending issues militating against achieving the objectives of either the landlord or the tenant in the study area.
Research Methods: A total of one hundred and twenty-five (125) copies of questionnaires were administered to Estate Surveying and Valuation firms in Abuja with one hundred and three (103) retrieved representing an 82.4% retrieval rate. The retrieved questionnaires were analyzed using frequency distribution, Weighted Mean Score, and Chi-Square Test further subjected to a Fisher's Exact Test.

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Corresponding author: Email: afaudu@jabu.edu.ng;

Main Contributions: The study observed that there is a relationship between landlord-tenant relationship and compliance with lease arrangement in the study area (with a p-value of 0.001 for the Fisher's Exact Test at 0.05 significance level). In view of this, Estate surveyors and valuers are advised to ensure the maintenance of a cordial and mutual relationship in sequence with the proviso of the tenancy agreement between landlords and tenants in order to avoid non-compliance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rental property is an essential component of a healthy real estate market all over the world. More people are renting rather than buying, causing the rental market to expand exponentially [1]. Many tenants prefer to rent because it is more convenient and less expensive [2]. It is important to note, however, that the success of investing in rental properties is determined in part by the characteristics of consumers (tenants). This assertion is supported by Goss and Campbell [3] 's observation that one-third of Americans rent their housing, which has an impact on the real estate investment decisions made by American investors. Rental property markets are influenced by local economic, political, and regulatory conditions, which vary greatly from city to city [4]. Landlords create flexible and inventive rental properties to maximize the asset value of their properties, while tenants use rental properties to meet their accommodation or business needs.

The landlord-tenant relationship is a key feature in the real estate rental market that can influence contractual terms either positively or negatively [5,6] noted that certain lease terms are generally negotiable between landlords and tenants. On agreement, the lease terms thus becomes binding on both landlords and tenants, thereby establishing a relationship between both parties (Baum 2003). The tenancy agreement defines the landlord-tenant relationship in general and clearly states the rights and responsibilities of both parties [7]. According to Bankole [8] the landlord-tenant relationship in rental properties is an integral part of property management activities and is also critical to the achievement of real estate investment objectives. Despite the regulation of landlord-tenant relationships, there is a proclivity for inequalities between landlords and tenants, which may influence the relationship that exists between them and thus manifest in the negotiation power favouring one party to the detriment of the other [9,10] According to Goss and Campbell [3] the success of investing in

rental properties is determined on one part by the characteristics of the tenants, and another the physiognomies of the landlord. Thus, the relationship which exist between the two may have an impact on the performance of real estate investment.

Concerns about the landlord-tenant relationship in the lease arrangement have grown over the years in the property management sector and academia. Studies of Gbadegesin and Ojo [11] Akogun [12] Gbadegesin & Oletubo [2] and Gbadegesin & Ojo [2] revealed that the relationship between landlords and tenants remained icy in Nigeria rental property market. Landlords and tenants have fought in and out of court over a variety of issues pertaining to the lease agreement. This actually indicates the occurrence of disagreement and strife in the duo's relationship, which may affect both the tenancy arrangement and subsequent lease renewal. The environment and various situations in which the parties involved are found may play a role in this. However, little research has been conducted on the impact of the landlord-tenant relationship on the compliance with rental properties lease arrangement in Abuja. Summarily, in order to achieve sustainable and efficient commercial property management practices, the influence of the landlord and tenant relationship on lease compliance in commercial property is worth studying in order to find common ground and long-term solutions to attendant problems inherent in commercial properties, which are gradually becoming rampant. This will ensure that best practices in commercial property management are followed.

Notable researches have been done on rental properties such as [8] on landlord-tenant relationship in residential property management; and Oletubo and Taiwo [13] on tenant selection criteria in an emerging rental market amongst other works. These ground breaking studies discussed various issues relating to tenant occupied properties to a great deal but are limited in their scope and location. The studies

also did not discuss the crux of this work which centers the influence of the landlords and tenant relationship on the compliance with lease arrangement. The innovation of this study was borne out of the inherent problems emanating from either the compliance or otherwise with lease arrangement that has made commercial property management practice suffer huge setbacks and further reduced or at best prevented the chances of realizing anticipated investment objective. This study is intended to enlighten the practicing Estate Surveyors and Valuers on reducing or at best preventing noncompliance in property management practices which in past times has not been at its best performance.

1.1 Purpose of the Research

The research aimed at assessing the influence of landlord-tenant relationships on lease compliance in Abuja, Nigeria with the view of providing relevant information to prevent lease arrangement related problems, and equip Estate Surveyors and Valuers with requisite data on commercial property management best practices that will enhance the achievement of the real estate investment objectives.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives are to

i. investigate the factors influencing the nature of the relationship that exist between landlords and tenants in Abuja, Nigeria, and
ii. examine the relationship between landlord-tenant relationship and compliance with commercial property lease arrangement in the study area.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H_0 there is no significant relationship between landlord-tenant relationship and compliance with commercial property lease arrangement.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationships as observed by Furman and Rose [14] are ongoing set of interactions between two people with a history. A landlord-tenant relationship exists when the property owner consents to the premises being occupied. As a result, the lease agreement establishes the relationship between landlord and tenant [8]. According to Zayed [15] relationships have an impact on the people involved. Each person's characteristics, the interaction of their characteristics, and the pattern of their interactions over time all have an impact on a relationship. Within an interaction, each person influences the other person's behaviour, and each interaction influences subsequent interactions. Such relationships acquire meaning, which is reflected in the cognitions, emotions, and behaviour of the participants, as well as in subsequent relationships. In a property management scenario, for example, the property owner has vested ownership in the property, whereas the tenant has a right to use the premises. When the owner transfers possession and control of the premises to the tenant in exchange for a sum of money known as rent, a contract between the parties is formed, which is supported by a comprehensive tenancy agreement and timely rent payment.

A relationship does not begin without a history, and its characteristics include relationship quality and content, relationship cognitions, and emotions [14]. This category also includes the feature of the landlord-tenant relationship. According to Kyle [16] the character of the relationship that exists between a landlord and a tenant is heavily influenced by the laws governing lease arrangements and must be clearly understood by property managers, particularly those covenants that directly affect the jurisdictions in which they operate. Furthermore, an effective relationship management strategy in property management practises ensures that the landlord's returns or other investment goals are met while the tenant's security of tenure is guaranteed [17]. Ideally, the landlord-tenant relationship should be strictly business, with both the landlord and tenant expected to follow a variety of laws designed to protect either of them. However, Furman & Rose [14] proposed that the relationships could change over time due to a variety of issues that arise. For example, issues ranging from landlords complaining about tenants or vice versa to breaking a rule outlined in the tenancy agreement could result in a shift in their relationship. Most landlord-tenant relationships, despite their importance to the tenancy, become difficult to maintain and, as a result, become a risk factor if not well managed. Kyle [15] asserted that landlord-tenant interests are not mutually exclusive and that the two parties do not need to be constantly at odds if the landlord-tenant

relationship is founded on a clear understanding of the rules and regulations and good communication.

The nature of the landlord-tenant relationship may be determined by their responsiveness to lease agreement provisions. For instance in the study of Bankole [8] five (5) types of relationships that exist between landlords and tenants in Lagos, Nigeria were identified. Using 180 tenants as respondents, the study employed descriptive statistical tools and result obtained from the analysis revealed that 44.4% of respondents considered the nature of the landlord-tenant relationship to be cordial, while 11.1% considered the relationship to be boss-subordinate. 16.7% of respondents believe that the landlord-tenant relationship is pro-landlord (i.e., primarily in favour of the landlord). 3.3% of respondents thought the relationship was pro-tenant (i.e., primarily in favour of the tenant). According to 22.8% of respondents, the landlord-tenant relationship is one of mutual participation.

2.1 The Study Area

The Federal Capital City (FCC), Abuja was established in response to the Panel for the Relocation of the Federal Capital out of Lagos, led by Justice Akinola Aguda, as a result of the inherent socioeconomic, political, and environmental problems experienced in Lagos as the former Federal Capital City of Nigeria and the state of Lagos, which included unbearable living and working conditions, obstinate traffic, persistent housing shortages, overcrowding, and overstretching. Abuja is located at latitudes 8° 25" and 9° 25" north of the Equator, and longitudes 6° 45" and 7° 45" east of the Greenwich Meridian, and covers an area of 8,000 square kilometres. It is bounded on the north by Kaduna state and on the east by Nassarawa state, Niger state to the west, and Kogi state to the south. FCT Decree No. 6 of 1976 established the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Abuja. The FCT property market has been thriving since its inception. This, however, stemmed from Abuja's rapid development over the last twenty-five years as a result of the influx of people into the city for employment and other related activities.

3. METHODS

The descriptive survey research design was used in this study, which included a field survey within the study area. To reach a reasonable conclusion for this study, a combination of quantitative and qualitative survey data was collected from the targeted population and analysed. The primary population for this study was Practising Estate Surveyors and Valuers in Registered Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms in Abuja. All 125 registered Estate Surveying and Valuation firms in Abuja metropolis were sampled, according to the 2021 directory of the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV) Abuja Branch. The copies of questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, who completed them and returned them for analysis. For the analysis, descriptive statistical methods such as frequency distribution and weighted mean score on a 5 point likert scale further subjected to ranking was used. The weighted mean score (WMS) is determined as follows in equation 1.

$$WMS = \frac{5n_5 + 4n_4 + 3n_3 + 2n_2 + n}{N} - - - -(eq\ 1)$$

Where

n_5 = number of respondent who answered very high
n_4 = number of respondent who answered high
n_3 = number of respondent who answered moderate
n_2 = number of respondent who answered low
n_1 = number of respondent who answered very low
N = total number of respondent.

Furthermore, the relation between the landlord tenant relation and compliance with commercial property lease arrangement in the study area was analysed using Chi Square Test of independence. The Chi-square test of independence checks the likely relationship that exists between two variables. The Pearson's chi-square (X^2) is the test statistic for the chi-square test of independence and the formula is as shown in equation 2.

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$ ---------- (eq 2)

Where

X^2 = chi-square test statistic
Σ = the summation operator (it means "take the sum of")

O = observed frequency
E = expected frequency

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section described the data analysis and presentation of the results obtained from respondents. A total of 125 copies of questionnaire were distributed to Estate Surveying and Valuation firms, and 103 questionnaires were successfully retrieved and analysed for this study. This however represented 82.4% of the population sampled. The implication is that opinions, inferences and the conclusion for this study was drawn from a sizeable percentage. The Estate surveyors' background information was obtained, and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 details the socioeconomic characteristic of respondents according to their status, educational and professional qualifications, and years of experience in property management practice. The status of the respondent revealed that 16.50% are Principal/managing partners, 22.33% are Heads of Departments, and 61.17% of the respondents are Estate Surveyors. The

respondents' educational status revealed that 45.63% are Higher National Diploma/ Bachelor's Degree holders while 52.43% of the respondents are Master's degree holders. 1.94% of the respondents are PhD degree holders. The respondents' years of experience in property management practice showed that 36.89% of the respondent have between 1-5 years of experience, 37.86% have 6 -10 years of experience, 21.36% have 11-15 years of experience and 3.88% of the respondent have 16 and above years of experience. This however implied that the respondents hold crucial positions in the firms, well-educated and professionally certified to give their opinion on the subject matter of interest. The years of experience in property management practice further implied that the respondents are well involved and knowledgeable about the landlord-tenant relationship in the study area and the opinion given by them could be relied upon for this study. Furthermore, the perception of the respondents was sought on some of the factors perceived to influence the nature of the relationship that exists between the landlords and tenants. The result is further presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Background information of respondents according to their status, educational and professional qualification, year of experience in property management practice (N= 103)

Firms' Characteristics	Classification	Frequey	Percent (%)
Status	Principal/managing partner	17	16.50
	Head of department	23	22.33
	Estate surveyor	63	61.17
	Total	103	100
Educational status	HND/BSc	47	45.63
	MSc	54	52.43
	PhD	2	1.94
	Total	103	100
Professional Qualification	Probationer/Graduate member	16	15.53
	ANIVS	65	63.11
	FNIVS	22	21.36
	Total	103	100
Years of experience in property management practice	1-5 Years	38	36.89
	6-10 Years	39	37.86
	11-15 Years	22	21.36
	16-20 Years	2	1.94
	Above 20 years	2	1.94
	Total	103	100

Source: Analysis of Field Survey, 2023

Table 2. Estate Surveyors and valuers' opinion on factors influencing the nature of the relationship that exist between landlords and tenants (N = 103)

Factors	Frequency					Men	Rank
	Very High(5)	High (4)	Moderate(3)	Low(2)	Very low(1)		
Unilateral increase in rent	45 (43.69)	23 (22.33)	11 (10.68)	12 (11.65)	12 (11.65)	3.75	1st
Immense power ascribed to the landlord	37 (35.92)	30 (29.13)	10 (9.71)	12 (11.65)	14 (13.59)	3.62	2nd
Improper tenant selection process	33 (32.04)	24 (23.30)	16 (15.53)	20 (19.42)	10 (9.71)	3.49	3rd
Infringement on privacy	31 (30.10)	20(19.42)	22 (21.36)	18 (17.48)	12 (11.65)	3.39	4th
Tenants' inability to comply with landlord's rules not provided in the lease agreement	34 (33.01)	9 (8.74)	23 (22.33)	18 (17.48)	19 (18.45)	3.20	5th
Misdemeanor from either the landlord or tenant	26 (25.24)	19 (18.45)	25 (24.27)	12 (11.65)	21 (20.39)	3.17	6th
Landlord/tenant's inability to fulfill their individual lease obligations	15 (14.56)	38 (36.89)	11 (10.68)	16 (15.53)	23 (22.33)	3.06	7th
Noncompliance of tenant with rent payment	20 (19.42)	22 (21.36)	16 (15.53)	27 (26.21)	18 (17.48)	2.99	8th
The response rate to provision of utilities, maintenance and repairs	27 (26.21)	18 (17.48)	10 (9.71)	21 (20.39)	27 (26.21)	2.97	9th
Landlord and tenant living in the same apartment	20 (19.42)	25 (24.27)	10 (9.71)	26 (25.24)	22 (21.36)	2.95	10th
Communication between the landlord and the tenants	20 (19.42)	25 (24.27)	12 (11.65)	21 (20.39)	25 24.27)	2.94	11th
Absence of other non-enforceable legal expressions/house rules from the tenancy agreement	24 (23.30)	15 (14.56)	10 (9.71)	37 (35.92)	17 (16.50)	2.92	12th
A clear understanding of the terms of the lease	17 (16.50)	22 (21.36)	20 (19.42)	19 (18.45)	25 (24.27)	2.87	13th
Agreement between parties to enter into the lease contract	15 (14.56)	25 (24.27)	18 (17.48)	19 (18.45)	26 (25.24)	2.84	14th
Religious and tribal sentiment	20 (19.42)	14 (13.59)	18 (17.48)	19 (18.45)	32 (31.07)	2.72	15th

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 detailed respondents' perspectives on the factors influencing the nature of relationship that exist between landlord and tenant. The perception of each respondent was sought on fifteen factors that influence the nature of the relationship between landlords and tenants in commercial properties lease arrangements. The unilateral increase in rent ranked 1st with a mean value of 3.75, and immense power ascribed to the landlord ranked 2nd with a mean value of 3.62. Improper tenant selection process ranked 3rd with a mean value of 3.49. Privacy infringement ranked 4th with a mean value of 3.39. Tenants' inability to comply with landlord's rules not provided in the lease agreement ranked 5th with a mean value of 3.20. Misdemeanors from either the landlord or tenant ranked 6th with a mean value of 3.17. Communication between the landlord and the tenants, absence of other non-enforceable legal expressions/house rules from the tenancy agreement, a clear understanding of the terms of the lease, agreement between parties to enter into the lease contract, and religious and tribal sentiment ranked 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th with mean values of 2.94, 2.92, 2.87, 2.84, and 2.74 respectively. This however implied that the landlord-tenant relationship could be greatly influenced by issues relating to the lease arrangement and less of an interpersonal relationship. Where there is a breach in the tenancy arrangement, disputes could emanate. Laurent (1993) and Forester (1994) posited that landlord-tenant disputes arise when either a tenant or a landlord does not meet the provisions of a tenancy arrangement thereby posing a major challenge to the Estate Surveyor and valuer in discharging duties required of him/her in such scenarios. The study further undertake a cross tabulation between landlord-tenant relationship and compliance with lease arrangement in the study area as opined by the Estate Surveyors and Valuers in order to determine the relationship between the two variables. The result was further analyzed using chi square. The result of the descriptive statistics is presented in Table 3.

The table above detailed the descriptive statistics of respondents' opinion on the landlord-tenant relationship and lease arrangement compliance in the study area. The N statistic showed an equal group size of 103 respondents for both relationship and compliance variables considered for further analysis in this section. This however indicated the fittingness of the dataset for the analysis. The skewness was further used to measure the distortion of symmetric distribution of the data set. For relationship dataset, the skewness is a positively skewed distribution of 0.340. The implication is that the mean value of the relationship variable dataset is greater than the median and moves towards the right and the mode occurs at the highest frequency of the distribution. For the compliance dataset, the result revealed a negatively skewed distribution of -0.453. This however implied that the skewness of this dataset distribution is on the left hence, the mean value is less than the median. The Kurtosis, on the other hand, provides information about the 'peakedness' of the distribution. The kurtosis statistics revealed a negative values of -1.503 (for relationship dataset) and -1. 252 (for compliance dataset) respectively. The kurtosis values showed a distribution with too many cases in the extreme otherwise known as platykurtic. This implied that the distribution has thinner tails. Hence, more data values are located near the center and less data values at the tails. A cross tabulation of respondents opinion on landlord-tenant relationship and compliance with lease arrangement in Abuja, Nigeria was conducted and the result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 detailed the cross tabulation between landlord-tenant relationship and compliance with commercial property lease arrangement in the Abuja Nigeria. From the table above, a total of 20.39% of the respondents opined that landlords and tenants in the study area have no compliance with the lease arrangement, 15.53% have low compliance with the lease arrangement, and 26.21% have moderate compliance with the lease arrangement, while 37.86% have high compliance with the lease arrangement. For the relationship status, a total of 41.75% opined that landlord and tenants in the study area have no relationship, 10.68% are of pro landlord type of relationship, 12.62% are of pro tenant type of relationship, 16.50% are of mutual type of relationship and 18.45% are of cordial type of relationship existing between the landlords and tenants in Abuja Nigeria. These cumulative revealed a detailed spread in the cross tabulation table as shown above. For instance, it was revealed that 10.68% each of the landlords and tenants have no relationship and zero compliance to the lease arrangement, no relationship and low compliance to the lease arrangement, no relationship and moderate compliance to the lease arrangement respectively. 9.71% of the landlord and tenants have no relationship and high compliance to the

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of respondents' opinion on the landlord-tenant relationship and compliance with lease arrangement

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
relationship	103	1	5	2.59	1.593	.340	.238	-1.503	.472
compliance	103	1	4	2.82	1.153	-.453	.238	-1.252	.472
Valid N (listwise)	103								

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4. Cross tabulation of landlord-tenant relationship and compliance with commercial property lease arrangement in the study area (N = 103)

Relationship/Compliance	No compliance	Low compliance	Moderate compliance	High compliance	Total
No relationship	11 (10.68)	11 (10.68)	11 (10.68)	10 (9.71)	43 (41.75)
Pro lanlord	4 (3.88)	3 (2.91)	3 (2.91)	1 (0.97)	11 (10.68)
Pro tenant	4 (3.88)	1 (0.97)	6 (5.83)	2 (1.94)	13 (12.62)
Mutual relationship	1 (0.97)	1 (0.97)	4 (3.88)	11 (10.68)	17 (16.50)
cordial	1 (0.97)	0	3 (2.91)	15 (14.56)	19 (18.45)
Total	21 (20.39)	16 (15.53)	27 (26.21)	39 (37.86)	103 (100.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 5. Relationship between landlord-tenant relationship and compliance with commercial property lease arrangement performance (N= 103)

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Monte Carlo Sig. (2-sided)			Monte Carlo Sig. (1-sided)		
Chi-Square Tests									
				Significance	99% Confidence Interval		Significance	99% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pearson Chi-Square	35.860[a]	12	.000	.000[b]	.000	.001			
Likelihood Ratio	38.933	12	.000	.001[b]	.000	.001			
Fisher's Exact Test	33.664			.001[b]	.000	.001			
Linear-by-Linear Association	19.674[c]	1	.000	.000[b]	.000	.000	.000[b]	.000	.000
N of Valid Cases	103								

a. 14 cells (70.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.71.
b. Based on 10000 sampled tables with starting seed 2000000.
c. The standardized statistic is 4.436.

Source: Field Survey, 2023

lease arrangement. The table further revealed that landlords and tenants that shared both mutual and cordial type of relationship and have low compliance to the lease arrangement are of relatively low percentage (0.97). This however implied that the type of relationship that exist between a landlord and tenant could influence their compliance with the lease arrangement. Furthermore, the result obtained was subjected to a Chi square and Fisher's Exact Tests and the result is detailed in Table 5.

A chi square test of independence was carried out to ascertain the relationship between the landlord-tenant relationship and compliance with lease arrangement in commercial properties in Abuja Nigeria. The Pearson Chi-Square value detailed in the Table 5 revealed a value of 35.860. However, the footnote revealed that one of the assumptions of chi-square concerning the 'minimum expected cell frequency', which should be 5 or greater (or at least 80 per cent of cells should have expected frequencies of 5 or more) was violated, therefore a Fisher's Exact Test was undertaken in furtherance to determine whether a statistically significant association exist between landlord-tenant relationship and lease compliance in Abuja, Nigeria. The result revealed a p-value of 0.001 for the Fisher's Exact Test. This however implied that the results are statistically significant at 0.05 significance level. Hence there is a relationship between landlord-tenant relationship and compliance with lease arrangement in the study area. This outcome is in consonance with Bankole [8] that the relationship that exists between a landlord and a tenant could influence the parties' compliance with tenancy agreement. Salloum [18] posited that relationships could be enhanced through goal-oriented communication with positive and creative attitude between the landlord and a tenant. Diverse relationship issues emanating from the lease arrangement can be curbed with proper communication.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDA-TION

Irrefutably, relationship is important in all facets of life and must be well managed. Therefore, Estate Surveyors and Valuers as professionals are required to ensure that the relationship which exist between their principals (i.e. the landlords) and customers (the tenants) is devoid of any complications that could easily affect the lease arrangement in property management settings. Based on the findings of this research, the

following recommendations were provided to promote efficient property management practice. Estate surveyors and valuers should ensure that a cordial and mutual relationship in sequence with the proviso of the tenancy agreement be maintained between landlords and tenants in order to avoid noncompliance. Furthermore Estate Surveyors and Valuers are advised to undertake more courses on KYC (know your clients/customers) in order to forestall impending noncompliance issues that might emanate from their property management portfolio. Conclusively inasmuch as it is not sufficient to place the responsibility of meeting the property management objectives solely in the hands of the Estate Surveyors and Valuers, landlords and tenants also have their parts to play by endeavouring to maintain a good relationship in order to achieve individual and collective goals for the commercial property investment.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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