



ANALYSIS OF STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT OF CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN ABUJA, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

The structure of the Nigerian construction industry is very complex in nature and consists of a wide range of parties. The aim of this paper is to analyse stakeholder management in construction projects in Abuja, with the view to improve construction projects performance. This study identifies and assesses barriers to stakeholder management in construction projects and determines critical success factors influencing stakeholder management and the delivery of construction projects. The paper employed a qualitative research design approach through semi- structured interviews. 30 construction professionals interviewed were purposively selected based on their experience. Content analysis was used to analyse information gotten from them. The study identified 25 barriers affecting stakeholder management and 14 critical factors influencing successful stakeholder management through interview carried out. The factors and barriers frequency mentioned during the interview were ranked. “Poor knowledge of stakeholder management procedure” and “lack of proper stakeholder management procedures” were the highest mentioned barriers affecting stakeholder management. Effective Communication emerged the highest ranked critical factor for successful stakeholder management. The study concluded that there is need to pay special attention to the above barriers and recommends appropriate strategies one of which is appropriate stakeholder analysis and engagement process within consulting project management firms managing project stakeholders.

Keywords: *Construction; stakeholder management; project delivery, qualitative approach.*

INTRODUCTION

The construction sector is very crucial to every nation's social and economic development. Apart from the sector's potential of employment generation, various activities undertaken in the sector are very germane to fostering effective linkages and enhancing as well as sustaining economic development. (Adeagbo, 2014). The Nigerian's construction industry like in other countries is very complex in nature, consists of building, civil and heavy engineering construction works which can be executed under different types procurement systems. The industry consists of a wide range of different parties such as main contractors and sub-contractors and clients which may be either public or private. The industry activities are been carried out on a project basis and could be within an organization or part of a construction programme (Adamu & Kolawole, 2011). Each project is unique in nature, while the project success or performance is measured based on criteria such as time, cost and quality (Project Management Institute, 2017). The success or failure of any project is based on the interests of the stakeholders directly or in-directly involved in the project (Atkinson, 1999). Studies Poor performance is the major challenge confronting the industry. Association for Project Management (APM) considered stakeholder management as the systematic identification, analysis, planning and implementation of actions designed to engage with stakeholders. Stakeholders include project team members as well as other interested entities and they can be categorised into internal and external stakeholder based on their level of involvement in the project life cycle. External stakeholders can be exemplified as customers, suppliers and related state mechanisms, while internal stakeholders are the project managers, project team and project sponsors (Project Management Institute, 2017). The categorisations show competing expectations that may lead to conflicts within the project. Apart from that, stakeholders also exert influence on the project, its deliverables, and the project team in order to achieve a set of outcomes in order to satisfy strategic business objectives or other needs (Dagli, 2018).

Ajayi *et al.* (2010) attributed disagreement among participating parties as one of the reasons for project failure in Nigeria. The conflicts associated with the industry are as a result of its complex nature, size of the industry and the challenges of satisfying its customers. Onarinde (2011) pointed out that the Nigerian Construction Industry has not fully reaped the benefits of managing

stakeholders in projects. In Nigeria, carrying out a planning for a project is not a guarantee of project success. Several projects still fail when stakeholders were not properly managed. According to Abdu- Lawan (2016) projects were suspended for quite a long time due to unresolved disputes between two major stakeholders involved in the project. Disputes on the projects are the reflection that some stakeholders still lack the knowledge of critical factor for stakeholder management and barriers to stakeholder management. The performance of the stakeholders is affected by the conflict and dispute on the project. To achieve project objectives, it is important to investigate barriers and critical factors having positive influence on the stakeholder's successful project delivery

This paper aimed at analysing stakeholder management(SM) in construction projects in Abuja, Nigeria, with the view to improve on construction projects performance. The following objectives were adopted to achieve this aim:

- To examine the barriers to stakeholder management.
- To investigate critical factors having influence on the stakeholders management successful delivery of construction projects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stakeholder management greatly contributed to the successful project outcomes (El-Naway, Mahdi, Badwy and Al-Deen, 2015). The success of construction projects dependent on the ability to manage various individuals and entities having stakes on the project. El Sawalhi (2015) asserted that stakeholders can be divided in two categories, namely internal and external. El Sawalhi (2015) opined that the internal stakeholders include employees, board members, company owners, donors and volunteers. The implication of this classification is that anyone who contributes to the company's internal functions can be considered an internal stakeholder. On the other hand, external stakeholders include customers, public authorities, clients, local communities, business partners, suppliers and shareholders. Anyone who is affected by your company but who does not contribute to internal operations is an external stakeholder. Stakeholder Management (SM) plays a very vital role in project performance in complex projects (Beringer *et al.*, 2012). SM does not just focus on single stakeholders, but accounts for all stakeholders' influence on one another in complex interactions of multiple, and potentially interdependent stakeholders (Beringer *et al.*, 2012).

Various studies have made substantial efforts to shed light on the concept of engaging and managing stakeholders in projects that are observed as multifaceted. Williams *et al.* (2015) observed the network structure of online stakeholders' discussions in the planning stage of a mega project that was highly complex because it was embedded in a network of stakeholders who were either supporting or opposing the project. Aaltonen *et al.* (2015) sought to advance understandings of stakeholder challenges in complex projects by focusing on the planning phase. Aaltonen *et al.* (2015) analysed how stakeholder dynamics—including stakeholder influence strategies, SM strategies and project contextual conditions—are affected by the interactions between stakeholders' influence, SM activities and the project's contextual conditions. Mok *et al.* (2015) conducted a literature review on SM studies that focused only on mega construction projects, and stated that traditional stakeholder analysis techniques are widely adopted in mega construction projects notwithstanding their weaknesses; moreover a social network approach for managing interrelationships in these projects is needed.

Eskerod *et al.* (2015) examined project SM by considering a theory outside the project management field to advance understandings of this topic. However, they emphasised the core argument that the current working forms are not suited to address the increased complexity facing project managers and project teams. In addition, it is widely recognized in the literature that many projects ultimately fail (Damoah and Akwei, 2017; Sharma *et al.*, 2011). Although the causes of failure may be as a result of project complexity which make it difficult in completing projects and requires extra effort to overcome (Dao *et al.*, 2016). Complex projects demand systematic approaches and efficient management skills to manage stakeholders to attain the best outcomes in terms of project performance (Mok *et al.*, 2015).

Barriers to Stakeholder Management

According to Newcombe (2003), stakeholders interact with the project in two fronts: cultural and political. These two fronts combined to impose invaluable barriers on stakeholder's engagement process. Barriers can emanate from the lack of awareness within the external stakeholders community in respect of available package thereby resulting in exclusion of citizens (Ihugba & Osuji, 2011). Under-resource or insufficient allocation of time and resources can result

in sub-optimal outcome, strong resistance either from the stakeholders or construction organisations towards engagement (Olander & Landin, 2008). The lack of identifiable project leadership also generates lack of accountability and transparency in the process. This may eschew difficulty in establishing legitimacy (Beaumont & Loopmans, 2008).

Zarewa (2019) explored some factors identified by various scholars as follows: Abdu Lawan (2016) identified: Cultural diversities(language barriers), lack of corporation from Stakeholders, client's behaviour, disagreement amongst stakeholders, absence of well-organised stakeholder meetings, handing over similar tasks to more than one stakeholder. TeyeBuerter *et al.* (2016) identified: Stakeholders' inability to participate in discussions, Lack of stakeholder involvement, Stakeholders lack of capacities to contribute meaningfully in discussions, Non acknowledgement of value of stakeholders, Non determination of requirements and expectations of stakeholders and inadequate identification and engagement of all stakeholders. Blood (2013) identifies compartmentalisation, lack of baseline data, cumulative effect of incremental development, stakeholders' fatigue, gap between public expectation and regulatory requirements as imminent problems inducing ineffective stakeholders' engagement in mining projects. From these broad themes, the study identifies organisational, project environment, communication, contractual, and regulatory issues affecting stakeholder management.

Bal *et al.* (2013) asserted that performance and economic contribution of a project is increased when effective stakeholder management and engagement process is carried out. Ihugba and Osuji (2011) stated that barriers on the part of external stakeholders' community arise from lack of awareness. Paying attention to the long term objectives of projects at the detriment of the short term objectives of community stakeholders can also breed public resistance (Olander and Landin, 2008).

Critical Factors Influencing Stakeholder Management Successful Delivery of Construction Projects

Projects that involve all the necessary stakeholders are far more likely to be successful (Zucker, 2017). According to Magassouba *et. Al* (2019) stakeholder involvement in project identification, planning, implementation and monitoring enhances the chance of project success and it is an appropriate way to achieve

an organization's goals. Project success refers to the effectiveness of a project and focuses on the multiple stakeholders involved as well as the ultimate results, or project benefits (Hidding and Nicholas 2014). Critical success factors are those activities and practices that should be addressed in order to ensure successful management of stakeholders in construction project (Forsman, 2017). Yang *et al.* (2009) defined CSFs in terms of stakeholders' management as "those activities and practices that should be addressed in order to balance stakeholders' interests and further ensure that projects are moved forward". Yang *et al.* (2009) studied major critical success factors and ranked the top three: 1. managing stakeholders with social responsibilities, 2. Exploring the stakeholder needs and constraints to the project 3. Communicating with and engaging stakeholders with social responsibilities. Ogwuleka (2013) recommends objective management and managing the process of design as critical success factors. Ihuah *et al.* (2014) identifies a competent project team as the most relevant critical success factor. Tung (2014) inferred that engaging and promoting good relationship and formulating clear statement of project missions as significant factors. Molwus (2014) hypothesised that adequately obtaining information on stakeholder characteristics and project characteristics, carrying out informed stakeholder analysis, understanding stakeholder dynamics and effective stakeholder engagement affect the impact of stakeholder management on construction project success. Forsman (2017) indicates that engaging stakeholders properly, understanding areas of stakeholders' interest and predicting the influence of stakeholders accurately in order to seek their support for the project as major influences in project success and performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study investigates influence of stakeholder management on construction projects delivery in Abuja. In order to achieve the aim and the objectives of this study, a qualitative research approach is considered appropriate. A semi-structured interview was used to collect primary data from selected construction practitioners within Abuja to analyse barriers to stakeholder management and to investigate the factors influencing stakeholder management successful delivery of projects.

For an in-depth understanding of those two items face to face interviews was conducted. A list of pre-determined questions was prepared based literature on

the barriers and CSFs of SM. Detailed answers were obtained as the method allowed the respondent to expatiate on the topic. The interview questions are semi-structured which helped to limit the boundary of discussion while allowing transparency and provided a better understanding of the responses. The interview consists of a total of 17 questions ranging from personal information to knowledge on stakeholder management practices. Thirty respondents were purposively selected based on their experience and roles played in the management of the projects. 30 professionals in the construction industry were interviewed comprises of 18 quantity surveyors, 7 Architects, 3 Civil Engineers and 2 project managers.

Content analysis was used to analyse the information gotten from the interviewees after coding and put together results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The vast majority of respondents were quantity surveyors, with 60% and 23.3% were architects, 10% civil engineers and 6.7 % project managers. All the respondents have over five years' experience in the industry, with 4 of the architects, 2 of the civil engineers and 10 of the quantity surveyors having over 10 years' experience in the industry. This can be attributed to the fact that it takes a significant number of years to gain enough experience and a good reputation which would enable one to do consulting or undertake challenging projects. According to the academic qualification 2 of the architects had bachelor's degrees while the other 5 had masters degrees, all of the civil engineers had bachelor degrees, one of project managers had bachelor's degrees while the other one had masters degrees, 10 of quantity surveyors have master's degrees while the remaining 8 have bachelor's degrees.

The breakdown is as follows: 18 quantity surveyors (QS1-18), 7 Architects (AR1-7), 3 civil engineers (CE1-3), 2 Project Managers (PM 1-2).

Table 1. Interviewee's Responses to Barriers of Stakeholder Management and Critical Success Factors of Stakeholder Management

SN	Interviewee code	designation	Barriers mentioned	Critical Success Factors Mentioned
1	QSI	Quantity surveyor	1. Delay in payment 2. Lack of proper stakeholder management procedure	Project coordination

			3. partial stakeholder involvement	
2	QS2	Quantity surveyor	1. Misinterpretation of stakeholder participations 2. Variation in contract form	Proper Engagement of stakeholders
3	QS3	Quantity surveyor	1. False and incorrect information given to stakeholders 2. Lack of consequent stakeholders' meetings.	Assessing strengths and weaknesses of stakeholders
4	QS4	Quantity surveyor	1. Lack of Human resources training 2. Lack of corporation from client	Proper Engagement of stakeholders
5	QS5	Quantity surveyor	1. Time constraints 2. Inconsistency in allocating stakeholder roles(Swapping roles within stakeholders)	Proper Engagement of stakeholders
6	QS6	Quantity surveyor	1. Lack of proper conflict resolution techniques 2. Lack of proper stakeholder management procedure 3. Lack of corporation from client	Understanding and working with stakeholders' needs
7	QS7	Quantity surveyor	1. Additional works 2. Lack of proper stakeholder management procedure	Proper identification of stakeholder roles
8	QS8	Quantity surveyor	1. Lack of proper stakeholder management procedure 2. Disagreements amongst stakeholders	Project coordination
9	QS9	Quantity surveyor	1. Poor knowledge of stakeholder management 2. False and incorrect information given to stakeholders	A competent Project team
10	QS10	Quantity surveyor	1. Misinterpretation of stakeholder participations 2. Unqualified personnel tasked with the role of stakeholder management	Clear definition of project mission
11	QS11	Quantity surveyor	1. Lack of proper conflict resolution techniques 2. Lack of corporation within stakeholders	Effective communication

12	QS12	Quantity surveyor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unqualified personnel tasked with the role of stakeholder management 2. Poor knowledge of stakeholder management 	Assessing strengths and weaknesses of stakeholders
13	QS13	Quantity surveyor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unqualified personnel tasked with the role of stakeholder 2. Delay in payment 	Understanding and working with stakeholders' needs
14	QS14	Quantity surveyor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Location of construction project 2. Clients interfering with stakeholder management process 	Promoting good relationship
15	QS15	Quantity surveyor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unfair treatment of stakeholders 2. Cultural differences 3. Corruption 	Clear definition of construction ethics
16	QS16	Quantity surveyor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cultural differences 2. Poor knowledge of stakeholder management 	Proper identification of stakeholder roles
17	QS17	Quantity surveyor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of consequent stakeholders' meeting 2. Inconsistency in role allocation (swapping roles within stakeholders) 3. Too many stakeholders claiming seniority 	Effective communication
18	QS18	Quantity surveyor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor knowledge of stakeholder management 	Project coordination
19	AR1	Architect	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. False and incorrect information given to stakeholders 2. Lack of corporation within stakeholders 3. Corruption 	Proper identification of stakeholder roles
20	AR2	Architect	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of Human resources training 2. Corruption 3. Time constraints 	Understanding and working with stakeholders' needs
21	AR3	Architect	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. preferential treatment amongst stakeholders 2. Lack of corporation within stakeholders 	Proper Allocation of stakeholder roles
22	AR4	Architect	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disagreements amongst stakeholders 2. partial stakeholder involvement 	Understanding and working with stakeholders' needs

			3. Too many stakeholders claiming seniority	
23	AR5	Architect	1. Too many stakeholders involved in same project 2. Too many stakeholders claiming seniority	Effective communication
24	AR6	Architect	1. Unfair treatment of stakeholders 2. Too many stakeholders involved in same project	Abiding to construction ethics
25	AR7	Architect	1. Lack of proper stakeholder management procedure 2. Poor knowledge of stakeholder management 3. Location of construction project	Proper identification of stakeholder roles
26	CE1	Civil Engineer	1. False and incorrect information given to stakeholders	Effective Communication
27	CE2	Civil Engineer	1. Lack of consequent stakeholders' meeting	Supportive attitude towards stakeholders
28	CE3	Civil Engineer	1. Lack of consequent stakeholders' meeting 2. Additional works	Analysing conflicts amongst stakeholders
29	PM1	Project Manager	1. Too many stakeholders claiming seniority 2. partial stakeholder involvement 3. Cultural differences	Effective communication
30	PM2	Project Manager	1. Lack of corporation within stakeholders 2. Lack of corporation from client	Effective communication

Table 1 shows that *lack of proper stakeholder management procedure* is highly mentioned barrier to stakeholder management and *Poor knowledge of stakeholder management*. 5 out of the 30 interviewees mentioned these two factors hindering the successful stakeholder management. Second highest was *lack of consequent stakeholders' meeting, false and incorrect information given to stakeholders, lack of corporation within stakeholders*, and *too many stakeholders claiming seniority* having 4 out of 30 interviewees mentioning them. While the 3rd in line were *corruption, cultural differences, lack of*

corporation from clients, unqualified personnel tasked with SM and partial involvement of stakeholders with mentions from 3 interviewees each. In 4th position is *delay of payment, unfair treatment of stakeholders, additional works, time constraints, location of construction project, lack of proper HR training, inconsistency in role allocation, misinterpretation of stakeholder participation, disagreements amongst stakeholders, too many stakeholders involved in managing same project and lack of proper conflict resolution techniques* all having 2 mentions each. The 5th in line were *Variation, preferential treatment within stakeholders and clients interfering with SM process* with only 1 mention each.

Lack of proper stakeholder management procedures -Most of the respondents that spoke about this talked about SM procedures like stakeholder identification and stakeholder engagement. One of the architects that was interviewed went ahead to mention lack of proper stakeholder analysing and monitoring as hindrances. The interviewees, nonetheless, established that inappropriate stakeholder identification, engagement and analysis affects SM process by having to reassess, review and reassign interests, roles and responsibilities. Also, they were of the opinion that depending on the strategic approach taken towards stakeholder management, the process can be very smooth and properly executed. Taylor (2015) described stakeholder engagement as gathering and sharing information, dealing with concerns and grievances from stakeholders, measuring their impact and importance, communicating back and forth through various methods, and more, clearly highlighted its importance to achieving ESM. To ensure a successful project, project team must identify and engage all stakeholders, observed that most projects fail after implementation not due to poor execution but rather due poor stakeholder consultation and engagement (TeyeBuertey *et al.* (2016))

Poor knowledge of stakeholder management-Five interviewees also mentioned poor knowledge of SM as a major barrier for effective SM. Interviewees asserted that SM process cannot be improved if the project manager does not understand, cannot successfully carry it out or is not ready to embrace it. One of the quantity surveyors emphasized “*It is not possible to do what you don’t know how to do! It’s really simple; you can’t successfully practice what you don’t have expertise in*”. Other interviewees were of the position that it is very important that construction professionals like architects,

quantity surveyors and civil engineers that practice project management must have undergone efficient, in-depth and proper training in order to carry out the job effectively. Because carrying out the process of SM without adequate knowledge may serve as a roadblock to the process thereby obstructing the success of the project. The respondents agreed that lack of knowledge of SM affects project organization, project development, causes setbacks, may have legal implications and has consequences on the entire SM process. EyiahBotwe1 *et al* (2015) identified PMs' poor knowledge as a major Critical Barrier Factor for an effective SM. Zarewa(2019) postulates that Project Manager's poor knowledge of SM, has direct relation with quality of SM in any project delivery because a project manager cannot effectively manage stakeholders without appropriate knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, each interviewee was asked to state in their experience and opinion what the most effective and important critical success factors to SM were. Each of them mentioned one critical success factor. *Effective communication* was the most mentioned with 6 out of 30 interviewees. Ranking second were *proper identification of stakeholders* and *understanding and working with stakeholders' need* with 4 mentions each.

Ensuring Effective Communication-This factor ranks highest amongst the CSFs determined, most of the interviewees agreed that it is important for communication to be effective, real, consistent and strategically executed. One of the project managers cited an example of a project he worked on that had a steady communication plan that was efficiently abided by and insisted "*that was one of the reasons things went smoothly in that particular project*". Another project manager stated that "there is need for mutual respect amongst workers and clients in order to effect good and useful communication". Peter (2017) asserted that continuous consultation and open communication with all stakeholders and groups is one of the steps to ensure that stakeholder groups and individuals are effectively managed and engaged within project.

This is an extremely crucial success factor as communication is vital for upholding the obligation of all stakeholders. According to Eric *et al.* (2014), project managers should be highly skilled negotiators and communicators capable of managing individual stakeholder's expectations and creating a positive culture change within the overall organization. Bourne (2010) further postulates that effective planning and implementing the right specific

communication strategy for each of the project stakeholder(s) is considered as one of the most important role the project manager often time consuming.

Proper Identification of Stakeholders-Another CSF the interviewees agreed upon is the need to ensure proper identification of stakeholders. One of the quantity surveyors stated that “*the main question to look into is- who are the stakeholders? How are they classified? Then we can talk about stakeholder management.*” It is very necessary to properly identify stakeholders. Another quantity surveyor relates that carefully identifying and listing the project stakeholders before the commencement of project is highly important. A conceptual scheme for identifying stakeholders should have recognition for a player’s power to influence the legitimacy of relationship between players, and the urgency of a stakeholder’s claim such that a detailed identification of project stakeholders is achieved (Jepsen and Eskerod, 2009).

CONCLUSION

Through qualitative research conducted after extensive literature review of related work, this paper revealed the perception of the stakeholders on effective stakeholders’ management in construction project delivery This study revealed that there are eminent barriers that need to be tackled in order to ensure smooth engagement of stakeholders in construction project. The barriers majorly mentioned and deduced from the interview analysis in this study were:

1. Lack of proper stakeholder management procedures.
2. Poor knowledge of stakeholder management and
3. False and incorrect information given to stakeholders.

The study also investigated critical success factors influencing SM through interviews, the CSFs which ranked the highest were:

1. Effective communication
2. Understanding and working with stakeholders’ needs and
3. Proper identification of stakeholders.

In the face of the awareness and reactions of the significance of effective stakeholder management, the survey however revealed that there is still no entire apposite acceptance of the procedures for stakeholder management as earlier postulated in literature. Thus recommends that:

1. The requirement to analyse stakeholders should be accentuated by clients in Nigeria and the procedure should be steady and constant and should be included in all phases of construction.
2. Appropriate stakeholder analysis and engagement process should be incorporated by consulting project management firms in managing

project stakeholders. 3. Clients should insist on continuous stakeholder engagement. 4. Every project should have well-trained and qualified professionals handling project management. 5. The project managers should create proper engagement and communication systems to ensure proper operations. 6. Other construction professionals carrying out project management roles should be well trained in the process. 7. Strategic communication should be appropriately maintained within the stakeholders and information and updates should be properly passed across as there should be an adequate communication chain for decisions, suggestions and complaints

It is nonetheless imperative to note that the study has some limitations that may affect oversimplification of its findings. One of such limitations was the restriction of the study to a selected location in Nigeria (Abuja). Secondly, the study was qualitatively conducted which limit its generalisation. Findings of the study could still be used to conduct another study in wider locations using similar or different research method.

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