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EXPLORING STAKEHOLDER BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGES IN COMMERCIAL PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS WITHIN AKPOR COMMUNITIES IN OBIO/AKPOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The study examined the challenges of stakeholder behavior in the commercial property development process within selected Akpor communities of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria. It was driven by growing complexities in stakeholder interactions, conflicting interests, and behavioral issues affecting efficiency, cost, and sustainability of development projects. Using a descriptive survey design, data were obtained from 290 valid responses representing developers, landowners, government officials, construction professionals, financiers, and community leaders, drawn from a total sample of 384 respondents through stratified random sampling (75% response rate). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean scores and relative importance index (RII) to rank key behavioral challenges. Findings revealed that poor communication, conflicting interests, inadequate community engagement, weak institutional coordination, and low regulatory compliance were the most critical behavioral challenges. These factors significantly impacted project timelines, costs, and sustainability. The absence of trust and effective collaboration mechanisms further exacerbated conflicts and reduced transparency in project delivery. The study concluded that stakeholder behavior is central to project success and should be strategically managed to improve efficiency and social acceptance. It recommends inclusive stakeholder engagement frameworks, stronger institutional coordination, strict adherence to ethical and regulatory standards, and transparent communication channels to reduce behavioral conflicts and promote sustainable commercial property development.*

KEYWORDS: Challenges, Collaboration, Stakeholder Behavior, Commercial Property Development, Akpor Communities.

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INTRODUCTION

Commercial property development is a complex and multi-stakeholder process involving developers, landowners, government agencies, financial institutions, consultants, and local communities, each with distinct interests and motivations (Olaleye, 2018; Bello & Adebayo, 2021). The interplay of these diverse stakeholders often shapes the efficiency, sustainability, and success of property development projects, particularly in developing urban contexts such as Rivers State, Nigeria. Stakeholder behavior—encompassing attitudes, decision-making patterns, power dynamics, and communication styles—plays a crucial role in determining the trajectory of commercial property development outcomes (Ezeokoli, Nwankwo & Ugwu, 2020).

In the Nigerian property development landscape, especially within urban and peri-urban areas like the Akpor communities of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area (LGA), stakeholder behavior is often influenced by socio-cultural norms, political interests, land tenure systems, and economic expectations (Umeh & Iwuagwu, 2019). These factors frequently give rise to conflicts, delays, cost overruns, and inefficient project execution. Studies have shown that stakeholder-related challenges, such as lack of trust, conflicting priorities, and inadequate stakeholder engagement, significantly affect the progress and sustainability of development projects (Olanrewaju & Anifowose, 2020; Adeniyi, 2022).

The Akpor communities in Rivers State represent a rapidly urbanizing zone where commercial property development has intensified due to the expansion of Port Harcourt metropolis. However, despite the growing investment in commercial real estate, the sector continues to face challenges associated with behavioral tendencies among key stakeholders, including disputes over land acquisition, community compensation demands, regulatory bottlenecks, and misalignment of project objectives (Nwokoro & Ogu, 2021). These behavioral dynamics not only impede smooth project delivery but also undermine investor confidence and the long-term sustainability of the real estate sector in the region (Eke, 2023).

Previous studies on property development in Nigeria have primarily focused on economic, legal, and infrastructural barriers, with limited attention paid to the behavioral dimensions of stakeholder interactions (Oluwatayo & Amole, 2019). This study, therefore, seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the challenges associated with stakeholder behavior in the commercial property development process within selected Akpor communities of Obio/Akpor LGA. By identifying and analyzing these behavioral challenges, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on stakeholder management and sustainable real estate development practices in Nigeria. Ultimately, understanding stakeholder behavior within the context of property development provides a pathway for formulating strategies that enhance collaboration, reduce conflicts, and promote effective project delivery (Ibrahim & Lawal, 2022). The insights derived from this study are expected to inform policymakers, developers, and community leaders on best practices for mitigating behavioral challenges that hinder the realization of commercial property projects in the Niger Delta region.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Property development dynamics in Nigeria is contextualized by behavioral challenges and their implications for development outcomes. In the built environment, the theory has been adapted to examine how developers, financiers, regulators, consultants, landowners and local communities interact, often with competing priorities, affecting project feasibility and sustainability (Leo-Olagbaye et al., 2021). The challenges associated with stakeholder behavior within the commercial property development process are drawn on stakeholder theory and empirical studies. Stakeholder theory provides the theoretical foundation for analyzing interactions among actors in the development process. Freeman (1984) conceptualized stakeholders as individuals or groups who can affect or are affected by the achievement of organizational objectives. In property development, this theory emphasizes that developers, financiers, regulators, landowners, and communities play interdependent roles influencing project feasibility and outcomes. Studies such as Leo-Olagbaye et al. (2021) and Akinola (2020) highlight that uncoordinated stakeholder actions, poor communication, and power imbalances often result in project inefficiencies and conflicts in Nigeria's construction industry.

The Nigerian property market features complex relationships among stakeholders, particularly between statutory authorities and customary institutions. While developers and government agencies possess formal authority, traditional landowners often exercise substantial informal control over land access and community consent. This dual authority system contributes to land acquisition delays, compensation disputes, and community resistance (Johnbull & Ikiriko, 2021; Olanrewaju & Anifowose, 2020). In Port Harcourt and its environs, overlapping land rights and weak institutional coordination exacerbate stakeholder conflicts during commercial property development (Eke, 2023). Such weaknesses have been documented in Port Harcourt-focused investigations that report stakeholder misalignment as a major obstacle to sustainable commercial property development.

Rivers State and the Obio/Akpor LGA present context-specific complexities. Rapid urbanization and peri-urban expansion have increased demand for commercial development, yet the regulatory environment and institutional capacity have not always kept pace (Nwokoro & Ogu, 2021). Studies examining stakeholder perceptions in the greater Port Harcourt area reveal that stakeholders, particularly local authorities, traditional institutions and community leaders, sometimes have divergent objectives, resulting in implementation gaps for master plans and development initiatives (Johnbull & Ikiriko, 2021). Where stakeholder roles are poorly coordinated, projects experience delays, cost escalation and, at times, abandonment (Olanrewaju & Anifowose, 2020). These findings highlight the need to examine stakeholder behavior not only at the project level but also in relation to municipal governance and planning processes.

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Behavioral Challenges Affecting Commercial Property Development

Empirical findings indicate several recurring behavioral challenges that hinder development: opportunistic behavior, lack of trust, information asymmetry, and political interference. Bello and Adebayo (2021) found that stakeholders' pursuit of individual economic interests often undermines collaboration, leading to mistrust and stalled projects. In Rivers State, developers frequently encounter community-driven rent-seeking behavior and regulatory opacity, which contribute to project delays (Nwokoro & Ogu, 2021). These behavioral factors cumulatively reduce investor confidence and increase transaction costs in the commercial property market.
Behavioral challenges are reinforced by institutional weaknesses and socio-cultural factors. Informal land transactions, weak enforcement of planning regulations, and patronage networks perpetuate conflict-prone interactions among stakeholders. Studies by Umeh and Iwuagwu (2019) and Olotuah and Bobadoye (2020) emphasize that cultural expectations regarding land ownership and benefit-sharing significantly influence stakeholder behavior. In the Akpor communities, customary practices and expectations of communal benefits often dominate over formal contractual obligations, creating behavioral patterns that challenge transparent development practices.
Stakeholder behavioral challenges have direct consequences on project timelines, costs, and overall investment climate. Olanrewaju and Anifowose (2020) observed that behavioral conflicts are among the leading causes of project abandonment in Nigeria's property sector. Similarly, Ibrahim and Lawal (2022) noted that projects with poor stakeholder coordination experience significant time and cost overruns. In the Akpor context, developers often relocate investments due to prolonged community negotiations and inconsistent government interventions.
Several studies recommend proactive engagement strategies and institutional reforms to mitigate behavioral challenges. Early stakeholder mapping, transparent communication, and benefit-sharing agreements are essential to fostering trust and minimizing conflict (Adeniyi, 2022).

Furthermore, Eke (2023) suggests that hybrid governance structures integrating both customary and statutory systems can improve alignment between communities and developers. These approaches have been shown to enhance cooperation and accelerate project delivery in similar urban development contexts. Despite the growing body of research on stakeholder management, limited empirical work focuses on the micro-level behavioral dynamics within the Akpor communities. Few studies quantitatively assess how behavioral challenges affect commercial property development outcomes in Rivers State. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by investigating the nature, causes, and implications of stakeholder behavioral challenges in selected Akpor communities.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study examined the challenges associated with stakeholder behavior in the commercial property development process within selected Akpor communities of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area (LGA), Rivers State, Nigeria. The study area—comprising Rumuekini, Rumuosi, Alakahia, Choba, Rumuolumeni, Ogbogoro, Ozuoba, Rumukwachi, Rumualogu, and Rumuapareii—forms part of the Port Harcourt metropolis, characterized by rapid urbanization, land conversion, and high stakeholder interactions among developers, landowners, financiers, professionals, and government agencies. The area was chosen for its strategic importance in commercial development and complex stakeholder dynamics.

A descriptive survey research design was adopted to obtain factual insights into behavioral patterns and stakeholder interactions without manipulation. The study population comprised 384 respondents, determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Respondents included residents, developers, contractors, community leaders, estate surveyors, legal practitioners, financiers, and government officials. A purposive and stratified random sampling technique ensured balanced representation across stakeholder categories. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, with 290 valid responses retrieved (75% response rate). Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, while the Relative Importance Index (RII) ranked key behavioral challenges. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically to identify major behavioral issues, perceptions, and stakeholder narratives influencing the commercial property development process.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Stakeholder Behavioral Challenges in Commercial Property Development Process

Table 1 identifies key challenges that arise from stakeholder behavior and their impacts on the development process, including poor communication, conflicting interests, lack of trust, and insufficient involvement. All challenges show agreement, as indicated by the Relative Importance Index (RII) scores, which highlight significant concerns.

Table 1: Challenges Due to Stakeholder Behavior

Challenges Due to Stakeholder Behavior	Weigh: N= 290					∑fx	∑fx/∑f	RII	Rmk
	SA	A	U	D	SD				
Poor communication between stakeholders hinders project progress.	65	65	60	50	0	915	3.15	0.63	Agree
Conflicting stakeholder interests create delays and additional costs.	70	70	58	49	43	945	3.26	0.65	Agree
Lack of trust between stakeholders affects the overall development process.	60	70	60	50	50	910	3.14	0.63	Agree

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Insufficient stakeholder involvement leads to poor decision-making during development.	58	58	62	58	56	872	3.01	0.61	Agree

***Legend:** <3.00= Disagree, >3.00= Agree. **Note**: ∑f = Number of values; ∑fx = Sum of Values; ∑fx/∑f = Sum of Values divided by Number of values (mean); and RII = relative importance index*

Source: *Author's Field Survey, 2025*

As indicated in Table 1, conflicting stakeholder interests create delays and additional costs ranked 1st with RII of 0.651, indicating as one of the key challenges that arise from stakeholder behavior and their impacts on the development process. The majority of the respondents with RII > 0.60 agree that disparities in goals or priorities between stakeholders can lead to disputes over resource allocation, scope, and timelines, often escalating to cost overruns and project delays. Effective conflict management and early alignment of interests are essential. Secondly ranked with RII of 0.631 was poor communication between stakeholders hinders project progress. It implies that ineffective communication often leads to misunderstandings, delays, and errors in project execution, resulting in inefficiency and setbacks. Clear, transparent communication strategies should be prioritized.

Then thirdly ranked is lack of trust between stakeholders affects the overall development process. Lack of trust between stakeholders affects the overall development process and was ranked third with RII of 0.627. A lack of trust among stakeholders can result in reluctance to collaborate, share information, or make commitments, leading to delays and poor project outcomes. Building trust through transparent actions and mutual respect is crucial for project success. Finally ranked as one of the challenges arising from stakeholder behavior during the property development process was insufficient stakeholder involvement that leads to poor decision-making during development. Insufficient stakeholder involvement leads to poor decision-making during development was ranked with RII of 0.601 where the respondents agree that when key stakeholders are not adequately engaged, critical perspectives and expertise may be overlooked, leading to suboptimal decisions that affect the project's direction and success. More inclusive stakeholder engagement is necessary for well-informed, balanced decision-making.

The RII values range from 0.601 to 0.651, indicating a moderate to high agreement across the challenges. The highest RII (0.651) points to the significant issue of conflicting stakeholder interests, while the lowest (0.601) indicates concerns over insufficient involvement, though still important. Challenges like poor communication and lack of trust highlight the need for stronger collaboration and proactive conflict resolution measures to ensure smooth project execution. This implies that stakeholder behavior plays a critical role in the success or failure of property development projects in Akpor communities. Challenges such as poor communication, conflicting interests, lack of trust, and insufficient involvement are significant barriers to project success. Addressing these issues through clear communication strategies, early alignment of interests, and trust-building efforts is essential for smoother, more efficient project execution. By proactively managing these challenges, stakeholders can work together more effectively, reducing delays and improving project outcomes.

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DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As identified in Table 1, the key challenges arising from stakeholder behavior and their influences on the commercial development process include poor communication, conflicting interests, lack of trust, and insufficient involvement, as indicated by the majority of the respondents. Conflicting stakeholder interests, poor communication, conflicting priorities, resistance to change, inadequate stakeholder engagement, lack of accountability, and political interference were ranked with RII of 0.600–0.651, indicating their impacts on the development process. The majority of the respondents with RII > 0.60 agree that disparities in goals or priorities between stakeholders can lead to disputes over resource allocation, scope, and timelines, often escalating to cost overruns and project delays. This finding affirmed that one of the primary challenges in property development is the failure to communicate effectively across different stakeholder groups, including developers, contractors, financiers, and government bodies. For example, when developers and contractors fail to communicate their expectations clearly, it can result in delayed decision-making, cost overruns, and quality issues. This was similar to the report that when government stakeholders are not adequately consulted or informed, regulatory approvals may be delayed or compromised, further impacting the project timeline.

The challenges associated with stakeholder behavior during the commercial property development process are multifaceted and can significantly impact project success. Poor communication, conflicting priorities, resistance to change, inadequate stakeholder engagement, lack of accountability, and political interference are some of the key challenges identified in the study. This study identified stakeholder conflicts as one of the primary challenges affecting property development projects in Nigeria. Developers reported that lack of clear regulations and government support created barriers to successful project completion. The study highlighted that poor communication and lack of cooperation among stakeholders were major obstacles in the construction industry. Stakeholders often had conflicting interests, which negatively affected project timelines and budgets. These challenges can lead to delays, cost overruns, and, ultimately, project failure if not effectively managed. It is essential for developers and other stakeholders to foster a collaborative environment, ensure transparent communication, and engage with all relevant parties to address these challenges. By adopting a proactive approach to stakeholder management, commercial property development projects can be completed on time and within budget, resulting in positive outcomes for all involved.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the challenges of stakeholder behavior in the commercial property development process within selected Akpor communities of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State. The findings underscored that stakeholder behavior remains a critical determinant of project success, cost efficiency, and delivery timelines in the real estate development process. The research revealed that the complexity of stakeholder interests, lack of effective communication, weak coordination mechanisms, conflicting objectives, and inadequate regulatory compliance are major behavioral challenges confronting the development process in the study area. Developers, landowners, community leaders, and government agencies were identified as the principal stakeholders whose interactions significantly shape project outcomes. The results indicated that behavioral challenges often

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manifest as conflicts, mistrust, delays, and uncoordinated decision-making, thereby affecting project feasibility and sustainability. These issues are further compounded by institutional weaknesses such as inadequate enforcement of planning regulations, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and insufficient stakeholder engagement during project conception and execution stages.

Furthermore, the study concluded that while stakeholder involvement is essential for inclusive and sustainable property development, the absence of structured collaboration frameworks undermines transparency and shared responsibility. The dynamics of stakeholder behavior in Akpor communities reflect the broader realities of urban property development in Nigeria, where the interplay of socio-political, economic, and cultural factors influences investment confidence and project performance. In essence, achieving effective stakeholder behavior requires the integration of participatory approaches, trust-building mechanisms, and transparent governance practices. Aligning stakeholder interests through continuous engagement, communication, and accountability is therefore central to promoting sustainable commercial property development in the region. Therefore, future studies should explore the mediating effect of institutional trust, communication quality, and governance transparency on stakeholder collaboration outcomes in urban property development.

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