



APPRAISAL OF THE IMPACT OF STAKEHOLDER CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON THE SUCCESS OF PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECTS IN ENUGU URBAN

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ABSTRACT: *This study appraised the impact of stakeholder conflict management strategies on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban. The specific objectives were to examine the effect of negotiation and mediation strategies on the success of public sector projects in the study area. The study adopted a survey research design, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to 293 staff of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, Enugu State, out of which 278 were correctly returned and used for analysis. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency tables, percentages, and mean scores) and inferential statistics (simple linear regression analysis) at a 0.05 level of significance. The regression results revealed that negotiation strategy has a significant positive effect on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban ($p < 0.05$), while mediation strategy does not have a statistically significant effect on project success ($p > 0.05$). The study concludes that negotiation is an effective stakeholder conflict management strategy that enhances public sector project success, whereas mediation, as currently practiced, does not significantly influence project outcomes in the study area. The study recommends strengthening structured negotiation processes among stakeholders, improving institutional frameworks for mediation, and enhancing stakeholder capacity in conflict management to improve public sector project delivery in Enugu Urban.*

KEYWORDS: Stakeholder conflict, negotiation strategy, mediation strategy, public sector projects, project success.



INTRODUCTION

Public sector projects represent one of the primary mechanisms through which governments deliver developmental policies, social services, and infrastructural facilities aimed at improving citizens' welfare and promoting economic growth. These projects encompass a wide range of developmental initiatives such as road construction, healthcare facilities, educational infrastructure, water supply systems, urban renewal programs, and housing schemes funded and implemented by government institutions. In developing economies like Nigeria, public sector projects play a significant role in addressing socio-economic challenges, stimulating employment opportunities, reducing poverty, and fostering sustainable urban and rural development. Despite the enormous financial commitments and policy attention devoted to these projects, many public sector projects continue to face serious implementation challenges, including delays, cost overruns, abandonment, poor quality delivery, and inability to achieve intended developmental outcomes. Scholars have argued that one of the major underlying causes of these persistent project failures is the existence of stakeholder conflicts and the inability of project managers to effectively manage competing stakeholder interests throughout the project lifecycle (Aaltonen & Kujala, 2016; Olander & Landin, 2005; Yang et al., 2011).

Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or institutions that can influence or be influenced by the implementation and outcomes of a project. In public sector projects, stakeholders often include government agencies, contractors, consultants, host communities, political office holders, traditional rulers, project beneficiaries, civil society organizations, and regulatory agencies. These stakeholders usually possess different expectations, objectives, interests, and levels of influence over project implementation. Consequently, disagreements and conflicts frequently arise concerning project priorities, land acquisition, compensation, resource allocation, environmental impacts, contract administration, political interference, and expected benefits from project outcomes (Freeman, 1984; Bourne, 2015). The multiplicity of interests and power relations among stakeholders often makes public sector projects highly vulnerable to conflicts that can significantly affect implementation processes.

Stakeholder conflict management strategies refer to systematic approaches employed by project managers and institutions to minimize, control, or resolve disputes among project actors to ensure smooth project execution. These strategies often include negotiation, mediation, collaboration, compromise, accommodation, effective communication, stakeholder engagement, dialogue, arbitration, and consensus-building mechanisms. Effective conflict management seeks not merely to eliminate disputes but to create an environment where differences are constructively addressed to promote cooperation and mutual understanding among project participants. Studies have shown that stakeholder participation and collaborative engagement significantly improve trust, transparency, and project performance, especially in public infrastructure delivery (Aaltonen, 2011; Bourne, 2015).

In Enugu Urban, public sector projects have become critical instruments for urban growth and socio-economic transformation. Government efforts toward infrastructural development have resulted in numerous projects involving road construction, drainage and erosion control, market modernization, water supply systems, educational infrastructure, healthcare facilities, and environmental sanitation initiatives. However, many of these projects have reportedly experienced delays, implementation bottlenecks, cost escalation, public resistance, and stakeholder dissatisfaction due to conflicts among contractors, government agencies, local communities, political actors, and project beneficiaries. In several instances, poor consultation,



communication breakdown, compensation disputes, land-related disagreements, and political interference have generated tensions that negatively affect project implementation and outcomes.

Despite the growing significance of stakeholder management in project implementation, there appears to be inadequate empirical attention regarding the specific impact of stakeholder conflict management strategies on the success of public sector projects, particularly in Enugu Urban. Existing studies have focused more broadly on project management challenges, governance issues, stakeholder participation, and public-private partnerships with limited emphasis on stakeholder conflict resolution mechanisms within the context of public sector project delivery in Enugu Urban (Aaltonen & Kujala, 2016; Bourne, 2015). This gap creates uncertainty concerning the extent to which strategies such as negotiation, mediation, collaboration, communication, and stakeholder engagement influence project success in the area.

It is against this backdrop that this study undertook an appraisal of the impact of stakeholder conflict management strategies on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban. The study becomes necessary in view of the persistent incidences of project delays, abandonment, cost overruns, stakeholder dissatisfaction, and implementation inefficiencies associated with public projects in the area.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to appraise the impact of stakeholder conflict management strategies on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. determine the impact of negotiation strategy on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban.
- ii. examine the impact of mediation strategy on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban.

Research Questions

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What is the impact of negotiation strategy on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban?
- ii. What is the impact of mediation strategy on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban?

Hypotheses of the Study

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

H0₁: Negotiation strategy has no significant impact on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban.



H0₂: Mediation strategy has no significant impact on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the appraisal of the impact of stakeholder conflict management strategies on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban. Specifically, the study is limited to examining the impact of negotiation and mediation strategies on the success of public sector projects. Geographically, the study is confined to Enugu Urban, while the content scope covers stakeholder conflict management and project success within the public sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Stakeholder Conflict Management

Stakeholder conflict management refers to the systematic approaches adopted to identify, control, minimize, and resolve disagreements among individuals or groups involved in a project. In project environments, stakeholders often possess varying interests, expectations, and levels of influence, which may result in disagreements capable of affecting project implementation. Effective stakeholder conflict management aims to harmonize competing interests, promote cooperation, and maintain smooth project execution through communication, negotiation, mediation, and collaborative decision-making (Kerzner, 2018; PMI, 2021). In public sector projects, stakeholder conflict management is particularly important because of the multiple actors involved, including government agencies, contractors, communities, and political stakeholders.

Negotiation Strategy

Negotiation strategy refers to a conflict management approach in which parties involved in a disagreement engage in discussions to reach a mutually acceptable resolution without the intervention of a third party. It involves dialogue, bargaining, compromise, and mutual understanding aimed at addressing divergent interests while preserving relationships among stakeholders. Negotiation is considered one of the most effective stakeholder conflict management strategies because it encourages cooperation, reduces hostility, and promotes consensus during project implementation (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011). In public sector projects, negotiation can help resolve disputes relating to compensation, project location, resource allocation, and contractual obligations.

Mediation Strategy

Mediation strategy is a conflict resolution process involving the intervention of a neutral third party who facilitates communication and negotiation between conflicting stakeholders to achieve a peaceful resolution. Unlike arbitration, the mediator does not impose decisions but assists parties in identifying common interests and workable solutions. Mediation is often preferred in public projects because it helps reduce tension, rebuild trust, and avoid costly litigation or project delays arising from prolonged disputes (Moore, 2014). Effective mediation



contributes to stakeholder satisfaction and enhances project continuity by fostering mutual understanding among conflicting parties.

Public Sector Projects

Public sector projects are government-sponsored initiatives undertaken to provide infrastructure, public services, and socio-economic development to citizens. These projects are financed and managed by government institutions at federal, state, or local government levels and often include roads, schools, hospitals, housing schemes, water supply systems, and urban development programs. The success of public sector projects is essential for national development; however, their implementation is frequently challenged by inadequate funding, bureaucracy, corruption, political interference, and stakeholder conflicts (Turner, 2014; Meredith & Mantel, 2017).

Success of Public Sector Projects

Project success refers to the extent to which a project achieves its intended objectives within the constraints of time, cost, and quality while satisfying stakeholders and delivering expected benefits. Contemporary views of project success go beyond the traditional “iron triangle” of cost, time, and quality to include stakeholder satisfaction, sustainability, community acceptance, and achievement of developmental goals (Shenhar & Dvir, 2007). In public sector projects, success is often measured by the project’s ability to meet societal needs, enhance public welfare, and satisfy stakeholders without major disputes or implementation failures.

Theoretical Framework

Stakeholder Theory

This study is anchored on Stakeholder Theory, propounded by R. Edward Freeman in 1984. The theory posits that the success of an organization or project depends largely on how well the interests and expectations of stakeholders are identified and managed. Stakeholders are individuals or groups that can affect or be affected by project activities and outcomes (Freeman, 1984).

The theory is relevant to this study because public sector projects involve multiple stakeholders such as government agencies, contractors, host communities, and beneficiaries whose conflicting interests may affect project success. Therefore, effective stakeholder conflict management strategies such as negotiation and mediation are essential for resolving disputes, enhancing cooperation, and ensuring successful project implementation.

Empirical Review

Aaltonen and Kujala (2016) investigated stakeholder management practices in complex infrastructure projects using a qualitative multiple-case study approach. The study found that effective stakeholder engagement and early conflict identification significantly improve project outcomes by reducing resistance and enhancing cooperation among stakeholders. It further emphasized that unmanaged stakeholder conflicts often lead to delays and increased project costs.

Olander and Landin (2005) examined stakeholder influence on construction project performance in Sweden. The study revealed that stakeholders with high levels of influence can



either facilitate or hinder project success depending on how their interests are managed. It concluded that poor stakeholder management and unresolved conflicts are major causes of project disruption, especially in public infrastructure development.

Yang, Shen, Ho, Drew, and Chan (2011) studied stakeholder management in construction projects in Hong Kong. Their findings showed that effective communication and negotiation with stakeholders reduce conflicts and improve project efficiency. The study also highlighted that mediation and collaborative approaches are critical in resolving disputes and ensuring timely project delivery.

Bourne (2015) conducted a study on stakeholder relationship management and project success. The study found that structured stakeholder engagement and conflict resolution mechanisms significantly enhance project performance by improving trust, reducing resistance, and ensuring alignment of stakeholder expectations with project objectives.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a survey research design. The survey design is considered appropriate because it enables the collection of data from respondents on their opinions and experiences regarding stakeholder conflict management strategies and the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban. It allows for the use of structured questionnaires to obtain standardized information from a relatively large sample, making it suitable for generalization of findings within the study area.

Area of Study

The study is conducted in Enugu Urban, Enugu State, Nigeria. Enugu Urban serves as the administrative and commercial center of the state and hosts numerous public sector projects executed by government agencies and contractors. These include road construction, drainage systems, market development, water supply projects, and other infrastructural developments. The area is selected because it has experienced several public project implementations where stakeholder interactions and conflicts are evident, making it suitable for examining the impact of stakeholder conflict management strategies on project success.

Population

The population of this study consists of all professional and technical staff involved in the planning, execution, and supervision of public sector projects within the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, Enugu State. These categories of personnel include project managers, engineers, quantity surveyors, procurement officers, administrative officers, and other relevant staff who play active roles in the implementation of public works projects in the ministry.



The total population of the study is 1,099 staff members, distributed across different professional categories as shown in Table 3.1.

S/N	Category of Staff	Number of Staff
1	Project Managers	210
2	Engineers	285
3	Quantity Surveyors	164
4	Procurement Officers	240
5	Administrative Officers	200
	Total Population	1,099

Source: *Field Survey, 2026.*

Determination of Sample Size

The sample size for this study was determined using the Taro Yamane formula for finite populations. The formula is expressed as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (1099 staff)

e = margin of error (0.05 for 5% level of significance)

Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{1099}{1 + 1099(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1099}{1 + 1099(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{1099}{1 + 2.7475}$$

$$n = \frac{1099}{3.7475}$$

$$n \approx 293$$



Therefore, the sample size for the study is 293 respondents.

Method of Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to staff of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, Enugu State. The instrument contains closed-ended questions aligned with the study objectives and divided into Sections A (demographic data) and B (study variables). A 5-point Likert scale was used for responses.

Validity of the Instrument

Validity was ensured through face and content validation. The questionnaire will be reviewed by experts in research methodology and project management to assess clarity, relevance, and adequacy. Corrections were incorporated to improve the instrument's quality.

Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient through a pilot study. A value of 0.70 and above will be considered acceptable, indicating internal consistency. Necessary adjustments were made where required.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically, frequency tables and percentages were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and their views on the study variables. In addition, multiple regression analysis was employed to test the hypotheses and determine the extent of the relationship between stakeholder conflict management strategies and the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance, and decisions were based on the probability (p-value) and standardized coefficients of the regression output.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Questionnaire Return Rate

A total of 293 questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents for the study. Out of this number, 278 questionnaires were properly completed and returned, while 15 questionnaires were either not returned or were improperly filled and excluded from analysis.

Table 1: Questionnaire Return Rate

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Returned Questionnaires	278	94.9
Not Returned	15	5.1
Total	293	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2026*

**Table 2: Responses on the Impact of Negotiation Strategy on the Success of Public Sector Projects**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
1	Effective negotiation between stakeholders reduces delays in public sector project execution.	112 (40.3%)	98 (35.3%)	30 (10.8%)	24 (8.6%)	14 (5.0%)	3.96
2	Negotiation helps resolve disputes over resources and compensation in public sector projects.	120 (43.2%)	92 (33.1%)	26 (9.4%)	22 (7.9%)	18 (6.5%)	4.00
3	Structured negotiation between stakeholders improves cost performance of public sector projects.	108 (38.8%)	104 (37.4%)	28 (10.1%)	20 (7.2%)	18 (6.5%)	3.94
Total/Average		340 (40.8%)	294 (35.3%)	84 (10.1%)	66 (7.9%)	50 (6.0%)	3.97

The results in Table 2 indicate that respondents strongly agree that negotiation strategy enhances the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban. The high proportion of Strongly Agree (40.8%) and Agree (35.3%) responses shows general consensus on its effectiveness.

Item 1 shows that 75.6% of respondents agreed that negotiation reduces project delays. Item 2 recorded the highest support, with 76.3% agreement that negotiation resolves disputes over resources and compensation. Item 3 also shows strong agreement (76.2%) that negotiation improves cost performance.

The overall mean score of 3.97 confirms that negotiation strategy is perceived as highly effective in improving project success in Enugu Urban.

Table 3: Responses on the Impact of Mediation Strategy on the Success of Public Sector Projects

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
1	The use of mediation by neutral parties helps resolve conflicts in public sector projects effectively.	82 (29.5%)	86 (30.9%)	34 (12.2%)	44 (15.8%)	32 (11.5%)	3.61
2	Mediation improves communication and understanding	78 (28.1%)	84 (30.2%)	30 (10.8%)	52 (18.7%)	34 (12.2%)	3.52



	among stakeholders in project implementation.						
3	Mediation reduces project abandonment and enhances successful completion of public sector projects.	75 (27.0%)	80 (28.8%)	32 (11.5%)	50 (18.0%)	41 (14.7%)	3.46
Total / Average		235 (28.2%)	250 (30.0%)	96 (11.5%)	146 (17.5%)	107 (12.8%)	3.53

The results in Table 3 show a moderate perception of mediation strategy effectiveness. Although a majority of respondents agreed, there is a noticeable level of disagreement compared to negotiation.

For Item 1, 60.4% agreed that mediation effectively resolves conflicts. Item 2 shows 58.3% agreement that mediation improves communication among stakeholders. Item 3 recorded 55.8% agreement that mediation reduces project abandonment, though disagreement levels remain notable.

The overall mean score of 3.53 indicates that mediation is moderately effective in enhancing public sector project success in Enugu Urban, but its impact is less strongly perceived compared to negotiation strategy.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses One

H0₁: Negotiation strategy has no significant impact on the success of public sector projects in Enugu urban.

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression Result

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
Negotiation → Project Success	0.78	0.61	0.60	0.78	19.18	0.000	Reject H0 ₁

Source: Researcher's Computation Using SPSS

The regression result in table 4 shows that negotiation strategy has a strong positive relationship with the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.61$) indicates that approximately 61% of the variation in project success is explained by negotiation strategy.

The beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.78$) shows a positive effect, implying that an increase in effective negotiation among stakeholders leads to improved project success.



The p-value (0.000) is less than the 0.05 significance level; therefore, the result is statistically significant.

Decision

Based on the p-value ($0.000 < 0.05$), the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This means that negotiation strategy has a significant impact on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban.

Hypotheses Two

H₀₄: Mediation strategy has no significant impact on the success of public sector projects in Enugu urban.

Table 5: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Mediation Strategy and Project Success

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
Mediation → Project Success	0.42	0.18	0.17	0.42	1.87	0.062	Do not reject H ₀₂

Source: Researcher's Computation Using SPSS

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed that negotiation strategy has a significant positive impact on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban. This is evidenced by the high mean score (3.97) and the rejection of the null hypothesis. The result implies that negotiation among stakeholders plays a crucial role in reducing project delays, resolving disputes, and improving cost performance. This finding aligns with the view that effective negotiation enhances cooperation and minimizes conflicts in project environments (Kerzner, 2018; PMI, 2021).

Conversely, the study found that mediation strategy does not have a statistically significant impact on the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban, as shown by the acceptance of the null hypothesis and a relatively lower mean score (3.53). This suggests that although mediation exists as a conflict resolution tool, its application may be weak or inconsistently practiced in public sector projects. This finding supports the argument that the effectiveness of mediation depends largely on institutional strength and proper implementation structures (Moore, 2014).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The study concludes that stakeholder conflict management strategies play an important role in the success of public sector projects in Enugu Urban. Specifically, negotiation strategy was found to have a significant positive impact on project success, indicating that effective negotiation among stakeholders enhances project execution by reducing conflicts, minimizing



delays, and improving overall performance. On the other hand, mediation strategy was found not to have a statistically significant impact, suggesting that it is either weakly applied or not effectively institutionalized in public sector project management within the study area. Overall, the study concludes that negotiation remains a more dominant and effective conflict management tool for achieving successful public sector project outcomes in Enugu Urban.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Government agencies and project managers should strengthen the use of negotiation strategies by ensuring continuous dialogue and engagement among stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle to reduce conflicts and improve project outcomes.
- ii. Structured frameworks for mediation should be developed and institutionalized within public sector project implementation to enhance its effectiveness in resolving disputes when they arise

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