

FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT

The Impact of Stakeholder Management on Project Success

A Student Research Proposal

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This research examines how stakeholder-management practices can influence project success, with a proposed application in the construction and infrastructure sector in Saudi Arabia.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Introduction

Projects are widely used by organizations to introduce change, build infrastructure, improve services, and achieve strategic goals. A project may have a clear schedule, budget, and technical plan, but these elements alone do not always guarantee success. Projects are also affected by people and groups who have different interests, expectations, levels of influence, and responsibilities. These people and groups are known as stakeholders.

Stakeholders can include project sponsors, customers, project managers, team members, contractors, suppliers, government entities, consultants, and end users. Their support can help a project move smoothly, while poor communication or unresolved expectations can create delays, resistance, conflict, and additional costs. For this reason, stakeholder management has become an important part of modern project management.

Stakeholder theory explains that organizations should consider the interests of different parties who can affect or be affected by organizational objectives (Freeman, 1984). In project management, this idea means that the project team should identify important stakeholders, understand their needs and influence, communicate with them, involve them when necessary, and manage their expectations throughout the project life cycle.

The Project Management Institute (2021) also emphasizes purposeful stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder management is not only a communication activity. It includes identifying stakeholders, analyzing their influence, selecting suitable communication methods, building relationships, managing expectations, and responding to changes in stakeholder attitudes.

Previous research shows that structured stakeholder-management practices can support better decisions, reduce misunderstandings, and improve cooperation (Yang et al., 2011). This is especially important in construction and infrastructure projects because these projects usually involve many internal and external stakeholders. Therefore, this study proposes to examine the impact of stakeholder management on project success in the construction and infrastructure sector in Saudi Arabia.

In this study, stakeholder management is represented by four main dimensions: stakeholder identification and analysis, communication, engagement, and expectations/conflict management. Project success is represented by time performance, cost performance, quality, achievement of project objectives, and stakeholder satisfaction.

1.2 Research Problem

Many organizations use formal project-management methods, but projects may still face delays, cost overruns, resistance, scope changes, conflict, or failure to achieve expected objectives. These problems may occur even when technical planning is available. One possible reason is that important stakeholders are not identified early, communication is weak, engagement is limited, or expectations are not managed clearly.

Stakeholder environments are also dynamic. A stakeholder who has limited influence at the beginning of a project may become more important later. Aaltonen and Kujala (2016) explain that stakeholder landscapes can differ in complexity and can change over time. Therefore, project teams need to review stakeholder needs and influence during the project instead of treating stakeholder analysis as a one-time activity.

The main research problem is the need to understand whether effective stakeholder management contributes to project success and which stakeholder-management practices may have the strongest relationship with successful project outcomes in the Saudi construction and infrastructure context.

1.2.1 Theoretical Gap

Previous studies provide strong concepts and frameworks for stakeholder management, but the findings come from different industries and countries. A large part of the literature has focused on construction and major projects outside Saudi Arabia. This creates a need to test whether the same relationships are found in the Saudi project environment.

Another theoretical issue is that project success should not be measured only by time and cost. A project can finish on time and within budget but still fail to satisfy users or achieve its main objectives. This study therefore uses a broader view of project success that includes time, cost, quality, objective achievement, and stakeholder satisfaction.

1.2.2 Practical Gap

In practice, project teams may know that stakeholders are important but may not manage them in a consistent way. Communication can become reactive, engagement may happen only when a problem occurs, and expectations may not be clarified early. Construction and infrastructure projects are particularly exposed to this challenge because they involve owners, consultants, contractors, suppliers, government entities, project teams, and end users.

The practical gap is therefore the need for a simple and structured understanding of which stakeholder-management activities should receive more attention in order to support successful project delivery.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is important because stakeholder management affects both project relationships and project outcomes. It can provide useful knowledge for project managers, coordinators, business analysts, engineers, team leaders, and organizational decision-makers.

1.3.1 Academic Significance

Academically, the study brings several stakeholder-management dimensions into one research model and connects them with a multidimensional view of project success. It also proposes testing this relationship in a Saudi context, which can add local evidence to the existing literature.

1.3.2 Practical Significance

Practically, the study may help project-based organizations understand the value of early stakeholder identification, clear communication, meaningful engagement, and active management of

expectations and conflicts. Better practices in these areas may reduce avoidable problems, support faster decisions, improve cooperation, and increase stakeholder satisfaction.

1.4 Research Questions

- What is the relationship between effective stakeholder management and overall project success?
- How does stakeholder identification and analysis influence project success?
- How does effective stakeholder communication influence project success?
- How does stakeholder engagement influence project success?
- How does managing stakeholder expectations and conflicts influence project success?

1.5 Research Objectives

- To examine the relationship between stakeholder management and project success.
- To assess the effect of stakeholder identification and analysis on project success.
- To evaluate the effect of stakeholder communication on project success.
- To determine the effect of stakeholder engagement on project success.
- To examine the effect of managing stakeholder expectations and conflicts on project success.
- To provide practical recommendations for project-based organizations.

1.6 Research Hypotheses

- H1: Effective stakeholder management has a positive and significant relationship with project success.
- H2: Effective stakeholder identification and analysis have a positive and significant effect on project success.
- H3: Effective stakeholder communication has a positive and significant effect on project success.
- H4: Effective stakeholder engagement has a positive and significant effect on project success.
- H5: Effective management of stakeholder expectations and conflicts has a positive and significant effect on project success.

1.7 Research Model

The research model contains one independent variable and one dependent variable.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
Stakeholder Management • Identification & analysis • Communication • Engagement • Expectations & conflict management	Project Success • Time performance • Cost performance • Quality • Objectives achieved • Stakeholder satisfaction

Proposed relationship: Stakeholder Management → Project Success

The model assumes that stronger stakeholder-management practices contribute positively to project success. The four stakeholder-management dimensions form the independent construct, while project success is the dependent construct.

1.8 Proposed Research Methodology

The proposed study uses a quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive-correlational design. Data will be collected once through a structured questionnaire. A five-point Likert scale will be used to measure stakeholder-management practices and project-success outcomes.

1.9 Scope of the Study

- Subject scope: the impact of stakeholder management on project success.
- Sector scope: construction and infrastructure projects in Saudi Arabia.
- Human scope: employees with direct project experience, such as project managers, coordinators, engineers, business analysts, team leaders, and functional managers.
- Method scope: a quantitative questionnaire-based study.
- Proposed sample: approximately 100-150 valid responses, subject to access and university requirements.

1.10 Project Structure

1. Chapter One introduces the research problem, significance, questions, objectives, hypotheses, model, methodology, and scope.
2. Chapter Two reviews the main literature related to stakeholder management and project success.
3. Chapter Three explains the proposed research methodology, sample, questionnaire, variables, analysis, and ethics.
4. Chapter Four presents the proposed plan for analyzing and discussing results after data collection.
5. Chapter Five presents the expected conclusion structure, recommendations, limitations, and future research directions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the main concepts used in the study. It begins with stakeholder theory and stakeholder management, then explains the four stakeholder-management dimensions. It also discusses project success and the relationship between stakeholder management and project success.

2.2 Stakeholder Management

Stakeholder management is the process of understanding and managing relationships with people and groups who can influence a project or are affected by it. Freeman (1984) provided an important foundation for stakeholder thinking by emphasizing that organizations should consider multiple interested parties.

In projects, stakeholder management should continue throughout the project life cycle. Bourne (2016) explains that successful stakeholder relationships depend on identifying the correct stakeholders, understanding changing expectations, and engaging stakeholders at suitable times. PMI (2021) similarly treats stakeholder engagement as an important part of project performance.

Stakeholder management can therefore be understood as a practical cycle: identify stakeholders, analyze them, plan communication and engagement, manage expectations, monitor changes, and adjust the approach when needed.

2.3 Stakeholder Identification and Analysis

Stakeholder identification means determining which individuals, groups, or organizations may influence or be influenced by the project. Early identification is important because a missed stakeholder may later create objections, new requirements, resistance, or delays.

Stakeholder analysis goes further than creating a list of names. It considers stakeholder interests, influence, expectations, attitudes, relationships, and potential impact. Aaltonen and Kujala (2016) show that stakeholder landscapes can be complex and dynamic. This means stakeholder analysis should be reviewed during the project rather than completed only once at the beginning.

For a construction project, for example, an owner may have high decision power, a government entity may have regulatory influence, a contractor may control important delivery activities, and end users may strongly affect final acceptance. Understanding these differences helps the project team decide how much attention and communication each stakeholder requires.

2.4 Stakeholder Communication

Communication is one of the most visible parts of stakeholder management. Effective communication gives stakeholders relevant information, allows feedback, reduces misunderstanding, and supports coordinated decisions.

The same communication method is not suitable for every stakeholder. Senior sponsors may need short progress summaries and major decision points, while technical teams may need detailed

information. Customers or end users may need updates about outcomes, changes, and expected delivery. Communication should therefore be clear, timely, relevant, and adapted to the stakeholder.

Yang et al. (2011) identified communication and structured stakeholder-management processes as important areas in construction projects. This suggests that informal communication alone may not be enough for complex projects.

2.5 Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement is broader than sending information. It means creating meaningful participation and maintaining a working relationship with stakeholders. A stakeholder may be informed, consulted, involved in decisions, or closely managed depending on the stakeholder's influence and interest.

Good engagement can increase commitment and reduce resistance because stakeholders understand the project and have suitable opportunities to express concerns. However, engagement should be planned carefully. Too little engagement may create resistance, while unnecessary engagement can slow decisions. The goal is appropriate engagement rather than maximum engagement.

2.6 Expectations and Conflict Management

Different stakeholders often have different priorities. A sponsor may focus on strategic benefits, a customer on quality, a contractor on scope and payment, and a regulator on compliance. These priorities can create disagreement if expectations are not discussed clearly.

Effective expectation management includes clarifying requirements, explaining constraints, documenting important decisions, negotiating differences, and responding to changes. Conflict is not always negative, but unresolved conflict can affect time, cost, quality, and relationships.

Aaltonen et al. (2015) show that stakeholder positions can change during the early stages of a project. This supports continuous monitoring and flexible engagement rather than assuming stakeholder expectations will remain fixed.

2.7 Project Success

Traditional project success is often measured using time, cost, and quality. These measures remain important because they show whether the project was delivered according to its main constraints. However, modern project success is broader.

A project may meet its schedule and budget but still fail if it does not achieve its intended objectives or satisfy important stakeholders. For this reason, this research measures project success through five indicators: time performance, cost performance, quality, achievement of objectives, and stakeholder satisfaction.

This broader approach is useful because it combines operational performance with the value and acceptance of the project outcome.

2.8 Relationship Between Stakeholder Management and Project Success

There are several reasons to expect a positive relationship between stakeholder management and project success. Early identification can reduce unexpected opposition. Good communication can

reduce information gaps. Engagement can improve commitment and acceptance. Managing expectations can reduce conflict and uncontrolled changes.

These mechanisms can influence schedule, cost, quality, decision speed, and stakeholder satisfaction. Yang et al. (2011) found that systematic stakeholder-management practices are important in construction projects. Aaltonen and Kujala (2016) also show why ongoing stakeholder analysis is needed in complex project environments.

Therefore, the proposed study expects that better stakeholder-management practices will be associated with stronger project-success outcomes.

2.9 Recent Empirical Evidence

Recent studies continue to show the importance of stakeholder management while also showing that context matters. Shaukat et al. (2022) examined stakeholder engagement within sustainable project management and highlighted the importance of considering engagement together with other project practices.

Budiman et al. (2024) reported a relationship between stakeholder management and project success in project-based industries. Turesoy et al. (2024), in construction practice, highlighted stakeholder analysis, communication, monitoring, and participation as important activities and also identified practical challenges such as weak engagement, uncertainty, changing objectives, and limited resources.

These findings support further study of stakeholder-management practices in Saudi construction and infrastructure projects.

2.10 Research Gap

The literature provides useful theories and evidence, but three gaps remain relevant to this study. First, many empirical studies were conducted in specific countries or industries, so their results may not automatically represent Saudi project settings. Second, stakeholder management contains several activities that should be examined together rather than separately. Third, project success is multidimensional and should be measured through more than time and cost.

The proposed research addresses these gaps by using one model that connects stakeholder identification and analysis, communication, engagement, and expectations/conflict management with time, cost, quality, objective achievement, and stakeholder satisfaction in the Saudi construction and infrastructure sector.

2.11 Chapter Summary

The literature indicates that stakeholder management is a continuous and structured process. The four dimensions used in this research represent practical activities that project teams can understand and apply. The literature also supports a broad view of project success. Based on these ideas, the proposed hypotheses expect positive relationships between stakeholder-management practices and project success.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Setting

The proposed empirical setting is the construction and infrastructure sector in Saudi Arabia. This sector is suitable because projects usually involve multiple stakeholders such as owners, consultants, contractors, suppliers, government entities, project teams, and end users. These relationships provide an appropriate setting for examining stakeholder-management practices.

3.2 Research Design and Approach

The study will use a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional, descriptive-correlational design. Quantitative research is appropriate because the study aims to measure stakeholder-management practices and test their statistical relationship with project-success outcomes. Cross-sectional means that data will be collected from respondents at one point in time.

3.3 Population and Sample

The target population will include employees who have direct experience with projects. Possible participants include project managers, project coordinators, engineers, business analysts, team leaders, functional managers, and other project team members.

A practical target of approximately 100-150 valid responses is proposed for this student research project, depending on access and course requirements. Convenience and purposive sampling may be used to reach participants who have relevant project experience.

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

Data will be collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire will have three main parts. The first part will collect general respondent information and project experience. The second part will measure stakeholder-management practices. The third part will measure project-success outcomes.

A five-point Likert scale is proposed: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. This format is simple for respondents and suitable for statistical analysis.

3.5 Variables and Measurement

Variable	Type	Dimensions / Indicators
Stakeholder Management	Independent	Identification & analysis; communication; engagement; expectations & conflict management
Project Success	Dependent	Time; cost; quality; achievement of objectives; stakeholder satisfaction

3.6 Data Analysis

The collected data can be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies can describe respondent characteristics. Means and standard deviations can summarize the main study variables.

Cronbach's alpha can be used to check the internal consistency of questionnaire items. Pearson correlation can be used to examine relationships between stakeholder-management dimensions and project success. Multiple regression analysis can then be used to test the hypotheses and identify which stakeholder-management dimensions significantly predict project success.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Participation should be voluntary. Respondents should be informed that the study is for academic purposes. The questionnaire should not request confidential project information or unnecessary personal identifiers. Responses should be analyzed in aggregate form and used only for the research. Any university requirements related to research ethics and academic integrity should be followed before collecting primary data.

Chapter Four: Proposed Analysis and Discussion Plan

This research document is a proposal and does not claim results that have not been collected. After questionnaire data are collected, Chapter Four can be completed using the following sequence:

6. Describe the respondents and their project experience.
7. Calculate the reliability of the questionnaire scales using Cronbach's alpha.
8. Present the mean and standard deviation for each main variable and dimension.
9. Use Pearson correlation to examine the direction and strength of relationships.
10. Use multiple regression to test H1-H5.
11. Compare the results with previous studies.
12. Explain practical reasons for supported or unsupported hypotheses in the Saudi construction and infrastructure context.

No numerical findings are included in the present proposal because primary data have not yet been collected. This avoids presenting invented or unsupported results.

Chapter Five: Expected Conclusion and Recommendations

The final conclusion will be written after the statistical analysis. Based on the literature reviewed in this proposal, stakeholder management is expected to have a positive relationship with project success. However, the final conclusion must depend on the actual data.

Possible practical recommendations to be evaluated after the study include:

- Identify important stakeholders early and update the stakeholder list during the project.
- Use different communication methods for different stakeholder groups.
- Create clear opportunities for stakeholder feedback and participation.
- Clarify expectations, responsibilities, constraints, and important decisions early.
- Monitor changes in stakeholder influence and attitude.
- Document and manage conflicts before they become major project issues.

Possible limitations may include the use of convenience or purposive sampling, reliance on self-reported questionnaire responses, and the focus on one national and sector context. Future research could compare different sectors or examine additional variables such as leadership, organizational culture, project complexity, or governance.

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Appendix A: Proposed Questionnaire

Research Title: The Impact of Stakeholder Management on Project Success

Purpose: This questionnaire is designed for academic research. It examines stakeholder-management practices and project-success outcomes. Participation is voluntary and responses should be used only for academic purposes.

Section A: Respondent Profile

- Current role: Project Manager / Coordinator / Engineer / Business Analyst / Team Leader / Functional Manager / Other
- Years of project experience: Less than 2 / 2-5 / 6-10 / More than 10
- Main project sector: Construction / Infrastructure / Other related project-based activity
- Approximate number of projects participated in: 1-2 / 3-5 / More than 5

For Sections B and C, use: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Section B: Stakeholder Management

B1. Stakeholder Identification and Analysis

13. Important project stakeholders are identified early.
14. The project team analyzes stakeholder interests and expectations.
15. The level of stakeholder influence is considered when planning project activities.
16. Stakeholder information is reviewed when project conditions change.

B2. Stakeholder Communication

17. Stakeholders receive relevant project information in a timely manner.
18. Communication methods are selected according to stakeholder needs.
19. Stakeholders have clear channels for asking questions or giving feedback.
20. Important project changes are communicated clearly to affected stakeholders.

B3. Stakeholder Engagement

21. Key stakeholders are involved at appropriate stages of the project.
22. The project team actively seeks input from important stakeholders.
23. Stakeholder participation supports project decision-making.
24. The project team works to maintain positive stakeholder relationships.

B4. Expectations and Conflict Management

25. Stakeholder expectations are clarified early in the project.
26. Project constraints and limitations are communicated honestly.
27. Disagreements with stakeholders are addressed in a timely manner.
28. Changes in stakeholder expectations are monitored and managed.

Section C: Project Success

29. The project is generally completed according to the planned schedule.

- 30. The project is generally delivered within the approved budget.
- 31. The project output meets the expected quality requirements.
- 32. The project achieves its main objectives.
- 33. Key stakeholders are satisfied with the project outcome.

Section D: Optional Open Comment

In your opinion, what is the most important stakeholder-management practice for project success?
