

Midocean University

Faculty of Management

Project Mangment / Bachelor of Project Management



Project title

Causes of Project Failure

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2.Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of existing literature related to project failure in the construction industry. It highlights the importance of understanding the variables that influence project outcomes and sets the foundation for the empirical study. The review is structured around key research variables—unclear objectives, poor planning, lack of communication, inadequate resources, poor leadership, risk management failure, and scope creep—and explores their interrelationships.

2.2 Research Variable

2.2.1 Unclear Objectives

Unclear objectives are a major contributor to project failure. Herz and Krezdorn (2021) emphasize that ambiguity in project goals leads to misalignment, inefficient resource use, and stakeholder dissatisfaction. Shaker (2010) adds that without well-defined deliverables, teams struggle to measure progress, resulting in scope drift. Theoretical perspectives suggest that goal clarity is essential for aligning stakeholder expectations and guiding project execution.

2.2.2 Poor Planning

Poor planning encompasses unrealistic timelines, inadequate scheduling, and lack of contingency measures. Kerzner (2022) argues that planning is the backbone of successful project management. Turner (2016) highlights that poor planning often results from insufficient stakeholder engagement and flawed assumptions. The evolution of planning theories underscores the need for integrated scheduling, budgeting, and risk anticipation.

2.2.3 Lack of Communication

Communication failures can derail projects. Raymond (2024) identifies poor communication as a leading cause of delays and cost overruns. Asana (n.d.) stresses the importance of clear reporting lines and feedback loops. The literature supports the use of stakeholder communication models and collaborative platforms to enhance transparency and coordination.

2.2.4 Inadequate Resources

Resource constraints—financial, human, or technological—impact project execution. Pinto (2019) notes that under-resourced projects face delays and quality issues. Kumarage et al. (2023) discuss labor shortages in construction and advocate for strategic workforce planning. Resource-based theories highlight the importance of aligning capabilities with project demands.

2.2.5 Poor Leadership

Leadership influences project direction, motivation, and conflict resolution. Turner (2016) and Herz & Krezdorn (2022) link poor leadership to disorganization and low morale. Transformational and situational leadership theories provide frameworks for understanding how leadership styles affect project outcomes.

2.2.6 Risk Management Failure

Denicol et al. (2020) argue that proactive risk management is essential, especially in megaprojects. Failure to identify and mitigate risks early can lead to significant disruptions. Risk management frameworks emphasize early identification, impact analysis, and contingency planning.

2.2.7 Scope Creep

Scope creep refers to uncontrolled changes in project scope. Project-Management.com (n.d.) warns that without change control, projects become unmanageable. Effective scope management involves documentation, stakeholder agreement, and disciplined change tracking.

2.3 The Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study is project success or failure. It represents the overall outcome of a construction project, measured by its ability to meet predefined objectives such as budget, timeline, quality standards, and stakeholder satisfaction. Project success or failure is influenced by the seven independent variables discussed in this chapter—unclear objectives, poor planning, lack of communication, inadequate resources, poor leadership, risk management failure, and scope creep. Understanding how these factors interact and impact the dependent variable is essential for developing effective project management strategies and improving outcomes in the construction industry.

2.4 Relationships Among Research Variables

The literature reveals strong interdependencies among the variables. For instance, poor planning often leads to resource shortages and scope creep. Unclear objectives can exacerbate communication issues and leadership challenges. These relationships suggest that project failure is rarely caused by a single factor but by a combination of interacting variables. Conceptual models, such as the one developed in this study, help visualize these dynamics and guide empirical analysis.

2.5 Conclusion

This literature review synthesizes key findings from academic and industry sources, highlighting the multifaceted nature of project failure. It establishes a conceptual framework for analyzing the causes and relationships among variables. The insights gained will inform the empirical study and contribute to developing strategies for improving project success in the construction industry.

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