

Stakeholder Management Practices and Project Success in Saudi Public Sector Projects in Riyadh

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1. Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Projects are a main tool for organizations to implement strategy, improve services, and deliver public value. However, projects often involve uncertainty, multiple stakeholders, and changing expectations. When projects are delayed or deliver low quality, the results affect budgets, public trust, and organizational performance. For this reason, effective project management is needed to improve delivery and reduce failure.

One important area in project management is stakeholder management. Stakeholders are individuals or groups who can affect the project or be affected by it. They include sponsors, clients, end users, regulators, suppliers, and internal departments. Stakeholders can support a project, but they can also create risks if their expectations are not managed well. Therefore, understanding stakeholders and engaging them appropriately is a key success factor.

In Saudi Arabia, many public sector projects are large and visible, especially in Riyadh. These projects often involve government entities, private contractors, service providers, and citizens. Stakeholder expectations can be high, and communication can be complex. In such an environment, effective stakeholder management is necessary to build trust, handle conflicts, and support decision making.

Although stakeholder management is recognized as important, organizations often struggle to apply it consistently. Some project teams focus only on technical delivery and underestimate stakeholder influence. Others communicate frequently but without a clear plan, which can lead to confusion and dissatisfaction. These challenges raise an important question: which stakeholder management practices are most helpful for improving project success?

This project studies stakeholder management practices as the independent variable and project success as the dependent variable. The purpose is to examine how effective stakeholder identification, engagement planning, communication, and monitoring can improve project outcomes in Saudi public sector projects in Riyadh. The study aims to provide useful knowledge for both researchers and practitioners.

1.2. Research Problem

Despite the importance of stakeholder management, many projects still face stakeholder resistance, unclear expectations, and late changes. In Saudi public sector projects, these issues can lead to delays, cost overruns, and lower stakeholder satisfaction. The research problem is that project teams may not know which stakeholder management practices most strongly support project success, and organizations may lack clear indicators to evaluate stakeholder engagement.

1.2.1. Theoretical Gaps

The literature provides different approaches for stakeholder analysis and engagement (for example, power–interest mapping, salience models, and engagement assessment). However, studies do not always agree on which practices have the strongest impact on project success.

Also, many studies examine stakeholder management in private sector or international contexts. There is limited research focusing specifically on Saudi public sector projects in Riyadh, where governance, public accountability, and multi-agency coordination can influence stakeholder behavior.

1.2.2. Practical Gaps

In practice, stakeholder management is sometimes treated as informal communication rather than a planned process. Stakeholder registers may not be updated, and engagement plans may not be monitored during execution.

In addition, project teams may focus mainly on powerful stakeholders and ignore other affected groups until issues appear. This can create conflicts, rework, and loss of support.

Main Research Question: How do stakeholder management practices influence project success in Saudi public sector projects in Riyadh?

1.3. Research Significance

1.3.1. At the theoretical level

At the theoretical level, this study supports the literature by connecting specific stakeholder management practices to project success indicators. It clarifies how identification, analysis, communication, and engagement monitoring can contribute to project outcomes.

The study also adds context-based evidence from Saudi public sector projects in Riyadh, which can support future research and comparisons across sectors and countries.

1.3.2. At the practical level

At the practical level, the findings can help project managers and public organizations improve stakeholder engagement planning, reduce resistance, and communicate more effectively.

The study can also support decision makers by suggesting practical indicators to evaluate stakeholder engagement and by highlighting practices that can improve schedule, cost, quality, and stakeholder satisfaction.

1.4. Research Questions

Main Research Question:

How do stakeholder management practices influence project success in Saudi public sector projects in Riyadh?

Sub-questions:

1. How do stakeholder identification and analysis practices affect project outcomes?
2. How does stakeholder communication planning influence stakeholder satisfaction?
3. How does monitoring stakeholder engagement and taking corrective actions affect project performance (time and cost)?
4. What are the most common stakeholder challenges in Saudi public sector projects in Riyadh?

1.5. Research Objectives

- To examine the relationship between stakeholder management practices and project success in Saudi public sector projects in Riyadh.
- To identify the key stakeholder management practices used by project teams (identification, analysis, engagement planning, communication, and monitoring).
- To assess how these practices relate to project performance indicators (time, cost, quality) and stakeholder satisfaction.
- To provide practical recommendations to improve stakeholder management in public sector project environments.

1.6. Research Hypotheses

H1: Stakeholder management practices have a positive and significant relationship with overall project success.

H2: Effective stakeholder identification and analysis have a positive relationship with project time performance.

H3: Effective stakeholder communication planning has a positive relationship with stakeholder satisfaction.

H4: Monitoring stakeholder engagement and taking corrective actions have a positive relationship with project cost control and reduced change requests.

1.7. Research Model

Independent Variable (IV): Stakeholder Management Practices

- Stakeholder identification and analysis (stakeholder register, power–interest mapping)
- Engagement planning and communication approach
- Monitoring engagement and corrective actions

Dependent Variable (DV): Project Success / Project Performance

- Schedule (time) performance
- Cost performance
- Quality performance
- Stakeholder satisfaction

Expected direction: Stronger stakeholder management practices → Higher project success.

1.8. Research Methodology

This project will use a quantitative research approach using a survey method. A survey is suitable because it allows collecting data from a larger group of project participants and analyzing relationships statistically.

Suggested industry/organization for the empirical study: the study can be conducted in Saudi public sector organizations in Riyadh that manage multiple projects, such as government service improvement programs, digital transformation initiatives, or infrastructure-related departments. Respondents may include project managers, team leaders, and stakeholder engagement officers.

Population and sample: the target population includes project managers and project team members working on public sector projects in Riyadh. A purposive or convenience sampling approach may be used depending on access, with an expected sample size of about 80–150 respondents.

Data collection instrument: a structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale. Items will measure stakeholder management practices and project success indicators.

Data analysis: descriptive statistics will summarize the data. Reliability tests (e.g., Cronbach's alpha) can be used. Correlation and regression analysis can test the hypotheses.

Ethics: participation will be voluntary, and responses will be anonymous. Data will be used for academic purposes only.

1.9. Scope of The Study

Geographical scope: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Sector scope: Saudi public sector projects (service, infrastructure, or digital transformation).

Topic scope: stakeholder identification, engagement planning, communication, and engagement monitoring as they relate to project success.

Time scope: the study is planned for the current academic semester and focuses on recent projects within the last 12–24 months.

1.10. The Suggested Project Structure

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- Chapter 2: Literature Review
- Chapter 3: Research Methodology
- Chapter 4: Statistical Analysis
- Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

2.Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews key concepts and previous research related to stakeholder management and project success. It explains the main variables in this study and provides a basis for the research model and hypotheses. The review also highlights why stakeholder management is especially important in public sector projects where many groups are affected and expectations can change.

2.2. The independent variable

The independent variable is stakeholder management practices. Stakeholder management includes identifying stakeholders, analyzing their power and interest, planning engagement, communicating, and monitoring engagement during the project.

Common tools include stakeholder registers, power–interest matrices, stakeholder engagement assessment, and communication plans. Effective stakeholder management aims to align expectations, reduce resistance, and build support for project decisions.

2.3. The dependent variable

The dependent variable is project success or project performance. Traditional measures include time, cost, and quality. Many studies also include stakeholder satisfaction as a success indicator, because projects can be technically successful but still fail if stakeholders reject the outcome.

In this study, project success is reflected through schedule performance, cost performance, quality performance, and stakeholder satisfaction.

2.4. The relationship between the independent and the dependent variables

Previous research suggests that effective stakeholder management supports project success by improving communication, reducing conflict, and enabling faster decisions. When stakeholders understand project goals and feel engaged, they are more likely to support delivery and accept changes.

In contrast, weak stakeholder management can lead to misunderstandings, late requirement changes, resistance, and delays. Therefore, this study expects a positive relationship between stakeholder management practices and project success in Saudi public sector projects in Riyadh.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter provided the theoretical foundation for the study by defining stakeholder management practices and project success and explaining the relationship between them.

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