HARMONY IN CONSTRUCTION: UNRAVELLING STAKEHOLDER DYNAMICS IN A COMMUNITY-CENTRIC PROJECT

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Abstract: The successful delivery of construction projects is contingent upon a myriad of factors, with effective stakeholder management standing out as a linchpin in the intricate web of project dynamics. This study aimed at exploring the dynamics of stakeholder relationships in the construction project and provide insights that can inform both theory and practice in the realm of construction project management. Qualitative approach was used to explore the dynamics of stakeholder relationships during the delivery of a construction project. Semi structured interviews municipal mangers, project managers and focus group discussions were conducted community members. Political interference and lack of community involvement were found to have negative impact toward on the delivery of construction project. Politicisation of service delivery by ward councillors have been found to have to be the causal factor for lack of community involvement during the delivery of construction projects. Project managers and practitioners should adopt a nuanced approach that extends beyond conventional planning and execution, recognizing the socio-economic and cultural intricacies of the community. The success of construction projects, as evidenced in Kayamandi, hinges on fostering collaboration and building partnerships with local entities. This study contributes to the evolving discourse on construction project management, theory, policy and practice in terms of stakeholder engagement strategies in the delivery of construction projects within the broader municipal landscape.
Keywords: *Stakeholders management, construction project and municipality*

Introduction and Background

The successful delivery of construction projects is contingent upon a myriad of factors, with effective stakeholder management standing out as a linchpin in the intricate web of project dynamics (Kaza, 2019). This study delves into the nuanced interplay between stakeholder management and the delivery of a selected construction project in Kayamandi, situated within the Stellenbosch Municipality. Kayamandi, a vibrant and culturally rich community, presents a unique context where the convergence of diverse stakeholders, ranging from local residents to regulatory bodies, demands a strategic and comprehensive approach to project management. According to Locatelli, Ika, Drouin, Müller, Huemann, Söderlund, Geraldi and Clegg (2023) burgeoning field of construction project management is increasingly recognizing the pivotal role played by stakeholders in the realization of successful project outcomes. This recognition is underscored by the multifaceted nature of construction projects, where diverse interests, expectations, and concerns converge to shape the trajectory of development (Blomkamp 2022). Against this backdrop, the construction project in Kayamandi at Stellenbosch Municipality emerges as a microcosm reflecting the broader challenges and opportunities inherent in stakeholder engagement within a community-driven context.

Stakeholder management, in the context of construction projects, extends beyond the conventional realms of project planning and execution (Mabelo 2020). It becomes a strategic imperative, encompassing a proactive approach to identifying, understanding, and responding to the myriad stakeholders who hold stakes in the project's success (Flaherty and Bartels 2019). In Kayamandi, this entails not only engaging with local residents but also navigating the regulatory landscape, collaborating with governmental bodies, and fostering partnerships with local businesses. The success of the construction project hinges on the ability to harmonize these diverse interests, ensuring that each stakeholder's perspective is acknowledged and integrated into the project's framework.

The rationale for undertaking this study lies in the recognition that effective stakeholder management is not a one-size-fits-all proposition but a contextualized, dynamic process. By examining the interplay between stakeholder management strategies and the delivery of the construction project in Kayamandi, valuable insights can be gleaned for both academia and practitioners. The study aims to contribute to the evolving discourse on construction project management, offering a nuanced understanding of how stakeholder dynamics influence project outcomes, with implications for future projects in similar community-centric settings. Through a comprehensive exploration of this interdependence, the study aspires to provide actionable recommendations for optimizing stakeholder engagement strategies in the delivery of construction projects within the broader municipal landscape.

Theoretical framework

Theoretical framework of this study is anchored on Stakeholder Theory. Stakeholder Theory posits that organizations should recognize and prioritize the interests of all individuals or groups (stakeholders) who can affect or are affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives (Schaltegger, Hörisch and Freeman 2019). Stakeholder Theory encourages a holistic view of project management by considering the needs and concerns of all stakeholders (Martinsuo and Geraldi 2020). In the context of the construction project in Kayamandi, stakeholders could include local residents, community leaders, government bodies, contractors, and more. Examining the project through the lens of Stakeholder Theory allows for a comprehensive understanding of the relationships and dynamics at play (Shaukat, Latif, Sajjad and Eweje 2022).

Given the community-centric nature of the study, Stakeholder Theory aligns with the emphasis on community engagement (Shaukat et al 2022). It recognizes the community as a critical stakeholder group and emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing their needs and expectations throughout the project lifecycle (Schaltegger et al 2019). Stakeholder Theory highlights the need to balance the interests of different stakeholders. In a construction project, conflicting interests may arise between the local community and regulatory authorities. The theory provides a framework for navigating these conflicts and finding equitable solutions that consider multiple perspectives. This study adopted Stakeholder Theory as the theoretical basis to explore the dynamics of stakeholder relationships in the construction project in Kayamandi and provide insights that can inform both theory and practice in the realm of construction project management.

Literature review

The influence of stakeholder dynamics on the delivery of construction project.

Drawing from the study by Luo, Jin, Shen, Wang, Liang, Li, X. and Li, (2020) critical issues such as insufficient attention to resource planning, substantial assembly delays, overproduction, excess inventory, and extended lead times. The authors reported that the underlying causes of these challenges are attributed to inadequate supply chain planning, ineffective communication among stakeholders, and deficient workflow control. Stakeholder management in projects involves the management and fulfillment of stakeholder expectations. Traditionally, the emphasis in this domain has been on the viewpoint of the focal firm or the project, sometimes overlooking the unique perspectives and expectations of the project stakeholders themselves. The focal firm or project team typically takes the lead in managing stakeholders, but it is equally important to consider the expectations of the stakeholders themselves (Vuorinen and Martinsuo 2019). Given the study by Naranjo-Zolotov (2019) it can be argued that stakeholders, who can be individuals or groups directly or indirectly affected by the project, often have specific expectations regarding the outcomes, benefits, and overall value created by the project.

However, Vuorinen and Martinsuo (2019) further argued that a key factor influencing stakeholder management strategies is the stakeholders' expectations related to the creation of value by the project. In other words, stakeholders are likely to employ different influence strategies based on what they anticipate the project will deliver in terms of benefits, positive outcomes, or value to their respective interests. Understanding and addressing these diverse expectations become crucial for effective stakeholder management. This approach recognizes that stakeholders bring varied perspectives, interests, and concerns to the table, and their engagement should go beyond a mere compliance-focused strategy. Instead, it calls for a more inclusive and nuanced approach that considers the unique expectations of each stakeholder, thereby fostering better collaboration, communication, and ultimately, successful project outcomes.

A qualitative study by Masiya, Mazenda and Davids (2019) averred that facilitating citizen-focused service delivery necessitates a proactive approach that prioritizes and encourages public participation. This strategy aims to strengthen the collaboration between local communities and municipal officials, particularly during the critical stage of implementing policies. By actively involving citizens in decision-making processes, municipalities can gain valuable insights, enhance transparency, and ensure that the services provided align more closely with the actual needs and preferences of the community members. The study went on highlighting that this collaborative effort creates a more inclusive and responsive framework for delivering services, ultimately fostering a stronger connection between the government and the citizens it serves.

Citizen dissatisfaction with service delivery is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors. One significant aspect is the perception of relative deprivation and inequality, where citizens may feel that their access to resources, opportunities, or services is unfairly limited compared to others (Saidu and Yeom 2020). Additionally, unfulfilled political promises contribute to dissatisfaction, as citizens may perceive a gap between what was pledged during political campaigns and the actual delivery of services.

Uneven access to services is another critical factor, where certain segments of the population may face barriers or disparities in receiving essential services. The provision of substandard services further exacerbates dissatisfaction, as citizens expect and deserve

high-quality service delivery. The legacy of high levels of poverty, including disparities stemming from the post-apartheid regime, adds a layer of complexity, creating socio-economic challenges that impact the overall satisfaction of citizens with service delivery. Addressing these multifaceted issues requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach to ensure equitable and effective service delivery for all citizens (Masiya, Davids and Mangai 2019).

Methodology

A qualitative approach was used to explore the dynamics of stakeholder relationships during the delivery of a construction project. The target population for this study was the municipal manger, project managers and community members. The table below depicts the selected sample:

Table 1: Target population and selected sample.

Occupation	Target population (approximately)	Selected sample
Community members	87	10
Project Managers	5	5
Municipal Managers	2	2
Total	**94**	**17**

Source: Author's calculation

Critical case sampling was used to engage the participants who deemed to have in-depth knowledge about dynamics of stakeholder relationships in the construction project. The overall sample for this study was 14 participants consist of 7 community members, 5 project managers and 2 Municipal managers. From the selected sample (see table 1) 3 community members withdrew from the study. Structured interviews were conducted with project managers and 2 Municipal managers and focus group discussions were conducted community members and all 14 responded. The interviews were conducted face to face in their respective offices, homes and focus group were conducted in a community hall. The researcher visited each participant in their offices and homes to extend an invitation to participate into the study. Field notes were used to capture the data during the interviews and focus group discussions. The table below presents the profile of the participants.

Table 2: Participants profile.

Respondents	Occupation	Gender	Ethnicity	Years of experience/residence
R1	Community members	Male	Black	8
R2	Community members	Male	Black	22
R3	Community members	Male	Black	31
R4	Community members	Female	Black	15
R5	Community members	Female	Black	33
R6	Community members	Female	Black	36
R7	Community members	Female	Black	10
R8	Municipal Managers	Female	Black	5
R9	Municipal Managers	Male	Black	6
R10	Project Managers	Female	Black	15
R11	Project Managers	Male	White	17
R12	Project Managers	Male	Coloured	12

| R13 | Project Managers | Female | Black | 9 |
| R14 | Project Managers | Male | Black | 18 |

Source: Author's calculation

Data analysis
Inductive thematic analysis was the bases at which the data was analyzed in this study. ATLAS.ti software was used to generate codes and themes; therefore, the researcher captured all interview and focus group responses to the software. The software generated codes and themes were identified.

Pilot study
The interview guide underwent pre-testing with a subset of the sampled population, involving three distinct groups: project managers, municipal managers, and community members. Each group received two interviews during the pilot phase of the study. To ensure consistency and mitigate subjectivity and bias, the researcher applied the same discretion used in the full-scale research process.

Trustworthy and validity
The opinions of respondents from project managers, municipal managers and community members were cross-verified with supporting theories and literature to identify patterns. The researcher fostered a casual and comfortable environment to build trust, providing accurate information. Follow-up questions were utilized to confirm and clarify information essential for data analysis, ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the collected data.

Ethical Clearance
This study was approved by the Research Ethic Committee from Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). Gatekeeper letter was obtained before data collection from the participants. The purpose of the study was explained to each participant. The participants were informed that their identity and confidentiality would be preserved, even if the subject matter might not be open to debate.

Findings and Discussions
In this section, the study explores the rich tapestry of findings gleaned from our qualitative research endeavors. Through an in-depth examination of participant narratives, thematic analyses, and emergent patterns, the study aims to unravel the nuanced to understand the dynamics of stakeholder relationships in the construction project and provide insights that can inform both theory and practice in the realm of construction project management. Subsequently, the study engages in thoughtful discussions that delve into the implications and broader context of these findings, fostering a deeper comprehension of the qualitative dimensions within the research framework. However, the following themes emerged from the data.

Theme 1: Political interference
Most respondents claimed that the involvement of ward councilors comes with politicizing municipal project aimed at developing the community. Community members believe that ward councilors should carry mandate from the communities when it comes to service delivery, not the mandate from their political parties or personal interest. Drawing from Selepe (2023) ward councilors should serve as the representatives of particular communities and are well-positioned to serve as the bridge between the residents and the municipality. The author further argued that their role involves conveying the needs and

issues of the people to the municipality, as well as engaging and informing the community about municipal services and programs. Some community members said "*Ward councilors are so entitled and when they get to municipal council to advocate for community development, they think it is the right time for time to make decisions that favor their organizations not the public*" The study by Panday and Chowdhury (2020) argue that ward councilors are the democratically elected representatives of the people in their area. They are expected to behave in an honest and transparent way and to always remain accountable to their voters. Based on the municipal manager and project manager utterances it can be argued that ward councilors prioritise their political party over the needs of the community. Municipal manager and project managers said "*ward councilors demanded that they (members from their political parties) want to see the representation of people from their community in the workforce of the construction project. Yet there were community members from their community working in the project.*" According to Musitha et al (2022) the primary responsibility of a ward councilor is to represent the interests of the residents in the municipality, and this should be carried out in collaboration with the ward councilors. It is essential for ward councilors to act independently of any political party influence and focus on serving all residents within the ward. The authors further reported that this underscores the reason why political parties should not have a presence on the councilors. The ward councilor bears accountability to the residents and is obliged to regularly update them on municipal council matters. Given the diverse composition of the ward councilors, should serve as an optimal mechanism for cultivating public relations between the council and the community.

Theme 2: Community involvement

Based on the responses of project managers and municipal managers it can be argued that community members have unimaginable influence on the delivery of construction project. They said "*community members opt to unrest as a mechanism to express their dissatisfaction about the project*" public participation during the delivery of construction projects promotes stakeholder engagement and collaboration and justice in service delivery to everyone in the community (Saidu and Yeom 2020). Drawing from the responses of community members it is evident that municipality is doing a tick box exercise when it comes to ensuring that the public participate actively during the delivery of services. Community members said "*Municipality claim to have engaged us during the planning of the construction project yet they came to brief us on IDP meeting about the development they already planned*" Community involvement should start from needs analysis to the handover of the project. The study by Sachs, et al (2019) highlighted that community involvement promotes sustainable development practices. By engaging community members, construction projects can be designed with a focus on environmental sustainability. Additionally, involving residents in decision-making processes can result in better resource allocation, reducing waste and ensuring long-term sustainability. Drawing from Flaherty and Bartels (2019) working closely with the community allows housing providers and policymakers to gain a deeper understanding of the specific challenges and needs of residents. This insight enables the development of housing solutions that address the unique circumstances of the community, catering to factors such as affordability, accessibility, and social support systems. However, when community members actively participate in the decision-making process, their valuable insights and input can lead to more successful project outcomes. They can provide local knowledge, identify potential

issues, and assist in designing housing plans that are well-suited to the community's needs (Naranjo-Zolotov 2019).

Conclusion and recommendations

The findings of this study reveal a compelling interdependence between effective stakeholder management and the successful delivery of construction projects, with particular relevance to the unique community context of Kayamandi in the Stellenbosch Municipality. Drawing from both theoretical frameworks and practical insights, this conclusion encompasses key implications for theory, practice, and policy.

The study contributes to the theoretical discourse on construction project management by highlighting the pivotal role of stakeholders. It emphasizes the need for an expanded understanding of stakeholder dynamics within community-centric projects, emphasizing the importance of tailoring strategies to the specific socio-economic and cultural landscapes.

Practically, the study underscores the strategic imperative of proactive stakeholder management throughout the project lifecycle. Project managers and practitioners are urged to adopt a nuanced approach that extends beyond conventional planning and execution, recognizing the socio-economic and cultural intricacies of the community. The success of construction projects, as evidenced in Kayamandi, hinges on fostering collaboration, managing political interference, and building partnerships with local entities. Practical insights gleaned from this study inform project management strategies, leading to more successful outcomes in similar community-driven contexts. On the policy front, this study advocates for the integration of community-centric stakeholder management principles into construction project guidelines. Municipalities and regulatory bodies should consider the diverse interests and cultural sensitivities present in communities like Kayamandi when formulating policies. This ensures that construction projects align with the community's needs and aspirations, fostering sustainable development. Policymakers are encouraged to view stakeholder engagement not merely as a project requirement but as a catalyst for positive community impact.

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