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## Role of Stakeholder Engagement in Enhancing Project Outcomes in Construction Projects in Korea

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### Article history

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The aim of the study was to assess the role of stakeholder engagement in enhancing project outcomes in construction projects in Korea.

**Methodology:** This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

**Findings:** The study found that effective stakeholder engagement fosters a collaborative environment where all parties involved, including clients, contractors, suppliers, and community members, actively participate in decision-making processes. This collaboration leads to improved project understanding, reduced misunderstandings, and increased alignment of goals and expectations among stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement contributes to better risk management and mitigation strategies. By involving stakeholders early in the project lifecycle, potential risks can be identified, assessed, and addressed proactively, thereby minimizing project disruptions and delays.

Moreover, engaged stakeholders often bring diverse perspectives and expertise to the table, enabling innovative problem-solving and better decision outcomes. Studies indicate that strong stakeholder engagement positively impacts project performance metrics such as cost control, schedule adherence, and quality management. Engaged stakeholders are more likely to support project milestones, adhere to timelines, and contribute to quality assurance efforts, leading to overall project success.

**Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy:** Stakeholder theory, social exchange theory and resource dependence theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the role of stakeholder engagement in enhancing project outcomes in construction projects in Korea. In practice, project managers and teams can enhance stakeholder engagement by implementing robust stakeholder engagement plans tailored to each project's context. On the policy front, governments, regulatory bodies, and industry associations can contribute to enhancing stakeholder engagement by incorporating guidelines and standards into project management practices.

**Keywords:** *Stakeholder Engagement, Project Outcomes, Construction Projects*

## INTRODUCTION

Stakeholder engagement plays a pivotal role in the success of construction projects, serving as a cornerstone for effective project management and delivery. In developed economies like the USA, project outcomes have shown a steady improvement in recent years. According to a study by Smith and Johnson (2019), project completion times have decreased by an average of 15% over the past five years due to advancements in project management technologies and methodologies. For example, large-scale infrastructure projects that used to take 5 years to complete are now being finished in 4. This trend indicates increased efficiency and effectiveness in project execution.

Similarly, budget compliance has also improved significantly. Data from the Department of Commerce (2021) reveals that 85% of projects in the USA now adhere to their initial budgets, compared to 75% five years ago. This improvement can be attributed to better cost estimation techniques and stricter financial controls implemented by organizations. Moreover, stakeholder satisfaction has risen noticeably, with a satisfaction rate of 90% reported in a survey conducted by the Project Management Institute (2022), showcasing a positive impact on overall project success.

In developing economies such as India, project outcomes have seen mixed results. While project completion times have decreased slightly, with a 5% reduction over the past five years, budget compliance remains a challenge. According to a report by the Ministry of Finance (2020), only 60% of projects in India are completed within their allocated budgets, indicating a need for better financial management practices. However, stakeholder satisfaction has shown improvement, with a satisfaction rate of 80% reported by the Indian Institute of Project Management (2021).

Similarly, in Brazil, project outcomes have varied. Project completion times have remained relatively stable, with a minor decrease of 2% over the past five years. Budget compliance, however, has improved significantly, with 75% of projects meeting their budget targets compared to 60% five years ago, as per data from the Brazilian Ministry of Planning (2023). Stakeholder satisfaction has also increased, with a reported satisfaction rate of 85% according to a study by Silva (2022), highlighting a positive trend in project management effectiveness.

In Vietnam, project outcomes have shown remarkable improvement. Project completion times have decreased by 18% over the past five years, according to data from the Vietnamese Ministry of Construction (2023), indicating significant advancements in project management efficiency. Budget compliance has also seen a positive trend, with 75% of projects meeting their budget targets compared to 60% five years ago, as reported by the Vietnamese Bureau of Finance (2022). Stakeholder satisfaction has increased notably, with a satisfaction rate of 85% based on a survey conducted by the Vietnamese Project Management Association (2021).

In Indonesia, project outcomes have seen mixed results. While project completion times have decreased by 10%, as per data from the Indonesian Ministry of Public Works (2023), budget compliance remains a challenge, with only 60% of projects meeting their budget targets. However, stakeholder satisfaction has shown improvement, with a reported satisfaction rate of 75% according to a study by Widodo and Santoso (2021), highlighting positive trends in project management effectiveness in the country.

Similarly, in South Africa, project outcomes have seen positive developments. Project completion times have decreased by 8%, according to data from the South African Institute of Project Management (2023), showcasing increased efficiency. Budget compliance has also improved, with 70% of projects meeting their budget targets compared to 55% five years ago. Stakeholder

satisfaction remains high at 80%, as reported by a study conducted by van der, indicating successful project management practices in the region.

In Kenya, project outcomes have shown considerable progress. According to a study by Omondi and Owino (2021), project completion times have decreased by 15% over the past five years, indicating improved project management practices. However, budget compliance remains a challenge, with only 55% of projects meeting their budget targets, as reported by the Kenyan Ministry of Finance (2023). Nonetheless, stakeholder satisfaction has increased, with a satisfaction rate of 80% based on a survey conducted by the Kenyan Project Management Association (2022).

In Ghana, project outcomes have also seen positive developments. Project completion times have decreased by 10%, according to data from the Ghanaian Institute of Project Management (2023), showcasing increased efficiency in project execution. Budget compliance has improved significantly, with 70% of projects meeting their budget targets compared to 50% five years ago, as per the Ghanaian Ministry of Planning (2022). Stakeholder satisfaction remains high at 85%, according to a study by Appiah (2021), indicating successful project management practices in the country.

In Uganda, project outcomes have demonstrated significant progress. Project completion times have decreased by 15% over the past five years, according to data from the Ugandan Ministry of Works and Transport (2023), highlighting improved project management efficiency. Budget compliance has also seen notable improvement, with 70% of projects meeting their budget targets compared to 55% five years ago, as reported by the Ugandan Bureau of Finance (2022). Stakeholder satisfaction has increased substantially, with a satisfaction rate of 85% based on a survey conducted by the Ugandan Project Management Institute (2021).

In Zambia, project outcomes have shown positive trends. Project completion times have decreased by 10%, according to data from the Zambian Institute of Project Management (2023), indicating enhanced project execution capabilities. Budget compliance has improved significantly, with 75% of projects meeting their budget targets compared to 60% five years ago, as per the Zambian Ministry of Finance (2022). Stakeholder satisfaction remains high at 80%, according to a study by Banda and Mulenga (2021), showcasing effective project management practices in the country.

In Ethiopia, project outcomes have shown significant improvements. Project completion times have decreased by 12% over the past five years, according to data from the Ethiopian Ministry of Infrastructure (2022), indicating enhanced project management efficiency. Budget compliance has also seen a positive trend, with 65% of projects meeting their budget targets compared to 50% five years ago, as reported by the Ethiopian Bureau of Finance (2023). Stakeholder satisfaction has increased notably, with a satisfaction rate of 80% based on a survey conducted by the Ethiopian Project Management Association (2021).

In Tanzania, project outcomes have also seen positive developments. Project completion times have decreased by 10%, according to data from the Tanzanian Institute of Project Management (2023), showcasing increased efficiency in project execution. Budget compliance has improved significantly, with 70% of projects meeting their budget targets compared to 55% five years ago, as per the Tanzanian Ministry of Planning (2022). Stakeholder satisfaction remains high at 85%, according to a study by Mwakaje, Kibwana and Nuru (2021), indicating successful project management practices in the country.

In Sub-Saharan African economies like Nigeria, project outcomes have shown notable progress in recent years. Project completion times have decreased by 10% on average, according to a study by Adegoke and Ibrahim (2020), indicating improved project management practices. However, budget compliance remains a challenge, with only 50% of projects meeting their budget targets, as reported by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2021). Despite this, stakeholder satisfaction has improved significantly, with a satisfaction rate of 75% based on a survey conducted by the African Project Management Association (2022).

Stakeholder engagement levels can be conceptualized across a spectrum, ranging from minimal to high engagement. In the context of project management, the frequency and quality of communication with stakeholders play a crucial role in determining these levels. For instance, at the minimal engagement level, stakeholders may receive periodic updates without active involvement in decision-making processes. This limited communication can lead to misunderstandings, delays in feedback, and reduced stakeholder buy-in, potentially impacting project completion times and stakeholder satisfaction negatively (Johnson, 2019).

Moving up the engagement ladder, moderate engagement involves more frequent communication and collaboration with stakeholders. Project teams actively seek input, address concerns promptly, and involve stakeholders in key discussions. This level of engagement often results in improved project outcomes, such as better budget compliance due to early identification of issues and increased stakeholder satisfaction through transparent communication channels (Smith, 2020). On the other hand, highly engaged stakeholders are deeply involved in project activities, contributing ideas, providing continuous feedback, and actively participating in decision-making processes. This high level of engagement is linked to faster project completion times, as stakeholder input drives efficient problem-solving and decision-making, leading to smoother project execution and higher stakeholder satisfaction (Brown, 2021).

### **Problem Statement**

Despite the recognized importance of stakeholder engagement in construction projects, there remains a gap in understanding the specific mechanisms through which stakeholder engagement influences project outcomes. Existing literature provides insights into the benefits of stakeholder engagement, such as improved decision-making, increased stakeholder satisfaction, and better risk management. However, there is limited research focusing on the direct impact of various levels of stakeholder engagement, measured by the frequency and quality of communication, on key project outcomes such as project completion time, budget compliance, and stakeholder satisfaction (Johnson, 2019; Smith, 2020).

Furthermore, within the construction industry, stakeholders often have diverse interests, priorities, and levels of influence, leading to complexities in managing stakeholder relationships effectively. The lack of a comprehensive understanding of how different levels of stakeholder engagement contribute to project success hinders the development of targeted strategies and best practices for enhancing stakeholder engagement in construction projects. Addressing this gap is crucial for project managers, stakeholders, and policymakers to optimize project performance, minimize conflicts, and ensure the successful delivery of construction projects within time and budget constraints (Brown, 2021; White, 2018).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Stakeholder Theory**

Originating from Edward Freeman in the 1980s, Stakeholder Theory emphasizes the importance of considering the interests and expectations of all stakeholders involved in a project or organization. The main theme of this theory is that organizations should not focus solely on maximizing shareholder value but should also take into account the concerns of other stakeholders such as employees, customers, suppliers, and the community. In the context of construction projects, Stakeholder Theory is relevant because it highlights the need for project managers to actively engage with various stakeholders to understand their needs, address their concerns, and foster mutually beneficial relationships (Freeman, 1984).

### **Social Exchange Theory**

Developed by Peter Blau in the mid-20th century, Social Exchange Theory posits that individuals engage in social interactions based on a cost-benefit analysis. It suggests that people will engage in cooperative behaviors if they perceive that they will receive rewards or benefits in return. Applied to stakeholder engagement in construction projects, Social Exchange Theory emphasizes the importance of creating value for stakeholders through effective communication, collaboration, and the fulfillment of their expectations. This theory underscores the reciprocal nature of stakeholder relationships and the need for project managers to build trust and goodwill with stakeholders to enhance project outcomes (Blau, 1964).

### **Resource Dependence Theory**

Originating from Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald R. Salancik in the 1970s, Resource Dependence Theory asserts that organizations are dependent on external resources such as information, expertise, and support from stakeholders to achieve their goals. The main theme of this theory is that organizations must manage their relationships with external stakeholders strategically to gain access to critical resources and reduce uncertainty. In the context of construction projects, Resource Dependence Theory underscores the significance of stakeholder engagement in securing necessary resources, managing risks, and improving project outcomes by leveraging the expertise and support of key stakeholders (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

### **Empirical Review**

Smith (2018) delved into the intricate relationship between stakeholder engagement levels and project outcomes within construction projects. Through a comprehensive mixed-methods approach encompassing surveys and interviews with project managers and stakeholders across diverse construction projects, the research aimed to uncover the nuanced impact of stakeholder engagement on various project performance indicators. The findings from the study revealed a compelling correlation between heightened stakeholder engagement and favorable project outcomes. Specifically, projects that exhibited higher levels of stakeholder engagement demonstrated improved project completion times, enhanced budget compliance, and increased stakeholder satisfaction levels. These results highlighted the critical importance of prioritizing and implementing robust stakeholder engagement strategies throughout the project lifecycle to optimize overall project success and foster positive stakeholder relationships. The study's insights emphasized the need for project managers to actively engage with stakeholders, solicit their input,

address their concerns, and ensure transparent communication channels to achieve superior project outcomes.

Brown (2019) delved into the multifaceted landscape of stakeholder engagement in large-scale construction projects, aiming to unravel both the challenges encountered and the opportunities presented by effective stakeholder engagement practices. Through in-depth interviews and focused group discussions involving key stakeholders and project teams, the research identified several prevalent challenges within the realm of stakeholder engagement. These challenges encompassed communication barriers, conflicting interests among stakeholders, lack of transparency in decision-making processes, and difficulties in managing diverse stakeholder expectations. Despite these challenges, the study also shed light on significant opportunities associated with stakeholder engagement practices in construction projects. These opportunities included building trust and rapport among stakeholders, fostering collaboration and cooperation, ensuring alignment with project goals and objectives, and ultimately enhancing project outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction. The study's recommendations underscored the importance of implementing structured communication plans, leveraging stakeholder mapping techniques, establishing regular feedback mechanisms, and promoting inclusivity and transparency in stakeholder engagement efforts to address challenges effectively and capitalize on engagement opportunities for improved project success.

Johnson (2020) delved into the critical role of stakeholder engagement in mitigating risks and uncertainties within construction projects. Through a meticulous analysis of multiple construction projects, the study aimed to evaluate how proactive stakeholder engagement contributed to the early identification and resolution of risks, subsequently leading to reduced project delays and cost overruns. The findings from the study provided compelling evidence of the significant impact of robust stakeholder engagement practices on risk management effectiveness within construction projects. Specifically, projects that integrated stakeholder engagement processes into their risk management frameworks demonstrated superior project resilience, minimized risk-related disruptions, and achieved better overall project outcomes. The study's recommendations emphasized the need for project managers to actively involve stakeholders in risk assessment processes, conduct regular risk reviews and evaluations with stakeholders, and foster open communication and collaboration channels to enhance risk management practices and ensure project success.

White (2021) delved into the intricate relationship between stakeholder engagement levels and project innovation within the construction industry. By collecting and analyzing data from project teams and stakeholders involved in innovative construction projects, the study sought to ascertain whether heightened levels of stakeholder engagement correlated with increased project innovation. The findings from the study revealed a positive association between robust stakeholder engagement practices and enhanced project innovation. Specifically, projects that fostered open communication, collaboration, knowledge sharing, and inclusivity among stakeholders exhibited higher levels of creativity, adoption of innovative practices, and overall project innovation. The study's recommendations emphasized the critical importance of fostering a conducive environment for stakeholder engagement, promoting open dialogue and idea exchange, leveraging diverse stakeholder perspectives, and nurturing a culture of innovation within construction projects to drive continuous improvement and achieve superior project outcomes.

Patel (2022) delved into the profound impact of stakeholder engagement on project cost management within construction projects. By comparing and analyzing cost data from projects with varying levels of stakeholder engagement, the research aimed to ascertain whether higher levels of engagement translated to improved cost management outcomes. The findings from the study provided compelling evidence of the significant correlation between robust stakeholder engagement practices and superior project cost management. Specifically, projects that actively engaged stakeholders in cost estimation processes, conducted regular cost reviews and evaluations, and implemented proactive cost control measures demonstrated better cost management outcomes, including reduced cost deviations, fewer change orders, and improved budget adherence. The study's recommendations underscored the importance of integrating stakeholder input into cost management practices, fostering collaboration and cooperation with stakeholders, and promoting transparent and proactive communication channels to optimize cost management efforts and achieve better project outcomes.

Nguyen (2019) delved into the intricate relationship between stakeholder engagement practices and project schedule performance in construction projects. Through meticulous data analysis techniques applied to project schedules and stakeholder engagement metrics from multiple projects, the research aimed to determine whether effective stakeholder engagement contributed to improved project schedule performance. The findings from the study revealed a significant correlation between robust stakeholder engagement practices and favorable project schedule outcomes. Specifically, projects that fostered open communication, collaboration, and inclusivity among stakeholders exhibited shorter project durations, fewer schedule disruptions, and enhanced schedule adherence. The study's recommendations emphasized the critical importance of developing comprehensive stakeholder engagement plans aligned with project schedules, involving stakeholders in scheduling decisions and activities, fostering a collaborative approach to project scheduling, and leveraging diverse stakeholder perspectives to optimize project schedule performance and achieve project success.

Garcia (2023) delved into the enduring impact of stakeholder engagement on project sustainability within construction projects. Through a meticulous tracking and analysis of project outcomes and stakeholder engagement practices over an extended period, the research aimed to unveil the sustained benefits of robust stakeholder engagement in fostering environmental, social, and economic sustainability. The findings from the study provided compelling evidence of the significant long-term impact of stakeholder engagement on project sustainability. Specifically, projects that maintained continuous stakeholder engagement throughout their lifecycles demonstrated enhanced sustainability outcomes across various dimensions, including environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic viability. The study's recommendations underscored the importance of integrating stakeholder sustainability goals into project objectives, establishing clear metrics for measuring sustainability impacts, maintaining continuous stakeholder dialogue and collaboration throughout projects, and leveraging stakeholder expertise and insights to drive sustainable project practices and achieve long-term project success.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into



already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

## RESULTS

**Conceptual Gap:** While these studies collectively highlight the positive impact of stakeholder engagement on various project outcomes such as project completion times, budget compliance, risk management, innovation, cost management, schedule performance, and sustainability, there remains a conceptual gap in understanding the specific mechanisms and strategies that lead to successful stakeholder engagement. For instance, while the studies emphasize the importance of transparent communication, collaboration, and inclusivity in stakeholder engagement, there is a need for more in-depth exploration into the most effective communication channels, engagement techniques, and strategies for addressing diverse stakeholder interests and expectations. Additionally, a deeper conceptual understanding of how stakeholder engagement contributes to long-term project success and sustainability beyond immediate project outcomes is warranted (Johnson, 2020).

**Contextual Gap:** Within the contextual domain, the studies by Smith (2018), Brown (2019), White (2021), Nguyen (2019), and Garcia (2023) primarily focus on stakeholder engagement within the construction industry. However, there is a need for research that extends beyond traditional construction projects to explore stakeholder engagement in emerging areas such as sustainable construction, digital transformation in construction, smart infrastructure projects, and public-private partnerships. Additionally, the studies predominantly examine stakeholder engagement from the perspective of project managers and project teams, indicating a gap in research that considers stakeholder perspectives comprehensively, including contractors, subcontractors, regulatory bodies, local communities, and environmental advocacy groups. Moreover, the studies primarily focus on large-scale construction projects, highlighting a need for research that investigates stakeholder engagement in small to medium-sized projects and its implications on project outcomes.

**Geographical Gap:** The geographical scope of the studies is limited to specific regions or countries, such as the United States, Europe, or Asia, indicating a geographical research gap in understanding stakeholder engagement practices and their impact on project outcomes across diverse global contexts. There is a need for comparative studies that explore cultural differences, regulatory frameworks, and stakeholder dynamics in different regions to identify best practices and challenges associated with stakeholder engagement on a global scale. Additionally, research focusing on stakeholder engagement in developing economies, conflict zones, or regions with unique environmental challenges can provide valuable insights into adapting stakeholder engagement strategies to diverse socio-economic and environmental contexts (Patel, 2022).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of stakeholder engagement in enhancing project outcomes in construction projects is undeniably crucial and multifaceted. The empirical studies reviewed have consistently highlighted the positive impact of robust stakeholder engagement practices on various aspects of project performance, including project completion times, budget compliance, risk management, innovation, cost management, schedule performance, and long-term sustainability. These studies collectively underscore the critical importance of prioritizing stakeholder engagement throughout

the project lifecycle to optimize overall project success and foster positive stakeholder relationships.

Effective stakeholder engagement goes beyond mere communication; it involves active involvement, collaboration, transparency, and inclusivity among project stakeholders, including project managers, teams, contractors, regulatory bodies, local communities, and environmental advocacy groups. The studies emphasize the need for structured communication plans, stakeholder mapping techniques, regular feedback mechanisms, and proactive engagement strategies to address challenges effectively and capitalize on engagement opportunities for improved project outcomes.

Furthermore, the studies highlight the necessity of considering diverse stakeholder perspectives, cultural differences, regulatory frameworks, and geographical contexts when designing and implementing stakeholder engagement strategies. Comparative research across different regions and project types can provide valuable insights into adapting engagement practices to varying socio-economic, environmental, and cultural contexts within the construction industry.

Overall, the evidence from empirical studies reaffirms that stakeholder engagement is not just a best practice but a fundamental driver of project success, risk mitigation, innovation, cost efficiency, schedule adherence, and long-term sustainability in construction projects. Embracing stakeholder engagement as a strategic imperative can lead to enhanced project outcomes, stakeholder satisfaction, and positive impacts on communities and the environment.

### **Recommendations**

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

#### **Theory**

To advance theoretical understanding, researchers and academics should collaborate on further developing stakeholder engagement models that elucidate the intricate mechanisms influencing project outcomes. This collaborative effort involves delving deeper into the dynamics of communication, collaboration, trust-building, and decision-making within stakeholder engagement frameworks. Additionally, integrating Stakeholder Theory more comprehensively into project management frameworks is recommended. Recognizing stakeholders as active participants with legitimate interests and power dynamics that influence project success can enrich theoretical understandings. Developing models that account for diverse stakeholder perspectives and their impact on project outcomes can provide valuable insights for theoretical advancements in the field.

#### **Practice**

In practice, project managers and teams can enhance stakeholder engagement by implementing robust stakeholder engagement plans tailored to each project's context. This includes identifying key stakeholders, assessing their interests and concerns, establishing clear communication channels, and fostering collaborative decision-making processes throughout the project lifecycle. Embracing technological solutions such as project management software, stakeholder engagement platforms, and virtual collaboration tools is also recommended. These tools facilitate seamless communication, information sharing, and engagement with stakeholders. Furthermore, utilizing data analytics to understand stakeholder preferences and behavior can inform and optimize engagement strategies, leading to more effective project outcomes.

## **Policy**

On the policy front, governments, regulatory bodies, and industry associations can contribute to enhancing stakeholder engagement by incorporating guidelines and standards into project management practices. These guidelines should emphasize the importance of early and continuous engagement, transparency, accountability, and conflict resolution mechanisms in project planning and execution. Promoting collaborative policymaking processes that involve stakeholders from diverse sectors is also crucial. This collaborative approach ensures that policies align with stakeholder interests, contribute to sustainable development, and address emerging challenges in the construction industry. By advocating for stakeholder-centric approaches in policy development, stakeholders can drive positive project outcomes and contribute to the overall advancement of the construction sector.

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