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Examining Stakeholder Management Process in Project Management: A Case Study of the Mungwi District Phase 1 of Road Construction Project

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Abstract
Road construction is essential for infrastructure development, economic growth, and community connectivity, and its success largely depends on effective stakeholder management. In Zambia, major initiatives such as the Link Zambia 8000 which targets the construction of 8,000 kilometers of roads demonstrate the importance of strong stakeholder coordination for project sustainability. This study examined stakeholder management in Phase 1 of road construction projects in Mungwi District, focusing on the types, effectiveness, and influence of stakeholder practices on project success, as well as limitations affecting their implementation. A quantitative case study was conducted with 70 targeted participants, of whom 63 stakeholders responded using semi-structured questionnaires that enabled flexible and detailed perspectives. Findings revealed that participants were predominantly male, mostly aged 36–45, with stakeholders being highly educated, as 80% held tertiary qualifications, while many community members (36%) worked in informal employment. Long-term residency among community members (54.5%) strengthened engagement in road projects. Stakeholder participation was primarily led by engineers (40%) and contractors (30%), while local government officials (15%), councilors (10%), and community members (5%) provided oversight, advocacy, and feedback to ensure alignment with community needs. However, decision-making was dominated by contractors (80%) and engineers (81.8%), resulting in low community involvement, with 58.2% rarely participating. Radio announcements (43.6%) emerged as the main communication method. Stakeholder management practices were moderately effective, with 23.6% of respondents rating meetings effective and 22% viewing updates as accessible, although 45.5% perceived minimal impact on project outcomes. Statistical analysis demonstrated strong positive relationships between stakeholder engagement and project performance, particularly involving local government, community leaders, engineers, and community participation. Challenges included political interference, inadequate communication, insufficient funding, delayed approvals, and limited local leadership capacity, all of which constrained effective engagement. Overall, the study underscores that transparent, inclusive stakeholder management is essential for improving rural road project outcomes, recommending enhanced communication, greater participation, reduced political interference, and stronger leadership capacity to support sustainable infrastructure development.

Keywords: Construction, engagement, project management stakeholders.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Stakeholder management has become a critical component in the success of complex projects across sectors, particularly in construction and infrastructure. Globally, these sectors contribute approximately 13% of global GDP and employ over 7% of the world's workforce (Aiyetan and Das, 2022). However, large-scale projects often face extensive stakeholder-related challenges that may delay timelines, increase costs, or compromise quality. Such challenges stem from the diverse and sometimes conflicting interests of stakeholders-including government agencies, contractors, local communities, environmental advocates, and financial institutions-each holding varying degrees of influence over

project decisions and outcomes (Freeman, 2023). Shaukat *et al*. (2022) report that over 70% of projects experience delays or cost escalations due to ineffective stakeholder management, particularly when stakeholder expectations are not properly identified, aligned, or addressed throughout the project lifecycle.

Despite its proven importance, stakeholder management remains difficult to implement effectively. Ardiana (2023) attributes this difficulty to poor communication, inadequate stakeholder analysis, and weak early engagement, all of which can hinder project performance. Marginalized groups or stakeholders with limited decision-making power often become sources of conflict when their concerns are overlooked. Okafor and Odubade (2022) further observe that projects that span multiple jurisdictions or cultural contexts face additional complexities due to differing regulatory requirements, communication barriers, and power imbalances. Although effective stakeholder engagement can enhance project cost performance by up to 25% and improve schedule adherence by 30–40% (Shaukat *et al*., 2023), many projects still underperform because stakeholder input is inconsistently gathered or insufficiently incorporated into project decisions.

In Africa, stakeholder management challenges are particularly visible in large-scale public infrastructure projects. According to Richu *et al*. (2025), more than 60% of public sector projects in Sub-Saharan Africa fail to achieve their intended outcomes due to poor stakeholder relationship management, which often results in conflict, mistrust, and project delays. Weak governance structures, limited institutional capacity, and socio-cultural dynamics further complicate coordination. Maina and Mbutu (2025) highlight that political instability, competing community interests, and lack of transparency frequently contribute to misunderstandings and implementation delays. Although inclusive stakeholder engagement frameworks can mitigate risks, enhance ownership, and improve overall project outcomes, their application across the continent remains inconsistent.

In Zambia, similar challenges persist in both public and private construction initiatives. The Link Zambia 8000 Project, a major national road development program, encountered delays and cost overruns partly due to inadequate engagement with local communities, contractors, and regulatory bodies (Omondi and Kinoti, 2020). While the Road Development Agency (2023) emphasizes the importance of systematic stakeholder identification and coordination, many projects continue to suffer from weak communication, fragmented inter-agency collaboration, and insufficient community involvement. Research by Matsiko *et al*. (2024) shows that projects with early and continuous stakeholder engagement are 35% more likely to be completed within schedule and budget. Senaratne *et al*. (2024) further note that transparent communication strengthens trust and facilitates smoother implementation, yet many projects lack such transparency.

In this context, rural road construction projects in Mungwi District illustrate the significance of effective stakeholder management. As the district relies heavily on road infrastructure for mobility, service access, and economic development, engaging local communities, traditional leaders, contractors, and government institutions is essential. Understanding how stakeholders are identified, managed, and integrated into decision-making provides valuable insights for improving project performance and ensuring sustainable outcomes.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Stakeholder management has emerged as a critical determinant of success in construction project delivery, yet it remains a persistent challenge in many developing countries, including Zambia. In rural contexts such as Mungwi District, construction projects typically involve a wide range of stakeholders-local communities, contractors, government agencies, and regulatory authorities-whose interests and expectations often diverge. However, weak stakeholder identification, inadequate engagement mechanisms, poor communication, and limited participation in decision-making continue to undermine effective collaboration and project outcomes (Zulu *et al*., 2023). These deficiencies frequently manifest in project delays, cost overruns, substandard construction quality, and minimal community ownership.

The persistence of these challenges is partly rooted in Zambia's historical development trajectory, where colonial-era infrastructure priorities marginalised rural areas, resulting in systemic underdevelopment and limited institutional capacity for inclusive project governance (Mambwe *et al*., 2020). Consequently, rural construction initiatives such as those in Mungwi District are often implemented without adequate consultation or consideration of local socio-economic contexts, weakening stakeholder trust and long-term project sustainability.

Despite the recognised importance of effective stakeholder management in enhancing project performance, empirical research on its practice within rural construction settings in Zambia remains limited (Zulu *et al*., 2023). This knowledge gap has constrained efforts to design context-specific stakeholder management frameworks that promote transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. Therefore, this study seeks to examine stakeholder management processes in rural construction projects in Mungwi District, focusing on challenges related to stakeholder identification, engagement, communication, participation, and accountability, with the ultimate goal of improving project performance and advancing community well-being.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

To examine stakeholder management process in project management. A case study of road construction projects in Mungwi District.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

i) To establish the types of stakeholder management involved in road construction projects in Mungwi District.
ii) To examine the effectiveness of stakeholder management practices in road construction projects in Mungwi District.
iii) To analyze the relationships between various stakeholder management processes and project success in road construction projects in Mungwi District.
iv) To assess the limitations associated with implementing stakeholder management practices in the Mungwi road construction project context.

1.4 Research Questions

i) What types of stakeholder management are involved in road construction projects in Mungwi District?
ii) How effective are stakeholder management practices in road construction projects in Mungwi District?

iii) What are the relationships between various stakeholder management processes and project success in road construction projects in Mungwi District?
iv) What limitations are associated with implementing stakeholder management practices in the Mungwi road construction project context?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Stakeholder Theory, introduced by R. Edward Freeman (1984), which emphasizes addressing the interests of all parties affected by organizational decisions. Unlike shareholder-focused models, Stakeholder Theory argues that organizations have a responsibility to consider the needs of employees, customers, suppliers, communities, lenders, and the environment (Beck & Storopoli, 2021; Freeman, 2023). Because organizations are interdependent with these groups, balancing stakeholder interests promotes long-term sustainability, trust, and shared value creation (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022). Stakeholders include anyone who can influence or is affected by an organization's success, from shareholders to local communities (Osei-Asibey *et al*., 2021).

The theory consists of descriptive, instrumental, and normative dimensions. The descriptive aspect examines how firms engage stakeholders; the instrumental aspect links stakeholder management to improved performance; and the normative aspect highlights the moral obligation to treat stakeholders fairly (Barney *et al*., 2020; Freeman, 2020). Its philosophical foundation draws on deontological ethics, which stresses treating stakeholders as ends in themselves (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022), virtue ethics emphasizing ethical leadership and organizational integrity (Barney *et al*., 2020), and social contract theory, which posits that organizations gain legitimacy by honouring obligations to society (Osei-Asibey *et al*., 2021). These foundations reinforce that stakeholder engagement is both ethically required and practically beneficial (Beck & Storopoli, 2021).

In this study, Stakeholder Theory provided the conceptual basis for assessing stakeholder engagement in Mungwi District's road construction projects. It guided the analysis of how community members, government agencies, and contractors influence project outcomes. The theory's framework information inputs, stakeholder estimation, decision-making, and sustainable support offered a structured approach for examining stakeholder dynamics, emphasizing collaboration as essential for successful, long-term project implementation.

2. Litereture Review

2.1 Types of Stakeholder Management Involved in Road Construction Projects

Stakeholder management is essential for the success of road construction projects due to their complexity (Phiri and Chibomba, 2025). Proper identification and engagement reduce conflicts, improve decisions, and lower project failure risks (Mashwama *et al*., 2020). Internal stakeholders such as clients, contractors, and consultants directly influence outcomes, while effective resource management enhances performance (Beldinne & Gachengo, 2022). In rural areas, strong stakeholder management prevents project failure and abandonment (Oguzie *et al*., 2020). Stakeholder analysis helps identify key actors and threats based on power and influence (Kumar, 2018), emphasizing early and continuous involvement.

In the USA, road construction projects involve complex stakeholder environments including government agencies, contractors, communities, commuters, businesses, and environmental groups; these are prioritized using interest-power tools (Dadpour *et al*., 2018). In India, stakeholder needs and expectations significantly determine project success (Oppong *et al*., 2017). Stakeholders include internal groups—owners, managers, teams—and external groups such as clients, investors, authorities, suppliers, and communities. Effective management improves communication, trust, decisions, and outcomes (Oppong *et al*., 2017).

Stakeholder roles in construction safety remain limited to known regulations (Osei-Asibey *et al*., 2021). Critical Stakeholder Factors in Pakistan highlight project mission formulation, communication, and stakeholder identification (Rafeh *et al*., 2023). Large EPCM projects in Africa require integrating stakeholders into organizational processes (Tchumtcha Wembe, 2022). In Zambia, projects map stakeholders by interest, influence, and support for effective engagement (Road Development Agency, 2023).

2.2 The Effectiveness of Stakeholder Management Practices in Road Construction Projects

Communication is a critical determinant of construction project success, directly influencing performance, efficiency, and stakeholder satisfaction. Effective stakeholder communication must be conducted properly to ensure successful project development and outcomes (Larm and Fakhro, 2019). Construction projects are inherently complex, involving diverse stakeholders with varying roles and expectations (El-Sawalhi and Hammad, 2020). Within this complexity, mastering stakeholder communication is essential, as strong communication strategies align stakeholders with project visions and objectives (Satoinong *et al*., 2024). Effective communication requires identifying key stakeholders early, understanding their needs, and using tailored verbal, written, and visual methods (Olatunde and Odeyinka, 2021). Feedback tools surveys, public forums, interviews support adjustments during the project lifecycle (Mambwe *et al*., 2020).

Technology has transformed communication by enabling real-time updates, increased transparency, and stronger trust (Tessema *et al*., 2022). Digital tools facilitate interaction, feedback, and collaboration, keeping stakeholders informed and aligned. Accessibility and user-friendly platforms ensure equal participation and minimize miscommunication. Technology-enhanced engagement improves decision-making, outcomes, and stakeholder satisfaction. Training project teams in communication skills further strengthens stakeholder engagement, while ongoing evaluation through satisfaction surveys and participation metrics enhances continuous improvement (Akeyo Forsman, 2017). Effective communication reduces risks by preventing conflicts and misunderstandings (Daka, 2024).

Forsman (2017) identified critical success factors for managing stakeholders, including clear objectives, proper communication, social responsibility, good relationships, and accurate prediction of stakeholder influence. Senaratne and Ruwanpura (2016) found that Sri Lankan project teams effectively manage communication through structured processes and project management tools across five stages. Mambwe *et al*. (2020) revealed strong positive correlations between stakeholder engagement and project schedule/specifications in Lusaka but a strong negative correlation with project cost. Oguzie *et al*. (2020) confirmed

that proper stakeholder identification significantly reduces rural road project failures in Ghana. Japhet and Shokia (2024) emphasized quick, simple communication channels such as calls, meetings, and conversations in Tanzania. Munthali and Kaliba (2024) found that despite good understanding of stakeholder management in Zambia, a lack of frameworks and limited skills hinder effective implementation.

2.3 The Relationships Between Various Stakeholder Management Processes and Project Success in Road Construction Projects

Research consistently shows that stakeholder management positively influences project success, with awareness of stakeholder practices strengthening this relationship (Saad *et al*., 2020). Stakeholder engagement directly improves project success, while stakeholder characteristics, project constraints, and stakeholder analysis indirectly contribute through engagement (Molwus *et al*., 2017). Successful stakeholder relationships rely on communication, client management, key personnel, timeliness, accountability, planning, stakeholder needs, honesty, trust, and shared goals (Olatunde & Odeyinka, 2021), with the client–contractor relationship having the greatest impact (Satoinong *et al*., 2024). External stakeholders pursue social, environmental, and economic sustainability, requiring project managers to address opportunities, threats, social responsibility, common goals, and satisfaction (Chan *et al*., 2017).

Communication significantly improves performance, cost efficiency, and reduces delays, though barriers such as inconsistent information and language differences persist (Satoinong *et al*., 2024). Effective stakeholder analysis, participation, and communication are also key to success in slum upgrading (Flink, 2017). Factors influencing stakeholder management include maintaining relationships, addressing concerns, and communicating impacts, grouped into six components including project relationships and sustainable support (Olatunde & Odeyinka, 2021). Construction performance in South Africa is shaped by stakeholders, workforce, and machinery, with strategies such as competent personnel, supervision, transparent engagement, and advanced communication recommended (Aiyana & Das, 2020). Effective project management practices planning, risk management, communication, and monitoring strengthen success but face challenges of awareness and weak engagement (Daka, 2024).

Sustainable project management improves success, moderated by stakeholder engagement (Ambreen, 2025). Stakeholder management also reduces cost overruns and delays by addressing risks, planning accurately, improving communication, and managing expectations (Phiri & Chimbomba, 2025; Kaharuddin *et al*., 2020). Beneficiary participation significantly enhances both short-term performance and long-term project impact by increasing relevance, empowerment, trust, and collaborative decision-making (Mohit *et al*., 2024).

2.4 Limitations Associated with Implementing Stakeholder Management Practices in Road Construction

Stakeholders in construction projects often have diverse interests and expectations, leading to potential conflicts that complicate decision-making. Clients typically prioritize cost and time efficiency, while local communities focus on environmental impacts and job creation, which can result in disagreements (Rafeh *et al*., 2023). Effective communication is critical for stakeholder engagement, but challenges like jargon, cultural differences, and varying expertise can hinder clear dialogue, resulting in misunderstandings (Ebekozien *et al*., 2023).

Stakeholders wield different levels of power and influence, which can lead to imbalances in decision-making processes (Mambwe *et al*., 2020). Those with more power may dominate discussions, sidelining valuable input from less powerful stakeholders. Additionally, resistance to changes during the project lifecycle, often due to fear of uncertainty, can delay progress (Japhet and Shokia, 2024). Lack of stakeholder engagement throughout the project can also lead to disengagement and missed opportunities for valuable feedback (de Oliveira and Rabechini, 2019). To address these challenges, conducting thorough stakeholder analysis at the outset is essential. Identifying stakeholder interests, influence, and contributions allows for tailored engagement strategies (Larm and Fakhro, 2019). Developing comprehensive communication plans that specify channels, frequency, and feedback methods ensures transparency (Freeman, 2023). Building strong relationships through regular interactions, such as workshops, fosters trust and encourages open dialogue (Munthali and Kabila, 2024). Structured feedback mechanisms, like surveys and forums, ensure ongoing stakeholder involvement (Oguzie *et al*., 2020).

Despite these strategies, barriers such as conflicting interests, communication gaps, and resource limitations can hinder effective stakeholder management (Artem *et al*., 2024; Julio *et al*., 2024). The lack of empirical research quantifying stakeholder engagement's impact on project performance calls for further studies to explore its influence on cost, schedule, and quality (Innocent & Juma, 2025). By addressing these challenges, projects can achieve better collaboration, stakeholder satisfaction, and successful delivery.

2.5 Critique of the Literature Review

The literature review offers a global perspective on stakeholder management in construction, highlighting key success factors like communication, prioritization, and conflict resolution, along with frameworks like interest-power matrices. However, it has limitations, such as a lack of focus on rural road projects in Africa, particularly Zambia. Most research emphasizes urban or large-scale projects, neglecting rural dynamics. Additionally, there is an overreliance on qualitative methods and insufficient integration of stakeholder theory, limiting a deeper understanding of local governance and community engagement in rural settings like Mungwi District.

2.6 Research Gaps

Existing literature reveals a critical gap in understanding stakeholder management in rural road construction projects, particularly in Zambia's Mungwi District. While studies such as Mambwe *et al*. (2020) and Munthali & Kaliba (2024) focus on urban (Lusaka) or large-scale infrastructure (e.g., Kariba Dam), they neglect the unique challenges of rural road projects. Issues like informal community structures, limited stakeholder awareness, and resource constraints remain under-explored. Additionally, prior research often treats stakeholder management as a static process, ignoring the dynamic nature of rural projects, where community involvement and political influences fluctuate. This study aims to fill these gaps using quantitative methods and context-specific strategies.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A case study design was employed to critically examine stakeholder management in road construction projects within Mungwi District. This approach facilitated a comprehensive, real-world analysis of the complexities surrounding stakeholder interactions. A quantitative methodology was utilized, involving structured questionnaires administered to project managers, stakeholders, and community members, complemented by document analysis of project plans and communication records. The primary objective was to identify recurring patterns in stakeholder engagement strategies and the challenges encountered throughout the project lifecycle. The study's findings provide valuable insights into effective stakeholder management practices, contributing to the optimization of stakeholder involvement and the enhancement of road construction project outcomes in Mungwi District.

3.2 Target Population

The target population for this study comprised stakeholders involved in road construction projects within Mungwi District, including project managers, contractors, subcontractors, clients, and local government representatives. This diverse group were essential because they each play a critical role in the stakeholder management process, influencing project outcomes through their interests and interactions. Project managers provided insights into strategic decision-making; contractors and subcontractors offered perspectives on operational challenges; clients represented the funding and expectations; and local government officials ensured compliance with regulations. By examining these stakeholders collectively, the study identified best practices and challenges in stakeholder management specific to the construction sector in Mungwi District. This comprehensive approach ensured that all relevant viewpoints were considered, leading to more robust findings that can enhance project success rates.

3.3 Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was ideal for the study because it allowed the researcher to select participants who possessed specific knowledge or experience relevant to the study. This sampling method ensured that the sample includes key stakeholders, such as project managers, contractors, and local authorities, who were able to provide valuable insights into stakeholder dynamics and decision-making processes. By focusing on individuals with direct involvement in the road construction projects, purposive sampling will enhance the depth and relevance of quantitative data collected, leading to a more nuanced understanding of stakeholder management practices.

3.4 Sample Size

The target population for this study consisted of 65 stakeholders involved in road construction projects within Mungwi District, including 2 project manager, 2 contractors, 2 subcontractor, 1 client, and 1 local government representative, 2 civic leaders (councilors). Additionally, the group includes 55 community members, comprising farmers, youths, businessmen, and headmen (community leaders), who play a crucial role as gatekeepers of the community. This diverse group was essential as each stakeholder influenced project outcomes through their unique interests and interactions, providing valuable insights into the social, economic, operational, and environmental impacts of road construction. Their perspectives informed effective stakeholder management, ensuring the success and sustainability of the project within the District.

3.5 Data Collection

Quantitative data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to stakeholders involved in road construction projects within Mungwi District over a one-month period. This approach allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives, providing valuable insights into stakeholder dynamics. Secondary data, including project records, reports, meeting minutes, and communication logs, was also reviewed to understand stakeholder interactions and decision-making processes. The combination of primary and secondary data was cost-effective and efficient, offering a comprehensive understanding of established practices and stakeholder management processes in the local context, without the need for extensive primary data collection.

3.6 Data Analysis

Descriptive data analysis was employed to analyze the data collected. Data was analyzed using Statistical Packaging for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. The process involved coding responses, entering them into SPSS, and performing descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed to summarize demographic information and stakeholder engagement patterns. Cross-tabulations and correlation tests were conducted to examine relationships between stakeholder management practices and project success, providing clear, data-driven insights for interpretation.

3.7 Triangulation

This study employed methodological triangulation to enhance the credibility and depth of findings. As a qualitative study, it combined three data collection methods: semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (project managers, contractors, and community representatives), document analysis of project reports and policies, and focus group discussions with local residents affected by road construction. These methods provided multiple perspectives, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder management processes in Mungwi District. Data source triangulation was also used by gathering insights from different stakeholder groups (government, contractors, and communities) to cross-validate findings. Additionally, analyst triangulation was applied, with data independently coded and interpreted to minimize bias. This layered approach strengthened the study's validity, offering a nuanced exploration of how stakeholder engagement influenced road project success in rural Zambia.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations that were addressed were crucial to both the relevance and success of this study. Key issues included protecting participants' privacy and ensuring transparency throughout the research process. Participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and were given the option to refuse participation if they chose. Except for a numbering system used to identify data during editing, no names or personal identifiers were included in the interviews. Informed consent was obtained to ensure that participants fully understood the study's objectives, purpose, and their freedom to participate voluntarily. The study emphasized clarity and avoided ambiguity to prevent misunderstandings among participants or readers.

4. Presentation of Findings

4.1 Participant Demographics

From the targeted 70 respondents Information was obtained from 65 respondents which comprised of stakeholders involved in road construction projects within Mungwi District namely 2 project managers, 2 contractors, 2 subcontractors, 1 client, and 1 local government representative, 2 civic leaders (councilors) as well as 55 community members from Mungwi District where the road construction projects were undertaken. Thus, representing a response return rate of 93%. The table below shows the response return rate.

From the community members, n=35 (64%) participants were male and n=20 (36%) participants were female. Detailed responses of the gender of the community members, is shown below.

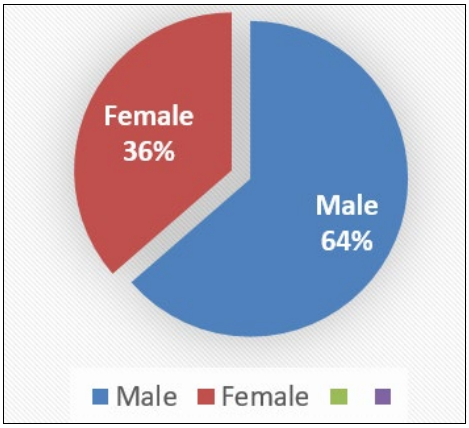

Fig 1: Participants gender for community members.

From the stakeholders, it was found that that n=7 (70%) participants were male and n=3 (30%) participants were female. Detailed responses of the gender of the stakeholders, is shown below.

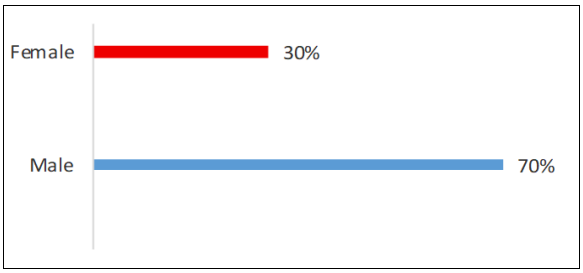

Fig 2: Gender of the Stakeholders

Age of the Study Participants

From the community members study participants, the study found that the study established that respondents aged 18-25 years were n=4 (7.3%) participants while, n=13 (23.6%) participants were aged 26-35 years. On the other hand, n=16 (29.1%) participants were aged between 36-45 years, n=12 (21.8%) participants were aged between 46-59 years and n=10 (18.2%) participants were aged 60 years and above. Detailed responses of the age of the community members, is shown in the figure below.

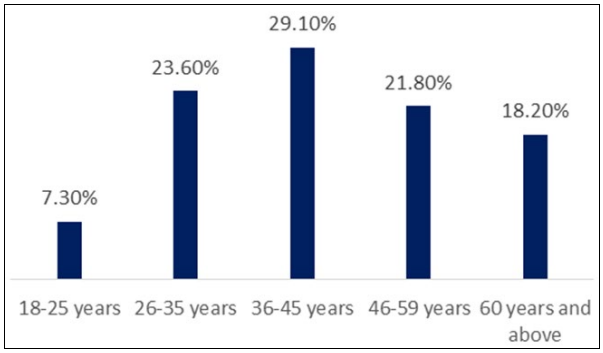

Fig 3: Age of the Community Members

From the stakeholder study participants, n=2 (20%) participants were aged between 26-35 years, n=4 (40%) participants were aged between 36-45 years while, n=3 (30%) participants were aged between 46-59 years and n=1 (10%) participant was aged 60 years and above. Responses obtained from the study participants is shown in the figure below.

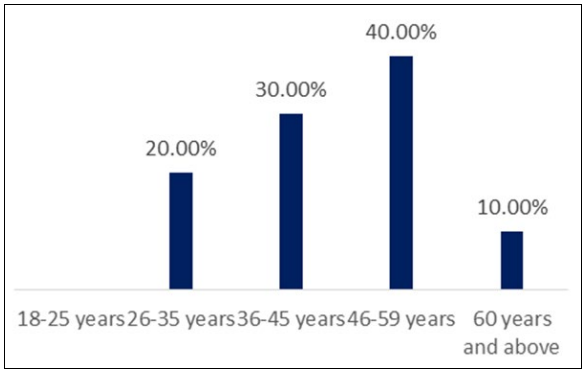

Fig 4: Age of the Stakeholders

Level of Education of the Study Participants

The study found that among the community members, that n=5 (9.1%) participants had no formal education while n=8 (14.5%) participants had attained primary education. Participants who had attained secondary education were n=22 (40.0%) and n=20 (36.4%) participants had attained tertiary education. Detailed responses obtained on the level of education of the community members is shown in the figure below.

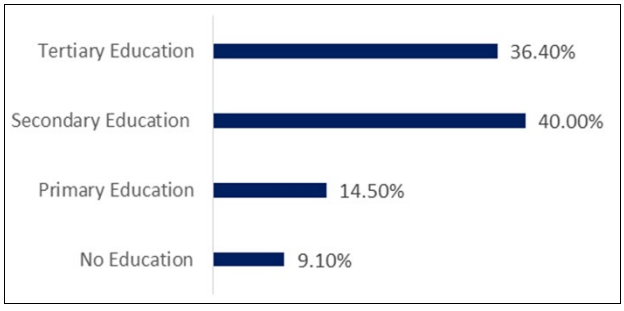

Fig 5: Level of Education of the Community Members

4.2 Types of Stakeholder Management Involved in Phase 1of Road Construction project and their participation level

Stakeholder participation in Mungwi District road projects includes engineers (40%), contractors (30%), local government officials (15%), councilors (10%), and community members (5%). Engineers lead design and supervision, contractors handle execution, while officials ensure compliance. Councilors advocate for community needs, and community members provide feedback, influencing decisions and ensuring project sustainability.

Table 1: Types of stakeholders engaged and their level of participation in phase 1 of road construction project in Mungwi District.

Stakeholders	Description	Level of Participation
Local government officials	Technical experts providing specialized expertise, conducting feasibility analyses, and overseeing project execution. They are appointed by the local government or public service commission.	15%
Project engineers	Professionals responsible for designing, planning, and supervising road construction projects. They are hired by the local government or contractors.	40%
Community leaders	Elected representatives who understand community needs, prioritize initiatives, and advocate for funding. They are elected by the constituents.	10%
Contractors	Companies that submit bids, deliver road construction services, and execute projects according to agreements. They are selected through a competitive tendering process by the local government.	30%
Local community members	Residents who participate in public forums, provide feedback, and influence project decisions. They are community members who choose to engage mainly by the virtual of being in the project area.	5%

Stakeholder Engagement Processes in Mungwi Road Construction Project

The study revealed that 40% of respondents in Mungwi District experienced consultative management, where communities were informed or occasionally consulted, but not deeply involved in decision-making. Collaborative approaches were less common (18%), indicating limited partnerships between stakeholders. Informative (25%) and top-down management (13%) practices reflect ongoing communication gaps and a hierarchical decision-making culture. Notably, only 4% of respondents perceived genuine participatory management, highlighting the insufficient inclusion and empowerment of local communities in road construction projects.

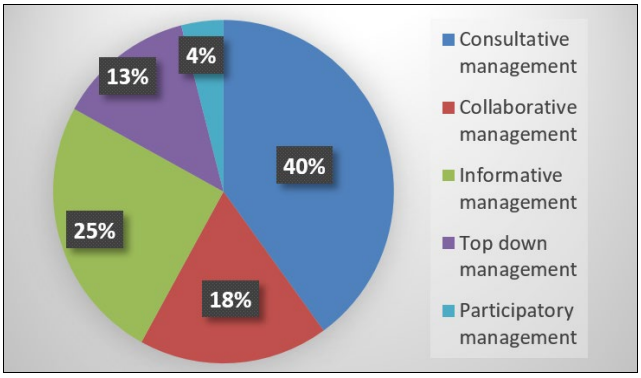

Fig 6: Types of stakeholder engagement processes involved in Mungwi road construction projects.

Most Relied Upon Communication Method with the Strongest Impact on Community Understanding

The study identified that community meetings (30.9%) were the most frequently utilized communication method to ensure community awareness and understanding. Radio announcements (43.6%) also played a significant role, followed by notice boards (16.4%) and door-to-door communication (9.1%). These methods were considered the most effective in fostering community engagement and enhancing understanding of project developments.

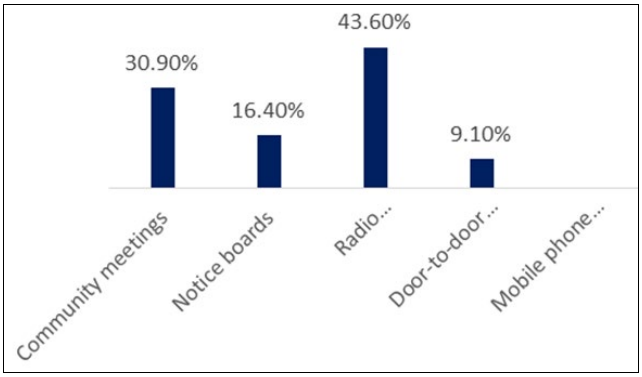

Fig 7: Most Relied Upon Communication Method with the Strongest Impact on Community Understanding

The study found that n= 5(50%) participants indicated that stakeholder meetings were the most effective communication method used to engage with other stakeholders. On the other hand, n= 3 (30%) participants cited circulars/ official letters as most effective communication methods. Lastly, n=2 (20%) participants indicated that digital platforms (emails/ WhatsApp), were the most effective communication methods used to engage with other stakeholders. Details of the responses obtained from the study participants are shown in the figure below.

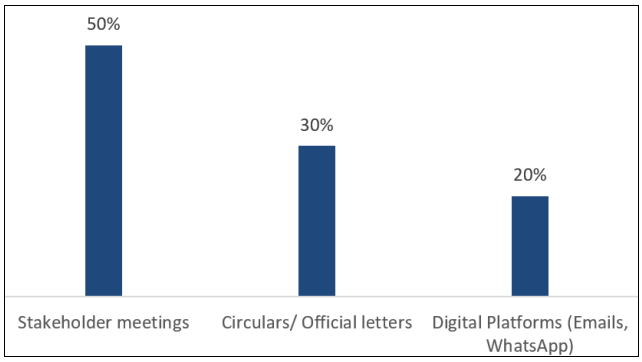

Fig 8: Most Effective Communication Method Used to Engage with Other Stakeholders

Extent to Which Stakeholder Consultations were Genuinely Considered in Shaping Project Design and Implementation

The study found that n=1 (10%) participants indicated that there was little consultation while, n=2 (20%) participants indicated that there was general consultation without much effect. On the other hand, n=4 (40%) participants indicated that there was broad consultation but selective implementation and n=3 (30%) participants indicated that there was comprehensive and genuinely influential consultation. Details of the responses obtained from the study participants are shown below.

Fig 9: Stakeholder Consultations were Genuinely Considered in Shaping Project Design and Implementation

4.3 Effectiveness of Stakeholder Management Processes

The study found that n=8 (14.5%) participants rated overall effectiveness of stakeholder management practices in this road construction project not to be very effective, n=11 (20.0%) participants rated overall effectiveness of stakeholder management practices in this road construction project not to be effective. On the other hand, n=20(36.4%) participants were neutral whether overall stakeholder management practices in this road construction project was effective or not. Lastly, n=10 (18.2%) participants rated overall effectiveness of stakeholder management practices in this road construction project to be effective; and n=7 (12.7%) participants rated effectiveness of stakeholder management practices in this road construction project very effective. The detailed responses obtained from the study participants are shown in the table below.

Table 2: Overall Effectiveness of Stakeholder Management Practices

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not very effective	7	12.7%
Not effective	11	20%
Neutral	20	36.4%
Effective	10	18.2%
Very effective	7	12.7%

4.4 The Relationship between Stakeholder Management Processes, Their Impact on Project Success, and Related Limitations in Mungwi Road Construction Projects

Local actors (χ^2=14.82), leaders (χ^2=12.44), engineers (χ^2=16.55), and communities (χ^2=18.21) improved outcomes; communication (χ^2=20.66) and transparency (χ^2=11.73, 19.88) helped, while interference hindered timeliness (χ^2=22.44).

Table 3: Correlations Between Types of Stakeholder Management and Stakeholder-Management Processes, Project Success, and Limitations

Type of Stakeholder Management	Indicator	Chi-square (χ?	P-Value
Local government involvement	Decision-making effectiveness	14.82	0.032
Community leader influence	Project acceptance & satisfaction	12.44	0.041
Project engineers? involvement	Perceived project quality	16.55	0.024
Community participation	Progress, quality & acceptance	18.21	0.009
Communication methods	Understanding & transparency	20.66	0.003
Consultation before construction	Transparency & accountability	11.73	0.048
Clarity of information shared	Participation in decision-making	19.88	0.004
Stakeholder coordination	Delays & milestones	15.33	0.028
Community input	Road sustainability	17.12	0.015
Limitations	Barriers to completion	22.44	0.001
Project manager efforts	Stakeholder satisfaction	13.88	0.039

Older respondents prioritized transparency (χ^2 = 15.22, p = 0.041), while education positively influenced engagement and understanding (χ^2 = 20.11, p = 0.003). Employed individuals evaluated project outcomes more critically (χ^2 = 10.33, p = 0.049), and long-term residents showed greater involvement and project acceptance (χ^2 = 18.56, p = 0.009).

Table 4: Correlations between the Sociodemographic Characteristics of the study Participants and Stakeholder management processes, their impact on project success, and related limitations in Mungwi road construction projects among community members

Sociodemographic Variable	Stakeholder Management/Project Success Indicator	Chi-square (χ^2)	P-Value	Interpretation
Age Group	Perceived transparency & accountability	15.22	0.041	Older respondents demanded more transparency
Gender	Level of involvement in decision-making	12.45	0.186	No significant association
Education Level	Understanding project information & participation	20.11	0.003	Higher education linked to better participation
Employment Status	Satisfaction with project outcomes	10.33	0.049	Employment status influenced satisfaction
Duration of Residence	Community involvement influence on project acceptance	18.56	0.009	Longer-term residents valued involvement more

Satisfaction with Both the Process of Stakeholder Collaboration and the Final Project Outcomes

The study showed participant satisfaction as follows: 10% very dissatisfied, 20% dissatisfied, 20% neutral, 30% satisfied, and 20% very satisfied with stakeholder collaboration and project outcomes.

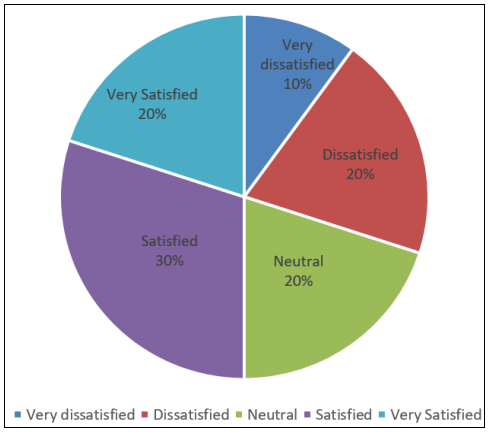

Fig 10: Overall Satisfaction with Both the Process of Stakeholder Collaboration and the Final Project Outcomes

4.5 Limitations Associated with Implementing Stakeholder Management Practices in the Mungwi Road Construction Project Context

Key limitations in Mungwi District's road projects include community resistance (20%), limited stakeholder capacity (18%), cultural barriers (15%), inadequate resources (14%), political interference (12%), geographical challenges (10%), and weak feedback mechanisms (11%). These issues hinder project success, highlighting the need for better engagement strategies.

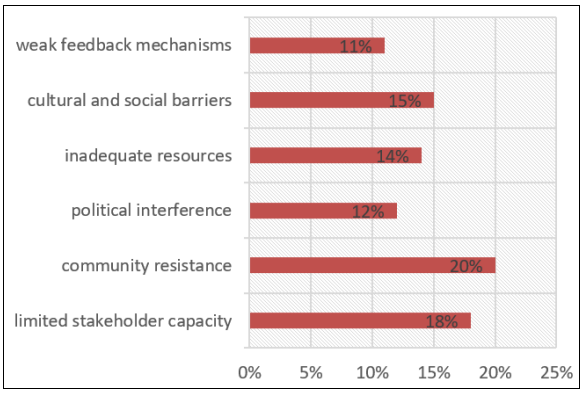

Fig 11: Significance of these Limitations in Delaying, Weakening or Distorting the Project Outcomes

The study found that 10% of participants saw the limitations as no barrier to project outcomes, 20% as minor barriers, 30% as moderate barriers, and 40% as major barriers, delaying or distorting project outcomes.

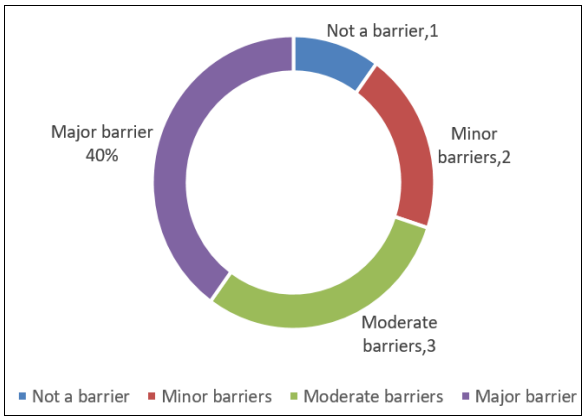

Fig 12: Significance of these Limitations in Delaying, Weakening or Distorting the Project Outcomes

5. Discussion

5.1 Types of Stakeholder Management Involved in Road Construction Projects in Mungwi District

The study of stakeholder management in Mungwi District's road construction projects revealed diverse levels of engagement. Local government officials were moderately involved, with 36.4% fully engaged, while contractors and engineers were most influential, with 80% and 81.8% fully involved. Community leaders and members had limited participation, with 58.2% rarely involved, reflecting a top-down decision-making process. Communication methods, primarily radio (43.6%) and community meetings (30.9%), were vital for outreach, though 41.8% of respondents struggled to understand the project information. Grievance mechanisms were ineffective, and only 20% of consultations were comprehensive. The study highlighted the need for inclusive consultations, better communication, and effective grievance channels (Dadpour *et al*., 2018; Oppong *et al*., 2017; Rafeh *et al*., 2023).

While the Mungwi study aligned with international frameworks, its implementation was inconsistent and informal, with political and institutional limitations affecting stakeholder roles (Road Development Agency, 2023). The findings emphasized that for sustainable outcomes, effective stakeholder management in rural areas requires continuous communication, capacity-building, and transparent processes that strengthen community ownership.

5.2 The Effectiveness of Stakeholder Management Practices in Road Construction Projects in Mungwi District

The study assessed stakeholder management in road construction projects in Mungwi District, highlighting mixed perceptions among community members and project stakeholders. From the community perspective, stakeholder meetings were moderately effective, with 23.6% finding them effective and 27.3% rating them ineffective. Communication was inconsistent, with 35% of participants feeling updates were rarely shared in accessible formats, limiting their involvement. Transparency was also moderate, with 30.9% viewing the process as moderately transparent, while 18.2% felt it lacked transparency. Community engagement had a mixed impact on project timeliness, with 23.6% saying it hindered progress. Only 9% saw strong alignment between project outcomes and community needs.

From the stakeholders' perspective, communication was stronger, with 70% indicating updates were often shared in collaborative formats. Half of the stakeholders found meetings effective for conflict resolution, and 50% rated the transparency of budget, timelines, and progress positively. However, feedback integration remained selective, with 40% saying it was well incorporated into decisions. While stakeholders perceived effective technical coordination, the study revealed a gap in community inclusion. Only 32.7% of community members rated stakeholder management as effective, suggesting the need for more inclusive, transparent frameworks that foster greater community engagement and accountability in future projects.

5.3 The Relationship between Stakeholder Management Processes, their Impact on Project Success, and Related Limitations in Mungwi District Road Construction Projects

The study revealed significant correlations between stakeholder management practices and project outcomes in

Mungwi District's road construction projects. Local government involvement was positively associated with effective decision-making ($\chi^2 = 14.82$, $p = 0.032$), supporting decentralized governance's role in improving project delivery (Zulu *et al*., 2023). Community leader participation correlated with project acceptance ($\chi^2 = 12.44$, $p = 0.041$), enhancing trust and social cohesion. Project engineers' involvement was crucial for project quality ($\chi^2 = 16.55$, $p = 0.024$), and community participation was strongly linked to project progress ($\chi^2 = 18.21$, $p = 0.009$), supporting participatory development theories (Mambwe *et al*., 2020).

Effective communication, particularly clear and accessible information sharing, significantly impacted stakeholder understanding and community participation ($\chi^2 = 20.66$, $p = 0.003$). Consultations prior to construction enhanced transparency and accountability ($\chi^2 = 11.73$, $p = 0.048$), underlining the importance of transparent, two-way communication. However, contractor involvement ($\chi^2 = 10.19$, $p = 0.067$) and grievance mechanisms ($\chi^2 = 9.77$, $p = 0.081$) did not show significant effects on project outcomes, suggesting operational inefficiencies.

Stakeholder coordination ($\chi^2 = 15.33$, $p = 0.028$) and community input ($\chi^2 = 17.12$, $p = 0.015$) were crucial for reducing delays and improving sustainability. Political interference ($\chi^2 = 22.44$, $p = 0.001$) and poor communication were major barriers. Proactive leadership improved stakeholder satisfaction ($\chi^2 = 13.88$, $p = 0.039$).

These findings emphasize the need for inclusive, transparent, and participatory stakeholder management frameworks in rural infrastructure projects to improve quality, accountability, and sustainability (Aiyana & Das, 2020; Daka, 2024).

5.4 Limitations Associated with Implementing Stakeholder Management Practices in the Mungwi Road Construction Project Context

The study on stakeholder management in Mungwi District's road construction projects identified significant limitations from both community members' and stakeholders' perspectives. Community engagement faced challenges, with 21.8% reporting many barriers and 9.1% perceiving extreme challenges. Key issues included inadequate funding (23.6%), low community awareness (20%), political interference (32.7%), and irregular communication (32.7%). Delays in regulatory approvals (40%) also hindered engagement. Project managers' efforts to address challenges were moderate, with 40% stating they were moderately addressed. From the stakeholders' perspective, political interference (40%) and delays in decision-making (60%) were critical barriers. These limitations delayed and weakened project outcomes, highlighting the need for better communication, funding, and local leadership. These findings align with studies by Olatunde and Odeyinka (2021), El-Sawalhi and Hammad (2020), and others, emphasizing the importance of transparent communication, dynamic stakeholder identification, and improved collaboration for successful project delivery.

Conclusion

The study concluded that effective stakeholder management is crucial for the success of rural construction projects in Mungwi District, Zambia. Key factors include inclusive, transparent, and coordinated engagement, particularly involving local government and community leaders. The study advocates for structured stakeholder management frameworks, continuous communication, and capacity-building for local authorities. It also highlights the need to address weaknesses in contractor involvement, grievance mechanisms, and political interference, emphasizing the importance of transparency, accountability, and depoliticized project management to improve project outcomes and sustainability.

Recommendation

Recommendations from the Study

i) Strengthen community awareness programs to improve understanding of project goals and stakeholder participation rights.
ii) Allocate adequate funding to support consistent stakeholder engagement and communication activities.
iii) Provide leadership and stakeholder management training for local leaders and project managers.
iv) Minimize political interference through transparent decision-making and accountability mechanisms.

Recommendations for Further Studies

i) Investigate the impact of stakeholder engagement on project sustainability in rural road construction projects.
ii) Examine the role of local leadership capacity in enhancing stakeholder participation.
iii) Assess the influence of political interference on project timelines and outcomes.
iv) Explore effective communication strategies to improve stakeholder collaboration in infrastructure projects.

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