

Full Length Research Paper

Problems and prospects of project execution in Nigeria: a study of construction companies operating in Delta state

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Accepted 7 May, 2019

The study examined the problems and prospects of project execution in Nigeria: evidence from selected construction companies operating in south-south. The study was based on survey research design. Taro Yemeni was used to determine the sample size of two hundred and twenty five (225). The primary data analyzed was obtained using a close end questionnaire structured in binary format. Binary logit regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses formulated. We found that environmental factors, Economic policy and Political factor has positive significant impact relationship with project execution in Nigeria. Changes in Government policy and Cultural factor have no impact on project execution in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommend that construction companies in Nigeria should consider Environmental factors, Economic policy, Political factor while bidding and planning project execution in Nigeria.

Keywords: Project Execution, Environmental Factors, Economic Policy, Government Policy, Cultural Factor and Political Factor.

INTRODUCTION

The major responsibility of public sector is the provision of basic amenities to the populace. The amenities are usually provided by government through its contractors who provides those services as agreed in the terms of the contract. However, the quality and delivery time of the project is to a large extent dependent on the terms of the contract and government payment. In Nigeria, project failure has continued at an alarming rate, despite growing understanding of determinants of success in project management, increasing maturity, and a stream of successful projects. Project failure manifests as inability to deliver a project to time, cost and quality specifications, or inability to satisfy consumer expectations (Amachree, 1988). Going by this it may be observed that few projects in Nigeria go through to completion on time with budgeted amount. More often than not, the projects drag on for years and in some instances, they become functionally obsolete on completion. This is because times are changing fast, and new innovations driving the way things are done are being introduced every day. A typical example is the Ajaokuta Steels Project. The amount of money invested so far runs into billions of naira yet, because it has dragged on for years, the project has no prospects of

ensuring steel production at a competitive rate. This is because parts installed initially in the early stages of the project have become obsolete and cannot guarantee steel production at a competitive rate.

The inability to complete projects on schedule or to cost projected has sometimes led to total project abandonment. Most times the abandon project brings untold hardship especially in many rural areas; project like road construction.

In practice, project execution tends to be complicated by many unforeseen problems. Therefore flexibility is required at this stage to enable the successful execution of the project. The process of execution can be long and drawn out though depending on the nature of the project and the time period over which it spans. It is normal to consider it over three phases; Investment, Development and Operation. Agu (2012) believe that there is considerable variation in the length of each of these stages between different projects with infrastructure projects tending to have long investment periods. It is probably true to claim that a project is as good as its execution. Thus, execution of a project is another critical stage in the project's life cycle.

Agu (2012) and Richard (2012) argued that Africa's

cultural values, economic and political conditions, government policy, finance and organizational environments have great effect on execution of projects. Similarly, the recognition of economic rationality and efficiency, assumed as a basis for many project management tools and techniques does not reflect local realities. The use of such tools and techniques in Nigeria does not enhance project success since they run counter to cultural and work values.

According to Nwachukwu et al. (2010), the rate at which infrastructure construction projects fail, or are abandoned, some even under construction, is retrogressive in most developing economies. Projects of moderate scale go on for a long time and this has raised question about the sincerity of governments to complete those projects embarked upon as schedule. Various studies have been carried out to evaluate the factors affecting the execution of project in public sector but study on factors affecting company's execution of project awarded to them in Nigeria context is lacking. This constitutes the gap this study filled. Hence main objective of this study therefore is to examine the factors affecting project execution by companies in Nigeria.

Literature review

Concept of project: A project is a series of coordinated activities and tasks embarked upon by organizations, with clearly defined objectives, commencement date, duration, requirements for resources and also funding limits. A project is delivered to quality and time and cost specifications and in order to realize them, proper organization of resources is crucial (Nwankwo, 2006). Akpan and Chizea (2002) defined Project Management as the effective utilization of available human and material resources under time and cost constraints for the satisfactory realization of the pre-determined project objectives. Ntamere (1995) defined project management as managing and directing time, materials and costs to complete a particular project in an orderly and economical manner, so as to meet established objectives in time, budgeted amount and to achieve technical results. The execution of project deals with planned activities which converts human and physical resources into a product or service of value to the customers. It should be noted that if the operational systems are not clear then the execution process will have a rocky path and the project might fail to realize the intended goal or purpose. Projects are designed, planned and implemented in tandem with the sequence displayed by the project cycle.

The execution of projects is influenced by a multiple of factors which can be external or internal to the organization responsible for its management. They are grouped into five basic categories. They are: cultural values, economic, political conditions, government policy, finance and organizational environments. Those

factors determine to a large extent the success and failure of any project. Rubin and Seeling (1967) stressed that technical performance was a measure of successful project development. Avots (1969) similarly argued that the wrong choice of a project development manager and unsupportive top-management would cause a project development failure and/or abandonment. Therefore, competency of the project development teams should be imperative in combating development projects abandonment because of the important products and service it provides to real properties and its value enhancement.

Ozdemir (2010) asserted that the construction industry has a very poor reputation for coping with delays. Delay analysis is either ignored or done subjectively by simply adding a contingency. As a result many major projects fail to meet schedule deadlines. In a construction project where time truly equals money, the management of time is critical (Duran, 2006), thus predicting the likelihood of schedule delay may play a key role towards project success.

Political factors and project execution

Political factor include change in government through electionary process, the change may lead to abandonment of some project while new one will be initiated, this is the case in Nigeria and most African country where political factor determine the allocation of resources for execution of project budgeted for.

Politics manifests itself in all organizations as opinions and attitudes of the different stakeholders in these organizations. In addition, the stakeholders relied upon by the project may also have their own agenda and preferences for participating in the project. The relationships to the project by these stakeholders can vary from very supportive to antagonistic, but depending on their field of influence, must be considered and managed. However, neither the sponsor nor the project manager has control over external politics such as political turmoil which may disrupt the project.

Environmental factor and project execution

For those who have not had experience of a construction project in the trenches so to speak, it is sometimes difficult to capture the feeling of pressure, stress and ultimate satisfaction of project well accomplished, which the construction project management process offers. For the first timers, many experience bewilderment as to what is really happening around them. Yet, most projects, if they are well run, exhibit some very typical but distinguishing features as they run their course. Wideman (1990) maintain that, for convenience, and working outward, the project environment may be thought of in terms of the project

time, environment, the internal project culture, the original cooperate culture, and external social surroundings.

Christenson (1989) identified three different community approaches: self-help, technical assistance and conflict. This typology is useful for understanding some of the ways practitioners or project implementers approach their work. Self-help assumes that increasing the capacity of residents to address their problems will result in improvement in quality of life and ability of residents to help them in future. Technical assistance approach adopts a belief that the most important obstacle communities face concerns the lack of technical knowledge and information to surmount their problems, and the quality of life will improve if the community is given such technical assistance. Conflict approach advocates that the fundamental problem a community faces are the lack of power to overcome and if they are organized around the problem identified the community will win (Green and Haines, 2008).

Cultural factor and project execution

The word culture originates from the Latin word *colere* which means to inhabit or to cultivate. It is defined as: The collective programming (thinking, feeling and acting) of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another (Hofstede, 2005).

The term, culture, was introduced to business life in the late 1980's, to refer to the attitudes and behaviour of members of an organization or business unit. The term became more and more popular over the last twenty years as businesses tended to be more active internationally. This is the reason why understanding different cultures has become a business necessity.

Hofstede identified culture to be the mental programming of the mind: every person carries within him or herself patterns of thinking; feeling; and potential acting which are learned throughout their lifetime.

Economic factors and project execution

Economic influence has two levels: first, the internal economics principle relating to the viability of a project holds that unless there is a net gain there is no point in even considering embarking on a project. The external or macro-economic relate to high interest rates and prices, tariff barriers, embargoes and shipping restrictions, among other influences, of which the project manager have no control over. Many projects, and indeed most construction projects, inevitably affect the communities in whose area they are carried out. Conversely, the opposite holds true that the benefitting communities also affect projects being rolled out in their areas. It is vital therefore to inform the residents in the affected areas as early as possible of the intent,

purpose and benefits to the community of the project. Some projects cannot be started until after a public inquiry, environmental impact assessment, route survey or lengthy planning procedures. Economic factor like exchange rate inflation and lending rate can positively or negatively influence the execution of project. It is recommended that the results presented in this research be widely disseminated and used in community enlightenment, and in further policy guidance and regulation.

Government policies and project execution

Policies are made in every state by the elected representatives who have diverse interest in mind. The projects to be approved and executed depend on the political objectives which the government wants to achieve. This interference of politician in project approval and execution has been identified as a breeding ground for corruption and shady execution and abandonment of project. Since there is a political motives behind the project, including it in the budget becomes a necessity in order to enable the relevant department implement the project.

Theoretical framework

This study will be guided by stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984). Freeman defined stakeholder as any group or individual who can affect or who is affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives and continues to provide the boundaries of what constitutes a stake. He argues that a stakeholder has some form of capital, either financial or human, at risk and, therefore, has something to lose or gain depending on a firm's behaviour. To these elements, Waddock (2004) adds a tie that creates a bond of some sort.

A stakeholder theory of the organization requires an understanding of the types of stakeholder influence but also how organizations respond to those influences. Each firm faces a different set of stakeholders, which aggregate into unique patterns of influence. Ambler and Wilson (1995) demonstrate that firms do not simply respond to each stakeholder individually; they respond, rather, to the interaction of multiple influences from the entire stakeholder set. Thus, organizations response to their stakeholders requires an analysis of the complex array of multiple, interdependent relationships existing within the stakeholder environment. The conceptual competition within stakeholder theory, between legitimacy and power, is reflected in virtually every major theory of the firm particularly in agency, behavioural, institutional, population ecology, resource dependence and transaction cost theories (Argenti 1997).

Empirical review

Adnan et al. (2009) identified the factors affecting the performance of local construction projects; and to elicit perceptions of their relative importance. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to three key groups of the participant; namely owners, consultant and contractor. The survey findings indicate that all three groups agree that the most important factors affecting project performance are: delays because of borders/roads closure leading to materials shortage; unavailability of resources; low level of project leadership skills; escalation of material prices; unavailability of highly experienced and qualified personnel; and poor quality of available equipment and raw materials.

Zuofa and Ochieng (2014) examined the concept of project failure with the aim to identify the main factors responsible for project failure and suggest strategies aimed at curbing project failure and facilitating development in the future. The results was synthesized into action points which included: the need for an introduction of governance mechanism to incorporate processes standard guidelines that supports projects to achieve their objectives, enshrining punitive actions against erring project stakeholders who engage in corrupt and unethical practices.

Benedict (2012) investigated the critical success factors of project execution in Nigeria. The study sampled the opinion of fifty selected project professionals presently working in six project sites located in Anambra, Imo and River States. An objective realization instrument developed using twelve (12) factors identified in the literature as possible drivers of success in project execution based on the Likert five-point scale of ranking. Weighted scores of respondents to the factors were analyzed using factor analysis, while the effects of the quantified weight of the critical factors were analyzed using the regression tool. Results of the analysis among others show that Environmental factors are more critical to the success of project execution than skills portfolio of the project team. Collective responsibility among project stakeholders is a necessary condition for successful project execution.

Nzekwe et al. (2015) critically analyze the factors that lead to project failure in Anambra State, South East, Nigeria, with a view to ameliorating the high level of project failure. Primary information used in the research were sourced from a survey of one hundred (100) project professionals, with a minimum of 5 years of experience. The research founds that the most important factor for project failure is increase in the price of starting materials.

Statement of the problem

Most projects are not implemented and completed as specified due to the inadequate skill and capacity to

prepare and analyze projects and even few planning program under taken most often underestimate the time and effort needed to implement and complete projects.

The rate of Project poor implementation is indeed alarming. Projects of moderate scale go on for a long time and this has created skepticism in the population about the sincerity of governments to complete any projects embarked upon on schedule. Sometimes, communities make projections about the likelihood of early completion or not, or even outright abandonment, judging solely by the reputation of the contractor handling the work. Even more worrisome is the prevalence of abandoned projects, mostly private properties, due to one reason or another. Nwachukwu et al. ((2010).

Objectives of the study

The main objective is to investigate the factors affecting project execution in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- Determine the extent to which environmental factors affects project completion in Delta State.
- Ascertain the effect of cultural factors on project execution in Nigeria.
- Evaluate the effect of economic factors on project execution in Nigeria.
- Evaluate the effect of political factors on project execution in Nigeria.
- Examine the effect of government policies on project execution Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The research is guided by the following hypotheses:

H₀: Environmental factor has no effect on project execution in Nigeria.

H₀: Cultural factor has no significant effect on project execution in Nigeria

H₀: Economic factor has no significant effect on project execution in Nigeria

H₀: Political factor has no significant effect on project execution in Nigeria

H₀: Government policies have no effect on project execution in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study used primary data and was based on field survey research design. The primary data was collected with the aid of questionnaire well structured in binary format. The secondary data helped establish the theoretical background and to modify the research question. The primary data were collected from the respondent in SetracoUghelli, Consortium construction

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

S/N	Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
1.	Male	186	83	83	83
2.	Female	39	17	17	100.0
Total		225	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's Computation

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by work experience

Relevant years of experience	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
0 – 10	65	28.9	28.9	28.9
11 – 20	106	47.1	47.1	76.0
21 – above	54	24.0	24.0	100.0
Total	225	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's Computation

company (CCC) Kwale, Niger Cat, Warri and professional in the construction industry. The Population consists of 513 staffs with different background including project managers, architects, surveyors, engineers, builders, field supervisor etc. The fraction of the targeted study population responding to the questionnaire constituted the sample size. The sample size of 225 was derived using Taro Yamani.

The reliability of the instrument was established using test re-test method. Copies of the questionnaire for the study was administered to Forty (40) respondents in each research area hence a total of 120 copies of the questionnaire were used for the reliability test. The same instrument was administered to the same respondents after two weeks of main field data collection in order to ascertain the reliability of their responses. The coefficient of reliability for their responses was tested using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis.

The study used binary Regression in obtaining a functional causal effect relationship between the selected factors and project execution. The binary regression models unlike others is based on the use of dichotomous dependent variable in which observation scores one (1) if it is present and zero(0) if otherwise. Model used was specified as follows:

$$COM_i = f(ENV, CUL, GOV, POL, ECO) \dots\dots\dots 1$$

This can be econometrically express as follows

$$COM_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ENVF_i + \beta_2 CULF_i + \beta_3 GOVF_i + \beta_4 POLF_i + \beta_5 ECOF_i + E_i \dots\dots\dots 2$$

Where: COM = Project execution; ENVF= Environmental Factor; CULF = Cultural Factor
 ECOF = Economic Factor; GOVF= Government Factor;
 POLF = Political Factors; d_0 = Constant $d_1 - d_5$ = are the coefficient of the binary logistic regression equation; E = Error term
 i= i is the cross section of firm.

Data analysis and interpretation

Efforts were made to analyze the data generated and collected in this study which are mainly from primary source. Apart from the analysis of the personal data of the respondents, the main issues in the study were analyzed in two sections namely; answer to research questions and the test of hypotheses. Also, whereas summary statistics of percentage was used in answering the research questions, Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression (binary) analysis were used to verify the hypotheses formulated to guide the study.

Table 1 shows that 83 percent of the respondents in the sample are male while 17 percent are female thus showing that there are more male than female in the composition of workforce in the construction firms sampled.

The distribution of respondents according to experience shows that 28.9 percent of the respondents have less than ten years work experience in the construction industry. 47.1 percent have more than ten years but less than twenty one years experience in construction firms while 24 percent have more than twenty one years work experience in construction industry. Table 2 indicates the level of experience of workers in the sampled firms, this may have influence on the execution and quality of job done by the sampled firms beside qualification.

From Table 3, respondents that have high school certificate (SSCE/OND/NCE) in the sampled firms are 23 only and it represents about 10.2 percent of the sample. Those with university degree, higher national diploma certificates are 81 and they represent about 36 percent in the sampled population, those with second and third degree (Master, Ph.D) are 57 and they represent about 25.3 percent. While those with other certificates outside the categories stated above, that is

Table 3: Distribution of the Respondents by Educational Qualification

S/N	Highest Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
1.	SSC/OND/NCE	23	10.2	10.2	10.2
3.	B.Sc/HND/B.ed	81	36	36	46.2
4.	MSC/PHD	57	25.3	25.3	71.5
5.	ICAN/ANAN/NCORREN/OTHERS	64	28.4	28.4	100.0
Total		225	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's computation

Table 4: Distribution of the Respondents by Department/Unit

S/N	Department/Unit	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
1.	Engineering	48	21.3	21.3	3.1
2.	Accounting	26	11.6	11.6	2.7
3.	Admin	34	15.1	15.1	77.0
4.	Field/Project	117	52.0	52.0	100.0
Total		225	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's Computation

those with professional qualification in their respective field, professional like the ICAN, ANAN CORREEN are 64 and represent about 28.4 percent of the sampled population. The implication of this analysis is that the sample consists of those that are highly literate.

The distribution of respondents Department/Unit in Table 4 shows that 21.3 percent of the respondents have works in engineering department of the sampled firms. 11.6 percent respondents have worked in accounting department, 15.1 percent of the respondents work's in the Administrative department/unit. While 117 respondent representing 52.0 percent of the sampled respondent's works as field supervisor or staff.

Hypotheses testing

The result of the binary regression analysis is presented below

The above table report the Binary regression result which follows the assumption of no hetero-scedaticity.

In table 5 above, the study observed from the result that the Mc-Fadden R.sq is 0.6214. this indicates that all the independent variables jointly explain about 62% of the variation in project execution of the sampled companies. That is, all the independent variables account for about 62% of the level of project execution in the selected firm influence by the selected variables. The L.R-statistics value of 62.502 and its probability value of 0.0000 shows that the Binary regression model used are well specified and the model specification is statistically significant at 1% levels.

The finding from the Binary regression Analysis and testing of the hypotheses is as follow:

Hypotheses1: Environmental factors do not have significant effect on project execution.

The analysis result showed a coefficient value of 1.1165, Z-statistics of 3.0637 and a P-value of 0.0022. The coefficient value of 1.1165 reveals that environmental factors influence about 1.12 percentages in project execution. Hence, #1.00 change in environmental factors can lead to 1.12% increase in project execution by the sampled firms. The Z-statistics of 3.0637 reveals that environmental factors have effect on project execution of construction companies/firms. The probability value of 0.0022 reveals that environmental factors have statistical significant effect on project execution, and the effect is statistical significant at 1% level.

Hypothesis 2: Cultural factors have no significant effect on project execution.

The analysis result of the effect of Cultural factors on project execution shows a coefficient value of 0.0079, Z-statistics of 0.0226 and a P-value of 0.9820. The coefficient value of 0.0079 reveals that #1.00 value change in cultural factors may lead to about less than 1% positive increase in project execution of construction companies in Nigeria. The Z-statistics of 0.0226 reveals that Cultural factors have weak but positive effect on the project execution of construction companies. The probability value of 0.9820 reveals that Cultural factors effect on project execution of construction companies in Nigeria is not statistically significant even at 10% level.

Hypothesis 3: Economic factor has no significant effect on project execution.

Table 5: Binary Regression Result

Variables		Execution
Environmental Factors	Coefficient	1.1165
	Z-stat	[3.0637]
	P-value	(0.0022)
Cultural Factors	Coefficient	0.0079
	Z-stat	[0.0226]
	P-value	(0.9820)
Economic Factors	Coefficient	6.8615
	Z-stat	[2.1740]
	P-value	(0.0297)
Government Factors	Coefficient	0.5190
	Z-stat	[1.4381]
	P-value	(0.1240)
Political Factors	Coefficient	1.9764
	Z-stat	[2.4785]
	P-value	(0.0132)
Mc-Fadden R.sq		0.6214
L.R statistics		62.502
L.R Statistics probability		0.0000

Source: Researcher's summary of binary regression Analysis from E-view 9

The analysis result of the effect of Economic factor on project execution showed a coefficient value of 6.8615, Z-statistics of 2.1740 and a P-value of 0.0297. The coefficient value of 6.8615 reveals that changes in economic factors may lead to less than one percent changes in project execution (0.9%) in Nigeria. The Z-statistics of 2.1740 reveals that Economic policy factor has a positive effect on project execution of construction companies. The probability value of 0.0297 reveals that the effect of economic policy factor on the project execution in Nigeria is statistically significant at 5% level. The p-value result re-affirms the Z-statistics result.

Hypothesis 4: Government policy has no significant effect on project execution.

The analysis result of the effect of Government policy on project execution showed a coefficient value of 0.5190, Z-statistics result of 1.5381 and a P-value of 0.1240. The coefficient value of 0.5190 indicates that a change in Government policy may lead to about 0.52% positive increase in project execution in Nigeria. The Z-statistics result of 1.5381 reveals that Government policy has a weak positive effect on project execution of construction companies. The probability value of 0.1240 reveals that the effect of Government policy on project execution of construction companies in Nigeria is not statistically significant even at 10% level.

Hypothesis 5: Political factor has no significant effect on project execution.

The analysis result of the effect of Political factor on project execution showed a coefficient value of 0.9764, Z-statistics result of 2.4785 and a P-value of 0.0132. The coefficient value of 0.9764 indicates that changes

in politics and Political factor may lead to about 0.98% changes in project execution in Nigeria. The Z-statistics result of 2.4785 reveals that Political factor has a positive effect on project execution of construction companies. The probability value of 0.0132 reveals that the effect of Political factor on project execution of construction companies in Nigeria is statistically significant even at 5% level.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that economic factors, political factors and environmental factors have statistical significant effect on project execution in Nigeria. The McFadden R.sq of 62.14% indicates that there are other variables which have about 37.86% influence on project execution that is not captured in this study such like resource allocation, project funding and project cost and lack of skilled personnel. The results of this study supported previous studies on the factors affecting project execution in Nigeria. The findings can be very useful in formulating short term, as well as long term strategies for project evaluation and execution. The result provides useful information for construction companies managers in planning their project execution.

Recommendations

Construction companies in Nigeria in bidding for project and formulating project execution and related strategies should pay less attention to cultural factors and government policy, because they have no statistical

significant effect on project execution, though they have influence on project execution, their influence is negligible. More attention should be given to environmental factors, Economic factors and political factors that may influence the execution of project by construction companies in Nigeria.

It is also recommended that a similar study should be conducted assessing the factors influencing completion of construction projects in private and non-governmental organizations. A study should also be conducted on the Factors influencing resource allocation on Government funded construction projects.

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