

# Barriers of Project Management in Public Property Development Projects in the Niger Delta Region

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## ABSTRACT

Public projects have huge differences from other types of projects, which these differences have an implication on the existing methods used in managing these projects. Often times, in the Niger Delta region, the development of public projects are faced with some project management difficulties. At the same time there is evidence of uncompleted projects, abandonment of projects, time overrun, and cost overrun by the government in the Niger Delta. These have become a continuous challenges faced by the developers, populace and government, as stated in previous studies. Therefore, the aim of the study is to examine these difficulties that arise during the development of public projects in the Niger Delta region. However, focus was given to government initiated funded projects in the Niger Delta region. The research has taken an interpretative philosophy with multiple case study approach of explanatory and exploratory case studies in project management of public property development. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using ten (10Nr) semi-structured interviews, and one hundred and thirty (130Nr) questionnaires. The data was analysed using interpretative content analysis techniques and Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 2021. Further, the study highlighted eleven difficulties of project management in public property development. The study further recommends that the identification of nine difficulties of project management would improve the delivery of public projects and sustain the contemporary public property development projects.

**Key words:** difficulties of public projects, project management, public property development,

## INTRODUCTION

Property Development involves the transformation of land or buildings for specific purposes, such as residential, commercial or industrial uses, for which factors including zoning regulations, environmental impact, and community needs to determine the best use for a piece of land must be considered. Public properties are those properties that are owned by the government or any of her ministries, departments or agencies from any tier (Federal, State, and Local Government) (Amoah, Berbegal and Marmon 2022). The goal of the development of public property development projects is to achieve social benefit because it is a non-profit making status. The activity of public development project involves planning, design, finance, and the assembling of a team to manage the project to completion stage which is the basic function of project management (Folger, 2024).

Effective project management plays a crucial role in the successful development of public property development project which Nigeria have made some progress in project management, such as government commitment, increased investment, capacity building, and technology adoption, but still they are faced with several difficulties (GIPM, 2023).

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is a coastal environment located in the Atlantic coast of southern Nigeria where a river divides it into numerous tributaries (Ike and Emaziye, 2012). The Nigeria's Niger Delta region by this description would have been the fan shaped area covering the three states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers alone as the geographic Niger Delta, but for the purpose of revenue sharing, the region is said to be made up of nine oil producing states upon which ecological funds are raised for public projects (Akujuru, 2014). The

population of the region is estimated at 42.65 million people (Osigwe, Okungbowa, and Rafiu, 2023).

Fig. 1: Map of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria



Source: Niger Delta Home page, (2013)

### Statement of problem

The Niger Delta region is noted to have had a definitely visible climate change problem amidst its natural equatorial climatic condition dominated by mangroves and tropical swampy rainforest, with heavy rainfall almost throughout the year, having a maximum output of 3785 mm at Brass (Nigerian Met 2007), high monthly temperature of 26.67<sup>0</sup>C, and high relative monthly humidity reaching 90%, (Ituen and Alonge, 2009). There exist myriads of physical geographical problems as identified to include: flooding, siltation, erosion and submergence of developed areas as well as pervasive environmental degradation, which all are capable of impeding the process of infrastructural development and has officially led to the region being tagged ‘difficult terrain’ (Ogele, 2022).

Nevertheless, there has been significant underdevelopment of public property development projects which is blamed on the placement of affairs in the hands of government personnel who are interested in misappropriation and wasteful spending of huge revenue from oil (Isidiho and Sabran, 2015). It is observed that many government projects are prolonged for years, failing to meet the projects objectives, wasting tax payers’ money or they are shortly terminated in the midst of the planning or implementation stage (specifically in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria). This is caused by the environments in which the projects are developed, leading to abandonment of projects, delivery of low-quality projects, and sometimes uncompleted projects. This research therefore investigates these reoccurring barriers that are encountered during the development of public project.

Therefore, the aim and objective of the study is identifying the difficulties of project management in public property development projects in the Niger Delta Region.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Public Property Development Projects

Project is defined as a set of principles, methods, tools, and techniques for the effective management of work in a specific and unique Organizational environment (Waldt, 2015). Projects consume resources and these resources are in form of Time, Money, Materials and Labour, which the aim is to oversee them and apply them effectively as possible Waldt, (2015).

Public property development projects are projects funded by government, which is meant to be owned and

operated by the government (Kassel, 2010). Project management Institute defined public projects as projects that are implemented by the decision of the central level government institution (Gasik, 2022). Public property development projects include: transportation projects, educational projects, recreational projects, residential/accommodation projects, healthcare projects, telecommunication projects, agricultural projects, water resources projects and electricity projects.

### **Project Management in Public Development Projects**

Project management is a complex job that requires knowledge, skills, and capabilities from many areas which are executed in the environment of its organisation and many of the activities carried out is as a result of the arrangement adopted for all organisation activities (Gasik, 2022). Waladt, (2015) defined project management as the essential for a successful development; also he mentioned that managing a project is establishing a definable, measurable project outcomes that relate to a government department's strategic goal, ensuring that project outputs are attained by utilizing the project team, and managing the interrelationship between all stakeholders and role-players. Westland (2022) described project management as a highly complex field and pointed out eight key principles of which are believed to simplify the development process and they include: Definition a project organization structure; Setting clear project goals and objectives; Creating a communication plan; Defining roles and responsibilities; Creating a risk management plan; Setting a project performance baseline; Creating a change management plan and Focus on value delivery.

### **Barriers of Project Management in Public Property Development Projects**

It is seen that Niger Delta Region have no institutional framework or regulatory bodies that can assess, review and control current and future skill requirement for property development project management system (Oduami, Iyagba and Omirim, 2003; Nwachukwu and Emoh 2011; Kissi and Ansah 2013). However, Abbasi, Al-mham and Sukhoo (2004) as cited by Ogunde, Olaolu, Afolabi, Owolabi and Ojelbi, (2017), emphasized that difficulties of project management are shortage of skilled staff, difficult economy and social condition, Weak political institution, deeply rotted cultural and religious beliefs. Also Caliste (2012) outlined the following as difficulties of project management in public projects and they are poor project definition, misunderstanding between project goals and objective. According to Salau and Salawu, (2014) outline eight difficulties encountered in public projects and they include: Bureaucratic bottle neck leading to unnecessary delay, increase in cost of project, granting contract to incompetent persons, non-keeping of proper account books, and lackadaisical activities of people towards government projects.

However, in view of this the difficulties of public project management include the following which was drawn from the literature review.

**Bureaucratic bottle neck:** Bureaucracy bottleneck is defined as a complicate official system which caused delay in one stage of a development process that makes particular process take longer to accomplish (Reed, 2005).

**Poor project definition:** project definition is the foundation of any project for all future decisions and it act as a base for all future decisions, changes and work involved in project execution (Eduarado, 2022).

**Misunderstanding between project goals and objective:** project goals are the end result a developer wishes to achieve as a long term gain, whereas project objective is a concrete tasks that need to be executed in order to attain an end results; they are more concrete and specific which cover short to mid-term achievements that usually need to be implemented on a daily basis (Cohen, 2022).

**Increase in cost of project:** increase in cost of project is an unexpected change in the project budget that ends up increasing the total cost and this happen due to economic factors that occur due to inaccuracies in project budget or scope; technical reasons too is another factor which is due to erroneous estimates or incorrect data gathering and psychological causes which is due to the presence of scope creep or any decrease in project commitment levels (Yvvika, 2022).

**Corruptions:** Corruption takes the form of public servants taking money or favors in exchange for services or

politicians misusing public money or granting public projects to their sponsors, friends and families. Obayeu, (2007) defined corruption as an effort to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private gain at public expenses or a misuse of public power for private benefit.

**Granting contract to incompetent persons:** an incompetent developer is one that is poor communicator, indecisive and cannot inspire a shared vision, makes poor decisions, lack team building skills, lacks integrity, lacks project management skills, and lacks problem solving skills (Ondiek, 2015).

**Non-keeping of proper account books and other records:** Record keeping helps property developer efficiently and productive, because without a thorough documentation of records there will be miscommunication and data loss (Hilinski, 2017). Poor recording leads to problems with rippling effect and it can be very serious when records are needed for budgets and pay roll (Hilinski, 2017).

**Lackadaisical attitude:** it is well known that incoming governments make no effort in keeping any existing projects that was carried out by the previous government rather they abandon the project and embrace on new ones with a view to drain the little resources of the state (Adeyemi an Omotehinshe, 2007).

**Economy and social condition:** social condition affects development by preventing clearances and the movement of men, materials and equipment (Shabir, Aftab, Nafees, Zubair and Rawal, 2023). Public development is dependent on healthy economy and there are many economic factors that affect the implementation of public projects such as interest rates, taxes, laws and legislation, jobs and political activities.

**Weak political institution:** Political institutions are the organisations in a government that create, enforce and apply laws (Alistair, 2020). They often mediate conflict, make policy on the economy and social systems and otherwise provide representation for the population which Nigerians political institution is weak because they do not fulfill their purposes.

**Deeply rotted cultural and religious beliefs:** Culture and religion is a very powerful force and is multidimensional; a person placed in different organisations would act differently because a strong embedded culture creates social ideas that guide individual behavior (Muzinda, 2017); (Suda, 2007).

## METHODOLOGY

Efforts to identify the difficulties of project management in public property development projects were discussed in the literature review. However, in gathering information the study adopts quantitative and qualitative approach using case study design which allows the use of mixed method approach of data collection sources and analytical techniques. Based on the quantitative approach, a five-point likert scale questionnaire survey design was designed and self-delivered to the participants. This was adopted because it helps to cover a wide geographical targeted population, assures respondent of privacy, it is timing, less expensive, less of interaction and there is no possibility of interviewer bias (Creswell and plano Clark, 2011). The questionnaire sample was drawn from the total estimated staff members' such as quantity surveyors, estate surveyors, engineers, project managers, architects from the ministries, departments and agencies associated with public property development projects in each of the nine Niger Delta states. Since the total sample size of the study was largely unknown and the entire domain was large, a stratified simple random sampling was conducted with an assumed population of 200 to calculate the finite population using Taro's Yammane formula (Ihuah, 2015). This was determined and the targeted population size for questionnaire was 132 but 130 questionnaires were retrieved which represents 98.5% of the respondents' rate and 10 interviewees were sampled. Further, the data was analysed using statistical package for the social sciences version 2021, where data were interpreted using descriptive statistics and relative important index (RII), and the result were represented in tables. Similarly, based on the qualitative approach, data was analysed by transcribing the data's after organising all relevant documents and visual information. However, the reason for transcribing of data is to get meaningful interpretation and to summarize voice records into words (Yin, 2009). Finally, the qualitative data supports the quantitative data; this was done by linking arguments and evidence. According to Seale (1999), questionnaire data fills the gaps in the knowledge which could not have been done with interview alone, hence, helping to provide more explanation to the findings of an interview.

## DATA ANALYSIS / FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the presentation and analysis of data gathered from the field, where data collected are presented in forms appropriate for interpretation and understanding using the various analytical tools and text discussed in the previous chapter.

The data presentation involves the use of relative important index, for interpretation of result, the range of figures in Table 4.0 below will be adopted in judging the strengths of the response within the whole research analysis (Pallant, 2013).

Table 4.0 Decision rule table for judgment of analysis

Range	Judgment
0.00- 0.29	Very weak
0.30 - 0.39	Weak
0.40 - 0.59	Moderate
0.60 - 0.79	Strong
0.80 - 1.00	Very strong

Source: Pallant, (2013)

Based on the literature review, questionnaire administration and interview conducted the following theme emerged and discussed below also data for analysis were collected through questionnaire administration and interview, the following theme emerged from the result of the analysis and discussed below:

$$RII = (n1 + 2n2+3n3+4n4+5n5)/5N$$

Where:

n1 = number of respondents that answers strongly disagree;

n2 = number of respondents that answered disagree;

n3 = number of respondents that answered neutral;

n4 = number of respondents that answered agree;

n5 = number of respondents that answered strongly agree;

N = total number of respondents = 130.

Table 4.1 below, outlined the result on the barriers of project management in public property development projects by the respondents. The Table showed that the respondents strongly agree that corruption (ranked 1<sup>st</sup>), bureaucratic bottleneck (ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>), economy/social condition (ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>) are the major barriers of project management in public property development projects. The result also showed that grant of contract to incompetent developer, misunderstanding between project gals and objective, poor project definition, weak political institution scored above 0.80 R.I. I score, the respondents strongly agree that they are barriers of project management n pubic property development project. Also, non-keeping of proper records, lackadaisical attitude and rooted cultural beliefs scored above 0.70 RII score, the respondents agreed that they are also barriers of project management public property development projects, except for increase in cost of project which scored above 0.40 R.I. I scores



“...all these barriers of project management in public property development projects you mentioned are encountered during the development of public projects...” (Transcribed interview 2023)

“...the major barriers faced in public property development are corruption, bureaucratic bottle neck and the economy/social condition of the country. There is always an act of nepotism in awarding of contract and this has affected public project delivery, which eliminating this act is difficult as pubic projects is developed in a political environment...”

Table 4.1 Barriers of project management in public property development Rank based on Relative Importance Index (RII) Value.

Barriers of project management in public property development	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	RII values	Ranking
Corruption	2	0	18	120	460	0.923	1 <sup>st</sup>
Bureaucratic bottleneck	2	0	18	184	380	0.899	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Economy/social condition	0	16	54	248	210	0.859	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Grant of contract to incompetent developer	2	12	78	80	380	0.849	4 <sup>th</sup>
Misunderstanding between project goals and objective	0	20	24	256	240	0.831	5 <sup>th</sup>
Poor project definition	0	16	36	256	230	0.828	6 <sup>th</sup>
Weak political institution	4	16	42	248	210	0.800	7 <sup>th</sup>
Non-keeping of proper records	4	12	72	200	230	0.797	8 <sup>th</sup>
Lackadaisical attitude	4	20	36	272	180	0.788	9 <sup>th</sup>
Rooted cultural/religious beliefs	14	20	96	160	170	0.708	10 <sup>th</sup>
Increase on cost of project	2	8	24	136	410	0.477	11 <sup>th</sup>

Source: field survey 2023

The study on the barriers of project management in public property development projects revealed that there Property developers are faced with several barriers especially in the public sector and that these barriers affect the public property development process in the study area. However, from the analysis and result as shown in Table 4.1, the respondents agreed that corruption, bureaucratic bottleneck, economy/social condition were the major barriers of project management in public property development projects but that grant of contract to incompetent developer, misunderstanding between project goals and objectives, poor project definition, weak political institution, non-keeping of proper records, lackadaisical attitude, rooted cultural beliefs and increase on cost of project are also barriers of project management in public property development projects. This was in agreement with the study by Ogunde, Olaolu, Afolabi, Owolabi and Ojelbi, (2017); Caliste (2012); Salau and

Salawu, (2014), who established that the following are barriers of project management in public property development projects.

Therefore, the above eleven (11) barriers of project management encountered during the development of public property development projects are important for every public property developer to be aware of, during the development process.

## CONCLUSION AD RECOMMENDATION

The literature review on project management in public property development in the Niger Delta region shows that mass public projects are faced with several barriers during the development process, which these barriers tend to create problem of variation, delay in execution, and total abandonment of the project. This paper demonstrates that barriers of project management in public project are encountered during the development process and that they arise due to the political environment that the project is developed.

Subsequently, the research recommends that the eleven barriers of project management in public property development projects are important aspects that every developer should not neglect to watch out for, so as to improve the delivery of public projects and sustain the contemporary public property development projects so as to reduce waste of public fund in the hands of corrupt government and facilitate multiple developments in the region.

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