A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION ON HOW PROJECT MANAGERS HANDLE KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN CONSTRUCTION PROJECT FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES PERSPECTIVE

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Group Number:

17

A PROJECT ASSIGNMENT SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLIED PROJECT MANAGEMENT (TKP 5100)

AT

NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (NTNU)

PROFESSOR

BASSAM HUSSEIN

DATE

03 November 2022

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1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an upsurge in the study of stakeholders and its management because of their great influence towards project outcome. However, to understand the concept of this topic, one need to understand who a stakeholder is in a project, how a stakeholder could be managed and who's responsible in managing a stakeholder.

Project Management Institute (PMBoK, 2013) defined a stakeholder as an individual, group or organization who may affect, be affected by or perceive itself to be affected by a decision, activity or outcome of a project. Stakeholders are individuals or group who have an interest or some aspect of right or ownership in the project and can contribute or be impacted by the outcome of a project (Bourne and Walker, 2005). From this two definition and other literatures on Project stakeholders one could understand that stakeholders cannot be neglected as far as project is concern. Jergeas et al (2000) and Cleland (1986) argue that efficient management of the relationship between the project and its stakeholders is an important key to project success.

Jepsen and Eskerod (2009) as cited by Bassam (2018), defined stakeholder management as am important tool for mapping and assessing the bond between a project and its various stakeholders and to develop relationship with stakeholders in order to achieve a successful outcome.

Bassam (2018) goes further to outline the three main task that are involved in stakeholders' management as Identification of stakeholders, analysis of stakeholder to identify the relationship between each stakeholder and the project and finally implementation of the appropriate strategies for communicating with each stakeholder group.

However, this project research wants to investigate how different project manager handles the stakeholders involve in their respective project from different countries perspective.

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2. Evaluation of Project Management Effort

a. Organization of the Project Group

It is the organization of the project that determines its structure. The project organization process allows decisions on how a project should be realized to be made. In our group, we appointed a project manager who was responsible for dividing the tasks and specifying the person responsible for each activity as well as the deadline for completing the activities. All the members performed their tasks well and were able to meet the deadline easily because the division of tasks was done fairly by the project manager.

The following diagram shows our work-breakdown structure (WBS):
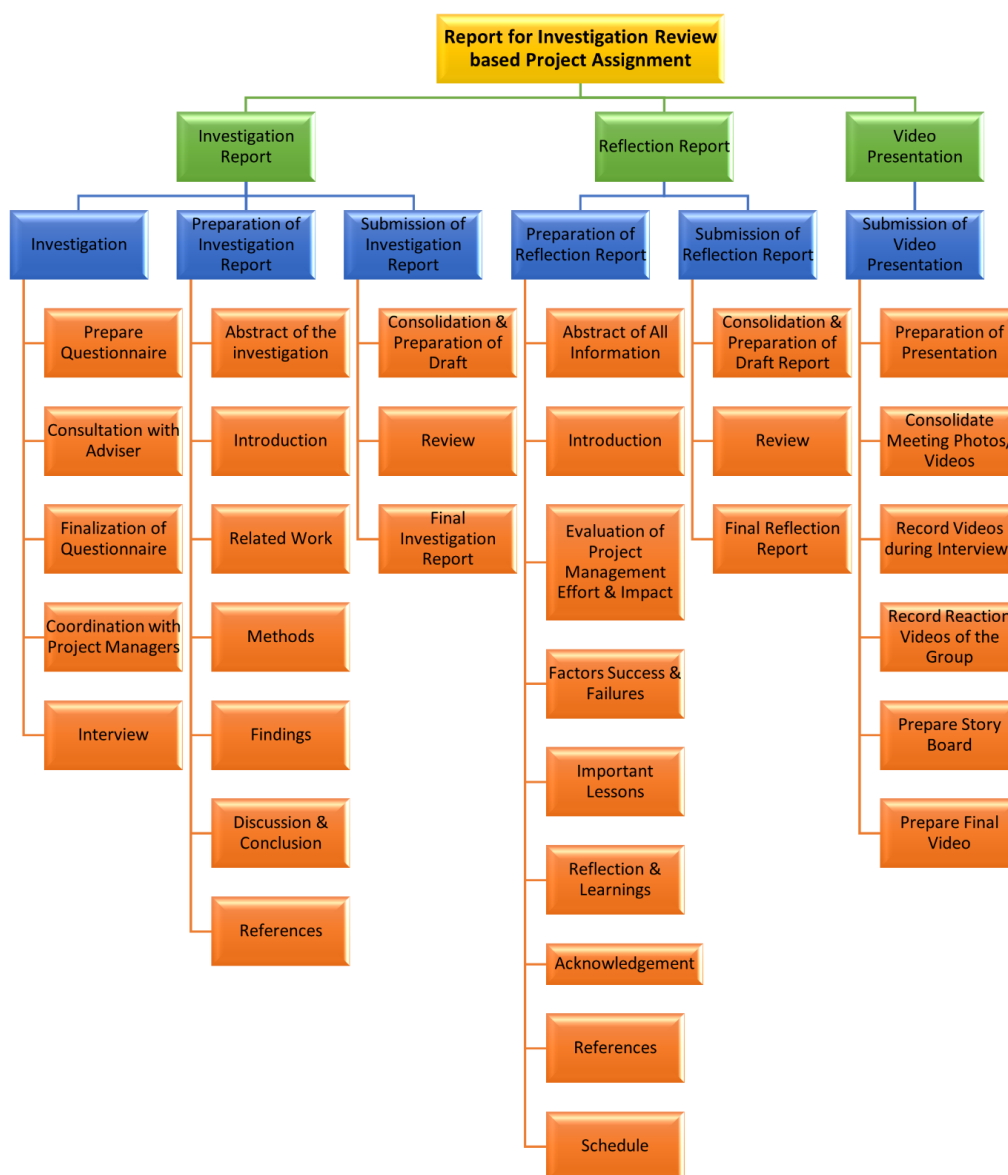
Figure 1: Group 17 Work breakdown Structure

b. Risk management plan

In projects, risk management can lead to savings, according to Martin Schieg (2006). Real estate developers and project managers should therefore consider the risk management process. Schieg (2006) identifies 6 steps in risk management: Identifying risks, analyzing risks, assessing risks, controlling risks, monitoring risks, and Controlling goals.

Some risks of our projects include time difference, delay on the response, unpopular applications in some countries such as China, restrictions from the outside emails, not fulfilling the promise to answer .In the first stage, our team decided to identify the most important and probable risks in order to estimate the strategy to deal with them. But some of the mentioned risks were unexpected and were identified during the implementation of the project. Weekly meetings were the perfect environment to identify new risks, design new strategies, and monitor old strategies for previous risks.
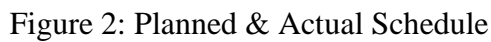
c. Communication plan

Communication is a key factor in the success of "process improvement" projects. It is essential to maintain constant, effective communication among all those involved in the project or affected by the "process to be improved" (Van Aartsengel and Kurtoglu 2013).

Based on the communication plan, members, goals, and means of communication (in person or online) were recorded. It is noteworthy that the mentioned form was filled in both group meetings and interviews. Although at the beginning of the project, it was decided to hold weekly group meetings, sometimes other meetings were held during the week. The interviews were sometimes held in groups (including several members and the interviewee) and sometimes with only one of the members and the interviewee.

d. Compliance of the project results with the stated success criteria

For a project to succeed, it must consider cost, scope, time, public image, satisfaction and fun. Details may vary according to the industry, company, or objective of the project, but these factors will determine whether it succeeds or fails. The project, with all the limitations and difficulties it had, was able to meet the scope and did not exceed estimated time. Usually, our group meetings created a happy and fun environment for the members, and this in turn increased the empathy between the group members. in general, the project was in line with the success factors.

Figure 2: Planned & Actual Schedule

We evaluate our project management effort as successful because we were able to meet up with our project objectives as stated in the pre project reports by interviewing Nine (9) project managers from seven (7) different countries and seeing the difference in how they handle key stakeholders.

Scale	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Your response					✓

Table 1: Evaluation of the quality of our Project Management.

3. Evaluation of the Impact (Project Success)

It is the process of recording, examining, and evaluating all expected and unexpected results of a project. Using Impact Analysis, businesses can assess potential strengths and weaknesses that might arise.

A. Target audience

Analyzing the audience of each project helps to understand the needs and expectations of them. In many projects, the needs of stakeholders are not fully understood. So, assessing them and finding the best solution to deal with stakeholders is very crucial. The main audience of our project can be project managers or managers in general who must identify, review and manage the stakeholders in the project. The main reason for this is that in most projects, it is the managers who, based on their experience and knowledge, first start identifying and managing the stakeholders. Managers can perform better by using our project in fully identifying the stakeholders and dealing with them. As a result, the level of satisfaction in projects will increase. Similarly, University students and professors also could be our target audience.

B. Quality of our final results

It is a wise idea to conduct a quality review at the end of a project phase. In a quality review, you can determine if what you are doing meets the quality standards you have set. Our group has faced many challenges during the implementation, however, we managed to meet the deadlines, achieve the objectives stated in Pre-Reports and finally we are successful in collecting information/ data collecting the intended information/data required to deliver the output. We managed to conduct at least nine (9) interviews with Project Managers working in different countries.

We evaluate the quality of our final results as successful.

Scale	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Your response					✓

Table 2: Evaluation of the quality of our final result.

4. Factors that have Contributed to Failure / Success.

On our group first meeting held at Loftet the sit student welfare space at Molholt studentby, we started by appointing a project team lead and set some ground rules which I believe should be one of the factors that contributed to the success of our project assignment. Other factors are listed and discussed as follows:

- **Clearly defined objective:**
  From outset of our group, we made a clearly defined objective and target on the project assignment which everyone accepted unanimously. This made the group interest to override each one's personal interest on the group. So, throughout the time we had on the project assignment we continuously look at the objective and target set.

- **Commitment from all members:**
  all our members showed great commitment towards the project assignment which was demonstrated on several occasions to ensure that we met up with our deadlines. Some of the occasions are on the last day for submission of pre project report, we all worked together at Loftet till 22:00 and consolidated our work to ensure we finished up everything required of us to submit within the time schedule. Almost all the members were present in our group meeting in few cases those absent do send us message to excuse them before the scheduled meeting time. Some members have to also stay awake at night to meet up with time zone differences between the location of some project managers we requested to answer our questionnaire.

- **Effective Communication strategy:**
  after our first meeting, we agreed to create a WhatsApp group called Applied project management group 17 which we used as our medium of communication and having online meeting. This was very helpful and contributed to the success of this project assignment.

- **Well-motivated members:**
  each one of us were well motivated which created great enthusiasm toward seeing the successful outcome of our project assignment. The tasks were challenging considering other commitments we have on other courses, but our motivation kept the interest of the group renewed.

- **Good collaboration:**
  having a common interest toward our group objection, we all put hands on deck using our different skills and knowledge to ensure that our project outcome came out great. Most time after our project group meeting, we do play games and crack jokes at our meeting venue to ease off stress. Sometimes, when the meeting stays long, we do it in between the meeting. All this we believe helped to bond us together towards our objective. On this note we wish to thank our lecturer Bassam Hussein again for creating this wonderful opportunity for us to make good new friends.

- **Loyalty to the group decision:**
  All our members were loyal to the group decision which was part of the things we stated in our ground rules. This help to eliminate unnecessary conflict among us. This also strengthened the group interest over individual interest by making each one of us to be responsible to their task and report as at when due.

- **Trust among members:**
  Within the time we spent on this project assignment, each member was responsible, sincere and transparent in their dealing within the group which did not give room for unnecessary suspicion. This we believed helped to strengthen our commitment.

- **Clarity of responsibility and task:**
  From the outset, we do share task among ourselves and set deadline to send report to the WhatsApp group. Even the ones that were decided in the meeting are being typed in the group to eliminate confusion and conflict of responsibility.

- **Adequate support from our lecturer and student assistant:**
  we had adequate support from our lecturer and student assistant which we considered in the pre report as one of the key stakeholders of this project assignment. In some occasions, we do schedule meeting with them to clarify issues and challenges we face in the course of doing this project assignment. These meetings helped to boost our moral and minimize the time wastage.
- **Flexible scheduling of group meeting:**

Comparing our identified success factors with the ones listed in (Hussein, 2018) pp92. We could say that above mentioned factors are a sub set of the factors listed in pp 92 of (Hussein, 2018). the ones we could not see in the textbook is having a flexible meeting schedule and setting ground rules for the project team.

5. Most Important Lessons from your Project

The lessons learned during the implementation of this project are as follows:

- We recommend that before conducting the interview, we should share the topics to be covered during the interview with project managers in advance so that he/ she can prepare for the interview and impart more knowledge based on their experiences.

- We suggest to prepare open questions for discussions, it should not be long and several questions should not be asked all at once. Let the interviewee answers back up with their experiences.

- Pay attention to the time difference of countries if you are involving people in projects remotely from different countries to consider their time zone.

- We advise to pay attention to the methods of communication and possible limitations when communicating with professional working in different countries. For example, we tried to coordinate the Project Manager from China for interview and the only way we can contact him is through email and WeChat. Unfortunately, there's no reply on our emails due to the company's restriction regarding external emails from generic domain are not being entertained. Limited Social media platforms to communicate and we are not in the position to use the WeChat.

- Be prepared unexpected circumstances that may happen, and you will lose your connection with the project manager. Be sure to consider options as alternatives in advance. We planned and communicated effectively with Project Manager in Philippines but due to the typhoon the interview was not push through. Regardless of the effective planning we were unsuccessful due to natural calamities.

6. Reflection on Learning and Unlearning

Learning some skills and techniques and gaining knowledge about some topics could help to do this project better, and these topics are as follows:

- Group decision making

- Working in a stressful situation

- Coordination techniques

- Problem-solving techniques

- Time management

- Risk management

We are a group of six (6) students from different countries with different cultures and backgrounds, however, we strictly worked on common goals & interests. We understand, respect, and listen to everyone's opinion and assess which are applicable on our project. With all the process we have gone through on the execution of this project, we all believe that learning the techniques of doing group work and especially group decision-making could help us.

Some of the ways of thinking, beliefs, and knowledge that each of the group members had before the implementation of the project, and finally, during the implementation of the project, each of us realized that they were no longer updated or were wrong and should be deleted are as follows:

- Initial thinking that project managers will not entertain our request to interview them considering their status, schedule, and the confidentiality of their information. Although there are some that did not respond on our request due to time constraints, but there are a lot of them that granted our request and are willing to share all their experiences and lessons. Hence, we cannot jump into conclusion and generalized the situation.

- A wrong way of thinking that some of us had the beginning of the project was that we thought that doing this project as a group might make us unable to get the ideal result. Everyone preferred to works alone, they can work with more concentration and can adjust the work according to their own will and time with a better result of the project. Since we are all new to each other, we don't trust yet. But along the way, the trust is built as well as the camaraderie with each other that help increase the efficiency of the work. Working in a group ease the pressure and load of work as it is being shared by everyone, lessen the stress knowing that someone will help you and you know that you are not alone. The environment is enjoyable. This is one of the important lessons for us for this project.

7. Acknowledgments

This investigation presents different experience from project managements in different countries around the world. It is about the differences of their methods of managing their stakeholders during their projects' lifetime.

Foremost, we would like to express sincere gratitude to our adviser Prof. Bassam Hussein for his continuous supports, valuable advice and feedbacks. His guidance helped us all the time during the planning and execution phase of our project. We would also like to thank him for the opportunity to gain experience of group work and knowledge by preparing this project report.

I would like to thank all of project managers who we have interviewed working from different countries such as Nigeria, Canada, Qatar, Iran, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia and shared their knowledges and experiences with us and devoting a lot of time to answer our questions.

Also, we would like to thank our friends and ex-colleagues who directly helped us coordinate with project managers in above mentioned countries.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the SIT – Welfare (Loftet) as our venue for most of the meetings we held to discuss the project assignment.

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9. Appendix

Appendix 1: Pre-Report
Appendix 2 The investigation review report
Appendix 3. Link to the video presentation.

AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON HOW PROJECT MANAGERS HANDLE KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN CONSTRUCTION PROJECT FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES PERSPECTIVE

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A PROJECT ASSIGNMENT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLIED PROJECT MANAGEMENT (TKP 5100)

AT

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22 SEPTEMBER 2022

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However, this investigation wants to examine how different project manager handles the stakeholders involve in their respective project from different countries perspective.

Objectives
Our project is based on questionnaire survey of how key stakeholders are handled by a project manager of a construction company located in different countries of the world.

Key objectives of our projects are listed below.

- Understand how key stakeholders are identified by a project manager
- Understand how key stakeholders are categorized by a project manage
- Understand how key stakeholders are managed by a project manager
- Find out different ideas how a project manager resolves conflict with key stakeholders
- Learn how key stakeholders influence construction project from a project manager's perspective

Success Factors

Some of the identified key success factors which increases the likelihood of project success are listed below.

- Clarity of project purpose and objectives
- Identification of key stakeholders
- Adequate project planning
- Realistic project estimates
- Competent team members
- Commitment of team members
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities

Key stakeholders

Key stakeholders involved in this investigation project are outlined as follows:

- Course Professor,
- Project teaching Assistants,
- Project Managers that will be interviewed
- Department of Industrial Economic and Technology Management
- Project Team Members

Skills Requirements

Following skills will be required for a successful outcome of this research:

- Knowledge of Microsoft office tools
  (MS Project, MS Word, MS Excel)
- Effective communication skills

- Time management
- Team work

Risk Management

Risk management consists of five processes: plan risk management, risk identification, qualitative and quantitative risk analysis, risk response planning, and risk monitoring and control. In this project, due to the size of the project, only the stages of identifying risks, planning and determining the appropriate response to them, and the risk control process are carried out. Our goal of risk management in this project is to increase the probability and impact of the opportunities while decreasing the probability and impact of threats to the project; in fact, we believe that by managing the project risks, we can stay in control of the project, rather than being controlled by it. The risk management process is very iterative; risks can be identified at any time, so if a risk is identified after the initial risk identification process, the new risk is examined, and the appropriate response is considered for it. In this project, the process of identifying risks and preparing a suitable plan to react to the identified risks has been such that all the team members studied and researched this matter, and finally, after three face-to-face brainstorming sessions, the initial risks of the project and reaction were identified to them. And of course, we also benefited from searching on the Internet and talking to several experts in this regard. Our response strategy to risks will be as follows: for threats, we choose one of the four strategies Eliminate, Mitigate, Transfer, and Accept, and for opportunities, we choose one of the four strategies Exploit, Enhance, Share, and Accept. And finally, the risk control process will be in the form of weekly meetings, in which we will look for risk triggers, identify and analyze new risks, existing risks will be reassessed, and communicate with project stakeholders about risks will be done.

Row	Risk	Threat/ Opportunity	Description of response

Row	Risk	Threat/ Opportunity	Description of response
1	Conflict between team members	T	Holding meetings in which the members express their expectations and views, and it was decided that in case of conflict, a meeting with the management of the project manager and with the presence of all the members will be held to resolve the matter.
2	Professor not available or that he does not have enough time to allocate	T	Send an email at least one week in advance to request an appointment and prepare all the questions, in order to avoid wasting time, and finally, if the professor is not available, the TA will be contacted.
3	TA not available or that TA does not have enough time to allocate	T	Send an email at least one week in advance to request an appointment

Row	Risk	Threat/ Opportu nity	Description of response
4	All team members are not available for team meeting	T	At the beginning of every week, the project manager determines the time of the project in a virtual meeting, and in the face-to-face meetings, a maximum of one person can be absent with the coordination of the project manager, and the project topics will be transferred to him.
5	Changing the schedule of project managers and not being able to interview them	T	The project managers are requested to specify another date in addition to the interview date as an alternative in emergency situations. And if an interview is not possible at all, we will enter into negotiations with other managers with whom we have already had initial discussions.
6	The team members are infected with the covid virus	T	The sick person will not attend the meetings and her duties will be followed by the person chosen by the project manager.
7	Finding project managers within Norway to interview	O	By participating in university events and correspondence with various companies, we are trying to increase the probability of this happening.
8	Project managers do not send answers to the questionnaire	T	In the first step, an e-mail will be sent as a reminder, after a week, a second e-mail will be sent, and if you do not receive an answer, we will enter into negotiations with other managers with whom we have already had initial discussions.
9	Project managers should send incomplete answers to the questionnaire	T	In the initial conversation, the format of the questions and how to answer the questions will be sent to the managers, if the answers are incomplete, an email will be sent as a reminder in the first stage and in a respectful manner, after a week, a second email will be sent, and if not completed Hello, we ask the relevant manager to explain the reason for not responding if possible.

Communication Plan

Defining a communication plan includes a policy-oriented approach to maintain a proper communication. The plan consists of two important questions: 1) who should prepare specific information? 2) and what communication channels should be taken into account? A proper communication management plan considers what information needs to be available to audience. Finally, the communication plan should indicate what channels stakeholders will use to give feedback and whether communication will be documented or not. Communication plans play a key role in project management. Since there is complete transparency throughout the project, all members of the project are assured of the progress of the project. in other words, an important communication strategy can help stakeholders become involved and endorse the requirement for change.

In our project, there is two types of communication as follows.

1) Communication between members of the project.
2) Communication between interviewers and stakeholders of selected projects.

For the first type, there are several plans to make a strong communication between members such as setting a clear agenda for each meeting, scheduling regular status updates, encouraging members, reviewing goals, providing regular training opportunities, …

For the next type, firstly, we need to set an appointment for holding interview and then through following points, we can understand how to plan an interview:

- Selecting the best format for interviews.
- Choosing interview questions very carefully. (Depends on the performance of selected projects)
- Keeping the conversation relevant to the job.
- Being consistent with all candidates. (Since the preference of the candidates are different)
- Being ready to answer possible questions. (For example, about the goals of the project)
- Arranging a suitable location.
- Making sure interviewers have the right skills.

Considering the above points, in the next page, there is a template of communication plan that should be filled throughout the project.

Project Communication Plan

Project Name:

Project Manager:

Beginning date:

Completion Date:

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

Communication Goal	Communication Tool	Audience	Frequency

Responsibilities:

Kulchandra (Project Manager):

- Arranging meetings
- Reviewing suggestions
- Assigning tasks to the members
- Following up work progress and providing feedback
- Interview with project managers and collect information from them

Emmanuel:

- Reviewing literature to provide information for pre-report
- Preparing the framework and pre-report
- Providing the background of the project study
- Interview with project managers and collect information from them

Mohammad Reza:

- Reviewing literature and standards
- Providing information for risk assessment
- Leading team for controlling the risks during project implementation
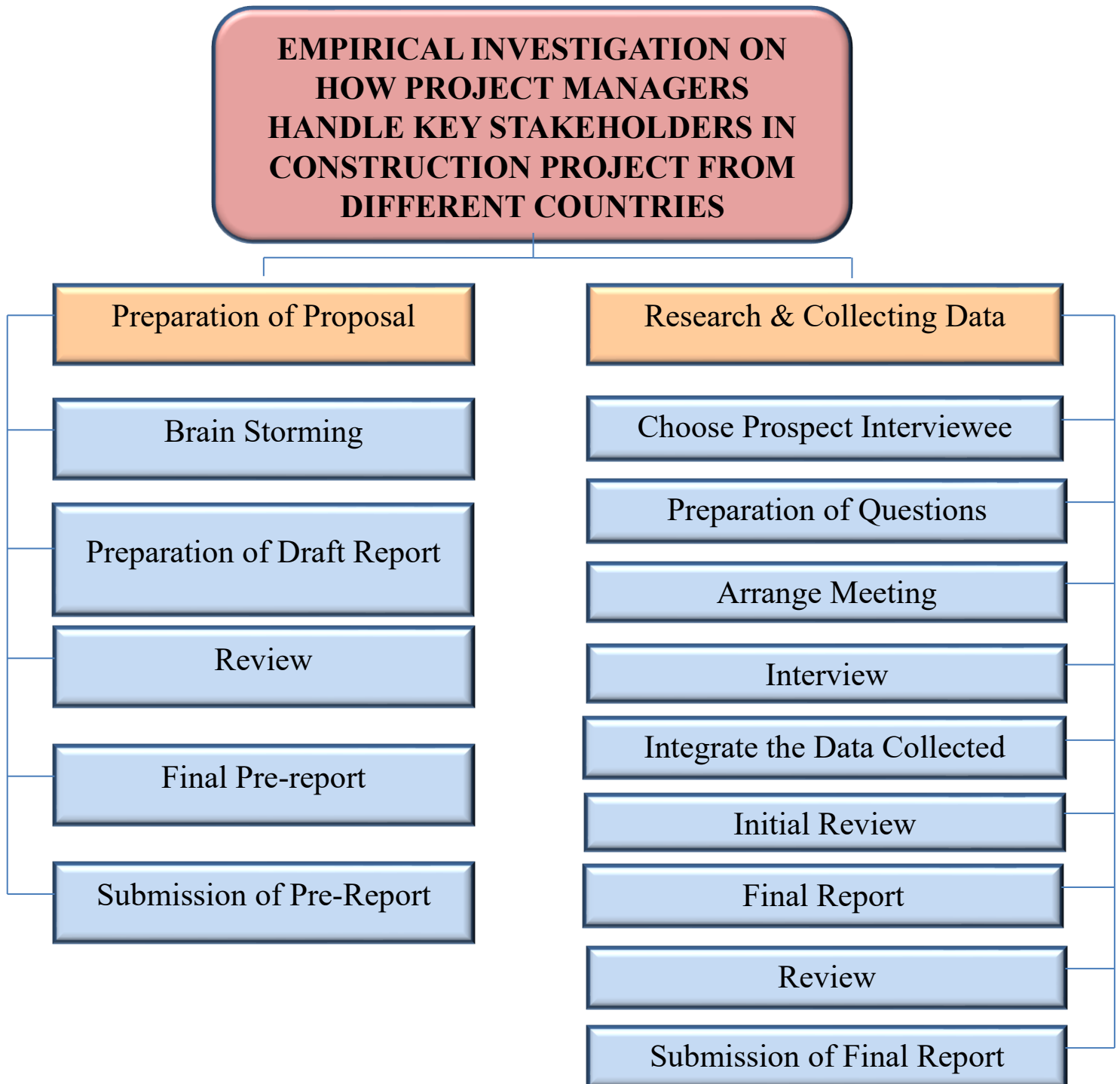- Interview with project managers and collect information from them

Fatemeh K:

- Preparing questions for interviews
- Reviewing literature and standard to collect information
- Preparing framework for final report of the project
- Providing detail communication plan and supervise the implementation of the plan
- Interview with project managers and collect information from them

Genelou and Fatemeh B:

- Preparing WBS
- Preparing project schedule
- Preparing responsibility list of members
- Plan, schedule, and lead team for interviewing project managers
- Interview with project managers and collect information from them

Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) of the Project

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                    EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON
                    HOW PROJECT MANAGERS
                    HANDLE KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN
                    CONSTRUCTION PROJECT FROM
                    DIFFERENT COUNTRIES
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Preparation of Proposal	Research & Collecting Data
Brain Storming	Choose Prospect Interviewee
Preparation of Draft Report	Preparation of Questions
Review	Arrange Meeting
Final Pre-report	Interview
Submission of Pre-Report	Integrate the Data Collected
	Initial Review
	Final Report
	Review
	Submission of Final Report

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Title of the Investigation:

A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION ON HOW PROJECT MANAGERS HANDLE KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN CONSTRUCTION PROJECT FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES PERSPECTIVE

Group number:
17

Abstract (200 words)

Stakeholders can have tremendous impact on the likelihood that a project will succeed or fail (Pinto, 2012). Thus, making stakeholders management one of the prerequisite tools for project managers to successfully deliver projects. The main objective of this project assignment research is to investigate how project manager from different countries in the world handles the key stakeholders involved in their respective projects. This is because of the believe we had that culture has some influence on project management.

Due to the limitation, we had in terms of short time for submission of this project assignment, the scope of this research is limited to interviewing project manager from seven different countries to represent their cultural mindset. We know that this assumption is not holistic, but it was made to allow us to complete our task within the stipulated deadline set for this project. However, we recommend this topic for further studies with more countries involved. From our result, we find that there are differences in the style and procedure in which project Managers from different countries handle stakeholders which could be attributed to influence from the laws and culture of organizations and the government of their respective countries.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an upsurge in the study of stakeholders and its management because of their great influence towards project outcome. The importance of stakeholders can never be over emphasis, according to Pinto (2012), the stakeholders can have a tremendous impact on the likelihood that a project will succeed or fail. This is part of the reason why every project manager should be very conversant with the techniques and strategy in handling project stakeholder for the purpose of successful project delivery. However, to understand the concept of this topic, one need to understand who a stakeholder is in a project, how a stakeholder could be managed and who is responsible in managing them in a project.

According to Project Management Institute (PMBoK, 2013), stakeholder is defined as an individual, group or organization who may affect, be affected by or perceive itself to be affected by a decision, activity of outcome of a project. Stakeholders are individuals or group who have an interest or some aspect of right or ownership in the project and can contribute or be impacted by the outcome of a project (Bourne and Walker, 2005). From this two definition and other literatures on Project stakeholders one could understand that stakeholders cannot be neglected as far as project is concern. Jergeas et al (2000) and Cleland (1986) argue that efficient management of the relationship between the project and its stakeholders is an important key to project success.

Jepsen and Eskerod (2009) as cited by Bassam (2018), defined stakeholder management as an important tool for mapping and assessing the bond between a project and its various stakeholders and to develop relationship with stakeholders to achieve a successful outcome.

Bassam (2018) goes further to outline the three main task that are involved in stakeholders' management as Identification of stakeholders, analysis of stakeholder to identify the relationship between each stakeholder and the project and finally implementation of the appropriate strategies for communicating with each stakeholder group. Thus, handling stakeholders basically involves taking time to identify those that the project and its outcome would influence as well as those that could influence it and establishing an effective communication plan with them to ensure that their interests are met at the end of the project delivery.

We believe that culture could have influence on the way project managers handle their key stakeholders in different country. Thus, this has resulted to the purpose and objective of this project assignment research to investigate how project manager in different countries in the world handles the key stakeholders involve in their respective project. Furthermore, the scope of this research is limited to interviewing project manager from at least one country in each continent of the world to represent its cultural mindset. The reason is to allow us to complete our task within the short deadline for this project assignment.

We term it qualitative investigation because, we are doing this research base on their practical field experience and not on the theories in textbooks and journal articles.

2. Related works

Stakeholder management is an important tool for mapping and assessing the bond between a project and its various stakeholders and to develop relationships with stakeholders in order to achieve a successful outcome. Stakeholder management consists of three main tasks:

1. Identification of stakeholders

2. Analysis of stakeholders to identify the relationships between each stakeholder and the project

3. Implementation of appropriate strategies for communicating with each stakeholder group. These strategies will have a significant effect on how stakeholders will be involved in decision-making processes [1]

In this investigation based on the importance of managing stakeholders, identifying, and communicating with them, we decided to figure out how project managers in different countries manage their stakeholders. Our focus is on how they deal with the challenges in managing stakeholders, how they identify the stakeholders of the project, the way and the time of collecting projects' requirements, the way that they prioritize the projects' stakeholders, and the way of managing the stakeholders.

Many works and studies have been done in this regard. Dr George F. Jergeas and their colleagues in 2000, provided an overview about managing stakeholders in oil and gas construction projects [2]. Based on their paper, full alignment of all stakeholders is not possible due to the concept that some of all stakeholders are fundamentally opposed to the project. But by identifying key stakeholders and their concerns by project manager and managing them as best, they can prevent them from adversely affecting the project [2]. Charles Amoatey and Mawuena Vincent Kadzo Hayibor investigated the critical success factors for effective project stakeholders' management at the local government level in Ghana in 2017 [3]. According to their article, communicating with and engaging stakeholders; identifying stakeholders properly; formulating a clear project mission statement; keeping and promoting good relationships; and analyzing stakeholder conflicts and coalitions are the top five critical success factors for stakeholders' management [3]. Also, a systematic literature review of the stakeholder management process was done by Matteo Pedrini and Laura Maria Ferri in 2019 [4]. Based on their paper, stakeholder management is embedded in corporation activities, and because of the internet and social network, more pressure has been put on companies to develop new tools and techniques to manage stakeholders [4]. An overview of previous studies in stakeholder management and its implications for the construction industry was done by Jing Yang and his colleagues in 2009 to provide an overview of previous studies in the field of stakeholder management and propose implications for the construction industry [5]. Based on their overview, three main problems of previous studies are identified: very few methods and tools are available to identify all stakeholders and their interests; limited studies involve the change management about the stakeholders' influence and relationship; and few studies are capable of reflecting the influence of the entire relationship network in practice [5]. Moreover, Feasibility and benefits of a probable novel way for improving project performance in case of facing with the integrating risk and stakeholders' management was studied by Nini Xia and others in 2017 [6].

3. Method

This study is completely group working and all the decision have been made in group meetings. The steps of preparing this investigation from the start point to the end are as follows:

- First, after specifying the subject, tasks of preparing project proposal were divided between members. All the tasks were reviewed after completion by other members then it was consolidated, and the final proposal was published.
- Secondly, the research process began after the proposal got approval. All the members searched about the topic, reviewed papers, and they prepared their suggested interviewed question sheet based on their knowledge. After that, during a meeting, we went through the questionnaire and selected few questions which all members agreed on them. We arranged meeting with our professor to discuss the list of questions, based on his comments and suggestions we prepared the revised/ final questions for our interview.
- The interview part was the most difficult one. Because all project managers are working in different countries with different time zone and work schedule. Due to this reason, we were unable to arrange oral interactive session of interview for some of the project managers. Instead, we requested them for a written interview.
- Moreover, after all interviews were done, all the answers were analyzed based on the references and experiences which some of group members have from their previous working years. It was a sensitive part because we did not agree with each other in some cases, and we had to refer to the sources to achieve the correct conclusion. It was a long discussion meeting. When we reached the consensus, we started to prepare final report by again dividing tasks.

The methods we used are literature review, interview and analysis of data and information provided by the interviewees. Through these communications all the opinions were considered, and experiences of all members had been shared. Also, the flexibility of the members for the agreed time for meeting and highly collaboration are other strengths of our group work. Besides, all the members studied and reviewed relevant papers and books to reach insight in the subject.

4. Findings

RESPONDENT	COUNTRY	COMPANY/ INDUSTRY
1	Canada	Gas & Utility Company
2	Indonesia	Paper Mill Construction
3	Iran	Oil & Gas Industry
4	Malaysia	Oil & Gas Industry
5	Nigeria (1)	Shell Petroleum Development Company
6	Nigeria (2)	Odum Integrated Solution
7	Nigeria (3)	State Government
8	Singapore	Oil and Gas Construction Company
9	Qatar	Construction, Operation & Maintenance

Basic understanding of stakeholder management

All Project Managers who took part in interview has common ground of understanding regarding stakeholder management. However, they have used different terminologies to define stakeholder management

➢ Project manager working in Qatar defined stakeholder management as coordination and communication with different parties who are involve/interfacing with the work directly or indirectly.

➢ Project manager working in Nigeria$_{(1)}$ has focused on maintaining and sustaining good relationships with the people and organizations that have most critical impact on the project

➢ Project manager working in Canada has similar understanding regarding stakeholder management. However, his focus is on understanding the parties who are directly or indirectly involved in the project.

➢ Project manager working in Singapore has focus on identifying and solving concerns and diverse objectives of affected parties.

➢ Project manager working in Nigeria$_{(2)}$has focused on identifying, consulting, and involving and laying off stakeholders, as at when due, in a particular project.

➢ Project manager who worked in Indonesia has focused on communication and engagement of concern parties of a specific project.

➢ Project manager working in Iran has focused on identifying, analyzing, and responding to the needs of stakeholders to manage their interests throughout the project.

Stakeholder Management Plan

Project manager working is Qatar, Nigeria and Malaysia highlighted that stakeholder management plan is a mandatory document and must be submitted to client for generic approval. The document includes introduction to stakeholder management, list of stakeholders involved in the project starting from the preliminary level till the handing over of the project, role of each stakeholder, involvement of each Stakeholder, names and Contact details of the stakeholder representatives and advance details that need to be shared with each stakeholder based on the necessity of their involvement in your project. But the one from Canada and

Singapore stated that it is optional while the one from Iran stated that his company has official procedure for stakeholder management plan which is based on ISO 21500.

Identification and Categorization of key stakeholders

All project managers suggested their own ideas for categorization of stakeholders.

➢ Project manager working in Qatar came up with interesting idea to categorize stakeholders. He highlighted four ideas to group/categorize key stakeholders base on their level of interference with the project, trades of involvement, duration of interface and stage of interface. As per his perception, government permitting body is the most important stakeholder in Qatar. The reason behind this is that none of the project can be initiated without their approval; regardless of their positive benefit/cost analysis.

➢ Two project managers both working in Malaysia and Indonesia use principal idea to categorize stakeholders as internal stakeholders and external stakeholders.

  Internal Stakeholders - Finance Controller, Contracts & Procurement, Decision Executives, Facilities manager, Operation manager
  External stakeholders - Contract owner, Contract holder, Local Authorities, Consultants, Contractors & Subcontractors
  They highlighted the project owner as the most important stakeholder.

➢ Project manager working in Singapore has categorized key stakeholders as primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders. All stakeholders who are directly affected by the project are categorized as primary stakeholders and all stakeholders who are indirectly affected by the project are categorized as secondary stakeholders.

➢ Project manager working in Nigeria$_{(1)}$ analyzes key stakeholders based on their interest and influences. Then, he categorizes stakeholders in three groups namely: Key stakeholders with low interest and low influence. keep them informed, Key stakeholders to with low interest and high influence. Consult them and keep them informed, Key stakeholders to with high interest and low influence. Consult them and keep them informed, Key stakeholders to with high interest and high influence. Collaborate them, consult them and keep them informed

  They highlighted client as the most important stakeholder in the project.

➢ Project manager working in Canada categorizes his stakeholders on the basis of work breakdown structure (WBS). He has highlighted Asset Management team as the most important key stakeholder as this department is responsible for budget management.

➢ Project manager working in Iran highlighted that categorization of stakeholders is completely an informal process in his organization. All stakeholders are dealt by project manager as per his experience and approach to meet the requirements.

Collection and prioritization of stakeholders' requirements

All stakeholders involved in the project have their own concerns/requirements related to the project. All project managers have commonly suggested that requirements/concerns of stakeholders should be collected at the initial phase of the project. However, they have suggested different effective ideas regarding method of collection and prioritization of stakeholders' requirements.

➢ Project manager working in Qatar has adopted a unique technology-based method to collect the requirements of key stakeholders. The requirements/concerns will be collected by applying through their online application platform and getting it responded through the same channel. Each stakeholder has their own way of communication system and channels.

Prioritization of registered requirements/concerns is carried out based on the sequence of detailed program of the project

- ➢ Project manager working in Nigeria$_{(1)}$ considers following point for collection of key stakeholders' requirements.
  - Determine the Project Goals and Objectives very early in the project phase. This will provide guide in collecting the necessary requirements
  - Ensure that all project requirements are well documented
  - Be honest with Requirements Documentation
  - Ensure that you talk to the right Stakeholders/Users and not just anyone
  - Don't make any bogus assumptions about requirements
  - Re-confirm the requirements, and probably get additional confirmation from other stakeholders with similar interest, influence, or from same stakeholder
  - Be an active listener
  - Ensure that you focus on business Requirements
  - Prioritize Your Products
  - Remember that there may be missing information

He has highlighted an interesting way of prioritizing stakeholders' requirements which is known as bubble sort method. In this method, two requirements are considered and compared with each other. If one requirement has been found with greater priority over the other, it is swapped with other. This is continued in this fashion until the very last requirement is properly sorted.

- ➢ Project manager working in Canada adopts both formal documented method and informal verbal communication method to collect stakeholders' requirements. Critical requirements are collected through formal documentation process and requirements with low criticality are collected verbally also.
  He keeps critical path on center while prioritizing requirements of stakeholders. All requirements which lie in critical path are prioritized with high importance. Other remaining requirements are kept in low priority and are address as per schedule
- ➢ Project manager working in Indonesia has considered formal method of documentation to collect requirements of stakeholders.
  He has adopted a different method to deal with the requirements raised by key stakeholders. All the concerns were treated with equal importance, and they were addressed parallelly when the presence of the specific stakeholder is required on the project.
- ➢ Project manager working in Singapore has adopted a formal procedure to record all concerns/requirements highlighted by key stakeholders on record book.
  He has always prioritized the primary stakeholders' concern especially the parties who may not be adequately represented (ie local communities), through regular communication/dedicate coordinator to get the feedback from this group of primary stakeholder.
- ➢ Project manager working in Iran mentioned that requirements of the stakeholders are identified in basic engineering phase and are recorded in basic documents. These documents are inputs during detail engineering phase.

Immersion of key stakeholder in-between ongoing project

We had provided a situation to all managers whether they had to go through a situation where the key stakeholder was immersed in between the project or not.

- ➢ Project managers working in Malaysia, Project manager working in Nigeria$_{(1)}$ and Project manager working in Nigeria$_{(2)}$ mentioned that they have not gone through such situations.

- Project managers working in Qatar, Iran, Singapore and in Canada have mentioned that they have gone through such situation.

  Project manager from Qatar has shared a lesson learning situation where immersion of key stakeholder has led to redesign of substation. Approval of substation layout from the respective government authority was mandatory. They encountered a situation where the substation design was approved by design team but respective government authority who was one of the key stakeholders was not considered. During implementation phase, it was noticed that the drawing used for preparation of shop drawing were not approved by the authority. Later it leads to the redesign and approval of authority.

  Project manager working in Singapore has shared where immersion of key stakeholder has led to major change in stakeholder management approach. There was a project where direct client undergoes restructuring and new major shareholder joins the project. There was a need to improvise existing stakeholder management approach to manage the new stakeholder and to balance the interest of other previous stakeholders which was not an easy task.

  Project manager working in Iran has shared an interesting experience. The transfer of some top managers in the client's side is a routine process in Iran. So, they are usually familiar with immersion of top managers in client side in the middle of the project and many times a key stakeholder leaves and other added to the project. In general, they are experienced and plan in advance to handle a new stakeholder based on the facts of the project and their plan.

All project managers agreed that if such situation arises the biggest problem could be project delay. Which further creates problems like cost overrun, and schedule overrun, scope change, reputation damage, and this may lead to the failure of the project.

Handling of stakeholders with numerous change requests

All project managers have common understanding and have faced the situation that in most of the projects one or more stakeholders come up with frequent change requests. They have suggested different approaches to tackle the situation considering the impact of change request on project.

- Project manager working in Iran has shared a practical approach to handle stakeholders with numerous change requests. In the first step, the team of project manager check power and influence of that specific key stakeholder. After that they usually classify the announced changes, examine some of the most important changes that the key stakeholder has announced. If the changes are in the way of improving the project or helping the project progress better, we will proceed with them accordingly. Otherwise, we will respond to them with technical answers and try to satisfy them with the information provided.

- Project manager working in Nigeria[1] suggests that this is usually handled by introduction of Management of Change Process. However, after Decision Gate 3, the scope is frozen and further change requests are no longer allowed in the project.

- Project manager working in Qatar suggests that when the key stakeholder brings change request frequently, stakeholder workshop to be carried out to identify the possible easiest solution without involving abortive works. Accordingly, appropriate solution to be reached with minimum influence work progress.

- Project manager who has worked in Indonesia mentions a traditional approach to deal with frequent change requests. He used to record all change requests with equal importance and forward them to concern department for their evaluation and further action, if required.

➤ Project manager working in Canada for gas and utility company has a common but effective way to handle the situation. He has suggested to arrange a meeting including all concern parties and take collective decisions to address multiple requests in the same meeting.

Resolving conflicts

All PM accepts that conflicts are unavoidable in any project, and they occur very often. Based on their understanding and their involvement, all project managers have suggested different unique approaches to resolve conflicts.

➤ Project manager working in Qatar highlights that if the proper stakeholder management document is established and is included to the project program, the likelihood of arising conflict is considerably less. If it arises, the solution is arranging a workshop with respective key stakeholders and concern departments. He shares his experience that It is more difficult to resolve the conflict when it involves abortive work related to government approval authority.

He also shared a common practice which are followed by large projects in Qatar. Large projects of national interest have many stakeholders, sometimes more than 40 stakeholders, which cannot be handled by project manager alone. Therefore, dedicated manager entitled as stakeholder manger with his support team manages all the external stakeholders.

➤ Project manager who has worked in Indonesia suggests different two ways to deal with internal conflicts within company and external conflict with external stakeholders. Internal conflicts are more related with emotional issue management. Conducting separate meetings followed by joint meetings is key for resolving internal conflicts. Conflicts with external stakeholders should be dealt in a professional approach with neutral emotions. Best approach to resolve external conflicts is External conflicts are resolved through a process of negotiation, mediation, and arbitration.

➤ Project manager working in Nigeria$_{(1)}$ has mentioned that conflicts are usually resolved mostly by collaborating or compromising techniques. He shares his experience that It is usually more difficult to resolve conflict between stakeholders especially when they are competing or avoiding each other.

➤ Project manager working in Nigeria$_{(3)}$ suggests that conflicts are resolved through mediation and proper people management. He highlights that when multiple key stakeholders are involved in the conflict, it is hard to resolve.

➤ Project manager working in Nigeria$_{(2)}$ suggest common technique to resolve conflicts. He suggests resolving conflicts with dialogue.

➤ Project manager working in Singapore suggests that regular communication is the key to resolve the conflicts. Issues relating with the local communities is always hard to resolve as the laws and communities are protective to the locals.

➤ Project manager working in Iran mentioned that complex conflicts are solved at higher level by higher management. However, majority of the conflicts are solved at ground level by arranging meetings and follow-ups.

Do Project Managers reject concerns raised by stakeholders?

We have asked scenario-based question to all the PMs whether they reject concerns raised by key stakeholders or not. All project managed, except two project managers working in Nigeria, sometimes reject concerns raised by stakeholders.

➤ Project manager working in Qatar states that when the concern seems to be very much favored on stakeholder and has no real necessity for it, then concerns raised by key stakeholders are rejected.

- Project manager working in Canada states concerns are rejected sometimes when their concerns are not logical or beneficial for the project.
- Project manager working in Nigeria$_{(1)}$ states that concerns raised by stakeholders with low interest and low influence are rejected sometimes.
  Project manager working in Iran stated that it is obvious that concerns raised all concerns raised by the key stakeholders are not worthy. When the team feels that the concerns is not worthy. They reject the concerns raised by the key stakeholders and justify with technical justification.
- Project manager who has worked in Indonesia states that concerns raised by stakeholders for the sake of protecting their own interests are rejected sometimes.

Two managers working in Nigeria has different view on this regard.

- Project manager working for one of the state governments (Nigeria$_{(3)}$) states that all concerns matter raised by key stakeholders matter. Therefore, concerns raised by stakeholders are not rejected.
- Project manager working for Odum Integrated Services LTD (Nigeria$_{(2)}$) states that every concern raised by key stakeholders is valid but might not be feasible in the project at that point of time. Therefore, stakeholder's demands are rejected when they are not beneficial, feasible and important to the project

Do project managers' stop project due to conflict with stakeholders?

We have asked scenario-based question to all the PMs whether they have stopped project or not due to conflict with stakeholders. Surprisingly four project managers came up with hard answer, yes!

- Project manager who has worked in Indonesia shared his experience of terminating contract with one of sub-contractor due to ongoing conflict related to quality of work delivery. He highlighted that if we see this from sub-contractor's perspective, it is termination of contractor and stoppage of ongoing project.
- Project manager working in Nigeria$_{(3)}$ shared his experience of stopping ongoing project due to conflicts with stakeholders. Those conflicts were critical conflicts contradicting with project objectives and project management principles and effecting overall fun of the project.
- Project manager working in Nigeria$_{(2)}$ shared an experience of stopping project temporarily for 3 days. He has mentioned that when a particular supplier claimed that he has not been paid for his previous supplies which was a technical issue from his bank, it caused a huge feud between supplier and client that he refused to supply the remaining materials till he gets his full payment. we had to stop the project for 3 days as there was material shortage.
- Project manager working in Singapore shared an experience of stopping project due to conflict of interest. There was one new investor who become the substantial shareholder of client company, decided to terminate the project as the direction of this new investor is different from the initial management team direction.

5. Discussions and conclusions

The Project Managers with different nationalities working in different counties and industries that we interviewed have same understanding and perception of stakeholder management and its importance; however, the results of this research cannot be generalized to the implementation of all projects in a particular country. The purpose of this research is ultimately to compare the method of stake holder management in the real world and in the academic environment.

The Project Managers working from different countries provided the same context of stakeholder management but with a different approach based on their experience. There are apparently two different approaches regarding the formal preparation of the management plan. In some cases, the formal preparation of the plan is one of the requirements of the project, which must be approved by the client, and in some cases, this requirement does not exist on the part of the client, and there is no need to prepare a formal stakeholder management plan. One important point is that most of the project managers prefer that this document be prepared in a formal way, and it can be concluded that this work can help the better management of project stakeholders.

All the project managers commonly identify the stakeholders and collet their requirements at initial phases of the project. But all project managers have their unique approaches and methods to prioritize the requirements which may be influenced by the conditions, work culture, company standard procedures, type of industry, and the experience and expertise of the project managers.

The immersion of new stakeholders during the project is a relatively common occurrence, and one of the main reasons for this is the change in the management structure of the client or the project's shareholders, and this is usually accompanied by changes in the project which ultimately causes delays in the end of the project in most cases.

In most projects, some stakeholders have a lot of requests for changes during the project and conflicts may arise. All project managers agreed that conflicts are unavoidable in projects. Based on the nature of stakeholders and project, they follow different approaches to resolve them. Two types of conflict in the project, a conflict between the project management team and a stakeholder, as well as a conflict between the stakeholders themselves, and according to the experience of project managers, solving the conflict is more difficult in the second case. Also, another point that was very interesting for us was meetings, communication, and discussion and having an efficient method to evaluate change requests in the project are a big key to solve problems during the implementation of projects.

We understand that the project manager can reject a request made by a stakeholder when the change request has no specific benefit for the project which is normal occurrence in companies. Position and power of the stakeholders are a major reason when rejecting or accepting the change request.

Project Manager in Qatar shared a unique concept. Majority of projects of national interest has many stakeholders, therefore, there is a dedicated department lead by Stakeholder Manager to handle all the external stakeholders especially the Government approval authorities.

Finally, it can be concluded that there is no fundamental difference in the main principles and stages of project stakeholder management in the real world and the academic environment, the important point is how to implement those principles in a project that is influenced by government laws in different countries, culture and procedures and laws in the organization, the specific conditions of each project and the experience of the project managers. For example, we can refer to the different methods used by project managers in different companies and countries to resolve conflicts and how to deal with change requests. It is also necessary to pay attention to the fact that regardless of how much time and money was spent on preparing the plan at the beginning of the project, or what country or company we are in, and what kind of project we are in, the occurrence of conflict and change requests during the implementation of the project is unavoidable. The important point is to use a suitable method to solve problems based on the specific conditions of each project.

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Appendix 3. Link to the video presentation

[Content (blackboard.com)](blackboard.com)

The Video Presentation is uploaded on NTNU Blackboard.