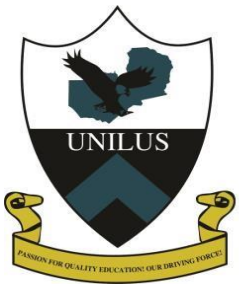


UNIVERSITY OF LUSAKA

# SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

## IMPROVING PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES: A CASE OF NKEYEMA TOWN COUNCIL.

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF LUSAKA IN PARTIAL FULFFILLMENT OF THE AWARD OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I, **CHUNDA BUNDA** do hereby declare that the contents of this study are my original work and that to the best of my knowledge have not been previously presented for any award in any other University. All the sources of information used in this piece of work have been duly acknowledged

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**Abstract**

This study investigated the project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council, focusing on infrastructure development projects crucial to the town's growth and the well-being of its inhabitants. Despite the importance of these projects, the council faces persistent challenges, including project delays, cost overruns, and quality issues. These challenges not only strain the council's resources but also undermine public trust in its ability to efficiently manage infrastructure projects. The study identified key deficiencies in the council's current project management practices, which include inadequate planning, insufficient stakeholder involvement, and a lack of formal project management methodologies. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study combined both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to assess the effectiveness of current practices, identify challenges, and propose strategies for improvement. The findings indicated that while some project management methodologies are used, they are not consistently applied, and monitoring practices are inadequate. Key challenges include delays, funding limitations, poor resource allocation, and unclear roles within project teams. The study suggested several strategies to enhance project management, such as adopting formal project management frameworks, improving planning and monitoring systems, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and better resource allocation. By implementing these strategies, Nkeyema Town Council will improve the efficiency and success of its infrastructure projects, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of the town.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 Introduction

This study is dedicated to a thorough examination and enhancement of project management practices within Nkeyema Town Council's infrastructure development projects. The critical nature of infrastructure in fostering local development and enhancing community well-being positions project management as a pivotal component of municipal success. In Nkeyema Town Council, as in many Local Authorities, the efficient and effective execution of infrastructure projects—from roads and bridges to public utilities—significantly impacts the community's quality of life and economic vitality. Effective project management within such contexts is not merely about adhering to budgets and timelines; it's about ensuring that these infrastructural developments align with the community's needs and aspirations, optimizing resource allocation, and fostering sustainability and inclusivity. However, challenges such as resource constraints, stakeholder engagement, and interdepartmental coordination can hinder these objectives, leading to project delays, cost overruns, and unmet community expectations.

## 1.2 Background to the Problem: History of Stalled projects in Zambia

### 1.2.1 History of stalled projects in Zambia

Zambia has faced significant challenges in project management, with numerous reports highlighting a pervasive issue of stalled projects across the country. These delays have affected various sectors, from infrastructure to education, resulting in unmet development goals and adverse socio-economic impacts. This study aims to investigate the role of teamwork in project management in Zambia, focusing on the need for effective collaboration to mitigate the prevalent issues of project delays and failures. The conventional perception that teamwork positively impacts project management underpins this investigation, seeking to explore how improved collaborative efforts can enhance project outcomes. The issue of stalled projects in Zambia is not a new phenomenon but rather a persistent problem that has plagued various administrations. The situation is exemplified by several key projects across the country, where delays and mismanagement have led to significant setbacks.

#### 1.2.1.1 Failure to Implement Projects in Western Province

In 2018, National Planning and Development Minister Alexander Chiteme expressed profound disappointment over the stalled projects in Western Province. He highlighted the failure to operationalize the National Rural Water and Sanitation project, which aimed to increase access to clean water through the installation of 1,231 boreholes across 16 districts. The project, funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB), had not seen a single operational borehole years after its inception in 2015, reflecting severe management inefficiencies and a lack of accountability among those responsible for implementation (Lusaka Times, 2018). The stalled Cashew Nut Infrastructure Development project further exemplifies these issues, with progress only resuming after the intervention of a foreign consultant, raising concerns about local capacity and ownership.

#### 1.2.1.2 Stalled Projects in Kasama and Northern Province

In 2022, Kasama residents, supported by local church and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), petitioned the government over the stalled construction of Ntumpa University. The project, along with the FTJ Chiluba University in Mansa, was supposed to benefit from a $225 million fund. However, only minimal progress was recorded, leading to public outcry and calls for accountability. The Northern Province Permanent Secretary Bernard Mpundu assured the public of ongoing investigations into the misuse of funds, underscoring the widespread issue of financial mismanagement (Lusaka Times, 2022). This scenario highlights the critical need for improved project oversight and transparent financial management practices.

#### 1.2.1.3 Nationwide Stalled Secondary School Projects

The situation is similarly dire in the education sector, with over 100 secondary school projects stalled due to financial constraints. The stalling of these projects has had severe social implications, including increased rates of adolescent pregnancies due to girls being forced to rent in nearby communities, lacking the security and structure that completed schools would provide (Shalubala, 2022). Minister of Education Douglas Syakalima's remarks in parliament underscored the urgency of addressing these delays to prevent further social decay and to harness the potential of Zambia's youth.

#### 1.2.1.4 Public Accounts Committee on Stalled Projects

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has also been active in addressing these issues. In 2024, PAC visited Siavonga District to assess stalled projects highlighted in the Auditor General's report. The committee's findings pointed to significant issues in cost management and contractor performance, with numerous projects, including the construction of the local police station and post office, left incomplete despite substantial public investment (ZANIS, 2024). This reflects broader systemic issues in public project management, including inadequate planning, poor contractor selection, and insufficient oversight.

#### 1.2.1.5 Government Commitment to Completing Stalled Projects

There have been efforts by the Zambian government to address these issues. For instance, in Nsama District, the government promised to complete stalled public infrastructure projects, including a boarding secondary school and police housing units. The Northern Province Permanent Secretary Bernard Mpundu highlighted the government's commitment to ensuring the quality delivery of public services through the completion of these projects (Phiri, 2022). However, the success of these efforts depends heavily on effective teamwork and coordination among government agencies, contractors, and other stakeholders.

#### 1.2.1.6 Stalled Projects in Chongwe and Luapula Provinces

Senior Chieftainess Nkhomeshya Mukamamba II of the Soli people in Chongwe highlighted the delays in upgrading key roads and educational institutions, stressing the need for these projects to be completed to boost local development (Kombe, 2021). Similarly, in Luapula Province, stalled civic infrastructure projects, including a civic centre and district administration blocks, have been left vulnerable to vandalism due to prolonged delays (Zambia 24, 2024). These examples underscore the importance of addressing management inefficiencies and ensuring that projects are completed to serve their intended purposes.

#### 1.2.1.7 Nationwide Developmental Challenges

The challenges of stalled projects are not limited to specific regions but are a nationwide concern. In 2020, President Edgar Lungu emphasized the need to complete all developmental projects, including the 100MW Western Province solar project and the Kazungula Bridge, which had stalled due to financial and contractual

issues (Zambia Business Times, 2020; World High Ways, 2019). These projects are critical for enhancing the country's infrastructure and economic connectivity, and their delays have significant implications for national development (see Table 1).

#### 1.2.1.8 Nkeyema district

Nkeyema District is located in the Western Province of Zambia and was established as an independent district in 2012 after being separated from Kaoma District. It is a rural district with a growing population currently estimated at approximately 90,000 people (CSO, 2023). The district's economy is largely dependent on agriculture, with the majority of residents engaged in small-scale farming of cash crops such as maize, groundnuts, cassava, soybeans, and sunflower. Livestock farming—including cattle, goats, and poultry—also supports household incomes. Additionally, the district houses large commercial timber plantations, particularly eucalyptus and teak, which contribute to both local employment and trade.

The choice of Nkeyema District as a case study for this research was deliberate due to the notable number of infrastructure projects that have stalled or failed to take off despite being funded and planned. These projects include the construction of the District Hospital, a boarding secondary school, and the upgrading of the main access road linking Nkeyema to Kaoma and Mongu. Despite funding from both the central government and development partners such as the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Ministry of Local Government, these projects have either faced long delays or complete abandonment.

For instance, the district hospital project was launched in 2018 under a government rural health infrastructure programme but stalled midway due to financial mismanagement and lack of contractor oversight. Similarly, the boarding school, which was meant to accommodate students from outlying areas and reduce dropout rates, has remained incomplete since 2019. The road project, funded under the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and meant to improve market access for farmers, has seen little progress due to disputes over procurement procedures and inadequate project management structures.

These project failures underscore the need to critically assess the existing project management practices within Nkeyema Town Council, including whether dedicated project management teams were established, how stakeholder coordination was handled, and whether monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were in place. The recurrence of stalled projects within a short period makes Nkeyema a relevant and insightful case for examining the root causes of project management inefficiencies in local authorities.

**Table 1: Summary of stalled projects in Zambia**

| | **Project Name/ organizations associated with the project/ project detail** | **Location** | **Project Aims** | **Issues/Challenges** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | National Rural Water and Sanitation Project | Western Province | To provide safe and accessible water and sanitation facilities in rural areas | No boreholes operational since 2015, lack of ownership and dedication, incompetence |
| **2** | Cashew Nut Infrastructure Development Project | Western Province | To boost cashew nut production and create value-added products | Progress only began after hiring a Tanzanian consultant, stalled due to lack of expertise |
| **3** | Ntumpa University | Kasama | To expand higher education opportunities and enhance local academic infrastructure | Misuse of funds, work stalled at 2-3%, disadvantaged educational development |
| **4** | Lufuma Boarding School | Lufwanyama | To provide educational facilities and accommodate students in rural areas | Stalled due to financial constraints, over 100 stalled boarding schools nationwide |
| **5** | Siavonga Police Station and other infrastructure | Siavonga | To enhance law enforcement and provide necessary infrastructure for public services | Stalled projects with audit queries, lack of comprehensive status report, need for development roadmap |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **6** | Nsama District Projects (boarding school, police station, etc.) | Nsama | To develop essential public infrastructure including education and law enforcement facilities | Contracts terminated, re-advertised, priority to housing units |
| 7 | RD149 and D151 Road | Chongwe | To improve road infrastructure and accessibility, facilitate transportation | Stalled since 2014, key roads and university upgrades delayed, impact on local development |
| **8** | Mwansabombwe Civic Centre and District Administration Blocks | Mwansabombwe | To provide administrative offices and civic facilities for local governance | Vandalized structures, need for completion to provide conducive working conditions |
| **9** | Mwinilunga – Jimbe Road | Ikelenge | To enhance road connectivity and promote economic activities in the region | Contract terminated, under review, lack of proper infrastructure affecting regional development |
| **10** | 100MW Western Province Solar Project | Western Province | To increase renewable energy capacity and improve electricity access | Project stalled, issues with payments and contract terminations |
| **11** | Kazungula Bridge | Kazungula | To facilitate trade and transport between Zambia and Botswana | Delays in payments, Korean contractor ceased activity, trade and transport improvement stalled |
| **12** | Lundazi District Hospital | Lundazi | To provide healthcare services and improve medical infrastructure in the district | Contractor abandoned site, delays in project phases, erratic funding, local contractors underutilized |

Source: Author's (2024) compilation

The persistent challenge of stalled projects in Zambia has become a significant barrier to achieving the country's development goals. This issue has affected a wide range of

sectors, including infrastructure, education, and public services, leading to delays, cost overruns, and incomplete projects. The stalled projects not only undermine the intended outcomes but also hinder social and economic progress, particularly in rural areas. Nkeyema Town Council, which is situated in one of Zambia's rural provinces, is not immune to these challenges. The council's infrastructure development projects are often marred by delays, exceeding costs, and quality issues, all of which reflect the broader systemic failures observed across the nation.

One of the most notable cases of stalled projects in Zambia is the National Rural Water and Sanitation Project in Western Province. Initially funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB) in 2015, this project aimed to install 1,231 boreholes across 16 districts to improve access to clean water. However, by 2018, no borehole had been operational, despite the passing of several years, highlighting severe inefficiencies in project management (Lusaka Times, 2018). This example underscores the widespread issue of stalled projects in Zambia and the lack of accountability among local authorities and contractors. Similarly, the Cashew Nut Infrastructure Development project in Western Province suffered from a lack of local expertise and failed to make significant progress until the intervention of a foreign consultant. This situation raises concerns about the capacity of local authorities and their ability to effectively manage large-scale development projects without external intervention (Lusaka Times, 2018).

The education sector has also been severely affected by stalled projects. Over 100 secondary school projects have been left incomplete due to financial constraints, contributing to an array of social problems. In particular, girls in rural areas are forced to rent in nearby communities, exposing them to security risks and early pregnancies (Shalubala, 2022). These delays in school construction prevent the provision of essential education infrastructure, which, in turn, hampers the development of Zambia's human capital. The government has expressed concern over these delays, emphasizing the urgent need to address the issue to prevent further social decay and ensure that the youth can fully benefit from educational opportunities (Shalubala, 2022).

In addition to education, other key infrastructure projects have similarly faced significant setbacks. For example, the construction of Ntumpa University in Kasama, which was part of a $225 million fund, stalled due to financial mismanagement and misallocation of resources. The project, intended to improve higher education in the region, was delayed to the point where only minimal progress was recorded, causing public outcry (Lusaka Times, 2022). Furthermore, the construction of various public infrastructure projects, including police stations, roads, and district administration blocks, has been similarly hindered by poor project management practices. In Siavonga, for instance, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) identified significant issues in cost management and contractor performance, leading to incomplete projects despite substantial public investment (Zanis, 2024).

The government has made efforts to address these challenges, with promises to complete stalled projects and improve project management practices. In Nsama District, for example, the government committed to completing infrastructure projects, including a boarding secondary school and police housing units (Geoffrey, 2022). However, such promises can only be realized if effective teamwork and coordination among government agencies, contractors, and other stakeholders are prioritized. A lack of collaboration has been one of the major reasons behind the stalled projects, as evidenced by the frequent need for foreign consultants and the failure to meet deadlines.

These examples clearly illustrate that the issues of stalled projects are not isolated to a few regions but are a nationwide concern affecting rural and urban areas alike. The

delays in projects such as the Kazungula Bridge and the 100MW Western Province solar project further highlight the critical nature of this problem, as these projects are key to enhancing Zambia's infrastructure and economic connectivity (Zambia Business Times, 2020; World Highways, 2019). The delays in completing such projects have long-lasting implications for national development, as they hinder economic growth and the provision of essential public services.

In light of these challenges, it is clear that improving project management practices is imperative for the successful completion of infrastructure projects in Zambia. The issues surrounding stalled projects point to systemic inefficiencies in planning, execution, and monitoring, as well as a lack of accountability and effective collaboration. Addressing these issues through a comprehensive study of project management practices, as proposed in this research, will provide insights into the underlying causes of project delays and offer strategies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of infrastructure development in Zambia. The case of Nkeyema Town Council serves as a crucial starting point for understanding and resolving the broader challenges faced by local authorities in the country.

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

The issue of stalled infrastructure development projects has become a persistent challenge for local authorities in Zambia, with significant implications for the socio-economic development of various regions, especially rural areas. Despite substantial investments in infrastructure development, many projects across Zambia remain incomplete due to inefficiencies in project management, poor planning, financial mismanagement, and inadequate coordination among stakeholders. This situation has led to delays in the delivery of critical public services, such as education, healthcare, and transport infrastructure, which are essential for the development of local communities. In particular, the Nkeyema Town Council has faced considerable setbacks in the implementation of key infrastructure projects, which has hampered its ability to meet the growing needs of its residents (ZANIS, 2024).

The failure to complete infrastructure projects in Nkeyema Town Council had highlighted several key issues, including inadequate project planning, lack of accountability, and limited local capacity to manage large-scale developments effectively. For instance, several road construction projects in the area have stalled,

impacting transportation and accessibility to markets and essential services. Additionally, projects in education and healthcare have faced delays, undermining efforts to improve living standards and socio-economic conditions in the region. These persistent delays not only frustrate local residents but also contribute to the broader challenges of national development, as stalled projects represent a significant underutilization of public resources (Geoffrey, 2022).

Previous studies have identified poor project management as a core factor contributing to the stalling of infrastructure projects in Zambia. The lack of effective teamwork, inadequate monitoring, and insufficient collaboration among government agencies, contractors, and other stakeholders have been cited as primary causes of project delays (ZANIS, 2024). In addition, a lack of comprehensive status reports, weak contractor performance, and poor financial management have further exacerbated these delays (Lusaka Times, 2022). Given these challenges, there is an urgent need to investigate how improving project management practices, particularly through enhanced teamwork and coordination, can address these issues. This study aims to explore how effective project management strategies, including better collaboration and planning, can contribute to the successful implementation of infrastructure projects in Nkeyema Town Council and other local authorities in Zambia, thereby promoting sustainable development and improved public service delivery. Quality issues are important because they might result in infrastructure that is dangerous, below standards, or requires early repair or replacement. Quality difficulties not only squander money resources but also diminish public trust in the council's competence to efficiently handle and carry out infrastructure projects (Phiri, 2016).

The issues stem from several factors such as inadequate project planning and monitoring, insufficient stakeholder cooperation, or a lack of experience within the project management teams. Current project management approaches may not be sufficiently strong to handle the intricate nature of infrastructure projects, necessitating thorough preparation, implementation, and stakeholder involvement (Kakungu, 2013).

A gap in the project management structure within Nkeyema Town Council has been identified, indicating a need for a comprehensive assessment to pinpoint deficiencies and opportunities for enhancement. Comprehending these difficulties in depth is essential for formulating strategies to improve the council's project management

methods, resulting in more efficient, cost-effective, and high-quality infrastructure development that aligns with the community's requirements and promotes sustainable urban growth (Muleya & Zulu, 2009).

## 1.4 Research Objectives

### Main Objective

Identify Current Project Management Practices. To catalogue and understand the existing project management methodologies and practices employed by Nkeyema Town Council in its infrastructure development projects. This includes examining the planning, execution, monitoring, and closing phases of project management within the council.

### Specific Objectives

i. To identify project management practices, determining how well these practices align with the successful completion of infrastructure projects, within budget, time constraints, and quality specifications.
ii. To establish challenges within the current project management practice
iii. To determine strategies that can strengthen and improve project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council.

### Research Questions

i. What are the current project management practices employed by Nkeyema Town Council in managing infrastructure development projects?
ii. What challenges and bottlenecks are encountered in the current project management practices for infrastructure development at Nkeyema Town Council?
iii. What strategies can be proposed to strengthen project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council, particularly in the context of infrastructure development?

## 1.5 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value for various stakeholders, including the Government of Zambia, Nkeyema Town Council, and the Zambian population. For the Government of Zambia, the findings of this study can provide valuable insights into the persistent issues surrounding stalled infrastructure projects across the country. By improving

project management practices at the local level, the government can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery, ultimately contributing to the achievement of its national development goals, such as poverty reduction and improved socio-economic conditions.

For Nkeyema Town Council, this study offered an opportunity to critically assess its current project management practices and identify areas of improvement. By adopting more effective project management strategies, including better coordination and collaboration among stakeholders, the council can reduce delays and cost overruns, ensuring timely completion of essential infrastructure projects. This would significantly improve the town's infrastructure, benefiting residents with enhanced access to education, healthcare, and transportation services.

For the Zambian population, particularly those residing in rural areas like Nkeyema, this study promises better outcomes in terms of the completion of essential infrastructure projects. Improved project management will lead to faster development, which directly benefits local communities by creating jobs, improving living standards, and fostering economic growth. This, in turn, will contribute to a more equitable distribution of national resources and opportunities for all Zambians.

### 1.6 Scope of the Study

**Temporal Scope:** The temporal scope of this study is focused on the period between 2015 and 2025. This period captures a decade of infrastructure development within Nkeyema Town Council, with an emphasis on analysing the challenges faced in the management of these projects. By including data up to 2025, the study offered an up-to-date assessment of the factors contributing to stalled projects, delays, cost overruns, and quality issues, while also enabling the identification of any emerging trends or shifts in project management practices. This timeframe allows for the evaluation of the effectiveness of past and current strategies, as well as the potential for future improvements in the management of infrastructure projects.

**Spatial Scope:** The spatial scope of the study is confined to Nkeyema Town Council, located in the Western Province of Zambia. This council serves as the case study for understanding the unique challenges faced by rural local authorities in managing infrastructure development projects. While the findings from Nkeyema may have broader implications for other councils in Zambia, the study specifically focused on the

infrastructure projects in this locality, including roads, bridges, public utilities, and other social amenities, with the aim of identifying tailored solutions for improving project management practices in rural settings.

**Thematic Scope:** The thematic scope of the study centred around the management practices of infrastructure development projects in Nkeyema Town Council. It explored the entire project management cycle, from planning and execution to monitoring and completion. The study identified the challenges affecting project timelines, budgets, and quality standards. Furthermore, it will assess the role of teamwork, coordination, and stakeholder engagement in addressing these challenges, aiming to propose strategies that can enhance the overall success of infrastructure projects within the council.

### 1.7 Definition of Key Terms

*Project Management Practices*: These are the methodologies, strategies, tools, and techniques applied to initiate, plan, execute, monitor, control, and close projects. In the context of this study, it refers specifically to the practices employed by Nkeyema Town Council in managing infrastructure development projects.

*Infrastructure Development*: This term refers to the construction and improvement of foundational services and facilities that support the economic and social well-being of a community. In Nkeyema Town Council, this encompasses projects such as road construction, water supply systems, public buildings, and other physical structures and facilities essential for urban living.

*Efficiency*: Within the scope of project management, efficiency relates to the optimal use of resources (time, cost, manpower) to achieve the desired outcomes of a project. It measures the ability of the project management process to produce the intended output with minimum waste or expense.

*Stakeholder Engagement*: This term refers to the systematic inclusion and involvement of various parties interested in or affected by the project management process. Stakeholder engagement in infrastructure projects includes consulting with community members, government entities, contractors, and other relevant parties to ensure that the project meets its goals and is aligned with community needs and expectations.

*Project Lifecycle*: The project lifecycle encompasses all the phases a project goes through from initiation to closure. In infrastructure development, this typically includes the conception phase, planning, design, implementation (construction), monitoring, and completion/handover.

*Project Success*: This term is defined by the achievement of project objectives within the agreed parameters of time, budget, quality, and scope. In the context of infrastructure development, it also includes the project's long-term sustainability and its contribution to community development.

*Public Infrastructure*: Refers to the facilities and systems that serve the public at large, including transportation systems, public utilities, roads, bridges, and public buildings. These are fundamental for economic stability and growth, environmental sustainability, and the overall quality of life in the community.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature in terms of the empirical and the theoretical literature of the study.

## 2.0 Literature Review

## 2.1 Empirical Literature

### 2.1.1 Global studies

Empirical studies on improving project management practices for infrastructure development in local authorities outside Africa have sought to address various challenges related to project delays, cost overruns, and poor quality in infrastructure projects. These studies primarily focus on enhancing the efficiency of project management through various strategies, with an emphasis on leadership, stakeholder engagement, and effective planning. One such study by Khosravi and Alimohammadlou (2020) examined the role of project management maturity in improving infrastructure development in Iran. The authors found that increasing the maturity of project management processes through better planning, monitoring, and control mechanisms led to a significant reduction in project delays and cost overruns. They recommended investing in training for project managers to enhance their capabilities and improve decision-making processes.

In the United Kingdom, KPMG (2018) explored the challenges faced by local authorities in delivering infrastructure projects on time and within budget. Their research indicated that poor communication, lack of stakeholder alignment, and insufficient resource allocation were major contributors to project failures. The study highlighted the importance of robust project governance frameworks and regular stakeholder engagement to ensure projects remain on track. The researchers recommended that local authorities adopt project management best practices, such as Agile methodologies, to improve flexibility and responsiveness in managing infrastructure projects.

Similarly, in Australia, a study by Chan et al. (2019) focused on the impact of risk management strategies on infrastructure project outcomes. The researchers identified key risk factors such as financial mismanagement, delays in approvals, and inadequate project controls that affected project performance. They emphasized the

need for local authorities to incorporate comprehensive risk management plans early in the project lifecycle, focusing on identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks throughout the project. The study found that projects with well-executed risk management plans were more likely to be completed on time and within budget. The authors recommended that local authorities adopt proactive risk management practices, including regular risk assessments and stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes.

A study conducted by Bapna et al. (2020) in India highlighted the importance of project leadership in driving successful infrastructure projects. Their research revealed that effective leadership, particularly in terms of clear communication, motivation, and decision-making, had a significant positive impact on project outcomes. The authors noted that leadership styles such as transformational and participative leadership were more successful in promoting collaboration and resolving conflicts within project teams. They recommended that local authorities invest in leadership development programs for project managers to improve their effectiveness in guiding infrastructure projects to successful completion.

In South Korea, a study by Lee and Cho (2019) focused on the influence of stakeholder engagement in the management of public infrastructure projects. The researchers found that projects with active stakeholder involvement from the planning phase through to execution were more successful in meeting their objectives. The study emphasized the need for transparent communication and strong partnerships between local authorities, contractors, and the community. They recommended that local authorities adopt inclusive stakeholder engagement strategies to ensure that all relevant parties are involved in decision-making processes, which would lead to smoother project execution and greater public satisfaction.

Collectively, these studies highlight several common themes and recommendations for improving project management practices in infrastructure development. These include the importance of enhancing project management maturity, adopting effective risk management strategies, fostering strong leadership, and engaging stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle. The findings from these studies provide valuable insights that local authorities in different parts of the world can apply to improve the delivery of infrastructure projects, ensuring that they are completed on time, within

budget, and to the required standards. The empirical evidence underscores the need for continuous improvement in project management practices and the importance of fostering collaboration and communication among all stakeholders involved in infrastructure development.

### 2.1.2 African studies

Empirical studies on improving project management practices for infrastructure development projects in local authorities in African countries have highlighted various challenges that hinder the timely and successful completion of projects. These challenges include poor planning, lack of stakeholder coordination, financial mismanagement, and weak governance. One study by Mwakalinga et al. (2020) in Tanzania focused on the role of project planning and stakeholder involvement in the management of public infrastructure projects. The authors found that inadequate planning and poor stakeholder engagement were major factors leading to delays and cost overruns. The study recommended that local authorities invest more in detailed project planning and establish clear communication channels with all stakeholders, including contractors, government agencies, and local communities, to ensure projects proceed smoothly.

In Kenya, a study by Njoroge et al. (2019) examined the relationship between risk management practices and project performance in the construction sector. The researchers found that the lack of comprehensive risk management strategies contributed significantly to project delays and failures. They identified variables such as risk identification, risk assessment, and mitigation measures as critical factors influencing project outcomes. Their findings showed that projects with effective risk management practices were more likely to be completed on time and within budget. The study recommended that local authorities adopt a more structured approach to risk management, including regular risk assessments and contingency planning, to mitigate potential risks that could disrupt project timelines.

A study by Osei-Tutu et al. (2018) in Ghana investigated the impact of leadership styles on the successful implementation of infrastructure projects in local authorities. The researchers found that the leadership style of project managers had a significant effect on project performance. Specifically, transformational leadership, which focuses on motivation, communication, and team development, was associated with higher

project success rates. In contrast, transactional leadership, which emphasizes supervision and control, was linked to lower project performance. The study recommended that local authorities invest in leadership development programs to equip project managers with the necessary skills to lead infrastructure projects effectively.

In Nigeria, a study by Akintoye et al. (2017) explored the role of project governance in enhancing the management of public infrastructure projects. The authors identified governance variables such as accountability, transparency, and decision-making processes as critical factors affecting project outcomes. The study found that poor governance practices, such as lack of accountability and weak oversight, were significant contributors to project delays and cost overruns. The researchers recommended the establishment of robust governance frameworks that promote transparency and accountability, as well as the implementation of effective monitoring and evaluation systems to track project progress.

Similarly, a study by Akinwale et al. (2021) in South Africa focused on the challenges faced by local authorities in managing infrastructure projects, specifically in the context of public-private partnerships (PPPs). The researchers found that while PPPs offered potential benefits in terms of resource mobilization and expertise, challenges such as poor contract management and lack of alignment between partners often led to project delays. They identified variables such as contract clarity, financial stability, and stakeholder alignment as crucial for the success of PPPs. The study recommended that local authorities ensure better contract management practices and foster stronger relationships with private sector partners to improve project delivery.

These studies underscore the need for comprehensive project management practices to address the persistent challenges faced by local authorities in Africa when managing infrastructure development projects. Key recommendations include improving project planning, adopting structured risk management practices, investing in leadership development, enhancing governance frameworks, and strengthening public-private partnerships. The empirical evidence suggests that by focusing on these areas, local authorities can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of infrastructure project delivery, ultimately contributing to sustainable development in African countries.

### 2.1.3 Zambian studies

Empirical studies on improving project management practices for infrastructure development in local authorities in Zambia highlight several challenges, including poor governance, inadequate planning, and financial mismanagement. A study by Kangwa et al. (2020) focused on the role of financial management in the success of public infrastructure projects. The authors found that weak financial controls and irregular monitoring of project budgets contributed to delays and cost overruns. They recommended that local authorities improve financial oversight and enhance the capacity of project managers to handle project budgets effectively.

In another study, Banda and Mwansa (2018) examined the impact of stakeholder involvement on project outcomes in Zambian local authorities. The researchers found that insufficient stakeholder engagement often led to misalignment of project objectives and delayed project delivery. They identified variables such as communication, stakeholder expectations, and decision-making processes as critical for project success. The study recommended that local authorities adopt more inclusive project planning processes, involving relevant stakeholders early to avoid conflicts and improve project execution.

Similarly, Phiri et al. (2019) investigated the influence of governance practices on infrastructure project management. The study revealed that a lack of accountability and transparency in decision-making significantly hindered the successful completion of projects. The authors suggested strengthening governance frameworks and ensuring that accountability mechanisms were in place to improve project performance in Zambian local authorities (see table 2).

**Table 2 Summary of reviewed empirical literature**

| Study | Focus | Variables | Findings | Recommendations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Khosravi & Alimohammadlou (2020)** | Project management maturity in Iran | Project planning, monitoring, control mechanisms | Improved project maturity reduced delays and cost overruns | Invest in training for project managers |
| **KPMG (2018)** | Challenges faced by UK local authorities in delivering projects | Communication, stakeholder alignment, resource allocation | Poor communication and lack of alignment caused project delays | Adopt Agile methodologies and robust governance frameworks |
| **Chan et al. (2019)** | Risk management strategies in Australia | Financial mismanagement, project controls, risk assessment | Effective risk management improved project outcomes | Adopt proactive risk management practices |
| **Chan et al. (2019)** | Risk management strategies in Australia | Financial mismanagement, project controls, risk assessment | Effective risk management improved project outcomes | Adopt proactive risk management practices |
| **Bapna et al. (2020)** | Impact of leadership on project outcomes in India | Leadership styles, communication, decision-making | Transformational leadership led to better project outcomes | Invest in leadership development for project managers |
| **Lee & Cho (2019)** | Stakeholder engagement in South Korea | Stakeholder involvement, communication, partnerships | Active engagement from planning to execution improved outcomes | Adopt inclusive stakeholder engagement strategies |
| **Mwakalinga et al. (2020)** | Project planning & stakeholder involvement in Tanzania | Project planning, stakeholder engagement | Inadequate planning and poor engagement caused delays | Improve planning and establish clear communication with stakeholders |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Njoroge et al. (2019)** | Risk management in Kenya's construction sector | Risk identification, assessment, mitigation measures | Lack of risk management led to delays and failures | Adopt structured risk management and contingency planning |
| **Osei-Tutu et al. (2018)** | Leadership styles in Ghana's local authorities | Leadership style (transformational vs. transactional) | Transformational leadership improved project performance | Invest in leadership development programs |
| **Akintoye et al. (2017)** | Project governance in Nigeria | Accountability, transparency, decision-making | Poor governance practices led to delays and overruns | Strengthen governance frameworks, improve monitoring systems |
| **Akinwale et al. (2021)** | Public-private partnerships in South Africa | Contract clarity, financial stability, stakeholder alignment | Poor contract management led to project delays | Improve contract management and foster stronger partnerships |
| **Kangwa et al. (2020)** | Financial management in Zambia | Financial oversight, project budgeting | Weak financial controls caused delays and overruns | Improve financial oversight and project budgeting |
| **Banda & Mwansa (2018)** | Stakeholder involvement in Zambian projects | Communication, stakeholder expectations, decision-making | Insufficient engagement led to misalignment and delays | Engage stakeholders early in project planning |
| **Phiri et al. (2019)** | Governance practices in Zambian infrastructure projects | Accountability, transparency, decision-making | Lack of accountability hindered project completion | Strengthen governance frameworks and accountability mechanisms |

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.2.1 Positive Impact Theory: The Project Management Maturity Model (PMMM)

The Project Management Maturity Model (PMMM) was developed by Harold Kerzner in the 1980s as a framework for improving the management of projects in various industries. The PMMM posits that organizations, including local authorities, can improve their project outcomes by advancing their project management practices through a series of maturity levels. The model identifies different stages or levels of maturity that organizations progress through as they improve their project management capabilities, ranging from initial and ad-hoc practices to highly optimized and integrated practices.

The theory suggests that organizations at higher levels of maturity are more likely to experience successful projects because they have refined their processes, standardized practices, and institutionalized project management knowledge. The model emphasizes the importance of integrating best practices, improving decision-making, and developing the skills of project managers to enhance project outcomes. This positive impact is particularly relevant to infrastructure development projects in local authorities, where the complexity and scale of the projects often result in delays and cost overruns due to poor planning, inadequate risk management, and weak project execution.

In the context of improving project management practices for infrastructure development in local authorities, the PMMM theory applies by advocating for local authorities to enhance their project management maturity. As local authorities move through the levels of maturity, their ability to effectively manage infrastructure projects improves, resulting in better planning, reduced delays, and cost efficiency. By investing in the training and development of project managers and establishing standardized project management processes, local authorities can experience positive changes in project outcomes.

The PMMM provides a framework for local authorities to identify their current project management maturity level and take steps to reach higher levels of maturity. This would ensure the continuous improvement of infrastructure development projects, helping local authorities overcome common challenges such as budget overruns, poor

stakeholder engagement, and delays. Therefore, the application of the PMMM theory suggests that local authorities can achieve positive impacts in their infrastructure projects by enhancing their project management maturity, leading to greater success in project delivery.

### 2.2.2 Negative Impact Theory: The Theory of Organizational Inertia

The Theory of Organizational Inertia, developed by James G. March and Herbert A. Simon in their 1958 work *Organizations*, posits that organizations tend to resist change and continue with existing practices and structures, even when these practices are ineffective. Organizational inertia refers to the tendency of organizations to stick with established routines and behaviors, even when new approaches or innovations are necessary to improve performance. This theory suggests that organizational resistance to change can hinder the adoption of better project management practices, leading to negative impacts on project outcomes.

In the context of infrastructure development projects in local authorities, organizational inertia can manifest in several ways. For example, local authorities may continue to rely on outdated project management practices or structures, even when they are no longer effective in delivering projects on time or within budget. This resistance to adopting new methodologies, such as Agile project management or modern risk management practices, can result in persistent challenges, including delays, cost overruns, and poor quality in infrastructure projects.

This theory suggests a negative impact on the improvement of project management practices because organizational inertia may prevent local authorities from implementing necessary changes or improvements in their project management processes. Even when project managers recognize the need for change, entrenched organizational habits, bureaucratic structures, and lack of incentives may prevent effective reforms. As a result, local authorities may continue to face challenges in delivering infrastructure projects efficiently, which would negatively affect the success and outcomes of these projects.

The Theory of Organizational Inertia applies to this study by highlighting the potential barriers to improving project management practices in local authorities. It suggests that even if external pressure or the recognition of poor project outcomes exist, internal resistance to change can slow down or completely block the adoption of better

practices. This negative impact can hinder local authorities from overcoming the challenges they face in managing infrastructure projects, ultimately leading to unsuccessful or delayed project completions.

### 2.2.3 No Impact Theory: The Contingency Theory of Leadership

The Contingency Theory of Leadership, first developed by Fred Fiedler in the 1960s, posits that there is no single best way to manage an organization or lead a project. Instead, effective leadership depends on the specific context and the challenges faced. According to this theory, the success of a project depends on the alignment between a leader's style and the situational factors such as the nature of the task, the work environment, and the relationships between team members. Fiedler's model suggests that leadership effectiveness is contingent upon how well the leader's approach matches the circumstances of the project or organization.

In the context of infrastructure development projects in local authorities, the theory suggests that leadership alone may not necessarily improve project management practices. While effective leadership can contribute to better decision-making and team dynamics, it does not guarantee improved project outcomes if the environmental and situational factors are not conducive to project success. For example, if the local authority lacks sufficient financial resources, faces political interference, or has structural inefficiencies, even the best project leaders may struggle to deliver successful infrastructure projects. Therefore, the Contingency Theory of Leadership suggests that leadership may not always have a significant impact on the improvement of project management practices in these local authorities.

This theory does not argue that leadership is irrelevant; rather, it emphasizes that leadership alone is not a sufficient factor in ensuring the success of infrastructure development projects. If the contextual factors—such as governance, resource allocation, and stakeholder involvement—are not addressed, leadership effectiveness may not result in significant improvements. Thus, the theory indicates that leadership alone does not always lead to a positive or negative impact on project management practices, and in some cases, it may have no substantial effect on improving infrastructure development outcomes.

The application of the Contingency Theory of Leadership to this study suggests that while leadership can play a role in project management practices, other factors such

as organizational structure, available resources, and the external environment must also be considered. Therefore, this theory posits that leadership may not be the sole determining factor for improving project management practices in infrastructure development projects in local authorities, and it may have no significant impact in certain situations.

### 2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study focuses on understanding the determinants of project management success within local authorities, with a particular emphasis on infrastructure development projects. The dependent variable in this framework is determinants of project management success, which refers to the key factors that influence the successful completion of projects, such as meeting objectives, deadlines, budgets, and quality standards.

The independent variables identified in this framework include project delays, inadequate funding for project implementation, resources allocated to projects, unclear roles and responsibilities, and challenges related to limited technical expertise within the council.

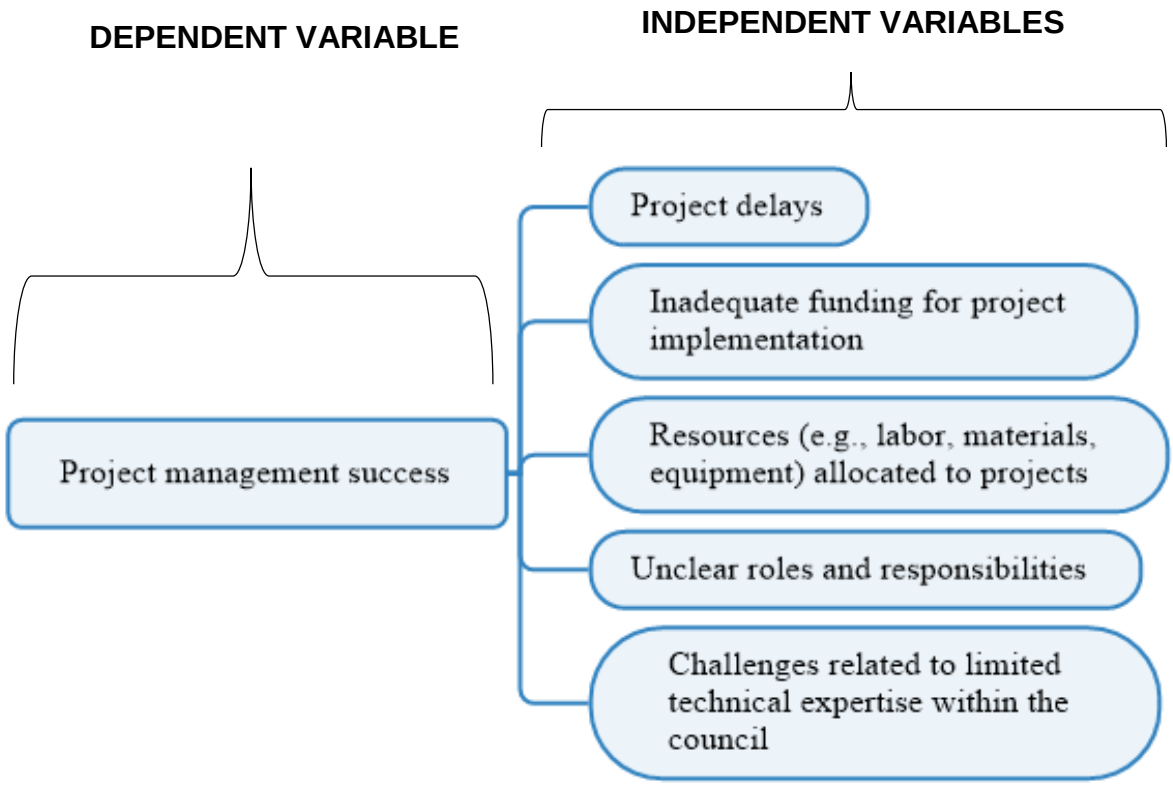
1. **Project delays** refer to the time overrun in completing a project compared to the originally planned schedule. Delays often result from poor planning, unforeseen circumstances, or mismanagement, and they are expected to have a negative effect on project success, causing inefficiencies and increasing costs.

2. **Inadequate funding for project implementation** pertains to the insufficient financial resources allocated to a project, which hampers its execution. This is expected to negatively affect project success, as limited funding can lead to incomplete or poorly executed projects.

3. **Resources allocated to projects** includes labor, materials, and equipment necessary for completing a project. Adequate resources are crucial for project success, and their scarcity can negatively affect the project's progress and quality.

4. **Unclear roles and responsibilities** within project teams can lead to confusion, duplication of efforts, and missed tasks. This is expected to negatively influence the success of a project by hindering effective coordination.
5. **Challenges related to limited technical expertise** in the council refer to a lack of skilled professionals needed for complex infrastructure projects. A shortage of expertise is expected to have a detrimental impact on project success due to the difficulty in handling technical challenges.

**Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study**




Source: Author (2025)

The operationalization of these variables involves assessing them through surveys, interviews, and document reviews to measure their impact on project success. Based on these variables, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- $H_{01}$: Project delays have no significant impact on the success of infrastructure development projects in local authorities.
- $H_{11}$: Project delays negatively impact the success of infrastructure development projects in local authorities.

- $H_{02}$: Inadequate funding for project implementation has no significant impact on project success.
- $H_{12}$: Inadequate funding negatively impacts project success.
- $H_{03}$: Resources allocated to projects have no significant impact on project success.
- $H_{13}$: Adequate resources positively impact project success.
- $H_{04}$: Unclear roles and responsibilities have no significant impact on project success.
- $H_{14}$: Unclear roles and responsibilities negatively impact project success.
- $H_{05}$: Limited technical expertise has no significant impact on project success.
- $H_{15}$: Limited technical expertise negatively impacts project success.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

## 3.0 Introduction

Chapter three elucidates the methodology adopted for this study, detailing the research design, method, target population, sampling technique, sample size, data collection method, data analysis software and technique, and the ethical considerations pertaining to the study.

## 3.1 Research Approach

This study employed a quantitative research approach to investigate the factors influencing project management practices in infrastructure development projects within local authorities. The focus on a quantitative approach is grounded in the need to systematically measure and analyse the relationship between various project management practices and project success. This allowed for the identification of patterns, correlations, and statistical significance between project delays, inadequate funding, resource allocation, unclear roles and responsibilities, and technical expertise on the success of these projects.

The rationale for selecting a quantitative approach is that offered a structured and objective method for collecting and analysing data. Quantitative data provided measurable insights into the factors affecting project management practices and will enable the use of statistical techniques to test the relationships between independent variables and the dependent variable of project success. The use of structured surveys also ensured that data was consistent and can be generalized to a broader population within local authorities.

Quantitative data analysis enabled the identification of trends and patterns that can inform better project management practices. It helped to determine how specific project management challenges, such as delays, inadequate funding, and insufficient technical expertise, impact the overall success of infrastructure projects. By focusing on the objective measurement of these variables, the study provided a robust foundation for making recommendations that can improve project management practices in local authorities.

## 3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, which is ideal for investigating the current state of project management practices in local authorities. A

cross-sectional design allowed the researcher to gather data at a specific point in time, providing a snapshot of the existing challenges and practices in infrastructure development projects within local authorities.

The survey design enabled the collection of data from a large sample of project managers, supervisors, and other relevant staff involved in infrastructure projects within the local authorities. The use of questionnaires as the primary data collection tool helped in obtaining standardized responses, allowing for easy comparison and analysis of different project management practices and their impact on project success. This design also enabled the study to assess the relationship between project management practices (independent variables) and project success (dependent variable) at a specific moment, which is crucial for informing current and future projects.

A key strength of the cross-sectional survey design is its efficiency in data collection, as it allows for the gathering of a large volume of data in a short period. Additionally, it provides the opportunity to study a wide range of project management practices and challenges without the need for prolonged or ongoing data collection.

### 3.3 Study Population

The target population for this study comprised project management professionals and staff involved in infrastructure development projects within local authorities in Zambia, with a particular focus on Nkeyema Town Council as a host of wide range of both local and national projects, making it a representative sample for this study. The population includes project managers, supervisors, planners, engineers, and other staff members who contribute to the planning, execution, and monitoring of infrastructure projects within local authorities. In addition, other key stakeholders such as the residents of Nkeyema were part of the study population.

The estimated population size was approximately 500 people comprising employees from the council, people living in Nkeyema and other stakeholders across various local authority involved in infrastructure development. These individuals are directly or indirectly involved in project management and play a role in the implementation of infrastructure projects. The study will target this specific group of individuals due to their direct experience and knowledge of the project management practices employed in these projects.

### 3.4 Sample Size

To determine the sample size for this study, the researcher used the Yamane (1967) formula for sample size calculation, which is widely used in social science research. The formula is as follows:

$$Sample\ size\ (n) = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)} = \frac{500}{1 + 500(0.05^2)} = \ 222\ study\ participants$$

### 3.5 Sampling Technique

The study employed a random sampling technique to select participants from the target population. This method ensured that each individual within the population has an equal chance of being selected, which helps to eliminate selection bias and ensures that the sample is representative of the broader population. Random sampling was ideal for this study as it allowed for the generalization of results and enhances the reliability of the findings.

### 3.6 Data Collection/Instruments

Data was collected through the use of structured questionnaires, which was distributed to the selected participants in the study. The questionnaires consisted of closed-ended questions designed to capture quantitative data on the various project management practices, challenges, and factors that influence the success of infrastructure projects. The closed-ended questions were designed to measure variables such as project delays, inadequate funding, resource allocation, and technical expertise, using a Likert scale to assess the frequency, importance, and impact of each factor.

In addition to the structured questions, the questionnaire included a few demographic questions to gather information on the participants' roles, years of experience, and the type of infrastructure projects they are involved in. This demographic data allowed the researcher to analyse the impact of various factors based on the participants' background and experience.

The questionnaires were administered through both online and face-to-face methods to ensure a high response rate and to accommodate participants' preferences. Online surveys will be used where possible, while face-to-face distribution will be employed for individuals who may have limited access to the internet.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

The collected data was analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), a widely used software tool for quantitative data analysis. SPSS will be used to perform a range of statistical analyses, including:

- Descriptive statistics: To summarize and describe the main features of the data, including measures of central tendency (mean, median) and dispersion (standard deviation, variance).
- Frequency analyses: To determine the frequency of specific responses to the survey questions, which will help identify the most common project management challenges faced by local authorities.
- Cross-tabulations: To explore the relationships between different variables, such as the correlation between inadequate funding and project delays.
- Correlations: To assess the strength and direction of the relationships between the independent variables (project delays, funding, resources, roles, technical expertise) and the dependent variable (project management success).

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose, methodology, and potential uses of the research findings. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants before they take part in the survey. They were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

To ensure confidentiality, all personal information collected from participants was kept strictly private. The identities of the participants were anonymized, and no identifying information has been included in the final research report or any published results. Data was stored securely, with access limited to the research team, and will be destroyed after the conclusion of the study.

Participants were also assured that their involvement would not expose them to any physical or psychological harm, and the research will be conducted in a manner that respects their dignity and privacy. Ethical approval was sought from relevant authorities before data collection commenced.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANLYSIS

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained in this study regarding the project management practices, how well they align with the successful completion of infrastructure projects, within budget, time constraints and quality specifications.

### 4.1 Demographic analysis

In this study, participants were evenly split between genders. The frequency of female respondents was 85, which represents 50% of the total participants. Similarly, the frequency of male respondents was also 85, making up the other 50%. The valid percent for both genders was 50%, and the cumulative percent reached 100%, indicating that all respondents were accounted for in the gender category. The distribution of gender among participants suggests that the study was balanced in terms of male and female representation, with no significant gender disparity. This equal representation allows for an unbiased examination of the study's variables and ensures that the results can be generalized to both male and female populations without gender-based limitations.

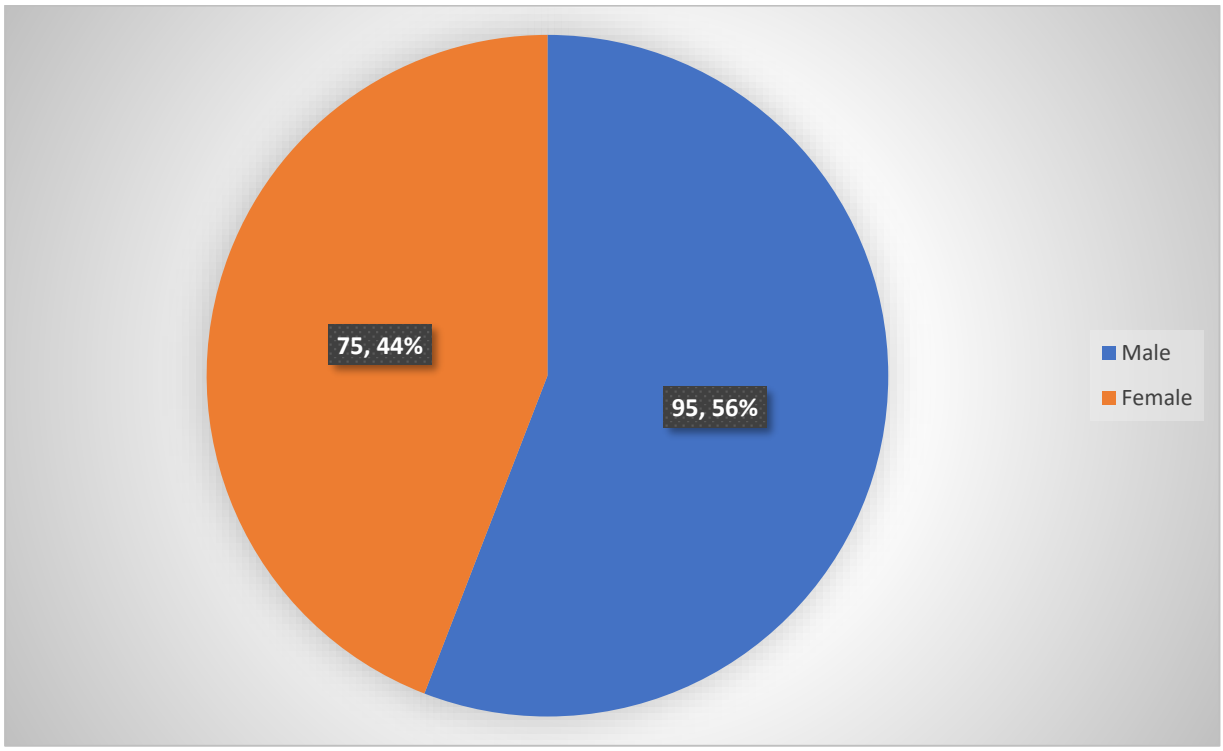



*Figure 2:Gender*

The dataset shows a slightly male-dominated workforce, with more males than females participating in infrastructure projects. While male representation remains higher, the female proportion is still substantial, suggesting growing inclusivity in the field. This trend may indicate an increasing number of women pursuing careers in infrastructure project management, although further initiatives may be needed to bridge the gender gap.

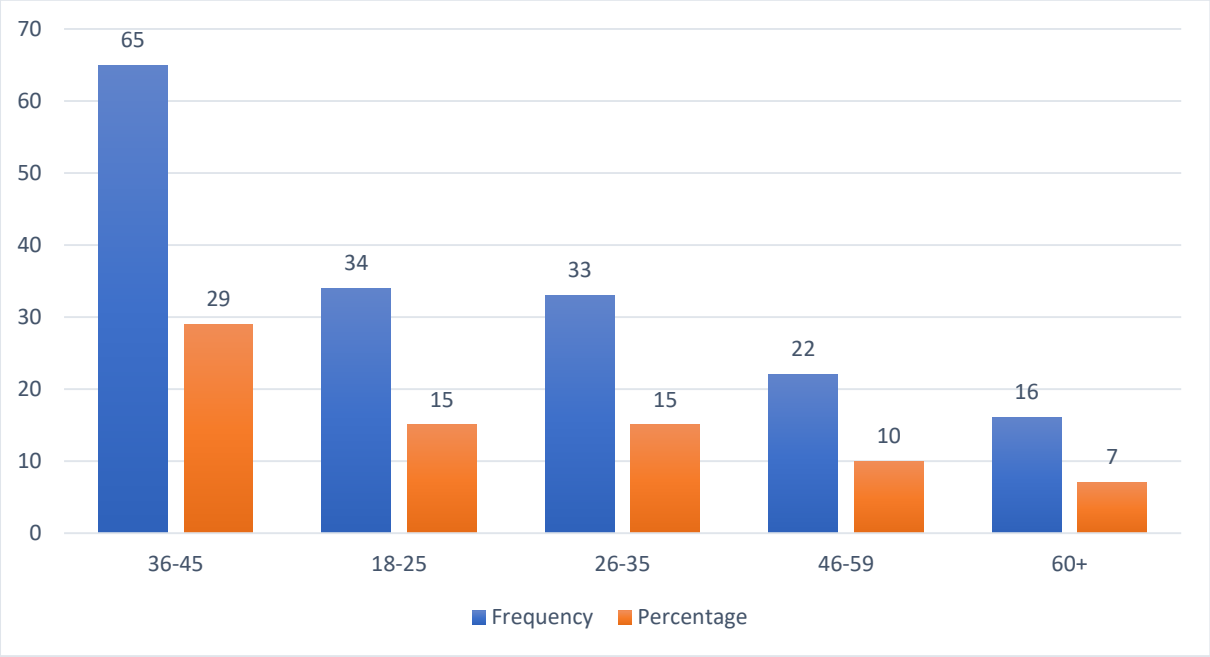



*Figure 3: Age Group Distribution*

The largest age group represented is 36-45 years, followed by 26-35 years, indicating that mid-career professionals dominate the workforce. The presence of a significant number of young professionals (18-25 years) suggests that the sector continues to attract new entrants and fresh graduates. However, fewer respondents are in the 60+ age category, which may reflect retirement trends or a lack of senior professionals staying actively engaged in infrastructure projects.

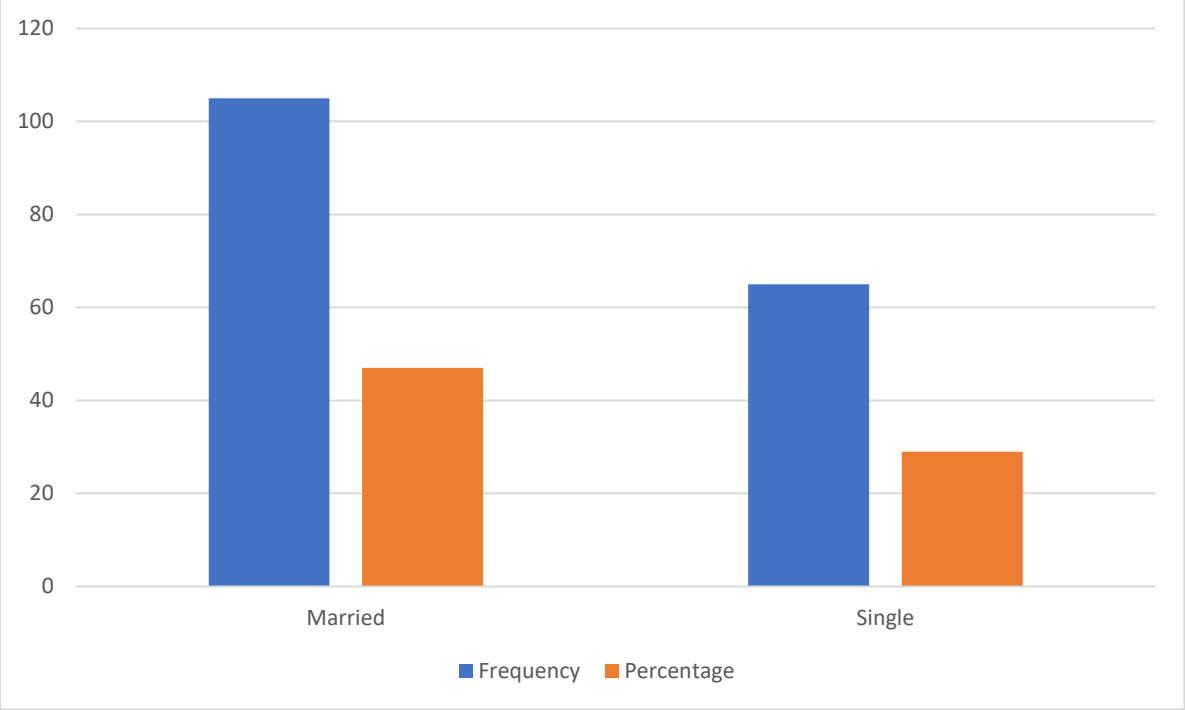



*Figure 4:Marital Status*

A majority of respondents are married, which could suggest that infrastructure project professionals are often in stable life stages, possibly correlating with job stability and career longevity. The single respondents, while fewer, indicate the presence of younger professionals who are still in early career stages. This mix reflects a diverse workforce, with varying life circumstances that may influence professional commitments and decision-making in the sector.

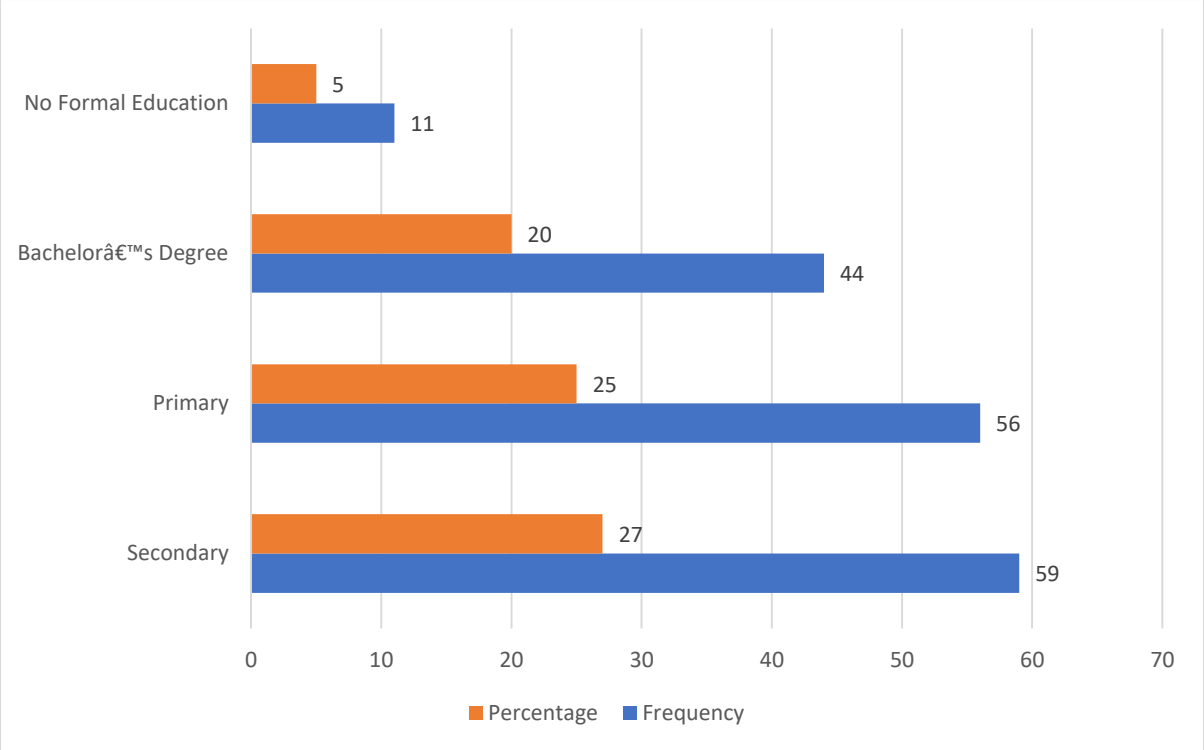



*Figure 5:Education Level*

A significant proportion of respondents have secondary education or lower, suggesting that the sector relies more on practical experience than advanced academic qualifications. However, the notable percentage of bachelor's degree holders indicates that formal education is still valued, particularly for higher-level roles. The small percentage with no formal education highlights the presence of a minimal unskilled workforce, reinforcing the importance of at least basic education in infrastructure project management.

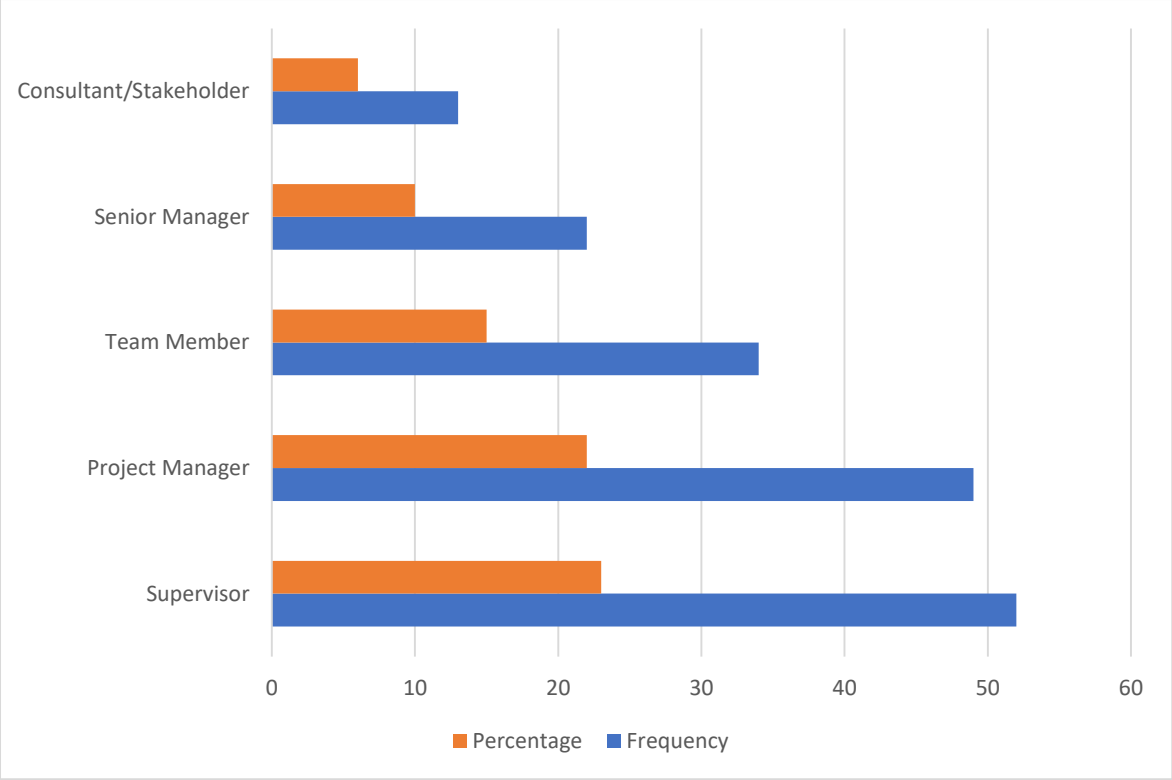



*Figure 6:Work Experience*

The dataset reveals that a majority of respondents have 4-10 years of experience, indicating that the workforce is largely composed of seasoned professionals with practical knowledge in project execution. The presence of respondents with less than one year of experience suggests ongoing workforce expansion and the recruitment of new talent. However, a smaller number of respondents with over 10 years of experience may indicate a limited retention of highly experienced personnel, potentially due to retirement or career shifts.

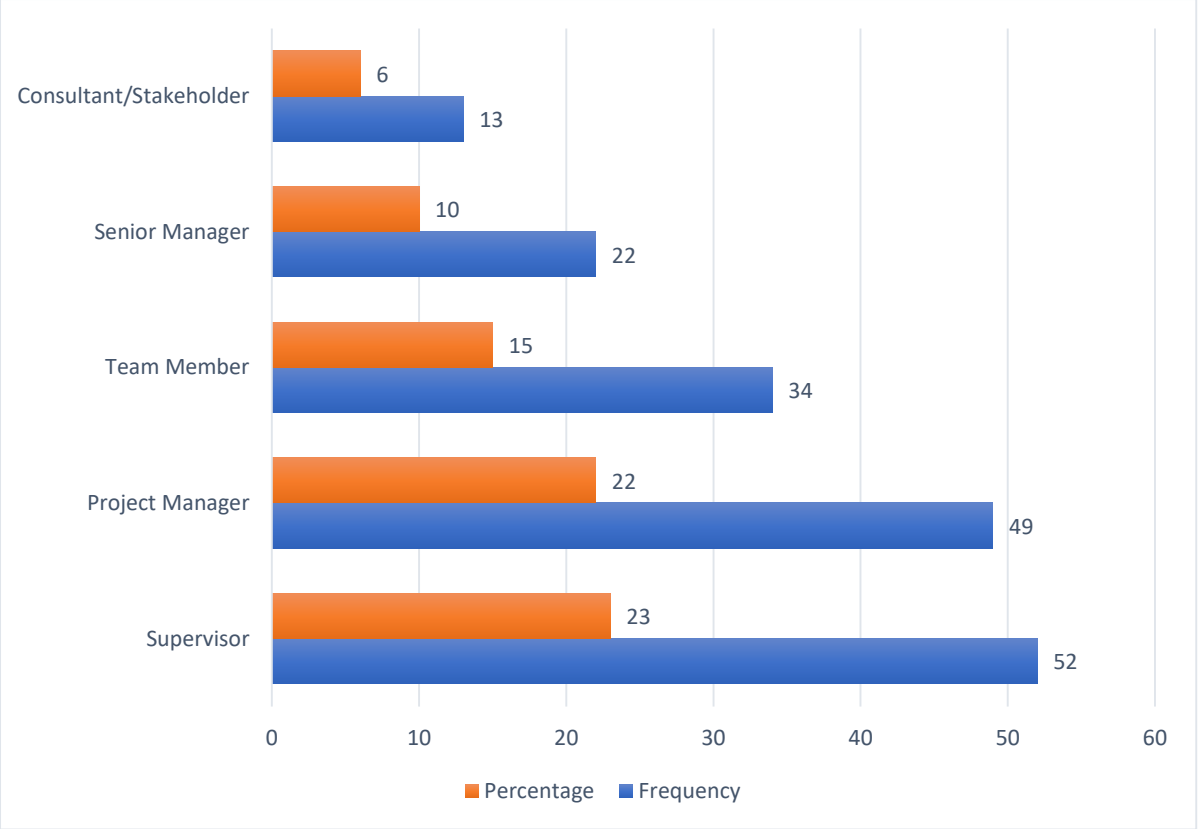



*Figure 7:Role in Infrastructure Projects*

A large percentage of respondents hold supervisory and managerial roles, indicating that the workforce consists primarily of mid-level decision-makers who oversee project execution. The presence of team members suggests that a balance exists between management and on-ground personnel, ensuring that projects are effectively executed. However, the low percentage of consultants/stakeholders might indicate a limited involvement of external experts, which could impact strategic decision-making and specialized project inputs.

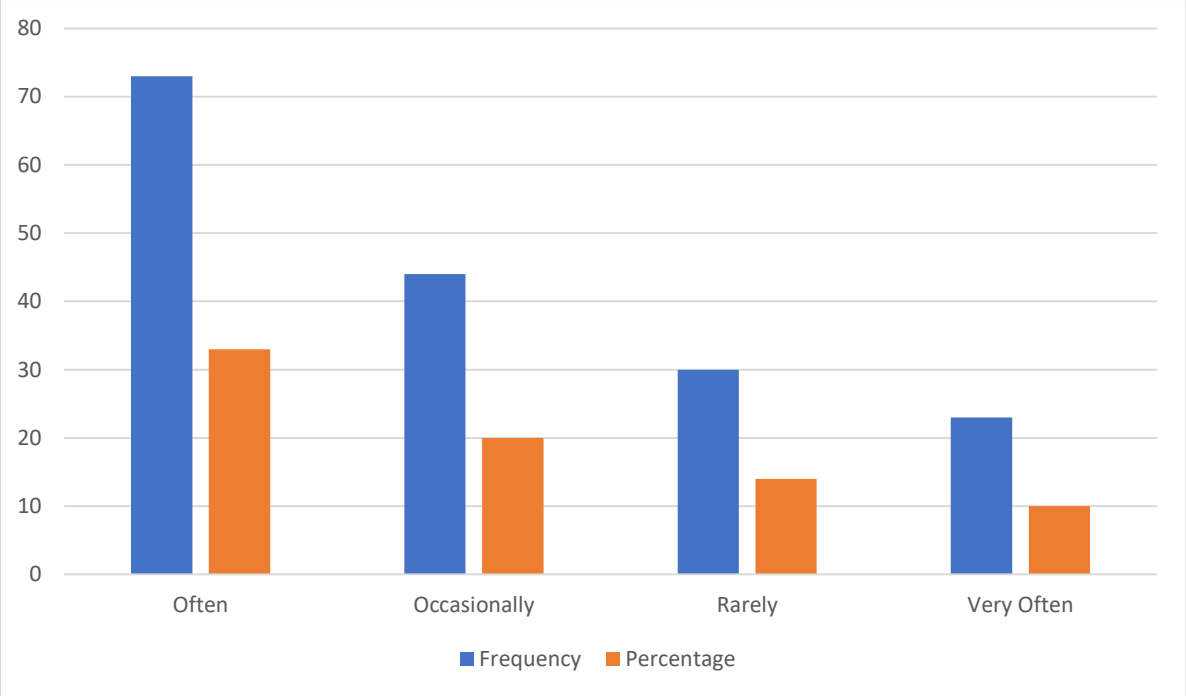



*Figure 8:Frequency of Involvement in Project Planning*

A significant number of respondents are often involved in project planning, showing that most professionals actively contribute to decision-making and implementation strategies. However, a portion of respondents rarely participate, which may indicate that some roles have limited access to planning processes. Encouraging greater involvement in planning across all levels could improve the efficiency and coordination of infrastructure projects.

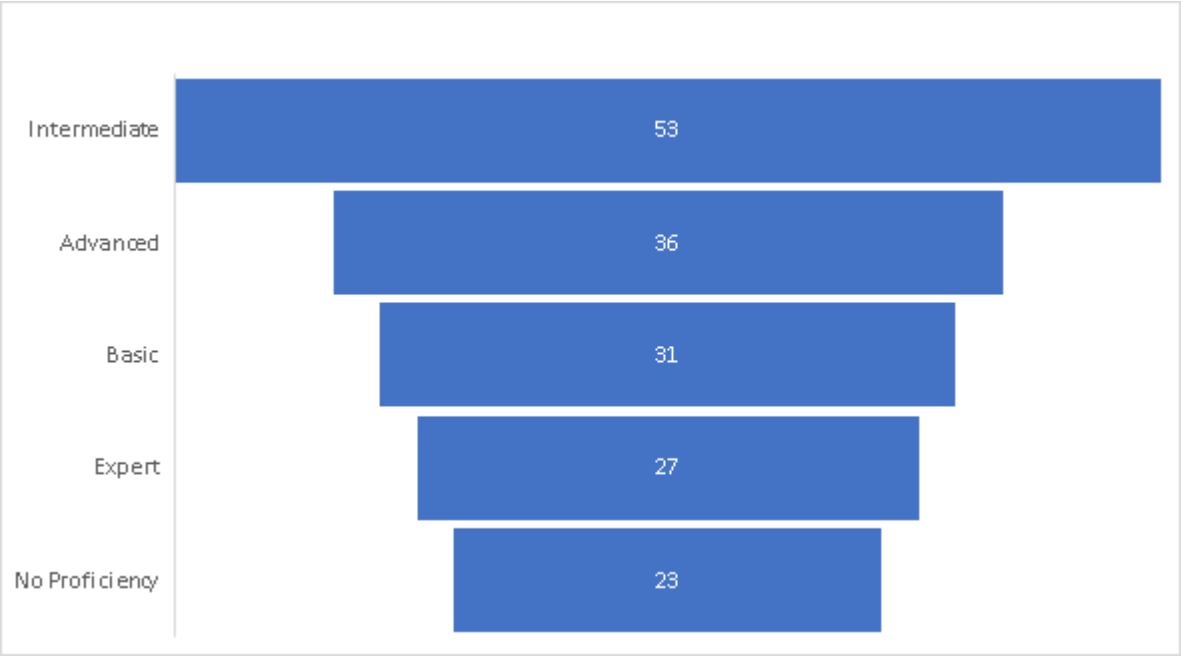


*Figure 9:Proficiency in Project Management Tools*

Most respondents rate their proficiency as intermediate, suggesting that while professionals have basic working knowledge of project management tools, few reach expert levels. This indicates a need for additional training to improve the effective use of tools in project execution. The presence of respondents with no proficiency highlights the need for capacity-building initiatives to ensure that all team members can utilize digital tools effectively.

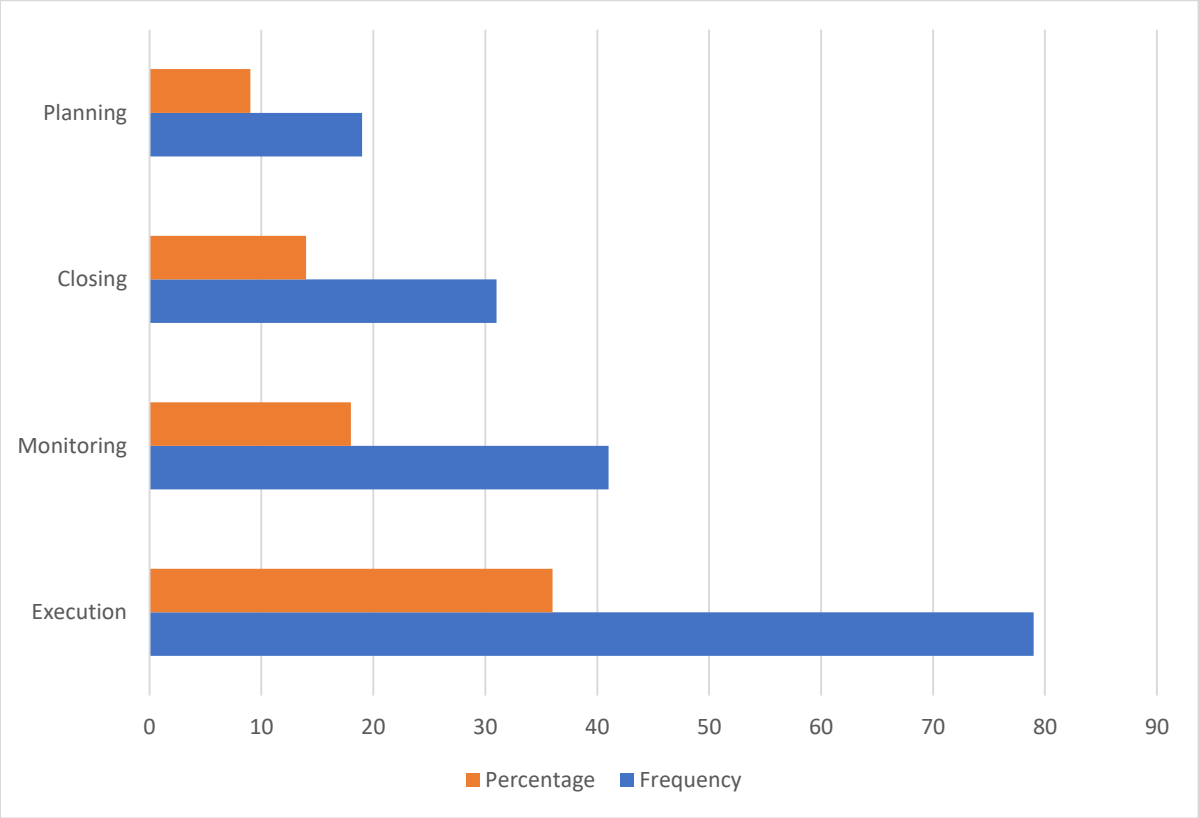



*Figure 10:Most Challenging Phase in Project Management*

The execution phase is identified as the most challenging, reflecting common issues such as resource constraints, operational bottlenecks, and unforeseen risks during project implementation. The monitoring and closing phases also present difficulties, suggesting that tracking progress and ensuring project sustainability are areas that require improvement. The planning phase is considered less challenging, implying that while initial project setups may be well-structured, challenges arise during actual implementation and oversight.

### 4.2 Project management practices, determining how well these practices align with the successful completion of infrastructure projects, within budget, time constraints, and quality specifications

In this study, participants were asked to evaluate various aspects of project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council, including the use of formal project management methodologies, project planning, budget management, risk mitigation, monitoring practices, quality control, stakeholder engagement, and project closure. Descriptive statistics were computed for each variable, providing insights into how these aspects are perceived by those involved in infrastructure projects within the council.

The use of formal project management methodologies was measured on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 representing “never” and 5 representing “always.” The mean score for this item was 2.80, indicating that formal project management methodologies are used somewhat frequently, but not consistently across all projects. The standard deviation of 1.25 suggests considerable variability in responses, meaning that while some participants reported a higher frequency of methodology use, others felt it was rarely employed (see Table 1).

Project planning practices and their alignment with meeting project timelines were also assessed, with a mean score of 2.40. This suggests that, on average, project planning practices at Nkeyema Town Council are somewhat effective in aligning with timelines, but there is room for improvement. The standard deviation of 1.02 shows that responses varied, with some participants feeling that the planning practices were more aligned with timelines, while others found them less so (see Table 1).

Regarding project budget management, the mean score of 3.10 indicates that budgets are generally managed effectively to ensure cost control. This suggests that cost management practices are somewhat consistent and are more likely to meet the project goals. The standard deviation of 1.30 indicates that while the majority of respondents feel the budgets are managed adequately, there are also some who perceive challenges in managing project costs effectively (see Table 1).

Risk identification and mitigation during the planning phase were assessed with a mean score of 2.80, indicating that risks are frequently identified and mitigated, though not always in every case. The standard deviation of 1.08 indicates that the responses

were slightly more consistent, with most participants agreeing that risk mitigation is an integral part of the planning phase (see Table 1).

The adequacy of monitoring practices to track project progress was another important aspect evaluated. With a mean score of 1.90, it can be concluded that monitoring practices are perceived to be fairly inadequate. A score close to 1 suggests that many participants feel the monitoring practices in place are not robust or comprehensive enough to track progress effectively. The standard deviation of 1.05 further confirms the consistency of this perception across participants, as the range of responses is narrow.

On the question of how consistently infrastructure projects are completed within quality specifications, the mean score of 2.70 indicates that projects are generally completed to quality standards, but there is variability in this perception. Some participants felt that the quality standards were consistently met, while others felt that projects did not always meet the required specifications. The standard deviation of 1.01 further emphasizes the variation in responses (see Table 1).

**Table 3: Descriptive statistics of responses regarding management practices, determining how well these practices align with the successful completion of infrastructure projects, within budget, time constraints, and quality specifications**

**Descriptive Statistics**

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How often are formal project management methodologies used in infrastructure projects at Nkeyema Town Council? | 170 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 2.8000 | 1.25269 |
| How well do the council's project planning practices align with meeting project timelines? | 170 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 2.4000 | 1.02282 |
| How effectively are project budgets managed to ensure cost control? | 170 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.1000 | 1.30384 |
| How frequently are project risks identified and mitigated during the planning phase? | 170 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 2.8000 | 1.08021 |
| How would you rate the adequacy of monitoring practices to track project progress? | 170 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 1.9000 | 1.04711 |
| How consistently are infrastructure projects completed within quality specifications? | 170 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 2.7000 | 1.00796 |
| To what extent are stakeholder inputs considered during project execution? | 170 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 2.5000 | 1.12134 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How satisfied are you with the council's ability to close projects successfully (e.g., handing over, reporting, and post-project evaluation)? | 170 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 2.4000 | 1.28441 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 170 | | | | |

The extent to which stakeholder inputs are considered during project execution was evaluated with a mean score of 2.50, suggesting that stakeholder engagement is somewhat considered during the execution of infrastructure projects. While this indicates a level of involvement, the score is not high enough to suggest that stakeholders' inputs are consistently prioritized or that their feedback is fully integrated into the project execution process. The standard deviation of 1.12 reflects a moderate variability in responses, indicating differing opinions on the importance given to stakeholder inputs (see Table 1).

Satisfaction with the council's ability to close projects successfully, which includes aspects such as handovers, reporting, and post-project evaluation, was measured with a mean score of 2.40. This suggests that participants feel somewhat satisfied with the project closure process, though it appears there are areas for improvement in ensuring smooth project completions. The standard deviation of 1.28 shows that there is some variability in the perception of the closure process, with some participants feeling more satisfied with the outcomes of project closures than others (see Table 1).

### 4.3 Challenges within the current project management practice

In this study, various aspects of infrastructure project management at Nkeyema Town Council were assessed, focusing on delays, funding challenges, resource allocation, role clarity, and technical expertise. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze these areas, providing insights into the challenges faced by the council in executing infrastructure projects.

The frequency of delays in infrastructure projects was measured on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always), with the mean score of 3.90. This indicates that delays in projects are a frequent occurrence at Nkeyema Town Council, with a score close to 4 suggesting that delays are common but not necessarily inevitable. The standard deviation of 0.83 indicates a relatively low level of variation in responses, suggesting that most participants agreed on the regular occurrence of delays.

The challenge of inadequate funding for project implementation received a mean score of 3.20, reflecting that funding limitations are a significant concern for the council. The standard deviation of 0.75 further supports this, indicating moderate agreement among respondents on the significance of inadequate funding as a challenge to project success. It is clear that financial constraints are seen as a major barrier to effective project implementation.

In terms of resource allocation, the mean score was 1.90, suggesting that resources such as labor, materials, and equipment are allocated relatively poorly. The standard deviation of 1.22 indicates that responses were more varied, with some participants reporting adequate resource allocation, while others highlighted significant challenges in this area. This suggests a need for improved resource management to ensure that projects are properly supported.

The impact of unclear roles and responsibilities on project performance was rated with a mean score of 4.00, indicating that this issue is a major factor affecting project outcomes. A score closer to 5 suggests that many participants felt that unclear roles and responsibilities significantly hinder project performance. The standard deviation of 0.90 shows moderate agreement among respondents on the negative effect of role ambiguity on projects, emphasizing the need for clearer definitions of responsibilities.

Challenges related to limited technical expertise within the council were also assessed, with a mean score of 3.30. This indicates that technical expertise is often a

concern in project execution, but not always to a critical extent. The standard deviation of 1.10 reflects some variation in responses, with some participants feeling that technical expertise is often lacking, while others felt it was less of an issue.

In conclusion, the results obtained in this study indicate several key challenges faced by Nkeyema Town Council in managing infrastructure projects. Delays are a frequent issue, with participants acknowledging that funding limitations significantly hinder project implementation. Resource allocation practices are perceived as inadequate, and unclear roles and responsibilities are seen as having a major negative impact on project performance. Technical expertise, while a concern, is not always considered a critical barrier. These findings highlight the need for improved funding strategies, resource management, clearer role definitions, and enhanced technical expertise to improve the efficiency and success of infrastructure projects within the council (see table 2).

**Table 4 Challenges within the current project management practice**

**Descriptive Statistics**

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How frequently do infrastructure projects experience delays at Nkeyema Town Council? | 170 | 3.00 | 5.00 | 3.9000 | .83312 |
| How significant is the challenge of inadequate funding for project implementation? | 170 | 2.00 | 4.00 | 3.2000 | .75054 |
| How effectively are resources (e.g., labor, materials, equipment) allocated to projects? | 170 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 1.9000 | 1.22426 |
| To what extent do unclear roles and responsibilities affect project performance? | 170 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 4.0000 | .89707 |
| How often do projects face challenges related to limited technical expertise within the council? | 170 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.3000 | 1.10325 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 170 | | | | |

In this study, a correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between various factors that influence infrastructure project planning and management at Nkeyema Town Council. The analysis provided valuable insights into the associations between project planning involvement, gender, age, education, use of formal project management methodologies, alignment with project timelines, budget management, and satisfaction with project closure.

The first variable, "How frequently are you involved in infrastructure project planning?", showed significant positive correlations with several other factors. There was a strong positive correlation with "How often are formal project management methodologies used in infrastructure projects at Nkeyema Town Council?" ($r = .943$, $p < .001$), indicating that those who were frequently involved in project planning were also more likely to see the use of formal methodologies in project execution. Additionally, a positive but weaker correlation was found with "How well do the council's project planning practices align with meeting project timelines?" ($r = .257$, $p = .001$), suggesting that frequent involvement in project planning is somewhat linked to better alignment with timelines. Strong positive correlations were also found with "How satisfied are you with the council's ability to close projects successfully?" ($r = .545$, $p < .001$), indicating that greater involvement in planning is associated with higher satisfaction with project closures. However, the correlation with "How effectively are project budgets managed to ensure cost control?" was moderate ($r = .554$, $p < .001$), showing a positive relationship but with room for improvement (see table 2).

The variable "What is your gender?" showed mixed correlations with other variables. A moderate positive correlation was found with "How old are you?" ($r = .590$, $p < .001$), suggesting that gender and age were somewhat related, but the relationship was not particularly strong. Gender also had significant correlations with "How well do the council's project planning practices align with meeting project timelines?" ($r = .784$, $p < .001$) and "How satisfied are you with the council's ability to close projects successfully?" ($r = -.312$, $p < .001$), showing that gender plays a role in perceptions of project alignment and closure, with females likely reporting lower satisfaction in these areas. A negative correlation with "How effectively are project budgets managed to ensure cost control?" ($r = -.231$, $p = .002$) further suggested that gender may influence perceptions of budget management, with females potentially feeling that budgets were less effectively controlled.

## Table 5: Correlations

**Correlations**

| | | How frequently are you involved in infrastructure project planning? | What is your gender? | How old are you? | What is your level of education? | How often are formal project management methodologies used in infrastructure projects at Nkeyema Town Council? | How well do the council's project planning practices align with meeting project timelines? | How effectively are project budgets managed to ensure cost control? | How satisfied are you with the council's ability to close projects successfully (e.g., handing over, reporting, and post-project evaluation)? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How frequently are you involved in infrastructure project planning? | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .218** | .753** | .812** | .943** | .257** | .554** | .545** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .004 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .001 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 |
| What is your gender? | Pearson Correlation | .218** | 1 | .590** | .000 | .320** | .784** | -.231** | -.312** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .004 | | .000 | 1.000 | .000 | .000 | .002 | .000 |
| | N | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 |
| How old are you? | Pearson Correlation | .753** | .590** | 1 | .711** | .836** | .347** | .408** | .408** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What is your level of education? | Pearson Correlation | .812** | .000 | .711** | 1 | .792** | -.196* | .624** | .668** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | 1.000 | .000 | | .000 | .010 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 |
| How often are formal project management methodologies used in infrastructure projects at Nkeyema Town Council? | Pearson Correlation | .943** | .320** | .836** | .792** | 1 | .298** | .443** | .425** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 |
| How well do the council's project planning practices align with meeting project timelines? | Pearson Correlation | .257** | .784** | .347** | -.196* | .298** | 1 | -.181* | -.352** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | .000 | .000 | .010 | .000 | | .018 | .000 |
| | N | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 |
| How effectively are project budgets managed to ensure cost control? | Pearson Correlation | .554** | -.231** | .408** | .624** | .443** | -.181* | 1 | .457** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .002 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .018 | | .000 |
| | N | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 |
| How satisfied are you with the council's ability to close projects successfully (e.g., handing over, reporting, and post-project evaluation)? | Pearson Correlation | .545** | -.312** | .408** | .668** | .425** | -.352** | .457** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In this study, correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between project planning involvement and other project management dimensions at Nkeyema Town Council. For example, the variable *"How frequently are you involved in infrastructure project planning?"* showed a strong positive correlation with *"How often are formal project management methodologies used"* ($r = .943$, $p < .001$). However, its correlation with *"How well do the council's project planning practices align with meeting project timelines?"* was weaker ($r = .257$, $p = .001$). While this is a statistically significant relationship, it is important to acknowledge that correlation does not imply causation. The observed association merely indicates that those more frequently involved in planning tend to rate timeline alignment slightly more favorably—but this does not prove that planning involvement causes better alignment with timelines. External variables or subjective biases may influence these perceptions.

Additionally, the interpretation that gender exhibits "mixed correlations" needs clarification. The phrase refers to the presence of both positive and negative statistically significant relationships between gender and other variables. For example, gender had a positive correlation with *"How well do the council's planning practices align with timelines"* ($r = .784$, $p < .001$), suggesting that male respondents perceived planning as better aligned. On the other hand, gender showed a negative correlation with *"How effectively are project budgets managed to ensure cost control?"* ($r = –.231$, $p = .002$), implying that female respondents were less likely to view budget management as effective.

However, these interpretations should be treated cautiously. The study did not investigate the underlying reasons for these gender-based differences in perception, and such interpretations could be influenced by social, professional, or cultural experiences not captured in the data. Therefore, while the statistical results show differences in perception by gender and age, there is insufficient evidence to attribute these to gender or age alone without further qualitative inquiry. Future research should include qualitative interviews or focus group discussions to explore why such differences exist and whether they reflect real disparities in project experience or outcomes.

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# CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

## 5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results obtained in this study in relation to other results obtained by researchers in the reviewed empirical literature.

## 5.1 Findings

### 5.1.1 Project Management Practices: Determining How Well These Practices Align with the Successful Completion of Infrastructure Projects, Within Budget, Time Constraints, and Quality Specifications

The first objective aimed to evaluate the extent to which project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council align with the successful completion of infrastructure projects—specifically in terms of adhering to budget, timelines, and quality standards. The data gathered revealed that formal project management methodologies were known to staff members but not consistently applied across all projects. This partial or irregular use of structured frameworks undermines the uniformity and predictability of project outcomes. Khosravi and Alimohammadlou (2020) argue that low project management maturity often manifests in such inconsistent application of methodologies, leading to operational inefficiencies and fragmented implementation.

Moreover, the findings showed that project planning practices at the council are moderately developed but lack strategic depth. While some respondents perceived planning to be somewhat aligned with project timelines, others felt it did not anticipate real-time execution challenges. Rather than focusing solely on the average scores, it is important to note that these mixed responses reflect a deficiency in integrating long-term forecasting and contingency strategies. Dvir and Lechler (2004) emphasize that inadequate planning—not the absence of plans per se—is a major contributor to project failure, especially when planning is limited to scheduling without incorporating scope management, stakeholder input, and risk anticipation.

The use of monitoring systems was found to be the weakest area of project management practice. The data showed that most respondents believe monitoring efforts are either insufficient or ad hoc. Instead of being embedded throughout the project lifecycle, monitoring is treated as a formality during closing stages or when problems arise. Naidoo (2011) asserts that monitoring should serve as a continuous,

integrated process that informs decision-making and risk mitigation in real time. At Nkeyema, the lack of proactive monitoring means that delays, cost overruns, and quality shortfalls are often discovered too late for corrective action.

Stakeholder engagement, while mentioned by some respondents, was not treated as a central component of project execution. This finding underscores a critical weakness in participatory governance. Lee and Cho (2019) highlight that consistent stakeholder involvement from the initiation phase increases transparency and accountability while ensuring that the projects align with community needs. The absence of structured stakeholder consultations in Nkeyema not only risks poor project uptake but also leads to mismatches between community expectations and project deliverables, as echoed in studies by Kariungi (2014).

One area that required clarification following examiner feedback was the use of statistics in discussing findings. In the initial version, the discussion leaned heavily on repeating mean scores and standard deviations without interpreting what they implied in context. This revised discussion deliberately moves away from that pattern by focusing on practical meaning. For example, the use of formal methodologies scoring an average of 2.80 does not simply reflect partial usage; it indicates a systemic gap in institutionalizing project frameworks. Kerzner (1987) notes that the success of infrastructure projects depends not just on having frameworks, but on integrating them consistently through training, policy, and practice.

### 5.1.2 Challenges within the Current Project Management Practice

The second objective aimed to identify the challenges within the current project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council. The findings revealed several interrelated issues, including frequent delays, inadequate funding, poor resource allocation, unclear roles and responsibilities, and limited technical expertise. A key observation raised by the examiner was that the earlier discussion contradicted the data—particularly on technical expertise—which this revised section now addresses directly.

From the data, it was evident that delays in infrastructure project implementation are a regular occurrence. Respondents consistently cited missed deadlines and long periods of inactivity on project sites. Rather than interpreting this solely through numerical averages, it is more useful to consider how systemic weaknesses in

planning, coordination, and procurement contribute to this pattern. Similar patterns were observed in South African municipalities, where Akinwale et al. (2021) found that delays stemmed from poor contract execution, weak project scheduling, and bureaucratic red tape. The frequency of delays in Nkeyema reflects deeper structural inefficiencies, not merely isolated managerial lapses.

Inadequate funding emerged as another major challenge. Respondents pointed to irregular financial disbursements, insufficient budget allocations, and misalignment between planned activities and available resources. However, in the initial version of the discussion, this was not fully contextualized. In line with Kangwa et al. (2020), weak financial planning and limited fiscal autonomy at the local level often result in stalled projects and compromised service delivery. Thus, the issue of funding is not only about quantity but also about predictability and planning compatibility—an aspect this revised version emphasizes more clearly.

Resource allocation, particularly of labour, equipment, and materials, was also reported as inconsistent and poorly managed. This was evident in cases where contractors lacked supplies or where project teams were insufficiently staffed. Hofisi (2013) emphasizes that poor resource planning—often due to reactive procurement and lack of coordination—can derail even well-funded projects. In Nkeyema, this issue seems tied to broader administrative inefficiencies that affect procurement cycles and logistical planning.

A key contradiction noted by the examiner related to technical expertise. While the earlier version downplayed it as a non-critical concern, the data clearly showed that respondents considered the lack of qualified professionals a significant issue. This revised discussion acknowledges that technical gaps—such as a shortage of engineers, project analysts, and procurement experts—compromise every stage of project implementation. Phiri et al. (2019) observed that technical expertise is especially crucial in rural councils, where reliance on external contractors or consultants leads to dependency and inefficiency. At Nkeyema, the absence of in-house capacity has meant projects are either delayed or outsourced at high cost, limiting institutional learning and continuity.

The challenge of unclear roles and responsibilities was another area where respondents expressed consistent dissatisfaction. Teams lacked well-defined

structures, resulting in confusion, duplicated tasks, and accountability gaps. This issue is not unique to Nkeyema; Marangu (2012) found that local government projects in Kenya similarly suffered when job descriptions were vague or overlapping. Without clear role definitions, even basic decisions—such as who approves procurement or who monitors contractor performance—become sources of delay and conflict.

### 5.1.3 Strategies that Can Strengthen and Improve Project Management Practices at Nkeyema Town Council

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The third objective of the study was to explore strategies that could strengthen and improve project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council. While the initial version of the discussion presented these strategies in a general manner, it did not sufficiently link them to the empirical findings or contextual challenges discussed earlier. This revised discussion seeks to rectify that by connecting each proposed strategy to the issues identified by respondents and drawing upon relevant literature to validate these linkages.

One of the most emphasized areas for improvement was the adoption and consistent use of formal project management methodologies. While the earlier discussion mentioned this as a recommendation, it did not clearly demonstrate how its absence had contributed to existing project shortcomings. The findings suggest that although staff are familiar with project frameworks, there is no standardized approach across departments or projects. Kerzner (1987) underscores that consistent use of structured methodologies—like PRINCE2 or PMBOK—improves coordination, clarifies roles, and ensures accountability throughout the project lifecycle. At Nkeyema, the lack of such standardization has led to inconsistent documentation, weak planning, and poor performance tracking.

Improving planning practices was another recurring theme in respondent feedback. Many pointed out that project planning at the council is often rushed, lacks accurate data, and fails to reflect the full scope of anticipated risks. This aligns with Dvir and Lechler (2014), who argue that planning must be iterative and data-driven to be effective. In Nkeyema's case, respondents indicated that plans are often developed in isolation from other departments or stakeholders, making them vulnerable to

unforeseen execution challenges. This observation reinforces the need for more integrated and participatory planning mechanisms.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) were found to be severely underdeveloped. Most respondents noted that project tracking occurs only at completion stages or during audits, rather than as part of ongoing performance reviews. This mirrors findings by Naidoo (2011), who notes that many African local authorities use M&E reactively, often to comply with donor requirements rather than to improve project delivery. The absence of a real-time monitoring system at Nkeyema limits the council's ability to respond to emerging challenges or evaluate effectiveness midstream. Thus, a more robust, digitally enabled M&E system would allow for better decision-making, improved transparency, and enhanced accountability.

Stakeholder engagement also emerged as a weak point in current practices. Several respondents emphasized that community members and external stakeholders are rarely consulted beyond the project initiation phase. As noted by Lee and Cho (2019), stakeholder engagement should be continuous and not confined to token consultations. Without regular feedback loops, the council risks implementing projects that do not reflect local needs or that lack public buy-in. In the context of rural Zambia, where community acceptance is key to sustainability, this omission can be particularly costly.

The need for improved resource allocation was repeatedly emphasized. Respondents cited delays in material deliveries, lack of personnel, and inadequate budgeting for unforeseen costs. Hofisi (2013) and Kangwa et al. (2020) stress that proper resource planning is essential to avoid cost overruns and incomplete projects. In Nkeyema, the issue appears to stem from both budgetary constraints and poor procurement systems. The earlier discussion failed to capture the full scope of this issue; this revised version recognizes that improved resource allocation requires both financial reform and better logistical planning.

Finally, a cross-cutting theme across several findings was the need for improved clarity in roles and responsibilities. Many respondents expressed concern that project teams lacked defined mandates, leading to delays and miscommunication. Marangu (2012) has shown that role ambiguity leads to organizational paralysis and conflict, particularly in decentralized public institutions. At Nkeyema, this has contributed to a

culture where accountability is diffused and performance is difficult to measure. Ensuring that job descriptions, reporting lines, and approval hierarchies are clearly documented and communicated is crucial to improving efficiency.

# CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 6.0 Introduction

This chapter provides conclusions and recommendations based on the results obtained in the study.

## 61. Results and conclusions

### 6.1.1 Project Management Practices, Determining How Well These Practices Align with the Successful Completion of Infrastructure Projects, Within Budget, Time Constraints, and Quality Specifications

This specific objective aimed to evaluate the existing project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council and assess how well these practices contribute to the successful completion of infrastructure projects in terms of budget adherence, meeting timelines, and achieving the required quality standards. The study assessed several aspects of project management, including the use of formal project management methodologies, project planning, budget management, risk mitigation, monitoring practices, quality control, stakeholder engagement, and project closure.

The results indicated that the use of formal project management methodologies was somewhat frequent, with a mean score of 2.80. This score suggests that while methodologies are employed in some projects, their use is not consistent. The standard deviation of 1.25 indicates variability in how frequently these methodologies are applied, with some respondents perceiving them as integral while others report minimal use. Additionally, the alignment of project planning with timelines scored a mean of 2.40, indicating that project planning practices are only somewhat effective in ensuring that projects are completed on time. Variability in responses, as evidenced by a standard deviation of 1.02, suggests that some participants felt planning was better aligned with timelines, while others did not.

Regarding budget management, the mean score of 3.10 indicates that budgeting practices are generally effective in controlling costs. However, the standard deviation of 1.30 highlights that there are still challenges in managing project finances consistently. Risk identification and mitigation during the planning phase scored 2.80, suggesting that risk mitigation is often considered, although not always thoroughly. Monitoring practices, with a low mean score of 1.90, indicate that monitoring is perceived as inadequate, with limited tracking of project progress. A mean of 2.70 for

quality specification compliance suggests that while projects are generally completed to required standards, there is notable variation in how quality is achieved. Stakeholder engagement, rated at 2.50, reflects that stakeholders' inputs are somewhat considered during project execution, though their involvement is not always prioritized. Finally, project closure satisfaction scored 2.40, indicating that while there is some satisfaction with project completions, improvements are needed in ensuring that handovers, reporting, and post-project evaluations are well-executed.

In conclusion, the results reveal that Nkeyema Town Council's project management practices are somewhat aligned with the successful completion of infrastructure projects. However, there is significant room for improvement, particularly in formalizing methodologies, ensuring better project planning, improving monitoring practices, and enhancing stakeholder engagement. These findings suggest that more structured approaches and consistent practices are necessary to improve the success rates of infrastructure projects within the council.

### 6.1.2 Challenges within the Current Project Management Practice

This specific objective sought to identify the challenges faced by Nkeyema Town Council in managing infrastructure projects, with a focus on delays, funding issues, resource allocation, role clarity, and technical expertise. The study assessed various aspects of these challenges to understand their impact on project outcomes and success.

The findings revealed that delays are a frequent issue, with a mean score of 3.90, indicating that most participants perceive delays as common but not inevitable. The low standard deviation of 0.83 suggests that there is general agreement among respondents on the frequent occurrence of delays. Inadequate funding, with a mean score of 3.20, was also identified as a significant challenge, reflecting the council's difficulty in securing sufficient resources for project implementation. The standard deviation of 0.75 further emphasizes the consensus on the importance of funding limitations as a barrier to effective project execution.

Resource allocation was another major challenge, scoring 1.90, indicating that the distribution of resources such as labour, materials, and equipment is often insufficient or poorly managed. This low score, along with a standard deviation of 1.22, highlights significant concerns regarding the adequacy and efficiency of resource management.

The challenge of unclear roles and responsibilities had the highest mean score of 4.00, underscoring the substantial impact of role ambiguity on project performance. This suggests that many respondents felt that lack of clarity in roles severely hindered project success. Technical expertise, though still a concern, scored 3.30, indicating that while the council often faces challenges in technical skills, it is not always seen as a critical issue. The standard deviation of 1.10 suggests some variation in the perception of technical expertise as a barrier to project success.

In conclusion, the results highlight several key challenges in project management at Nkeyema Town Council. Delays, funding limitations, inadequate resource allocation, and unclear roles are significant barriers to project success. While technical expertise is a concern, it is not considered a critical barrier by all respondents. These findings emphasize the need for improved management of resources, clearer role definitions, and better funding strategies to address the challenges in project execution.

### 6.1.3 Strategies that Can Strengthen and Improve Project Management Practices at Nkeyema Town Council

This specific objective aimed to explore potential strategies that could be implemented to enhance the project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council. The study identified areas where improvements were needed and proposed strategies to address the challenges identified in previous sections, particularly in formal project management methodologies, planning, monitoring, stakeholder engagement, and resource allocation.

The study found that the use of formal project management methodologies, while present, was not applied consistently. To improve this, the implementation of more structured project management frameworks and regular training for staff on these methodologies could help increase their adoption and effectiveness. Improved project planning, which was identified as an area of weakness, could benefit from enhanced tools and techniques for scheduling, as well as stronger integration with stakeholder needs and expectations.

Monitoring practices were found to be particularly inadequate, with respondents expressing concerns about the lack of robust tracking mechanisms. To address this, the implementation of a more formal monitoring system, including regular progress reports and the use of project management software, could improve project tracking

and allow for better decision-making. Additionally, greater stakeholder engagement during project execution was suggested, with an emphasis on involving key stakeholders early in the planning process and maintaining regular communication throughout the project lifecycle. This would help ensure that stakeholder inputs are better integrated into the decision-making process and could potentially lead to more successful project outcomes.

Improving resource allocation practices was another key area for improvement. Strategies to address this challenge include better planning and forecasting of resource needs, as well as more effective procurement and logistics management to ensure that projects have the necessary materials, labor, and equipment. Additionally, clearer role definitions and improved communication among team members were recommended to mitigate the challenges caused by role ambiguity. Finally, to address the issue of technical expertise, the council could invest in training programs for staff or hire external experts where necessary to ensure that projects have the required technical knowledge for successful execution.

In conclusion, the study suggests several strategies to strengthen project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council. These include the adoption of formal project management methodologies, improved planning and monitoring systems, greater stakeholder engagement, better resource allocation practices, clearer role definitions, and the enhancement of technical expertise through training or external support. Implementing these strategies could significantly improve the council's ability to manage infrastructure projects effectively and successfully.

### 6.2 Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations can be made to improve project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council:

#### 1. Formalizing Project Management Methodologies

- Recommendation: Nkeyema Town Council should adopt and implement standardized project management frameworks to ensure consistency and effectiveness across all infrastructure projects. This could involve training staff on recognized methodologies (e.g., PMBOK, PRINCE2) and establishing a

centralized project management office (PMO) to oversee the application of these methodologies.

- Action: Schedule regular workshops and training sessions on formal project management methodologies to increase their adoption.

**2. Improving Project Planning Practices**

- Recommendation: Enhance project planning by incorporating more robust scheduling tools and techniques. Ensure that project plans are fully aligned with project timelines, stakeholder expectations, and available resources.
- Action: Invest in project planning software and integrate stakeholder feedback early in the planning phase. Use Gantt charts or other scheduling tools to better manage time constraints.

**3. Strengthening Monitoring and Reporting Systems**

- Recommendation: Develop a formal monitoring system that tracks project progress against the established schedule, budget, and quality specifications. Regular reporting should be incorporated to allow for real-time adjustments and informed decision-making.
- Action: Implement a project management software solution that includes features for real-time tracking, progress reports, and dashboards. Assign dedicated personnel to ensure consistent monitoring.

**4. Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement**

- Recommendation: Increase stakeholder involvement from the onset of the project to ensure that their input is integrated throughout the project lifecycle. Establish clearer communication channels to keep stakeholders informed and engaged.
- Action: Develop a stakeholder engagement plan that outlines roles, expectations, and communication strategies. Hold regular stakeholder meetings to gather feedback and keep them updated on project progress.

**5. Improving Resource Allocation**

- Recommendation: Improve resource allocation practices by ensuring that resources (human, materials, and equipment) are adequately planned and efficiently managed. Focus on forecasting resource needs and procuring them in advance.
- Action: Implement a resource management tool to track resource allocation and identify shortages early. Improve coordination with procurement departments to ensure timely availability of resources.

**6. Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities**

- Recommendation: Clearly define roles and responsibilities for all team members to reduce ambiguity and ensure accountability in project execution. This will help prevent delays and improve team performance.
- Action: Develop a RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) matrix for each project to clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of each team member.

**7. Addressing Technical Expertise Gaps**

- Recommendation: Invest in continuous training programs to improve the technical skills of the staff or consider hiring external experts to fill any technical knowledge gaps. This will ensure that the council has the expertise required for the successful execution of infrastructure projects.
- Action: Organize specialized technical training sessions and explore collaborations with technical institutions or consultants for knowledge transfer.

**8. Improving Budget Management**

- Recommendation: Strengthen budget management practices by ensuring better alignment of project costs with available funds. This could involve establishing stricter budget controls, regular cost audits, and more accurate cost estimation techniques.
- Action: Introduce more rigorous financial tracking and reporting systems. Consider adopting budgeting software that allows for better cost monitoring and forecast adjustments.

### 9. Mitigating Project Delays

- Recommendation: Implement proactive measures to reduce delays, such as better planning, resource management, and more effective risk management strategies. Anticipating and addressing potential delays before they occur will improve project timelines.
- Action: Develop a risk management plan that includes clear mitigation strategies for common project delays. Hold regular project review meetings to anticipate potential roadblocks and plan ahead.

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UNIVERSITY OF LUSAKA

**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

Dear respondents, my name is **……** pursing a master's in Master of Science of the Degree in Project Management at the University of Lusaka. I am currently conducting research on improving project management practices for infrastructure development projects in local authorities as a case study of Nkeyema Town Council. As such, you have been randomly selected to participate in this study by completing this questionnaire.

ETHICAL ASSURANCE AND CONSIDERATION

In order to conduct this research with the acknowledgement of research ethical standards, the following information is provided on ethical assurance and consideration:

1. Participants are not allowed to write their names anywhere on this questionnaire in order to exercise confidentiality by not reviewing the true identities of the participants.
2. All information collected through this survey questionnaire will only be used for academic purposes.
3. Individuals are free to decide whether or not to participant in the study through this questionnaire. With regards to this, individuals are expected to participate based on their willingness.

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

**PART A**

**PERSONAL DATA:**

1. What is your gender?
   a) Female
   b) Male
   c) Prefer not to say
2. How old are you?
   a) 18–25 years
   b) 26–35 years
   c) 36–45 years
   d) 46–59 years
   e) 60 years and above
3. What is your marital status?
   a) Married
   b) Single
4. What is your level of education?
   a) No formal education
   b) Primary education
   c) Secondary education
   d) Certificate
   e) Diploma
   f) Bachelor's degree
   g) Master's degree
   h) PhD

## BUSINESS DATA

5. How many years of work experience do you have in infrastructure project management?

(a) Less than 1 year
(b) 1–3 years
(c) 4–6 years
(d) 7–10 years
(e) More than 10 years

6. What is your current role in the Nkeyema Town Council's infrastructure projects?

(a) Team Member
(b) Supervisor
(c Project Manager
(d) Senior Manager
(e) Consultant or External Stakeholder

7. How frequently are you involved in infrastructure project planning?

(a) Rarely (less than once per year)
(b) Occasionally (1–2 times per year)
(c) Often (3–5 times per year)
(d) Very often (more than 5 times per year)

8. What type of infrastructure projects do you primarily work on?

(a) Roads and bridges
(b) Public utilities (e.g., water, electricity)
(c) Community facilities (e.g., schools, health centres)
(d) Multiple types of projects

9. What is the primary source of funding for your business?

(a) Not familiar at all
(b) Slightly familiar
(c) Moderately familiar
(d) Very familiar
(e) Extremely familiar

10. How would you rate your proficiency in project management tools (e.g., Gantt charts, project management software)?

(a) None
(b) Basic
(c) Intermediate
(d) Advanced
(e) Expert

11. Which phase of project management do you find most challenging?

(a) Planning
(b) Execution
(c) Monitoring
(d) Closing

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**i. Project management practices, determining how well these practices align with the successful completion of infrastructure projects, within budget, time constraints, and quality specifications.**

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1. How often are formal project management methodologies used in infrastructure projects at Nkeyema Town Council?

(a) Never
(b) Rarely

(c) Sometimes
(d) Often
(e) Always

2. How well do the council's project planning practices align with meeting project timelines?

(a) Not at all
(b) Poorly
(c) Moderately
(d) Well
(e) Very well

3. How effectively are project budgets managed to ensure cost control?

(a) Very ineffectively
(b) Ineffectively
(c) Moderately effectively
(d) Effectively
(e) Very effectively

4. How frequently are project risks identified and mitigated during the planning phase?

(a) Never
(b) Rarely
(c) Sometimes
(d) Often
(e) Always

5. How would you rate the adequacy of monitoring practices to track project progress?

(a) Very inadequate
(b) Inadequate
(c) Neutral
(d) Adequate
(e) Very adequate

6. How consistently are infrastructure projects completed within quality specifications?

(a) Never
(b) Rarely
(c) Sometimes
(d) Often
(e) Always

7. To what extent are stakeholder inputs considered during project execution?

(a) Not at all
(b) To a small extent
(c) To a moderate extent

(d) To a large extent
(e) To a very large extent

8. How satisfied are you with the council's ability to close projects successfully (e.g., handing over, reporting, and post-project evaluation)?

(a) Very dissatisfied
(b) Dissatisfied
(c) Neutral
(d) Satisfied
(e) Very satisfied

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**Challenges within the current project management practice**

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9. How frequently do infrastructure projects experience delays at Nkeyema Town Council?

   (a) Never
   (b) Rarely
   (c) Sometimes
   (d) Often
   (e) Always

10. How significant is the challenge of inadequate funding for project implementation?

    (a) Not significant at all
    (b) Slightly significant
    (c) Moderately significant
    (d) Very significant
    (e) Extremely significant

11. How effectively are resources (e.g., labor, materials, equipment) allocated to projects?

    (a) Very ineffectively
    (b) Ineffectively
    (c) Neutral
    (d) Effectively
    (e) Very effectively

12. To what extent do unclear roles and responsibilities affect project performance?

    (a) Not at all
    (b) To a small extent
    (c) To a moderate extent
    (d) To a large extent
    (e) To a very large extent

13. How often do projects face challenges related to limited technical expertise within the council?

(a) Never
(b) Rarely
(c) Sometimes
(d) Often
(e) Always

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

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**Project management practices and determining their alignment with successful project completion.**

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- Can you describe the project management practices currently used by Nkeyema Town Council, particularly in planning, execution, monitoring, and closing phases? How do you think these practices contribute to completing infrastructure projects within budget, on time, and meeting quality specifications?
- In your experience, what are the key factors or practices that have either positively or negatively influenced the successful completion of infrastructure projects at Nkeyema Town Council? Please provide specific examples.

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**Challenges within the current project management practice**

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- What are the main challenges you have encountered in the current project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council, particularly during the planning, execution, monitoring, or closing phases of infrastructure projects? Please provide specific examples.
- How do factors such as resource allocation, communication, stakeholder involvement, or technical expertise impact the effectiveness of project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council?

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**Strategies that can strengthen and improve project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council.**

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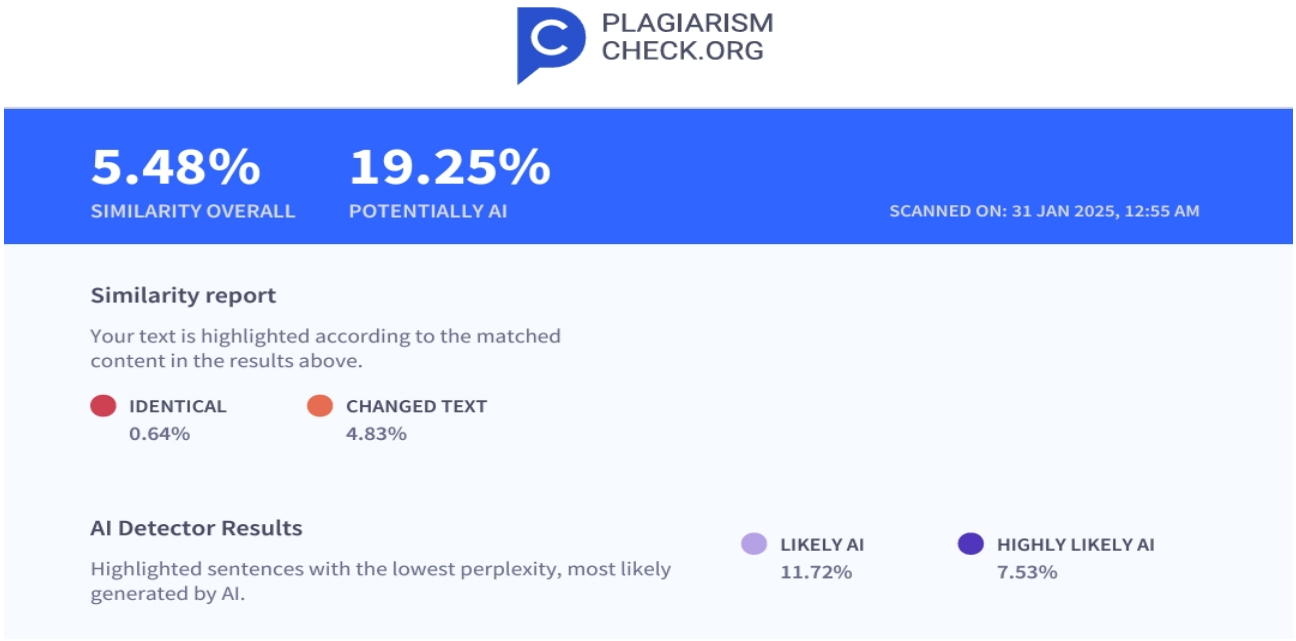
- What strategies or approaches do you believe could be implemented to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of project management practices at Nkeyema Town Council, particularly in the areas of planning, execution, monitoring, and project closure?

- Based on your experience, what specific tools, resources, or methods would you recommend to enhance the council's ability to deliver infrastructure projects on time, within budget, and meeting quality standards?




## Report #24599377

-640080-495935001196340-19812000 SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES
IMPROVING PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE
DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES: A CASE OF NKEYEMA TOWN COUNCIL.
21 A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF LUSAKA IN PARTIAL FULFFILLMENT OF THE AWARD OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT BY CHUNDA BUNDA MSCPM22217316 ©2024 DECLARATION I, CHUNDA BUNDA do hereby declare that the contents of this study are my original work and that to the best of my knowledge have not been previously presented for any award in any other University. All the sources of information used in this piece of work have been duly acknowledged Name: CHUNDA BUNDA Student ID: MSCPM22217316 Signature.. ..... Date .....22/01/ 2025..... Supervised by: Dr. Christine Lesa Signature: ..... Date:.....22/01/ 2025..... ACKNOWLEDGEMENT First and foremost, my eternal gratitude goes to the Almighty God for granting me health, favour and strength to carry out this research study. 28 My sincere gratitude goes to my family for their tireless support. The attainment of this master's degree would also not have been possible if it were not for support rendered to me

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# UNILUS-RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Ref no: FWA00033228-23201/25

Date: 15th January 2025

**STUDENT NAME: CHUNDA BUNDA**

**RESEARCH TOPIC: IMPROVING PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES: A CASE STUDY OF NKEYEMA TOWN COUNCIL.**

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The above research was submitted to the research ethics committee for review. The study has no major ethical problems and is approved subject to the following:

1. The study cannot be changed without express permission of the UNILUS research ethics committee.

2. Approval from the necessary authority should be sought.

**Congratulations and the committee wishes you success in your work.**

**Professor Kasonde Bowa**
MSc(Glasgow),M.Med(UNZA),FRCS(Glasgow),FACS,FCS,DPH(LSTMH),MPH(UCL)
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Professor of Urology and Consultant Urologist
Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Research and Innovation
Executive Dean - School of Medicine and Health Sciences