

Governance Issues Behind Construction Project Failure in Nigeria¹

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Abstract

Project failure in developing economy is often linked to technical and financial shortcomings, with institutional and governance factors not given proper attention. Nigerian construction industry has witnessed persistent project delays, cost overrun and abandonment, indicating a strong governance weakness rather than mere operational failure. This research goes beyond descriptive assessment, to empirically identify the hidden governance aspects that negatively contribute to construction project failure. The study utilized a cross-sectional survey, involving 321 construction professionals in Nigeria, and evaluation of 25 institutional and governance related factors on project delivery, using 5-point Likert scale. The data was further validated for its factor analysis appropriateness using the Kaiser Meyer Olkin measure (0.881) and Barthlet test of sphericity ($X^2 = 852.031$, $P < 0.001$). The Principal Component with Varimax rotation identified 11 components that accounts for 64.97% of the total variance observed and grouped into 11 interpretable factors which include institutional accountability, weak decision-making, political influence and transparency. The result of the study showed that construction failure in the Nigerian construction industry is not an isolated phenomenon but a complex outcome of underlying governance dysfunction. Political interference and poor inter-agency coordination was ranked the most significant factors, but deeper construct such as paradoxical relationship between transparency and technical capacity provides a significant theoretical insights. For effective policy making, institutional reforms must tackle not just the over-bearing barriers, but also the hidden structural issues. The validated factor structures offer a diagnostic tool for future governance interventions for developing country's infrastructure sector.

Keywords: *Construction project delivery, institutional factors, governance, Nigeria, factor analysis, principal component analysis.*

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1.0 Introduction

The construction industry is fundamental to a country's economic growth, especially in emerging markets and contributing significantly to gross domestic product (GDP), job and the development of physical infrastructure that supports industrialization and social welfare.

The construction industry holds similar significance in Nigeria, supporting the nation's general output and offering employment opportunities for millions of its citizens. Despite its crucial role in the country, it is hounded by chronic underperformance, particularly in the execution of public infrastructure projects, in form of cost-overrun, prolonged delays, contract cancellation and poor workmanship, resulting in economic and social consequences (Ogunlana, 2010; Ogunsemi & Jagboro, 2006; Nzekwe, 2025.)

Several research has examined the causes of project failure, with factors linked to inadequate management practices, poor project supervision, delayed payment and fluctuating material prices, that results in project inefficiencies (Ndubueze et al, 2021; Oke et al, 2024)

While these operational factors serve as a valid cause of project failure, the deeper structural conditions that shaped project initiation, execution and monitoring of construction projects and research had persistently focused on the institutional and governance frameworks. Where public projects procurement and delivery takes place, emphasizing that project failure cannot be comprehensibly understood without considering the quality of institutions that guide them (Iroha et al, 2025; Scott, 2014).

Akintan et al. (2025) in their study opined that institutional theory offers a useful framework for grasping construction project delivery in developing economies, and emphasizing how organizational practices are influenced by regulations, normative and cultural cognitive institutional pillars, inherent in project delivery, in form of laws and regulations, professional norms, ethics and shared believe that pilots decision making processes ((World Bank, 2025).

However, the presence of weak, conflicting or poorly enforced institutional structures, always results in fragmented governing structure, reduced accountability and poor project performance (Nwachukwu. & Michael. 2024)

Within the Nigerian construction industry, the institutional framework guiding the construction industry has been widely described by researchers as defective (World bank, 2025), with underlying challenges including under-utilization of projects managers, weak enforcement of regulations, corruption, and political interference in procurement and implementation process (Federal Ministry of Works, 2025, ICPC, 2025).

The weakness misrepresents incentives, misallocate resources and sabotage the independence of the technical professionals. In the same vein, Transparency International (2021) infer that political interference oftentimes prioritizes partisan interests over value for money which is a major tenet in construction project delivery, this in turn result in inflated contracts and project delays, while ineffective inter-agency coordination creates bureaucratic bottlenecks and overriding responsibilities.

Ofori (2015), Iroha et al (2024) further stated that broader institutional issues such as conflicting responsibilities, weak and inconsistent policies and implementation, ineffective monitoring and evaluation system negatively contributes to project success. A recent study conducted by Olawuni, & Okunola (2022) demonstra4ed how bureaucratic bottlenecks, such as requiring 62 signatures for a single contractor payment, directly impede project delivery. Previous study within the Nigerian construction industry adopted factor analysis in analyzing the challenges of the construction industry and efficient project delivery, none comprehensively analyzed institutional and governance influence using validated multi-variant technique, which this study seek to address through descriptive statistics, KMO & Barthlet test and Principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation, providing both theoretical and practical insight for governance reforms and improved project delivery in Nigeria.

2.0 Research methodology

A positivist research philosophy which its assumptions lie with, that a phenomenon can be objectively measured and statistically analyzed was adapted for this study. A cross sectional survey design approach was employed to examine the influence of 25 institutional and governance factors on construction project delivery in Nigeria. The employed study design necessitated the collection of data from large number of respondents at a single point in time, while preserving the unique nature of construction industry operations.

The study population comprises of construction professionals engaged at different phases of construction project execution, including Quantity surveyors, Architects, Civil Engineers, Project managers, Procurement officers and monitoring evaluation specialists from both private and public organizations.

A multi-stage stratified random purposive sampling technique was employed and most construction active cities within the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria were selected and respondents were identified through professional directories such as the Nigerian Institute of Building (NIOB), Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), and Nigerian Institute of Quantity

Surveyors (NIQS) from which sample size of 300 were established, from which a respondent to variable ratio of 10.1 was established based on factor analysis requirement and threshold.

Data for the study was collected using a structured questionnaire with demographic items and 25 governance related variables, measured using 5-point Likert scale. The survey instrument was validated by academic and industrial professionals, while a pilot survey conducted involved 35 respondents and produced a Cronbach alpha of 0.92, indicating an excellent reliability. The data collection instrument was distributed through both physical and electronic distribution method, from which 321 valid responses were received out of the 450 distributed questionnaire, representing 71.3% response rate.

The data analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS statistical version 27, in three stages; descriptive statistics, suitability testing for factor analysis using Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure and Barthlet test of sphericity and Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with rotated varimax.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was carried out to ensure that the institutional and governance factors affecting construction project performance in Nigeria is statistically suitable for factor analysis, with the KMO value of 0.881 considered excellent, being well above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.60, as seen in table 1, which signifies that the sample size is adequate and that the variables share a sufficient amount of common variance to justify the application of factor analysis, thereby ensuring that the data matrix is not too sparse and that each variable is likely to be predicted without excessive error by the remaining variables in the dataset, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity further reinforces this conclusion by producing a statistically significant result, as evidenced by a Chi-Square value of 852.031, degrees of freedom (df) of 300, and a significance level (Sig.) of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix can be rejected, and that there are meaningful correlations among the variables, confirming the factorability of the correlation matrix, and collectively, these two tests validate that the dataset is both reliable and appropriate for advanced statistical techniques such as exploratory factor analysis or principal component analysis, which can help in identifying the underlying dimensions of the institutional and governance factors affecting construction project performance in the Nigerian context.

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test of sample adequacy

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.881
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	852.031
	df	300
	Sig.	.000

Each professional roles have comparable samples, with engineers forming the majority with 25.54%. 30.5% of the respondents have at least five years of industry experience, ensuring informed assessments of governance barriers. Private sector participants were 32.7% slightly outnumber federal agency staff of 27.7%, providing both implementer and procurer perspectives. All six geopolitical zones are represented ranging from 12.8%–19.3%, supporting national generalizability. Over 89% of the respondents are corporate members of their respective professional bodies, which strengthens the validity of responses to abstract institutional items.

Table 2. Background data of respondents

Group	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Profession of respondents	Project Manager	78	24.3
	Civil / Structural Engineer	82	25.5
	Architect	51	15.9
	Quantity Surveyor	47	14.6
	Procurement Officer	29	9.0
	Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist	18	5.6
	Other (supervisor, contract manager, etc.)	16	5.0
	Total	321	100
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	52	16.2
	5 – 10 years	98	30.5
	11 – 15 years	87	27.1
	16 – 20 years	54	16.8
	More than 20 years	30	9.3

	Total	321	100
Type of Organization	Federal Government Agency	89	27.7
	State Government Agency	67	20.9
	Private Construction Firm	105	32.7
	Consulting / Engineering Firm	41	12.8
	Development Partner / NGO	19	5.9
	Total	321	100
Geopolitical Zone	North-Central (incl. Abuja)	62	19.3
	North-East	41	12.8
	North-West	48	15.0
	South-East	53	16.5
	South-South	58	18.1
	South-West	59	18.4
	Total	321	100
Professional membership	Membership standing		
	Corporate members	162	50.5
	Fellows	124	38.6
	Probational members	18	5.6
	Others	17	5.3
	Total	321	100

3.0 Data analysis, presentation and interpretation

The mean score analysis was employed to rank the responses of respondents on institutional and governance-related issues on project delivery using mean scores and standard deviations, it reveals a nuanced understanding of how various institutional dynamics influence construction project outcomes in Nigeria, resulting in hypothetical mean of 3.0, the result obtained were above 3.0, making it fit for this research following a one-sample t-test analysis at 95% certainty level (kissi et al, 2019)

Table 3.1 Mean analysis of institutional and governance-related factors on project delivery.

Institutional-Related factors	Mean	Std. Deviation
Presence of a dedicated project management unit	3.50	1.276
Level of institutional accountability mechanisms	3.55	1.321
Clarity of project approval processes	3.58	1.267

Institutional openness to public input	3.60	1.374
Level of bureaucratic procedures	3.63	1.306
Centralization vs decentralization of project authority	3.65	1.261
Staff turnover rate in key institutions	3.65	1.294
Transparency in project procurement processes	3.65	1.285
Adequacy of institutional funding	3.68	1.346
Institutional learning and knowledge retention	3.69	1.309
Effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems	3.70	1.150
Legal and regulatory support from institutions	3.71	1.327
Use of performance based institutional metrics	3.72	1.288
Degree of institutional autonomy	3.73	1.251
Training and development opportunities	3.73	1.257
Frequency of institutional restructuring	3.74	1.160
Access to project related data and records	3.74	1.234
Clarity of institutional roles and responsibilities	3.74	1.194
Timeliness of decision making by institutions	3.81	1.227
Policy consistency over time	3.82	1.159
Availability of implementation guidelines	3.88	1.167
Institutional responsiveness to challenges	3.90	1.082
Institutional capacity technical expertise	3.90	1.106
Level of political interference in institutions	3.92	1.049
Inter-agency coordination effectiveness	3.92	1.109

The Total Variance table Explained through Principal Component Analysis (PCA), in Table 3.2 revealed that the factor extraction process yielded a total of 11 components with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, as shown in the Initial Eigenvalues column, indicating that these 11 factors account for a significant portion of the overall variance in the data and are thus retained for further analysis.

The Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings show that these same 11 components continue to explain the same cumulative percentage of variance (64.970%) after extraction, which confirms the consistency of their contribution to the model without rotation, while the Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings derived through a technique such as Varimax rotation reorganize the distribution of explained variance to make the structure of the data more interpretable, with the variance explained by each component more evenly distributed and maintaining a cumulative

variance of approximately 64.970%. This reinforces the robustness of the dimensional structure derived from the dataset, and thus, the table demonstrates that the dataset is suitable for multivariate analysis, providing a solid foundation for identifying and interpreting the underlying latent variables such as governance issues and institutional inefficiencies.

while the gradual decline in eigenvalues after the 11th factor and the fact that the remaining components each explain less than 4% of the variance suggest that they do not contribute meaningfully to the overall explanation and are therefore excluded from interpretation to maintain parsimony in the factor solution.

Table 3.2 Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.159	8.635	8.635	2.159	8.635	8.635	1.693	6.772	6.772
2	2.047	8.188	16.823	2.047	8.188	16.823	1.647	6.588	13.360
3	1.889	7.557	24.380	1.889	7.557	24.380	1.610	6.438	19.798
4	1.710	6.841	31.222	1.710	6.841	31.222	1.602	6.408	26.206
5	1.534	6.135	37.357	1.534	6.135	37.357	1.596	6.385	32.591
6	1.308	5.232	42.589	1.308	5.232	42.589	1.587	6.348	38.940
7	1.203	4.813	47.402	1.203	4.813	47.402	1.557	6.227	45.166
8	1.164	4.656	52.058	1.164	4.656	52.058	1.295	5.180	50.346
9	1.131	4.526	56.583	1.131	4.526	56.583	1.267	5.070	55.416
10	1.090	4.358	60.941	1.090	4.358	60.941	1.199	4.796	60.212
11	1.007	4.029	64.970	1.007	4.029	64.970	1.189	4.758	64.970
12	.976	3.902	68.873						
13	.913	3.651	72.524						
14	.875	3.499	76.023						
15	.828	3.311	79.334						
16	.750	3.000	82.334						
17	.688	2.750	85.084						
18	.640	2.561	87.645						
19	.577	2.310	89.955						
20	.570	2.282	92.236						

21	.467	1.866	94.102							
22	.430	1.722	95.824							
23	.384	1.536	97.360							
24	.360	1.442	98.802							
25	.300	1.198	100.000							

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The Rotated Component Matrix in table 3.3 using Principal Component Analysis (PCA), with Varimax rotation and Kaiser Normalization revealed that the institutional and governance-related variables influencing project delivery have been grouped into eleven distinct components based on their highest loadings, each representing an underlying latent factor, whereby Component 1 presented 6.772% of the total variance, Component 2 presented 6.588% of the total variance, Component 3 presented 6.438% of the total variance, Component 4, 6.408% of the total variance Component 5, 6.385%, Component 6, 6.348%, Component 7, 6.227%, Component 8, 5.180%, Component 9, 5.070%, Component 10, 4.796%, and Component 11, 4.758% respectively.

Table 3.3 Rotated Component Matrix

	Component										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Level of institutional accountability mechanisms	.782										
Degree of institutional autonomy	.766										
Clarity of institutional roles and responsibilities	.496										
Timeliness of decision making by institutions		.815									
Adequacy of institutional funding		.776									
Level of political interference in institutions			.732								
Inter-agency coordination effectiveness			.633								
Institutional responsiveness to challenges		.360	.387				.352				

Use of performance-based institutional metrics			.827							
Access to project-related data and records				.791						
Presence of a dedicated project management unit				.799						
Staff turnover rate in key institutions					.642					
Policy consistency over time					.522	.310	.244			
Legal and regulatory support from institutions						.738				
Training and development opportunities						.719				
Frequency of institutional restructuring							.734			
Availability of implementation guidelines								.702		
Transparency in project procurement processes									-.628	
Institutional capacity technical expertise									.585	
Effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems									.550	
Level of bureaucratic procedures										.750
Institutional learning and knowledge retention						.322	.359			
Centralization vs decentralization of project authority										.807
Clarity of project approval processes										-.766
Institutional openness to public input										.600

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

a. Rotation converged in 14 iterations

4.0 Discussion and interpretation of findings

The statistical analysis provided rotated component matrix in terms of grouped factor components, and reveals a comprehensive categorization of institutional and governance-related variables influencing project delivery into Eleven distinct thematic constructs based on eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and a clear simple structure after Varimax rotation.

Component 1: Institutional Accountability and Autonomy: comprises high loadings for variables such as the level of institutional accountability mechanisms (.782) and degree of institutional autonomy (.766), along with a borderline loading for clarity of institutional roles and responsibilities (.496), highlighting the importance of internal checks, freedom of decision-making, and role definition in project execution.

Component 2: Decision Efficiency and Funding Adequacy: encapsulates the timeliness of decision making by institutions (.815) and adequacy of institutional funding (.776), both of which underline the significance of timely administrative action and sufficient financial resources for efficient project delivery.

Component 3: described as Performance Orientation and Political Influence: includes strong contributions from the level of political interference in institutions (.732), inter-agency coordination effectiveness (.633), and use of performance-based institutional metrics (.827), illustrating the dual pressures of political dynamics and the necessity for performance measurement and cooperation among government entities.

Component 4: Project Data and Structural Support: which shows high loadings on access to project-related data and records (.791) and presence of a dedicated project management unit (.799), emphasizing the role of data transparency and formal project structures in managing construction outcomes.

Component 5: Staffing and Policy Stability: comprises the staff turnover rate in key institutions (.642) and policy consistency over time (.522), pointing to the impact of personnel continuity and predictable policy environments on project continuity and stability,

Component 6: Legal Support and Capacity Development. includes legal and regulatory support from institutions (.738) and training and development opportunities (.719), indicating that legal robustness and institutional learning mechanisms are vital enablers of successful project implementation, and

Component 7: Organizational Stability and Restructuring: with a single prominent loading of frequency of institutional restructuring (.734), suggests that excessive or constant institutional reform may disrupt project consistency,

Component 8: Implementation Framework and Guidelines: is defined by a strong loading on the availability of implementation guidelines (.702), reaffirming the need for clear procedural direction during project execution.

Component 9: Transparency, Monitoring, and Technical Capacity. is composed of transparency in project procurement processes (notably with a negative loading of $-.628$), institutional capacity technical expertise (.585), and effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems (.550), suggesting a somewhat paradoxical relationship in which stronger monitoring and technical capacity may be hindered by procurement opacity.

Component 10: Bureaucracy and Administrative Burden. with a loading of level of bureaucratic procedures (.750), reveals that excessive red tape could hamper timely project outcomes, and

Component 11: Governance Structure and Public Input. groups centralization vs decentralization of project authority (.807), clarity of project approval processes (negative loading $-.766$), and institutional openness to public input (.600), underscoring the impact of decision authority structure and participatory governance on approval efficiency.

5.0 Conclusion

The result of the findings aligns with previous study conducted in developing economies with institutional awareness such as political interference and poor coordination as major barriers to construction project delivery (Ofori, 2015; Transparency International, 2021). Interagency coordination and political interference received the highest mean score of (3.92), showing that weak collaborations amongst ministries and agencies, collectively with non-technical influence on procurement, budgeting and staffing contributes strongly to delays and cost overrun.

Governance issues in the construction industry is multidimensional rather than singular as inferred by the factor analysis, yielding eleven (11) latent constructs. A significant result from the study analysis is that political influence remains dominant, even where performance system exists, in contrast, the negative loading of procurement transparency indicates that poor transparency subverts technical capacity and effective monitoring and evaluation.

The validated 11-factor structure provides a robust diagnostic tool for governance interventions. Policymakers should focus not only on political interference and coordination but also on the hidden paradox where improved technical capacity and monitoring are undermined by opaque procurement transparency. The study provided undaunted empirical evidence that institutional and governance deficiencies hinders construction project delivery in Nigeria.

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