

Construction Professionals' Perceptions of the Impacts of Construction Conflicts on the Construction Industry in Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

Construction conflicts remain a significant challenge to effective project delivery, particularly in environments characterised by complex contractual relationships, multiple professional disciplines, and competing stakeholder interests. This study assessed the perceived impacts of construction conflicts on the construction industry in Edo State, Nigeria, with emphasis on their financial, relational, contractual, operational, and project-related consequences. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The study population comprised 623 registered construction professionals, from which a sample of 244 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to Builders, Quantity Surveyors, Architects, Town Planners, and Land Surveyors practising in Edo State. A total of 238 valid responses were obtained, representing a 97.5% response rate. Descriptive statistics and the Relative Severity Index (RSI) were used to analyse and rank the perceived impacts of construction conflicts. The findings revealed that financial distress was the most prominent impact of construction conflict (RSI = 3.67), followed by strained stakeholder relationships (RSI = 3.66), cost overruns (RSI = 3.63), litigation costs (RSI = 3.62), and contractual complexity (RSI = 3.62). Loss of opportunity (RSI = 3.61), regulatory scrutiny (RSI = 3.60), and uncertainty in planning (RSI = 3.58) were also highly rated. Although decreased productivity ranked lowest (RSI = 3.48), it remained a recognised consequence of construction conflict. The study concludes that construction conflicts have multidimensional effects extending beyond immediate disagreements to influence the financial stability, professional relationships, contractual processes, planning, and overall performance of the construction industry. The findings provide location-specific evidence for stakeholders and policymakers seeking to strengthen proactive conflict-management practices and improve construction project delivery in Edo State.

Keywords: Construction conflicts; construction industry; conflict management; project performance; cost overruns; stakeholder relationships; Edo State; Nigeria.

1. Introduction

The construction industry is a major contributor to economic development through infrastructure provision, employment generation, and investment. However, construction projects are characterised by complex contractual arrangements, multidisciplinary teams, interdependent activities, and the involvement of stakeholders with different interests and expectations. These characteristics create conditions in which disagreements and conflicts can emerge throughout the project life cycle. Although conflict may sometimes generate constructive outcomes when properly managed, unresolved conflict can escalate into disputes that adversely affect project performance, stakeholder relationships, cost, and time. A recent systematic review by Silva et al. (2024) confirms that disputes are widespread in construction and

that their effects extend beyond the immediate disagreement to project success and relationships among stakeholders.

Construction conflicts arise from a combination of financial, contractual, technical, managerial, organisational, and behavioural factors. A systematic review of construction dispute literature identified poor contractual arrangements, scope changes, unforeseen site conditions, inadequate contract administration, contractor performance, failure to achieve time targets, delayed payments, and poor design quality among the recurring causes of disputes (Silva et al., 2024). Similarly, research examining construction projects globally has established a close relationship between conflict and project delays, with financial problems, variations, and poor communication or relationships among the recurring factors associated with both conflicts and

delays. These findings indicate that construction conflict should be viewed not simply as an interpersonal disagreement but as a project-management problem capable of producing multiple and interconnected consequences.

One of the principal consequences of construction conflict is financial impact. Disputes can generate additional expenditure through disruption of work, rework, claims, prolongation, professional services, and dispute-resolution processes. Contractual uncertainty can further intensify these effects. In the Nigerian construction industry, Titus et al. (2023) found that contract incompleteness including ambiguity, deficiencies, inconsistency, and defects in contract documentation is significantly associated with the occurrence of construction disputes. Their findings demonstrate that contractual problems can create uncertainty and opportunistic behaviour, thereby increasing the likelihood of disputes and their associated costs.

Conflict can also produce cost overruns and delays because disagreements may interrupt work sequences, slow decision-making, and require additional time for negotiation or formal dispute resolution. A global meta-analytical review of construction delays found that the effects of construction delays include time and cost overruns, litigation, and project abandonment, while financial difficulties, poor site organisation and coordination, and inadequate planning were among the prominent factors associated with delays (Sanni-Anibire et al., (2022)). The relationship between conflict and delay is therefore potentially cyclical: disagreements can interrupt project activities, resulting delays can increase costs, and increased costs can subsequently generate further disagreements among project participants.

Another important consequence is the deterioration of relationships among stakeholders. Construction projects depend heavily on cooperation among clients, consultants, contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, and regulatory authorities. When conflicts persist, communication and trust may deteriorate, making collaboration and joint decision-making more difficult. Silva et al. (2024) emphasised that the consequences of construction disputes extend to stakeholder relationships and that the interconnected nature of dispute causes means that problems rarely occur in isolation. This suggests that the impact of conflict should be assessed not only through financial and schedule indicators but also through its effects on professional relationships and collaboration.

The effect of conflict on productivity and professional performance has also received empirical attention. Particularly relevant to the Nigerian context, Adeyemi and Aigbavboa (2024) evaluated the impacts of construction professionals' conflict on performance in the Nigerian

construction industry. Their study found that abandonment of professional tasks was the highest-rated impact, followed by insufficient communication, job pressure, frustration and displeasure among professionals, and work damage. The study further demonstrated that conflict can influence communication and professional performance within the Nigerian construction environment. These findings provide direct evidence that the consequences of construction conflict extend beyond project cost and time to affect the people responsible for delivering construction projects.

The Nigerian context is particularly important because the construction industry involves numerous professional disciplines and project participants who interact throughout different stages of construction projects. Nigerian research has established that the multiplicity of individuals involved in construction projects creates potential for disagreements and conflicts, with financial factors and differences among construction professionals identified as important contributors to conflict occurrence (Ejohwomu et al., 2016; Adeyemi & Aigbavboa, 2020). More recent evidence from Nigeria further demonstrates the importance of contractual deficiencies, with contract incompleteness, ambiguity, inconsistency, and deficiencies in contract documents found to be significantly associated with the occurrence of construction disputes (Titus et al., 2023).

The consequences of construction conflict can therefore be multidimensional, encompassing financial losses, cost overruns, project delays, reduced productivity, deterioration of stakeholder relationships, disruption of professional activities, and adverse effects on overall project performance (Adeyemi & Aigbavboa, 2020; Raza et al., 2023). Importantly, these consequences may reinforce one another rather than occur independently. Conflict can disrupt communication and construction activities, contributing to delays, additional costs, productivity losses, and deterioration in relationships; prolonged disagreements may subsequently escalate into formal disputes and legal proceedings (Raza et al., 2023). This interconnected perspective is further supported by the systematic literature review of construction disputes conducted by Silva (2024), which identified several major causes of disputes—including poor contractual arrangements, scope changes, unforeseen site conditions, poor contract administration, delayed payments, time-related problems, and design deficiencies—and emphasized that these causes are interconnected rather than isolated events.

Despite the growing body of research on construction disputes, there remains value in examining their consequences within specific geographical and professional contexts. Existing Nigerian studies have examined conflict among construction professionals and its effects on

performance, but the 2024 study by Adeyemi and Aigbavboa was focused on professionals in Southwestern Nigeria and recommended wider geographical coverage in future research. This provides a clear basis for examining the phenomenon in other Nigerian locations rather than assuming that findings from one region necessarily represent the experiences of construction professionals elsewhere.

Edo State provides an important context for such an investigation because construction activities involve interactions among clients, consultants, contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, and other stakeholders across public and private projects. However, empirical evidence specifically assessing the perceived impacts of construction conflicts among professionals practising in Edo State remains limited. Establishing the relative importance of these impacts is necessary for understanding the extent to which conflict affects project delivery and the wider construction environment within the state.

Against this background, this study assesses the impact of construction conflicts on the construction industry in Edo State, Nigeria. The study examines the perceived effects of conflict across key dimensions of construction performance, including financial consequences, stakeholder relationships, productivity, litigation costs, project timelines, planning, and other project-related outcomes. The findings are expected to provide location-specific empirical evidence that can assist clients, contractors, consultants, professional bodies, and policymakers in developing proactive measures for mitigating the adverse consequences of construction conflict and improving project delivery in Edo State.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to examine the perceived impacts of construction conflicts on the construction industry in Edo State, Nigeria. The design was considered suitable because it permits the collection of quantitative information from construction professionals at a defined point in time and facilitates the assessment of their perceptions regarding the consequences of conflicts on construction project delivery.

3.2 Study Population and Sampling

The study population comprised 623 registered construction professionals practising in Edo State, Nigeria. The population consisted of 114 Builders, 104 Quantity Surveyors, 150 Architects, 105 Town Planners, and 150 Land Surveyors. The population figures were obtained from the relevant professional regulatory registers: the Council of Registered Builders of Nigeria (CORBON), Quantity

Surveyors Registration Board of Nigeria (QSRBN), Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON), Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC), and Surveyors Council of Nigeria (SURCON), respectively. A simple random sampling technique was adopted to provide each member of the identified population with an equal opportunity of being selected. The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1976) formula for finite populations at a 5% level of precision:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

where n is the required sample size, N is the population size (623), and e is the acceptable sampling error (0.05). Applying the formula yielded a sample size of 244 respondents.

Thus, a sample size of 244 respondents was established for the study.

3.3 Data Collection

Primary data were obtained through a structured questionnaire developed from the study objectives and relevant literature on construction conflict and its consequences. The instrument was organised into two sections. Section A collected information on respondents' demographic characteristics, while Section B contained statements relating to the perceived impacts of construction conflicts on project and industry performance.

A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the responses, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The questionnaires were administered to the selected construction professionals. Of the 244 questionnaires distributed, 238 were properly completed and considered suitable for analysis, giving a valid response rate of approximately 97.5%.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. Frequencies and percentages were used to present the characteristics of the respondents, while the Relative Severity Index (RSI) was employed to assess and rank the perceived impacts of construction conflicts.

$$RSI = \frac{\sum W}{A \times N}$$

where:

- RSI = Relative Severity Index;
- $\sum W$ = total weight assigned to a factor by respondents;
- A = highest weight on the Likert scale (5); and
- N = total number of respondents.

The resulting RSI values were arranged in descending order to establish the relative ranking of the identified impacts. A

higher RSI value indicated a greater perceived impact of construction conflict among the respondents.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 238 valid questionnaires were used for the analysis, representing a response rate of approximately 97.5% from the 244 questionnaires administered. The demographic distribution indicates that 75% of the respondents were male and 25% were female. This distribution reflects the male-dominated composition of the professional construction workforce represented in the study.

Across professional disciplines, Builders constituted the largest proportion of respondents (26%), followed by Architects (24%), Quantity Surveyors (21%), Land Surveyors (12%), and Town Planners (9%). The inclusion of professionals from different disciplines provides a cross-section of perspectives from participants involved in various stages of construction project planning, design, measurement, supervision, and delivery.

The educational profile of the respondents indicates that 61% held Bachelor's degrees, while 22% possessed Master's degrees, 11% held doctoral qualifications, and 7% had Higher National Diplomas. In addition, more than 62% of the respondents had over ten years of professional experience. The combination of formal professional education and substantial industry experience suggests that the respondents had considerable exposure to construction project activities and were therefore suitably positioned to provide informed assessments of the effects of construction conflicts.

4.2 Impact of Construction Conflicts

Table 2. Perceived Impacts of Construction Conflicts in Edo State

IMPACT	RSI	Rank
Financial distress	3.67	1
Strained relationships	3.66	2
Cost overruns	3.63	3
Litigation costs	3.62	4

Contractual complexity	3.62	5
Loss of opportunity	3.61	6
Regulatory scrutiny	3.60	7
Uncertainty in planning	3.58	8
Impact on public projects	3.56	9
Impact on reputation	3.55	10
Quality of work	3.55	11
Decreased productivity	3.48	12
Disincentive for investment	3.53	13
Innovation and technology	3.53	14

4.2 Impact of Construction Conflicts

Table 4.5 shows that construction conflicts have several financial, relational, contractual, and operational consequences for the construction industry in Edo State. Financial distress ranked highest with a mean score of 3.67, followed by strained relationships (3.66), cost overruns (3.63), and litigation costs (3.62). These findings indicate that conflicts can impose significant financial burdens on project stakeholders while also weakening professional relationships and increasing the cost of dispute resolution.

Contractual complexity ranked fifth with a mean score of 3.62, followed by loss of opportunity (3.61) and regulatory scrutiny (3.60). Other identified impacts included uncertainty in planning (3.58), impact on public projects (3.56), impact on reputation (3.55), and quality of work (3.55). Although these factors ranked below the leading impacts, their mean scores indicate that respondents generally perceived them as important consequences of construction conflicts.

The least-ranked impacts were decreased productivity (3.48), disincentive for investment (3.53), and innovation and technology (3.53). Overall, the findings demonstrate that construction conflicts extend beyond immediate

disagreements between project parties, with consequences affecting the financial stability, relationships, contractual processes, planning, reputation, and broader performance of the construction industry in Edo State.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that construction conflicts have significant and multidimensional effects on the construction industry in Edo State. The findings indicate that financial distress, strained relationships, cost overruns, and litigation costs are the most prominent consequences of construction conflicts, while contractual complexity, loss of opportunities, regulatory scrutiny, and uncertainty in planning also represent important impacts. Although decreased productivity, disincentives for investment, and effects on innovation and technology ranked relatively lower, they remain relevant consequences of unresolved conflicts.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that construction conflicts extend beyond disagreements between individual project stakeholders and can affect the financial, contractual, relational, and operational performance of the industry. Consequently, construction stakeholders should adopt proactive conflict management practices, including effective communication, clearer contractual arrangements, timely financial management, and early intervention in emerging disputes. Such measures can help minimise the adverse effects of conflict and contribute to more efficient and sustainable construction project delivery in Edo State.

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