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THE IMPACT OF INFORMAL STAKEHOLDER INFLUENCE MECHANISMS ON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS IN NIGERIAN ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

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KEYWORDS

Informal stakeholders, community leadership, social networks, political mediation, stakeholder engagement, stakeholder participation, conflict resolution

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ABSTRACT

This research studied the influence of the informal stakeholder influence mechanism on stakeholder engagement effectiveness in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State, Nigeria. The research philosophy was positivism, and the approach was deductive. The study used a survey research strategy with a quantitative, cross-sectional design. Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used due to the absence of a database of informal stakeholders in the Lagos State Road infrastructure sector. One hundred and three (103) respondents participated in the study. The research instrument was tested and confirmed to have high reliability, measuring $\alpha = 0.874$ for community leadership and social networks, $\alpha = 0.882$ for informal negotiation and political mediation, $\alpha = 0.866$ for stakeholder participation and inclusiveness, and $\alpha = 0.845$ for conflict resolution and project acceptance. All instruments exceeded the accepted reliability score of 0.70. The researcher supervisor confirmed face validity. The results showed that community leadership and social networks had a weak, statistically insignificant correlation with stakeholder participation and inclusiveness ($\rho = 0.138$, $p = 0.164$). However, community leadership and social networks was found to have a moderate statistically significant relationship with conflict resolution and project acceptance ($\rho = 0.351$, $p = 0.001$). Informal negotiation and political mediation had a weak though statistically significant correlation with stakeholder participation and inclusiveness ($\rho = 0.211$, $p = 0.033$). Informal negotiation and political mediation was also found to have a moderate statistically significant relationship with conflict resolution and project acceptance ($\rho = 0.388$, $p = 0.001$). The correlation between informal negotiation and political mediation and conflict resolution and project acceptance was found to be the strongest among all relationships studied. Consequently, three out of the four hypotheses were confirmed to be true. Therefore, this study concludes that informal stakeholder influence tactics are likely to have a stronger relationship with conflict resolution and project acceptance than stakeholder participation and inclusiveness. The study recommends that project managers and government statutory agencies such as Lagos State Ministry of Works and Infrastructure should consult community leaders and informal negotiators from the beginning of a project, instead of waiting until conflict arises. Project teams should establish direct, clear-cut lines for stakeholders' participation rather than channel participation through community leadership for true and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

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Introduction

Background

Road projects can only be successfully delivered when adequate technical know-how and financial resources are followed by appropriate stakeholder engagement practices throughout the project lifecycle. Existing literature has also established that adequate stakeholder engagement optimises project performance, increases acceptance levels and reduces implementation challenges (Oppong et al., 2021; Derakhshan et al., 2019). For instance, community leadership and social networks influence local community attitudes, promote stakeholder participation and communication between project implementers and impacted stakeholders There are also scholars that found that infrastructure projects with identifiable informal local structures are likely to experience fewer stakeholder-associated risks (Nduku et al., 2026). This type of informal arrangements appear to complement formal stakeholder engagements and are predominant in developing countries where relationships and political intervention influence project activities (Alayande and Ola-Awo, 2021). As a response to increasing urbanization trends, many governments have focused on road infrastructure development to cater for rising population growth, economic productivity and sustainable development (Foster et al., 2023). Hence, effective governance, collaboration, and accountability among stakeholders has become critical for achieving expected project outcomes.

Many times, the issues affecting infrastructure projects are less about technical engineering but are associated with factors like land acquisition, inadequate stakeholder consultation, compensation grievances, weak institutions, conflicting interests between project authorities and affected stakeholders (Lehtinen et al., 2022). Sub-Sahara African countries face similar challenges with rapid urbanisation and population growth rates coupled with increasing demand for transport infrastructure putting more pressure on governments to develop sustainable projects while managing multiple stakeholder expectations (Sakketa, 2023). Projects are more likely to be successfully implemented if social issues, community concerns, and governance challenges are considered during engineering and administrative decision-making processes. The influence of informal stakeholder positions could explain why different implementation outcomes are experienced across similar infrastructure projects within comparable formal structures (Lehtinen et al., 2022).

While some projects receive strong stakeholder support and rarely experience disputes. In the opposite, others encounter public opposition, protests, delays or legal confrontations despite employing similar stakeholder engagement strategies. Successful infrastructure delivery is often linked to project organisations building quality relationships with stakeholders, establishing trust throughout project delivery and showing willingness to address local grievances using formal and informal engagement channels (Ninan, 2026).

Lagos State has witnessed rapid urbanisation and sustained investment in road infrastructure over the years. However, road infrastructure projects continue to face implementation challenges that cannot be fully explained by technical and financial issues alone (Lagos State Ministry of Works

and Infrastructure 2026) Previous studies have identified informal stakeholders who use community leadership, social networks, informal negotiation and political mediation to influence project implementation. These stakeholders include traditional rulers, community development associations (CDAs), community-based youth groups, transport unions, political actors, and customary landowners among others.

Moreover, there is limited understanding of how informal stakeholder influence mechanisms such as community leadership, social networks and informal negotiation or political mediation impact stakeholder engagement outcomes such as participation and inclusiveness, conflict resolution mechanisms, and project acceptance within the context of road infrastructure projects. Furthermore, in practice, project managers in Lagos State tend to respond to informal stakeholder interventions in inconsistent ways resulting in temporary stakeholder reliance on political intervention rather than an established engagement process (Oke et al., 2020 ; Aghimien et al., 2021). With limited understanding of how informal stakeholder influence mechanisms affect stakeholder engagement effectiveness in infrastructure projects, providing clear and practical steps towards managing informal stakeholders remains difficult. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how informal stakeholder influence mechanisms such as community leadership, social networks and informal negotiation influence stakeholder engagement effectiveness which may include participation and inclusiveness, conflict resolution, and project acceptance in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Based on these theoretical arguments and empirical findings, the following hypotheses are proposed for empirical testing.

Definitions of the Variables

Community Leadership and Social Networks

Community leadership and social networks refers to the ability of people and relational connections within a community that are locally based to affect the way the people either accept or oppose a developmental project outside of the projects power structure. Alhassan (2024) claimed that most of the decision-making power was held by few people who were centrally placed in the network. Information on the other hand was distributed based on network proximity rather than project authority. Communities with higher levels of social capital and trust were able to self-organise and coordinate recovery projects much better than communities who lacked these traits (Rayamajhee and Bohara, 2020).

Informal Negotiation and Political Mediation

Informal negotiation and political mediation make up the second sub construct. Lobo and Abid (2019) revealed that community groups against the project used social media to organise and lobby decision-makers outside of their official engagement process. These groups were able to manipulate the official engagement process more than the structured process was affecting

decision-makers. There is need to negotiate and appease their legitimacy to the affected communities and political actors outside of their formal powers since these actors could easily take back their legitimacy through informal means (Walker et al., 2017). Aragonés-Beltrán et al., (2017) used game theory to show that stakeholder mapping did not properly identify the bargaining power of stakeholders with informal power but no formal authority.

Stakeholder Participation and Inclusiveness

Stakeholder participation and inclusiveness describes the degree to which stakeholders are truly able to participate in project decision-making processes as opposed to simply being informed of decisions. Mojtahedi and Oo (2017) stated that early and continuous engagement, respectful communication, and treatment of local communities as knowledgeable actors were necessary conditions for meaningful stakeholder participation in disaster risk management projects. Delaying consultation until after planning was labeled reactive engagement and resulted in poor participatory outcomes. Vahanvati and Mulligan (2017) identify that inclusive, owner-driven reconstruction approaches lead to greater beneficiary satisfaction in the long-run than contractor-driven models that limit stakeholder input.

Conflict Resolution and Project Acceptance

Conflict resolution and project acceptance reflects how well disputes that arise during project implementation are resolved and whether stakeholders accept the project upon completion. Most communities affected by conflict related issues in project were not involved in project decision-making because they did not possess the power or legitimacy to be considered key stakeholders by those in charge (Shafique and Gabriel, 2022). This reality undermines perceptions of procedural fairness and ultimately project acceptance once completed.

Hypothesis Development

Impact of Community Leadership and Social Networks on Stakeholder Participation and Inclusiveness in Road Infrastructure Projects

Previous research has identified community leadership and social networks as important determinants of stakeholder participation and inclusiveness. Social network analysis by Alhassan (2024) revealed that decision-making power during a Norwegian road expansion project was held by a few dominant actors in densely connected networks. Residents outside these networks had less access to information about the project and fewer opportunities for influencing decisions. Similarly, Matu et al. (2020) found a strong positive association between stakeholder participation at the project identification stage and stakeholder participation at completion ($r = 0.859, R^2 = 0.737, p < 0.001$) for urban road transport projects in Kenya. Landowners were not engaged during project identification, leading to increased conflict, compensation-related land price surges, and project delays. Richu et al. (2025) found that stakeholder identification and two-way communication greatly improved project performance during road construction projects in South Sudan. However, community participation remained constrained by limited financial resources and competing

stakeholder interests. Damayanti and Syarifuddin (2020) also found that village development decisions in Indonesia tended to be made by community leaders who sided with the government, resulting in limited opportunities for meaningful participation by the wider public. Simanjuntak and Tampubolon (2024) reported that low levels of community participation during the monitoring of road construction activities created opportunities for corruption and weakened accountability relationships. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Community leadership and social networks have a significant positive relationship with stakeholder participation and inclusiveness in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Impact of Community Leadership and Social Networks on Conflict Resolution and Project Acceptance in Road Infrastructure Projects

Previous studies indicate that community leadership and social networks contribute to resolving conflicts and enhancing project acceptance. Mboh (2021) found that traditional leaders were able to leverage their long-established moral authority to remain at the centre of community conflict resolution processes in South Africa. Baldwin (2018) similarly showed that traditional chiefs could exert greater influence over collective action for local infrastructure compared to elected politicians. Richu et al. (2025) also found that effective stakeholder identification, including consultations with legitimate community leaders, had a positive impact on project performance in South Sudan. Conflicting stakeholder interests continued to moderate this relationship. Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek (2022) further reported that trust, shared understanding, and strong community relationships improved the adaptive capacity of local-level governance institutions to manage conflict. However, some studies show that community leadership does not always contribute to positive project outcomes. Muchaku and Magaiza (2024) found that major conflicts during one mining project were escalated by the presence of competing leadership structures, limited institutional capacity, and exclusionary decision-making processes. Existing literature also suggests that trust mediates the relationship between community leadership and social networks and project acceptance. Wang et al. (2023) found that trust in authorities strongly influenced public perceptions and acceptance of urban transport projects. Otor et al. (2026) also found that trust was the strongest predictor of social acceptance for major infrastructure projects.

H2: Community leadership and social networks have a significant positive relationship with conflict resolution and project acceptance in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Impact of Informal Negotiation and Political Mediation on Stakeholder Participation and Inclusiveness in Road Infrastructure Projects

Previous research demonstrates informal negotiation and political mediation can enhance stakeholder participation and inclusiveness in circumstances where engagement methods do not address community needs. Gurnani (2026) found that affected communities along the Nairobi Expressway were excluded through superficial engagement tactics and had little decision-making power over the project. Compared to London organisations consulted during the Crossrail project, Lobo and Abid (2020) found community groups collaborated over social media to act collectively

and influence policymakers outside formal engagement channels. Furthermore, past research indicates informal negotiation does not ensure inclusive participation. Hurtig et al. (2026) argue meaningful inclusion is dependent on long-term civic relationships, facilitative institutions, and mediators who are trusted to represent their communities interests. To some extent, this may explain why informal negotiation and political mediation only appear to be effective when creating genuine opportunities for community voices to be heard and influence outcomes, not when imposing another gatekeeper.

H3: Informal negotiation and political mediation have a significant positive relationship with stakeholder participation and inclusiveness in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

The Impact of Informal Negotiation and Political Mediation on Conflict Resolution and Project Acceptance in Road Infrastructure Projects

Past studies indicate informal negotiation and political mediation are vital to conflict resolution and project acceptance during infrastructure development. Leo-Olagbaye et al. (2023) discovered communities and interest groups were key stakeholders who influenced Lagos State project outcomes, with government agencies and project management overseeing their engagement. Within communities, Thontteh et al. (2023) reported family heads and local leaders served as gatekeepers during land-related transactions which could make or break development projects depending on whether they were willing to cooperate. Richu et al. (2025) found that stakeholder engagement such as communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution positively impacted project success in road infrastructure projects in South Sudan. Amuni et al. (2025) reported successful projects in Kenya were more likely to enjoy communal support when community leaders, youth groups, and women's groups participated in project activities.

H4: Informal negotiation and political mediation have a significant positive relationship with conflict resolution and project acceptance in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Underpinned Theories

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory was first defined by Freeman (1984) in his book, Strategic Management. In his definition, he posited that organisational success can only be achieved when leaders agree to responsibly manage their stakeholders. The theory simply assumed that every organisation and project lives within complex webs of social relationships where stakeholders have differing power, legitimacy, urgency claim, knowledge of project activities and influence over decision-making (Freeman, 1984). Pauna et al., (2021) similarly argued that stakeholder influences in most mega infrastructure projects are often derived from informal networks and relational aspects than the formal power bestowed on them by organisational structures. t. Most recently, Aghimien et al. (2021) affirmed that stakeholder management still plays an important role in determining construction project success in Nigeria.

Research Framework

Figure 2.2 shows the study's research model.

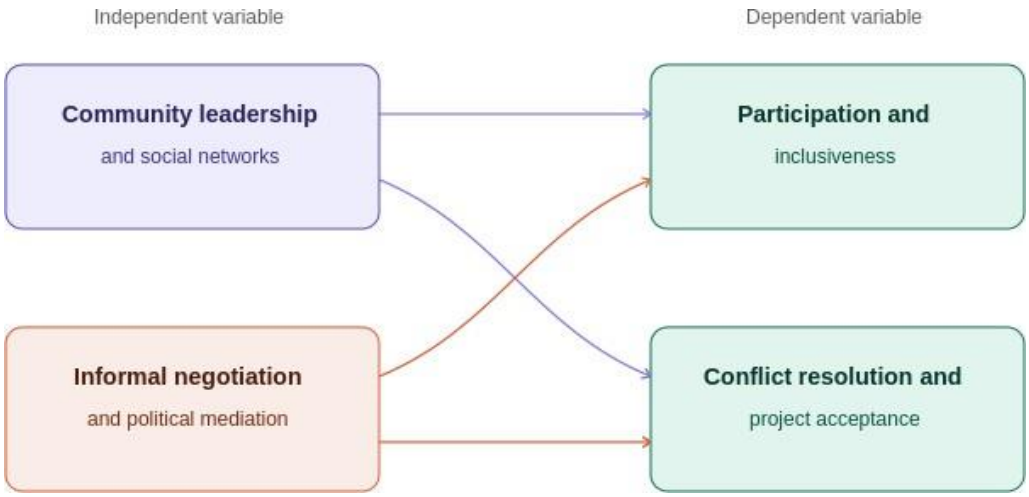

Figure 2.1: Research Framework

Methodology

The transition from generality to particularity – the deductive approach has been employed in this study. In selecting the research method in this section, the primary decision was whether the study should be conducted quantitatively, qualitatively, or using mixed methods (Saunders et al., 2020). Cross-sectional study is research done at one single point in time whereas a longitudinal study looks at change over time by repeatedly observing the same or comparable subjects (Saunders et al., 2023). Stakeholders directly involved with or impacted by road infrastructure projects in Lagos State. This includes community residents such as household heads and persons living within the communities where road projects are being executed, landowning families locally called Omo Onile and traditional leaders. Another participants group is transport union members and political representatives such as federal, state and local government agency personnel responsible for executing road projects. Also, contractor personnel or project management and community-based or civil society organisation representatives. A sample size of minimum 100 respondents across these key groups was used. Based on Green (1991) recommendation, the following formula for multiple regression was used: $N \geq 50 + 8m$. Where N = minimum required sample size. M = number of predictors (independent) variables used in the regression model. This gives me = 2 predictors per model. $N \geq 50 + 8(2)$ $N \geq 50 + 16$ $N \geq 66$. Also, this study was within non -probability sampling technique known as purposive sampling. The primary data has been gathered for this study. The final sample size was 103. Thus, in this study, the Quantitative Mono Method has been used for data collection and analysis to test the hypothetical assertions. In this study, survey techniques have been employed to gather data from respondents. The data generated from the questionnaire

created on Google Forms will be exported into a spreadsheet, coded, and cleaned for analysis. The data analysis process can be broken down into two sections which are descriptive analysis followed by inferential tests for each hypothesis. In order to test each hypothesis, this study will conduct both a bivariate correlation, to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between variables.

Research Instrument and Scale Measurement

A survey questionnaire derived from a variety of sources was utilized in this study. This study conducted a pilot study using 22 respondents' data. Cases with excessive amounts of missing data will be eliminated before testing. Responses from each Likert question will then be coded numerically (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree),

Table 3.1: Pilot Study Reliability Results

Sub-construct	Pilot sample (N)	No. of items	Cronbach alpha	Interpretation
Community leadership and social networks	22	4	0.896	Good
Informal negotiation and political mediation	22	4	0.820	Good
Stakeholder participation and inclusiveness	22	4	0.867	Good
Conflict resolution and project acceptance	22	4	0.829	Good

From table 3.1, the pilot shows that this study survey instrument is reliable as it measures what it is designed to measure.

Data Analysis

Response Rate

For data collection, 500 instruments were distributed among the respondents in our target population. Of the 500 instruments, 117 responses were received. In the end, 103 properly filled questionnaires were finalized as the target sample for data analysis.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

INSTRUMENT FREQUENCY	Nos	%
Questionnaires	500	100
Received	117	78%
Finalized	103	88% from Received

Demographics

The sex distribution shows a higher representation of male respondents in the study sample. Male respondents constituted the majority, with 83 respondents (80.6%). Female respondents accounted for 20 respondents (19.4%). Table 9 presents the educational qualifications of the respondents. The respondents represented a range of age groups, with most participants falling within the 31–40-year category. The largest proportion of respondents were aged 31–40 years, comprising 41 respondents (39.8%). This was followed by respondents aged 18–30 years, with 22 respondents (21.4%). Respondents aged 41–50 years and 51–60 years each accounted for 18 respondents (17.5%). The smallest proportion comprised respondents aged 61 years and above, with four respondents (3.9%). The respondents had varied educational backgrounds, with most having at least secondary education. Respondents with a bachelor's degree formed the largest group, with 39 respondents (37.9%). This was followed by those with secondary education, comprising 32 respondents (31.1%). A total of 13 respondents (12.6%) reported having no formal education, while 10 respondents (9.7%) held a diploma. The smallest group consisted of respondents with postgraduate qualifications, accounting for 9 respondents (8.7%). Community residents formed the largest group, with 35 respondents (34.0%). This was followed by transport union or association representatives, with 21 respondents (20.4%), and contractors or project management staff, with 17 respondents (16.5%). Community or traditional leaders accounted for 16 respondents (15.5%), while community-based organisations or civil society representatives accounted for 9 respondents (8.7%). Government agency staff represented the smallest group, with 5 respondents (4.9%). The distribution shows that the study included respondents from different stakeholder groups involved in or affected by road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Table 4.2: Demographics

Demographics	Respondent	%age
Gender		
Male	83	80.6
Female	20	19.4
Age of Respondent		
18–30 years	22	21.4
31–40 years	41	39.8
41–50 years	18	17.5
51–60 years	18	17.5
61 years and above	4	3.9
Educational qualification		
No formal education	13	12.6
Diploma	10	9.7
Secondary education	32	31.1
Bachelor's degree	39	37.9
Postgraduate	9	8.7
Project stakeholder category		
Community residents	35	34.0

Community or traditional leaders	16	15.5
Transport unions or associations	21	20.4
Government agency staff (project delivery or regulatory)	5	4.9
Contractors or project management staff	17	16.5
Community-based organisations or civil society representatives	9	8.7

Reliability Test

Table 4.3 presents the reliability results for the research instrument. Cronbach's alpha was calculated separately for the four sub-constructs. The coefficients ranged from 0.845 to 0.882, indicating good internal consistency across all the measurement scales. Community leadership and social networks recorded an alpha of 0.874, while informal negotiation and political mediation recorded 0.882. Stakeholder participation and inclusiveness recorded 0.866, and conflict resolution and project acceptance recorded 0.845. These results indicate that the items within each sub-construct consistently measured their respective constructs. The instrument was therefore considered reliable for the main study.

Table-4.3: Reliability Test

Section	Constructs	N	Cronbach alpha	Standardised alpha
A	Community leadership and social networks	4	0.874	0.874
B	Informal negotiation and political mediation	4	0.882	0.882
C	Stakeholder participation and inclusiveness	4	0.866	0.867
D	Conflict resolution and project acceptance	4	0.845	0.846

Test of Normality

Table 4.4 shows that the Shapiro–Wilk test was conducted to assess the normality of the four composite variables. The results showed that all four variables significantly departed from normality ($p < .05$). Therefore, Spearman rho correlation was used to examine the relationships between the study variables.

Table-4.4: Test of Normality

Composite variable	Shapiro–Wilk statistic	df	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
Community leadership and social networks	0.814	103	< .001	Not normally distributed
Informal negotiation and political mediation	0.831	103	< .001	Not normally distributed
Stakeholder participation and inclusiveness	0.955	103	.001	Not normally distributed

Conflict resolution and project acceptance	0.923	103	< .001	Not normally distributed

Spearman Correlation Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Community leadership and social networks have a significant positive relationship with stakeholder participation and inclusiveness in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Table-4.5: Spearman rho correlation between community leadership and social networks and stakeholder participation and inclusiveness

Variables	Correlation coefficient (ρ)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Community leadership and social networks x Stakeholder participation and inclusiveness	0.138	0.164	103

Correlation is significant at p < .05

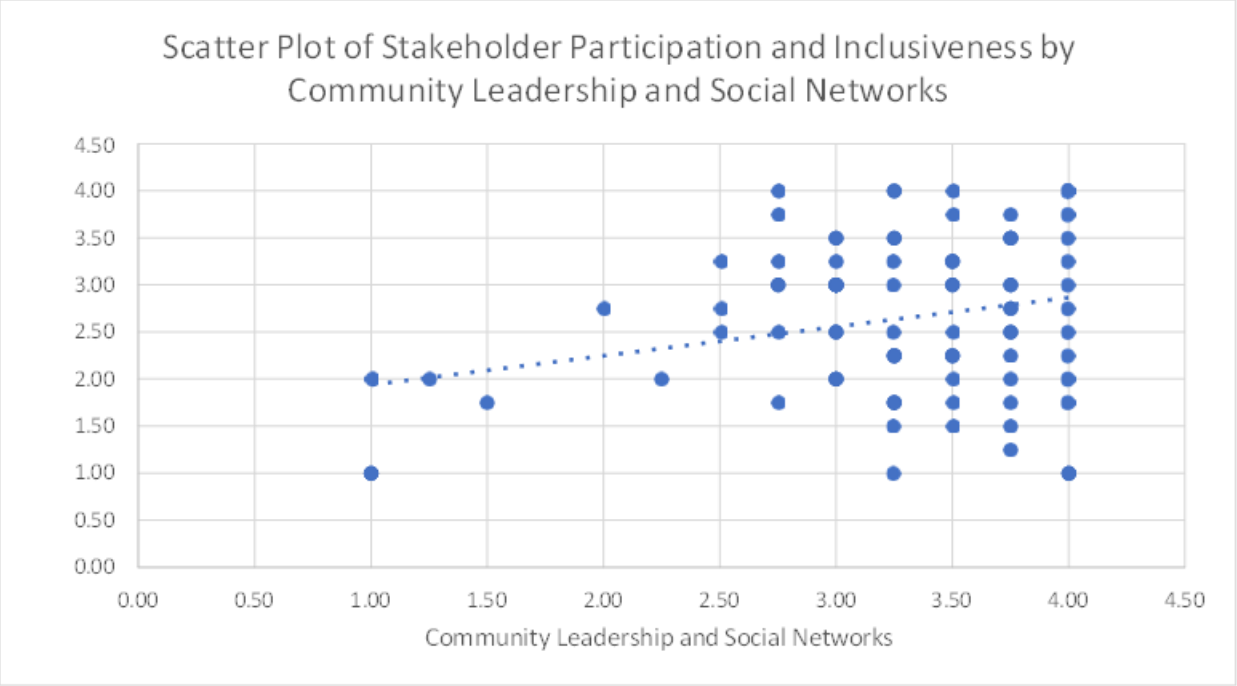

Figure 4.1: Scatter Plot of Stakeholder Participation and Inclusiveness by Community Leadership and Social Networks

From the Spearman rho correlation analysis (Table 4.5), the findings indicate a weak positive relationship between community leadership and social networks and stakeholder participation and inclusiveness ($\rho = 0.138$, $p = 0.164$, $n = 103$). This relationship was not statistically significant. Also, Figure 4.1 shows this same weak positive trend, with the fit line sloping gently upward and points widely scattered around it at nearly every value of community leadership, particularly in the higher range of the scale, where participation and inclusiveness scores span almost the full width of the response scale. Because the significance value ($p = 0.164$) exceeds the 0.05 threshold, the observed relationship is not statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the hypothesis that community leadership and social networks have a significant positive relationship with stakeholder participation and inclusiveness in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Hypothesis 2 Community leadership and social networks have a significant positive relationship with conflict resolution and project acceptance in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Table 4.6: Spearman rho correlation between community leadership and social networks and conflict resolution and project acceptance

Variables	Correlation coefficient (ρ)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Community leadership and social networks x Conflict resolution and project acceptance	0.351	< .001	103

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

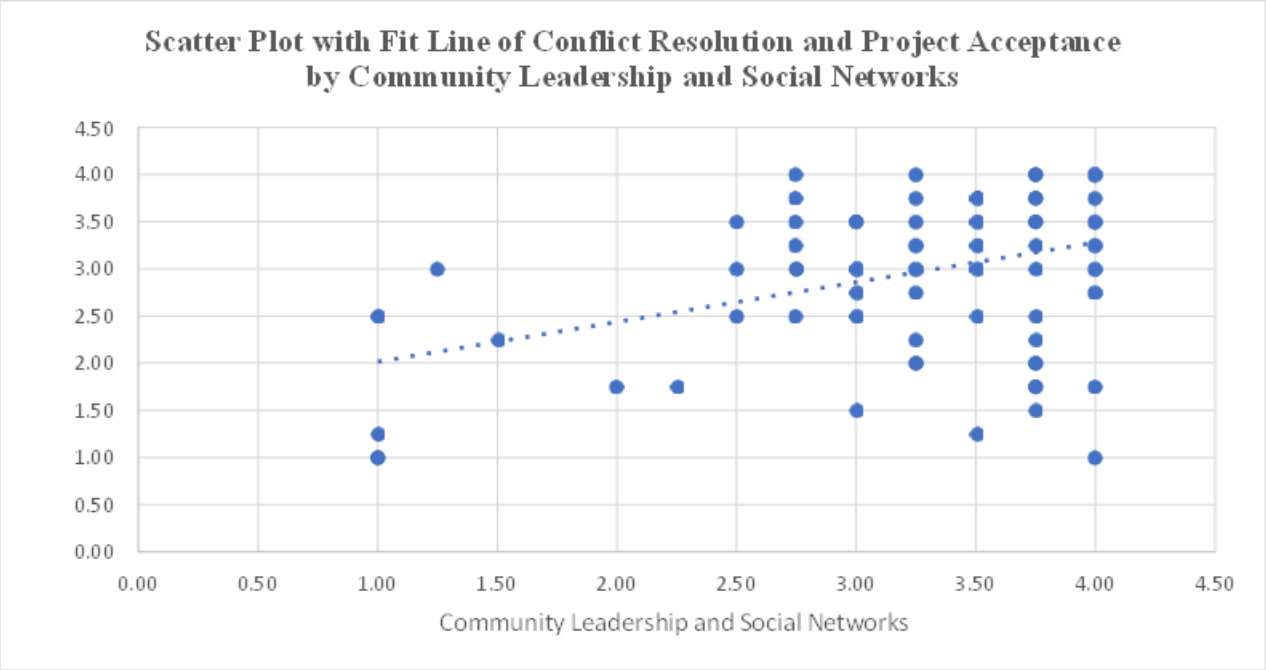

Figure 4.2: Scatter Plot of Conflict Resolution and Project Acceptance by Community Leadership and Social Networks

Table 4.6 and Figure 2 show a positive and statistically significant relationship between community leadership and social networks and conflict resolution and project acceptance (ρ = 0.351, $p < .001$, N = 103). The coefficient indicates a moderate positive association, suggesting that stronger community leadership and social networks are associated with better conflict resolution and greater project acceptance. Also, Figure 4.2 shows this trend visually, with the fit line sloping upward more steeply. This confirms that community leadership and social networks account for a meaningfully larger share of the variance in conflict resolution and project acceptance than was observed for participation and inclusiveness. Since the significance value is below the 0.05 level. Therefore, we accept the hypothesis that community leadership and social networks have a significant positive relationship with conflict resolution and project acceptance in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Hypothesis 3: Informal negotiation and political mediation have a significant positive relationship with stakeholder participation and inclusiveness in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Table-4.7: Spearman rho correlation between Informal negotiation and political mediation and stakeholder participation and inclusiveness

Variables	Correlation coefficient (ρ)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N

Informal negotiation and political mediation x Stakeholder participation and inclusiveness	0.211	0.033	103

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

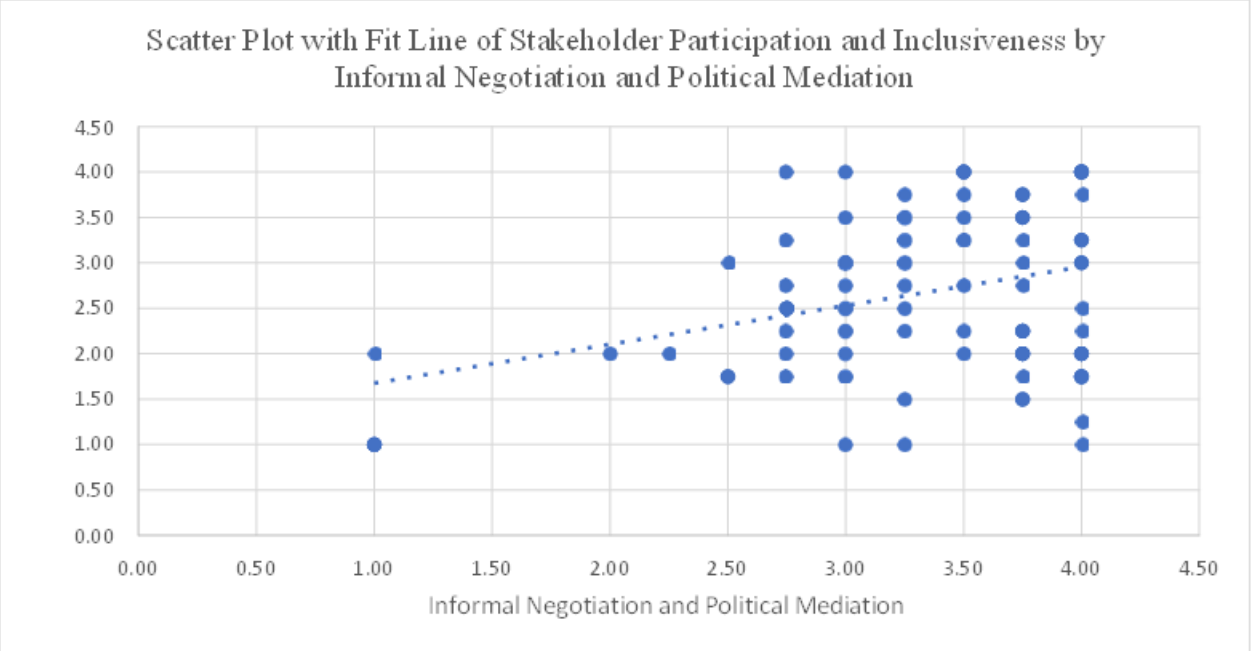

Figure 4.3: Scatter Plot of Stakeholder Participation and Inclusiveness by Informal Negotiation and Political Mediation

Table 4.7 contains a Spearman correlation which was conducted to test Hypothesis 3. The result shows a weak positive and statistically significant relationship between informal negotiation and political mediation and stakeholder participation and inclusiveness ($\rho = 0.211$, $p = 0.033$, $N = 103$). The positive coefficient indicates that higher levels of informal negotiation and political mediation are associated with higher levels of stakeholder participation and inclusiveness. Since the p-value is below the 0.05 significance level, the relationship is statistically significant. Alongside, Figure 4.3 shows a slight upward trend between informal negotiation and political mediation and stakeholder participation and inclusiveness, which is consistent with the positive Spearman rho coefficient. Therefore, we accept the hypothesis that Informal negotiation and political mediation have a significant positive relationship with stakeholder participation and inclusiveness in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Hypothesis 4: Informal negotiation and political mediation have a significant positive relationship with conflict resolution and project acceptance in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Table-4.8: Spearman rho correlation between Informal negotiation and political mediation and Conflict resolution and project acceptance

Variables	Correlation coefficient (ρ)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Informal negotiation and political mediation x Conflict resolution and project acceptance	0.388	< .001	103

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

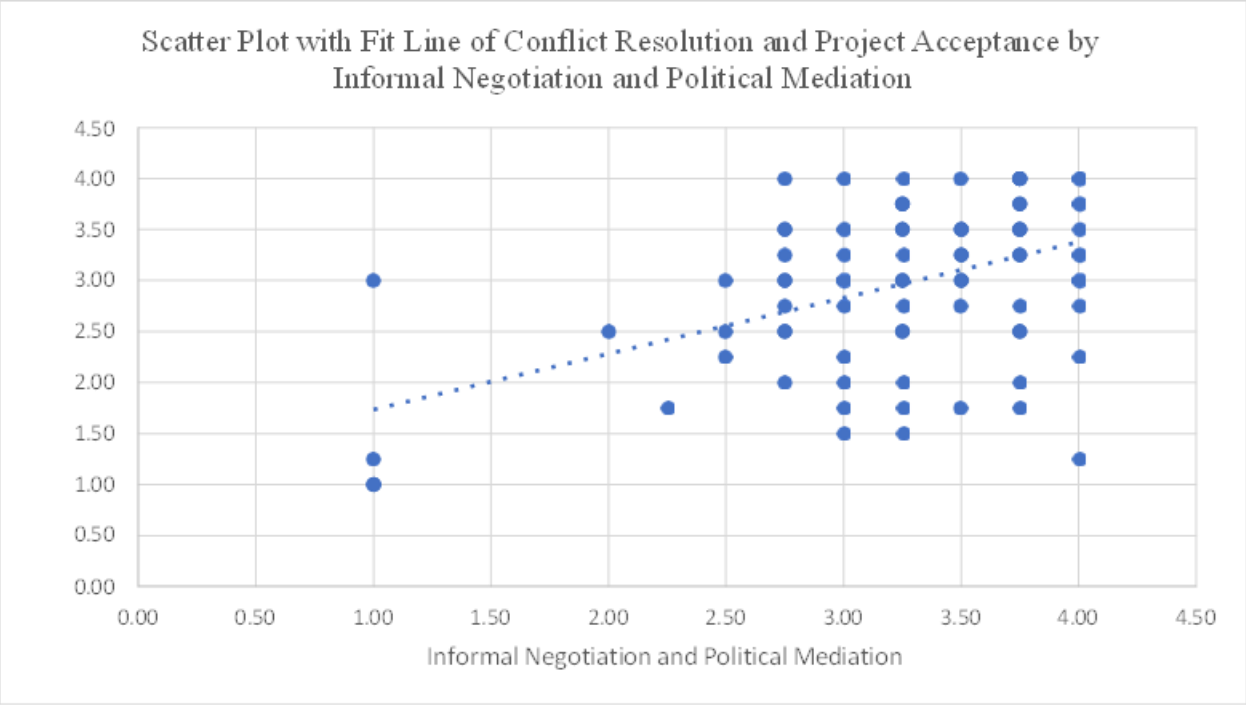

Figure 4.4.: Scatter Plot of Conflict Resolution and Project Acceptance by Informal Negotiation and Political Mediation

The result in Table 4.8 shows a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between informal negotiation and political mediation and conflict resolution and project acceptance ($\rho = 0.388, p < .001, N = 103$). The positive coefficient indicates that higher levels of informal negotiation and political mediation are associated with higher levels of conflict resolution and project acceptance. Since the p-value is below the 0.01 significance level, the relationship is statistically significant. Similarly, Figure 4.4 shows an upward trend between informal negotiation and political mediation and conflict resolution and project acceptance. The pattern is consistent with the positive Spearman rho correlation reported in Table 4.8. Therefore, we accept the hypothesis that informal

negotiation and political mediation have a significant positive relationship with conflict resolution and project acceptance in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Hypothesis Testing

The value of the table determines whether the summary of all hypotheses is meaningful. P values indicate whether there is a significant relationship between the constructs and, as a result, whether all hypotheses are accepted.

Table-4.9: Summary of Hypotheses and Results

Hyp.	Relationship Tested	Spearman's ρ	Sig. (p)	Strength	Result
H1	Community leadership and social networks x Stakeholder participation and inclusiveness	0.138	0.164	Weak	Rejected
H2	Community leadership and social networks x Conflict resolution and project acceptance	0.351	< 0.001	Moderate	Accepted
H3	Informal negotiation and political mediation x Stakeholder participation and inclusiveness	0.211	0.033	Weak	Accepted
H4	Informal negotiation and political mediation x Conflict resolution and project acceptance	0.388	< 0.001	Moderate	Accepted

Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). n = 103

Hypothesis Test Discussion

The results indicated that community leadership and social networks were weakly but positively and statistically non-significantly associated with stakeholder participation and inclusiveness in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State ($\rho = 0.138$, $p = 0.164$). Therefore, H1 was rejected. This finding contrasts with other studies that found community structures to be positively related to participation of stakeholders in infrastructure projects. Matu et al. (2020) observed a strong positive relationship between stakeholder participation and project completion likelihood in urban road infrastructure projects in Kenya ($r = 0.859$, $p < 0.001$). Community leadership and social networks were moderately and positively and statistically significantly associated with conflict resolution and project acceptance in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State ($\rho = 0.351$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H2 was supported. This finding aligns with research by Mboh (2021), who found that traditional leaders were able to mediate and resolve conflicts within communities in South Africa. There was a weak positive and statistically significant correlation between informal negotiation and political mediation and stakeholder participation and inclusiveness in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State ($\rho = 0.211$, $p = 0.033$). Thus, H3 was accepted. This is consistent with research demonstrating how informal routes allow communities to participate and express their influence over project decisions when formal processes do not exist or have failed. Lobo and Abid (2020) found that community groups campaigning against the CrossRail 2 project in the UK used social

media to organise themselves and influence decision-makers beyond formal engagement forums. Findings indicated a moderate positive and statistically significant correlation between informal negotiation and political mediation and conflict resolution and project acceptance in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State ($\rho = 0.388$, $p < .001$). Thus, H4 was accepted. Thontteh et al. (2023) similarly observed that leaders of landowning communities and heads of indigenous families served as informal gatekeepers of land acquisitions in Ibeju-Lekki local government area of Lagos State. Matu et al. (2020) also found a significant relationship between stakeholder participation and project completion in Kenyan road projects.

Conclusion And Implications

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of informal stakeholder influence mechanisms on the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement in road infrastructure projects in Lagos State, Nigeria. Informal stakeholder influence mechanisms constituted the independent variable which consisted of two sub-constructs namely; community leadership and social networks, and informal negotiation and political mediation. Stakeholder engagement effectiveness constituted the dependent variable which consisted of two sub constructs namely; stakeholder participation and inclusiveness, and conflict resolution and project acceptance. Furthermore, four objectives were identified for this study and were used to guide all facets of the study. Objective one was to determine whether there is any relationship between community leadership and social networks and stakeholder participation and inclusiveness. Second objective was to determine whether there is any relationship between community leadership and social networks and conflict resolution and project acceptance. Objective three was to assess if any relationship exists between informal negotiation and political mediation, and stakeholder participation and inclusiveness. The last objective, which was number four aims to evaluate if any relationship exists between informal negotiation and political mediation and conflict resolution and project acceptance. The four objectives led to the development of four hypotheses. these hypotheses were subjected to tests using the data obtained from the 103 respondents selected from various road infrastructure projects in Lagos State.

Limitations

The limitation of this study is that it used a cross-sectional design. This is considered as limitation because data were collected once among the participants at a single point in time and so the study cannot establish how the relationships between variables change over time when road projects move from planning to completion. Secondly, this study used purposive sampling method due to absence of formal list of informal stakeholders therefore respondents were sampled based on their information on the study and not randomly selected. This participants sampling technique limits the generalization of the study findings to all stakeholders affecting road projects in Lagos State. The third limitation of this study is that the study was conducted in Lagos State only. The research

findings therefore may not generalize to other states in Nigeria or countries with different government systems.

Theoretical Implications

This study helps add to stakeholder theory by providing insight into how the theory can be applied to informal stakeholders that are often not considered or very visible like community leaders as well as political mediators in the context of road infrastructure projects. Most previous research has focused strictly on groups who have formal stakes in project outcomes. The findings here show that informal selection mechanisms do matter and have a quantifiable impact on projects but that their impact varies depending on the aspect of stakeholder engagement being measured. Differentiating between levels of stakeholder engagement provides additional insights that can be tested in future research projects.

Practical Implications

Project managers and government organisations like Lagos State Ministry of Works and Infrastructure can use these research findings to help them understand that community leaders and informal negotiators are helpful when it comes to resolving conflicts and building local acceptance during the implementation phase of a project. However, if project teams want to promote actual and inclusive participation among stakeholders they cannot rely solely on community leadership. Instead, projects should have deliberate plans in place to include community input early on in the project rather than waiting for leaders to bring up the concerns of citizens. Bringing in informal negotiators and finding ways to compromise may also prevent some conflicts and help road projects have better community acceptance.

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